

THE WAY OF LIFE

BEING

NOTES OF LECTURES DELIVERED

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THE WAY OF LIFE.

THE REPORT.

(ROMANS X.)

I DESIRE to speak to you this evening upon what the apostle calls in these verses the "*report.*" Isaiah asked the question, after he had spoken of the glory and greatness of the Christ, "Who hath believed our report?" "And so," the apostle says, "faith cometh by report, and report by the word of God." The word of God, which is the revelation of His thoughts toward man, is declared by the gospel throughout the world, and this makes a demand for faith.

The report is concerning the Son of God; it is the declaration of the grace of God to men in that Person, it announces His resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God. Faith is begotten by this report. Indeed, it is so in human things as well as in the things that are divine. Faith cannot exist without report. Things are reported to us daily which we cannot at the moment verify, and we either believe what we hear or we do not, it all depends upon

the credibility of the witness who brings the report. The moment you hear of faith you think of a report, because you know that apart from report there cannot be faith.

The gospel is a report about something in heaven, something which has come to pass by the work of God and which you cannot verify. A day is coming when it will be verified, but that day is still future, and until that day comes we stand by faith. The report is about the place that God has given Christ in glory, and as this will be openly manifested in the world to come and never until then, we look for that day and wait for Christ to appear; like the Thessalonian believers who turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for His Son from heaven.

The report has been brought to us by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. It is, as I have said, all about Christ and the work of God in and through Him for the deliverance of man from the bondage of sin. Peter tells us that the Old Testament prophets, who were moved by the Spirit of Christ to testify of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow, learned that "not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look

into." (1 Pet. i. 12.) They are great things that are reported to us, for they are the works that God has wrought by His Son for the salvation of men, and the report has been brought down from heaven and put in circulation by a great Personage, the Holy Spirit of God, and therefore the responsibility to hearken to them, and to believe the gospel is proportionately great.

And this report is indeed good news. It sets before us how God has come in on our behalf, how He has brought about righteousness and life for us, so that we have both, that we may have our nakedness clothed with clothing upon which the pure light of God's glory will not find a speck. Also that we may have life, life eternal, life beyond the reach of death, that we may be for ever beyond the reach of condemnation and the hurtful sting of death.

Every child of Adam needs righteousness. Some may be so insensible to their miserable condition and so rebellious at heart against the authority of God as to refuse to look upon themselves as sinners, but man naturally is afraid of God, and dreads the day in which he has to meet Him. And then there is man's neighbour bearing continual testimony against him with all his might. Each man may try to think the best about himself and may hold his head high, but he cannot get his neighbour to have

the same exalted notions about him. Whatever each man may think about himself, every man believes his neighbour to be a sinner.

I meet men who tell me they do not believe the gospel; they have no faith in the word of God. The way in which I meet such men is this, I ask them where they are to get righteousness. They need not say they are righteous, they may say it with their lips, but their consciences condemn them, and all the human family declares by their behaviour toward one another that no man is to be trusted. Whatever men may say, I know I need righteousness, and who can tell me how I am to procure it? A man may say that I must find it in my works; but that is just the trouble, I am proved a sinner by my works. Must I begin to do better? *Better* will not do, I must do *well*. Can I do well? And if I could, will my future well-doing blot out my past ill-doing? And shall I in this way escape the penalty of sin, which is death? Has any one ever been justified in this way? Do not all die? And is death not the wages of sin?

The gospel is the only thing that solves this question, solves it so that the conscience is set at rest in the presence of God, and solves it so that death is no more king of terrors, neither is it the witness that I cannot be righteously allowed to continue for ever in my life of flesh

and blood ; it has become to me but the avenue into the presence of Christ, and the chamber in which I shall put off all that is mortal and sinful for ever. What other religion under heaven has even attempted to clear up this great problem of sin and death and righteousness and life ?

The question is, where are these blessings to be found ? The Jews looked for them in the law, but they found condemnation and death there, not righteousness and life. Through the intervention of God both are to be found in Christ risen from the dead. This is not man's righteousness, which the Jews in vain sought to establish, but the righteousness of God, to which all men are called to submit. Man's righteousness would have been worked out by his law-keeping, if he had answered in all things to the requirement of God. If he failed in any one thing he forfeited all title to life and blessing and came under the curse. It is not for man to say what God's demand is, that is for God to say, and He has made it plain, and less He cannot accept. If man does not answer to it he does not improve his position by ignoring the fact, especially if God is disposed to be gracious to him, and has found a way of justifying him.

In the gospel the righteousness of God has come to light, and this righteousness is in man's favour ; it is unto all and upon all them that

believe. God's righteousness in man's favour means that He has wrought with a view to bring man into suitability to Himself; it is God's righteousness in contrast to man's. Here was man a helpless sinner under death and the power of the devil in a world defiled by sin. God approaches him in Christ as a Saviour-God, at the same time asserting His rights and executing judgment upon all that stood in His way of blessing. Sin is dealt with, it is condemned in the flesh; the power of the devil is broken; death is annulled; man who was under judgment has received his judgment, but in the death of Christ who gave Himself a ransom for all, and by the mighty power of God He who shed His blood for us is raised from the dead and established in heaven at the right hand of God; and in Him are righteousness and life for all, and every one who believes on Him has both in the power of the Spirit: the righteousness of God is upon all them that believe. Thus Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. The believer does not need the law for righteousness, he has it in Christ.

Peter says, "Who by him do believe in God, who raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God." If our faith and hope are in God we know how this was brought about, they were begotten in us by the report of a risen Christ,

for in Him and in the glory in which He is we read the gracious disposition of God toward us, we see how God has wrought on our behalf so that we might have righteousness.

The report is about Christ. It directs man's thoughts from himself and his work and the consequences of his work to God and His work and the consequences of His work, as seen in the fact that there is a Saviour for man at the right hand of God. Instead of faith and hope being in oneself they are in God. He has made the same Jesus whom men crucified both Lord and Christ. He has the highest place in glory, and He has that place for the blessing of all; He is there on man's behalf. Had it not been for the grace of God to man there would have been no Saviour in glory to-day. He would never have become a man. He would have remained in the Godhead unrevealed. If He came down here it was for man; He came into the world to save sinners. He died for man, and rose again for man, and the place He has in glory He has on behalf of man. I do not doubt His grace will affect the whole universe, but we have now to do with the way it affects us. He is made Lord for blessing, not for destruction and condemnation. He is Lord of all—Lord of angels, Lord of men, Lord of living and Lord of dead: "To this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived [lives], that he

might be Lord both of the dead and living." (Rom. xiv. 9.) He will yet be owned Lord of all. Everything in heaven, earth and under the earth must bow at His name and confess Him Lord to God the Father's glory.

I want all to see that God has made Him Lord and Christ for the blessing of men, and it is for us to bow to Him, to submit to Him and confess Him Lord. Had He been placed at the right hand of God for man's condemnation it would have been a different matter, and a different dispensation on the part of God to man would have been brought to light, and I could have understood a reluctance on the part

man to bow to Him ; but having been placed where He is by the power of God for salvation, it is suicidal for man to rebel against Him. The glad tidings says, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." This is good news for you and me. Take your place in subjection to Him. He is placed where He is as Saviour, and a Saviour such as He you need. All that is necessary is that you believe the report which a divine Person, the Holy Ghost, has brought from heaven. If you believe it, faith and hope in God will spring to life in your heart.

Perhaps you say, How can the report that

Christ is at the right hand of God cause my faith and hope to be in God? I answer, because He is there on behalf of poor sinful man. God has given you a Saviour who has all power in heaven and in earth. I do not want a weak and feeble Saviour; I want One who is worthy of the name of Saviour. Such a Saviour is Jesus. I want a Saviour who is superior to all the forces of evil put together, and who has the supreme place in the universe. The report is that Jesus is that Person and that He has got that place. And who brought all this about? Whose righteousness is this that has wrought such a deliverance for slaves of sin and Satan? God brought it all about, and it is His righteousness. Therefore my faith and hope are in God. I say, how good God is who has given me such a mighty Saviour in such an exalted place!

I confess Him as Lord. I am glad to confess Him. It is not a creed or a doctrine with me, but a living Person who has broken the power of death on my behalf, and who is able to save to the uttermost all who come unto God by Him. When I hear this report my heart is affected by the good news. It is just what I need. I want it to be so. I would not have it otherwise. I believe it with my heart. I believe God has put forth His mighty power on behalf of his poor weak creature. I believe the

grave of Christ is empty. I believe He is on the throne in the heavens. A sense of relief, of rest and of unspeakable tranquillity enters my heart. I confess Him Lord. My whole moral and spiritual being, prostrate in the dust at His feet, cries out, "My Lord and my God," and I come into salvation.

By confessing Him as Lord I come into the kingdom. I find protection under His sceptre, and I come under His control. All the world will in the age to come be brought under His gracious sway, but the one who confesses Him now comes into the benefit of His salvation before the day comes when He shall be openly manifested. Then "a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment, and a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place; as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." This is God's idea of a king, and it is found in Christ. He is righteousness to the believer. Righteousness is reckoned to us if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. We believe with the heart to righteousness; all that believe are justified. We confess with the mouth to salvation. A kingdom is valueless unless the subject enjoys salvation. This is what a king is for—to save

his people from their enemies. A king may not always be able to save his people. Saul was not, but David was. Under the sceptre of David the people found salvation. Jesus is the true David. You cannot count upon His protection if you are rebellious. You must submit to Him. All His power is exercised on behalf of the one who submits to Him. Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. He is Lord of all, and He is rich unto all that call upon Him.

You confess Him during the day of His rejection, when all the world is against Him, and you wait for the day when He shall come in power and glory. Perhaps you fear you may be put to shame in that day. Fear not. Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed; that is, he shall not be put to shame. All that is reported about Him will one day be verified. We may need patience, but we are assured that He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. This report brought from heaven by the Holy Spirit has been in circulation for about two thousand years. The verification of this report seems to have been long delayed, but "yet a little while," only a little while, and His glory shall be revealed.

Isaiah says, "Who hath believed our report?" His report was of the majesty of Christ: "he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high."

(Isa. lii.) Chapter liii. explains why it was not believed. The lowly way in which He came stumbled that proud nation. But the suffering had to come before the glory. But by-and-by they shall confess "he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." (Isa. liii.) We were sinners, and He had to bear the judgment which lay upon us. But He has now gone up on high, and salvation is in Him for all, and the Holy Spirit has come down with the report, that men may turn to Him and believe in Him to righteousness, and confess Him unto salvation.



BOASTING.

(Rom. v. 1-11.)

IN the last verse which was read we get the effect of the gospel in the soul of the believer, "We boast [boast is really the word] in God." Boasting is excluded in chapter iii.; the apostle asks, "Where is boasting?" It is excluded by the law of faith. The law of faith excludes boasting, for if a man is justified by faith he has nothing to boast of over his neighbour, for the greatest sinner in the world may be justified on the same principle. If a man were justified by works he would have much to boast of, for it would be seen that he was so much better than others; but the fact that a man is justified on the principle of faith puts boasting out of court. We get it in its right place in this chapter: "we boast in hope of the glory of God" (ver. 2); "we boast in tribulation also" (ver. 3); "we boast in God." (Ver. 11.) *Rejoice* in verse 2, *glory* in verse 3, and *joy* in verse 11 are all the same word in the original, which means to *boast*.

Every man in this world finds something to boast in, some quality in himself that dis-

tinguishes him from others, and in this he boasts. If a man has no good quality in which to boast, he will boast in evil. It has been said that a man would rather be the cleverest thief in the city than have nothing to distinguish him. The reason is that God has lost His place before the soul of man, and the poor slave of the devil wants the homage for himself which belongs to God only. He is a fallen creature who is occupied with anything but God. No unfallen being is found contemplating his own excellency. Pride of heart was the cause of the fall of the devil. I suppose we may take Ezekiel xxviii. as having reference to him. He is spoken of as full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. Every precious stone was his covering ; but what is said to him is, that his heart was lifted up because of his beauty, and that he had corrupted his wisdom by reason of his brightness. Whatever he was, he was God's handiwork, and the glory all belonged to God, but he gave the glory to himself. His heart was lifted up with pride, and he drifted away from God and fell headlong. Now there is no brightness or beauty about him, and he is the most foolish being in the universe, for what could be greater folly than to pit himself against his omnipotent Creator ? He has also corrupted man, and the means by which he secured the downfall of his victim was the delusion that he might successfully aspire to divinity :

“ye shall be as gods.” The devil was not satisfied to remain in the position of a creature, and through his subtlety man became corrupted and under condemnation. Man’s moral foundations are destroyed. He has usurped the place that belongs to God and to Him only, for he has made himself a centre around which everything is to revolve, and he judges of everything by the way in which it stands in relation to himself and by the way in which it affects him. He calls things evil if they affect him adversely, and good if they seem to be to his advantage. The way in which they stand with relationship to God is of no account to fallen man.

How different Christ was to all this; He judged of everything by the way in which it affected the glory of God. He did not estimate things by their bearing upon Himself. God had His rightful place in the mind and heart of Christ. He loved righteousness and He maintained the rights of God. The will of God might involve shame, rejection and the death of the cross to Him, but “even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight,” was all that the worst of circumstances could force from the lips of Jesus. In Jesus man is in his right place with God. All outside that blessed Person was rebellion, pride, darkness, chaos and death. In Him God had His delight. There was no desire to exalt Himself, no grasping after divinity, no

feverish anxiety to keep well to the front His personal dignity and greatness. He came in the form of a servant, and He found His meat in doing the will of Him that sent Him. He sought the glory of Him that sent Him, and this proved how true and righteous He was. It is under this glorious Head that God will gather all things in heaven and in earth, and by Him all will be brought into suitability to God.

In this epistle the gospel is taught to us. For what was preached to men generally we have to turn to the Acts. In this epistle is unfolded the word of righteousness; the foundation upon which the soul is in relationship with God is gone into and opened out. This is what I understand by the word of righteousness, and it is what believers need to be instructed in. It is milk for babes, and it is very necessary that babes should get milk; by using milk we grow up to salvation (1 Pet. ii.) and become able to take meat. The gospel is the gospel of God. It sets before us the intervention of God on behalf of His ruined creature. The way God has intervened thus has been by His Son, hence the gospel of God is concerning His Son. (Rom. i. 38.) It is important to lay hold of this, as there is a notion in the minds of some people that Jesus came into the world to do a work whereby He might turn God's heart to man, and with Jesus men associate goodness, grace,

kindness and love, while God is viewed as hard and exacting. This thought needs to be removed from people's minds, for it is neither the gospel nor the truth of God. Jesus was here, but God sent Him. He was here as the Witness of the grace of God to man. He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil, but it was because God was with Him. Jesus was the One in whom God was bringing His kindness and love before the hearts of men, that they might know Him and believe in Him and trust Him. He has wrought a great work of righteousness for the deliverance of man from the thralldom of sin and the power of Satan.

Sin was obnoxious to God, and He could have cleared the scene from its presence by angelic means, but had He done so it would have meant destruction to the whole human race. But it has been through His Son that He has wrought righteousness, and through Him He has been able to do this on man's behalf. He has dealt with everything that was offensive to Him, whether that be man or devil, and He has laid a foundation in Christ risen upon which everything will be established that is pleasing to His heart.

In chapter iii. this Christ is set forth a propitiation or mercy-seat. It is the antitype of the mercy-seat which was in the tabernacle set

up by Moses. It was sprinkled with blood, but the blood which was sprinkled upon it could not make atonement for the souls of the people. But the blood which is upon the true mercy-seat is the blood of Jesus. It is the witness that the man upon whom the judgment of God lay has been brought to an end in the execution of that judgment, but brought to an end not in himself but in the death of his Substitute. The blood-sprinkled lintel in the land of Egypt on the night of judgment was I suppose a type of this. God was about to execute judgment upon all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, but would spare His people Israel. The way He took to do it was this: they were commanded to kill a lamb and to sprinkle its blood upon the lintel and door-posts of the houses where they were, and none of them was to go out of his house until the night of judgment was over. The destroying angel with drawn sword passed through the land that night and entering into every house where the firstborn was slew him without mercy. But coming to a door sprinkled with blood he entered not. Why? He was too late; the judgment he was executing in the land had preceded him. There was no firstborn there. The witness to it was the blood upon the lintel and door-posts. The firstborn had already been slain, not in his own person but in his substitute.

Now God has provided this shelter for all. It is not for one nation as it was in Egypt. All may avail themselves of it. From this mercy-seat, the witness that satisfaction has been rendered Him and that His judgment has been faithfully carried out, He addresses men everywhere. He has given up none of His rights in addressing men in grace as a Saviour God. The very opposite is true, He has asserted His rights. Nothing has been too hard for Him. His wisdom is infinite, and He has found a way of executing all His righteous judgments and yet of being able to address men in grace. Who could have suggested all this to God? Who could have devised this plan of salvation? No one but God Himself. Now the righteousness of God is unto all and upon all them that believe.

This gives us light as to God's passing over of sins before Christ came. How He was just in doing so is seen in the light of the mercy-seat. A flood of very precious light is cast upon all the dealings of God with men in past ages. The fact is He never intended to set up man in the flesh. He had him under probation, bringing out all that was in him and demonstrating that there was no good in him; He passed over his sins, and even wrought a work of grace in the hearts of many, and spoke of men as righteous who in themselves were nothing but sinners.

His righteousness in doing this is declared in the risen Christ. In Him I now behold the Man that God had ever before Him, and I see that God, while dealing with the man after the flesh in the past and passing over his sins, not executing then and there the judgment that those sins merited, was only waiting the moment when in the cross He would bring that man to an end judicially and set forth in resurrection the Man of His counsels as the only Man through whom He would have to do with the children of Adam, and in whom He would address men in grace, and in whom He would bring men into relationship with Himself, and in whom every poor sinner might find righteousness, life and salvation.

In chapter iv. God in whom our faith is to be placed is brought before us ; He is the God in whom Abraham believed. In this chapter the apostle produces two great witnesses against the theory that righteousness was on the principle of law. If it were on the principle of works of law man would have room for boasting in the flesh ; but this cannot be before God. The scripture is appealed to as that which must decide every question. The two witnesses are Abraham and David. Abraham was the one to whom the promises were made, and he was the heir of the world. David was the one to whom the throne and kingdom belonged. What about

Abraham—how was he justified? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.” He was held to be righteous on the principle of faith; his works went for nothing as far as justification in God’s sight was concerned. David describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness without works, saying, “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” Here are two witnesses whose testimony no Jew would have disputed; one four hundred and thirty years before the law was given, declaring justification was *by faith*; the other during the age of law, declaring that justification was *without works*. And the One in whom Abraham believed, who was He? because if I am to be justified by faith, my faith must be in the same blessed God. His faith was in God who quickeneth the dead and calls those things that be not as though they were. How did this God of all grace bring Himself in these characteristics before Abraham? In these words, “I have made thee a father of many nations.” This was beyond the power of nature, for he was a hundred years old; but he trusted in Him who quickens the dead, and was strong, or strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and was fully persuaded that what He had promised He was able also to

perform, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness.

Now this is the God in whom we believe. But how has He brought Himself before us? As the God of resurrection. Where? In the resurrection of Jesus our Lord, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. If we believe in this blessed God, righteousness is reckoned to us. The righteousness of God is upon all them that believe. This is how God has brought Himself before us in the putting forth of His power on our behalf, that we might have righteousness in His presence, and that our faith and hope might be in Him.

But some one might ask me, Must I not believe in Jesus? I answer, it is in Jesus God brings Himself before you. I can learn Him in no other. But Jesus has not come to divert my thoughts from God, but to direct me to God. It is by Jesus that God has wrought for our deliverance, and the life and death and resurrection of that glorious One were but the activities of God on our behalf. Jesus is the revelation of God, and it is by Him we believe in God who raised Him up from the dead and gave Him glory. God has wrought in and by Christ, that we might not be naked sinners before Him, and exposed to His righteous judgment, but that Christ might be our covering.

The best type we have of this is Adam and Eve clothed with the coats of skins which were made by God. They had clothed themselves with the work of their own hands. * The fig-leaf aprons were their invention, and there is a great deal of that to-day. It serves its purpose in a world where all are sinners. It is a poor covering, but none of us care to appear as we really are before the eyes of men. We hide our shortcomings and imperfections. We may know very well that our neighbour is no better than ourselves, still we are ashamed of the thoughts that pass through our hearts, and we do not desire them to be made public. We put on a garb of respectability and morality and shrink from appearing in public in our naked and hideous sinfulness, and we are thankful that the thoughts of our hearts are known only to ourselves. But how would all this serve us if God came into the scene? Just the way the fig-leaves served Adam and Eve. He says, "I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." Your works of righteousness will not do for God; you must have something better than that.

But what did God do for those poor naked sinners? He made coats of skin and clothed them. The coats were procured by death. God has found us righteousness through the death of Christ. He was delivered for our offences and

raised again for our justification. The One who died for us is to be our covering. It is all God's work—*He* made the coats of skin, *He* clothed them. I had nothing to do with it, just as Adam and Eve had nothing to do with the coats of skin. *They* made the aprons of fig-leaves; *God* made the coats of skins. He had no hand in their work; they had no hand in His. Had I had a finger in the work of God I should never have had peace; I should always have been wondering if I had done my part right. God has wrought by His almighty power and has found righteousness for us in His blessed Son risen from the dead, and that righteousness is upon us when we believe the gospel.

The effect is peace with God; He can never find fault with His own work. We also stand in His favour; He has brought us there through our Lord Jesus Christ. We also rejoice, or boast in hope of the glory of God. We come to boasting now. It was excluded in chapter iii. for no flesh shall boast before God. He that boasts, let him boast in the Lord. We are justified in view of the glory, and instead of fearing as we think of it we boast in hope of it. On the way to it there may be much tribulation, but it will work patience, that is, if you are real. If not, you will be likely to give up Christ. But where the heart has really believed in Christ tribulation can do nothing but good; it

will work endurance, and endurance, experience, you get to know God better. The very untoward circumstances of the way give God an opportunity of coming in for your deliverance in a thousand ways, and in these ways you form acquaintance with Him that nourishes hope in your hearts, and hope makes not ashamed, because you have already got the earnest of the glory in the love of God shed abroad in your heart. When you believe the gospel you receive the Spirit, and He sheds the love of God abroad in your cold dead heart so that your heart beats responsive to His great love; and this love was manifested toward us when we were ungodly sinners and without strength. You never can be more weak or worthless than you were when God set His love upon you and gave expression to it in the death of Christ and took you up for Himself. And the apostle reasons that if we have been justified in the power of His blood we shall be saved from wrath through Him. The day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God is coming, but He who died for us will take us out of this scene before that day arrives. We shall be saved in the power of the life of Christ. He will quicken our mortal bodies, whether we are alive upon earth when He comes or have died and been buried. And not only this, but our boast is in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have

received the reconciliation. In reconciliation we have reached a scene where all things are of God, and therefore our boast is in Him. In the world to come all boasting will be in God ; but we are brought to it now through the glad tidings. May God be ever before our souls as our Saviour God in the person of Christ, that all our boasting may be in Him.



YEA AND AMEN IN CHRIST.

(2 COR. I. 18-24.)

THE apostles not only preached the gospel in word, but set it forth practically in their lives; their ways were consistent with the truth which they proclaimed. Concerning the scribes who sat in the seat of Moses, the Lord told His disciples to observe and do whatever they said, but not to do after their ways; for they said and did not. They laid down the law for others, but did not keep it themselves. It was altogether different with the apostles, who set forth in their ways the Christ they preached. And all this is kept before us from beginning to end of this epistle; we learn how they were affected by the ministry which was committed to them; and the doctrines taught are introduced through some reference to their own ways. The doctrine taught in the verses I have read seems to be brought to the mind of the apostle by the reference made to his apparent neglect to fulfil his promise of visiting them. It seemed as though he was using lightness, and it was all "yea and nay" with him—promises made only to be broken. In chapter iii. he seems led to

speak of the new covenant by the thought coming to his mind that they might think he was commending himself to them through the reference he makes to himself at the close of chapter ii. Then again reconciliation is introduced through his allusion to the assertion of some that he was beside himself. The subject of a man in Christ in chapter xii. flows from his boasting, to which they had compelled him. It is all the ministers, and how that which they had received from the Lord affected them. No doubt it is all brought before us that we may be affected in a similar way.

In this first chapter we see he was afraid his ways with these Corinthians might weaken in their souls the truth in which he sought to establish them, and therefore he hastens to explain why it was he had not come to them when he had promised to do so. The fact was their conduct was not to be commended. Great power had been given to the apostles, but not for the destruction of the saints; and they were responsible to the Lord as to how they used that power. Their state was such, that had Paul come at this time to Corinth he would have had to deal with the offenders in a way neither pleasing to himself nor to them; he would have had, as he says, to use a rod. This he did not desire to do, and so he kept away to give them time and opportunity to recover them-

selves, so that he might come with joy and not with grief. He desired that his coming should be in the blessing of Christ, and that his heart should be gladdened by witnessing their repentant state.

He had really intended to come and was longing to be with them, and he lets them know this that they might not be under any wrong impression. He says, "did I use lightness? or the things that I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, that with me there should be yea yea, and nay nay? For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who was preached among you by us, even by me and Silvanus and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea." And this they had proved, but he would not have the great fact weakened in their souls by any act of his. In the Son of God, Jesus Christ, every promise that God had at any time made was established and made available for every human being.

God had made many promises in the past. We read of blessing for every family upon earth; we read of forgiveness, of righteousness, of life, of salvation, of eternal inheritance, of the gift of the Holy Spirit. God has not forgotten His promises. It has not been yea yea and nay nay with Him. He has fulfilled them, and in the fulfilment of them He has taken the whole human race into account. Israel thought

that blessing lay in the law, but the curse was there; instead of life they found death, and instead of righteousness they found condemnation. Moses had said that the man who did the things commanded would live in the doing of them; but no man ever did them. The curse was pronounced upon the transgressor, and as many as are of the works of the law are under it. They would have found blessing had they been obedient, but being disobedient the curse became their portion.

Yet God has not been slack concerning His promise. But if man has no title to blessing, surely God has the right, if He proposes to bless, to place the blessing wherever He may deem right; and He has also the prerogative to say upon what principle men are to have the blessing. But God who made the promises determined to fulfil them, and in fulfilling them to bring the blessings within the reach of man's appropriation, and this He has done by placing them in the risen Christ. There they are established, and there they are available for all. To this end He gave Himself a ransom for all. Apart from His death and resurrection no man could have had any blessing, because the righteous judgment of God lay upon all, and this must be executed. God could not have to say to man in such a way as to give the impression that He was indifferent to sin, He could not

act as though sin were a matter of little or no importance to Him. Thank God, He could not. What rest and peace it gives us to know that He could not condone the evil of the creature! What guarantee of security would we have if He could? If sin could be tolerated in His dominions, if evil could be perpetrated with impunity, if iniquity could be allowed to go unpunished in the heavens or in the earth, then the whole universe would become a vast moral chaos, and the beginning of the creature's existence would be for him the beginning of eternal misery. But God has vindicated His righteousness, holiness, truth, authority and majesty in the cross of Christ, and thus declared His love to man, for He sent His Son to bear the judgment. And in Him who bore the judgment the blessing is placed; all blessing is in Him, and in Him without recall; they are established there: that is what I understand by the "*Amen*" being in Him. There is nothing but judgment outside Christ for any human being. Every blessing is restricted to Him, and it is only as under His headship that any soul can have the least of the promises.

God said to Abraham that in him should all the nations be blessed. But the natural seed of Abraham failed under law, and the centuries rolled on and the Gentiles wallowed in idolatry, and the times of their ignorance God winked at.

Had God forgotten His promises, or broken His covenant made with the father of the faithful? Neither: the fulfilment of everything awaited the true Seed of Abraham, to whom these promises were confirmed. He came in flesh and blood, bore the curse that rested upon the Jew, tasted death for all, and in Him risen from the dead every blessing is placed for every man; the blessing of Abraham has come the length of the Gentiles in that risen Christ. The Holy Spirit has come from heaven to direct men to where they may find all their need met, and where they can be in righteous and blessed relationship with God. And when a soul turns to Christ for blessing it will never be met with "*nay*."

God desires that all men should have the blessing, for He will have all men to be saved. It is without works, it is without money and without price, and it is for rich and poor alike. Were it on the principle of works no one could have it, for the best is full of failure; and were it for a price, who could pay the ransom? If there were any demand, it would always be "*nay*" and never "*yea*."

Paul was sent to the nations to preach to them the Son of God, to direct them to this glorious Person in whom they would find all their need met. If a poor sinner felt his need of forgiveness, it was in Christ for him; if he

wanted life, it was in the same Person; if salvation, it was also in Him and nowhere else. The blessing is brought to every man's door. It is not at a great distance, in a place inaccessible. The testimony is rendered in the ear of every human being. "The word is nigh thee," and as it is a word of faith there is no need to move hand or foot to get it. It is a question of the heart turning to God and having to do with Him. And the Corinthians were living witnesses that the gospel preached by the apostle was not yea and nay, for they were in the enjoyment of the blessings.

The next question is, How do we come into them? How are they made ours? They are made ours on the principle of faith and in the power of the Holy Spirit. We receive the Spirit by faith, and by the Spirit we are attached to the One in whom all these blessings are. The promises made to the fathers were all fulfilled to the Jewish nation in the bringing of Christ into the world; but to Christ come thus of the seed of David the Gentiles had no claim. But when rejected by that nation and cast out and slain, God raised Him from the dead, and as risen from the dead the Gentile has as good a claim to Him as a Jew, for no one has any claim at all except the claim God gives to men in the gospel, and He gives the same claim to all. The blessing did not come to the Gentile in a Christ

in flesh and blood; He said, when here upon earth, to a poor Gentile who sought relief from Him, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs." But it has arrived at the Gentile in a *risen* Christ.

We are attached to Christ by the Spirit that the blessing may be ours. We are joined to Him in whom all the promises are fulfilled and in whom all blessing is. By the same Spirit we know they are ours, for He is the anointing, and by the anointing we know all things. (1 John ii. 20 and 27.) The unction, or anointing, which is the same thing, gives us the consciousness that the blessing is ours. *Faith* comes by report, but *knowledge* by the *anointing*. There is an illustration of the difference between what may be by report and by the Spirit in John iv. The Samaritans believed on account of the saying of the woman which testified, "He told me all that ever I did." But when they came to Him they could say, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and *know* that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." You believe the report of the grace of God to men in Christ and turn to Him and get the Spirit, and then not only are the blessings yours but you know they are yours.

He has also sealed us and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. We are marked off

from the world with the seal of God upon us, and He who is the seal is the earnest of the glory which will be ours at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

My object in bringing these things before you is to have our hearts well grounded in the great fact that God has been faithful to all that He promised in the past, and that there has been no breach of promise. For some hundreds of years while the promise was being delayed it may have appeared as if it was yea and nay with God; and the law, where not understood, might have given colour to thoughts like these; but all questionings of unbelief are now for ever set at rest, for the promises are all fulfilled in Christ, and the testimony goes out to all, that all may turn to Him and believe on Him and in the power of the Spirit possess and enjoy them.

THE NEW COVENANT.

(2 COR. III; IV. 1-6.)

THE apostle speaks of the new covenant as glad tidings. He says, "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." The covenant will actually be made with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, but it is the principle upon which God addresses Himself to all men to-day. There is no covenant made with any one upon earth in this dispensation, but the disposition of God toward man is declared in the gospel, and this is what the covenant means; it is a disposition on the part of God manward. It is what God is toward man in Christ. It is not *made* with man, it will be *made* with Israel, but the terms, fixed and sure, upon which God will be with Israel, are now held out to all men in the name of Christ. Men may refuse to welcome and submit to the disposition of God, or they may gladly accept it, but the disposition is declared in the power of the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven.

A covenant in the scriptural sense of the term does not always mean an agreement between two parties; it may be that, or it may not. In

Genesis xv. we get an account of a covenant made with Abram, to which there was only one party. It was of the nature of a promise made by God to Abram. A mediator always supposes two parties, but a covenant does not. I speak of the use of these terms in scripture. A covenant is a disposition on the part of God. It is well to get out of the mind the idea of an agreement between two parties. In a sense there were two parties to the old covenant given at Sinai. There, though the terms were proposed by God, I think Israel might not have accepted them. They might have thrown themselves upon the grace and mercy of God in the acknowledgment of their own rebellious nature, and I am sure the blessed God would have gone on with them upon the ground on which He had already intervened for them when they were slaves to Pharaoh; and the law never would have been presented to them as the demand of God; but instead of owning the evil disposition of their natural hearts, and fearing to put themselves under obligation to merit blessing by the fulfilment of their responsibilities, they confidently say, "All that Jehovah hath said will we do and be obedient."

A contrast is here drawn between the new covenant, and that which was announced at Sinai. The latter was God's righteous demand upon the people. He spoke audibly in the ears

of the people, and what He spoke was afterwards written with the finger of God upon two tables of stone. The ten commands were neither more nor less than what Israel ought to have responded to and fulfilled to the letter. But man was not able to answer to the demand of God. Instead of being righteous, he was sinful; instead of being obedient, he was rebellious; and instead of being a law-keeper, he was a law-breaker. When Moses brought the tables of stone down from the top of the mount where he had received them from the hand of God, the people were already steeped in idolatry. When the terms of the covenant were first spoken in the ears of the people, they excused themselves from hearing, and fled from the voice of God, saying to Moses, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die."

It was also by the disposition of angels the law was given. It was Jehovah, no doubt, but Jehovah approaching man by angelic means. It is said to be an angel that appeared to Moses at the burning bush (Acts vii. 30); and it was also an angel at Sinai. Stephen tells the Jews that they had received the law by the disposition of angels; also the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, "If the word spoken by angels," &c. I quote these passages to shew you the great contrast between the old covenant and the new. The old was not God speaking personally

to man, nor was it the revelation of God. God was hiding Himself all the time in the thick darkness, and out of that darkness He spoke, and from that darkness sent forth the fiery law into their midst.

An angel was a poor representative of God. It was all that was necessary, and all that could be under that ministration; but it was not God drawing near to them Himself. He approached the people by means of a being man had no knowledge of, and who could not come into contact with man, or compassionate his weakness. An angel may be a minister of God's strength, and the executioner of His righteous judgments, but not the expositor of His affections; we do not read that he is sympathetic and tender and gracious. There is a great gulf between a man and an angel, and also between God and an angel. We need some one that can come nearer to ourselves, and who can also draw nearer to God; one great enough for God, and yet not too great for us.

All this shewed that God was not bridging the distance between Himself and His creature. He was only telling him through an angel, by whom He had wrought a great temporal deliverance for Israel, what man ought to do and be if he was to find life and blessing. But which of us could listen to God telling us what we ought to be? If God dealt with us as we deserved, who could

stand in His presence? The Psalmist says to the Lord, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." People sometimes hope to come into judgment and be justified at the great white throne, but it is all a vain hope, for man is a sinner, and if God enters into judgment with him he is lost for ever. If God treated you and me as we deserved, what hope could there be of salvation? We have naturally high thoughts of ourselves. Each man upon earth thinks a great deal more of himself than he can ever get his neighbour to think of him. We cannot get others to think of us as highly as we think of ourselves. And if I cannot get a man who is no better than myself to justify me, what about God? Can He say I have not sinned, when every one who knows me knows I have, and can He approve me for the heights of heaven, when my own conscience and the consciences of all who know me consign me to the depths of hell? O no, never! If we are to be blessed it can never be by works of righteousness that we have done.

The old covenant was all demand. It was the Creditor telling the debtor how much he had to pay. But the debtor never paid; the Creditor never received a farthing. He says, "All day long have I stretched forth my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people." He

held out His hands that man might pay into them that which he owed; but man was disobedient and rebellious, and would pay nothing. And the law shewed what man was. "By the law is the knowledge of sin." Now it is clearly demonstrated that if God deals with man as he deserves he is lost for ever.

But when we come to the new covenant, we are face to face with a very different order of things. The word spoken by the Lord was very different from that spoken by angels. In the synagogue at Nazareth He opens the book of the prophet Esaias, and finding the passage in which was recorded beforehand the grace in which He came, He reads: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." (Luke iv. 18, 19.) How different all this was to that uttered from the midst of blackness and darkness at Sinai! This was glad tidings to the poor. It was not the Creditor demanding payment from the debtor, but forgiveness was breathed in every utterance of His lips. He had come to tell men of the grace and compassions and love of God. His presence there in their midst was the

witness of all this to them. God had drawn near to them as a Saviour. There was bread for the hungry, clothing for the naked, deliverance for the captive and light for those who had long sat in darkness. It was the acceptable year of the Lord, and it was being preached as glad tidings. And the people wondered at the words of grace which proceeded out of His mouth. It was all so different to what their ears had been accustomed to hear.

Whom did God send to bring all this grace to man? Was it a great and mighty angel? No, it was God speaking in the Person of His Son; His Son in human form, a Man amongst men; One who could draw near to poor weak man, and not drive him away with His terror; One able to speak a word in season to the weary. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." The law was neither grace nor truth. I do not mean that it did not set forth what man ought to be; it did all that, but it did not declare what God was. The grace and the truth came together in one Person, and both subsist in that Person; He was full of grace and truth. The law says, If you have nothing to pay, you are cursed; Jesus says, "When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both." Jesus found men just the same as Moses found them. He did not find them any better than when the law

was addressed to them ; but it was now no question of what men were, it was a question only of what God was. With Moses it could not be this, for the people must answer to the demand of God or come under the curse. If they were not righteous, if they fulfilled not their obligations, Moses could do nothing for them. When he found them in idolatry he went up to God with the object of making atonement for them, and he asked God to blot him out of His book. He was willing to give himself for the people, but God refused the sacrifice he proposed to offer. Moses had plenty of affection for Israel ; he was not lacking in that, but he had no ability to do anything for them. He had to leave the people he loved under the curse and condemnation.

But the new covenant is sealed and confirmed by the blood of Jesus. He has made propitiation. He went to the cross and bore the judgment under which man lay, and God accepted that sacrifice. It was a sweet savour to God. God has executed in the cross of Christ the judgment, and in the execution of the judgment God is declared, and the glory of God shines in the face of Him who bore that judgment. We are not afraid of that glory ; it speaks of grace and forgiveness. Righteousness shines there, but it is in our favour ; holiness shines there, but it does not repel us, it is also

in our favour, and the love of God shines there, and it is the love of God to us.

When Israel had failed, and the satisfaction Moses offered to God had been rejected, the glory of the Lawgiver, whose back parts he had been privileged to behold, shone in his face. Moses had pleaded with God that he might see His glory; but God told him that no one could see His face and live. God could not be met by man in the revelation of Himself. Moses at best was but a sinner, and if God declared Himself, He must declare Himself with respect to sin, and if He did, what about Moses? He must have perished from before Him. Seeing His face meant seeing Him fully revealed, and if God fully declared Himself, and a sinner like Moses stood in His path when He issued forth from the midst of the thick darkness into the light of revelation, what would become of him? No one could stand in the path in that day when God declared Himself but Jesus, and to Him it meant the cross with all its horrors. But God put Moses in a clift of the rock, and passed by him proclaiming His goodness, and when He passed by, Moses saw His back parts. And that glory rested in the face of the mediator of the old covenant. At this glory Israel could not look, for it accentuated the demands of God that were expressed by the law. The curse of a broken law was still hanging over their head, and

Moses, in whose face the glory shone, had been unable to shelter the people from the judgment they merited.

But in the face of Jesus there shines the glory that excelleth. And that glory is in the face of the One who has made propitiation. It tells us of the satisfaction of God with the work of the cross, and it tells us of God's delight in the One who did that work. Moses could not feel about sin as God felt about it, for Moses was himself a sinner; neither could God accept him as a substitute for the people, for he needed that some one should make atonement for himself; neither would the offering of himself have any value for Israel, even had he been sinless. But Jesus could and did feel about sin as God felt about it, for He was a divine Person, and He could offer a spotless sacrifice to God, for He was holy and spotless, and His sacrifice was of infinite value, for He was an infinite Person, and also He could not be holden of death. His offering is a perfect offering, and God has accepted it, and the glory in the face of Jesus tells us of God's unbounded delight in it and in Him who offered it.

This glory requires no veil. The glory on the face of Moses had to be covered up. It repelled the people, spoke of their unfulfilled obligations, pressed the claims of God home upon their consciences, and terrified them so

that they fled from its presence. But the glory in the face of Jesus is attractive, it needs no veil. The light is sweet, it tells us that propitiation has been made, that our sins—all of them—are gone as completely as if they never had been committed. He has given Himself for us, and has borne the judgment, and God has dealt with Him as we deserved, and from His bruised, broken and bleeding heart—from that cross shrouded in darkness and blackness and gloom and wrath and horror of desertion by God, a sweet and holy savour has risen that has more than compensated God for all the dishonour done to Him by His creature since the creation of the heavens and the earth. That sweet and blessed savour will yet fill the whole heavens and the earth, and every intelligent being shall bow low at the feet of Jesus and glorify Him who became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Who would cover up the glory in the face of Jesus? We want only to get more fully under its bright beams. What rest and peace it speaks to our souls! What a joy it is to contemplate it! How it fills our hearts with praise and worship! And as we contemplate it we are changed into the same image. It has a transforming effect. It has the effect of establishing our hearts more firmly in the grace and love of God, and Christ gets a larger place

in our hearts, so that we become more descriptive of Him in our pathway through the world.

On the line of the new covenant the gospel goes out world-wide. Grace is preached to all. There is no demand for righteousness, it is ministered. The righteousness of God is unto all. You are not asked to get righteousness for yourself. You are a sinner, and assumed to be a sinner, but you are not called upon to make yourself any better than you are. You will do very well for God as you are. He can justify you, and He presents Christ to you for your justification. Your attention is not drawn to yourself by the gospel, but to God, to God in His grace toward you in Christ.

The first day the law was given three thousand people fell by the edge of the sword in the desert. It proved itself at once to be a ministration of death; but the first day the gospel was preached by the apostles three thousand people were recovered for God. The gospel proved itself to be the word of life. There is wrath coming upon the world, but God has made a hiding-place for you. Isaiah spoke of it: "*A man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind.*" If you want a shelter from the wrath to come you will find it in Christ. You will find Him an ark of refuge. Noah, warned of God of things not yet seen, and moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving

of his house. There is a judgment about to be revealed, from which no ark built of Gopher wood could shelter you. Where will you find a hiding-place in that day? God has prepared a covert from that tempest. Where is it? It is Christ at the right hand of God. There is salvation in Him, and nowhere else. He is exalted on behalf of men. God has been at work for your salvation. This shews His gracious disposition towards you. This is the accepted time. It is the day when God looks out upon men in marvellous grace and love. His kindness and love toward man have appeared.

Why is Christ at the right hand of God? Because God has placed Him there. Why has He placed Him there? He has placed Him there for salvation to men. This speaks to you of the grace of God. The two tables of stone told the people in the past dispensation what God's disposition towards them was. To-day you read God's disposition toward man in Christ risen: "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." This is what makes repentance possible. This is what enables a man to face the light, and turn to God.

How is it all are not in the light of this glory in the face of Jesus? It is (if the gospel has reached them) because the veil is upon their hearts. There is no veil to-day upon the glory,

there was in the past dispensation, but not to-day—not upon the glory that excelleth. There is no need. It is life-giving, it is attractive, it speaks of accomplished righteousness on man's behalf and of the love of God.

I can understand a person saying, If there is no demand upon me, and if a poor sinner will do for God, am I to remain a sinner? No, God will take good care you will be not only justified, but you will be practically righteous. You cannot change yourself, but that glory will change you if you come under the influence of its glorious radiance. You find first of all everything you need in that blessed Christ—righteousness, life, salvation and everything else, and as you occupy yourself with the glory of the Lord you are led in the paths of righteousness.



RECONCILIATION.

(2 Cor. v. 14-21.)

IN the first epistle we see the way in which the Corinthians were affected by the gifts given to them. They came behind in no gift; they were richly endowed in that way by the Spirit. But they laid hold of the gifts which they had received, and put them on as adornments for the flesh. They used them to exalt themselves. Hence they sought after the gifts which in the eyes of men shone most brilliantly, though really of least value, and paid little attention to those which were of the utmost value and importance. The gift of tongues was very popular amongst them and much sought after, and used without any regard to edification. I suppose that those who were very unlearned and ignorant would naturally take every opportunity to display the power which was committed to them in order to get a little worship from their fellows, thus depriving God of the glory due to Him. But such is the flesh, and we need ever to be on our guard against it. It will lay hold of anything within its reach as a means by which to adorn itself. Even the cross has been

taken up as a decoration. That which is the condemnation of the flesh, and the sign of its fierce and relentless hatred of God, it takes up as an ornament. It has to be watched at every turning. It would clothe itself with the graces of Christ if it were allowed, and rob God of all the glory due to Him. The gifts the Corinthians had received were in the Spirit, whom they had received from Christ on high; but they were losing sight of the Giver and were glorying in the gifts as though they were themselves the source of them. There was one gift which none of them seemed to be grasping after, but which all ought to have coveted more than anything else, and that was the gift of prophecy. This gift would have been a great blessing to the people of God when rightly used. It was not a gift like that which distinguished the "Seer" in the past dispensation; it was a peculiar power given to the servant of Christ by which the heart and conscience were brought into the immediate presence of God. The one that used it spoke to men to edification and encouragement and consolation. (1 Cor. xiv. 3.) It did not puff up the servant, as the gift of tongues might have done, where the speaker was not watchful, but it built up the hearer in the knowledge of God.

But the apostle shews the Corinthians a more excellent way—the way of divine love. It has a

way of its own, unlike any way that the natural man is accustomed to. It has been the pathway of God through this world marked out by the feet of Jesus. It is the way of the divine nature in a world of sin. Without this nature, however eloquent they might be, they could effect nothing, and however powerful they seemed to be they were nothing, and whatever good works they might do they profited nothing. All service to be of any value must be carried out in divine love, and in this self could not intrude. They were to follow after love.

This pathway of love was trodden by the apostles in their service for Christ on earth; and as we saw, when looking at the fulfilment of the promises in Christ, all the second epistle is occupied with these ministers. We have in this epistle set before us the servants and the way they were affected by the service committed to them, and the way in which they carried it out. No doubt all this is brought before the Corinthians that they might see how powerfully the things ministered to them affected the ministers, and that they might also be affected in a similar manner.

In chapter i. we have all the promises of God established in Christ, and made ours by the gift of the Spirit. In chapter iii. we have the new covenant, and the teaching connected with the new covenant is continued up to the intro-

duction of the judgment-seat. (Chap. v.) The effect of being in the benefit of the new covenant is that we come out in this world descriptive of Christ. One great point in it is that Christ is engraven upon the fleshly tables of our hearts in spiritual lines, and the effect of this is that the life of Christ comes out in our mortal flesh. When God takes up Israel again He will put His law in their hearts. It will not then be written upon tables of stone and given to them to do or be cursed; He will give them a heart that will love the law and delight to do it. It will not be presented to them as the demand of God, but by the work of God they will be all that ever was required of them. They will have a nature that will delight in the law; they will love it; it will be to them sweeter than the honeycomb. Psalm cxix. is descriptive of Israel with the law written in their hearts.

Christ is traced in our hearts. We are not really under any covenant; but the terms of the new are ministered to us. We come into the benefit of it by the sealing of the Spirit, and we are sealed by the Spirit when we believe the gospel, and in the gospel is declared the disposition of God toward all men. This is expressed in Christ. Therefore He is the subject of the gospel; it is the gospel of God concerning His Son. The new covenant is expressed in the Mediator the old covenant was not; it was

written upon stones. The new is not written on anything except the hearts of those who have turned to God. It is all expressed in Christ. If I wish to know the terms of relationship between God and man I learn them in Christ, and He is preached to men as the terms upon which man must be in relationship with Him or perish. You learn the disposition of God to you in Christ risen and glorified ; for “ By him we believe in God, who raised him up from the dead and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.” The effect of the knowledge of Christ’s glory is to produce in the soul faith and hope Godward. What God has done in Christ gives me faith and hope in God. All the kindness and love of God have come to light in Him and this gives me confidence in God and makes Him attractive to me. God was in thick darkness at Sinai, and Moses drew near into the thick darkness where God was, but it was with fear and trembling. God is now in the light in Christ, and we draw near into the clear light where He is. He has not changed in the least, He is the unchanging One, but until Christ came He was unrevealed. In 1 John i. we read that “ God is light ” and also that He is “ in the light.” The sun is light before it rises in the east as truly as after it has bathed the earth in its heavenly radiance ; but it is not *in the light*, as far as we are concerned, until it makes

its appearance in the dome of heaven ; but even after it has risen and can be said to be in the light *we* would not be in the light if our eyes were sightless. But we who see can now say, "God is light" and "He is in the light" and "we are in the light." And in that light we become morally transfigured, so that Christ comes out in our mortal body.

But we must come to reconciliation. Here it is not so much a question of the disposition of God to us—what He is to us in His grace and love, but what God has made us in Christ to the satisfaction of His own holy nature. It is here a question of what God has wrought. "We are his workmanship." But both the new covenant and reconciliation are learned in Christ. I must learn the new covenant first, for I must learn what God is toward me in Christ before I can learn what He has made me in Christ. God must come out to me before I can go in to Him ; the new covenant is the *disposition* in which God has come out to me, and reconciliation is the *state* in which I go in to Him. It is the revelation of the grace of God in Christ that attracts me in to Himself, but this does not teach me what kind of man is to stand in the light of that revelation ; this is learned as I learn reconciliation. But all this is learned as Christ is learned, for I can never know the grace of God to man, except as I know Christ.

I can never learn what God is in His infinite compassions, except as I learn the One who is the perfect expression of those infinite compassions; neither can I learn what man is as the workmanship of God, except as I learn Christ, for it is in Christ we are new-created.

The new covenant was expressed in the kiss which was implanted upon the neck of the prodigal; reconciliation is figuratively presented to us in the dress in which he went into the house which rung with music and dancing. Everything there was of God, and came out of the house—the robe, the ring, the shoes, all belonged to the house; and all is set before us in Christ. God had nothing more for man on the ground of nature and the flesh. All He had He gave to man, and man squandered everything. It must now be Christ or nothing. So in reconciliation “all things are of God.”

See how the apostle introduces this ministry. He speaks of the love of Christ constraining him in the preaching. The love of Christ was seen in His going down into death to bring man out of it, that he might live. But this brought to light the great truth that all were in death. He says, “We thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.” The death of Christ proved where all men were. If Christ went into death for all, then all were under that judgment. “Death passed upon all men.” But

Christ went into death to remove the judgment, to break the power of that under which man lay. By His death He annulled it ; and risen from the dead He has become the source of life for all ; He is lifegiving Head to all, and quickens souls who are morally dead by the power of the life that is in Himself, so that they live to Him who died for them and rose again. Those who live are those who live in His life. They are brought out of death by His lifegiving power.

The next thing is : “ We know no man after the flesh.” Why not ? Because all after the flesh are under death, and we are after a new order in the life of Christ. If you take account of yourself as in the life of Christ you are apart from the order of flesh ; you have, in that life, parted company with the dead. In the life of Christ you are in new and eternal relationships with God.

Now we are ready for the next statement : “ If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature,” or better, new creation. A man in Adam or in the flesh is old creation ; but God has begun afresh with man in Christ, and a man in Christ is new creation. The new covenant does not bring new creation before us. It is more God’s approach to man in Christ. It is, as we saw, more what God is for us, than what we are for God. Hence the teaching of the new covenant winds up with the judgment-seat in chapter v. ; but you have

no judgment-seat in connection with reconciliation, for in reconciliation all things are of God. The new covenant is God in Christ manward; reconciliation is man in Christ Godward. We learn both as we learn Christ.

In reconciliation everything is in the life of Christ: "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." This is what is true in Christ. It is not exactly what is true as we view one another in this room; here we have to know one another after the flesh. In our pathway of responsibility through the world we have to do with the old order: we have parents, children, husbands, wives, masters, servants, &c., and we have to walk in these relationships to the glory of God. But this will all come to an end. It will come to an end at death, or the coming of Christ, when He will take us up in glory; but in the meantime we are in them, and we are to walk in them so as to please God. The life of Jesus is to come out in us down here; we are to walk as He walked. But in the life of Christ, as quickened together with Him, we are apart from all belonging to the old. There is nothing of Adam or of the flesh in our life in Christ. Personal identity, of course, abides to eternity, but that has nothing to do with the *order* of man. When I speak of the *old* or *new* it is a matter of relationships, nature and affections. All these

new things are of God. This does not merely mean that He made them. He made the old also, but they became corrupted. But the old was not of Him in this sense; the new is of His nature. They are of God, in the sense that they are of Him morally and spiritually. They are in Christ and of His order.

The ground of all is, that He was made sin for us. Sin has received its judgment in the cross of Christ; it has been condemned in the flesh, and the flesh has been removed in that judgment. God has dealt with sin in unsparing judgment, and His object in doing so was that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. In Christ everything is according to His mind and heart; there He has the most perfect delight in us; we are to His perfect satisfaction, the result of His intervention in grace on our behalf. What a triumph over the enemy! The poor slave of sin and Satan brought into such light and nearness, and so wrought by the power of God that only in the full blaze of the glory of God will it be seen how completely he is to the delight of the heart of God.



THE ACCEPTED TIME.

(2 COR. VI. 1, 2 AND 11-18.)

THE exhortations we have read are based upon the grace of God, which has been brought before the Corinthians in the previous part of the epistle. Grace is preached in the world that men may be brought under its influence. It is not a creed that men may subscribe to, and remain morally unaffected by it. The grace of God carries with it salvation for all men, but teaches those who come under the power of it how to live. The grace is not to be received in vain, but it is to be turned to account, and where it is not so the soul has no part in the salvation of God. "For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned." (Heb. vi. 7, 8.) The grace of God was set before these saints in the ministry of the new covenant and of reconciliation. The effect of the former is to draw us into the presence of God, where we get enlarged in our affections; the

effect of the latter is to separate us from the world, and we get these two things in the verses which I have read from this chapter.

God has come out to us in Christ in the greatness of His love, and the light in which He has shone out has been very attractive to us. It was so in the pathway of Jesus upon earth; the weary and heavy-laden sought Him; He attracted the wretched and the weak, and awakened hope in the hearts of sinners whose souls were withered under the curse of a broken law; but only in His death did that great love of the heart of God shine forth in all its power, for there the veil was rent, and nothing remained to obscure the full glory of infinite love. This is what attracts the heart, for all that glory now rests in the face of Jesus, and whatever man's disposition Godward may be, this tells us of His disposition toward man, for in this has "the kindness and love of God toward man appeared." And in drawing near into the full light of that love we get enlarged; we grow by this true knowledge of God.

The effect of being in the benefit of reconciliation is that we know no man after the flesh. We are able to take account of ourselves as in Christ, and there old things have passed away and all things have become new. As long as we are here we have to do with the old, but we know that they are not eternal. However

sweet they may be we know that they are only for a very little time, and soon we shall lay them aside for ever. We have other relationships, and, thank God, we have the affections that belong to them, but they are all in Christ; not in the flesh. They are all of the new order and abide for ever. Life is enjoyed in these new relationships, and "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." We know that in the new order we are beyond the reach of sin and death.

Now the important thing for us is to turn the grace of God to account. To receive it in vain means to profess to have received it and yet to be unaffected by it; like the seed sown among thorns or on the rock, it was fruitless. The apostle desired that the seed might prove to have fallen into good ground, so that there might be fruit. Where the grace of God is truly received there is always a response to it in the heart and life.

He draws their attention to the character of the present day. He says, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." This is the day when God is favourable to men. The literal application of the passage is to Christ, and the setting of it in the scripture is in connection with the world to come. That day will be in a very manifest way the accepted time and day of salvation, but the

resurrection and glory of Christ has introduced it, and it is now testified of in the gospel. There is no public display of it yet, but faith can lay hold of it and anticipate the day in which it will be in world-wide display. This day, then, is the day of grace; grace is preached in the gospel and carries with it salvation for all. If it is the day of grace it is the day of salvation and the grace is not to be despised, the salvation is not to be neglected.

The present dispensation is in faith, and it is also the dispensation of the Spirit. Every blessing that will be the portion of man in the world to come is testified of in the gospel and declared to be in Christ for all, and the believer comes into every blessing in the power of the Spirit. The things that are now reported are hidden with Christ, but in the world to come they will be public. Everything to-day is a matter of faith, because it is a matter of report, and the Spirit is given that they may be something more to us than mere report, that they may be engaged by us in a spiritual way.

The apostle was anxious that the saints should be enlarged. I was saying this would be the effect of being in the benefit of the new covenant. Hence the great thing is to have the heart well under the influence of the grace of God. We are not likely to get enlarged in the presence of men. It is not what men see in one

another, it is not what they see in this grasping world that will enlarge the heart. Whatever a man may possess of this world he is always grasping after more. He is never satisfied. It is only in the presence of God, only as occupied with His love, that we become enlarged. This world is dissatisfied, grasping and covetous, and it never has enough. Jesus alone can satisfy the heart, so that, as some one else has said, in His presence we find ourselves in a region of satisfied desire. What a thing it is to come into the presence of the unselfish, self-sacrificing love of God! We no longer hanker after the world. Our cup runs over. All the grace and love in which the blessed God has come out to us rests in the face of Jesus Christ, and in contemplating it we are changed, we are enlarged in the divine nature. We are no longer narrowed up, and able to think only of ourselves. We come out as givers, like God in this famine-stricken world.

Later on in this epistle we hear of the righteous man, who comes out in the moral characteristics of God, dispensing abroad, and giving to the poor; and his righteousness remaining for ever. It is only wealthy people that can afford to give away. We are made wealthy in the favour of God; there we are more than satisfied. I suppose few saints are truly enlarged. Paul says of Timothy, "I have no man like-minded, who will naturally care for your

state. For all seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's." They were narrowed up to their own interests. It is a great thing to be rich in the things of God: "The rich man's wealth is his strong city: the destruction of the poor is their poverty." (Prov. x. 15.) And in divine things giving does not impoverish you: "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth."

The apostle seeks in this epistle to interest the saints in that which is of God in the world. They were too much taken up with their own affairs, and the things that are Jesus Christ's were to them matters of secondary importance; but the apostle would interest them even in the poor saints at Jerusalem. The Gentiles had reaped the spiritual things of the Jew, and it was only right that they should not be ungrateful; it was little enough that the Jews should reap their carnal things. But if the hearts of the Gentiles were to go out in this way to the Jews it was needful that they should feel greatly enriched in the things of God. If the Corinthians were in the benefit of the great things that had come to them through the Jews they would not fail in shewing their gratitude, and the only way in which they could shew it was in ministering carnal things. And the great desire of the apostle was that they would not come behind in this grace. Salvation was of the Jews, and it had come to the Gentiles, and they ought to be

thankful. Therefore the grace of God is very fully brought before these saints in the two ministries which we have been looking at.

But there was a snare which would hinder enlargement, and the Corinthians were in danger of it; and that was worldly associations. The heart was to be whole for Christ. Here the ministry of reconciliation comes in. I have said the effect of the new covenant is enlargement, because if we are in the good of that grace we draw near and take character from the God of all grace. But reconciliation gives us a new place with God and gives us part in a completely new order of things in which there is not one element of the old. I find I am placed in new and different relationships both with God and man, and that those relationships are eternal. What then about the old? for I am still as to my life of responsibility linked up with the old which is fast passing away. Am I to allow that which is not eternal and which has been corrupted by sin, and which is fast passing away—indeed *in Christ* has passed away—to have undue influence over me so as to weaken in my soul the power of eternal things and the whole-hearted devotion to Christ which ought to characterise me? By no means. But then I must be well established in reconciliation if I am to withstand the natural tendencies of the flesh and keep clear of the snares laid for me by

Satan to entangle me with the world. I must be able to disconnect myself in mind and heart from the whole old earthly order and take my stand in the life of Christ where my relationships are *new, eternal and heavenly*.

“Be ye not unequally yoked with unbelievers.” They were not to be half-hearted. What was there in common between righteousness, light, Christ, faith, the living God’s temple, and unrighteousness, darkness, Belial, unbelief, and idols? How could these entirely different principles be made to harmonise? Impossible. Believers were all those things, righteousness, &c. And they were the temple of the living God, the house in which He dwelt and the people in whom He walked. All the activities of the love of God are carried out in His saints. That is what I understand by His walking. God walks in His people to the ends of the earth—to China or elsewhere. He went in Philip to Gaza, to Samaria, and in Peter to Cornelius, and in Paul to Melita and to all the Gentiles and to Rome. He walks in His people in the way of blessing throughout the whole earth. This was proposed to Israel, and though they failed to answer to it He will take them up another day and it will be all made good to them. Meantime it is our privilege to answer to His heart and get the enjoyment of all this. “I will be their God and they shall be my people.” How blessed

all this is! How we should go in for it with all our souls! And how are we to go in for it? Let us seek to get better into the grace that is brought before us in the earlier part of this epistle, and if we do, we shall feel no difficulty in coming out from worldly associations and separating ourselves to the Lord.

“I will be a Father to you.” We may get into difficulties through separation from the world. We may be scorned, cast out, persecuted, but He will never abandon us. He will not be ashamed to identify Himself with us. He was not ashamed to say, “I am the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob.” Why? Because they gave up the world; they were not mindful of that country out of which they came at the call of God, but sought a heavenly. They had no home here. They dwelt in tents in the confession that they were strangers upon the earth. Abraham’s relatives in Syria had houses; Abraham had not, neither had Isaac nor Jacob. The land of promise was theirs, and given to them by God, and they will have it in the world to come, but then they will also have something better. They will have a heavenly portion. As yet they have had nothing in the land to which they were called, but they had faith in God, and were not mindful of the country from which they came out. Had they been mindful of that, they had opportunity to return. If God calls you out of

the world He does not close the door behind you ; He leaves *you* to do that. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob could have gone back had they desired ; the way was open to them, but they preferred the call of God ; and if the Canaanite occupied the earthly country, they set their minds upon the heavenly. Many of the disciples of Christ went back when the shadow of death fell across their path, and Jesus challenges the twelve : “ Will ye also go away ? ” They had opportunity to return. Others had gone back, so might they. Peter answers for all : “ To whom shall we go ? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” Faith looks not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are unseen ; it sacrifices present advantages, knowing that they are only temporal, in view of eternal blessing with the Christ of God. And God cares for you : “ I will be a Father unto you.” He reproved kings for His people’s sakes, saying, “ Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.”

The thought of Father here is not relationship. In the new relationship it is not sons and daughters ; it is new creation in Christ ; and there is not male and female, all are *sons*. Here it is what you will prove God to be to you, if you walk in separation from this idolatrous world. He will take the place of Father to you when you are cast out.

How great these promises are ! In view of

them we are exhorted to cleanse ourselves from every filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God. Filthiness of flesh and spirit were two things very common amongst the Corinthians; they were fornication and idolatry. Hence the importance of getting well into the good of these two ministries, the new covenant and reconciliation. Where there is enlargement in the knowledge of God, and where there is separation to God, we come out in His grace, able to disperse abroad and to give to the poor. It is a great thing to meet a saint who has something to give; it is a pity to be poor where we can all be wealthy. Jesus can make us to lie down in green pastures, so that we know no want; but He can also make our cup run over, so that we may be a blessing to others.



THE POWER OF GOD.

(2 COR. XII. 1-10.)

EVERYTHING that is to subsist for ever in blessing must be maintained in the power of God. The creature is not self-supporting; God must hold up all that is to stand. The old creation is in the responsibility of man; I might say in the responsibility of the creature, for there is more than man upon that ground. Satan was placed upon that footing, so were the angels which kept not their first estate, and also demons, otherwise they would not have fallen. Nothing falls that is supported by God; what is set up in His power abides for ever.

The thought of God from the beginning was to place everything in His power and make Himself to be by the creature the acknowledged source of authority, might and blessing. But before this is universally brought to pass He saw fit in His infinite wisdom to bring in the principle of responsibility and to place man (for it is only man of whom we are at present concerned) on that footing and to test him for man's ultimate good and for the glory of God. The responsible man came in in the *ways* of God. We are not told how long Satan or the

angels stood in pristine perfection. I suppose they would stand until tested and no longer. Neither are we told how long man stood; possibly not an hour. The moment the test came he fell. The responsibility of the creature is a subject we may not understand, but we do know it exists. Where the conscience is not benumbed by sin and ill-treatment every man feels he is responsible to God. I cannot have responsibility with regard to my neighbour and none with regard to God. If I am held to be answerable to man I cannot be excused as regards God; and if men hold me accountable when I trespass upon them they cannot complain if God calls them to account to Him of their actions. A great many questions and side issues might be and are raised upon the question, but to the fact that responsibility does exist the conscience of man bears witness; and as I have stated, if a man holds his neighbour accountable for his actions he cannot ignore the right of God to judge the world. Surely if I acknowledge my responsibility to my neighbour I must also admit it with regard to God.

It might be replied that man cannot be held responsible if he is not made sufficiently strong to withstand every power that may come against him; how can he be held accountable for doing that which he cannot avoid doing? But why do you judge a man when he trespasses against you?

You tell him he ought not to have done such things, and you seem to think he could very well have avoided doing them, and therefore you condemn him for his actions. You protect your own interests as far as you are able, and you think yourself just and wise in doing so. But if you thus judge, may not I? "Certainly," you say. And if you and I thus judge, may not God? You say you did not make man. That is so; but you admit the principle of responsibility with regard to him. God's intention in creating man you perhaps do not know, and you may never know, but according to your own actions you cannot complain if God judges you should you infringe His rights, for you judge your neighbour.

God had His own reasons for bringing the responsible man upon the scene, but the responsible man was not the man of His counsels. He had the Man of His counsels in reserve when testing the responsible man, and the fall of the latter gave Him the opportunity of bringing in the former, who would stand in His power. The first four thousand years of the history of this world were spent in demonstrating the weakness and worthlessness of the flesh. In innocence was proven his inability to maintain himself in blessing: and in guilt and under death was proven his inability, even with help from God, to recover the ground he had lost.

If he could not hold his ground when innocent neither could he recover it when guilty.

Death lay upon man, he dies and wastes away, he gives up the ghost, and where is he? Everything is weakened down in death. No man has power over the spirit to retain the spirit, neither has he power in the day of death. Death is not an evidence of power, it is the consummation of weakness. Christ was crucified through weakness, but lives by the power of God. He came to bear the judgment which lay upon man; He tasted death in all its bitterness; He drank the cup of wrath for us and gave up His spirit. In the sorrow of His heart He said that God had weakened His strength in the way (Psa. cii.) and that His strength was dried up like a potsherd and that He was brought into the dust of death. He felt what the weakness of death was when forsaken of God He gave Himself for our sins.

But the weakness of man gave God an occasion to manifest His almighty power. His power is exhibited in the resurrection of Christ—He lives by the power of God. This is the way in which God is brought before us in the gospel. For justification we believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. This is how God is operating on man's behalf. He is not testing and striving with the flesh; He is placing everything upon the platform of resurrection, and

there everything is in His power. When we get to see the import of the resurrection of Christ we know there is no other ground for us, we take our place as risen with Him. (Col. ii. 12.) Many believe that God has raised Christ from the dead who do not see in it the witness that He is placing everything upon the ground of resurrection, and thus in His own almighty power.

It is all over with man on the ground of the fulfilment of his responsibility; on that footing all is lost. But in the resurrection of Christ a new scene opens up before our souls where failure can never enter. It is not a scene marked by the fruitless activities of the weak and fallen creature; it is not what man has wrought in his pathway of responsibility; it is what God has wrought for His own honour and glory and for the eternal salvation of crushed and helpless sinners. Resurrection is the great victory of God over the powers of evil, and it is the glorious display of His almighty power.

We are apt to think, even as saints, that there is something of ourselves on which we can rely, something that makes us independent of any outward support. We are apt to think, if we are believers, if we are saints, if we are children of God, we are beyond the reach of destruction. And this may be true, but it is sometimes not the truth as it is in people's minds. God will

keep His own ; but it is *He* who keeps them. True there is a sense in which they keep themselves, but they keep themselves by walking in dependence upon God. There is no inherent power in man, no matter who the man is, that can make him independent of God. We are kept by the power of God through faith (1 Pet. i. 5), and that brings us into dependence upon God.

If we are in Christ we are there as God's workmanship, and all boasting in the flesh is excluded. If we are in Christ we are there as of God, and we are there in the power of God ; for if we are in Christ we are in His life, and we are in His life by the quickening power of God. It has not been the fulfilment of my responsibility that put me there but the sovereign operation of God.

There were those in the assembly of God at Corinth who were boasting in themselves. They were weak as to the true meaning of the cross of Christ. They had not seen the worthlessness of the flesh, neither had they seen that in the cross God had brought it to an end in His judgment. They were giving it a loose rein and glorying in its deeds. But Paul had another Man to boast in, a Man that eclipsed the man after the flesh in his best condition. He knew *a man in Christ*. They knew little or nothing of such a man. It is not that they were not in Christ, for they were ; all who have the Spirit

are in Christ. But they had not the knowledge of what a man in Christ really meant. The apostle knew a man in Christ and in this man he would boast. One might have thought he would have boasted in himself as an apostle gifted with miraculous powers and used to establish a new religion upon earth ; but no, of himself he would not boast except in his infirmities ; because in publishing his infirmities Christ got all the credit of his marvellous labours. If he kept his infirmities well to the front his Master got the glory which was due to Him, for it became manifest to all who knew him that the power manifesting itself in his frail body was from the Christ he served. What he was he was by the grace of God. Nothing of nature had any place in Christ, and nothing of nature contributed to his service for Christ.

This man in Christ was caught up. He does not say *I* was caught up, that might have seemed as though the man, as men could take account of him, had this honour conferred upon him. It is only the heavenly man can go into heaven, and it is only the man in Christ who is heavenly. He did not know whether he was in the body or out of it. It had no part in such a scene. Down here there is everything that appeals to the body. In his service here below he had to keep it under, but he had no consciousness of being in it up there. He had

visions and revelations there. He heard words that the tongue of man could not utter. Those were marvellous communications. You and I will be there one day. We will be caught up. We will have our bodies then—glorified bodies. We will be in our native element there. Paul was. The man in Christ was at home there. In the third heaven he was in the place and circumstances suitable to him.

But he was not to remain there at that time. He had to come back again and take up his responsibilities in the body for the service of Christ. Then he is conscious of the body. The will of the flesh would have energised it, but God meant it to be energised by the Spirit for His will, and Paul was in the mind of God regarding it. Hence his contention with its will, and his need to chastise it, that it might not bring him under. He would bring *it* under. It would have puffed him up. With the distinction conferred upon him as a man in Christ the flesh, which had no part in this, would have decorated itself. So he has to get a thorn for it. It was something that crippled the flesh, and Paul thought it would cripple him in his blessed service for Christ. Therefore he goes three times to the Lord about it, and what he learns is that the weaker he is, the more use he is in the ministry, for all that is done for the Lord upon earth must be done in His power.

Christianity subsists in the power of God. The greatest man upon earth can communicate nothing. No man however great ever brought to Christ any natural quality that could be used in the service of Christ. "Tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." Power from on high is the only power that can accomplish anything for God. Man glories in man, in his genius, erudition, intellect, eloquence; but none of these things are of value in Christ's service. The false profession of Christianity goes after men who are great in this world, men of superior intellectual powers, and glories in following the line of thought marked out by such a leader; but the true-hearted follower of the rejected Son of God passes onward noiselessly on his heavenward way in the distrust of all that is of man, and gathers from the lips of Jesus all the wisdom that is needed for the salvation of his immortal soul and for the building up of the inward man.

Satan was glad to be allowed to cripple Paul, and Paul was distressed on account of it, but neither Paul nor Satan had known that the power of Christ was perfected in the weakness of the servant. It took place at a very early period of his christian life. He speaks of it here as fourteen years ago. It was necessary that he should learn at the commencement of his

labours in whose power the work was to be done. It was a great revelation to him that his ability for service lay in his weakness, but every lesson that he learned only weaned him more and more from all trust in his natural capabilities. "My grace is sufficient for thee" caused him to lift himself up in the power of another and to feel that in his fancied strength he was weaker than water; but in his weakness he was invincible, for the power of Christ rested upon him. The blessed Lord, whom he served with a true heart, gives him to understand he was not waging this warfare with the powers of darkness at his own charges, but that He who sent him into the conflict would be both the power and the munition to bring the battle to a successful issue. He says as it were to His servant, The weaker you are the better for me. It is only the weak I can use. My power is made perfect in weakness. "Most gladly therefore," Paul says, "will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

All the strength of nature was taken out of him. Everything now must be in the power of God. Christ Himself was crucified through weakness, but He lives now by the power of

God. Death is man's hour of weakness, as I have already quoted, "No man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death." (Eccles. viii. 8.) Weakness characterises that day, but that is God's opportunity; He comes in in the power of resurrection. Hence everything on the resurrection platform stands in the power of God, and God is placing everything upon that platform. So the apostle in the next chapter speaks about being weak in Christ, but living by the power of God in his service toward the saints. The weaker you and I are in our own estimation the better. We trust a great deal too much in our own strength. What we need to get more before our souls is that new order of things in resurrection which is maintained by divine power, so that all our boast might be in Christ, and all our strength also in Him.



THE WORD OF SALVATION.

(ACTS XIII. 26-47.)

THE gospel is that by which the eyes of men are opened. When Paul was converted he got a mission from the Son of God, and that mission was to open the eyes of the Gentiles. Peter and John were sent to the Jews, and the other apostles occupied themselves more with that people, but Paul was sent directly to the Gentiles. Therefore we can speak of him as our apostle. We get the benefit of the writings of all those servants of Christ whose words God has thought right to preserve to us, but Paul was the apostle chosen to go to the Gentiles. He did not neglect the Jews; he laboured to present *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus; and so we find him here in the synagogue speaking to the circumcision, but the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God.

Christ has been set as a light to the Gentiles, that He should be for salvation to the ends of the earth, and Paul preaches Christ that all may get this saving light. This is what is meant by getting the eyes opened; it is to get light as to God. Man by nature is in darkness;

he does not know God. His thoughts are all wrong about his Creator. Athens was perhaps the most enlightened city in the world in the days of the apostles, but when Paul went there he found they had erected an altar to "*The unknown God.*" Man cannot discover God by searching. Neither astronomy nor geology will give him the knowledge of God. His power and divinity are witnessed to by creation; but we need to know more than His power and divinity to turn to Him and to trust in Him. We naturally think God cares little or nothing for us, that He is regardless, so to speak, whether we sink or swim. And then, man being a sinner with a bad conscience, he is unable to view God in any other light than that of judge. Hence the thought of God is not pleasant to him, and added to all this there is the power of the devil, who misrepresents God to him, and fills his depraved mind with superstitious terror, so that the god he worships, if he worships any, is a monster, not the true God. He reasons from himself to God. His thoughts cannot rise above himself, and being evil and corrupt and malicious he cannot conceive a God of purity, grace and goodness. Hence the gods the heathen served were demons. When they thought of God it was a demon rose up before the mind, an evil being full of evil and corrupt desires, malicious and cruel, with unlimited powers to

work out all the wickedness the black heart was privy to.

And with the Jews, who had a ray of light, it was little better; they knew God no more than did the Gentiles. And with many who profess Christianity it is just the same. God is really unknown. His goodness and grace are not believed, though in measure widely published. Man does not seem to be able to get away from himself to the living God. He does not see the grace of God. He thinks that if he is to be accepted by God it must be on account of some good thing in himself. He thinks God will deal with him according to what He finds in him. Hence he seeks to improve himself. He turns to morality, religion, good works as he calls them, and hopes that his good deeds will more than compensate for his bad ones. Some even think there may be such a surplus to their credit that they will have a little to make over to their neighbours, who may not have been so attentive to their religious duties. Such is man in his darkness and error, whether he be heathen, Jew, or professing Christian.

But the gospel brings light to man. It is Christ that is preached, and in Him God is set forth in His true nature. The gospel has the power to open men's eyes. By it we become delivered from the authority of darkness. By it we get the knowledge of God, and we find that

though there is no good thing in us that would commend us to God, there is in God goodness and grace for us, so that in turning to Him He will meet all our deep need. It is His Son that has told us all this. He came from heaven that He might shine as light in this dark world, and that the gloom might be dispelled from our hearts.

Creation cannot give us this light. As I have said, it speaks of His power and divinity, but Jesus speaks of the grace and love of His heart. And this is what I need to know. I find myself in a world of sin and sorrow, of pain and of death, and I want to know if God takes any account of the sorrow of my heart. I can have no rest until I know if I am of any importance to my Creator. Who can tell me? I find my neighbour has no means of solving this all-important question any more than myself. To whom am I to turn for light? Is there light? Yes, blessed be God, He has sent light to us. Jesus says, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." In Jesus I see how God has interested Himself on my behalf. He knows all my woes, and in the person of His beloved Son He has come down to deliver me from them. He has drawn near to man to free him from sin, Satan, death and sorrow. From the moment sin entered into the world God had spoken of

deliverance for man; but He waited His time, because the proud heart of man needed to be put to the test to demonstrate the helplessness of his lost condition. But man had heard God declare that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent's head, and faith looked for the intervention of God as Saviour.

The apostle here says, "We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus." Here is one who is to fulfil all God's will. God brings Himself before the eyes of men in this Person. If we do not believe in Christ as the revelation of God we must remain in our natural darkness, we can never know Him. There is no other light. Jesus is the true light. God has found a way of bringing Himself before our eyes. And all this light is that our souls may be saved. Jesus is set to be a light of the Gentiles, that He may be for salvation to the ends of the earth. Salvation is found in the knowledge of God; it cannot be known otherwise. It is not found in darkness and unbelief. And if God is to be known He must declare Himself; this He has done in Christ. There is no wisdom in man that can reach up to God. What human mind could pry into the secret of God? Who could approach into His presence? No creature. Hence if man is to

know God, God must first declare Himself. If man is to approach to God, God must first draw near to man. This He has done in Christ. And He has drawn near to a rebellious race in kindness and love.

The Saviour's name witnessed to this. The name declares what the Person is. His name is *Jesus*, that means *Jehovah the Saviour*. At Sinai He was *Jehovah the Lawgiver*. It is not so to-day. He makes Himself known as a Saviour-God. He has come to save sinners. Man is to do nothing but stand still and see the salvation of God. He asks no help from man ; it is His own work and His alone. And the fear of the apostle was lest they should despise this work of God. He had no fear of their being irreligious, neither did he fear that they would become greater transgressors of the law, neither was he for the moment concerned about their morality or philanthropy ; one thing he warns them against, and that is, the possibility of their unbelief in the work of God. He says, "Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets ; behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish : for I work a work in your days, a work which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." This was the danger for them, and it is ever the danger for all men. Man prefers his own work to the work of God. The law of Moses set

before men what they ought to do, but which they never did; the gospel sets before us that which God has wrought by Christ—"the wonderful works of God." He had made promises, not to be broken but to be fulfilled, and He had fulfilled them in bringing His Son into the world. This is God's work, His intervention on behalf of man: a virgin has a Son. This was the sign of His intervention, and which was made known to the shepherds; they were to find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. This Babe God acknowledged as His Son: "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."

He presents His Son, first of all, to the responsibility of man. They fulfilled all that was written of Him in condemning Him to the cross. All that they would do to Him was recorded beforehand by Him who knew the wicked heart of man. It was written that they would mock Him, pierce His hands and feet, gamble for His clothes, number Him with the transgressors. They had read these scriptures many times, but had never known the meaning of them, but in the rejection of Christ they were fulfilling them: "And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a sepulchre." Thus in the insane wickedness of their hearts had they flung from them their

last and only hope; they had murdered their Saviour.

But were the resources of God exhausted? Had they been exhausted man must have perished for ever, and God would have been defeated by the power of evil. But this could not be. "God raised him from the dead." And in this great work we see Him active for man's salvation as much as in bringing His Son into the world. It is all the activities of God that are brought before us, whether in the birth, or death, or resurrection of Jesus, and all these activities on man's behalf.

What I want you all to see is the work of God on behalf of His ruined and helpless creature. You learn how God is disposed toward you in this. Men think that God is unmindful of them, that He does not concern Himself about them, but the fact that there is a Saviour for you at the right hand of God gives the lie to all these hard and wicked thoughts. He sent His Son into the world not to condemn it, but that the world through Him might be saved. He would have all men to be saved, and therefore the Mediator gave Himself a ransom for all. God has wrought by and in Christ with a view to meet all your deep need. There is righteousness in Him, and you need it—not perhaps for man, you can afford to despise the thought of man about you, but you need righteousness for God.

Where is it to be found? Only in Christ. He was delivered for our offences and was raised again for our justification. I am a poor, failing, sinful thing in myself, but Christ is my righteousness. My righteousness is not the effect of my works but of God's work. Christ is made unto us righteousness.

Now look at verse 38. "Through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." "*Through this man.*" God's disposition is set forth in Christ. This opens the eyes of men. They learn that God is not against them, and they turn to Him. The gospel sets God before all men in the same light. You need to turn away your eyes from yourself to Christ. You will get nothing by self-occupation. You may tell me that you are unable to take the place of a believer. I am not now speaking of what place you may be able to take; I am speaking of God and of His disposition toward you and I am trying to tell you that it is grace; that He approaches you in Christ not only not imputing your sins to you but declaring forgiveness. You cannot believe until you hear the gospel and I am preaching the gospel. No doubt it is for you to believe, but it comes to you as to one who cannot have faith in it until you have heard it. You would like to have faith in your faith, but it is in Christ your faith is to be. All that I have been saying is true before you believe it.

Were it false your believing it would not make it true. It is true, and your unbelief does not falsify it, though it would most certainly, if persisted in, shut you out from the benefit of it.

In verse 39 we come to the believer. He is justified from all things. Verse 38 is God's disposition toward all men, verse 39 is what is true of the believer.

Next comes the warning. Do not despise the work of God. If you do you will most assuredly perish. Despise your own work; you cannot despise it too much; but do not despise the work of God.



THE MEDIATOR.

(JOB XXXII. ; 1 TIM. II. 1-6.)

THE law set before man what his work was to be ; grace brings before us the work of God. The law proposed blessing for man on the ground of obedience, but there was a curse pronounced upon the disobedient : “ Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.” And we read, “ If a man keep the whole law, and offend in one point, he is guilty of all.” One sin will prove the man who commits it to be a sinner, as one apple will prove the tree upon which it has grown to be an apple tree. By the law is the knowledge of sin. If the law went no farther than to say, “ Thou shalt not steal,” many a man could take the place of being righteous ; but it says, “ Thou shalt not covet,” and there every man is detected. Paul says, “ I was alive without the law once ; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.” He found out that the law took account of what was deeper than the outward act. It was not only that he was not to steal, he was not to lust after things that were not his. Therefore the law was a

ministration of death and condemnation : “ sin revived, and I died.”

But in Christ God brings Himself before us in another character. He has taken account of our need and has made provision for it. And in Christ He has approached the whole world. When He came with a law that brought no blessing to men, He came only to one nation ; He addressed Himself to Israel ; but if He takes up the attitude of Saviour the whole world comes into view. Nicodemus has to learn that “ As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up : that *whosoever* believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life. For *God so loved the world*, that he gave his only begotten Son, that *whosoever* believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into *the world* to condemn the world ; but that *the world* through him might be saved.” It is no longer to one nation that God addresses His word, but to all men. This is declared in the gospel ; repentance and remission of sins were to be preached among *all nations*.

God has drawn near to man as a Friend. Man never thought to find a friend in God. He had naturally no confidence in his Creator. He broke with God when he became a sinner, and to this day he has no desire for the healing of the breach. He wishes not to have to do with God,

nor would he ever have sought God if left to himself. But God had desires after man, and if man will not seek God, God will seek him. If there is none that seeketh after God, there is a God who seeketh after man. He sought after Adam and Eve when they had abandoned Him, and when they were doing their best to make it impossible for Him to find them. They hid themselves away from Him when they heard Him in the garden. They could only think of Him as a Judge. And even to-day with the gospel ringing in the ears of men few wake up to the fact that God is seeking after them in grace. People are liable to think there can be nothing for them in the heart of God but wrath. What a mistake this is !

Job thought God was against him ; but he has to learn that God was the only One that was truly for him. Satan, Sabeans, the winds and the fire of heaven, his wife and his three friends—all were against him, and set for his destruction or condemnation. And last of all he has to learn that he was against himself. There was only One in the universe his Friend, and He was the One Job only esteemed as his enemy. And all God's dealings with him were for his good. All the enemies mentioned were controlled by God. They were only allowed to go a certain length. They would have destroyed Job body and soul had they been allowed, but

God sets a limit to their power, and like the lance in the hand of the skilful surgeon, it can only touch that which is destructive to life and separate between the precious and the vile. He thought he was being hardly dealt with, but it was all brought upon him in the goodness and love of God, and he is able to give thanks for it all in the end.

Job was not a mere ordinary sinner. He was a sinner, for all men are sinners ; but there was a work of grace in his heart, and it was this that made him all that he was in his pathway as commendable to God. He was the most perfect man upon the earth ; but it was not the goodness of the flesh that made him so, it was God's work in his soul. God commends him when speaking to Satan, and the enemy, unable to deny his perfections, can only attribute them to base motives ; he accuses him of serving God because it paid him to do so. But God knew His servant, though the poor servant knew not himself. All the goodness he possessed he attributes to the flesh. He knew he was more upright than others, but he did not know that his uprightness was the effect of the grace of God, that as to the flesh he was no better than others who were in his eyes not fit to be classed with the dogs of his flock. He was fast becoming self-occupied and self-complacent, and a heavy fall was imminent unless God intervened. He had

become an object to himself, and God was being displaced through the foolish pride that was like a noxious weed in his heart.

Elihu was the only one who could enlighten Job. His three friends sought to convict him of sin. Their thought was that all the evil that had befallen him was on account of his transgressions. They were not able to convict him of any special overt act of sin, but they suggested a great many things in the hope that some of them would strike home to his conscience. But it was useless; Job maintained his integrity. He had walked in all good conscience before God, and he had the consciousness that God would acquit him in the end, and that could he only draw near to Him his justification would be assured.

But God was not to be found. If he went forward He was not there, and if he went backward he could not perceive Him. He could not behold Him on the left hand or on the right. And in his agony he cries out, "O that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!"

Then again a sense of the vast disparity that existed between himself, a poor loathsome creature, and the Creator presses upon his mind, and in his distress he cries out: "For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither

is there any daysman betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both." He felt altogether too little and too feeble to deal directly with God. Were He only a man Job felt he could approach to Him and expound his cause before Him, and let Him see that there was no just cause for the treatment he felt he was receiving. But the One who afflicted him was hidden from him, and His greatness was a terror to him.

He reasoned from what he was to God, and so did his three friends. It was never a question in any of their minds as to what God might be in His grace and goodness. In the judgment of those three wise men man supplied God with an incentive to love or hate; and their argument was that Job must have committed some great wickedness to fall, as he had apparently done, under the displeasure of God. And while Job knew that this was not so, for his conscience was good, he was as ignorant as they were as to God's ways with him, and his only argument was that God had acted in an absolutely arbitrary manner, without respect to the righteousness or the wickedness of the creature.

This wakes up Elihu, who had not hitherto been heard. He speaks in hot anger. He is angry with the three friends because they had condemned Job without being able to enlighten him, and he is angry with Job because instead of justifying God he had justified himself, and

had made it appear that when God deals with His creature his righteousness or unrighteousness is of no account. Thus he was advocating the cause of wicked men, and charging God with being indifferent to evil. Elihu is angry with them because of these things, and he rises up to speak on behalf of God, who had been dishonoured by their speeches. He waited until all the others had said all they had to say, and then he lifts up his voice on behalf of God. He would have Job justified, but he must first of all justify God. He was the mediator who spoke in God's stead. He says to Job, "I am according to thy wish in God's stead."

Elihu was a type of Christ, the true Mediator. Man had hard thoughts of God; Satan had falsified Him in the thoughts of His creature. But Jesus came into this world to speak on God's behalf, when every one was speaking on behalf of sinful man. And Christ waited until every one else had spoken. Sage, philosopher, law and prophet had all been given their opportunity before Christ came to set God forth in His true light. His mission was to save sinners; He did not come to condemn; but He would declare the righteousness and faithfulness of God whatever might happen. Man must be exposed in the utter sinfulness of his condition, but it will be by that in which the love of God to man is declared. By Jesus, and above all by

His death, the wicked heart of man has been exposed ; but also by Jesus, and above all by His death, the love of God to man has been brought to light.

Job can listen to Elihu. The words of his friends irritated him ; he found neither wisdom nor comfort in them. He says, " Miserable comforters are ye all." But he could listen to Elihu. There was healing balm in his words. As he listens to the mediator God comes before his soul in His true light ; like the sun from behind the dark cloud the light and warmth of the kindness of God steal over his poor broken heart, which until now had been in the gloom of a wintry night. He lets Job know that all that had come upon him was for his good, to bring back his soul from the pit ; that he might be enlightened with the light of the living. Job had lost all that flesh holds dear. His property, his family, his health, his status amongst men—all were gone ; and it was all for the good of his soul. No one shewed him his vileness as Elihu did, and yet the words that laid him low as a naked sinner before God were the only words to which he could have patience to hearken.

And is it not so as to the words of Jesus ? Man was never so exposed as a sinner as in the presence of the Son of God, and yet who was so attractive to the sinner ? Publicans and sinners drew near to hear Him. In the presence of

the light of God Job goes down in self-judgment. He says, "*I abhor myself.*" When his three friends had said all they had to say his confidence in himself was still unshaken; he felt himself to be morally superior to them. But the light of God brought him down: "Mine eye seeth thee" was what slew the sinful pride of his heart.

I suppose that all that Job had said of himself was true. It was the effect of the grace of God in him; it did not belong to him naturally. And God, in the midst of His dealings with him, and by those dealings, was letting him feel this. He recounted his good deeds, dwelt upon them, called them to mind, and recited them in the unwilling ears of his friends. This is, I suppose, what he refers to when he says, "Though I take snow water and wash myself never so clean." He seeks to adorn himself with his good deeds. But God lets His light into his soul, and he adds, "Yet thou wilt plunge me in the ditch again, and my own clothes shall abhor me." That which was the work of God's grace in him refused, so to speak, to be decorations for the flesh: his clothes abhorred him; and later on he comes to the same mind as his clothes, *he abhors himself*.

God will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth. He has taken up the attitude of Saviour toward all, and

has approached man in the Mediator, One who can lay His hand upon us both. He is great enough to lay His hand upon God, for He is a divine Person; and not too great to lay His hand upon me, for He is a man—the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all. An angel would not do, for he is too great for me; his hand would be too heavy upon me. I am weak and feeble, and he knows nothing of weakness. But he is not great enough to lay his hand upon God, for he is but a creature. But in Jesus my need and the need of God are perfectly met. I cannot now say of God, “He is not a man, as I am,” for He has become man in the person of Christ. And in this way God has drawn near to us that He might gain the confidence of our hearts.

No one was afraid of Jesus. No one was too timid to approach Him. His terror made no one afraid. Jesus was accessible to all. However vile and degraded the poor sinner might be, he had the consciousness in the presence of Jesus that he was welcome there. The words might be read in every act of the Son of God, “Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.”

And He gave Himself a ransom for all. It is not only that the Mediator has come and spoken to us, but He has died for us—died for *all*. Why was this? Because God would have *all* men to be saved. The way of salvation has

been opened up for all, and the testimony of the grace of God goes out in the power of the Spirit everywhere throughout this dark world. In this world where God is not known, where every desire of the natural heart of man is wrong, and where every thought of God is dreadful, and where the day in which God must be met is looked forward to with indescribable terror, the testimony is rendered. The Mediator has spoken on behalf of God, and the Holy Spirit continues the testimony in this world of sinners.

Everything is against you. All the influence of this world is opposed to your soul's interests. But God has shewn Himself for you in Christ, in His death, and in His resurrection. He desires to deliver you from the pit, that you may live in the light of the living.



THE WAY OF LIFE.

(JOHN IV. 10-14.)

I WISH to speak a little on the way of life. It is said, "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath." (Prov. xv. 24.) The way of life lies in the knowledge of God. It is not found in the cultivation of the flesh, for the end of every single way of the flesh results in death. The natural inclination of man is always in a direction away from God and toward the regions of death; and there are no exceptions. It is the same with the wise man as with the fool. But Jesus came into this world, saying, "I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness" (John xii. 46), and "he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." (John viii. 12.) The way of life is in the light of God. The natural sphere of man is darkness, and to him the light of God is not acceptable. Hence Jesus who came a light into the darkness was not acceptable. One would have thought the Jews, who were His earthly people, would have wel-

comed Him, but it was not so; they received Him not. The rejection of Jesus proved that men loved darkness rather than light. The flesh refused to be influenced in a right direction. There was therefore nothing left that could be done but have it removed in the execution of the judgment which lay upon it. This was done in the cross of the lifted-up Son of man. But Christ gave Himself not only for the Jew but for all. In resurrection He takes the place of life-giving Spirit toward all men. He can lay a new foundation in man, a foundation which will respond to the revelation of God, a foundation which will take in the light of God and which will not be deceitful and corrupt.

Therefore if a new order of man is to be brought about, and if man is to be apart from flesh in relationship with God, there can be no special place for the Jew, for as to the flesh he was as perverse and rebellious as the Gentile. The coming of Christ into the world tested him and exposed him as he never before had been exposed. He no longer had a cloak for his sin. He was left naked in his God-hatingness.

If man is to be led in the way of life there must be something in him that will respond to the influence of the Leader of life, the Son of God; and this can only be implanted in his soul by the One who came to guide our feet into the way of peace.

But this cannot be confined to the Jew, for God loved the world and sent His Son as the witness of that love; and therefore we find Him outside Judæa. We find Him at a city of the Samaritans, talking to a poor depraved sinner of the Gentiles. Jacob's well was there, at which, the woman says, Jacob drank and his children and his cattle. Man away from God has little more than the cattle. Jacob, his children and his cattle slaked their thirst at the same fountain. That which lifts man above the beast of the field is his knowledge and enjoyment of God; if he has lost these he has dropped down to the level of the beast.

But the Son of God stands in contrast to Jacob's well. In Him was living water. The fountain of life was in Him for those who were in this arid desert parched and dying without the knowledge of God. He draws the contrast between Himself and the well from which the woman came to draw: "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 everlasting life." There is no satisfaction to be derived from the creature springs of earth. Men think that there is enough in this world to satisfy every craving of the heart. In this they are mistaken. They

think if they could only drink from every earthly well they would allay the terrible soul thirst which devours all their happiness ; but like this woman they complain that the well is deep. They are sanguine that there is satisfaction to be found in the pleasures of the world, but they are debarred from the enjoyment of them from want of means. The poor think that happiness is to be found in wealth, but the rich have not found it so. There was a man who tried everything that proposed satisfaction for the heart, and we have his verdict. Solomon tells us that he tried everything that any other man could try. He gathered everything together that his soul lusted after. Nothing was withheld from him. He says he withheld not his heart from any joy. If he was told of anything that might minister enjoyment to the craving of his appetite, he got it. Many a man hears of what he might call good things and has no means of procuring them. The well is too deep and he has nothing to draw with ; the rope is too short. However deep the well was Solomon could draw, he had plenty of means. If you read what Solomon gathered around his person you will be surprised. He tried everything that could be had in his day, and there is nothing new under the sun. And he was inspired by God to put his experience upon record, and he virtually says what the Lord says to this woman, " Whosoever drink-

eth of this water shall thirst again." There is neither satisfaction nor profit. All is vanity and pursuit of the wind. If we could only believe all that this wise man was inspired to put upon record it would be well, but most of us prefer to learn by our own experience.

But the blessed Lord seeks this poor slave of sin and proposes to give her perfect satisfaction. What a contrast He was to Jacob's well! He can give living water. This could not be given until He was glorified, because God could not set up the man after the flesh. Living water was in Him when He came into the world, and in Him for all, but man could not have it until righteousness was accomplished and the Son of God glorified. But Jesus was the well from which all might drink. He was accessible to all. Two things only were necessary for the one who was to partake of this water. Jesus says, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink." It was news to this poor creature that God was a giver. He was not so presented under law. We have to learn that God needs nothing from man, and we have to learn also that man can render nothing. Man must take the place of a receiver; he must be a subject of grace. This is the first thing to be learned. The next is, who it is in whom the blessing of God has been established. Who is this who has brought this living water

near to us? Who could bring such a gift to us but a divine Person—the Son of God? If we only knew how freely God gives, and how near He has come to us in Christ, we should ask of Him, and He would give us living water.

John the Baptist speaks of Him as the One who would baptise with the Holy Spirit. This is God's great gift to man. In the past dispensation He was promised. But through whom was this great gift to be given? None of the prophets could give the Spirit. John the Baptist was on the look-out for the One who would confer this marvellous gift upon men. He says, "I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptise with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining upon him, the same is he which baptises with the Holy Ghost." When he baptised Jesus he saw the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him, and he says, "I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God."

People often think that all that is needful is to have forgiveness. But this would not be enough. They would sin again to-morrow; and the reason is because there is no good in the flesh. It is no good removing bad fruit from a bad tree; you will have another crop of bad fruit next year; you want a good tree for good fruit. A corrupt fountain will send forth only corrupt water. For sweet water you want a pure foun-

tain. Jesus puts into us a new fountain of life. He gives the Spirit to them that ask Him. He does not say we are to ask for the Spirit. Most people who pray for the Spirit are people who have received this great gift; but the Spirit is the answer to the sinner's need. You come to Him for forgiveness, and He will give it to you; but He gives the Spirit to all who come to Him. The prodigal came for bread, but the first thing the father did was to fall on his neck and cover him with kisses, and he never got anything greater than that. The kiss is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. You could not think of the prodigal questioning forgiveness with the father's arms about him and the kiss of affection upon his cheek.

There was not a bit of good in this woman. Her social life was corrupt and her religious life was a blank. She had not one commendable feature about her. And yet the blessed Son of God speaks to her of the greatest gift that can be conferred upon the creature—living water—life in the Spirit. This great gift was what was uppermost in His mind. It was not the thing she would have best understood, but it was the thing she most needed. He spoke to her afterwards about her sins and the uselessness of her worship, and then she began to understand Him. He lets the light in upon her guilty life, and she feels herself in the presence of the

Searcher of hearts. But it was the day of grace, and the grace in which He spoke to her enabled her to bear the searching. He told her all that ever she did. Well for her it took place in the day of grace. Had it taken place in the day of judgment it would have meant for her an eternity of woe. The great white throne was anticipated. All that could be brought to light was manifested, and there was no condemnation. When it was all out it was all gone, for God was then not imputing unto men their trespasses.

Convicted of her sins she had turned to her religion, but she was driven from that refuge and she has nothing to fall back upon but Christ—"I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things." What could He have told her more? He had told her of her need and the gift that would meet it. He had told her of the heart of God and of her own heart, and what more was there to tell? He says, as it were, You are as bad as you can be, but bad as you are there is goodness enough in God to meet your deep need. And all that goodness was brought close to her at Jacob's well.

"Thou wouldest have asked of him." She had only to speak to that fountain of living water and the stream would flow into her parched heart. She might speak for ever to Jacob's well, but it would be in vain; she must

toil in drawing. This living well has only to be spoken to and the waters will flow.

And "the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." That which springs up from the natural heart of man is corrupt and evil. It is a fountain of death. It is bitter water. And this poor degraded woman had proved it. But this was now come to an end. A new fountain was to be implanted in her that would spring up sweet and clear as crystal. It would be fed from the living fountain above—Christ glorified, and she would be independent of the creature springs of earth. She would find her life in the love of God, and because of this her whole pathway through the world would be in righteousness and moral purity, and she would escape from hell beneath. The fountain of living water is above and you must draw from it if you are to live. Your own natural heart is but a cess-pool of moral pollution and no good can come out of it. You need to have a new fountain of life implanted within you that the issues of your life may be clean. Jesus will do this if you come to Him. He will set you up in a new way independent of the flesh. And as your heart is in the enjoyment of the love of God, and in occupation with Christ where He is, your feet will be found in the path of life down here, and you will escape hell beneath.

THE VOICE OF THE SON OF GOD AND THE BREAD OF LIFE.

(JOHN V. 25 ; VI. 53-58.)

WE saw last evening that the greatest gift God has for man is the Holy Spirit. The Spirit was promised in the past dispensation, and was to be poured out upon all flesh ; but until the Son of God came there was no one through whom this great gift could be given, neither was there a righteous ground upon which the gift could come. The Spirit is given through the last Adam. And nothing else could really meet man's need. We may have once thought that all we needed was our sins blotted out, but we had to learn that not only had we done evil, but that there was nothing but evil in us. We came to God for forgiveness. We felt we were sinners, and we heard the testimony of the grace of God, and we turned to Him. Our eyes were opened, not only to our own sinful condition, but to the grace of God, and we were glad to come to Him. The gospel opened our eyes. It gave us to know the gracious disposition of God towards us. That was the first ray of light that broke in upon our darkened minds. That we are sinners we know ; it is not so much a matter of faith. We have got consciences which accuse

us of overt acts of sin, and we are therefore afraid of God, and we do our best to keep away from Him. But the gospel comes to us, and it sets God before us in His true light as revealed in Christ, and we learn that He has forgiveness for us, and we turn to Him that we may receive it. It was the preaching of Christ that opened our eyes. He is the eye salve, the cure for our natural blindness. We never see anything rightly until Christ is applied to our eyes. He is the light by which we see everything as it really is. The sun was set in the heavens to give light upon the earth, and Christ is set at the right hand of God to be a light to us, that He may be for salvation to the ends of the earth. We find salvation in the light of God. And the light of God shines for us in the risen Christ.

If there is in any heart a desire to return to God, it has been produced by the gospel, and the gospel is the preaching of Christ. It tells us of the goodness of God, and where He is to be found. By nature we neither know God, nor where to find Him. Job says, "Oh that I knew where I might find him! I would come even to his seat!" The gospel makes God known to us. We learn that He is merciful, and gracious, and full of kindness and love to man; and we learn this in Christ, in whom He is to be found; and we turn to Christ, and in turning to Christ we turn to God, for in Him we meet a Saviour-God.

And from Him we get living water—life in the power of the Spirit.

And this is what man needs. He must have a new fountain of life within. And every one that asks receives. I do not say that a man knows what to ask for. Most of us have turned to God, and have cried for mercy, and for forgiveness of sins. But God does not confine Himself to our requests. He gives what He sees we need. He gives according to His wisdom, and according to the love of His heart. In Luke xi. we read, “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?” There is affection enough in the heart of man to cause him to respond to the cry of need from the lips of a child; but there is more than affection needed, there is wisdom required, so that a good gift may be given. Parents do not always give everything their children may ask. They are not inattentive to their requests, but they study what will be suitable and good to give. So the Lord adds, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”

In John iv. you get the Giver of that priceless gift, and in these chapters (v. and vi.) the way

in which it is made ours. We are made to hear the voice of the Son of God. His voice has been heard in this world, and blessed is the man who hears it. Perhaps we are all ready to say we have heard that voice. I trust this is really so. But let me ask, What has He said to you? We may read a great deal in scripture, and we may be ready to take the statements that are there recorded, and apply them to ourselves, without being much affected by them. But the voice of the Son of God is a very real thing. It carries life with it to the soul of man. His voice is the testimony that He gave down here. He declared God. By Him God made Himself known. The testimony of Jesus here was to the heart of God. He came the whole way from heaven to tell us that God was love.

Do we really know anything of the voice of the Son of God? We know a little of the voice of Moses. The Jews did not know the voices of the prophets (Acts xiii.), and because of this they condemned Christ. To know the voice of a prophet is to know the peculiar testimony rendered by him. To hear the voice of the Son of God is to receive the testimony which He declared upon earth. The blessed Son of God spoke by all His works and words and ways amongst men, and above all in His death. He went about in the love of God to men, casting out devils, healing every disease that crossed

His path, raising the dead, and giving sight to the blind; and at the close of His ministry, when despised and rejected of men, He offered Himself a willing victim to bear our judgment, for "God so loved the world." This was the way in which He spoke. He has lifted up His voice in death's domain, and declared the love of God. The Holy Spirit interprets that voice to us. We should not understand the meaning of His death if the Holy Spirit did not shed abroad in our hearts the love of God. We learn in His death the love of God to us when we were yet sinners. This causes us to live, for if we live we live in the love of God, and it is because we know that He first loved us that we love Him.

Ezekiel was told to prophesy to the valley of dry bones, and as he prophesied bone was joined to bone, and flesh covered each skeleton. Then the winds blew upon them, and the spirit of life entered into them and they lived. This was all brought about by the word of God, uttered by the prophet. His word is the declaration of all that He is. This came to us in the person of Christ, and they that hear His voice live in the love of God.

Now turn to chapter vi. Here we have Christ as the Bread of life. In chapter v. it is more the Word of life, Christ as the quickener or life-giver. In this chapter vi. He is not only the giver but the sustainer of life. Jesus is the

Bread of life. He was to be eaten. He had come within the reach of man's appropriation. The Jews say, "Our fathers did eat manna in the wilderness." But the Lord adds to this statement of theirs, and says, "and are dead." In contrast with this He was the Bread come down from heaven, that a man might eat and not die. He says, "I am that Bread of life." It is not that He *would be* the Bread, He *was* that when down here. But He was to be appropriated. If man is to live by bread, he must partake of it; it may be set before him, and he may not eat it, and if he does not eat it he must perish of hunger. Nothing can satisfy the hunger of a man's soul but Christ. God has given Him to be the life of the world. He is the Bread of God, the true Bread given by the Father in grace for the life of a perishing world.

But the Bread must be broken before it can be used. He must die, for it is His flesh He gives for the life of the world. His flesh is truly meat, and His blood is truly drink. And it is set before us that we may eat and live for ever. In eating I make what I eat my own. If I eat the flesh of Christ and drink His blood, I make His death mine, and I eat and drink death to all that I am in flesh. Thus I part company with all that death has application to, and I live in His life in the power of the Spirit. If I make His death my death I am no longer in the flesh,

I abide in Him, and He abides in me, for He is in me as my life.

Then He says, "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." He had no other object when down here but the Father, and He has become our great Object in heaven. Man cannot live without an object. He is not self-supporting. We have Christ in heaven as our Object. If I look at Christ in the presence of God, the heavenly Man, I can say that is what I am in the thought of God. I may not be very like Him practically, but God has no other thought for me, and He will conform me to His image one day in the near future. He is to be the Object of our hearts. We are to live with relation to Him, and by feeding upon Him. Paul says, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Every man upon earth has got some object for which he lives. It may be money or pleasure, or anything else. It is always some fleshly gratification, and when a man's object fails him he often pines away and dies. Our object can never fail us. Let us appropriate the Bread the Father has given to us. Let us make it our own. Let us make His death ours, and let us make Himself in heaven ours, and we shall realise the rich blessing of *eternal life*.

“SEND OUT THY LIGHT AND THY TRUTH.”

(PSA. XLII. 1, 2 ; XLIII. 3 ; 1 JOHN V. 19--28.)

BEFORE the world was, the thought of God was to have a universe of intelligent beings rejoicing in the knowledge of Himself perfectly revealed. This was His object in building the fabric of the universe. The universe was built by Christ. He is the one person of the Trinity that is said to be the Creator, and He is called the Word of God because it is by Him that God gives expression to the thoughts of His heart. “All things were made by him.” And creation brought to light the power and divinity of God. All things were made by the Word of God ; but the Word of God is that which gives expression to all His thoughts and counsels and to all the love of His heart, so that His creatures might live for ever in the light of that revelation. The whole universe will yet be lighted up with the glory of God ; it will be the house of God in its largest thought. According to Hebrews iii. the house of God will yet comprise *all things* ; but before that day comes we are the house of God. The house of God is where He dwells and where

He is known and enjoyed. The whole universe and every redeemed soul will one day rejoice in the clear light of God fully revealed.

When we think of what God is as revealed to us in Christ, and when we think that the vast creation of God will yet be enlightened by this glorious radiance, what joy it gives our hearts! The light to-day is confined to the church; God dwells in His people; they are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit, but the day is coming in which that light will be universal. We get the thought of God's house in the Old Testament, because it was His great desire to dwell with men. The psalmist said, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord" (Psa. cxxii.), and again, "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee." (Psa. lxxxiv.)

In Christ the Creator has come into His creation. It had existed many thousand years as His handiwork before He took part in it, and when He did come into it, it was not in the form of a mighty angel, but in the form of man, and He has come into it to fill it with the light of His love. There is no unfallen or redeemed creature who will not get the benefit of this advent of the Creator into His creation. The angels, though not the subjects of redemption (I speak of the elect angels), will get the benefit of

God revealed in love. Peter says the angels desire to look into the grace of which men are the objects. They cannot be otherwise than interested in the revelation of God.

Now the light in which God has drawn near to man in Christ is attractive to the heart. It does not repel the poor sinner. It may, and will, be hated by the proud and by the self-righteous, but it is attractive to the wretched and the weak. The publicans and sinners drew near to hear Him. We find the worst and lowest type of sinner drawing near to hear Jesus. However sinful the soul might be, Jesus was always attractive. We see it in the woman of the city, who sought Him in the house of the Pharisee (Luke vii.), or the poor Samaritan (John iv.), who expected others to find the same attraction in Him that she did. He told her all that ever she did, but that did not frighten her away. The men of the city also were greatly attracted by Him, and besought Him to abide with them, and He abode with them two days. Thus we see how attractive the light of God in Christ was to those who had no character to lose and no reputation to maintain. The proud priests and Pharisees rejected Him, because the light exposed their hypocrisy and deceit, and the publicans and the harlots went into the kingdom before them.

Until Christ came it could be said, “ No man

hath seen God at any time." Yet bright rays of divine light shone through the gloom into the hearts of men, and where those bright rays got an entrance a great longing for more light was created. Moses was a man greatly favoured of God, and God spoke face to face with him; but the light with which he was so greatly favoured of God only made him cry out for more. He says, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory." Moses wanted the perfect light of God. This is what is meant by His "FACE." God answers him, "No man can see my face and live." The meaning of that is that no one could meet God in the revelation of Himself. If God had revealed Himself to Moses, He must have given Moses to know His hatred of sin, and how could Moses have stood before Him had He let loose His wrath against sin? But God shewed him His back parts. Moses never saw His face while upon earth; but even a sight of His back parts made the skin of his face to shine.

Here the heart of the psalmist pants after God, as the hart pants after the water brooks. He longs for the moment when he shall come and appear before God. How he is brought into the presence of God is found in the next psalm: "O send out thy light and thy truth: let *them* lead me; let *them* bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles." The light and truth of God are what lead the heart to

Himself. These things have come to us in Christ. God was in Christ. The flesh of Christ was the veil behind which God was while Christ walked the earth, and through which the Godhead glory shone brightly; but it was in the *death* of Christ that God came out to man in His full and perfect light. In the death of Christ the veil was rent, and God was perfectly declared. But this coming out of God was the end of man after the flesh. Therefore it is easy to understand the answer of God to Moses: "No man can see my face and live." The revelation of God was in the cross of Christ, and that was the removal of the sinner from before Him in judgment. At the same instant, and by the same means, judgment upon man was executed and the love of God declared. This is what leads us to Himself; we go in to God by the way in which He came out to us. He came out to us in the refusal of the flesh, and we go in to Him in the refusal of the flesh also. In His death the heart of God has been made known, but the believer can say, "I am crucified with Christ." It is important that we should learn that these two things have taken place together, the judgment and removal of all that I am as a child of Adam, and the revelation of the love of God. The love of God is declared in this, that God gave His Son to bear that judgment. This is surely very attractive; the

light is sweet. In this world we have the light of the sun, but it does not lead us to itself. The light comes to us where we are, and it warms and comforts us, but it does not lead us from earth to heaven. But the light and truth of God lead us to Himself. We have boldness for entering into the holiest. The psalmist speaks of being led to God, his exceeding joy, and to praise Him upon the harp. Well may we exclaim: "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house: they will be still praising thee." When the light and truth of God will have filled the whole universe, everything that hath breath will say, "HALLELUJAH."

God has come out to us to bring us to Him. He came out to the sinner, as we get in the parable of the prodigal, but the way in which He reached us has been through the cross, and that has made an end of all that was *sinner* about us. The prodigal went in in a new character; he went in in the best robe, the shoes and the ring, and the sinner goes in in Christ. He goes in in *God's best*, and God's best is Christ. We put on the character of Christ by getting our hearts acquainted with God. *Of God* we are in Christ Jesus. (1 Cor. i. 30.) We are in Christ as born of God, and it is only the man born of God that can draw near to God, and this is brought about by the light and truth of God getting into our souls. We

know that we are of God, and we are fit to draw nigh to Him.

“And we know that the Son of God has come.” It has become to us something more than *report*. We know that the sun is risen when his bright beams shine upon us from a cloudless sky. We know it by the fact that we are in the light that it has brought to us, and because we enjoy its warmth and the comfort that it brings. And it is in this way we know that the Son of God has come. He has brought the light and truth of God to us, and not only this, but He has opened our eyes to take in the heavenly radiance. The blind man spoken of in the Gospel of John had grown up to man’s estate in the gloom of midnight. The sun shone every day, but it was no good to him as light, though he felt the warmth of its beams. The One who made the sun and placed it in the heavens to gladden the eyes of men was the only One who could open his eyes to see it. And this is the One who brought the light of God into the world, and who has opened our eyes to enjoy it.

He hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true. We do not need to be told who it is that is true; we know that it is none other than God Himself. He wants us to know Him. He is the only One who attracts by the revelation of Himself. We do

not desire to be too well known by our fellows. We have to keep back much, because we know it is not to our honour, and people leave us when they get to know too much about us. And the power of Satan is destroyed when he is detected. But God attracts to Himself and gets the confidence of men by making Himself known. And the better we know Him, the more are our hearts drawn out to Him in confidence and love.

Next, "We are in him that is true." That is, as partaking of the divine nature, and that means that *we are true* ourselves. As *of God* we could not be anything else but true. There is nothing true about the flesh, but our true selves is what is of God in us.

"This is the true God and eternal life." We see His face, and it has not been death to us; it has been eternal life. We should never have seen life had He not revealed Himself to us in the person of His Son. Everything else is an idol from which we are to keep ourselves.



THE PROMISE OF LIFE.

(2 TIM. I. 1.)

I WISH to speak a few words on the expression we get in this verse, "The promise of life which is in Christ Jesus." The apostle brings before us the failure that had already come into the profession of Christianity, and in chapters iii. and iv. the failure that was about to come in in the last days. He speaks in chapter iii. of the coming in of perilous times, and in chapter iv. of the time when they would not endure sound doctrine. It is a dark picture that is drawn by the Spirit of God of that which professes the name of Christ; but when everything in the profession fails we see how the apostle falls back upon that which is incorruptible—"life which is in Christ Jesus." Every kind of evil may creep into the profession of the name of Christ, but that which is "*in Christ*" abides in its own purity for ever. This life in Christ was no mere remedy for the ruin of the creature; it was God's thought for man before the world was. So when everything was fast lapsing into decay the apostle can fall back upon this. In Romans he speaks of himself as an apostle separated to

the gospel of God, but here *life* is what occupies him in his service as an apostle. I suppose life really lies in the ability to enjoy the relationships in which we are placed. It is so as to the natural order; we are set in certain relationships, and affections have been created in us by God which enable us to enjoy these relationships. The relationships would be intolerable had we not the affections that belong to them. No one would desire to be in close relationship with one for whom he had no affection. Adam loved God in the way in which he knew Him, not as the believer loves God, for we love Him according to the revelation He has been pleased to make of Himself in Christ. But Adam loved Him as his beneficent Creator, and had he continued in innocency he would have continued in the enjoyment of the place he had with God, and all his innocent race along with him. But when sin came in fear took the place of love in the heart, and the relationship became intolerable; and as to men, hateful and hating one another took the place of love one to another. In the mercy of God a certain amount of natural affection has been preserved, otherwise the world could not exist.

When you come to Christ you come to another order of man, and in that Man you come to *new* relationships and to *new* affections. Christ having accomplished the work of redemption

sends Mary with a message, in which is brought to light the new order of relationships for man in connection with Him. He says, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." In these words we learn the blessedness of the new order.

Into the old order sin came and death followed; and the thing that makes death so terrible is that it is the break-up of all the sweet and tender relationships in which man finds himself in the present life. Because of this death is dreaded. But the new order never can be invaded by sin, and therefore the relationships are inviolable by death. *Love*, the nature of God and the nature of His children, never faileth. This is the life of all that have part in the new order, for this is really the life of Christ. The relationships are new and the affections are new also, and the affections are divine. It is not only that God has created these affections in our hearts, but they are of His nature; love is of God, and "He that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." It was not so in the old order, though of course God created the affections which belong to it; but they are human affections, not divine; but in the new order everything is divine. Those I address here this evening are not, except in a few cases, related to one another in the flesh,

but we are all brethren in Christ, and also sons of God in Christ Jesus; and we have the affections that enable us to enjoy these holy and eternal relationships. And this is the sphere of life; and we know that we have passed from death unto life because we love the brethren.

In the old order we are always very conscious that we are in a scene of death, and the stronger our natural affections are the more we realise that it is a scene of death. A husband fears that he may lose his wife, and the wife dreads the loss of her husband; parents fear that death will come in and rob them of their children, and children fear to lose their parents; and all this keeps us constantly in mind that death lies upon everything in the old order. But in the new order we are beyond the reach of death. Everything in the new order is of God. This does not mean simply that He created it. This was true of the old; it was God's creation; but in the new everything is of Him in the sense that it is of His nature. Adam was the workmanship of God. He was formed out of the dust of the ground and made a living soul by the breath of God. But the new man is formed by the light of God in Christ, brought into the soul by the power of the Spirit. And failure can never come in here. And upon this living and imperishable rock Paul falls back when he

sees everything going to decay here in the profession of Christianity.

And this was the eternal thought of God for man. The first Adam came upon the scene four thousand years before the last was revealed ; but the last Adam was first in the counsels of God. The old relationships and affections were upon earth before the new, but the new were in the mind of God for man before the world was ; and when the old will have disappeared as a vision of the night the new will be found blooming in fadeless glory to the praise of God for ever.

We need to know these things better than we do, especially in a day when we see things around us going steadily to the bad. And it is only as we get to see the mind of God for us in connection with what is ours in Christ that we shall be able to set ourselves steadfastly to build up our souls in the love of God, knowing that it is in divine love our life lies, and here death cannot enter.

I could understand a saint saying, I do not see how I can be said to be beyond the reach of death, for I may die and be separated from the love of the brethren. But death cannot separate you from the love of God ; and as to the love of the brethren, the Lord will raise up both you and them at His coming again. In the meantime you are with Christ and you cannot call that death.

What a comfort all this was to the heart of the apostle in the presence of the ruin, to retire upon that which is indestructible. Everything committed to the responsibility of man goes to the bad, but the things *in Christ* abide to eternity ; and we require to be better established on the line of life when we see the profession depart from Christ.



DIVINE LOVE.

(1 JOHN IV. 7-21.)

My thought is to follow on with what we had before us last evening. We were occupied with the new relationships into which we have been brought, and with the new affections which belong to these new relationships. In this epistle we get these things developed. We get the children of God, and the *babes* know the *Father*; and we have the brethren and their love one to another, and in these things divine life consists. Therefore the apostle says, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God." Love is brought before us in all scripture as the great thing to pursue. Paul says, "Follow after love" (1 Cor. xiv.), and Peter, "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Pet. i. 22); and here we get "Love is of God." The affection that is among the saints is of God; it is His nature. It is not that which is merely human, not that which belonged to innocent man, no more than guilty man. This affection is entirely of God, and is the consequence of being born of Him. Every one is of the nature of whom he is born; a child is

of the same nature as his father. We are all corrupt by nature because we come of a corrupt stock. But here we are looked at as born of God, and the apostle seeks to build us up in the divine nature. He says, "Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." God is known by His children. There is a passage in 1 Corinthians viii. where we read, "If any man love God, the same is known of him." God knows the one who loves Him. Here it is, the one who loves knows God. He is known by the one who has His nature, and the one who has His nature knows Him. It is the intimacy that is enjoyed in the divine nature. I know a man because I have the nature of a man ; and I know God because I have the nature of God ; but I do not know an angel because I have not the nature of an angel.

From verse 9 to the end of the chapter we have the manifestation of this love, and its effect in the saints. The love of God must be manifested if ever it is to be known ; and God has taken hold of our need as lost sinners to manifest His love ; and it has been manifested in sending His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. The great thought of God for man was life ; but he being a sinner, propitiation was needed before he could be brought into life ; therefore the love of God is seen in that He sent His Son to be the pro-

pitiation for our sins. This is how the love of God has come to light, and it must come to light before we can be affected by it. But this is just what the Holy Spirit would promote in us ; therefore we read, " Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." We should naturally have thought that if God so loved us, we ought also to love *Him* ; but that is not what we have here. In chapter iii. 23 we have His commandment, " That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another." The commandment is *faith in the Son of God, and love to one another*. There is no commandment in the New Testament to love God. In the *law* man is told to love God, but in the *gospel* is the announcement of the love of God to us. There are these two parts to the commandment of God—faith in Christ and love to the saints. Paul writes to the saints when he heard of their faith in Christ and love to all the saints. This was the evidence to him that they were true believers. It must first of all be faith in Christ, because it is in Him that the love of God has come to light. We would know nothing about love if we did not learn it in Him ; but having learned that love in Him we learn also that the children of God are the objects of it ; and having that love in our hearts, it is to take the same direction as in the heart of God, therefore the brethren are the objects of it. The command-

ment is very simple, and if we keep it we please God, and all our prayers are answered: "Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

Now in verse 12 we come to the effect of fulfilling our obligations, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us." In chapter i. of the Gospel of John we read, "No man hath seen God at any time." This was true until Christ came into the world, but then it had to be recorded: "The only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." But here we see the saints are the continuation of Christ in a moral way down here; that is to say, in the way of light, and therefore we read, "If we love one another, God dwells in us." We get the light of God in Christ in the gospel, and the same light in the saints in the epistle. But this is conditional, "If we love one another." "And his love is perfected in us;" that is, there is nothing of the love of God lacking. Every direction that the love of God has taken is witnessed in the saints if they love one another.

Verses 13 and 14 go together. "Of his Spirit" is, I suppose, not so much the Spirit personally as the nature and disposition of God. It is the Spirit of grace; and the effect is, "We have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." All

this is the effect of the saints being built up in the love of God, and walking in it.

In verse 15 we get the individual believer, and we read that "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." What a testimony in the world that rejected Christ! How could it be maintained except in the power of God? What mighty energy is needed to maintain in the face of the world that crucified Jesus that this rejected Man was the Son of God. But this testimony must be maintained in the energy of the love of God. What could lead a soul to stand up in the face of a hostile world and bear such a testimony, except as under the blessed influence of the light that came to us through that glorious Person, and as loving Him with all the heart?

Now we come to verse 16: "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." Naturally we would have said, "believed and known." We would have put believing first; but that is not how we get it here, because I think we must know that love, by its being shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit, before we shall be able to accept the testimony to it in the death of Jesus. I doubt if we can know the love of God by the preaching. We may believe in the grace of God through the preaching, and indeed we must

do so if we are ever to turn to God, and when we believe in the grace declared in the gospel and turn to God we receive the Spirit, who sheds the love abroad in our hearts, and then I think we are enabled to accept the testimony to it, so that it is not a mere feeling in the heart, however blessed and of God that feeling may be ; but our faith has the death of Christ to rest upon as the great manifestation of that love. And dwelling in that love the heart dwells in God, because if God is love, and I dwell in love, I dwell in God, and God in me. What an atmosphere of heavenly and divine affections !

In verse 17 we get love perfected in us in view of the day of judgment. We have had this love declared to us in the death of the Son of God, and we have had it shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and we know that as Christ is so are we in this world. All the love, of which He is the worthy object, is our sure present and eternal portion ; and we know that whatever our pathway be through this world, until the moment when we shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, that love will never desert us, but will keep company with us through all our desert wanderings, and will never have its perfect satisfaction until it has us like the Judge Himself in the unsullied light of an unsullied sphere of fadeless glory—love's eternal home.

The Lord says, "As the Father hath loved

me, so have I loved you ;” and, “ The Father himself loveth you, because ye hath loved me.” Therefore, whatever the circumstances of our journey may be, we can always count on the love of God. We do not know if we are to suffer hunger and nakedness ; we cannot tell what evils may lurk in our pathway ; the remainder of our pilgrimage is mercifully veiled from our vision ; but we do know this, that we have a sure and unfailing portion in the love of God, and that it will never desert us. Therefore fear has no place in our hearts ; the perfect love of God has cast it out. Love and fear cannot dwell together in the same breast. “ He that feareth is not made perfect in love.” Hence the great need is to have the heart well established in the love of God. Our love is only the echo of that love heard in our hearts : “ We love him, because he first loved us.”

But then it is the brother that tests us, so the apostle says, “ If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar.” God is not here to test man except in the saints, and if we do not love Him in the saints we will not love Him in Christ in heaven. My brother is the one in whom God is seen, and that draws out my heart to him, and where this is not so it is plain that I love not God. The commandment we have from Him is that the one who loves God is to love his brother also.

We see the importance of following after love. It is the divine nature, and the one thing set before us to pursue. If the Son of God is before our hearts as the object of faith, the love of God will always be a great reality to us, because, as we have seen, it is in Him the love of God has come to light ; and thus dwelling in love we will *grow* in it, and be better able to express it to one another. Paul was thankful that the faith of the Thessalonians grew exceedingly, and that their love to one another abounded. It must be so, that love grows as faith grows. Hence the important thing for us is to keep our hearts in the love of God.



HOW TO CONTEND FOR THE FAITH.

(JUDE.)

I DESIRE to follow a little on the lines we have had before us on former occasions, that our hearts may be further occupied with the divine affections in which we live according to God. The writer of this epistle would seek to have these affections promoted in the saints to whom he writes. His desire was to write to them about the common salvation; but he was turned aside to something else to which he thought it needful to direct their attention. He speaks of the salvation as "the common salvation," that is, it was not a salvation such as was accorded to Noah and his house, which was only available for eight persons; nor was it restricted like the mercy of God to Lot, which set no more than three souls beyond the reach of death; nor was it like the deliverance effected for Israel when they groaned beneath the oppression of Pharaoh in the land of Egypt; but it is a salvation that is proclaimed to the whole human race, and is the common inheritance of the people of God. The grace of God that bringeth salvation to all men hath appeared, and God presents Himself

in the character of a Saviour-God, who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth, and the proof of this is that the Mediator gave Himself a ransom for all, and thus opened up a way of salvation for all.

It was of this salvation that Jude desired to write, but another thing of pressing importance came before him, and for the moment lifted his thoughts from the blessed subject. Danger to the faith of the beloved people of God lurked in their path, and to this he feels it necessary to draw their attention. Evil men had crept into the profession of Christianity, “ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” They cast off the authority of the Lord, and having done this they refused to submit themselves to any earthly authority; they “despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.” But that the destruction of these evil men was certain the saints very well knew, for they had had many examples of the judgment of God against the evil-doer brought before them. The first example we get is that of the people saved out of the land of Egypt, and afterwards destroyed on account of their unbelief; the second is the angels who kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, reserved in everlasting chains under darkness

unto the judgment of the great day, and the third is the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. The great mass of the professors of Christianity have not faith, and where there is not faith the heavenly position which belongs to the church must be abandoned, and when this is given up the whole profession soon becomes characterised by pollution. Unbelief, apostasy and fleshly pollution characterise the christian profession to-day. Their swift downward course is set before us in the "way of Cain," the "error of Balaam" and the "gain-saying of Core." Like Cain, in the pride of their heart they refuse to bow to the righteous judgment of God that rests upon them on account of sin, and Christ, who maintained the rights of God upon earth, and who offered the sacrifice that was acceptable to God, is hated and persecuted. Out of this flows the error of Balaam: the leaders in Christendom who call themselves prophets of God lend their services to the prince of the world, that the true people of God may be kept out of the inheritance given to them of God. The sin of Korah was rebellion against the authority vested in Moses and the priesthood established in Aaron. Korah was a Levite, but was not satisfied with the blessed place of service given to him of

God, but aspired to the priesthood, and this sin is fully developed in Christendom. Men who have taken the place of servants, and who may be used of God to minister His word to His people, are not content with this service, but set themselves up as priests between the saints and God. Every saint of God is a priest, one as much as another, and their great High Priest is Christ on high in the presence of God, and between the people and God there is none other than He; but there are those in the profession who set themselves apart from the others as a specially sanctified class who claim the right that only belongs to the Son of God, and for this there is no forgiveness—"Perished in the gainsaying of Core." For individuals who have taken up that position there is surely in the mercy of God salvation, but for the system from which it springs there is no forgiveness.

In view of all this the Spirit of God would stir up the saints to contend for the faith. The effort of the enemy is to rob us of the precious faith. Whatever we may lose in the battle is not really loss if we keep the faith. Paul lost everything in defence of the faith. He lost his property, reputation, religion, liberty and life, but he kept the faith. He could say when the battle was over and he was going out of the world, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." It

is a great thing to be able to say, when the battle is ended, "*I have kept the faith.*"

But if we are to keep the faith we must contend for it. If you keep the faith you will not have an easy time in the world; you will know something of what tribulation means. The world is hostile to the faith, and though it may put on the cloak of Christianity it will not have the faith of Christ in its heart. Therefore if you and I are to keep the faith we must be ready to shed our blood in its defence. We desire to follow peace with all men, but whether it be peace or whether it be war, the faith must be held dear to our hearts. But we are not likely to contend to retain that which we do not value, and therefore the faith must have some importance in our eyes, and if it has importance to us we shall seek to be well established in it. We may to-day have grasped only a very little of the precious metal, but if we value what we have got we shall be found eagerly reaching out after more, and therefore we are exhorted to build ourselves up on it.

If the servant of God in this epistle desired to write to them about the common salvation, and found it necessary to turn to another subject, he nevertheless does bring out very definitely that in which salvation consists—the love of God. The whole power of salvation lies in the knowledge of God. Christ is set to be a

light to the Gentiles, that He might be for salvation to the ends of the earth. The light of God is in Him, and "God is love." In Titus iii. we get the way in which God has intervened for us as a Saviour: He has declared His kindness and love. This is the light in which God has approached us. In the beginning of Genesis the earth upon which God was going to work is said to have been without form and void and swathed in darkness, and the first thing we get is that light is commanded to shine out of the darkness; and if God is going to work for the salvation of man, the first thing is that He brings in light. This has come to us in the person of Christ, and is the light of His kindness and love. In the same chapter we get the way that light has been made good to us. "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit." The washing of regeneration takes in new birth, and may refer to baptism, and by these means we are brought into the kingdom of God, and the Holy Spirit sheds the love of God abroad in our hearts, and we are thus renewed in our affections and live in the love of God that has come to light in Christ, and instead of being distinguished by envy and malice and hatred we are marked by righteousness and love, and for us this is salvation.

Jude insists upon our keeping ourselves in

this love of God. There are two means by which we are to do this. The first, is building ourselves up on our most holy faith, and the second, praying in the Holy Ghost. Instead of being careless as to the faith, and letting it go rather than get into trouble with men on account of it, we seek that we may get better established in it. And as to praying in the Holy Ghost, it is not merely saying prayers, even though we may mean what we ask for, but it is drawing near to God and expressing in His ear the thoughts of the heart, which have been begotten there by the Spirit of God. It is to know that we have spoken to Him, and that He has heard us, and that what we have asked has been *granted to us*. By these two means we are to keep ourselves in the love of God.

What a blessed place in which to keep ourselves! That love has come to light in Christ, it shines out in all its power in His death for us, and we are to walk in the sunshine of it. On a cold, cheerless winter day the sun in the heavens may suddenly break forth upon the world in all its heavenly radiance, warmth and comfort, and we may creep along cold and shivering on the shady side of the street, and lose all the comfort that it is destined by God to bring to us; and so we may walk down here in the shadows of the world without availing ourselves of the great love of God that shines for all in Christ in

heaven. "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God" was the desire of the apostle for the young Thessalonian believers, and the oldest believer upon earth cannot get into a better place. And Paul could say: "The life which I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who *loved me, and gave himself for me.*" Then we get, "looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." Eternal life is looked at here in a dispensational way, not in the moral way in which it is viewed in John's writings. With John we have it *now* in the knowledge of the Father and Jesus Christ His sent One, but when Christ comes we shall have it in its own proper sphere. Next we get *work to do in the scene around us.* If our hearts are in the love of God we shall be able to serve Him in connection with His interests, and there will be plenty of work for us to do. But we must first of all be right ourselves or we shall not be able to get others right. If we are to save others we must first save ourselves. (1 Tim. iv. 16.) "Of some have compassion." God has had compassion upon us, and we are to go out in His compassions to others. All are not alike guilty of the corruption that has come into the profession of the name of Christ; there are the *leaders* and the *led*, and we must make a difference. It is not likely that the leaders will hear you, but many that have

been led astray by their means may be rescued. But while we seek to recover others, it is like pulling people out of the fire, and if we are not careful we may get badly burned ourselves in the work of rescue. We are to go to people in the love of God, and while we abhor all the filthy surroundings of those we desire to save, we do our best to get them extricated. We are to hate the garment in which they may have clothed themselves, because it is spotted by the flesh, but their souls we love in the love of God.

“Unto him that is able to keep you from stumbling.” Blessed be God, He is able to do this; even in this dangerous world where so many apparently strong men have fallen to rise no more He is able to keep us from stumbling. And He is able also to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exultation. May we keep ourselves in the love of God. May we ever walk in the light and warmth and comfort of it, and thus find salvation, for then the things that dominate others will have no power over us, for the things of this world will have no attraction for us. Well may we say, “To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”



LIFE AND JUDGMENT.

(JOHN V. 1-29.)

THE contrast in this chapter is between life and judgment. The one who receives life does not come into judgment. There is the resurrection of life and the resurrection of judgment. Those who come into judgment never see life. Jesus tells us that whoever hears His word and believes on Him that sent Him has eternal life and shall not come into judgment, but is passed out of death into life. Judgment has no application to those who come under the life-giving power of the Son of God ; it has to all others.

Adam brought in sin and death, and death passed upon all his descendants irrespective of their own personal disobedience. Babies die who have not sinned. It is impossible that God could allow man to continue for ever a life of sin. Life may be lengthened out to nigh a thousand years, or it may be closed in as many minutes, but it must be brought to a close, for man is by nature sinful.

But that the power of death might be broken the Son of God has died, and life is available

for all in Him risen from the dead. He is the last Adam and the last Adam is a life-giving Spirit. He is the fountain of life. All connected with the first Adam come under death, but all are directed to the last Adam for life. But no one could have been quickened had the Son of God not died. Chapter iii. speaks of the lifting up of the Son of man and of the revelation of the love of God ; there two things were necessary if men were to be made to live : sin had to be dealt with and death annulled, for man was under sin and subject to death, and only One could sustain the judgment due to sin and by death break death's power. But in the death of Christ death has been annulled and the love of God has been declared, and life is therefore possible for man ; for it is by the love of God being made good to the heart that men are made to live.

Out of death as brought in by Adam all men will be brought. Resurrection will accomplish this, and the wicked will be raised from the dead as well as the righteous. But the wicked will not be *quickened* with the life of the last Adam and theirs will be a resurrection of judgment, and this will result in the second death. Whoever perishes, perishes not on account of Adam's transgression, but on account of his own. Man will be taken out of the death that Adam brought upon all. The Lord says to John

in Patmos, "I have the keys of death and hell." He has invaded Satan's stronghold, death's domain, and He has all authority there now. Keys signify that He has authority in that sphere; therefore there is an hour coming in which *all that are in the graves* shall hear His voice and shall come forth, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. In Revelation xx. we get the great white throne and the resurrection of judgment, and all are judged according to their works—not according to Adam's work but according to their own; and all not written in the book of life are cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death. I do not doubt all that are written in the book of life are in the resurrection of life, which takes place a thousand years before the resurrection of judgment.

To bring man out of death into life the Father and the Son were working. When the Jews found fault with Jesus for doing good to men on the sabbath day, He answers, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." They would have limited the activities of divine love to six days in the week; but in a world of sin, death and human woe there could be no sabbath for Jesus. It was impossible for the love of God to rest in a world like this. So we find Jesus going down to the pool of Bethesda, that scene

of misery, on the sabbath. A multitude of poor afflicted creatures were there whose physical condition set forth the spiritual and moral condition of God's earthly people. The pool was at the sheep market. The people were under the iron rule of the proud Roman and were, so to speak, being bought and sold. They were under hard and cruel bondage. They had been, up to the coming of Christ, viewed as Jehovah's sheep, but they had wandered from Him and were reaping the sad consequences of their departure from Him. And their spiritual condition was as bad as was their physical condition—they were blind, halt, withered. They were unable to see, and they were unable to walk rightly, and the blight of death was upon them.

Bethesda means the house of mercy. A little of the mercy of God toward His people was ministered by angelic means for the healing of their diseases: "An angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had." It was not mercy suited to the weakest, the man who needed it least got it, for it would be the strongest who would be best able to get in first. A man was there who had been ill thirty and eight years. He had often seen the water moved and had

made his best effort to get in first, but his inability to avail himself of the mercy of God was more and more brought home to his consciousness; again and again while he was coming another stepped down before him. He might as well have been a thousand miles away from the pool. It was no good to him to step in *second*; no one must get in before him. Its virtue to heal was all spent upon the first comer. It was like the law in this respect, which was given by the disposition of angels; it would have been a mercy to man had he been able to avail himself of the blessing it proposed. But he must keep the whole law; if he offend in one point he becomes guilty of all.

But what a contrast there was between Jesus and that pool! He was the true Bethesda. All the mercy of God had come near to man in His person; and the mercy which was in Him was available for all. It was not only to be made good to the first comer, but to the last as well as first. There was light for the blind in Him. Not only was there light for his sightless eyes, but there was the love of God there to illuminate his dark heart. There was power in Him to make the lame walk, and not only strength for his feeble limbs, but power to enable him in his walk through this world to fulfil the righteous requirement of the law. Jesus was able to make him walk to the glory and praise of God.

If the withered were there, there was the power of God in the person of Jesus to bring the flush of health to the cheek and make the feeble frame thrill with life. And not only this, but life was there that was able to place man beyond the reach of death, so that he might live for ever in the light of God. Light, power and life were all in His person and brought near to men, and unlike the pool whose virtue was exhausted by the first who used it, the blessings that were and are in Jesus cannot be exhausted by appropriation. Truly He was the true Bethesda!

Therefore the only question now is: "Wilt thou be made whole?" It is not now a question of what God will do; He has done everything needful for your deliverance. It is now only a question of your willingness to be healed by Jesus. Outside of Him there is no mercy for man: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." The whole question is, Will you submit to the One in whom God has placed every blessing for you? Will you have Christ in whom everything is established?

This man gets strength to carry his bed, and he carries it. It was the sabbath day, and the religious prejudices of the Jews were shocked by the man's profanity. They inform him that it is the sabbath and that it is not lawful for him

to carry his bed. But he had now come under *new* authority. What had the law of Moses done for him? He had been under it for thirty-eight years, bedridden and helpless. It had not healed him. It had given him no ability to carry his bed. What did he owe that law? The power he now possessed was not derived from the law and the law had no right to control it. Jesus had crossed his path and had made him perfectly whole. He was a strong man now. No sense of feebleness weighs upon him as he carries that which for so many years had carried him. His bed that was once the witness of his weakness is now the witness of his power; and surely the One who bestowed upon him this power was the only One who had a right to say on what day that power was to be exercised. What right had the law to control a power that it was not able to give? "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed, and walk." This was unanswerable. The power was to be directed by the One who gave it. It is thus with the believer in Jesus: he is not under the law, but neither is he lawless, *he is subject to Christ.*

And because Jesus had done this good work upon the poor palsied man the Jews persecuted Him and sought to slay Him. But Jesus lets them know that in finding fault with Him they were finding fault with the Father. He says,

“My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” This only enraged them more, for He was making Himself equal with God. Still, whatever they might think, His works proceeded from the Father, for He did nothing but that which He saw the Father do. In this He was presenting to them the grace of the heart of God, but they were blind to it. What a sad state to be in! They refuse to believe in the kindness and love of a Saviour-God when manifested before their eyes.

Man was under death and subject to judgment, and Father and Son were working to rescue him. The Father raised up the dead and quickened them and the Son quickened whom He would. By the quickening power of Christ man was taken out of the state to which judgment applied. Judgment has no application to the life of Christ; it refers to man's responsible life, to the flesh and its sinful history. In the life of Christ a man is beyond death and judgment.

There are two ways in which death can be viewed. First, as the consequence of sin, “death by sin,” “The wages of sin is death.” Adam brought this in, but Christ will abolish it, and all men will be taken out of it. Secondly, moral death; he does not live to God. If a man loves God he lives; if he loves not God he lives not. This is what Christ refers to here.

Men are made to live to God by His life-giving power. The wicked will be raised, but they will not be quickened; they will not be placed beyond the reach of death, for the second death will be their portion.

The way the Son quickens is by causing His voice to be heard in the hearts of men: "The hour cometh and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live." This hour is now present. An *hour* in scripture is a period of time marked by a certain event. This hour is the hour of quickening. It has lasted nigh two thousand years; the hour of resurrection and of judgment is coming, and it will last a thousand years at least. The resurrection of life takes place before the age, which we call the millennium, begins; the resurrection of judgment takes place at the close of the millennium. (Rev. xx.)

The present time is the hour in which the life-giving voice of the Son of God is to be heard in the regions of death. He came from heaven to make the love of God known. Everything that He did and said told out that love; but the full declaration of it was in death. He has spoken by an act. His love has not been in word and tongue, but in deed and in truth. He laid down His life for us as the expression of the love of God to us: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God

sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." His testimony was the love of God, and this testimony was rendered in death. In chapter iii. you get the Son of man lifted up and the love of God declared, and in chapter iv. you get the Spirit that you may be able to hear the voice of the Son of God two thousand years after He has spoken. The Holy Spirit sheds abroad in the heart of the believer the love of God, and this is what I understand by hearing the voice of the Son of God. You receive and understand His testimony. And in the life of Christ we are outside all that judgment applies to: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation [judgment]; but is passed out of death unto life."

But another hour is coming, an hour in which "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth." It will be a glad sound to some; it will call them from corruption, weakness and dishonour to incorruption, power and glory. But for those who have been deaf to the voice of the Son of God, who have refused to come to Jesus that they might have life, that voice will break upon their ears with

indescribable terror. They shall come forth to the resurrection of judgment.

To-day is the opportunity God gives for men to come to Jesus and receive life, and He has said: "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out."



THE LAMB OF GOD.

(JOHN I. 29-39.)

THE Lord Jesus comes before us in these verses in three ways—as the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world ; the One who baptises with the Holy Ghost ; and who leads his followers to where He dwells. In the first place, He is in contrast with the first Adam, who brought sin into the world : “ By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Sin was in the creation before it was in the world ; the devil was a sinner before Adam fell. But it was not in the world as God made it. And Adam should have kept it out of the innocent creation. He allowed it to come into the world, and the world has been filled with it. But Christ came to put it away. The Lamb of God will remove every trace of it out of the world. John the Baptist points Him out in this character. The mention of the Lamb of God brings the thought of a sacrifice to the mind : He appeared to put away sin by His sacrifice. Sin has its seat in the flesh, and He came in the

likeness of sinful flesh that sin might be condemned where it had its seat. He who knew no sin, but was holy and spotless, was made sin; and in His cross God gave expression to His holy abhorrence of sin, and His righteous judgment of it, so that every intelligent being in the universe might know what sin was in the sight of God. Man imagines that God thinks of sin pretty much as he does, but God has shewn by the cross of His Son that He must visit it with the most unsparing judgment. But this judgment was not to be visited on the sinner; God had purposes of grace with regard to him. Still it must be judged, for God is holy and righteous and cannot pass it by. Some one must bear the judgment of sin, and if that judgment be visited on man, he is lost for ever.

You remember what Abraham said to Isaac in answer to his question, "Where is the lamb for the burnt-offering?" The answer of Abraham was, "My son, God will provide himself with a lamb for a burnt-offering." No lamb that man ever brought could take away sin; only the Lamb of God could do that great work. Peter speaks of Him as "a Lamb without blemish and without spot." In His cross God dealt with sin as it deserved. Whatever He may yet say to the sinner in the day of judgment will not express in a greater way His abhorrence of that terrible and hateful thing. And in that cross

it was dealt with as it deserved, and put away from the sight of God for ever.

Some one might object to this and say that sin was as much in the world to-day as ever it was. That is so, but nevertheless it has received its judgment, and the removal of every trace of it out of the universe is only a matter of detail. God has been glorified as regards it, and it does not now stand between Him and the blessing of His sinful creature. In the Book of Revelation we read of the Lamb of God, and we see the way in which He cleanses the world from sin, but the One who cleanses this defiled scene from its presence is presented to us at the outset of the book as "a Lamb as it had been slain." (Rev. v. 6.) He it is who cleanses the world from the presence of sin. In that book the judgments of God are poured out on the earth; but here He is brought before us more in the way of blessing. Peter speaks of Him as being manifested in these last times on behalf of believers. The Lamb of God offered Himself as a sacrifice that we might be saved. And in His death the love of God came to light, and this getting into our hearts by the Holy Spirit has broken the power of sin there. But He executes judgment in the day of wrath, and the world will be purged by the judgment that He executes, and He will bring in a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Secondly, He is the One who baptises with the Holy Ghost. He sets the believer up in the power of the Spirit. There is no mending of the flesh. In the putting away of sin the flesh was set aside, in order that we might be set up with a new fountain of life within. And Jesus is the One who baptises with the Holy Ghost. John points Him out in this character. The Spirit was promised in the past dispensation by the prophets, and now that the time of the probation of man was drawing to a close He is looked for by the forerunner of Christ. But who this Person was who was to give the Spirit John did not know. He was told that the One upon whom he would see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, He it was who would baptise with the Holy Spirit. Like Aaron, who was anointed with oil apart from his sons and without blood (Lev. vii. 12), so Christ received the Spirit altogether apart from the shedding of blood; but when Aaron's sons are brought in to be consecrated, the oil is put upon the blood in both his case and theirs. In this Aaron represented Christ, and his sons us. We could not receive the Spirit until the flesh received its judgment; the oil was not to be poured upon man's flesh. The Spirit is given when a risen Christ is believed in.

The preaching of the grace of God leads us to Christ who gives us the Spirit. When He was

exalted to the right hand of God He received from the Father the Spirit, that He might pour it out upon us. There was no one great enough to bestow such a gift until Christ came. John says that when he saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove and abiding on Him, he knew Him to be the Son of God. As Lamb of God He takes away the sin of the world, but as Son of God He baptises with the Holy Spirit. There are two things connected with the Lamb of God: one is that He takes away the sin of the world by bearing the judgment of it, that is, it stands no longer as a barrier between God and the blessing of the creature. The other is the kingdom; the throne of God and of the Lamb is in the city; and during the kingdom sin will be put away completely from the universe, everything will be purged from its presence. During His reign the whole question of good and evil will be disentangled; sin will be placed with its author the devil, and good will be placed with its blessed source, God. Everything of the devil will be in the lake of fire, and everything that is of God will be in His universe of bliss.

Thirdly, He is the One who leads His followers to the place where He Himself dwells. "Behold the Lamb of God." He is now to be the object of our hearts. It is not now *what He does*, but *who He is*. We behold Him in glory, but we

can contemplate Him in His pathway here where He glorified God. John contemplated Him as He walked, and he would have his disciples occupied with Him. It did not matter ~~to John if~~ his disciples turned away from him if they followed Jesus. It was a joy to this servant of God to see his disciples turn their backs upon him and go after the Lamb of God. They followed Jesus. This is always the effect where the Spirit of God is at work. We turn from every one to Christ, even from those who may have been instrumental in bringing the gospel to us, and to whom under God we owe everything. The Lamb of God fills our vision. This is the effect of all true ministry. The eye is directed to Him alone, and the heart is engaged with Him only. A ministry that has its power in the flesh draws the hearer after the minister. We should esteem those who teach us very highly for their work's sake, but the faithful servant will turn the heart and mind of the hearer to Christ. John preached his congregations away from himself, and he did not turn them to the Pharisees, lawyers or scribes, he turned them to the Son of God.

The two disciples that heard John speak followed Jesus, and He challenged them as to their object in following Him: "What seek ye?" If the Lord were to turn to any of us here to-night and say to us these words, what .

would our answer be? Are we seeking the pleasures of the world or its riches? Are we after the world in any shape? The disciples had but one object before them, they would know where He dwelt. The Lord was a wanderer in this earth. We read in the other gospels that He had not where to lay His head; but in this gospel He has a dwelling-place, and His great delight is to lead the hearts of His own into it. But that home cannot be described in human language; if you want to know it you must "*come and see.*" It was in the bosom of the Father that He found His home, and no one then knew that bosom but Himself. But He had come to conduct others into that place of infinite delight, and the only way in which we could know that place was by knowing the Father and the Son who make that home all that it is.

We read in John xiv. how the Lord says to His disciples, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." One of the disciples cannot understand this and says, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" And the Lord replies to this, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." The Father was declared in Him, therefore in coming to Him they came to the Father. Thus He was the way to the Father. Philip says to

Him, "Shew us the Father," and the Lord answers, as it were, Upon whom have you been looking all the time I have been with you? Whose words have you been listening to? Whose works have you seen? Whose moral nature has been manifested before your eyes? "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

But He was also the truth, for there is no truth as to the Father outside Christ. When I see Him I see God fully revealed, and I see what man is according to the thought of God, and I see the true place and relationship that belongs to man in the counsels of God; and He is also the life in which the Father is to be enjoyed. The life of man in the flesh is corrupt and could never enjoy that scene of holiness and love; it is only in the life of Christ that we can enjoy that home of love. The truth as to that home in which the Son of God dwelt and to which He was leading His disciples can only be learned in His company and as He in the grace of His heart leads us into it.

The whole Gospel of John is the answer to that word, "Come and see." If we want to see where He dwells we must read the pages of this gospel; but we must read prayerfully and seek divine power to enter into what is brought before us there. These two disciples came and saw where He dwelt and they abode with Him that day. No mere creature could have brought the

light of that home to us. It can only be known as we know the Father and the Son; and as we advance in the knowledge of these divine Persons, we are the more able to take in the light of that home of love. The Son came into the world to bring the light of that home to us, and to attract us to it after Himself, and if we get to know that place of infinite blessedness we shall be less attached to this world, and we shall be more ready to follow Jesus out of it into the place where He is gone. And even now we may in the Spirit cross the heavenly door and breathe the atmosphere of that home of peace and love. And let us not put off our going in there until we leave this world. There is no place in the universe where we are so welcome, and no place where we feel so much at home.

How blessed it is to contemplate the Lord in these three characters. He is the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world. By His blood our consciences have been purged and our hearts' affections won, and we have been freed from the dominion of sin. We see not yet creation freed from the presence of sin, but the Lamb of God will accomplish this also, and a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness will crown all His labours for the glory of God. And we know Him who will do this work; it will be Jesus, who loved us and gave Himself for us. He is the One who created

all things in the first instance, and when all things in the heavens and the earth became defiled by sin, He is the One to cleanse away the defilement. The old creation was His *handiwork*, but the new creation will be the work of His *heart*. "Behold, I make all things new." Not merely *renewed*, but *new*. In that new creation there will be no spot or stain of sin. There will be no curse, no death, no sorrow, no crying. Everything will be according to God. The Father's love will pervade the whole redeemed creation. It is the portion of our hearts now, but then we will be in the home of love. How blessed and encouraging it is, in the turmoil and bustle of this selfish world, to turn the eye of faith to that heavenly land where Jesus is with the Father, and to feel that our home is there, and that we are only waiting for Him to come and bring us there, that we may be with Him for ever in His own dwelling-place.



DELIVERANCE.

(ROM. VIII. 1-17.)

My desire is to speak a little on the subject of deliverance. By nature every man is in bondage to sin. The proof of this is that men serve it with every member of their body. Sin is man's master, and pays him wages for his service, and that wages is death. But God has drawn near to men in Christ to deliver from this cruel bondage. We have not apprehended the gospel aright if we have not seen this to be the object of God by it.

The first eight chapters of this epistle are for the most part taken up with shewing the way in which God has effected this deliverance for man. To a large extent the first three chapters are taken up with proving all *under sin*. He says in chapter iii. 9 : " We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." The proof given as to this in both cases is that they serve it. And from this bondage there is no power in man to effect his deliverance. The Jew was highly favoured; God gave him the law, which had he kept he would have lived,

but he broke it and came under its curse. It is here a great and true witness against him. It affirms there is none righteous, no, not one ; none that seeks after God, none that doeth good, not so much as one. God has approached man as a Saviour to deliver him from the service of sin that he may become the servant of God, and that every member of his body may be used in the service of God, that sin may not reign in our mortal body, but that we may be able to present our bodies a living sacrifice to Him, and that they may be only used in His service.

From the middle of chapter iii. to the end of chapter viii. we get how this is effected. In chapter iii. we have the mercy-seat sprinkled with the blood. This is said to be a risen Christ—"Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth." He is set forth in the testimony of the gospel, which is to be believed. Redemption is in Him, and this redemption involves an entirely new state for man. His blood is the witness that the flesh has received its judgment, and has been made an end of, and by the grace of God we have been justified through this redemption. It is impossible that man can be relieved from the righteous judgment of God under which he lies on account of sin and be left in the old standing in the flesh. At the mercy-seat we learn the price that has been

paid for our redemption—the blood of Jesus. The redemption is in Christ Jesus, and this can mean nothing less for us than a change of standing, for it is a transfer from one man to another. This may not be all *learned* at the mercy-seat, before we pass on to that which is more advanced, but the truth is there.

The righteousness of God has been said to be the assertion of His rights, and it may be spoken of in that way; but it may be simpler to some minds to speak of it as the consistency of God in all His actions with His nature and attributes. The creature needs a standard of obligation set before him, the fulfilment of which is his righteousness; but the only standard with which God must be consistent is Himself. In taking the attitude of Saviour towards man He has been consistent with His every attribute and with all that He is in His blessed nature, which is love. So in chapter iii. the righteousness of God is in man's favour, it is unto all and upon all them that believe. It is very wonderful that God has been able to assert His rights in a world of sinners, and yet that in the assertion of His rights He has been able to work deliverance for the sinner. If there should break out in this kingdom rebellion against the king it might be impossible for him to assert his rights in favour of his rebellious subjects. The assertion of his rights would most likely mean

the destruction of those who had taken up arms against him. But God has come out in Christ to assert His rights and yet save the poor sinner. The mercy-seat is where this is learned.

In chapter iv. the God of resurrection is before us. Abraham was the heir of the world; all nations of the earth were to be blest in him. He was to be the father of all them that believe, not only of those amongst the Jews, but of those amongst the Gentiles also. He believed in Him who quickens the dead, and calls those things that be not as though they were. This is the God in whom all believe who are of the faith of Jesus, and the way in which He has brought Himself before us in this character has been in the resurrection of Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification. Believing in God in this character righteousness is reckoned to us. The effect of being justified on the principle of faith is that we have peace with God, access into favour, and the glory of God is our hope. And in addition to all this, the love of God has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Spirit.

In chapter vi. we come to an entirely different line of things. In chapters iii., iv. and v. it is more our conduct with respect to that grace. Were we to go to heaven when we were converted we might not need anything more than

what we get in chapters iii.-v., but as a matter of fact we have to pass through this world where sin reigns and where it dominates every child of Adam, and we need deliverance from its power, so that instead of being servants of sin we should come out here as under the control of God. In this chapter vi. we are regarded by God as dead to sin. It is the ground we are placed on by baptism, and we are to reckon ourselves "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord." We get here set before us the path of life; it is the path of life because it is the path of righteousness: "In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death." (Prov. xii. 28.) Our *members* that were once used in the service of sin are now to be instruments of righteousness, and we are thus to have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. But in chapter vii. we see the impossibility of treading the path of righteousness in our own strength; for this we need divine power. The man described in the latter part of chapter vii. is like a man caught in the rapid current of a river and drifting down to destruction without the slightest ability to change his course. He needs power to stem the current that is against him.

In chapter viii. we have this power. It lies in the Spirit. The apostle says, "The law of the

Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The next verse is of the utmost importance to us if we are to understand the deliverance that has been wrought out for us in the grace of God. The law set no object before our souls except indeed our own blessing if we responded to its demands. It was unable to produce in us what it required, but "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin (by a sacrifice for sin), condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." In the judgment of the cross the whole condition of flesh was brought to an end, and God was declared in His great love on our behalf, so that on the one hand we know that our old man has been crucified with Him, and that we are no longer in the standing and responsibility of a child of Adam, and on the other hand the love of God has been declared, so that He becomes the controlling object of our hearts, and the righteous requirement of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. If we love God we shall fulfil the first table of the law, and if we love our neighbour as ourselves we shall fulfil the second table, for love is the fulfilling of the law. The law does not reveal the love of God;

it tells you to love God, but it does not tell you His love to you. Under law self must be your object ; it cannot be otherwise, it is the end you have in view in all your service ; it is your own blessing. It is so different under grace, in which you are first blest by God in His love, and thus set free to serve Him without thought of your own blessing. This sets us free from the dominion of sin. We are now able to stem the currents of the world. We have a power within that is greater than sin, and that power is the love of God in our hearts, implanted there by the Holy Spirit.

We belong now to another order ; we are after the Spirit. And we mind the things of the Spirit. There are those that are after the flesh, and they mind the things of the flesh ; this is the natural order. They know nothing about the things of the Spirit ; they are not of that order. They that are after the Spirit mind the things of the Spirit. This is the spiritual order. We are brought into contact with a new order of things, things that are natural to us as born of the Spirit. Our minds are diverted from the lusts and pride of man and are fixed upon the love of God, the excellency of Christ and heavenly things.

And by the Spirit we mortify the deeds of the body. We are able now to tread the path marked out for us in chapter vi., we are able

to reckon ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. We are not now self-occupied, but occupied with God. The law occupied us with the sin which it told us we were not to commit, but instead of this helping us it hindered us greatly, for it directed our attention to that to which we were not to live. The Spirit on the other hand occupies us with Him to whom we are to live, and in this there is real deliverance.

The Spirit is also in us as the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father. We know that we have a place in association with Christ before the face of God. We have not reached glory yet; we wait for His power to be put forth which shall change our bodies and make them like His own; but before that day arrives we have the Spirit of God's Son in our hearts awaking in us the affections that belong to the place we have in Christ. He also bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God, and makes intercession for us when we do not know what we should ask for. He will also complete the great deliverance for us by quickening our mortal bodies. The Spirit dwelling in us is the guarantee that our mortal bodies shall come under the quickening power of God. He who raised up Jesus will do this, and when it is done we shall be placed beyond the reach of sin, death and the power of Satan.

What a great gift God has given to us!

There is nothing to equal it. Perhaps some one may say, Is not Christ as great a gift as that of the Spirit? Yes, but He has not quite given Christ *to* us, but rather *for* us. He has given us to Christ, but He has given the Spirit to us. The ground of our deliverance is in the death of Christ, and the power of it is in Christ risen, but the way it is made good in us is in the gift of the Spirit. And He gives the Spirit to them that ask Him. However great the gift of forgiveness may be, it does not quite meet our need. We must have a power in us that is able to set us free from the dominion of sin, and that power is the Spirit of God. And the way in which He operates to set us free from the service of sin is by the knowledge of God. God becomes the great object of our hearts, and in the light of His great love we are glad to put to death the deeds of the body which war against the progress of our souls, and would deprive us of the enjoyment of the light of His face. And as I have already said, His presence in us is the guarantee of complete and final deliverance, for on account of the Spirit that dwells in us He will quicken our mortal bodies. What a great gift the Spirit is !



VICTORY.

(ROM. VIII. 18-39.)

IN the previous verse the apostle speaks of the children of God as heirs and joint-heirs with Christ. That means that believers possess all things, for if heirs of God they must possess all that is His; and as Christ has all things given to Him, and they are joint-heirs with Him, there is nothing that is not theirs. Of course, this involves suffering, but if we suffer with Him we shall also be glorified together. This present time is the time of suffering. Scripture speaks of the sufferings of Christ, and of the glory that should follow. Suffering comes before the glory. Peter calls himself a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory about to be revealed. (1 Pet. v. 1.) In a certain sense the present time is the time of the sufferings of Christ. When He was upon the earth He suffered from the hand of sinful man, and on the cross from the hand of God for us. What He suffered from the hand of God is all over for ever, but He is still the rejected One, and He is still deprived of His rights, and His

people suffer with Him, and in this sense His sufferings continue until the day of His appearing in glory. And when that day comes we shall share His glory with Him.

And here we get the estimate which the apostle put upon these sufferings of ours when he thought of them in the light of the coming glory. He says, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." The day of His glory will be a great day for us; we shall see *Him* glorified, and *we* shall be glorified as His companions. He says to His Father, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them." (John xvii. 22.) We rejoice in hope of this glory as those that will have part in it. And we shall be displayed in it before the world, for it is by this that the world is to know that the Father sent the Son, and has loved us as He has loved Him. Therefore the reckoning of the apostle is, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

And this day of glory is what the groaning creation is waiting for. The creature waits for the manifestation of the sons of God. It has been made subject to vanity. It had no will in the matter; it fell with its head, Adam. He was the one who brought it into its present

condition. But it is not a hopeless fall ; it will be delivered from the bondage of corruption when things are gathered under the headship of the last Adam. In allowing the fall and the subjugation of the creature to vanity, God had its restoration in view under the rule of Christ. It will come into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. The glory of the children of God is their display as sons. The children of God are already manifested, they cannot be more so ; but to be displayed as sons means that we are to be seen in the same glory as Christ. Suffering is connected with the thought of children, but not with sons ; glory is more that which is connected with sons. . So we are said here to await adoption (sonship), to wit, the redemption of our body. In the meantime we have to groan along with the groaning creation. By our bodies we are linked with the old creation, while by the work of God in our souls we are of heavenly origin, and we long for the moment when we shall be clothed with our house which is from heaven. This gives us the full thought of adoption, it involves the redemption of the body.

The creation must wait for deliverance until we are manifested, but we wait only until Christ comes and takes us in. We must go in before we can come out, and we must come out before the groans of creation are silenced. At present

tender-hearted men form themselves into associations for the benefit of the creature, seeking to alleviate its woes, but the creation expects nothing from such societies; it does not look to man or to earth, it looks to the heavens for the manifestation of God's sons. It is not that the creation knows anything of all that we are speaking of, it is the forcible way in which the truth of the blessedness of the glory is brought before our souls. It is the interpretation the Spirit of God puts upon all the suffering that wrings the heart of the creation, and which finds vent in one perpetual groan. But when Christ comes and brings His church with Him all this will cease. The sorrow came in through the first Adam and his bride; the last Adam and His bride will drive it all out. In that day the heart of creation, made for ever glad, will throb forth into the ear of heaven its praises and thanksgivings.

In the meantime the groaning has to be continued, and even we who have the firstfruits of the Spirit groan within ourselves waiting the redemption of the body. And just because we have the Spirit of God we feel the depth of the misery around us more acutely than others, and the pressure is sometimes so great we are able to descry no way out of the troubles that beset us, and though we know our resource is in God we know not what to ask Him for when we go

to Him. Here the Spirit comes in, and joins His help to our weaknesses, making intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. He identifies Himself with us in all our sorrows, and gives intelligent utterance to them in the ear of God. And we are told that He who searches the heart knows what is in the mind of the Spirit, because He makes intercession according to the will of God. He intercedes on that line, not with the object in view of making easy the circumstances of our lives down here, but according to the object the blessed God has in view in all the circumstances through which we are passed, for all our pathway is marked out for us by the finger of God, and is destined to prosper the work of God in our souls.

And when we know this we also know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose. Everything must contribute to the end God has in view. The circumstances of the way must be used to that end; the exercises produced by them keep us from settling down here and drive us nearer to heaven. And the Trinity are of one mind as regards the saints. Counsels belong to the Father, and the Son has declared the Father, and wrought a work on the ground of which those counsels can be fulfilled, and the Holy Spirit has taken up His abode in us to form us according to eternal counsel. We

are predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, and it is for His glory, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. This is what God had in view when He took us up, that we should be like Christ to the eternal delight of God. To bring about this Christ gave Himself for us, and to that end the Spirit works in us. There can be no failure in all this. "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." This was His eternal purpose, and it must be accomplished. If we are predestinated, there is no fear of our not being called. Whatever dark corner of the earth may contain us we must hear the call of God; He will send His word to us and draw us from our hiding-place and bring us to Himself. And He will not fail to justify us: "And whom he justified, them he also glorified." The purpose of God cannot be defeated—Father, Son and Spirit work to one end.

This finishes what the apostle has to say as to the ministry of the grace of God. In the former part of the epistle he has been setting before us the great fact of God's intervention on our behalf. He has been shewing us how God was for us when every other power was against us. God is the last person in the universe we would have accredited with being favourably disposed towards us, and really everything has been

against us but Himself. We lost everything by the fall, and upon God we had no claim, but through His intervention on our behalf we have got a better place than we lost through sin. We lost earth under the first Adam, and we have got heaven under the last Adam. We have been great gainers through the grace of God. To Him be all the glory.

What are we to say to these things? We surely can say this, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Now we begin to boast. Boasting is excluded in chapter iii., because all boasting in the flesh is excluded, and in chapter iii. it is the flesh that is in view. One of the signs of the last evil days is that men shall be boasters (2 Tim. iii.), but their boasting is not in God. The apostle challenges the universe here: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" And there is no answer to this universal challenge. And again the apostle, leading the boast of the saints, sends forth a second challenge: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Do we think God will give us all things? Better ask what He has kept back. Perhaps some may be saying that they would be content with a corner in heaven. There is no doubt about your getting *all* heaven, and even earth as well. "All things are yours." It is not a difficult

thought to take in, we have taken in a greater already. Do you not believe He has given His own Son? And what will He withhold after that? With Him He will freely give us all things.

The apostle was a great boaster. He flings out challenge number three: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" He blows the trumpet in the ears of heaven, earth and hell, and declares that God is the Justifier; who then can condemn? There is no one to take up the challenge of this boaster. He was once the chief of sinners, slave of the powers of darkness. He had lifted up his voice to condemn the saints, when in his blindness he persecuted them, but he learned that to fight against God was to kick against the goads to his own hurt. "It is CHRIST that died." No less a personage than the Son of God gave His life for those saints. But more than that, "He is risen again." He has broken the power of death, and He is at the right hand of God, supreme in the universe, and not only that, but He makes intercession for us, and Him God always hears.

Once more the challenge goes out: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" Every enemy that might be thought likely to do so is named—tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, sword—and in all

these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. These are the enemies that are found in the wilderness; they are not the inhabitants of the land of promise, not the wicked spirits in the heavenly places. But these things cannot separate us from the love of Christ, though they may separate us from our best friends upon earth. But the truth is, it is for His sake that all these things come upon us. But He holds up His hands in intercession for us; they never grow weary. And His eye sees all the difficulties of the way, and He knows all our sorrows, and He sympathises with us and ministers to us all the grace and strength that we need. We are more than conquerors, for tribulation will work patience, and we greatly profit by all our exercises.

Now the apostle says, "I am persuaded." He does not say the Romans were persuaded. It is our privilege to be persuaded as He was, but he does not say we are. He singles himself out three times in this epistle in this way, once in the second verse, where he says that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus had made him free from the law of sin and death. This is so experimental that every one must speak for himself. Then again in verse 18 he says, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." It is not every

believer who reckons in this way. We surely ought to reckon as he did. And now again for the third time he has to say something of the way in which he views things, and he is persuaded that nothing is able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. He was personally persuaded, but he was as fully persuaded about the Romans as about himself. Death, life, angels, principalities, powers, are more spiritual foes and more terrible to meet than those in verse 35; but they cannot separate us from the love of God. *Death* cannot separate us from the love of God, it is in death the love of God has been expressed to us; it is the witness of the love of God to us. *Life* cannot separate us from it, for the love of God is the life in which we live and shall live for ever. *Angels* cannot separate us, for they are appointed in the love of God to minister to us in our journey through an evil world. And they are greatly interested in the grace that has come to us in Christ. And as to evil angels they are powerless to hurt us. Neither can height nor depth rob us of that love. It has been expressed in Christ, and it has found its resting-place in Him, and God has brought us to Himself in the One in whom it rests, and therefore we are persuaded there can be no separation from it. If there is no separation from the love of God for Christ, there is

none for us, for it is in Him that that love is ours.

Our hearts may well rise up in praise and thanksgiving for all that is brought before us in this chapter. It begins with "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," and winds up with "no separation" from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.



THE CROSS AND THE SPIRIT.

(1 COR. II. ; III. 1, 2.)

THE prominent thought in chapter i. of this epistle is the setting aside of the flesh. The Corinthians trusted in the flesh, and followed to a large extent the wisdom of the natural mind. They were forming schools of opinion, and classing themselves under their respective leaders. The apostle charges them with being carnal, or fleshly. The flesh has no place with God ; He has drawn near to us in Christ to deliver us from it. The mind of Christ is that which He forms in the believer, and that is a very different mind from that which is in the natural man. Therefore the cross has a very large place in the beginning of this epistle. He says, "I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." Christ, and Him crucified, was kept very prominently before them.

The cross gives us light as to the value of man's wisdom. The world had been tested for four thousand years, and it had been given long enough time in which to develop the resources of

the fleshly mind. It could not complain of a prematurely unfavourable verdict. The mind of man is very clever and inventive, and has a craving for prying into the secrets of the universe. It is eager after wisdom, and yet has never discovered where true wisdom is to be found. It has never reached up to God, and by its own cleverness never will. The greatest sage upon earth is just as ignorant of God as the greatest fool. There was a day in the history of the world when it could be said man knew God. This was in its infancy, not in its manhood. But the thought of God was not a pleasant one, and it was soon given up. We get an account of that time in Romans i. It is not that men knew God in a saving way, but they had traditions of God which were genuine, and which they did not question, and His power and divinity were manifest to them in the things that He had made. But instead of being thankful for the light they had, they very quickly gave Him up and turned to idolatry. Their fancied wisdom was the rock upon which they perished, and which manifested their folly. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man, and to birds, and to quadrupeds, and creeping things. This was the course of the wisdom of man. Then after man had had time to put into operation the forces of

his mind God Himself came into the world. He who made the world was in it in the Person of Christ. His name was called Jesus, which means Jehovah the Saviour ; He was also called Emmanuel, which means God with us. But the creature knew not his Creator. This brought to light the value of his vaunted wisdom. And the Jew was just as ignorant as the Gentile, though his privileges had been greater. God manifest amongst men was despised, rejected, hated, condemned and crucified. So in the cross is set forth the value of human wisdom. And we must keep in mind that it was not the ignorant and uncultivated of the populace that were thus exposed in all their ignorance and blindness, but it was the leaders of the world. No doubt the crowd cried, " Away with him ! crucify him ! " but it was the leaders of the world that stirred them up to this. It was the learned, the refined, the educated and the moral—man at his best estate that crucified Christ. What am I to think of the wisdom of the flesh after that ? After such an exhibition of its criminal stupidity am I to follow where it leads, or put the smallest confidence in it ? And it is not only that the flesh has been proved worthless in its wisdom, its *enmity* against God has also come to light in that same cross ; for it not only did not know Him, but it hated Him, and could not bear His presence in the world. The cross is the eternal

witness of the dreadful evil of the flesh. How could it ever be forgotten that the rebellion of the creature was such that the Creator clothed in flesh was gibbeted by the hands of man? Who would have thought that the evil of the heart of man was so great? But it is all out now, and exposed in all its hideousness, that we may know it and never trust it again.

But this is only one side of the cross. There is also God's side of it as well as man's. The cross shews us the judgment of God upon that which would not have Him even in grace. The cross is man's place in the judgment of God. This is why Christ accepted the cross from the hand of man. He refused to allow Himself to be stoned, but when they condemn Him to the cross He allows Himself to be led away. If God was to take the place of Saviour on behalf of man, He will set forth the judgment of man's state before every intelligent being. The cross is the great evidence of the hostility of the flesh to God, and it is also the great witness of the condemnation that was justly its portion from His hand. The cross was the death of a malefactor, and the venom and wickedness of the heart of man condemned the Son of God to that death; but death as the judgment of God lay upon man, and in the righteousness of God it was bound to be executed. But in the execution

of that judgment we get expressed the thought of the abhorrence in which God held the flesh. We get a picture of this in the Old Testament. When God sent king Saul to destroy the Amalekites (1 Sam. xv.) he spared Agag and the best of the spoil. Samuel takes the execution of Agag in hand, and hewed him in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal. Had Saul passed his sword through his body on the battle-field it would have been enough, but in the hands of the man of God the whole extent of the judgment that was his portion comes to light, and he is hewn in pieces. In the judgment executed by Samuel we get the abhorrence in which Agag was held by God, for God had said He would have war with Amalek for ever. There would never be peace concluded with that family. So in the cross we get all that God is expressed against sin, and against the flesh in which it had its seat. We see man hung upon a gibbet, darkness over all the earth, the sin-bearer crying to God and confessing Himself forsaken; and in this we learn what sin is in the sight of God, and what the flesh is in His account.

But there is another thing to be learned there; there is the love of God to man, for it is the Son of God who hangs there bearing man's judgment, and there as sent by God in the great love of His blessed heart. God has approached man in this way to deliver him from the judgment that

rested upon him on account of sin, and from the flesh whose nature was enmity against Him, and that man might be set up in a new way in the power of the Spirit. God has drawn near to us not only to deliver us from our sins but from the principle of sin within us. And this is accomplished by the condemnation of the whole condition of flesh in which man has his standing in Adam, and by the gift of the Spirit, which forms in the believer a new fountain of life. He is no longer in flesh but in Spirit, once the Spirit of God dwells in him. He has his standing in Christ, and as in Christ *he is of God*. We are told in chapter i., "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus." This has been brought about by the revelation of the love of God in Christ. In Christ it is all new creation, and there all things are of God. We owe our new moral nature to the revelation of the love of God. This is very different from the old creation even in innocence. Adam was of God in a sense; he was the handiwork of God, who formed him out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man thus became a living soul. But we are *born of God*. He has begotten us by the revelation of His love. All who are in Christ are of God; they derive from Him; they have His nature; they love, and "He that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (1 John iv. 7); and all such are *in Christ*. And He

has become wisdom to us and all else that we need.

I would remark, before I pass on to anything else, that God is always consistent with the cross. He has not set flesh aside in His judgment and then gone on with it as if nothing had taken place. The gospel is not to be preached in words that appeal to the fleshly emotions of men. Paul did not come among the Corinthians in excellency of speech or of wisdom. This would have been a denial of the cross, for the cross was the end of the flesh before God, and had His servant been found preaching in a way that would have been calculated to arouse its sensibilities, it would have been a denial of the true meaning of the cross. The second thing is the call of God, and in this we see Him also in harmony with the cross. He has not called many of the great and the learned and the noble; but He has chosen "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; the base things of the world, and things that are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence." The wise and the scribe and the disputer of this world were not found in the christian assembly.

But if the apostle had confined himself to the

simplest elements of the gospel when among the Corinthians, it was not because there was nothing great in the things that had been committed to him. He says, "We speak wisdom among them that are perfect." It was not the wisdom of this world, which is folly, and will vanish away. He spoke the wisdom of God in a mystery. This wisdom was as much greater than the wisdom of the world as the mind of God is greater than the mind of man. It was as yet unrevealed. It was hidden, though it had been disclosed to the apostles, but it was as yet shut up with Christ within the veil, and known only to those who had the power given them of God to take it in. These things are prepared of God for them that love Him. He has a right to make preparation for His friends. Men claim that privilege, and so does the blessed God. Now these deep things of God were in the first place made known to the apostles. No natural man has any power to take in these things. They are not the things of a man. It is not merely because he is a sinner that he cannot take them in; they are not things that belong to man either as innocent or guilty. They are the things of God, and to know them man must have the Spirit of God. Believers get the Spirit that they may know them, for these things are ours by the grace of God. But it is not enough to have the Spirit,

we must have made some advance out of childhood into full growth before we can be able to enter upon these vast things. They are hidden from the eye of all flesh. The greatest mind ever formed never received the slightest impression of them. The blind know not the beauty of colour, nor the deaf the sweet sound of the human voice or the enchanting strains of music, and yet the blind know more about colour, and the deaf know more about sound than the greatest philosopher knows about the things that God has prepared for them that love Him. I know the things of a man because I am a man, but I know not the things of an angel, and perhaps were I told about them I might not understand them any more than the blind could be made to understand the glory of the rising sun; neither could I know the things of God had I not His Spirit. But having His Spirit I have access into His depths: "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." How very wonderful all this is! We hear of the depths of Satan in Revelation iii. To know the depths of Satan must be a terrible advance in wickedness; none of us have any desire to fathom these depths. But the depths of God! How blessed it is to explore those vast, fathomless depths! And He would have us know them, and He has given us His Holy Spirit that we may know them. But if we have

the Spirit let us be under the power of the Spirit, and let us not be trusting to the natural mind, which is of no value in the things of God.

We need to know the cross better, and we need to be more in the power of it. We are in the midst of a scene that has little or no knowledge of the true meaning of the cross, and we are apt to be influenced by it in our ways. Men are accepted now not for their spirituality but for their worldly wisdom and their natural endowments. They may be altogether without God and yet rank high in the religious world. It only shews us how far Christendom has dropped from the mind of God. The cross is *the end of the flesh and all its pretensions*, and you and I are to be formed in the mind of Christ. In His school we are formed after Himself. He says, "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart." No school of divinity ever made a man meek and lowly in heart. They make men proud, haughty and self-important; but Christ will form us according to the mind of God.

The beginning of our instruction in the school of Christ is the cross. There we get right thoughts about ourselves, and there, too, we get right thoughts about God. We learn what the wisdom of man amounts to, and what the love of God is. We see man's wisdom is only folly

and we no longer trust to it. But we are not by this left destitute of wisdom; the wisdom of God absorbs all our attention, and we find depths there that are unsearchable. And all this is found in Christ, for in Him all the mind of God is expressed, and in Him is found endless wisdom.



THE PATH OF FAITH.

(PSA. XVI.; HEB. XII. 1, 2.)

THIS psalm sets before us the spirit in which Christ trod the path of dependence through this world. He is said to be the author and finisher of faith. He left us an example that we should follow in His steps. Like the good Shepherd, He has gone before the sheep, and they are to follow. There was no one to go before Him, no one to mark out a path for Him through this waste. He depended entirely upon God for every step of the way. Not that He needed light or guidance for His path, for in whatever circumstances He was at any time found He never was less than God manifest in the flesh; but He was pleased for the glory of God to take the form of a servant and to come into this work in the likeness of men, and having taken the place of a man it was a very real thing with Him, and involved a life of obedience and dependence upon God.

In the previous psalm the law speaks to those under it and says, "They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good." But in verse 5 we get God in the generation of the righteous. In the midst of the corrupt nation of Israel there were those

that were of God. Then in Psalm xv. we get that generation described, and of them it is said they shall abide in His tabernacle, and dwell in His holy hill; and in Psalm xvi. we have the blessed Lord identifying Himself with them; He speaks of them as the "saints that are in the earth, and the excellent." He declares His place both with regard to Jehovah and to these saints. As to Jehovah He says, "My goodness extendeth not unto thee," and as to the saints He says, "In whom is all my delight." He had taken the form of a servant, and it was a place inferior to God, and He must fill it, and hence He says that His goodness extends not to Jehovah. It is no question of what He was personally, but of the place He had taken as man. And as it was on account of the saints He had taken this place He has all His delight in them. These saints were not much in man's account, but they were of great account in the mind of Christ. In the world they were only babes. Babes are not consulted in the affairs of this world; they have no power to change the course of events. Jesus speaking to the Father says, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes." Such was the generation of the righteous. They were not the wise, the great, the noble and the powerful; they were the weak, the poor and the despised. But what-

ever they were, they were the chosen of God and the excellent of the earth. Peter, James and John were not much in the estimation of the world, but they were great in the mind of heaven, and they were the gift of the Father to the Son, and He spoke of them as "His own" and identified Himself with them. They were to ascend into the holy hill of God; His counsels had given them a place there, and they were to abide in His tabernacle. Their names were written in heaven, and that was better than the best place on earth.

And Jesus came to lead them into that place. But if He was to lead them there He must come right down to where they were, and break the power of death that lay upon them, and destroy the one who had the might of it, and who held them in bondage through the fear of it. This He has done. He has also made propitiation for our sins, and knowing all the difficulties of the way, having suffered being tempted, He is able to succour them that are undergoing temptation.

In this psalm we get the spirit in which He entered upon the path marked out for Him in the will of God, and the energy that characterised Him the whole way through it. Dependence upon God and confidence in Him marked this blessed One from beginning to end. He enters the path holding up holy hands to God.

He says, "Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust." He realises that no creature power is sufficient to carry one through this world in safety. Nothing less than the power of God will do for the difficulties that beset the soul on the heavenward journey. The great object of the enemy is to throw the soul in self-confidence upon its own resources, and thus deprive it of the help of God. It was thus the devil sought to drive the Lord from the path of absolute dependence. He said to Him, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." By occupying Him with His personal greatness he thought to cause Him to forget the place He had taken as man. But the Lord, ever perfect, meets him with, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." And again, setting Him on the pinnacle of the temple, he said to Him, "Cast thyself down from hence: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone." But again the enemy is met with the word from the mouth of God, by which the servant is to keep himself from the paths of the destroyer: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." All this shews us the marvellous place of humiliation that the Creator of the worlds had taken.

Upon this path the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews sought to lead those to whom he wrote. The Spirit of God would lead us away from dependence upon anything in ourselves. There is a tendency to trust to the work of God in us, as if His work in our souls could make us self-sufficient. We often hear the question, If a soul is born again—if he is a sheep of Christ—if he has received the Spirit, can he perish? Why do people ask these questions if there is not a thought lurking somewhere in the mind that a man by virtue of the work of God in him is beyond the need of being kept by the power of God? Every man will most assuredly perish unless God keeps him. No doubt God will keep all who trust in Him, but we have to trust in Him. No one born again or who has received the Spirit will ever perish, but the reason of this is because God holds them by His almighty power, and it is not because of any virtue that lies in themselves. Scriptures that speak of the eternal security of the saint generally speak in an abstract manner, and not direct to any individual. When we are addressed directly we are told to “take heed” and “hold fast” and “continue.” And these admonitions are very salutary. It is true that the sheep of Christ shall never perish, but it is also true that they hear the voice of the Shepherd and follow Him. The great thing for us to take heed to is the

spirit in which Christ crossed this world and follow in His steps, and if we do all will be well.

And God was enough for Christ in His pathway down here. He says, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup." Jesus had nothing in this world, He had no portion down here. But God was enough for Him. Corn and wine make glad the hearts of men; but He could say, "Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased." (Psa. iv. 7.) And it is so with the saint who is found in the pathway of Jesus. There were no happier men in Philippi than Paul and Silas, though cruelly beaten and bound in a dungeon. They had nothing to comfort them but the love of God, but this was more than all the rest of the city had, and it filled their lips with praises. The Lord was the portion of their cup, and therefore their cup ran over. They were realising in that dungeon what the Lord realised when here below—the sufficiency of God.

"Thou maintainest my lot." Christ has prepared and keeps a place for us in heaven. Our lot is there with Himself; He has prepared the place and He keeps it for us, and also us for it, and we can surely say, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." Many a man is not satisfied

with the portion which has fallen to him in this world, and envies his neighbour who has, in his estimation, been more fortunate. Christ had His portion in the love of God, and so have we through grace, and nothing can separate us from it. It is indeed a goodly heritage.

Next, He says, "I will bless the Lord who has given me counsel." He is our Counsellor, and infinite in wisdom, and for every step of the journey we need divine guidance. Our own wisdom would be valueless to us, and if we were dependent upon it we should quickly lose our way. But our very affection for Christ helps us in our pathway, for where our hearts are true to Him we are quicker to detect what is not of Him and we do not so readily turn aside; thus our "reins also instruct us in the night seasons." In the night seasons when the worldling is asleep the affections of the saint are awake, he meditates on Christ and receives instruction.

"I have set the Lord always before me." The goal before us is Christ in glory, and with our eye fixed on Him where He is we run with patience the race set before us. There is nothing in the path to harm us. It is the path trodden by the Son of God, and from that path He has removed every hurtful thing. There is nothing to fear or to dread. We need only fear getting

off the path ; there we would be in great danger, but on it we are quite safe. All the grace and sympathy and strength we need is ministered to us from on high. The Son of God who is our great High Priest is able to save us to the uttermost. The difficulties of the way are all known to Him, and He is able to carry us through. We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. And pleasures for evermore await us in the place to which we are called. This place had attraction for the heart of Christ, and no one knew the fulness of joy that was there but Himself. He has told us of it, and has brought the light of it into our hearts, and also He is there Himself, and because of this we desire to reach it. For the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising the shame. Nothing detained Him down here, and nothing hindered Him in His race. He despised the shame ; He could well afford to do that, and though He could not despise the cross, because it was the judgment of God against sin, He could endure it. The path of life led through death into the glory of God, and there there were fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

The saints of this dispensation have a heavenly calling, and this is brought forward in this epistle, the object being to get them to abandon earth and take their journey heavenward, and everything needful for them on the way is

ministered to them from a heavenly Christ. He has gone before and secured the place for His people, and the spirit in which He trod the path is the spirit in which we are to tread it. We are to lift up the hands that hang down, this is the attitude of dependence. The feeble knees are to be strengthened by the grace of God. The eyes are to be fixed upon the goal—Jesus at the right hand of God. We are also to make straight paths for our feet; the allusion is to Proverbs iv.: “Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.” Our ears also are to be open to His voice; we are not to turn away from Him that speaks. We prove ourselves His sheep by having an open ear to His voice. He says, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” (John x. 27.)

If our hands grow heavy and our knees grow feeble, and our ears become dull of hearing and our eye gets off Jesus, and our feet wander away into the dark avenues of the world, destruction must inevitably result. Let us keep Christ well before our souls, and let us run with patience the race set before us, for at the end of the journey lie fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

THE WORLD TO COME.

(HEB XII. 18-29.)

THERE is a great distinction made in these verses which I have read, between that which we are said *not* to have come to, and that which we are said to *have* come to. We have not come to the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words ; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be addressed to them any more. This was the mount from which the demand of God upon man was uttered, and that demand was accompanied with all those indications of divine majesty and terror, which made the hearts of the people quake within them. The words spoken conveyed the righteous demand of God to the ears of the people ; but not one of them could listen to it. There was nothing set forth but what man ought to be ; he owed to God all that he was asked to pay, and there were indications given that there was power to enforce the demand, or execute wrath where the demand was not complied with. The

people could not bear to hear the full measure of their responsibilities recited in their ears, and they fled from the sound of the voice of God. Moses, the man of God, trembled at the terrible sight. It was as if God were, like the creditor in the parable (Matt. xviii.), determined to have from man payment in full of all he owed.

But *we* are not come to this character of things. We are not called upon to hear what we ought to be thundered into our ears from the midst of the thick darkness and the devouring fire, where the lightnings flash wrathful before our affrighted vision, ready to strike to the earth the unhappy creature who brings not to the uttermost farthing the full payment of his debt. We are come to the hill of grace, and to the city bright with the glory of God, and to an order of things that speak in our ears of the kindness and love of God. But I would like to set before you in the first place *how* we are come to these things, and in the second place *why* we are come to them.

All these things will be in manifestation in the world to come; at the present moment they are established in Christ, and all that is true of mount Zion and of the heavenly Jerusalem is testified to us in the gospel. In the scriptures we have the present age, and the age to come. In chapter ii. of this epistle the writer says, "Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection

the world to come, whereof we speak." The gospel speaks of the coming of Christ who will be supreme in the world that will be established under His reign; and that world in which He will be supreme is the world for which we look. The present world is of the rebellious will of man, and it must come to an end, and it will be brought to an end by Christ at His appearing, and He will reign in righteousness, and order everything to the glory and delight of God. He will see to it that the will of God shall be done on earth, as it is done in heaven. The professing church has almost lost sight of the coming of Christ, but the gospel testifies of it, and it is the great hope put before the believer. The present dispensation is of faith, and the one who believes the gospel receives the Holy Spirit, who puts his soul in contact with all that will be brought to the earth in the way of blessing at the coming of Christ. In this way we anticipate the world to come. We are in the light of all that which will be brought out of heaven by Christ in a public way in the day of His manifestation. In that day will be brought to light all that God is for man in the grace and love of His heart. It will not be only in *testimony*, as it is to-day, but it will be *public*; it will be the principle upon which that world will be ordered. It will not be like the word spoken from the burning mount which struck terror to the hearts

of all that heard, nor will it be the word that has reached our ears, the life-giving word of faith in the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, but it will be all that that word speaks of brought near to man in public display ; it will be God Himself taking up the government of the world by Christ, clearing the earth and heavens from the presence of evil, abolishing death, and making every heart rejoice in the grace and goodness of heaven. To-day we come into these things by faith, and in the power of the Spirit ; therefore we can be said to have come to them.

Mount Zion is the hill of grace, God makes His dwelling there, there He sets His King, and there He commands the blessing—LIFE FOR EVERMORE. He sets His King upon Zion for the blessing of man. He raises Him up for the salvation of His people. The object in raising up a king is for the salvation of the subject. Saul was raised up for this purpose, but he was not the choice of God ; he was the choice of the people ; he was a man after *their* heart, and he was a bad king. But God removed him and set up the shepherd of Bethlehem, who was a man after the heart of God. As he had shepherded his father's sheep, he was to shepherd the people of God ; and he fed them with the integrity of his heart, and guided them with the skilfulness of his hands. He is a type of the true King, the Lord Jesus, the Son of God. And by coming to

Him, and submitting to Him, we come by faith and in the power of the Spirit into all the benefit of the kingdom in a spiritual way.

Then as to the New Jerusalem, it is the city of light. It has the glory of God. We get a description of it in the Revelation. Her light is said to be like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. All the light of God is there, and the saved of the nations will walk in the light of it. It has the river of the water of life, and the tree of life, and the throne of God and of the Lamb. It will minister to the world all the blessing that is in the heart of God for man. But this is all in Christ to-day, and we come into these things by coming to Christ.

But *why* have we come to them in this day before they are displayed to the world? We have come to them in Christ, I believe, that they may exert an influence upon us, and that we may be formed by them. The fact is, these things have no actual fulfilment as yet. Mount Zion is at present a heap of ruins, and the New Jerusalem has no actual present existence. When it is really manifested, it will be seen to be composed of the saints of this dispensation.

Mount Zion is established in Christ glorified at the right hand of God. But in the description of the city given in Revelation the throne is there. Now we could well understand a throne being in any of the great cities of the world

which are capitals of kingdoms, but the New Jerusalem is in reality a company of people, and to understand this we need to know that the government of the world is committed to the saints. Possibly some of us would be ready to say that we would be very unfit people to be set to govern the world; yet the apostle tells the Corinthian saints that they shall not only judge the world, but angels also. This is the time in which the throne is being builded into the saints. We are made fit for reigning by being taught how to obey. No man has any right to exercise authority over others who is unable to obey those who are over him. Saul was made king before he was tested, and when the test came he failed most miserably; and he was rejected from being king because of his disobedience to God. He thought that there was no sin in the world but the sin of witchcraft, but he has to learn that "Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness as iniquity and idolatry." He is also told that to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. As he was unable to obey, God judged he was unable to reign. But David was well tested before he was exalted to sit on the throne, and he proved himself well able to obey. He was the anointed of God, and the throne was his by right, yet was he hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, and had no certain dwelling-place, but he could

await God's time in full confidence in His infinite wisdom and love. And it is only such an one that can rightly demand obedience from others. Saul was a man after the heart of the people, one of whom the carnal mind of man would approve; but David was a man after God's heart, and he loved the people over whom he was appointed to reign.

And Christ has also been well tested. His pathway to the throne was a pathway of humiliation and suffering. He was tried in the furnace of affliction, and it only brought to light His infinite perfections. "He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." God can confidently put everything into the hand of such an one as Christ. He will reign in righteousness.

And we are to reign with Him. The throne is found in the saints in the day of His glory. We are being educated in view of the place we are to take. In that way the throne is being established in the saints, they are being passed through suffering and affliction and are being

instructed in the knowledge of God, that they may be able to give the law to the whole world. It is really Christ that is being built into our souls, for all that is found in the city in the day of display is now found in Him. All the light of God which will shine out of the city is now in Him, and the water of life is in Him, and the wisdom and the power to order the whole universe according to God are only in Him, and He is the tree of life, and everything that will make that city a blessing to men is in Him. In coming to Him we come into the good of these things, and the light of God gets into our hearts; we eat of the tree of life, and drink of the water of life, and in this way the things that characterise the city get built into our souls, and thus the city, which is the bride of Christ, is formed to be His companion. Out of the first Adam Eve was builded to be a companion for him, and out of the last Adam, in this day of faith and the Spirit, is being builded a bride to be His companion in the day of His glory. Everything will be in the city in the day of the manifestation of Christ for the blessing of man, even the throne will be in it, for the saints shall judge the world. We are being formed for this now. The reigning time has not yet come, we are now suffering with Christ, but if we suffer with Him we shall reign with Him.

Then there is a wall great and high around the city, and that, like everything else, is being formed in the saints; we are being made partakers of His holiness.

The church cannot be spoken of as the new Jerusalem at present; it is being builded, as I have said, as Eve was builded out of Adam. And the way in which this is being accomplished is by the saints of this dispensation being brought into the light of all these things in Christ risen, and in this way we are formed. Jerusalem that is above is said to be our mother. (Gal. iv. 26.) And Jerusalem is *now* above; as Eve was in Adam before she had an actual existence, so Jerusalem is at the present moment above in Christ.

Then we get the "innumerable company of angels." Representatives of all the heavenly hosts will attend the second advent of Christ into the world to do homage to Him in the day of His coronation. As at the coronation of a great earthly monarch there are gathered representatives from distant lands to do him honour, so will the vast principalities and powers attend the procession of the Son of God from the heavens and bow the knee to Him.

Then we have the church of the first-born ones, whose names are written in heaven. We are citizens of heaven. We shall have to do with earth in that glorious day, but we are

always a heavenly people. Then we have God the Judge of all, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and the blood of sprinkling.

The gospel speaks of all these things, and calls us to them, and now we get the exhortation, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." The word is the revelation of God in Christ, and by this word we are formed for the place God intends to give us, and it is a very blessed place. This word has been spoken by the Lord, and has been confirmed unto us by them that heard Him. That voice is to sound louder and sweeter in our hearts than all the voices of the world. May we not be found turning a deaf ear to it.

