

# MEDITATIONS

ON THE

CHRISTIAN'S STANDING, STATE,

VOCATION,

WARFARE, AND HOPE.

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## NOTE.

The following brief "*Meditations*" have been written chiefly with the view of helping young Christians. The subjects embraced are both fundamental and practical; and all necessary to the complete understanding of Christianity.

As the plenary inspiration and divine authority of the scriptures are now so openly and daringly called in question by many, it is most needful for all, but especially for the young, to be well instructed and well grounded in the truth of God. "*It is written,*" should be our watchword. One line of scripture is of more value than a thousand theories.

May the Lord, in His grace, be pleased to use what has been written, for His own glory, and the good of many souls.

So prays, &c.,

*London.*

A. M.

# MEDITATIONS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### THE CHRISTIAN'S STANDING.

EPHESIANS I. 15—23.

THERE are two things with which every believer in Christ Jesus should be well acquainted; they are of the utmost importance to us, individually. We refer to what may be called, *the Christian's standing and state*: his standing before God in Christ; and the state, practically, which answers to that high and holy standing.

What theme can be more uplifting and strengthening to the soul that knows the Saviour? Let it be thine, O my soul, for a little while—yea, for ever. Meditate, I beseech thee, on this soul-elevating theme! Depend, in all simplicity, on the presence of the Holy Ghost, who only can reveal the person and position of Christ, and make good to thee, experimentally, thy place in Him. “Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the

glory of God." (Rom. v. 1, 2.) Already, by faith, we possess and enjoy, in Christ, everything but glory. This is plain from the passage before us. Being justified—having peace—standing in grace—waiting for glory. We only wait for glory—"the glory of God." And even with that we are now linked in the most blessed way, having Christ in the heart, the hope of glory. "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Col. i. 27.

The Person, work, and position of Christ, necessarily become, with such a theme, the blessed objects of the soul's happy meditations. His *humiliation* and *glory*, as the beloved Son of the Father, fill the whole vision of the soul. Fellowship with the Father and the Son is enjoyed. Love is created in the heart, by the contemplation of His love. In meditating on the Christian's standing and state, Christ Himself must be the centre of our thoughts and of our worshipful adorations; the heart must overflow, through nearness to Him, in grateful praise. As we *stand* in Him, we must know His standing in order to know our own; and as we are *loved* in Him, we must know the Father's love to the Son, before we can know His love to us. And surely, in the proportion that we enter into these blessed subjects, and are thus occupied with Christ, our *state*

here below will be the reflection of our *standing* in Him above.

The two prayers of the apostle in his Epistle to the Ephesians most fully, and in order, bring before us the subject of our present meditations. Follow then, I pray thee, my soul, this divine order. And grant, O Lord, that I may see, in thy light, the wondrous depths and heights of thy path and glory, as the once suffering but now exalted Man: and that I may also taste the sweetness of thy love, and know the inward power of the Holy Spirit. Oh! that these fervent breathings of thy servant—so long uttered—so often read, but, alas, so little heeded—may yet be fully answered in my experience, and also in the happy experience of all who may read these meditations!

Mark then, my soul, that the apostle in chapter i. 15—23, prays that the saints might know their place, or *standing*, in the risen and glorified Man, Christ Jesus—that they might have a deep and real apprehension of their place before God in Him, as exalted above all principalities and powers. Consistent with this truth, the saints are exhorted in the last chapter of this Epistle, to maintain their standing against every foe. “Stand therefore,” says the apostle; he does not say *advance*: there is no higher or better place to reach. Hence the word is, “stand therefore . . . and having done all, to stand.” In chapter iii. 14—21 he again prays that they might know, and be in that

*state* of soul which answers to this standing. Hence, he says nothing in the second prayer about being exalted and glorified, but rather, that they might be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man—that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, and that they might be rooted and grounded in love. The latter is as clearly *state* as the former is *standing*.

Secured in Christ, their Head on high,  
The saints below may boldly cry—  
Praise to our God, Amen!  
To God in Christ all praise be given—  
For evermore, on earth, in heaven.  
Amen! Amen! Amen!

Observe further, in thy meditations, and carefully note, as of all importance, that these two prayers are founded on the two great relationships in which God stands to Christ, and, consequently, to us in Him. This is the key to the better understanding, not only of the two prayers, but of the whole epistle. The apostle commences with this twofold relationship, and has it in his mind all through the epistle: "Blessed be the *God* and *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ." He is our God and Father in Him. Immediately after our Lord arose from the dead, He made known this great truth. It is based on accomplished redemption. "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God." (John xx. 17.)



Blessed fruit of the Saviour's death and resurrection!

The first prayer is addressed to "the *God* of our Lord Jesus Christ." The second, to "the *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ." And we find that the main thought in each prayer answers perfectly to these titles. Power and glory, as displayed in the risen Man, characterize the first. Relationship and love characterize the second. The Father loves the Son, and as Son He has His own place without being exalted. It is as man, once humbled for our sins, and having glorified God in putting them away, that He is exalted, and we in Him. *Love and glory* are the happy themes of the truth now before us. Love to the Son—glory to the Man—and we, loved and glorified in Him, and as He is. Blessed truth! Precious to our souls! What grace! what love! what glory! Can anything but praise be heard throughout eternity?

But the fulness of these wondrous truths will be better seen as we meditate on the different parts and petitions of the two prayers.

Verses 15, 16, "*Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.*" How much to say of an assembly of saints—of whom could the apostle say as much now? But Christ had His

right place in their hearts, and the saints, as a consequence, had theirs. These two things go together. Faith in Christ—love to the saints. The one is the fruit of the other. The saints will have a very small place in our hearts if Christ has not His own place there. Viewed in this light, “Love unto all the saints,” becomes a true test of our nearness to Christ, by faith. Merely to love those that suit us—whose disposition and ways are agreeable to us, would not answer to the description here given of the Ephesians. Not that we could love all Christians alike, that would be impossible; but we are to love all as the children of God, and for what we see of Christ in them. We must look at them from His point of view, not our own. True, we may have our special friends amongst the saints of God, and it may be profitable to have such; but we must be careful in manifesting our special affection for some, lest we should wound or discourage others. Largeness of heart and true affection should be cultivated for the whole family of God.

But knowest thou, O my soul, the secret of reaching and maintaining this Christ-like condition—“Love unto all the saints”—not unto *some*, observe, but unto *all* the saints? There is only one way, we believe, of manifesting this rare feature of our practical Christianity. Know, then, that we must ourselves be living sufficiently near the Lord to see the saints in His light, and learn His thoughts

about them. This, and this alone, rest assured, will lift thee above all that may be unlovely in the saints; and from being occupied with self, which always hinders our love to others. Outside of God's presence we are selfish. It is only when in His presence that we lose our selfishness. "If we walk in the light as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." (1 John i. 7.) God must have the *first place*, if we are to love one another as His children.

Take an example: The great apostle of the Gentiles was imprisoned at Rome. Everything in his circumstances was calculated to depress and weigh him down. But they did not, they could not. And yet what position could be more trying? Cut off from his friends—from visiting the churches—from the work of the gospel—in old age—in want. And more, trial from a very different quarter came upon him: many, taking advantage of his imprisonment, became very prominent in the work of the gospel, though in a wrong spirit; "supposing," as he says, "to add affliction to my bonds." *But* for his unselfish, large, loving heart, this must have been a great grief to him. But the glory of Christ, and the conversion of souls, were dearer to the apostle than his personal liberty, and his share in the work; therefore, as one far above their influence, he could say, "What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice,

yea, and will rejoice." "Many who"—as one has beautifully said, "in the presence of his power and his gifts, were necessarily powerless and insignificant persons—could make themselves of some importance when, in the unsearchable but perfect ways of God, this mighty instrument of His grace was set aside; they could hope to shine and attract attention when the rays of this resplendent light were intercepted by the walls of a prison. Jealous, but hidden when he was present, they availed themselves of his absence to bestir themselves—whether false brethren or jealous Christians, they sought in his absence to impair his authority in the Church, and his happiness. They only added to both. God was with His servant; and, instead of the self-seeking, which instigated these sorry preachers of the truth, there was found in Paul a pure desire for the proclamation of the good news of Christ, the whole value of which he deeply felt, and which he desired above all, be it in what way it might."

In writing to his beloved Philippians from the prison at Rome, his heart overflows with joy and love, in spite of everything. His joy in God abounds, and his love to the saints. The children are loved for the Father's sake, and when this is the case, *all* are loved. "I thank my God," he says, "upon every remembrance of you. Always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy." A stream of love flowed from that

dreary dungeon to the refreshing of the churches—of all the saints; and which has been flowing ever since, to the refreshing of the saints in all ages. Instead of being cast down or terrified by his enemies, he nobly rose above them all, and had his eye and his heart more effectually turned to Christ, and to his saints, than ever. What but conscious nearness to the Lord could give such holy victory? The enemy might be permitted to take his liberty from him, and to cast him amongst common criminals; but he could not take his Christ from him, or his love to the saints. Noble example! Blessed lesson for our souls! May we seek to learn it, and faithfully to follow it!

Verse 17. "*That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.*" The connection between *teaching* and *praying* is most intimate and beautiful. We naturally turn from teaching or preaching to prayer. It is God's way of relieving the heart. But for the relief which is found in prayer, the heart would soon sink beneath the solemn responsibility of ministering in the weighty matters of the soul. Eternal things may be seen in such a light, and realized in such power, from earnestly pressing their importance upon others, that a weight the most solemn and depressing may be left on the mind. Hence the need of a burden-bearer.

If we attach *Eternity* to the destinies of our hearers, we invest them with an interest, an importance, and a magnitude, which are altogether overwhelming. Compared with *Eternity*, everything which can be reckoned by time dwindles into utter insignificance. How, where, can relief from the pressure of such thoughts be found? Only in prayer. The testimony, the souls, the eternal results, and the conscious shortcomings too, must all be cast upon God.

To this divine refuge—this place of repose and strength—the great apostle now turns. For the moment he takes the place of intercessor. And now, mark, I pray thee, my soul—carefully mark—the *character* of this divinely inspired prayer. Thou hast here the apostle before thee, both as a teacher and as an intercessor. Blessed example!—it is worthy of thy closest study. And first, observe the perfect harmony there is between his prayer and the truths he had just been teaching. He says nothing in his prayer about the forgiveness of sins, or that they might receive the Holy Spirit. What is this? thou mayest enquire. The answer is, that the *tone* of his prayer is not below the *tone* of his teaching. Some seem to pull down in their prayers what they have confessedly been building up in their teaching. Not so the apostle. He is perfectly consistent. He seeks to bind up more closely in prayer what he has built up as a teacher.

The difference, we are ready to admit, between the *tone* of the teaching and the prayers, to which we have referred, may flow from a sense of unworthiness on the mind of him who is ministering in the things of God. And this, in its own place, is to be admired; but, nevertheless, we may falsify the word of God, and contradict our own statements, by praying according to our feelings, or a supposed becoming humility. Intelligence in the word is to be looked for; it is our only safe guide, and the medium of the Holy Spirit's action. At the same time, the prayer may be a truer index of the state of the heart in the presence of God, than the doctrines which have been advanced. The Lord knows. O my soul, judge thyself!—solemnly, constantly, judge thyself! And may He enable all His servants so to judge themselves, that they may be true and real before Him and before the congregation. We now turn to the lesson taught us by the apostle.

Having addressed the saints at Ephesus as the children of God, and as blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, he could not consistently pray that they might know that God loves them, and that they were forgiven. He had taught them these blessed truths in the plainest and fullest manner. He had assured the Ephesians, and through the same epistle he assures all Christians, that they *are* the children of God, according to the good pleasure of His will—that

they *are* before Him as the very delight of His heart—that they *are* pardoned and accepted in the Beloved—that the Holy Spirit dwells in them, both as a seal of their present salvation, and as an earnest of their future glory. These blessed truths are not only revealed to faith, but they are sealed home to the Christian's heart, through the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. “In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed *with* [not *by*, observe, but *with*] that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” In beautiful harmony with these and other great truths which he had taught the saints, he prays that God may give them the spirit of wisdom to understand these marvellous revelations of His grace, and that they might rise, in faith, to the height of His thoughts and counsels about them. This is the burden of his prayer.

But are Christians, let me ask, not to confess their sins and shortcomings to God their Father? Most assuredly: that is just what they need to do constantly. And they cannot walk with God unless they do; but they should never *lower*, by *unscriptural expressions*, the ground of their standing in His presence. Our standing in the presence of God is in virtue of the work of Christ, and according to the riches of God's grace; and, as these can never fail, we can never lose the place



they give. Besides, it is "to the praise of the glory of his grace" that we are there. But, though we may be deeply conscious of failure as Christians, we should never take the ground of poor, unpardoned sinners before God. This would be to deny our calling, and to bring darkness, confusion, and weakness into our souls. God says we are before Him as His children, pardoned and accepted in the Beloved. We are no longer on the ground of sinners before God, but as children before the Father. In conversion the *ground* is changed. When born of God, we cease to be on the ground of sinners before Him, and are ever after on the ground of children in the family. True, we do not cease to be sinners, in the sense that we sin daily and hourly in thought, word, and deed. The *thought* of foolishness is sin; and who is not troubled with foolish thoughts? But we are to confess our faults as children before the Father, and not as sinners before God. In faithfulness to God and His word, we ought to maintain the ground on which He has set us. Not, of course, that the sin of the child is any the less, but, on the contrary, more grievous, for it is against more light, love, and grace. And, rest assured, the better we understand our calling in Christ, the deeper will be our humiliation on account of failure, and the more unreserved our confession of it. True holiness should characterize the children of God. As it is written, "Be ye holy; for I am

holy." Or, in other words, the Christian's state should always answer to his standing. When it is not so, there is too good reason for humiliation and confession.

The question, you will see, is not that the Christian is any better in himself than he ever was, but that his position is changed. His standing before God is no longer in the first Adam, but in the last Adam—the risen Christ. And he is expected to walk even as Christ walked. "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Indeed, the scriptures speak of the Christian as if it were just possible for him to sin. "*If*," the Apostle John says, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The possibility of sinning is barely admitted. Such is the dignified manner of scripture, when speaking of the children of God: though, when speaking of our old nature, it affirms there is no good thing in it. And it is worthy of notice that he does not say, "If any man *repent and pray for pardon* he will be forgiven;" but, "If any man sin, we have an *advocate* with the Father." Nevertheless, we ought to repent, and repent deeply, when conscious of failure. But, in the meantime, Christ sees to our interests in heaven, and the Holy Ghost sees to our interests on earth, so that we are well cared for: adored be the goodness of our God! What a mercy that we are in Christ's hands!

How often we may sin and never be conscious of it ; but Christ sees it at once, and meets the need in virtue of His blood, so that the sin never reaches the throne of God. All praise be to His blessed name ! The *work* of Christ has set us as children in the Father's presence, and fitted us to be there ; and the *advocacy* of Christ maintains us holy, and without blame, before Him in love. The Lord give us to be in the intelligence of scripture, both in teaching, preaching, and praying ; and may we stand firm on the great truth, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.

GREAT ADVOCATE, Almighty Friend,  
On Thee do all our hopes depend ;  
Our cause can never, never fail,  
For Thou dost plead, and must prevail.

In every dark distressing hour,  
When sin and Satan join their power,  
Let this blest truth repel each dart,  
That Thou dost bear us on Thy heart.

The apostle refers in his first prayer to "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory." The mighty power of God, as displayed in the exaltation of Christ, and of the Christian in Him, is the *prominent* thought in this prayer, but not the only one. The thought suggested by the expression, "Father of glory," is sweet to the heart of the child. While we connect the idea of *power* with the title, "God," *affection* is inseparably associated with the title, "Father." This is most

precious to the heart—it sweetens everything. While meditating in wonder and delight on the bright scene of glory which is before us, the happy thought crosses the mind, My Father's love is the spring of all that glory—the fountain of all that perfect blessedness. He is “the Father of glory.”

Great indeed and wonderful is the effect of God's power as here seen by the eye of faith. It is called, “the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.” But who can speak of the happy combination of *love and glory*? Yet, surely, even the brightest glory is but the outward manifestation of love. Nevertheless, they go well together—we would not have them separated; and thank God, they never will be: but all will allow that love is the deeper, closer thing. Both will be seen in the millennium. Then the heavens will not be so high above the earth as they now are. They will be, as it were, together. Jacob in vision saw them united as by a ladder, and the many glories encircling the Messiah were seen from earth's point of view. Then the Church will be seen in company with Christ, according to His own word in John xvii. “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are

one : I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one ; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

Here all is plain as to the future. The glory which the Father gives the Son, the Son gives to us, that the world may know that the Father sent the Son, and that He loves us, as He loves the Son. When the world sees us in the same glory with Christ, it will then know that we are loved with the same love. Wondrous, blessed truth ! The soul can only bow in worship, while meditating on the grace that shines in these bright scenes of *love and glory*. "But what will it be to be there !" True, my soul, but what of the Father's house ? Ah ! that is the inner circle, the home of love. What is enjoyed there the world can never know. It will see the glory outside the house, but it can never gaze on the family scenes inside. Is this thy place, O my soul ? It is the children's place, I answer, and we are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. His word can never be broken. All who are the children of God *now*, will be in the children's home *then*.

O LORD ! my pilgrim spirit longs  
To sing the everlasting songs  
Of GLORY, LOVE, and power ;  
When heaven and earth and all things yield,  
My Saviour will be still my shield,  
For He has to my soul revealed  
Himself my strength and tower.

Who—O who could rest without the full assurance of an eternity of *love and glory*? Pray, dear reader, is this thy blessed hope? It is, surely, worthy of all thy thought—all thy attention—all thy determination; and all sacrifice too, even unto life itself, rather than lose that home of love—that eternal glory. One word settles all, “The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” (John iii. 35, 36.) May the Lord grant unto thee, and unto all who read these pages, His own richest and everlasting blessing, and may we all meet at last in that eternally happy home. *Now believe!*

Verses 18, 19. “*The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe.*” God is the source of all blessing. This is the first thought suggested in reading these verses. He is here seen as the author—the source of it all! Blessed, precious thought for the heart! Hence it is said to be *His calling—His inheritance—His power*. At the same time, the blessing is presented as *in Christ, and with Christ*, though flowing from God as its source.

When the apostle speaks of the gospel in the commencement of his Epistle to the Romans, he characterizes it as the "*Gospel of God, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*" There we have God as the *source*, and Christ as the *subject* of the gospel. Here, it is the bright display of His grace and love in heavenly places, to those who have been gathered to Himself by the gospel. Of course, Christ risen is the bright display to faith of all blessing. But whether it be grace and love to sinners on the earth, or to saints in heaven, the source is the same. The preaching of the gospel—the effectual call—the future glory, and the power which accompanies the truth, and gives a foretaste of the glory, are all of God. Wondrous, marvellous truth, when we think of what we are! But there is no heart in the universe that has been so revealed to us as the heart of God. He gave His Son to die for us. And who ever lay so deep in that heart as the Well-Beloved? Its depths have been revealed. Oh! blessed, full, eternal, unfailing spring of all blessedness, both in time and in eternity! How the renewed soul loves to linger at the fountain! Here linger—here dwell—O my soul! It is thy place of joy and strength—thy highest privilege—thy home for ever. Thou art born of God—born from above. A man's native place is where he was born.

What can be sweeter or more strengthening to the heart than to fall back upon the thoughts and

counsels of God, as the foundation of all our blessing? This ground can never, never change. Before this world was made, our redemption was planned. It was no afterthought of the divine mind. And now, in the risen Christ, and the children of God raised up in Him, is the perfect answer to the eternal counsels of love. "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Ver. 7.

But here, note also, my soul, that the fountain is not only the place of sweetest delight to thyself, but of the richest blessing to others. When truly connected with the source, we become the channel of living water to others. It is said of Moses, when he fled from the face of Pharaoh to the land of Midian, that "he sat down by a well." Beautiful illustration of the Christian's privileged place! He was thus in the right position to help the daughters of Reuel to water the flock. "Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock. And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, How is it that ye are come so soon to-day? And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock." Exodus ii.

It is perfectly clear that we must be near to the well of life ourselves, if we would become the channel of living water to others. What a



privilege to be enabled to roll away the stone from the well's mouth and water the Lord's flock when it is gathered together—to be so under the guidance of the Holy Spirit as to minister the truth in due season. Blessed Lord, keep thy servants near to thyself, that they may refresh thy gathered saints with the pure, living waters of the sanctuary !

Jesus ! thou art the fountain,  
The deep, sweet well of love !  
The streams on earth I've tasted,  
More deep I'll drink above ;  
There to an ocean fulness,  
His mercy doth expand,  
And glory—glory dwelleth  
In Immanuel's land.

Turn now for a little while, my soul, and meditate on the great truth of thy christian calling. "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened ; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling." Nothing can be of greater importance to thee than the *character* of God's call. To what, in the greatness of His love, has He called thee—to what has He called every Christian? This is the question. Is it to the *hope* of salvation, with a measure of uncertainty or insecurity hanging over it? Most assuredly not. In chapter ii. of this epistle it is said, "By grace are ye saved through faith." Salvation is here viewed as a present thing—as an accomplished reality to the soul. The hope of His calling is what we are called to in Christ Jesus, as the children of God.

Christ risen from among the dead, triumphant over all enemies, and exalted to all honour at God's right hand in heaven, is the expression of that which we are called to enjoy by faith now, and which we shall fully enjoy with Christ in heaven for ever. Were the heavens over our head to be opened, and could we see the Man Christ Jesus there; we should then see the Christian's place, privilege, and standing in the presence of God.

Grace begun shall end in glory;  
Jesus, He the victory won;  
IN HIS OWN TRIUMPHANT STORY  
IS THE RECORD OF OUR OWN.

The apostle, in this part of his prayer, refers, we doubt not, to what he had written in the early part of the chapter: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will." (Ver. 3—5.) Here all is grace—grace flowing from perfect love, and for the divine glory. But God is seen alone as the Blessor. The spring and power of all the blessing here revealed are in His own heart. It takes its character from Himself. But Christ is seen as the *foundation* of it all. It is in *Him* that

we are blessed. He died for us, adored be His name! and washed us from our sins in His own blood; and thus presents us to God and His Father, in the full efficacy of His work, and in the acceptancy of His Person. This is the foundation on which all blessing, both to the individual and to the Church—both for time and for eternity, securely rests. “The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

The heart of the apostle is so full of this great subject, that he breaks forth at once, without any preface, in the highest strains of praise and worship. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” All our blessings flow from the twofold relationship here introduced—God and Father. In the first message sent to the disciples by the blessed Lord, after He arose from the dead, He announces this blessed truth: “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.” Christ Himself is the perfect man before God, and He is a Son with the Father. We are one with Him in both these relationships.

Redemption is the basis of relationship. Christ had so blotted out our sins and glorified God in His death, that the way was perfectly clear in resurrection, to introduce His disciples into the place of sons—into the same place as Himself.

Oh! wondrous truth! Oh! marvellous place of blessing! But, listen, O my soul, it is to the knowledge of this—the faith of this—the enjoyment of this—the practical manifestation of this, that thou art called of God. Explain it not away, I pray thee, think not that it is a mere feeling, but receive it as God's truth, as a present reality. It rests on the solid foundation of the death and resurrection of Christ. "God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Gal. iv. 4—6.) Here again we see God as the great source of our blessing. The *Son* comes from God—the *Spirit* comes from God. God sent forth His Son—He sent forth the Spirit. We are not here said to be *made sons* by the Spirit, but because we are sons in Christ He sends forth the Spirit to dwell in us. Hence we have not only the *place of sons*, but the *consciousness of sonship*, by the Holy Ghost.

The unscriptural notion of many is, that the blessings of divine relationship can never be really known or enjoyed while we are in this world: whereas, in the First Epistle of John, the babes are addressed as knowing the forgiveness of their sins, and the Father. But what can be more true or real to the soul than the words of the risen Lord:

“Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; to my God and your God?” The apostle repeats the same truth, and connects with it the very highest character of blessing which is ours in Christ: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.”

Is thy faith, then, O my soul, up to this revelation? These are the lofty heights on which thou art called to walk, in the intelligence and power of the Holy Ghost. Doubt not, fear not; God has called thee to this. It is the safest path—the path of faith. David rose in faith to the height of God’s thoughts and counsels as to Israel, when he vanquished Goliath in the valley of Elah. Men of lower faith stood fearing and trembling before the boastful giant, and no doubt thought David very presumptuous. But God was honoured by the faith of David, and God honoured David. And so it must ever be. True faith can rest in nothing short of the whole counsel of God. Art thou prepared then, O my soul, to ascend these spiritual heights, and, like Israel of old, plant the sole of thy foot on thine own possessions in the heavenly places? Christ is there, my soul; be of good courage—thy standing is in Him. Thou art as safe as He is—thy security is His. The measure of His blessing is thine. We are “blessed with all spiritual blessings,” not one is lacking;

and they are of the highest order: they are not temporal, as was the case with the Jews. It is in the most exalted capacity of the renewed man that we enjoy these blessings, and they are adapted to that capacity, they are spiritual. They are also in the highest sphere: it is not in Canaan or Immanuel's land; these blessings are granted us in the heavenly places; they are granted us in the most excellent way, one which leaves no room for comparison, it is "*in Christ*." This is the children's blessing, all praise to our God and Father. It is individual: the Church's blessing is spoken of afterwards. Every child of God, without exception, is blessed according to that which is due to Christ. The measure of our blessing is the measure of God's value for Christ. It is enough, O my soul. It is the largest and highest blessing revealed. We are blessed in the best place—the best company, and with the best of blessings. Here rest a little in thy meditations—dwell on these three things—the measure is that which can never be measured.

We worship thee, FATHER and God!

What rich unfathomable grace,

On us, O Christ, in thee's bestowed!

Children of wrath—our nature's place—

Ransomed with blood, made ONE WITH THEE,

What lengths, breadths, heights, and depths appear!

Eternity, infinity,

Alone of grace the limits are!

*“According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.”* This fourth verse sets before us the blessings of God's call as connected with the divine nature. The fifth, as connected with relationship. These are the two heads of blessing—nature and relationship. They are according to God, as God; and according to the Father, as the Father.

The fourth verse refers to the first. God could not have it otherwise. If we are to be brought into His presence in heaven, we must be there like Himself. Nothing less could satisfy God. He is holy, blameless, and love; and He has chosen us in Christ to be like Himself as to these moral qualities. As Father (ver. 5), He has predestinated us to the blessed intimacies and privileges of a positive relationship. Both characters of blessing, nature and sonship, are united in every Christian; blessed be the God of all grace! But, for the present moment, O my soul, dwell a little on the first. It claims thy closest study. Wouldst thou be without a perfect acquaintance with that which God has chosen thee to be? Thy new nature is thyself, the old one will soon drop off. Thy divine nature is thy capacity for the enjoyment of heaven, and all that is to be found there. Now, in the capacities of this nature, we joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and have fellowship with the Father and the Son by the Holy Ghost. Bet-

ter than this, we may truly say, can never be found, even in heaven itself; but we shall know it better and enjoy it more when all hindrances are removed.

It is God Himself that has chosen us in Christ to be holy and without blame before Him in love. The thought—the choice—the love, are His own. His be all the praise and glory. Man had no voice in this matter. It was before the foundation of the world. All is according to God, and worthy of Himself. It is the necessity of His nature and character, to have those that are near Him, like Himself. It must be so. The principle is universal. The man of letters chooses for his companions literary men; and we all choose to have with us and around us those that are suitable to our nature and ways. God acts upon this principle in the fourth verse. He is holy and blameless and love, and those that are to be with Him for ever must be suitable to Him. But on the other hand, it is equally the necessity of His being to exclude all evil from His presence. Far, far from the God of holiness must all evil be removed. Solemn thought, when we think of many around us. But the day will come, when not only the evil doer, but all evil, shall be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. xxi. 8), all must be banished from the presence of God. He could not suffer the least stain of sin in the most distant part of His dominions, far less on those who are



near Him. The following lines are sweet to the renewed mind :

“All taint of sin shall be removed,  
All evil done away ;  
And I shall dwell with God's beloved,  
Through God's eternal day.”

Oh ! that the unbelieving, unpardoned, uncleaned sinner would think of this *now*. *Then*, it will be too late. Now the fountain is open for sin and for uncleanness, and whosoever will may come and wash and be clean. “I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.” Hear, hear, O sinner, hear these gracious words ! They are placed by the very side of that awful verse about the lake of fire. God has thus placed, as it were, side by side, the fountain of living waters, and the lake of fire. And mark, He says, “I will *give* unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life *freely*.” It is all of grace, rich, free grace. But those who despise the open fountain of living waters must be cast, with all their evil, into the lake of fire. Awful, solemn warning ! Oh ! what shall I say unto thee, my fellow sinner ? Do stoop, I beseech thee, and drink, and live for ever. The waters are free—free to the poorest—free to the vilest—free to all—free to thee. Think of the difference between the lake of fire and the fountain of living waters. Carefully read Revelation xxi. 6, 8.

The thought of banishment from God in the forsaken place is awful—it is overwhelming. To be banished from God and Christ, from all the good and the holy, from all the pure and the happy; and to be doomed to dwell with all evil, and with all evil doers, and that for ever, is more than we can bear to think of now. Oh! that word—that terrible word, “*forsaken*.” Who can bear to be forsaken? It brought from the heart of the lowly Jesus that mournful and pathetic cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” In richest love and grace, He took that place for us, that we might never have to take it for ourselves; but sin, unrepented of and unpardoned, must take the sinner there. How awful the thought! To be *forsaken* of God and all His goodness—*forsaken* of Jesus and His bleeding love—*forsaken* of the Holy Spirit and all His strivings—*forsaken* of all that can sympathize and love; the poor, desolate, friendless soul must sink into utter despair. May all, whose hearts assure them that they are not prepared for the presence of God, cease from rest until they are. May they never rest until they come to Jesus, and find rest in Him. Matchless is the love that says, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” It is His blood, and His blood alone, that cleanseth us from all sin. But to all who trust in Him He plainly says, “He that is washed needeth not save to wash his

feet, but *is clean every whit.*" Once washed in the blood of Jesus, we are clean, "*clean every whit,*" and that for ever. The blood can never lose its power; only the daily defilements need to be washed away, as with the basin and towel. See John xiii.

We now return to our beautiful fourth verse. We have only left "the ninety and nine" for a little, to look after a lost one in the desert. May the Good Shepherd lay him on His shoulder!

God is light, and God is love; and we are called to be like Him, and to enjoy Him as such. This is God's calling; but we are the called—chosen in Christ, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. This is the description of God's own character, though it is here given as the character of His children. Surely this is grace in its highest form. It breathes a well-pleased and delighting love. Do think of this, O my soul. Hurry not over the wondrous thought. This is it: when God would tell us what He is Himself, He describes what His children are—a son is of the same nature as his father. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." True, He is Love; but He is also Light; and He dwells in the pure unsullied light of His own absolute Deity. And there He has called us and fitted us to be, in the fitness and acceptance of the risen and exalted Man. This is what God Himself has made us in Christ; for ever blessed be His name!

But, pray tell me this: How can Christians be in the presence of God as *holy, blameless, and love*, seeing there is so much in us that is the opposite of all this? This is a point of much importance, and of great practical difficulty with many souls. But the answer is, The apostle is speaking of what we are *in Christ*; not of what we are, or have been, in ourselves. Our old nature is not referred to here—it is passed by unnoticed. Of course the old nature is in us, and no better than it ever was, and we must take care and not let it shew itself. But we are chosen and called in Christ—He is our life; and we are, before God, in the Beloved One. This is the explanation, and in this the heart finds rest—Christ is *holy* in His character—*blameless* in His ways—*love* in His nature. And we are in God's sight as He is. If God is to find pleasure in His children, they must be like Himself. Christ is the object of God's unqualified delight, and so shall we be by and by. This is the hope of His calling. Oh! deep, divine, ineffable, unutterable, unfailing spring of happiness now—of unmingled blessedness hereafter! “We know that, when he shall appear, we *shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*” Therefore God has chosen us in Christ, “that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” We are brought thus into His presence and His love is satisfied. Oh! most wondrous, precious truth! All is done, Christ is risen and glorified. “In thy presence is fulness

of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." It is only there that perfect blessedness can be found. With what a hope the calling of God fills the heart! His name alone have all the praise.

But this is only the bright side of the answer to the question. The state or practical ways of the saints is not always a true reflection of their standing and privileges in Christ. We come far short of what becomes the children of God in many things. How feebly we answer to His love; and how many things we allow that are contrary to Him. Whence come pride, vanity, and worldliness? we may ask. Certainly not from the divine nature. These, and all other evil things, flow not from our new, but from our old nature. Although our standing is in Christ, the flesh is in us, and ought to be mortified. In it there is no good thing. How often we have reason to be ashamed and humbled on account of our many faults. But ere long we shall have done with the flesh entirely, and be perfectly holy and without blame before God in love. He has chosen us to this end, and will in due time accomplish it. This is our sure hope. But in the meantime, may we seek to suppress our old nature and watch against all its tendencies. We know that we are in Christ now, and have His life in us, notwithstanding all our failures. May we have grace to feed on Him day by day and

hour by hour that we may be strengthened to do His will.

“ Though our nature's fall in Adam  
Seemed to shut us out from God,  
Thus it was His counsel brought us  
Nearer still through Jesu's blood ;  
For in Him we found redemption,  
Grace and glory in the Son,  
O the height and depth of mercy !  
‘ Christ and we through grace are one.’ ”

Hast thou well considered, O my soul, the blessing of a holy and loving nature? Who can understand the blessedness of it now? What, O what, must the change be, compared with our present unholy, unloving nature! Here pause a moment, I pray thee, and meditate on this great truth. Only think on what must be our happiness, when we shall be like Christ—when we never more can have a thought, a feeling, a desire, contrary to God; far less shall there ever be a look, a word, an action, unworthy of His holy presence. And thus will it be for ever! Oh! wondrous thought! Oh! perfect blessedness! And no fear of a change, or of an end, shall ever cross the mind.

In one sense, this shall be thy heaven; for what were all the blessings that God can give, had we not a nature to enjoy them? But to have a nature which is the perfect answer to what God Himself is, must give a capacity for the highest and purest enjoyments of heaven. And once more remember,

that this is thy nature for eternity. When the soul of the penitent thief ascended from the cross on Calvary to the paradise of God, he left behind him all that he was in himself, and ascended in all the blessedness of Christ. Not one atom of the old nature shall ever cross the threshold of heaven. Glorious deliverance ! Having eternal life—a divine nature, through faith in the dying Saviour, and thus made the righteousness of God in Him, he had both title and capacity to enjoy his new inheritance. The bloom, the beauty, the fragrance, the rest, the joys of paradise, shall all be relished by the children of God, and relished as those only can, who have reached their eternal home, and now breathe their native air.

But in the high calling of God there is more than nature, there is *relationship*. If we would well understand “ what is the hope of his calling,” we must know our relationship in Christ as well as our nature. We might have had a holy, blameless, and loving nature, and been only servants. The highest angels rise no higher. They are servants waiting on God to do His pleasure. But those whom God has *called*—*called* by His grace—*called* from the place of distance to the place of nearness—*called* from the lowest state to the highest, are *sons*, not *servants*. “ Wherefore,” saith the apostle, writing to the Galatians, “ thou art no more a servant, but a son ; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” And

the closing testimony of scripture is, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." The son inherits the large possessions of the Father. This blessed truth is the second part of the Christian's calling.

"*Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.*" (Verse 5.) The Jews of old were called "*the people of God*"—Christians are called "*the children of God.*" Doubtless Old Testament saints were born again, and in that sense they were children of God; but they are spoken of as His people, not as His children. In the same sense, they had eternal life; but they are not spoken of as having, or knowing that they had, eternal life. The revelation of these great privileges and blessings was reserved until Christ came. And it was not until redemption was finished, and Christ risen from the dead, that He calls the disciples *His brethren*. Then, for the first time, 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." Now they are introduced into the place of sons, according to the position and perfectness of the risen Christ. Christ is a Son—we are sons. True, most true, Christ is the eternal Son of the Father, and none can share that higher glory with Him; but as the



*risen Son of God*, exalted and glorified, we are one with Him; and that according to the work of the cross, and the good pleasure of the Father's will.

In all ages God blessed His people according to the revelation which He gave of Himself, as the object of their faith. See Hebrews xi. He made Himself known to Abraham, for example, as the ALMIGHTY; and blessed him as the depositary of promise. Called of God he leaves his own people and country, though he knew not whither he was going. He believes God and obeys. Having nothing but the promise, he was a stranger in a strange land. But his strangership was his gain. It brought him, in spirit, nearer to God Himself. It led him to desire a better country. He had no wish to go back to his own. God, known as the Almighty, was his trust, his shield, his reward. In the presence of the king of Sodom, though a stranger in a strange land, he confessed and honoured the Lord as "the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth." He refused to be enriched by the world. He was content to wait upon God, to whom both heaven and earth belonged. Enough for the heart of faith that God knows the need, and how and when to meet it. The God of promise was the object of his faith. He had nothing else; for God gave him none inheritance in the land, "no, not so much as to set his foot on; yet he promised that he would give it

to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child." (Acts vii.) It was thus that he honoured God as a stranger and a pilgrim, and God is not ashamed to be called Abraham's God. What a testimony! Of whom, we may ask, could God now say so much? Abraham was a pilgrim and a stranger on the ground of promise: we, on the higher ground of oneness with a Christ rejected on earth, and accepted in heaven. Even *now* our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour. Of "the fathers" the Spirit of truth bears this blessed testimony in Hebrews xi. "But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; *wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God*: for he hath prepared for them a city."

Israel, the natural seed of Abraham, was in covenant relationship with God, as JEHOVAH. All temporal blessings in a pleasant land—the choicest of earth's treasures, are their proper blessing. Through their rebellion they have been dispersed under His chastening hand; but they are His chosen people, and will yet be abundantly blessed, and peaceably settled in the land of promise. But the Christian's blessing goes far beyond a promise, or a goodly land. And he knows God, not only as the *Almighty* and as *Jehovah*, but as *Father*. "I will be," He says, "a *Father* unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the *Lord Almighty*." (2 Cor.

vi. 18.) We now return to the verse under meditation.

“ Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ *to himself*, according to the good pleasure of his will.” Here the soul finds perfect rest, the measure of its blessing is full. Promises were the stronghold of the Jew; the Christian rests in accomplished redemption. Nothing more can be added to this blessing—nothing more can be desired. More may be revealed to him, and all shall yet be better understood; but these words, “TO HIMSELF,” are enough. Not only has He chosen us to be *like* Himself, but *near* Himself. Surely it is the expression of the most tender—the most marvellous—the most delighting love. Here are two words, O my soul, for thy long and deep meditation. Never hast thou met with two words more fitted to calm down every rising fear, and hush to eternal rest all anxieties as to the future. Couldst thou ever distrust the love that chooses to have thee near as Christ Himself is near? Can the Father ever have Christ too near His heart? Can He ever have thee too near His heart? Faith must answer; but the word is plain, “*children by Jesus Christ to himself*.” What can be plainer? What can be truer? What can be nearer to thy heart? It is God’s call to *thee*—to every Christian—even the least. He could not do more for His children: He will not do less. It is marvellous in our eyes.

Called to be like Him—called to be near Him ; and this, mark, is “ according to the good pleasure of his will.” The children’s place and portion will be the display, throughout eternity, of the peculiar pleasure of the Father. Now it is revealed to faith, and as true as it will be then.

The sixth verse gives unity and strength to this twofold aspect of the Christian’s calling : “ To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.” This verse sums up the fulness of divine favour to the children, in their effectual calling. We are said to be blessed with all spiritual blessings *in Christ*—to be chosen *in Christ*—to be children *by Jesus Christ* ; but we are accepted *in the Beloved*. Here the word is changed to “ *Beloved*.” It means that we are accepted in the highest object of God’s affection. Christ is the Well-beloved of God’s heart ; He could shew favour to none as to Him ; and yet the word is plain : we are accepted, loved, and blessed in Him—in the Beloved. Higher than this, royal favour itself cannot raise us ; the heart can only bow and worship and adore in the presence of such love, and in the assurance that it can never change.

Ah ! ’tis too vast a story for me to dare essay !  
He, source of endless glory—I, but of yesterday.  
Yet, since I call Him Father and know His boundless grace,  
I tremble not, but rather delight His way to trace.

How little we think, when the heart of a poor good-for-nothing sinner is touched by the word of the gospel, that such love is at work—that such treasures are thrown open to his faith. But so it is. When God calls, He calls sinners, sinners lost and ruined in their sins. But He calls them to be like Himself in nature, and near to Himself in relationship.

Dear reader, before passing on to the subject of the *inheritance*, I must have a word with thee. Thou art as a weight on my heart. Hast thou listened—hast thou yielded to the call of God—to the call of the gospel? Now is the time: to-morrow may be too late. And what a loss thine would be! To believe in Christ—to own and trust Him, is to yield thyself to God's call. To love and follow Christ here, where He was rejected, is the clearest proof that thou art called of God. The heights and depths, the lengths and breadths, of God's love to thee are in Christ. To receive Him, is to receive all; to reject Him, is to reject all. What a prize, O, my fellow sinner, to lose or win! Think of the noble prize won by that poor woman at the feet of Jesus in the house of Simon—pardon, salvation, and peace. Grace is free—free to all—free to thee. "Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." We win the prize of eternal life, and all that belongs to it, by accepting it as God's free gift. He who glorified God

by putting away sin on the cross, is now saying to thee, "Him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out"—on no account—on no consideration, cast out or reject. Hast thou come then, O my fellow sinner? Come! O come! I beseech thee! Come in the faith of His own words. Let thine eye be up to Christ Himself, and let the invitation which He has given thee be in thine heart; and so coming to Him thou art saved. Saved—what a word!—saved! a soul saved—yes, *thy soul* saved! Saved from sin—saved from death—the death that never dies—saved from the lake of fire—the fire that shall never be quenched—saved from an eternity of misery—saved to an eternity of blessedness—saved to share the honours and glories, the dignities and privileges of God's beloved Son. O may thy heart bow to Christ, and thy tongue confess His name before this paper drops from thy hand!

I want an even, strong desire,  
I want a calm, a fervent zeal,  
To pull poor souls out of the fire,  
To snatch them from the verge of hell,  
And turn them to a pardoning God,  
And quench the brands in Jesu's blood.

Enlarge, inflame, and fill my heart  
With boundless charity divine!  
So shall I all my strength exert,  
And love them with a zeal like thine.  
And lead them to thy open side,  
The sheep for whom the Shepherd died.

Verse 18. "*And what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.*" This is the second part of the apostle's prayer. The first is, that Christians may understand the nature of their calling; the second, that they may understand the glory of their inheritance; and the third, that they may understand the power which puts them in possession of all that grace has given.

We have been dwelling a little, in our meditations, on the first part. There we learn God's wondrous grace to His children. Their dignity and blessedness is beyond all thought. It is overwhelming. Their birth is heavenly; their nature, holy and loving; their relationship, sons; their privilege, one with Christ. His position as the risen Man is their position; His standing is their standing. They rank with Christ; and their eternal life gives them the capacity to enjoy what He enjoys. And surely nothing more, nothing better than this can ever be conceived.

And now, O my soul, let thy thoughts dwell for a little on the *inheritance*—the inheritance of God's children. And thou wilt surely find that the inheritance is perfectly suited to the nature and position of the children. And forget not in thy meditations, that this inheritance is thine own: so shall thy thoughts be mingled with praise and thanksgiving. It is the Father's will for the children. Hence it is called "*the mystery of his will*"—the will that was kept a secret, or un-

revealed, until the days of the apostle. Christ is before Him, and all is suited to *His* position, and we are joint-heirs with Him. Oh! what a future!—a future of the purest happiness and glory. But the children's chief blessedness will be their nearness to God Himself—the blessedness of His own presence. The inheritance is another thing, and will embrace *created things*—all created things “both which are in heaven, and which are on earth.” The centre place will be theirs, because it is Christ's. And is this to be thy future—thy happy future, O my soul? Above thee—near thee—with thee—in thy Father's presence—in thy Father's house! And also, outside thy Father's house—around that house—what? The vast universe—from the lowly tomb of Joseph where the Lord once lay, to the throne of God where He now sits—shall be filled with His glory. What a spectacle for men and angels! The once despised Nazarene—His once despised followers, *together*, glorified together, in the centre of the glory. Till then, O my soul, seek to walk as becomes a child and heir of God.

Henceforth let each beloved child  
With quickened step proceed,  
To walk with garments undefiled  
Where'er thine eye may lead.  
O largely give, 'tis all thine own,  
The Spirit's goodly fruit:  
Praise, issuing forth in life, alone  
Our loving Lord can suit.



The expression, "His inheritance in the saints," is peculiar. It is *God's* inheritance, and yet it is the *saints'*. They will personally possess it; and, jointly with Christ, it will be under their dominion. It is similar to the expression, "the hope of his calling." It is God's calling, but we are the called. Both are characterized as God's; the former according to His grace, the latter according to His glory. It is this peculiarity which gives to each such excellency and blessedness. We have something very similar in the Old Testament. The land of Canaan was God's inheritance in Israel. He gave it to Abraham and to his seed for an everlasting possession. But under the law it could not be sold, for God claimed it as His. "The land shall not be sold for ever: for the land is mine." It is also called, "Immanuel's land." (Lev. xxv. 23; Isaiah viii. 8.) In place of Jehovah taking possession of the land by a direct act of His power, He takes possession in the persons of His people, so that it is *His* inheritance *in* His people. Surely this is beautiful and blessed. It is God acting in sweetest fellowship with His beloved people. Oh! that they could have seen and valued His love and care!

But when the better and brighter day comes, He will take possession, not of the land of Canaan merely, but of the entire universe: and that by the saints personally—the joint-heirs with Christ. But this grand theme is only referred to in the

apostle's prayer; the counsels of God respecting it are revealed in the middle of our chapter: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Nothing can be plainer, we think, than these words; but in passing from the subject of the calling, to that of the inheritance, the apostle touches upon a subject which is absolutely necessary to be known, before a soul can peacefully contemplate the coming of the Lord—the breaking up of everything here, and the future glory of the saints. And as some of our readers may not be in that state of settled repose, we will refer to the subject for a few moments.

*"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."* (Verse 7.) In the second chapter, man's condition under sin is fully stated. Here it is merely alluded to in passing. But there the judgment of God is plainly given. Man is dead—dead in trespasses and sins. He is not merely *sick*, as some would fain believe; no, he is dead—morally and spiritually dead. Nothing can be lower than this. There are degrees in evil, but there are no degrees

in death. And as to his present life, he is the willing slave of Satan. This is where the gospel found the Ephesians—where it found us—where it finds all. High as the Ephesians were raised in blessing, they were all raised from this low estate. Need we wonder then at these words, “The riches of his grace?” Our deep, deep poverty is met by the *riches* of His grace. When speaking of saints, the Spirit uses the word, “*Glory* of His grace;” but when speaking of poor sinners, the word is changed to “*Riches* of His grace.” He is *glorious* in grace—He is *rich* in grace. What love, what compassion we see in this! The heart is drawn to Him who thinks of us in our misery, and blesses us according to the riches of His own boundless grace. Far as our sin has abounded, grace much more abounds. But now for the details.

1. We needed *redemption*, and we have it—have it *now* as to our souls. “The redemption of the purchased possession” spoken of in verse 14, and the redemption of the body, we must wait for until Christ comes. But the redemption of the soul, which is by far the most important thing to us, is fully and perfectly accomplished *now*. It never can be more so. This is the redemption referred to in verse 7: “In whom we have redemption through his blood.” Not *may*, or *will*, but we *have it now*. All is found in Christ, adored be His name! “In whom”—it is in Him that we see our standing in the presence of God; and

it is in Him that we find the redemption, which fits us for it and sets us in it.

“ Salvation in that name is found,  
Cure for my grief and care ;  
A healing balm for every wound,  
ALL, ALL I WANT IS THERE.”

2. We needed *forgiveness*, and we have it—have it *now*. We can never have it more fully. The blood of Christ is *the ground* of our forgiveness, and the riches of God’s grace the *standard*. Mark the things here placed in contrast ;—The sinner’s slavery, and eternal redemption. The sinner’s poverty, and God’s riches. The sinner’s sins, and the blood of Christ. *Conditional* forgiveness would be *law*, not *grace*. *Partial* forgiveness would reflect no glory on the blood of Jesus ; but full, unconditional forgiveness proves *God’s* estimate of the blood, and shews that all blessing depends exclusively upon its value. We *are* forgiven then, according to the value of the blood of Christ, and according to the riches of divine grace. What more, we may ask, can be done ?—what more can be needed ? God has given His Son, His blood has been shed. More than this, God Himself cannot do, to blot out sin. What an unspeakable comfort—what a solid ground of peace and rest for our souls. His name alone have all the praise !

3. We needed redemption and forgiveness, not according to our thoughts and feelings, but according to God’s thoughts and counsels ; and we

have them—have them *now*; and have both in connection with the Person of Christ. This is everything! We have redemption and forgiveness *in Him*. God is glorified, the riches of His grace are displayed, and our cup of blessing overflows.

Kind hearts are here, yet would the tenderest one  
Have limits to its mercy—GOD *has none*.  
And man's forgiveness may be true and sweet,  
And yet he stoops to give it: more complete  
Is love that lays forgiveness at thy feet  
And pleads with thee to raise it; only heaven  
Means *crowned*, not *vanquished*, when it says "FORGIVEN."

But some will say, "How is it then that I still feel sin working in my heart, if I am so fully forgiven—so richly blessed?" True, sin still remains in the heart. But has God anywhere said that He has put away sin from the believer's heart? I am sure He has not. What then? He put it away on the cross; He has not put it away from your heart. But just because it was put away on the cross, He has forgiven you, and all who believe in Jesus. Therefore God rests on the completed work of the cross, and that is where you should rest. There is no other ground of rest for a guilty soul in the universe; but faith in the cross, however weak, draws down God's deepest compassion, and the boundless riches of His grace. But, on the other hand, all confidence, however strong, that is not founded on the cross, is without God's approval, and must come to nothing. Be content

then to know that God dealt with thy sins in the Person of thy Substitute on the cross, and put them away by the shedding of His precious blood. The whole question of sin as to every believer is settled and sealed in the blood of God's dear Son.

But again, the uneasy soul will say, "I am sure I sin daily, and if I live till to-morrow I shall be sinning again, let me watch against it as I may: what am I to think about these sins?" Think of them, O believer, humiliating as they are, as having been judged by God in the Person of His Son on the cross. "His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." (1 Pet. ii. 24.) This will work in thy soul a deeper sense of His love, and of the hatefulness of sin, than anything else can. All true, honest self judgment of sin is founded on the assurance that it was divinely judged on the cross. When thou hast no doubt that God judged and put away these very sins on the cross, then thou canst judge them thoroughly in His holy presence. *Self judgment* must go on as long as we are in this world, for sin will exist as long as we are here. But the *divine judgment* of sin was executed *once*, and *finished*. "It is finished," should give perfect rest as to the divine judgment of sin.

If then, O believer, thou wouldst be truly happy in the presence of God, then thou must well understand these two things—*self judgment*, and the *divine judgment of sin and sins on the cross*. And

rest assured that this is needful, before thou canst happily or profitably study the scriptures as to the coming of the Lord, or His millennial glory. It is never a healthy sign for a soul to be enquiring about prophecy that has not settled peace with God. Thus it is that the apostle would have this question fairly before the Ephesians, ere he opens up to them the mysteries of God's will as to the coming glory. How can we calmly and profitably enter into the counsels of God as to the future, if we are not perfectly free from anxiety as to our own salvation?

May we be enabled by His grace to rest where He rests; and to see that it was on the cross that He put away sin, and not from our hearts; and, farther, may there be the fullest self judgment of all our faults and failures, not only because of the loathsomeness of sin in itself, but because God has judged them all once and for ever in the cross of His beloved Son.

The whole question of sin, both as to the soul of the believer and the claims of God, being thus settled, the apostle is free to unfold the counsels of God concerning His Son. The saints are now in a fit condition to hear and enter into the truth. The one grand object of these counsels is the honour and glory of His beloved Son. He hath purposed to glorify Him in the very scenes of His former humiliation. In due time it shall be brought to pass, and that in a way worthy of the Father's

love. Amen! so let it be, exclaim all heaven and the hearts of all the faithful. Thou, Lord Jesus—thou art worthy!

At the same time, O my soul, bear in mind, that as the Church is one with Christ, she will be glorified *together* with Him. True, most true—scripture affirms it—we must maintain it. So we read in this very epistle: “This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.” Christ by Himself is not the mystery, neither is the Church by herself; but Christ and the Church *together*. She will share the honour and glory along with Christ, not because of anything which she has done, but because she belongs to Him. This explains everything as to her privileges and blessings—she belongs to Him.

Blessed Lord! what love! Who would not seek to form a part of thy Church—thy bride? Many, alas! are setting at nought these eternal honours, for the passing trifles of a moment. Deliver such, O Lord, in thy mercy, from the blinding power of Satan, and truly bring them to thyself. May they *now* hear *thy voice* and follow thee. The door still stands wide open, blessed be thy name—the door that leads to thy home, thy heart, thy bridal glories!

The word “mystery,” let the reader understand, affords no excuse for ignorance on this subject. In scripture, the word does not mean something that we cannot understand, or that is even diffi-



cult to understand, but something that has not been revealed before—something that God kept secret in His own mind until He was pleased to reveal it. A good deal is said, for example, in the Old Testament about the millennium, and about the blessings of Israel in a land flowing with milk and honey; but nothing is said about the position of the Church as one with Christ in heavenly places during that period. Neither is there anything said in the Old Testament about the Church's present position in suffering and rejection, or her future position as reigning and glorified with Christ. It was a secret—a hidden mystery, until the days of the apostle Paul; but when revealed, it is plain enough. But there is more, much more, in the mystery revealed to the apostle. God has not only made known to us the *secret* of His heart concerning the Church, but also, we may say, that which lay *deepest* in His heart—even the glory of His dear Son. He has thus committed to our trust that which lay long a secret in His own mind. Surely this is treating us as friends. This, O most gracious God, is like thy love, but most unlike what we deserve. The grace and the glory are thine alone.

This then is the mystery of His will—His good pleasure concerning Christ and the Church, which He hath purposed in Himself: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which

are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance." Clearly then, it is God's purpose to unite all things in heaven and on earth, under Christ as Head. All things will be under His hand and dominion; the heavens and the earth, which are now so far apart, will be united together as by Jacob's ladder; or, according to our Lord's own words to Nathanael, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." The heavens and the earth will form one united scene of glory under the headship of Christ, during the millennium.

But here pause for a moment, my soul, and enquire how this vast scene of universal glory can be the *inheritance* of the saints. This is well, the inheritance of the saints is our present theme, still it is well to understand the whole counsel of God: it gives breadth of truth to the soul. Observe, then, that it is as "the Son of man" that Christ is thus glorified. It is as such that we are associated with Him in the glory: "*In whom we have also obtained an inheritance.*" Nothing can be plainer than this. And this will be the peculiar glory of the millennium. All things are put under His authority as man. And the Church, as now risen *in Him*, will then be associated *with Him* in the glory. Dwell on this wondrous truth for a moment, O my soul. Think where humanity has

been carried to in the Person of Christ, and in what state it will appear on that day of full millennial glory! What a thought!—the vast boundless scene of heavenly and earthly glory under the headship of man. As man—as the Second Man—the Last Adam, He unites all things under His own hand, in peace, glory, and blessing. Then the Church will be seen, known, and acknowledged, as the second Eve of the heavenly man, the Last Adam. As the risen man He is heir of all things, and we are joint-heirs with Him. This is *the inheritance of the saints*; or, “the riches of the glory of God’s inheritance in the saints.” The heavens and the earth, thus filled with glory, belong to God; but He holds them in His heavenly saints. At the close of the millennium, when Christ shall have put down all rule and all authority and power, He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all. But still there is a sense in which we shall reign for ever—“reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.” 1 Cor. xv. 24—28; Rom. v. 17.

Before passing on to the third part of the apostle’s prayer—“The exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe;” we will look at an expression in verse 10, which is of immense importance in the economical ways of God, and closely connected with our present subject—“The dispensation of the fulness of times.” The word “dispensation,” or rather “administration,” refers

to the time when all things will be under the administration of Christ. This will be the millennium. *Now* Satan is permitted to reign as the god and prince of this world. *Then* he will be shut up in the bottomless pit. (Rev. xx. 1—3.) Christ reigning as the Prince of peace, and Satan bound in the bottomless pit, must produce a mighty change in the world. Then will be earth's jubilee. But she can hold no jubilee till then. Satan must be entirely off the scene, and Christ must take the reins of government into His own hands, before this earth's inhabitants can enjoy peace and quietness. But the promise is sure. "Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." (Isaiah xxxii.) This will be the state of things on the earth; and of the heavenly saints it is said, "And they shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years." (Rev. xx. 4.) The millennium, or administration of Christ, comes in between the rapture of the saints and the eternal state. No change on earth for the better need be looked for until after the Church is gone, and the scene swept of its corrupters, and the reign of Christ fairly begun. But what a comfort for our hearts to know, that He may come at any moment, and

take us out of it all, and up to be with Himself in the house of many mansions. He puts no event, no circumstance, not even a moment of time, between our hearts and His coming for us. We are not looking for a second advent merely, but for the Son from heaven: these were His last words, "He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly." Would that they had their own place in our hearts! Then could we say in true affection, "Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus."

"A little while"—Come, Saviour, come!  
For thee thy bride has tarried long:  
Take thy poor waiting pilgrims home,  
To sing the new eternal song,  
To see thy glory and to be  
In everything conformed to thee."

Some have thought that the expression, "the fulness of times," refers to the *present* time, and means the same thing as "the fulness of the time." (Gal. iv.) This is evidently a mistake. "The fulness of the time," and "the fulness of *times*," are widely different in their meaning. The one refers to the past, the incarnation; the other to the future, the administration. In Galatians the apostle is speaking of the time appointed in the divine counsels having fully come, when "God sent forth his Son." In Ephesians he speaks of a time yet future, when all *times* or periods will meet and terminate in the reign of Christ. Many things

now running their course must end then, and end for ever. Hence it is called "the fulness of *times*." For example—

Creation's long subjection to decay and death will then be brought to an end. "For the earnest expectation of the creature (or creation) waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." (Rom. viii.) Not, observe, for the manifestation of the *Son* of God, but the *sons* of God. *He* has been manifested; *they*, not yet. It is when the *sons* of God are manifested in the glory, that the groaning creation will be relieved: that will be the signal for its complete deliverance. Its time of bondage runs on till then. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now:" and, alas, must continue to groan and travail until Christ, and God's "many sons," appear in glory. But then, O happy day, the whole creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption—the winding sheet of death, in which it has been swathed since the days of Adam, shall then be removed—the trail of the serpent shall disappear before the rising beams of the Sun of Righteousness—the wild beasts of the field shall be shorn of their ferocity—the earth shall yield her increase, the wilderness shall rejoice and blossom as the rose—and men shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. Thus shall end the long

period of creation's subjection to vanity. Hasten it, in thy good time, O most gracious Lord! Oh, how many voices from the depths of oppression are daily and hourly crying, Come, Lord Jesus, O come quickly!

“Then comes the final kingdom,  
No bound nor end possessing,  
When heaven, and earth,  
Entranced shall lie  
In universal blessing;  
No mourning tongue to sadden,  
No breath of sin to wither,  
In earth—on high—  
Be nought but joy,  
And blissful peace for ever.”

But, as it would be out of place here to enlarge on the many *times* or *periods*, which are now running their sorrowful course, we will merely name some of them, and leave them for the reader's own meditation.

The time of God's long-suffering with evil, which still goes on, will end at the appearing of Christ; and so will the *time* of Israel's judicial blindness—the *time* of Gentile dominion—the *time* of universal misrule—the *time* of the enemy's power to deceive—the *time* of the Church's weakness and suffering—the *time* of Christ's sitting at the right hand of God. *These times*, and more that might be named, are limited in their duration—limited to the time of the Lord's coming—“The times of restitution (or restoring) of all things.”

The times of evil, of distress, of sorrow, and of open wickedness, will end, run out—cease to be, in “the dispensation of the fulness of times.” Christ will then take up that which has failed in the hands of men from Adam downwards, and reign as the Lord’s Anointed for a thousand years. All things will be put under Him as Head. The Church, His bride, will then be with Him, as the joint-heir of the inheritance of glory. Then God will be perfectly glorified in the world’s government—His will done on earth as it is in heaven, and all His ways completely vindicated.

“Head of the Church, thy body,  
Jesus, our great salvation!  
Sweet to thy saints  
It is to think  
Of all thine exaltation!  
All power to thee’s committed,  
All power in earth, and heaven;  
To thee a name  
Above all fame,  
Above all glory’s given.”

Having thus briefly glanced at the inheritance of the saints, or the place of the Church as one with Christ in the coming glory, we now turn in our Meditations to dwell for a little on the third part of the apostle’s prayer—the power which puts us in possession of the inheritance.

Verses 19, 20. “*And what is the exceeding*



*greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."* We speak of the cross of Christ as the strongest expression of love: and of His resurrection as the brightest display of power. Love alone, we may say, is seen in the cross. There He submitted to suffering and death for our sakes and His Father's glory. It was not the display of wisdom, though doubtless it was the wisdom of God. To the wise of this world the cross is foolishness, and to the self-righteous it is a stumbling-block. Neither was it the display of power—"He was crucified through weakness"—but it was the manifestation of love. If to the worldly-wise it is the display of weakness and foolishness, to admiring faith it is the highest expression of the endurance of love. All must own this. If they cannot see wisdom or power in the cross, they can see love enduring, and enduring willingly for its object. When love can do nothing else, it can endure. Such is its nature. It may be called weak and foolish by those who know nothing of its reality or power, but it bears all. It loves on—loves on. Many waters cannot quench it, the floods cannot drown it. It will master every circumstance, and still love on; for such love *hopeth* all things, as well as *endureth* all things.

But in the full sense of the word this could be

true only of divine love—of the Saviour's perfect love. And of His love can we say—*it never faileth*. The truest and strongest of earthly loves must fail, but He ever lives and changeth not. *Now* we know, blessed be His name, what His love is. We need no sign save the sign of the cross. No other sign can even now be given. All doubting hearts must be referred to the cross. It is the highest and strongest expression of His love. Even from the sunniest heights of heaven our love must ever look back to the cross, and be nourished by His, as seen and known there. The cross will be owned for ever as heaven's moral centre, and the foundation of all its glory and blessedness. It was there that the depths and power of His love were revealed, and yet, we may say, *unrevealed*. It is in the day of adversity that the true character and the full strength of love are known. What a day of adversity was His! All refuge failed Him, comforters there were none. What grief, what sorrow, what forsaking, were His! But He resisted not—He endured—"Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews xii. 2.

But, sweet as the love of the cross is, and needful for the heart of both God and man, it is not power: that we have in resurrection—there it is triumphant. Weakness is seen no more for ever. Redemption is accomplished; and the might of

God's power is put forth in raising up Christ from the dead, and setting Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. But here, my soul, let me remind thee, that it is faith only that can pass through these wondrous scenes. They embrace the depths of the grave and the heights of the throne. Many stop short at the threshold, because, as they say, "We cannot *realize* these truths." But how can the mansion be seen if we stop at the gate? It is not a question of *realizing*, but of *believing*. Faith follows the truth. It passes through the portals, and descends to the depths, or, as truth leads, it ascends the highest heights. The empty tomb and the occupied throne are alike easy of access to faith. *Realizing* has no place here, save as the *effect* of faith. We must *believe* the truth before we can *feel* it: we must *walk* over our estate before we can *know* it. If we really want to know the nature of the soil and the capabilities of each field, we must walk over them. So it was of old in type. "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses." (Josh. i. 3.) Art thou prepared, then, to believe the wonderful truth before us, understanding or not understanding it, realizing or not realizing it? This is the question. We pay but a poor compliment to the word of God when we fail to receive it because we do not understand it or realize it.

But, pray, what is the special truth that de-

mands such absolute faith? It is simply this: that the same mighty power of God which wrought in Christ when He raised Him from among the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in heaven, above every name that is named, has *already* wrought in us, and raised us to have part in the same position and glory. Observe what the word says, "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ." Personally it has been manifested in Him, but the same power has wrought in us who believe. It is not said that the exceeding greatness of His power was towards Christ only, but "*to us-ward who believe.*"

But, in what way can this be true? thou mayest enquire, seeing we are so weak, and so easily overcome with difficulties. Did we more firmly believe God's word we should make less of difficulties. A great many would be carrying their beds who are clinging to them. We fail to own and honour the power with which we are associated. The Man Christ Jesus is on the throne, and we, being in Christ, are associated with the throne that rules over all. Many, alas! fail in their testimony for Christ through fear of the way. The heart of the Apostle Paul was not only fixed on Christ Himself in heaven, but it was fixed on His ways on earth. He loved to trace His every footstep, whether in the depths, or in the

heights. There is a striking resemblance in this respect between the Eighty-fourth Psalm, and the Third of Philipians. "Blessed is the man whose *strength* is in thee, in *whose heart are the ways* of them." The Lord give us to know more of this strength in us, that we may be true witnesses for Him. But now for the answer:—

The same power that wrought in Christ and raised Him from the dead, has also wrought in us, and raised us from a state of death in trespasses and sins—it has delivered us clean out of the hands of Satan, and placed us as redeemed ones in the presence of God with every enemy beneath our feet. The second chapter is the explanation and development of this great truth. The very same power has wrought in the Christian that has been displayed in Christ. We see it accomplished in Him. We know it will be fully accomplished in us in due time. The power abides with us. "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Nothing can be plainer to faith than these words—nothing can be more difficult to reason. Christ is faith's object. All truth is connected with Him. We can only gain a knowledge of truth by an ever deepening knowledge of Christ. Blessed Lord, the eye, the heart, the thoughts, must all be fixed on thee, and all our delight must be in thee. Then, learning thy word is easy. We need not that any

one teach us. The light shines—the Holy Ghost is our teacher.

Let thine eye then, O my soul, with all the tender sympathies of thy heart, be fixed on Him. Beneath the awful weight of our sins on Calvary, our Jesus died and was laid in the grave. For the moment the enemy prevailed: the Prince of life lay sealed in death. Death reigned over all. The first Adam was dead *in* sin, the last Adam dead *for* sin. But the mighty work was done, and the mighty triumph at hand. By the shedding of His precious blood He had rolled away for ever the heavy load of our sins, and glorified God about them. Heaven was satisfied, hell was vanquished, and man, through faith in that blood, eternally saved. “The God of peace”—“the Father of glory”—raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places; and He raised us up in Him to the same place of privilege and blessing. The Head and the members were together. Here God began a new thing—a new creation, of which the risen Man, Christ Jesus, is the head and centre. “Old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new: and all things are of God.” The world, sin, Satan, death, and the grave, are thus left behind. To faith, they are as far removed from the believer as from Christ Himself. All who love that blessed name are in Him and where He is. God hath exalted Him, “far above all princi-

pality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world [or, age], but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

Clearly, then—seeing every believer is in Christ, and every enemy is beneath His feet—every enemy is beneath the believer's feet. And this is nothing more than faith looks for and reckons upon. One word explains to the heart that loves Jesus this wondrous mystery—*Christ is worthy!* He who glorified God on earth is worthy to be glorified by God in heaven. And any poor sinner that glorifies Christ on earth, God will glorify with Him in heaven.

This is the will of God—*Honour my Son.* Know Himself, esteem Himself, love Himself, trust Himself, think of Himself, commune with Himself, see Himself in the blood which He shed—in His lowly path of rejection and suffering; see Himself in all His invitations and promises. Ever look for Himself; know nothing apart from Him. Love is personal. A little bit, or a great deal of religiousness, is worth nothing. Most people have plenty of religion, but how few are more at home with Christ than with anyone else in the universe. Many are more at home in speaking of a kind Providence than of the heart of Christ, though the one has been fully revealed, and the other is

wrapped in mystery. How long, O Lord, shall it thus be? Would that the Holy Spirit were less grieved by our worldliness, that He might be free to reveal to our souls more of thy glory, that our hearts might be ravished with thy beauty!

Know then, in conclusion, O my soul, and bear this in mind, that it is as *man* that Christ is exalted and glorified. As *God*, we know, He could be neither—the glory of God changes not. But being God He could descend. He became a man and died; and as man He is exalted to all honour at God's right hand in heaven. The Church is united with Him there. He is the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. It is not said, observe, that He is *Head over the Church*; but, "Head over all things to the Church." She is one with Him who is supreme over all. His members, His fulness, His completeness, His glory as the Man Christ Jesus. As it was with the first man, Adam, and his beloved Eve: so shall it be with the Second Man, the Last Adam, and the Church, His beloved Eve. Though the dominion was given directly to Adam, Eve shared it with him, according to the good pleasure of God. Christ alone is personally worthy; and God has set Him as Head over all things, and united the Church with Him as His body and His bride.

Wondrous, marvellous, blessed place and portion for the Church! But God will have it so.



It has been in His mind from all eternity. He pictured it to Himself in the first pair before sin entered. It is no afterthought. Christ speaks to His Father in John xvii. about the long looked for day, when He would share all His glory as the risen Man with those He had given Him. "And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, *and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.*"

Before closing this paper, and our Meditations on the apostle's first prayer, may I ask my dear reader, if he is one of this happy company? Art thou a believer in Christ Jesus? Is He precious to thy heart? Couldst thou not live without Him even in this world? Is He necessary to thy daily peace and happiness? Is everything worthless to thee that has not His stamp upon it? And is everything empty to thee which He does not fill? A Christian is united to Christ now, and one with Him. His sins are all forgiven, he has eternal life, and is accepted in the Beloved. The Holy Spirit dwells within him as the spirit of adoption, and communicates to his soul a fuller knowledge of Christ and His finished work. Thus he is enabled to live above the world, though diligently attending to his duties in it. The Lord looks for separation from the world in all who are associated by

faith with Him in heaven. This is true Christianity, and fills the soul with heavenly peace and joy. Is it thine, O my dear reader? Think not that the picture is drawn too high; it is within the plain statements of scripture; and we have no other standard. Nothing less will suit God, and nothing less will serve thy soul. True, Christ may be possessed and not enjoyed; pardon may be possessed and not enjoyed; and so may other blessings of Christianity; but the heart of a true believer, even amidst all its darkness and unbelief, will turn instinctively to Christ Himself, under a sense of need, and cleave to Him alone. This is the surest evidence of the work of God's Spirit in the soul. Doubts and fears are lamentable, and dishonouring to Christ; but the grace of God will outlive them all. Is this then, my friend, more like the picture of thy state? Or!—What?—no Christ at all? God forbid! This would be awful indeed! It is bad enough to see Christ only through the errors and darkness of man's theology, but to have no interest in Christ at all, is to be forlorn and desolate beyond all conception. No language could picture *this* state—no figures could sum up its misery. It is to be Christless and Godless; a hapless wreck on the shores of the lake of fire.

Dost thou own to this state? Is it really thine? Be honest about it—if so, confess it. And think not that a little human religion can meet thy need.

The work of Christ alone can meet it. He died on Calvary for sinners the chief. Blessed be His name. All praise be to Him. But, oh! *do thou* believe it; and be thankful for it. Love the Lord that died for thee on Calvary. Surely He deserves thy love, and the deepest devotion of thy heart. A seat, a throne, beside Himself, is ready for thee, if thou but truly turn to Him. What grace—what love! To die for us on the cross; and share His throne and glory with us for ever! But, oh! what must hell be to those who reject such love and glory! The very remembrance of a Christ rejected, and a salvation despised, in that place of hopeless woe, must be the worm that never dies and the fire that shall never be quenched.

“The tick of the clock of hell,” as one has said, “sounds, ever—never; ever—never; everlasting woe—never-ending misery.” How awful—how overwhelming the thought! Imagine its dreary, monotonous sound falling on the wearied ear of lost souls. As they lie in dark despair, its pendulum swinging from side to side and muttering unceasingly the doleful, heart-sinking sound, “ever—never; ever—never.” It must be like a mockery of their agonies which is too dreadful to think of.

Once more, my friend, look at the bright side. Jesus died for lost sinners. God gave His Son for lost sinners. The Holy Ghost pleads with lost sinners. Resist not His pleadings, I pray thee:

despise not the grace of God, I pray thee : despise not the blood of Jesus, I pray thee : there's pardon for thy sins nowhere else. But hear, O hear, the blessed truth, "The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Have faith in that precious blood, and thy sins, however many, shall, the same moment, be forgiven. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Bow at His blessed feet—confess thy sins, and receive from His own lips of grace, a plenary pardon, salvation, and peace. Read carefully Luke vii. 36—50.

"ETERNITY.—Count the gold and silver blossoms

Spring has scattered o'er the lea ;

Count the softly-sounding ripples

Sparkling on the summer sea ;

Count the lightly flickering shadows

In the autumn forest glade ;

Count pale nature's scattered tear-drops

Icy gems by winter made ;

Count the tiny blades that glisten

Early in the morning dew ;

Count the desert sand that stretches

Under noon-tide's dome of blue ;

Count the notes that wood-birds warble

In the evening's fading light ;

Count the stars that gleam and twinkle

O'er the firmament by night—

\*            \*            \*            \*

When thy counting all is done—

Scarce ETERNITY's begun.

Reader ! pause ! *where wilt thou be—*

*During thine ETERNITY?"*

## CHAPTER II.

## THE CHRISTIAN'S STATE.

(EPHESIANS III. 14—21.)

*“For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.”* We are now come in our meditations to the apostle's second prayer. The object and character of this prayer are very different to the first, though their moral connection is easily seen. Christ is the centre of both, and the Christian is associated with Him as such. The first refers to the kingdom of Christ and our association with Him in the dominion and glory. The second, to the house of many mansions, where we are loved of the Father even as Christ Himself is loved. We are thus, O wondrous thought! *one with Him* as the exalted Man, in love and glory—in all the intimacies of the family, and in all the outward glories of the kingdom.

But tell me, O my soul, how far hast thou entered into these blessed realities? Hast thou the enjoyment of them *now*? The special work of the Holy Spirit that dwells within thee is to take of the things of Christ and shew them unto thee.

Grieve Him not, I pray thee. Unbelief in thy heart, or worldliness in thy life, would hinder His gracious operations. He is both the *Holy Spirit* and the Spirit of *Truth*. Whatever is not according to truth and holiness in us must grieve Him. This is the main reason, let me assure thee, why so many have such a dim apprehension of Christ, and such a feeble grasp of heavenly truth. The Holy Spirit, who only can reveal Christ and His work to the soul, is grieved. Yes, grieved and hindered in His gracious operations by many things, but especially by our unbelief as to His dwelling in us and abiding *with* us. Many Christians—if we may judge from what they say—are more occupied with the law than with the Holy Spirit: this is a serious mistake and greatly hinders their souls' prosperity. No soul thus occupied can ever be in a state of happy liberty. The law genders to bondage. It was given to govern human nature; the Holy Spirit is given to govern our divine nature. Faith knows that the old nature is dead, and that the law cannot apply to that which it has killed. "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Rom. vi. 6.) Hence we are warned and exhorted not to grieve the Holy Ghost whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. "Know ye not," says the apostle, "that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" But

alas, alas, the religion of many is much the same as in Old Testament times—it is the law and human nature, in place of the Holy Ghost and eternal life in a risen Christ. Not that Christ is left out, or His cross either; but there is such a mixture of law and grace—of the old creation and the new, that the Holy Spirit is grieved, and sad confusion the result. Hence the many doubts and fears in place of conscious, happy association with Christ risen, exalted, and glorified.

But in what sense, many enquire, can it be said that we are associated with Christ while here in the world? As, for example, it is said, that we are seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Does not this refer to the future when we shall be actually with Christ in heaven, or to the purpose of God's everlasting love? No, my friend, it refers to the present, and neither to the decrees of God nor to the future. The apostle is speaking of those who *were* quickened by the Spirit, through faith in Christ. True, by and by we shall be *with* Christ in heaven; now we are said to be *in* Him. It is equally true that the love of God is from everlasting to everlasting; but our relationship to Him as His children begins with faith. "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." (Gal. iii. 26.) Until we had faith in Christ, and were quickened by the Holy Spirit, we were "by nature the children of wrath, even as others." But let me endeavour to explain your

difficulty. And here scripture must be our only guide, and the only ground of our faith, even though we may not fully understand it. Association with Christ is the great truth of Christianity, and worthy of our most patient meditation.

In Ephesians ii. we find it stated in plainest terms, that when we were dead in sins *God quickened us together with Christ*. We must begin, in our meditations on this subject, in the region of death. We start from the tomb—we land in glory. God quickens out of the grave. We were dead in our trespasses and sins. That is, we were *without spiritual life*. Mark this carefully, we were without the least movement of spiritual life. “We were dead in sins.” But when we were thus dead *in* sins, the blessed Lord lay dead *for* sins. At that solemn moment all were dead. The first Adam dead *in* sin, the last Adam dead *for* sin. Not a breath stirred to disturb the deep silence of death. It was as if the vessel had sunk and the waves closed over it. But now, when man could contribute nothing towards the great work, God enters the scene; but He enters it as the God of resurrection. He only can plant the pulse of life in a dead soul. “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.” But to know our blessing we must see it in Christ, so we turn to Him, and meditate on what He is in God’s sight.



He died for us—for ever blessed be His name ! The Holy One, the spotless Lamb of God, died for us. The awful question of sin which stood against us, He answered on the cross and settled for ever. God was thus glorified and the way opened for Him to shew His love to us according to all that was in His heart. But He who had gone down under death as the judgment of God on our sins, was raised up again, and we were raised with Him. Here God alone as the great workman fills the scene. He is free to act, and acts towards the objects of His love in richest grace. He works, not only to meet their wants, but to glorify His own name. Sin has been blotted out by the shed blood of His dear Son, all His past ways have been vindicated, and His name glorified. His *rich mercy* and His *great love* characterize the great work. Christ is brought forth from under the power of death, and we are brought forth with Him. “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.” Thus we are associated with the risen Christ by the quickening power of God, in the most real, intimate, and blessed way. We have life in union with Him who is before God as His supreme delight, and we are associated with Him in all the blessed realities of His life. And what more, tell me, can be said or thought of? This is the great truth of Christianity—Christ’s

own life is ours. The place and privileges that belong to this life, as now seen in Christ before God, are ours. Hence it is said that we are not only quickened together—raised up together, but seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

But this most marvellous and blessed truth is also one of great practical power. It is the true ground of peace. Our sins must be all forgiven before we can be thus *one* with Christ. All that belonged to the old man was judged on the cross, and put away for ever. Blessed be His name! And now we are brought into the presence of God without our sins, and in the condition of divine righteousness. Christ is thus our righteousness as well as our life. In a word, He is our full salvation. “By grace ye are saved.” Salvation, according to this epistle, is a present reality. We are as really saved now as ever we can be. “By grace ye *are* saved.” Though salvation is spoken of in some of the other epistles as future, it is not less certain, but viewed as the end of our journey, when we shall stand before Christ in glory; when all the trials, difficulties, and dangers of the way shall be left behind.

This, then, dear friend, is my rather lengthy answer to your question, but it needed some explanation. It is what we have called the *Christian's standing*, or his association with Christ risen, in the full value of eternal life and divine righteousness. In virtue of this union it can be said of

him in truth, even while he is here in this world, that he is seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

The theology of some, I know, would bring a dark cloud over this bright scene, by saying, that the Christian may lose his eternal life. But what does scripture say? Plainly that we are one with Christ from the moment that we are quickened through faith in Him; and that His life is ours, not on the ground of our goodness, but His grace; adored be His name! From the time that we believe, we have eternal life, right on, without the possibility of a break, throughout the endless ages of eternity. God has said it—God has formed the union—it is in resurrection, where no enemy can ever come—the death of Christ has closed the door on every foe, even as the Lord shut Noah and his family inside the ark. Quickening, raising, sitting, are immediately followed by a statement of the very motive and purpose of God in our blessing. “That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” Here, faith can breathe freely, rest quietly, wait patiently, and without the smallest misgiving. Faith never asks for more than the word of God. Though, alas, in many things *we* fail and come short, yet He is faithful. The life which He gives is like Himself—Eternal: “His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus” is also like Himself—Eternal: here

called, "*the ages to come.*" See the entire chain of grace, verses 4—10.

Think, O think, my soul, on what grace has brought thee into—on what grace does for every one who believes in Christ Jesus. Quickened, raised, seated, in happy association with the blessed Lord; and the bright, bright opening of the rolling ages of a happy eternity before thee, with the unknown extent of the glory of God, which shall for ever surround thy Well-beloved, and all who are associated with Him in the power of His endless life.

O that God's richest blessing may rest on every soul that glances over these pages. Dear reader—my heart goes out to thee—Art thou saved? Is this eternal life thine? O what a prize to win, but, alas, what a prize to lose! It can only be won by faith in Christ. Bow, I pray thee, at His blessed feet—listen to His voice—hear that sweetest of all gospel notes—Come! come unto me! Melting words! They come from a heart that only loves—from lips that drop the sweetest accents of grace. O listen and obey—may they melt thy heart. How awful it would be for thee to hear at last from those lips, words of burning wrath. But God forbid! Hear now—believe now, and turn to Him now in unquestioning confidence. All is plain and simple, only give heed to the one thing needful. To hear the voice of Christ is to be one of His sheep. And this is what

He says about every sheep of His without exception: "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John x. 28, 29.) Better far, my dear reader, to be in the hand of Christ than in the hand of Satan. May the Lord enable thee to decide at once for Christ, and to give thy whole heart to Him, and to faithfully serve and follow Him. Blessed Lord! He alone is worthy.

"Oh, dearest Saviour! take my heart:

Where can such sweetness be

As I have tasted in thy love,

As I have found in thee?

Let every fervour of my soul,

By thy sweet sacrifice,

For ever be at thy control,

And but to serve thee rise."

The apostle, as we have said, addresses himself, in the third chapter, to "the *Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ;" as in the first, to "the *God* of our Lord Jesus Christ." The different titles indicate different lines of truth and blessing. In the first prayer, it is the Christian in Christ; in the second, it is Christ in the Christian. Hence it is that the apostle prays in the first chapter that the saints may have a true apprehension of their standing in Christ as risen and glorified; and in the third, that

Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith—that they might be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. This is evidently *practical*. The one we have called *christian standing*; the other, *christian state*. Would to God that the latter were a fair reflection of the former—that our practical ways truly answered to our place in Christ before the face of God our Father.

“*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.*” The familiar titles of “Father,” and “family,” awaken thoughts of home and affection. The glory of the *Person* of Christ rose up before us in meditating on the first prayer; but here it is *love*, rather than *glory* that surrounds Him, and surrounds us as one with Him. But, wondrous to the eye as that glory will be, sweeter to the heart will be the Father’s love.

Doubtless there are many glories which belong to Christ as the Son of the Father which no creature can share. Infinite must the distance necessarily be between the Creator and the creature—between Jesus as God, and the highest angel that bows before His throne. But we speak of Him here as *man*, and of the place which is due to Him as such.

God having fully judged sin in the Person of Christ on the cross, and put it away for ever, we are brought into His presence in the dignity of “the sons of God,” and loved with a perfect love.

As John says, "Beloved, *now* are we the sons of God"—"And if children," as Paul says, "then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." (1 John iii. 2; Rom. viii. 17.) Here dwell for a little, O my soul. Let thy thoughts be fully engaged. Never did more wondrous or more blessed truth engage thy meditations. Can it be, that God's many sons are loved even as His own beloved Son? Yes, Christ Himself has said it, and that is enough, more than wonderful though it be. When He speaks about the coming glory in John xvii. He says, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them;" this, observe, is His given glory as the Son of man; not His higher glory as the Son of God. We must ever keep in view in all our meditations His own proper *personal* glories. But why does He give to the saints His glory as Son of man? "*That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.*" Nothing can be plainer, nothing can be more definite than this.

Here concentrate all thy thoughts, O my soul. Words of deeper, richer, fuller, better blessing to thee, never dropped even from the lips of Jesus. God only can love where all is unlovable. The spring of His love is in Himself, not in its object. This thou canst not understand, yet it is the fountain of all thy blessing. Thou mightest be able to form some idea of divine wisdom, or power, or righteousness, or rather, how God can exercise

these attributes; but who can understand that He loves the saints as He loves His Son? In virtue of the work of Christ, we might understand something of Him giving us the place in heaven that belongs to Christ, but to *love us* as He loves Him, is incomprehensible.

Love is the spring of action, therefore love is a better thing than action. Love delights to serve, but love is better than service. There might be action and service without love, but there could not be love without both. God loved the world and gave His Son. Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. Had there been no love, there could have been no cross, no crown, no glory. But love secures all, and all for ever. Glory may fade, or pass away as in Israel of old, but love—never. (1 Cor. xiii.) Even towards the ancient people, God's love is the same; and just because His love and counsels are unchangeable, the glory will yet be restored, and shine a thousandfold brighter than ever. "*Love never faileth.*" Grant, Lord, in thy mercy, that this thy love may be the light of our eyes and the strength of our hearts—that every word of thy mouth, and every dispensation of thy providence, may be seen in the light of it. Oh! what will it be, blessed Lord, to dwell in thy love and with thyself for ever! Hasten, O hasten, the ingathering of souls, and the dawn of that happy day, for thine own name's sake!



“ Brethren, look up ! and view the home,  
The blessed home prepared in heaven,  
Though *here* with faltering steps we roam,  
What sweet assurance *there* is given.  
The Lamb is there upon the throne,  
The rainbow arch of love is o’er Him,  
And He will ne’er forget His own,  
Who bow with lowly hearts before Him.

Brethren, look up ! and *now* rejoice,  
Though sorrow’s clouds our path bedim.  
The trusting heart and joyful voice  
Alone can sing heaven’s choral hymn ;  
The opened heavens e’en *now* reveal  
The glories of our radiant home—  
Oh brethren ! join the glad appeal—  
‘ The Spirit and the bride say, Come ! ’ ”

But may I indulge the thought, a timid soul enquires, that *now*, at this present time, the Father loves me, a poor, weak believer, as He loves His own beloved Son ? Surely thou mayest when He says it. His object in making known His love to us is that we may believe it and enjoy it in this world. To doubt it would be to dishonour Him and injure our own souls. The *manifestations* of His love may vary, nay, must vary, according to our subjection to Christ and obedience to Him. (John xiv. 23.) But the love itself can never change. “ God is love.” Acquaint thyself with the blessed course of His love, as drawn by the apostle in 1 John iv. 8—18. True, the millennium will be the outward display of it, but the cross is

the deeper expression of it. And God's love never can be sweeter to the heart than now. Even amidst the higher glories, love will be the better thing, so what must it be now amidst the sorrows and sufferings of this present time? Let His love then, O my soul, be thy refuge in every time of trouble. Nothing will so shield thee from the attacks of the enemy—nothing will so strengthen thy confidence—nothing will so increase thy devotedness—nothing will so fill thee with peace and keep thee humble. The higher the truth we receive, the deeper it humbles us in the presence of God. It was when Paul was unfolding the great mystery—the Church, that he speaks of himself as “less than the least of all saints.” Ver. 8.

That the deep sense of the Father's love to His children might be wrought in their hearts, the apostle thus prays: “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.” The title “*Father* of the Lord Jesus Christ” is that relationship which brings out the *love* of the Father's heart, and ranges around His Son as a centre, every order of beings, both in the heavens and the earth. The title “*God* of our Lord Jesus Christ” brings out the *glory*—the given glory of the exalted Son of man; and, enough for the heart to

know, *He shares both with us*. Loved as He is loved, and in the same glory with Him; and that not only during the first, or millennial age, but throughout the ages to come"—for ever and for ever! What a future! What an eternity! What is time or earth to thee, my soul, in view of eternal love and glory?

"Every family," is said to be a better translation than "whole family." There will be many families both in the millennial heavens and on the millennial earth. Under the name of *Jehovah*, the Jews only were named or included. As it is written, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." (Amos iii. 2.) But we have in the apostle's prayer the contrast to this. Under the name of *Father*—"Father of the Lord Jesus Christ . . . . every family in heaven and earth is named." We read of principalities, powers, angels, Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God. But "every family" necessarily comes into view under the name of Father. When God delivered His ancient people out of the land of Egypt, it was under the title of *Jehovah*, His covenant name. He was not the God of any other nation in the same sense. But when the highly favoured people had sadly failed, and when He chose to place the crown of universal dominion on the head of a Gentile king, He makes Himself known as "the God of heaven." (Dan. ii. 37.) Now He speaks from heaven, not as in covenant relationship with

a people on earth. But when He brings forth His Son, the "heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds," He takes the title *Father*, and under this name He takes in the wide circle of creation—of "every family"—both in the heavens and the earth. The blessing is no longer limited to the favoured Jew or to the honoured Gentile, but it is extended to every class of beings which He has made. The Father's Son, centre of all His ways, Creator and Redeemer—He is worthy—worthy that every knee should bow to Him—worthy of universal glory!

"Kings shall fall down before Him,  
And gold and incense bring;  
All nations shall adore Him,  
His praise all people sing.  
Outstretched His wide dominion  
O'er river, sea, and shore;  
Far as the eagle's pinion,  
Or dove's light wing can soar."

But, pray, may I ask, what place will the Church have in these wide scenes of encircling glories? No question, personal and important though it be, is more easily answered. *She will be in association with Christ before God, as the bride the Lamb's wife.* Need more be said? Can more be said? Every family, or circle, will have its own special, distinctive glory, and the joy and glory of each one will be the common joy and glory of all; but the bride will have a place of nearness

and intimacy which none others can share. Now, the Church is spoken of as the *body of Christ*, which is the figure of her *oneness in life* with Him. "We are members of his body." Nothing can be so vitally connected with the head as the members of the body. "He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." Every true Christian is thus inseparably connected with Christ; and by the Holy Ghost's presence on the earth, all Christians are formed into one body. "There is one body and one Spirit." This is the all-important truth for the present time. We cannot be in the current of God's thoughts unless we are endeavouring to carry it out practically. "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." This is like the one—the chief *exhortation* for the Church. Eph. iv. 3, 4.

In 1 Corinthians x., xi. the same important truth as to the unity of the body is also taught. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of *the body of Christ*? For we being many are one bread, and *one body*: for we are all partakers of that one bread." These verses leave no doubt as to what the Church *is*—one body. Chapter xi. is equally plain as to what the Church *does*: "This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup,

ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." What we *are* and what we *do*, are here plainly taught. May we readily bow to the truth, and willingly obey it.

By and by, in heaven, when the body of Christ is complete, the Church will be known more especially as the *bride*, the *Lamb's wife*. Of course, both terms, *body* and *bride*, are figures, but they point out two most blessed relationships—*oneness* in life, and *oneness* in affection. As the wife ranks with the husband, so will the Church rank with Christ for ever and ever. *Bride* is a temporary title; *wife* is a permanent one. But throughout the endless ages of eternity the wife will retain the bloom and beauty of her nuptial day. No sign of age shall ever be seen on the fair bride of the Lamb. "Not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Oh! wondrous, wondrous truth! Oh! blessed, blessed hope! "The Spirit and the bride say, Come . . . Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus." Rev. xxii.

"Bride of the Lamb, rejoice! rejoice!

Thy midnight watch is past;

True to His promise, lo! 'tis He!

The Saviour comes at last.

For thee, His royal bride—for thee,

His brightest glories shine;

And, happier still—His changeless heart,

With all its love is thine."

But here, before passing on to the next verse,

pause a moment, O my soul, and drop a word—a tear, for those who are now rejecting Christ. Oh! what a day of disappointment and sorrow, to all such, will the day of His coming be! To those who now believe in Jesus, it will be a day of light and unmingled blessedness; but to those who now reject Him, it will be a day of darkness and everlasting despair. The awful sentence, “depart from me,” like Ezekiel’s roll, will be “full of mourning, lamentation, and woe.” Oh! thoughtless, careless, worldly one, be warned now. Be turned in thy heart to Jesus now. To come to Jesus now, is not only to escape the lake of fire—is not only to be admitted into heaven, but it is to be a sharer of the nuptial glories of the Lamb, and to enjoy the intimacies of His love for ever.

The same day and hour that the soul draws near to Jesus by faith, it is graciously met by God with eternal life. Full, immediate salvation is God’s blessed answer to our faith in His Son. Love delights to bless; but what so sensitive of neglect? How indignant must injured love be on that solemn day of final reckoning! With what sore judgment it will visit those who have despised its offers of pardon and salvation! Eternal condemnation must be the awful sentence of God on every soul that despises Jesus. There is not the shadow of a line of middle ground. He who is not justified by faith must be condemned for unbelief; and condemned for ever. Oh! how one’s soul is

thrilled with these words as the pen writes them down! *Eternal condemnation!* What an enemy to grapple with, but how helpless the soul! The very sound of thy name, O thou unpitied, undying foe, is terrible! But, pray, where dwellest thou? In the regions of dark despair. And what doest thou? I cut off all hope and shut up the soul to self-reproach. How dreadful thou art! But tell me, what is the number of thy years? My years are without number. I know nothing, as men count, of beginning and ending. I am an eternal now. When millions and millions of years are past as men now reckon, I shall be just the same. Countless millions have no effect on me. Eternal means eternal.

Hearest thou this, O my fellow sinner? Be entreated—be persuaded—think on these things *now*. Why play the fool, and fall into the fearful, the unrelenting grasp of *eternal condemnation*? Why prefer a moment's present gratification, to eternal happiness? "The devils," it is said, "believe and tremble." Is thy heart harder than theirs? Canst thou hear of these things and not tremble? Canst thou believe them with thy natural heart and not tremble? This is to be more insensible than Satan. How dreadful! Esau sold the land of Canaan for a mess of pottage; wilt thou sell heaven for less? Judas sold the Saviour for thirty pieces of silver; and for what art thou now selling Christ, heaven, and all? Say,



for what? The hope—the barest hope of a worldly pleasure—and be that pleasure in whatever form it may, it will never realize thy hope. The pleasure of the worldling has a rapid wing, and soon passes away, but a sting remains. Thou canst not give wings to it. For a vanity—for a nothing, thou art setting aside all that is good both for time and eternity, and thereby exposing thy precious, immortal soul to *eternal condemnation*. Be wise, O be wise! Pause, think: let not Satan have thee. There is One that loves thee and seeks thy real good; and, comparatively speaking, *only one*; and wilt thou not think of thy *only Friend*? He died for thee. Hast thou ever sought an opportunity to thank Him for it? Thy conscience says, No—never. Is this thy love to thy Friend—thy only Friend? Come to Him now. His love still lingers—He waits for thee. And His way is, to ask no questions, but to bless every new comer according to the love of His own heart. He will not put thee to shame with perplexing questions, but He will allow thee to hide thy guilty blushes in His own bosom. Were He only to enquire, “Why hast thou been so long in thinking of me?” shame and confusion would cover thy face; but such a thing He never does. He will rebuke Satan, who is at thy right hand ready to resist thee. But to a poor guilty one, like Joshua in Zechariah iii. it is grace without rebuke. He stands up for the sinner that has fled to Him in

the face of every foe. The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan ; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? The enemy is rebuked, but the penitent is cleansed, clothed, and crowned, and thus brought into the presence of God, to go no more out. And did He not vindicate the poor woman at His feet in the house of Simon? "I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven." How beautifully He stands up for her, and that in the very face of the nation's pride and self-righteousness! and mark too, how He fills her heart with a plenary pardon, a present salvation, and perfect peace. Luke vii.

As thou art a man, O my fellow sinner, come to Jesus. Be encouraged. Come now. Thou seest the manner of thy reception. Thou knowest what He will say to thee. Read carefully, I pray thee, these two portions, and there learn the Lord's ways in grace with every poor, guilty soul that comes to Him. Thou hast but to let go thy hold of the world, or rather get away from the world's hold of thee. Think of Jesus. Learn to know Him. He will fill every aching void, and satisfy thy heart

for ever. It is impossible to know Him without the heart being filled with joy, whatever the circumstances may be. "Acquaint thyself with him and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee." Job xxii. 21.

"Haste thee on from grace to glory,  
Armed by faith and winged by prayer,  
Heaven's eternal day's before thee,  
God's right hand shall guide thee there;  
Soon shall close thine earthly mission,  
Soon shall pass thy pilgrim days,  
Hope shall change to glad fruition,  
Faith to sight, and prayer to praise."

We now return to the apostle's prayer. He has before his mind, not the rejecter of Christ, but those who now believe, and who will have a place of peculiar nearness to Him in the coming glory. He prays,

"*That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.*" This is an entirely different line of truth from his prayer in the first chapter. There, it is a question of *standing*; here, it is of *state*. There, he prays that the saints might know more fully their place before God in Christ, and all the privileges of that position; here it is a question of practical power by the Holy Spirit—of being "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."

Love is the Christian's strength; or, *Christ*

*dwelling in the heart by faith.* This is his strength. The trials of the wilderness now, and the boundless glories of the future day, can only be calmly contemplated or endured in the strength of His love. It is the power of inward affections that strengthens for outward circumstances. When the object of affection *dwells in the heart*—yes, really *dwells* there—what would that heart shrink from to gain its object? To one, naturally, the most timid and delicate, love gives new courage, new strength, new resolution, a new character. Nothing is seen but the *one object* who is far away. The broad tempestuous sea—the ship's rough crew—the inhospitable foreign shore, presents no difficulties. All who are known and loved and dear to the heart by the tenderest ties of kindred and friendship are freely given up, and it may be given up for ever, for the one object who *dwells* in the heart, in truest, tenderest love. We mention not the possibility of all this valour of love being disappointed, it would be too heartless to think of; but there is only One whose love commands unquestioning confidence. And this is the *One* that the apostle so earnestly desires may dwell in our hearts.

What wondrous, blessed truth this is, O my soul! Hast thou well thought it over? It is one of the sweetest thoughts of His love. What is it, pray? It is this, as I understand it: When associated with Him as the centre of a glory which has no

circumference, what could sustain thy heart? What could strengthen thee as His many glories are displayed before thy wondering eyes? Nothing but His love. And this is the great truth here revealed to our hearts: "That he would grant you, *according to the riches of his glory*, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." It is enough, O my soul: He who fills the vast universe with His glory, fills thy heart with His love.

But still higher thoughts of His love are revealed in what the apostle further desires for the saints.

*"That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."* Herein, O my soul, is a wonderful thing. It falls with the effect of surprise on the mind. It fills the soul with wonder and adoration. But if thou wouldst understand it, thou must dwell upon it with thine eye upwards to Himself. The question is this: What is to enable thee to comprehend that which is measureless? True, it is a paradox; but the answer is, The love of Christ. It is not what may be called *knowledge* merely, or, *intelligence*, generally, or *great capacity of mind*; but *being rooted and grounded in the love of Christ*. Surely a more blessed thing has never occupied thy thoughts. Linger then in thy meditations over

this remarkable truth. Being rooted and grounded in love, mark, is thy intelligence and power in the things of Christ. What a thought! Is it new to thee? See and master it, make it thine own. It is thy wisdom and strength for time and eternity.

Yes! the sweetest thing that ever was, or is, or can be, is that which gives strength to thy heart for the contemplation of His glory. It is thy fitness for association with Himself, both now and for ever. But mark another thing, and a blessed thing too. *This is the portion of all the saints.* Christ is the Centre of all the counsels, the ways, and the glory of God; and as the saints are associated with Him, they will form the first or innermost circle of the many concentric circles of His universal glory. Thus strengthened in His love, all the saints will *then* "be able to comprehend" that which the apostle *now* leaves in its undefined glory—the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, but he does not say of what. He leaves the sentence unfinished.

Many have thought that the apostle is here speaking of the breadth, length, depth, and height of the love of Christ; and it is often so quoted. But we think this is a mistake. The apostle does speak of the love of Christ passing knowledge, but we believe that to be an additional thought. By reading the whole passage closely, it appears quite evident that he introduces a fresh subject, or at least a new thought, in the beginning of verse

19: "AND to know the love of Christ." At the same time, it is blessedly true, that the love of Christ is without limits—it passeth knowledge. The apostle is lost, as it were, amidst the grandeur and the glory of the scenes, into which the Holy Ghost is leading him.

Some who have studied this passage long and closely, have suggested that the "mystery" is before the mind of the Spirit in verse 18. The mystery, or the Church, is the grand theme of the epistle. It includes Christ in His heavenly and earthly glory, and the Church associated with Him. She will then be, as His associate, high above all others—above every family in heaven and earth. That which God kept a secret so long in His own mind, may still be left in part so. And there we happily leave it. Who could define the glory that is due unto the Son—the Son whom the Father delights to honour? But that which is the *foundation* of the mystery, as well as its joy and glory, has been fully revealed. "And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." We can never know His love perfectly, but we shall know it more and more. It has been fully revealed, and yet it must remain for ever unrevealed. The apostle is dealing with infinitudes, which, to us now, are divine paradoxes. It is of His love he speaks. That precious love is the spring of all blessing. It fills all, "all saints"—characterizes all—strengthens all—perfects all.

The sons of God, as morning stars, shall shine for ever, to the delight of His eye and His heart, in the eternal heavens of His love and glory. They will be the unfading lustre of His throne—the immediate companions of His joys, and the perfect delight of His heart.

“Thy glory, Lord, is mine—the light  
That beams upon Thy lustrous brow;  
For changed into its image bright  
I yet shall be, as Thou art now!

Thy rich inheritance is mine;  
Joint heir with Thee of worlds above,  
Lord, in Thy kingdom I shall shine,  
And reign with Thee in endless love.

Thy fulness, Lord, is mine—for oh!  
That fulness is a fount as free  
As it is inexhaustible!  
Jehovah's boundless gift to me!

My Christ! O sing, ye heaven of heavens!  
Let every angel lift his voice;  
Sound with ten thousand harps His praise;  
With *me*, ye heavenly host, rejoice!

With tears, with songs, with holy psalms,  
With daily love, with odours sweet,  
With broken heart, with outstretched arms,  
I'll pour my praises at thy feet.”

It is one of the most plausible snares of Satan, to keep us occupied with the good we receive from the work of Christ, in place of being occupied with Christ Himself, and with His delight and interest



in us. We enter too little into the divine side of redemption. Hence the great absence of joy and strength. Of Israel His earthly people it was said, "If the Lord *delight* in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it to us: a land which floweth with milk and honey." (Numb. xiv. 8.) Faith could see that all their blessing rested, not on what they were, but on the Lord *delighting* in them: and this will yet be fully manifested, both in the heavenly and earthly people. We have the same thought in Proverbs viii. 31: "And my delights were with the sons of men." He rests in His love and so should we.

There is still another remarkable word in verse 19, "*That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.*" Again we are launched on a sea without a shore, but it is a sea of love. More than this the apostle could not ask—further than this He could not go. The Church is Christ's fulness—"the fulness of him that filleth all in all." And He who fills all things, fills our hearts with the fulness of God. "There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and IN YOU all." Again, "In that day [the Spirit's day] ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." (John xiv. 20.) It is only by the power of an ungrieved Spirit that we enter *practically* into these great and blessed truths. If the world or the flesh be allowed, the Spirit is grieved, our minds are darkened, and we become

confused, so that nothing is seen in its absolute, distinctive character. We must ever remember, that it is not by dint of study or learning that Christ is known or His truths seen; but by the light and teaching of the Holy Spirit. Hence the importance of the condition of the heart and the practical ways. This is the main object of the apostle's prayer in this chapter. It is for the saints now that he prays—that their affections and all their practical ways may answer to their position in Christ as risen and glorified. Now we have an entrance into these things by faith, through the power of the Holy Ghost. By and by we shall be with Him, and like Him, and know even as we are known. But till then, our one desire should be, that we might grow up into Him in all things who is the Head, even Christ. The apostle now closes with a doxology of great fulness and beauty.

*“Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.”* The great thought, in the first prayer, is the power that wrought for us. Here, it is the power that works in us. There, it was a power that wrought in Christ and raised Him from the dead, and which wrought in us and raised us up with Him. Here, it is the same power, but now it is put forth in a practical way: “Accord-

ing to the power that worketh *in us*." It is also said in the second chapter, that we are "an habitation of God through the Spirit." He would have us to enter now, by the power of the Spirit, into the blessed revelations of the love of Christ and the fulness of God.

Let this further and higher truth, then, greatly encourage thee, O my soul. What mayest thou not count upon, seeing the power of God works in thee? How wonderful, that such an energy should be at work in such poor, weak, good-for-nothing ones! But do I really believe it? I admit it, but do I believe it? or do I count upon it? Should I be so soon cast down? would a little thing so soon discourage me? should I be so subject to the power of circumstances? should I have so little faith, if I really believed that the power of God works in me? or, on the other hand, should I enter so little into my Saviour's love, and the fulness of my God and Father? Ah no! there is nothing I forget so much, or know so little about, as the power that worketh *in me*: O wondrous, marvellous, blessed word! "*According to the power that worketh in us*." And yet well we know, and surely believe, that Thou art "able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Lord, give us to know more of this power, that we may think less of difficulties—less of ourselves—less of circumstances, and more of thee, and of thy power which worketh in us.

*Dependence*, we own, is our truest position—our highest service—our richest blessing, while here below. And prayer is its very life-breath. But though everything is now characterized by feebleness and failure, the day is coming when God will be fully glorified in the Church. Blessed, happy thought! Christ, and the Church which is His body, shall be the blessed centre of the manifestation of God Himself, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in all His glory. What a place this gives the Church: and what a place for ever! “*Throughout all ages, world without end.*” O what a privilege—what an honour—to be the dwelling place of God for ever! What separation from the world—what lifting above it—what strength for service—what nearness in worship, should the knowledge of this truth give! Blessed prospect—blessed future! for the Church of God, the bride of the Lamb. “UNTO HIM BE GLORY IN THE CHURCH BY CHRIST JESUS THROUGHOUT ALL AGES, WORLD WITHOUT END. AMEN.”

Having thus followed the Church, in happy association with Christ, into the future ages of her unmingled blessedness, we would now close our meditations on this blessed theme by taking a glance at her position just before she goes up to meet her coming Lord. This we see in Revelation xxii. “*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him*

*take the water of life freely."* Here her eye is fixed on Himself. But it is the eye of a bride fixed on her bridegroom. She knows Him as "the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star." He is the divine Bridegroom of her heart: and with affections suited to that relationship, she longs for His coming. But she also knows, and forgets not, that He who is the one object of her own heart's desire, is still the fountain of living waters to every thirsty one. And she knows the waters are free—free to the poorest—free to the vilest—free to all. And thus she extends her invitation to "*whosoever will.*" O loveliest of attitudes! Here she shines in the grace of her Lord, and acts in the power of His love. Would that every individual Christian entered heartily into the true spirit of this position! But sure we are, that in the proportion that our hearts long for the coming of the Lord, in the same proportion will they long for the salvation of souls. It would appear, from this beautiful description of the Church, that the one is a consequence of the other. And, surely, it is when meditating most deeply on His coming, that we turn to those around us with deepened earnestness, and beseech them to come to Him. Never are our appeals so pointed, so tender, so earnest, as when our hearts are burning with love to the Lord, and in the expectation of His return. Indeed we can only appeal when the heart is warm.

Thus it is with the Church as she is presented to us in Revelation xxii. She is, as it were, appealing to the Lord, and appealing to souls. Love fills her heart. And thus may it be with us *individually*, while here in the midst of Christless sinners. There is no motive to evangelization like the thought of His coming. O that our hearts may never cease to burn with desire for the salvation of lost souls! The time is short. The coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Great changes are taking place everywhere, both in the Church and in the world; and many are wondering what they will all lead to.

Thou hast only to look around thee, O my soul, and thou wilt see everything moving rapidly. The slumber of eighteen christian centuries is broken. The nineteenth is the century of invention and of the display of man's power and glory. Only think, that which is discussed to-night in the senate house in New York, will be read the following day in London by tens of thousands. With rapid strides the world is rising to its manhood. Old age and decrepitude, we believe, will as rapidly follow. The climax will soon be reached, not only in pride and worldly glory, but in the daring wickedness of *the man of sin*. This is what Satan has in view, and what man's energy in the present day is hastening on; but the enemy's one aim is to keep the eye from Christ. The first glimpse of a risen Saviour, by faith, in the light of the Holy Spirit,

dims all the world's glory. A risen Christ is the divine witness that the whole world is under the sentence of God's judgment, which may at any moment be executed. Hence the exaltation of man is Satan's object, and everything is now moving in that direction with telegraphic speed.

Now turn thine eye for a moment to *ecclesiastical movements*. The professing church as well as the world has been aroused from the sleep of ages. We forget not the great work of God's Spirit in the sixteenth century: but that in the nineteenth is very different in its character. Then, it became more a question of human governments and religious systems; now, it is more of the Church of God and the conversion of souls. The ten virgins are all awake, the foolish as well as the wise. The midnight cry has gone forth; but, the Lord be praised, as the cry, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh," waxes louder and louder, the cry to prepare for His coming has increased in proportion. Thousands of evangelists have been raised up to proclaim the gospel of the grace of God; and millions who have been startled, as it were, from their long undisturbed repose, are waking up and wondering what all this mighty movement of "lay preachers" can mean.

Long neglected, out-of-the-way places are visited by the evangelists, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them. *Individual responsibility* carries the glad tidings where official

status cannot—dare not, and the good work goes on.

The Spirit of God, as the quickener of dead souls, is active too, in connection with the gospel. This is matter of unfeigned joy. He is gathering many souls to Christ, especially within the last ten years. Christendom is unlike what it was before 1858. The bands of office are now found to be a hindrance. The energy of the Spirit in the “lay-preacher” hesitates not to cross the marches. All parishes are alike to the preacher. Souls are his object; not boundary lines, or the worn-out routine of particular forms. The field is the world. The Lord has given it to him. “Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,” is his high commission. “Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it,” is his divine privilege. The highways and hedge rows, the streets and the lanes of the city, and the supposed sacred enclosures, are all thrown open to him. Moral compulsion is to be used; his orders are, “Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” It is the *Master* who carries the key. “These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth.” Blessed is that servant who follows Him who has the key, the symbol of authority and power.

Thus everything, as we have said, is moving



rapidly, and changes as rapidly as it moves. In the world, notwithstanding its boasted progress, things are really going backwards. The ancient bulwarks of society are breaking up, as if the feebleness of age were accompanying the achievements of manhood. Power is passing into other hands, and hands that will use it. The word of God is being treated with indifference—the sign and forerunner, we believe, of a nation's decline. Man's will, man's reason, man's self, are supreme, and will have their brief display in ten thousand ways, before the appearing in glory of the Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. Even now, what "distress of nations, with perplexity: the sea and the waves roaring." The lawless, rebellious despisers of governments are like the tumultuous sea which cannot be bridled or governed by man. Hence we already see the most plain indications of the Lord's own words being in part fulfilled. "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." (Luke xxi. 25—27.) Such, alas, is the present state of the world. The rulers are perplexed, the people are uneasy; this is daily becoming more and more manifest. At the same time there is seeming progress; but it is a vain show. However, we can only look at things in the light of God's word.

We now return to our meditations on the Church, which lies more in our line of things. We have seen her amidst the thickening gloom, in her most beautiful character. Here she is truly heavenly in her affections, yet most devoted to the spiritual and eternal welfare of those around her. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. [The young convert is here exhorted to join in the cry, Come.] And let him that is athirst come [come to the Saviour]: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." This, we need hardly say, is not the position of the professing church at large; but of those who are bearing testimony to the coming of the Lord, and to where the living waters are to be found. This is the most lovely attitude in which we see the bride of the Lamb, as the Church, on the earth. The desire for souls to come to Christ keeps pace with the desire for the Lord to come as the Bridegroom of His Church. This is both beautiful and blessed. Lord, increase this twofold desire. It is clearly the teaching of the Spirit. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come." It is no peculiar view of any particular denomination, but the teaching of the Spirit of God. It is the bride that speaks, but she is moved and energized by the Spirit. And what must be the state of a preacher's heart, if it is not moved to intense earnestness, even to agony, by the near prospect of the Lord's coming?

But what, may I ask, would become of those who are now listening to the gospel, were the Lord to come before this service closes, if they had not believed it? The answer is unspeakably solemn. So far as scripture informs us, their case would be hopeless. Of course this remark would not apply to persons who are too young to be responsible, or to those who have never heard the gospel: but where the gospel has been plainly preached, and deliberately refused, what must the consequence be? "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Escape, in such a case, seems impossible. Look again at 2 Thessalonians i. : "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." This passage seems to take in as objects of judgment, two classes. Those that know not God, and those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. "The first class may embrace Jews and others, who profess to believe in God, but not in Christ and His gospel. The latter, evidently, are gospel hearers, but not true believers. We cannot see from scripture that there is the smallest hope for such, were the Lord to come. But the second chapter is stronger still on this awfully solemn point, and seems to shut

out all hope. Indeed we feel it is too awful and solemn to be transferred to a human page.

How seldom, alas, this soul stirring truth is thought of either by preacher or hearer! But when it has its right place in the heart, it will move to earnestness as none other can—it will agonize the whole soul of the preacher. Who could be occupied with themselves in any way, or even with the details of truth, under such a thought and feeling? How small a place the mere *style* of address would have in our minds, if we really believed that five out of every ten that we preach to, are in danger of eternal woe! Scripture never exaggerates. Even of those who take the place of *virgins*, five out of ten come too late and perish in their sins. They had lamps in their hands, but no grace in their hearts. Lord, grant that thy servants may think—think only—on the state of those before them, and of the awful consequences of thy coming to such.

But one thing is comforting—most comforting, O my soul. It is this—thou mayest safely reckon, that as the testimony to the coming of the Lord spreads on all hands, so will the testimony to the grace of God in the gospel. May the Lord greatly increase this twofold testimony in these last and closing days! And O, that all whose high privilege it is to bear it, may be faithful, earnest, and devoted, according to the all-commanding importance of the coming of the Lord, and the salvation

of those for whom His long-suffering still patiently lingers! May we maintain the beautiful and blessed attitude of the bride before us. "THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY, COME. AND LET HIM THAT HEARETH SAY, COME. AND LET HIM THAT IS ATHIRST COME. AND WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY."



## CHAPTER III.

### THE CHRISTIAN'S VOCATION.

#### EPHESIANS IV.

*"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love."* (Chap. iv. 1, 2.) That which naturally follows our "Meditations on the Christian's Standing and State," is what the apostle here calls his *vocation*. His practice—his whole walk and ways are included in his *vocation*. The word has a broad and deep significance in this verse. The exhortation is founded on, and flows from, his standing in Christ, and the state of heart becoming that blessed position.

Christian practice ought to be the reflection of christian position : and it will be well to meditate closely, patiently, and honestly, on what lies before us as the divinely marked out path for all Christians. The exhortation comes to us from a risen Christ. It is founded on accomplished redemption and the glory of the Redeemer. *It is final.* We must abide by this last revelation of His will. High thoughts and lofty words about our standing in a risen Christ will only be an offence to others, if our *practice* in all things be not in accordance therewith.

The apostle writes from a prison in Rome. This is significant and characteristic. He was there for the truth's sake, and especially for the testimony he had borne to the blessed truths contained in this epistle. But he was the Lord's prisoner. "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you." If we separate ourselves from the world and witness against it, it will be angry with us, it will consider itself insulted, and will revenge the insult. This is the real ground of all persecution, whether it be towards a child in the family, or towards a public witness for Christ and His truth. Paul was taken from the place of public testimony to the prison, and from the prison to the stake, and from the stake to Christ in the glory. And this was but the natural path of one so faithful to Christ.

But is not the world changed for the better since

Paul's time? No, my soul, the world is the same, but the Church has changed for the worse. It is now so mixed with the world that it is difficult to say what is the Church and what is the world. If Christians willingly mix with worldly people, they must expect to be dragged down to where they are. The world can never be raised to where the Church ought to be. But as things now are, what the world does, the professing church, for the most part, can do. Hence there is no occasion for persecution. But this is sad confusion, and what the scriptures call "Babylon," and against which God's sorest judgments are threatened, and will ere long be executed. It was not so at the first. The apostle and the early Christians stood in marked separation from the world, and testified against all attempts on the part of the enemy to introduce "another gospel." Hence their trials and imprisonments; but these were their scars of honour. Blessed Lord, increase our faithfulness in these last and perilous times.

Consistently with the heavenly truths the great apostle was teaching, he exhorts the saints to "all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love." Their own individual state was the first thing they were to see to. This is all-important. Those who are introduced into such privileges, and crowned with such blessings, should look well to the spirit of their minds, and to the bearing of all their ways. None on

earth can afford to be so humble as those who are the possessors of such heavenly treasure, and none should walk so evenly through this world as those who carry this treasure with them. "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is *in you*?" And again, we read, "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; *which is Christ in you the hope of glory.*" (1 Cor. vi. 19; Col. i. 27.) Surely nothing can so befit one who is so richly blessed, and so linked with heavenly glory, as the spirit of lowliness and meekness. And after all, these are but the necessary fruits of the Spirit, and of the enjoyment of our privileges in the presence of God.

Nothing can make up for the absence of meekness and lowliness in a Christian. Bear thou this well in mind, O my soul! Zeal is good—self-denial is good—devotedness is good; but thy walk would be irreparably damaged, if thou wert not meek and lowly. These qualities are indispensable to true christian character, whatever may be the gifts possessed. Without them, we should be unlike Him who was meek and lowly in heart.

But we now turn to that which may be more properly called the first part of the Christian's *vocation* :—

#### THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT.

"*Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*" (Ver. 3.) Surely this exhor-



tation is plainly and distinctly addressed to all Christians. And it stands first in order on this broad platform of truth, which is now the only true ground of service and worship. (Ver. 3—16.) This is the first thing to be examined, understood, and attended to in the Christian's vocation.

But what is "the unity of the Spirit?" some may enquire. It has a deep and blessed meaning, and a very wide application to us, as we may see further on in our meditations. At the same time, the question may be answered in a few words. It is simply the *Holy Spirit uniting all Christians on the earth into one body*. The body, of course, is united to Christ, the glorified Head in heaven, by the presence on earth of the Holy Spirit. Hence it is called "the unity of the Spirit;" and in Corinthians, "the baptism of the Spirit." It is the unity of the Spirit's forming. And He is not only the formative, but the sustaining power of this unity. Nothing ever has, ever can, or ever will disturb this perfect unity. Thank God, it is beyond the reach of man's constant failure. Christians, of course, who have departed to be with Christ, belong to His body, but such are not referred to here. It is on the earth that we are exhorted to *keep* this unity. When Paul fell asleep in Jesus, he ceased to be an eye, an ear, or a hand, in the body on earth; still, he belongs to Christ's body. The expression, "For we are members of his body" (chap. v. 30), we understand to embrace all Christians, whether

alive on the earth or asleep in Jesus. There the Spirit of God is speaking of the "glorious Church" in heaven, not of the unity of the Spirit on earth. But we must always bear in mind, that although the body thus formed by the Spirit is on the earth, it is *heavenly* in all its relationships. It belongs to heaven because the Head is there, but necessarily on the earth because the Holy Spirit is here. Paul and all who have fallen asleep in Jesus wait with Him, "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Ver. 13.

But here pause for a moment, O my soul, and weigh, as in the balances of the sanctuary, the following plain and obvious results of this great truth—"the unity of the Spirit." If thou art thus a member of the body of Christ, thou hast ceased to be an individual Christian merely. True, most true, thou hast individual responsibilities, and individual blessings too; but thou art also a member of a body, and that, not by faith only, but by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. We cannot, of course, be a member of any other body. "For we are members of his body," and that in resurrection life, and by the power of the Holy Spirit. Oh! blessed Lord, what a link—what a bond—what a reality—what nearness—what oneness! But so, in thy grace, it is. It is simple enough to faith, wondrous and mysterious though it be.

“He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit.” This is the truth referred to in John xi. 52: “But that he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad.” It was one of the definite objects of the Lord’s death. Up till the day of Pentecost the children of God were like scattered or individual saints merely. They were prepared for the building, but not yet builded together. This took place at Pentecost. (Acts ii.) Then the Holy Ghost came down from the glorified Head in heaven, and baptized into one body all the saints of God then on the earth. “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Cor. xii.) This was the beginning, in fact though not in purpose, of the Church of God, the body of Christ. And this baptism of the Spirit is our true church membership, and the only membership that will stand for ever.

A solemn thought here crosses the mind. It is the thought of that human roll of membership with which we have been long familiar. But, alas, how many names may be there that have never experienced the baptism of the Spirit! Were He who walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, and who holds the seven stars in His right hand, to examine our church rolls, would there not be many names blotted out of that so-called book of life? It ought to be a book of life

—it professes to be a book of life, for none should be entered there who do not profess to have a new life in Christ. But alas! alas! in many places it has become an empty form. The thought, as thou weighest it, becomes more and more solemn—it is overwhelming—it is heart-breaking! What is to be done? How are they to be reached? How is the fatal slumber to be broken? They deceive and are deceived, yet it may be unintentional. Formalism is the blind and snare. But how is the spell to be broken? They are a thousand times more inaccessible than the openly careless and profane. As of old, publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of heaven before the merely nominal professor. They are garrisoned on all sides by lifeless forms. And they are willing to hope that all will be right in the end, though in the meantime they heartily side with the world. Again, we are ready to cry out in agony of soul, What is to be done?

If the parable of the ten virgins represents the state of the professing church as the Lord sees it, how sad and solemn the picture! And we must bow to His judgment, and receive the truth in faith, whether we can see it as He sees it or not. But, alas! where, where does the responsibility rest? Doubtless with professors themselves, but not with them only. Has every true Christian done his utmost to awaken and to warn them? Let us not put in the plea, “I have no gift.”

That will not do. We have *grace*, and that is the ground of responsibility. "Unto *every one* of us is given *grace* according to the measure of the gift of Christ." (Ver. 7.) And the awful fact, as presented by our Lord, is surely enough to move every heart and fire every tongue. Thousands of our most respectable neighbours, who have received the right hand of christian fellowship, and who are dreaming that all is well for the future, are unpardoned and unsaved. They have no oil in their vessels. They have never been born again. The Holy Spirit dwells not in them. They are going down, from every comfort in this life, to that place of endless, speechless woe. Surely the occasion calls for tongues of living fire. The purple robe, the fine linen, and the sumptuous fare, must give place to the scene of unutterable anguish, where worlds could not purchase one drop of cold water to cool the burning tongue. Are they to go down with their arms folded, and at their ease, to the burning lake of fire? Again, once more, in agony we cry—What is to be done?

Oh! blessed Lord! Master of assemblies! *Awake, AWAKE, AWAKE* thy people, that they may put on strength—that they may put on courage, energy, and zeal, in the great and needed work of awakening—of evangelization. Go, my fellow Christian, go to either Church, or Chapel: open the door and look in—What seest thou? A fair and beautiful congregation to look upon. All are

sitting in the most respectful manner, and listening with devout attention. The sight is imposing and lovely. Thy heart warms towards them—it soon burns. But the solemn question arises, Are they all true Christians—are they all saved? The answer comes unwillingly, but the heart-sinking answer must come : No. The parable affirms that one half is unreal—having a name to live while they are dead. Does the preacher know it?—does he believe it? thy heart anxiously enquires. He ought to know it, and be governed by the awful and melancholy fact. The fire of a holy zeal for God's glory in their salvation should consume every other consideration. Nothing else in such a position is worthy of a thought. Heart and soul, voice and tears, appealing and pleading, must all be employed, if by any means he may save some. Let him but realize the awful thought that one half of his respectable and comely congregation may be shut out of heaven at last, but at present they know it not; and surely, if he has a heart to feel, and a tongue to speak, he will think of nothing but their salvation. A carefully arranged discourse, an intellectual display, or brilliant rhetoric, are all out of place here. Everything must give way to the eloquence of an earnest heart. It must be “pulling them out of the fire.”

The fearful state of things on all hands demands it—loudly and earnestly calls for it. The time is short—the end is near—the thought of eternity

connected with misery is awful. My dear reader, pray, where art *thou*? Amongst the wise or the foolish virgins? Or hast thou made no profession at all? Know, I pray thee, that unless thou art born again, thou canst not see the kingdom of God. There must be the possession of a new life in Christ, or heaven would be more intolerable to thee than hell. How awful the thought! "The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Come now—come at once—come straight to Him: He died that thou mayest live—He lives that He may receive thee, and hear thy praise. See that thou hast living connection with Him, all else will prove unavailing before His tribunal. Formalism is most deadening and deceiving. See that the risen Christ is thy one object of desire and delight. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Lord, grant that those who have the ear and the confidence of professors, may be plain, pointed, and faithful! and may many, through the power of the Holy Spirit, be awakened ere it be too late. "For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Mark viii. 36, 37.

"What doth the watchman say,  
Whose cry the slumberer wakes?  
'The night hath nearly passed away:  
The morning breaks.

'Come, whosoever will,  
Ere God's right hand He leaves :  
He waits till He His bosom fill  
With all His sheaves.

'God speaks, shall we be dumb ?  
Watch that your lamps may burn :  
Come, all ye weary wanderers, come !  
Return, return.'

Take up the watchman's word ;  
Repeat the midnight cry :  
'Prepare to meet your coming Lord,  
The time draws nigh.'

We must now return in our Meditations to that which is *real*—to our first lesson on the subject of the Christian's vocation—"the unity of the Spirit."

But many inquire, What am I to understand by *keeping* this unity? I see it is already *made*, but how am I to *keep* it? This is an important question, and one that concerns us more than any other. My answer is, *By assembling together for the breaking of bread, prayer, &c., in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the power of the Holy Spirit.* No assembly can express this unity unless the Spirit, who forms it, has His own place of sovereign rule in the assembly. It does not mean *the unity of Christians* merely, but the unity of the Spirit. To "keep" a thing is to hold it fast; therefore we must hold fast the truth, on this subject, as God has revealed it. Plainly, we are to "keep" to God's plan of the Church, and not to make one of our own. It is supposed there will be difficulty



and trial in doing so, as we are exhorted to *endeavour* to keep it.

And this, remember, my soul, thou must do with all diligence, and at all cost. God has formed this unity for the glory of Christ. Let this be thy motive, and the light of a cloudless sky will shine on all thy path. It will be perfect rest, and perfect peace, and untold blessing to thy soul. Hence it is called "*the bond of peace.*" A peaceful, restful, happy spirit, should characterize the members of Christ's body. Individually, we have peace with God through the blood of the Lamb, but the peace here spoken of is peace among ourselves.

See then, I pray thee, that thou art honest and earnest in this part of thy vocation. Do thy utmost diligence to maintain and manifest in thy practice the Spirit's unity. On no one point of thy practice would I charge thee more solemnly than on this. God's glory, the honour of Christ as the exalted Man, the due acknowledgment of the Holy Spirit on the earth, and thine own richest blessing, are all connected with it. Besides, it is the grand characteristic truth of this dispensation. Unless we are clear on this truth there must be confusion as to many others. Therefore it is that all Christians are exhorted to maintain in practice the principle of this unity, which is the body of Christ.

It was no doubt the one great aim of Satan when Christ was here, to have Him expelled from

the earth. But, wonderful to say, though Christ was crucified, Satan has utterly failed in his object. Christ is still here in the members of His body, and they are now in heaven, in Him their Head. This great truth is brought out in the doctrine of the Spirit's unity. It was first made known by the Lord Himself from the opened heavens. When Saul was on his way to Damascus, he was arrested by these words, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? . . . . I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." Here the Lord speaks of Himself as still identified with His people on the earth. No words could more forcibly or touchingly express the reality of this union. What a real and a blessed thing to faith are these words, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest."

These words, of tenderest love and sympathy for His poor saints, were words of almighty power to the fiery persecutor. He fell to the ground. He was brought down to his own absolute nothingness. But there he was met in grace, and created anew in Christ Jesus. As he afterwards said of himself, "I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." He is a model man both as to the Lord's mercy to the chief of sinners, and as to the privileges and blessings of the saints. In this remarkable way Paul became the chosen and fitted vessel for the new revelation. He knew its

heavenly character. He had been converted by a word that contains the germ of all that was afterwards revealed. His life was devoted to it. Hence he could say, "For me to live is Christ."

If we have entered into the mind of the Lord, as thus revealed from the excellent glory, we shall see no difficulty in "keeping the unity of the Spirit," or in practically maintaining that principle when we come together, which expresses and exhibits the "one body." It will, then, be our deepest joy and highest privilege on earth, though with much trial; but everything must give way to this. The dearest friendships, the oldest associations, the most sacred ties of kindred, will not be allowed to hinder us from "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Affection for friends and kindred may never have been felt more deeply, but that tender word from the Lord Himself in heavenly glory, and the exhortation of the Holy Spirit in the epistle, rise above and prevail over them all. The will of the Lord is now seen and must be followed. That which lies nearest His heart, and is most intimately connected with His glory, is the ground of His appeal to our allegiance. And no sooner is this path taken in faith and love to Him, than His richest blessings flow into our souls. Christ is honoured—the word is obeyed—the Holy Spirit is ungrieved, and who can speak of the blessings that immediately follow? The person and work of

Christ will now be ministered to the soul by the Holy Spirit, in a way unknown before, and the word of God will be seen in a new light. We are where Christ is, and where the light shines. "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Here we have Christ as the centre, and the Holy Spirit as the gathering power to that centre. It is not said where two or three *meet*, or *gather*; but where two or three "are gathered." The Holy Spirit is the gathering power to Christ as the centre.

What a theme for meditation is now before thee, O my soul. Here rest awhile. Dwell patiently and minutely on all the bearings of this great subject. It is thy *vocation*—it is that which thy Lord claims of thee. Personally, He is in heaven and thou art on the earth: but He would have thee know and own the mysteries of that union which makes the Head and the members "one body"—"one new man." Oh, most marvellous, mysterious, blessed truth! What can be so dear to thy heart? What can be so pleasing to the heart of thy Lord, as to see thee carrying it out in holy practice, for the glory of His great name?

But this is a deep *moral* question; my soul, be assured of this. It is more, much more than an ecclesiastical one. The love of Christ, the results of His atoning work, and our oneness with Him, are in question. There is a depth and tenderness in His love as here expressed, which the heart

loves to linger over. As if He had said, I still dwell on the earth in my members—I cannot leave them—I must return to them, and remain with them in *spirit*, until that happy day when they will all be with Me in *person*. All this He plainly says in John xiv. : “ I will not leave you comfortless, *I will come to you.*” It is enough, blessed Lord ! O, enable us by thy grace to enter more fully into thy love for us—thy delight in us. It passeth knowledge.

The two grand features of the unity of the Spirit—the Church of God—now come before us. And these are, First, That the Church is the body of Christ. Secondly, That it is the habitation of God through the Spirit. These are, doubtless, the highest truths ever revealed to man, and the richest in blessing to his soul. May the Lord enable us here to meditate, in the spirit of implicit faith, and of willing and hearty obedience to the truth. We will look in the first place, at

#### THE CHURCH AS THE BODY OF CHRIST.

The following passages, besides many others, state this truth in the plainest way. “ And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” (Eph. i. 22, 23.) “ For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body ; *so also is*

*Christ.*" Notice here, in passing, the last clause of this verse: "So also is Christ." According to the former part of the verse, it ought to be "So also is the Church." But the Holy Spirit is pleased, remarkable though it may seem, to call the body "Christ." Could anything more forcibly express the perfect identity of Christ and His people? Impossible!

But two things were necessary for the formation of "the Church which is the body." First, it was absolutely necessary that Christ as man should be in heaven. Secondly, it was also necessary that the Holy Ghost should be on the earth. What a field for meditation do these two New Testament truths open up! The great subjects of Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension rise up before the mind. To know such truths is to know Christianity, and the counsels of God as to His Church. It was easier far for God to make the world than to make the Church. And yet many men have spoken about forming a church, and laying down laws of worship. But one might as well talk of introducing a new way of salvation as a new way of worship. The one is as firmly fixed in scripture as the other, and as clearly defined.

When God made the world, He spake and it was done, He commanded and it stood fast. But before the Church could be formed, His own beloved Son must become a man and die. Sin must

be fully judged, and God fully glorified. The ancient barriers which God Himself had raised between Jew and Gentile must be removed, and the long standing distinctions swept away. The middle wall of partition must be broken down. When the mighty work was done, the risen Jesus ascended up on high, and took His seat as the glorified man at God's right hand in heaven, all things being now put under Him. Consequent on this, the Holy Ghost came down to form the body on earth. And now, the Head in heaven, and the members on earth, united together by the Holy Ghost, make one body. "There is one body and one Spirit."

This is the great truth of Christianity—the formation of the body Christ. But thou wilt do well, my soul, to meditate first, and more especially, on the heavenly side of this truth. To know Christ as the *man in glory*, is the right way to know His body on the earth. This will give an elevating power and character to thy vocation. Only think—Christ has carried humanity, in His own Person, to the throne of God in heaven. Surely this is the most stupendous fact in the records of revealed truth! The Son of God, thus seated there, should be the Christian's one object of desire, delight, and holy contemplation. But, marvellous as this fact is, it was necessary to the formation of the Church of God. There must be a Head in heaven before there could be a body on earth. And Christ Him-

self could not take that place until the great work of the cross was finished. He tells us this Himself in John xii. 24, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." It is in resurrection that Christ reaps the fruit of His toil. And again, in Eph. i. "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power . . . . which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body." Thus we see, that it was not until redemption was finished, Christ raised from the dead, and seated at God's right hand in heaven, that He becomes Head of His body the Church, and Head over all things to the Church. Not, observe, Head *over the Church*, but "Head *over all things* to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."

So long as the Jew's religion had the sanction of God, the Church had no existence save in the divine counsels. Israel was carefully walled off from all the other nations, and fenced on every side by rites, ceremonies, and the moral law. It would have been a sin against the God of Israel



for a Jew to have communion with a Gentile. Even in our Lord's time, the distinction was strictly maintained. His disciples were forbidden to go in the way of the Gentiles, or to enter any city of the Samaritans. The centurion and the Syro-Phenician woman strikingly illustrate this difference. Take the case of the woman. When she addressed the Lord as the "Son of David," He could not answer her plea. She was on false ground. The promises were to Abraham and to his seed. As a Gentile she was without right or title to the privileges of Israel. But the moment she takes her true ground as a Gentile, and addresses Him as "Lord," He rises in the majesty of His grace above all the limits of the Jewish covenant, and blesses the poor unprivileged Gentile, according to the greatness of His mercy. "Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Matthew xv.

It is beautiful beyond description to witness the Lord's love to the poor Gentile, and His faithfulness to God's covenant with Israel. Though treating her with apparent coldness, His love was drawing her nearer to Himself. The disciples wanted to get rid of her—not so their Lord. He waited—patiently waited, till she got down to the low place of the Gentile. It was well for that woman, and it is well for us, that the Lord's patience lingers until we learn and confess what

we really are. This is the true ground of immediate and unlimited blessing. The Lord is true, and He will have us to be true; He is real, and He will have us to be real. The question is, not how bad we are; but are we true—are we real before God? How often and how long blessing has been hindered from the anxious one not being real! Blessed Lord! give us to be thoroughly honest in thy presence; without reservations and without exceptions, that thy rich blessings may flow out unhinderedly into our souls.

The blessed change in the ways of God toward Jew and Gentile was brought about by the cross. There was comparatively little change in God's dealings with man till then. Four thousand years of the world's history had passed away, and God still dwelt in the thick darkness. The veil was unrent. He shewed mercy and grace to Adam, gave promises to Abraham, and the law to Israel; but all the great changes that were to take place both in heaven and on earth awaited the glorious event of the cross. Ephesians ii. is the great seat of this new truth. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace;

and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."

The cross of Christ introduces an entirely new order of things in the ways of God. His dealings with Israel and the Gentiles are here completely changed. In the death and resurrection of Christ, a sure foundation was laid for the new building—the body of Christ, composed of Jew and Gentile. All our individual and corporate blessings flow from that wondrous cross. Every soul of man is either in the state out of which Christ has risen, or in the state into which He has entered. There is no middle place. The cross determines everything as to man's state. We are either "far off" under the awful judgment of sin, or "made nigh by the blood of Christ." It must be either the *forsaken* place, or the Holy of holies—the torments of hell, or the happiness of heaven.

But there are some, alas, who think they never have been, nor are, in the "far off" place. They know nothing of the judgment of God on man because of sin. "The soul that sinneth it shall die," is God's declared judgment on man. This sounds like the death-knell of all human goodness in God's sight—of all boasted progress in the world: and it is the axe laid at the root of the tree of self-righteousness in the Church. But of this solemn and weighty truth, multitudes even of professing Christians are willingly ignorant. They

have always been so moral, amiable, and good ; and withal, so attentive to their religious duties, that they have no idea of their place of distance from God because of sin. This is a grave and fearful delusion. It is the ruin of millions. All have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And our sins, if unforgiven, must take us into the very place where Christ's love for us led Him. Can the unpardoned sinner himself fare better under the awful judgment of sin than did the holy, spotless Lamb of God, when He became the substitute of sinners? He was in the "far off" place for us, when He uttered that mournful and pathetic cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Well may we exclaim, If such things were done in the green tree, what must be done in the dry?

Does my reader know anything of the fearful and malignant nature of sin? And does he know anything of the power of the blood of Jesus Christ, which alone can cleanse it all away? If not—rest not, I pray thee, until thou knowest well both the sweet and the bitter experience of these solemn realities. Nothing short of the death and resurrection of Christ can avail for thee. Human goodness, however great—human religiousness, however complete, can never meet the judgment of God against sin. For without the shedding of blood there is no remission. But, oh! precious truth, the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son,

cleanseth us from all sin. That means—*us*—or *all*, who believe in Him. Look to Jesus, my dear reader—look to Him alone. He died for thee. What a truth! Only think of it, and it will create both love and confidence in thy heart towards Himself. Couldst thou not trust the man—the God-man, who thus loved thee, and died for thee? Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.

“I rest in Christ, the Son of God,  
Who took the servant's form;  
By faith I flee to Jesus' cross,  
My covert from the storm.

At peace with God, no ills I dread,  
The cup of blessing mine:  
The Lord is risen, His precious blood  
Is new and living wine.”

In the passage before us, the truth, I am aware, has a dispensational aspect: that is, the Jew was dispensationally near, and the Gentile dispensationally far off; but morally and judicially, Christ on the cross as the sin-bearer is the measure of the “far off” place. And nothing save the blood that was shed there, can ever bring either Jew or Gentile—the morally good or the openly bad—near to God. No goodness of man can ever blot out sin—quench the flames of hell—open the gates of heaven, or fit the soul to enter there. The blood of Christ alone can do these things. It rent the veil of heaven, and opened up a pathway to the

regions of love and glory. It unlocked the portals of the tomb; thereby shewing its power over the vast territories of the dead. Its power is unlimited. It rises to the loftiest heights of heaven: it penetrates to the deepest depths of the grave. It raises all who put their trust in Jesus, from the lowest point in sin and ruin, to the highest condition in righteousness and glory. It brings back the lost soul from the place of utter distance from God, and sets it in the place of blessed and eternal nearness. Its power to cleanse, purify, ennoble, and beautify, is infinite. In short, it is the solid foundation on which rests the whole of that glorious superstructure which God is now raising for His own glory, the honour of His Son, and the blessing of His people. All rests on the blood of the cross. "But *now* (meaning the present moment) in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off, *are* (not will be, but *are*) made nigh by the blood of Christ." Precious assurance, and infinite comfort for the heart! The Lord be praised!

He is also the believer's peace. "For he is our peace." The cross has done all. It brings the believer near to God, even as Christ is near; and gives him peace with God even as Christ Himself has peace. For Christ, in heaven, is our peace. And here we may notice, in passing, that many make a great mistake as to what peace is. They think of it as something which they should have

to enjoy in themselves. And because they do not always *feel* peace within, they are troubled, and begin to doubt if they are saved at all. Now we ought ever to bear in mind, that God has given us no good thing to enjoy apart from Christ. All the good things that His love can give, He has given to us in Christ. Thus it is that He is said to be, not only our peace, but our life, our righteousness, our joy, our sanctification, our hope, our all in all. In virtue of His cross, and of the Holy Ghost's presence on the earth, we are *one with Christ*. And what more can be said? He Himself is the measure of our nearness, acceptance, and blessing, in the presence of God. And as He can never lose His life or position, we can never lose ours. We are joined to the Lord, and one spirit with Him. His name alone have all the praise and glory!

"I hear the words of love,  
I gaze upon the blood,  
I see the mighty sacrifice,  
And I have peace with God.

"Tis everlasting peace!  
Sure as Jehovah's name;  
"Tis stable as His steadfast throne,  
For evermore the same.

I change; He changes not;  
My Christ can never die:  
His love, not mine, the resting place;  
His truth, not mine, the tie.

The cross still stands unchanged,  
Though heaven is now His home;  
The mighty stone is rolled away,  
But yonder is His tomb!

And yonder is my peace,  
The grave of all my woes!  
I know the Son of God has come,  
I know He *died and rose*."

But it was the cross that wrought this mighty change, and brought in this unheard of blessing for both Jew and Gentile. It removed the wall of separation which God Himself had raised; it abolished the enmity, "even the law of commandments contained in ordinances." It dissolved completely the distinction which separated the one from the other. And thus it brought the privileged Jew and the far off Gentile together, and made them *one in Christ*. "For to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace. And that he might reconcile both unto God in *one body* by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." This is the Church—the body of Christ—"one new man." The blessing is beyond all thought or expression. It is infinite. Here learn two things, my soul, in leaving this branch of the subject. 1. *That thou art saved*—saved by the blood of Christ, and that thy peace is stable as the throne of God. 2. *Know what thou art saved for*—that thou art saved to be a member of the body of Christ, and to be *one* with its exalted and glorified Head for



ever and for ever. The first question must be settled before the second can be thought of. But it will ever be the enemy's aim, to keep up the feeling of uncertainty as to the first, that the second may never be inquired into. Hence it is that the Christian's *vocation* is a subject but little known, and its need but little felt. The assurance of salvation is made the soul's highest object, and whenever this is the case it is seldom reached. Hence its constant anxiety about salvation. But this should be made the *starting* post, not the *winning* post—the commencement, not the goal, in the christian race. What can be plainer than the verses we have just been looking at, both as to our individual and our corporate blessings? May the Lord enable us by His grace to enter more fully into these practical and most precious truths, that His own name may be glorified!

Having thus considered, though briefly, the subject of the Church as *the body of Christ*, we will now dwell upon it for a little, as

“AN HABITATION OF GOD THROUGH THE SPIRIT.”

Both aspects of the Church are of the most blessed and practical character—both are abundantly taught in scripture—both are of or through the Spirit, and both are founded on redemption. 1 Corinthians xii., Ephesians i., iv., v., plainly speak of the former; and 1 Corinthians iii., Ephesians ii., 1 Timothy iii. as plainly speak of the latter.

The great practical truth, both as to the body of Christ and the habitation of God, is the place which the Holy Ghost occupies in each. Until this is seen and owned, no true idea of the Church can ever be entered into. There must be great darkness and confusion, both as to church truth and practice, so long as the Holy Spirit has not His right place. Human notions, in such a case, must take the place of the word of God.

Let this, then, be thy first lesson, O my soul; learn it patiently, learn it thoroughly from the holy scriptures. Examine carefully what is taught on this point; and so learn how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God. Here let thy meditations be in the sanctuary of His presence. Tradition and the human will should have no place in the temple of God; but, alas, nowhere are they allowed so large a place; indeed they too often *practically* displace the truth of God and the Person of the Holy Ghost; but when such things are allowed, God is robbed of His glory even by His own children. Hence the doubts, darkness, and bondage of those who ought to be in the enjoyment of the light and the happy liberty of the gospel.

What can be plainer than the Lord's own words on this subject. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Being a Spirit, He can only be worshipped *spiritually*, or in the power of the Holy

Spirit, and according to His own revealed truth. And such worshippers the Father seeks. He led the woman of Samaria thus to worship. What grace! Who else would have cared for her worship? The living water which the Son gives represents the Holy Spirit as the power of worship, and communion with God and the Father. "The water that I shall give him shall be *in him* a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The Holy Spirit in the believer is also the seal of a present salvation, and the earnest of future glory. But our present theme is rather the presence of the Holy Spirit in the assembly than in the person of the believer. As this is by far the most important truth connected with the Church of God, let me direct thy attention for a few moments to what the Lord Himself says on the subject. Let us be clear as to the great fact of the Holy Spirit Himself (not merely a spiritual influence or power) being on the earth. This, I believe, is the characteristic truth of Christianity. Christ Himself may be savingly known, but Christianity cannot, without the knowledge, in some measure, of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. He is the bond, the everlasting bond, of our union with Christ in resurrection and heavenly glory.

Many have spoken of Christianity as a continuation of Judaism, and of the Holy Spirit in the Church as a continuation of the influence which He exerted in Old Testament times. Both are

wrong and lead to endless confusion. Christianity is the contrast, not the continuation of Judaism. The one is heavenly, the other was earthly. Heaven and earth are contrasts. True, the Old Testament saints had eternal life as really as the New, but the *dispensations* are different. And as to the Holy Spirit, in place of that influence which He has exerted from the beginning, we have Himself—His personal presence. Consequent on redemption being finished, and the Son of man glorified, the Holy Ghost came down. Let us, then, with unprejudiced and subject minds, endeavour to trace for a little the history of this great New Testament truth :

#### THE PERSONAL PRESENCE OF THE HOLY GHOST.

John vii. is conclusive as to the gift of the Holy Ghost to believers : “ He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive ; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given ; because that Jesus was not yet glorified).” Nothing could possibly be plainer. The Holy Ghost could not be given, as to His presence in person on the earth, until Jesus, as man, was glorified in heaven. The circumstance in which this truth was revealed adds greatly to its interest and value to us. It was “ the Jews’ feast of tabernacles”—the type, not only of their sojourn in the desert, and

their rest in the land, but also the title and pledge of their future joy and glory under Messiah as King in Israel. His brethren, in unbelief, evidently thought that the feast was a favourable opportunity for Him to display His power and glory before the eyes of the world. It was the great annual festival at Jerusalem, the most joyous season in the whole year. It was celebrated when the harvest and vintage were ended. But the Lord's time to shew Himself to the world was not yet come. The passover had its fulfilment at the cross, and Pentecost at the descent of the Holy Ghost (Acts ii.), but the fulfilment of the feast of tabernacles is still future. It awaits the accomplishment of the anti-typical harvest and vintage, or the gathering home of the saints to heaven, and the execution of judgment on the earth. Israel shall then be restored to their own land, and in full possession of every promised blessing under Messiah their King. Then His time shall be fully come to shew Himself to Israel and to the world; as it is written, "Every eye shall see him." Revelation i. 7.

And now, the question for thy meditation, and for every Christian is—what takes place in the meantime, or, between the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down, and the yet future feast of tabernacles in the land of Israel. Let me have thy best attention, and I will endeavour to answer the question.

In place of the Lord bringing in the feast of tabernacles then, as His brethren wished, He intimates that He Himself must withdraw from the scene, and that the Holy Ghost must come and take His place, after He leaves the world. Israel is thus left in unbelief—the feast of tabernacles is set aside; and the only spring of blessing for the soul is earth's rejected Man in heaven; the waters of Jerusalem, as it were, are dried up, and the streams of the Spirit must flow in other channels.

All this is plain and simple. The Saviour must die—die for Israel—die for the world. He passes through death and reaches the glory. Redemption is finished—God is glorified—every enemy is overthrown, and sin is blotted out. And now, in place of restoring the kingdom to Israel, He sits down as the Son of man at God's right hand in heaven, and from the glory He gives the Holy Ghost to every one that believes. (Ver. 38, 39.) The living waters, observe, so often spoken of in scripture, now take their rise, not from the smitten Rock in the desert—the lowly Jesus, but from the exalted Christ in glory; and believers, the members of His body, become the new channels through which the river of life flows. It may be interesting here just to notice the difference between the children of Israel drinking of the water from the flinty rock, and the thirsty Christian coming to Christ and drinking the living waters. The Jew drank

for himself and *only* for himself; the Christian drinks, first, for his own refreshment and blessing, and then for the refreshment and blessing of others. The Holy Ghost *in us*, revealing Christ and His work to our souls, makes us channels of blessing to others.

Thus it is—thus it has been since the day of Pentecost, and thus it must continue to be during the entire period of the present dispensation—the Christian has to do directly with Christ in the glory. He thirsts—he feels his need—it is an individual thing—Christ in glory, revealed to his soul by the Holy Ghost, is the perfect answer to all his need. Thus, we say, it must be, until the Church is caught up—the judgments executed—the millennium restored, and all Israel saved. Then shall the living waters have another source and other channels, according to the dispensational ways of God. The river of life shall then flow forth from the sanctuary in Zion for the refreshment of Jerusalem and the whole earth; and then the ancient prophecy shall be fulfilled, “Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.” Isaiah xii. 3; Ezekiel xlvii.

But further, no truth is more practical, or bears more directly on the Christian's *vocation*, than the one before us. The Holy Ghost in us is the only power of testimony to the Son of man in heaven, until the time comes for Him to shew Himself to the world. Surely this is all important. Mark it

well, my soul ; it is thy highest—thy holiest—thy happiest vocation. And remember this, meanwhile, amidst all thy trials and difficulties, that when the set time is come, He will not only shew Himself to Israel and the world, but He will shew His glorified saints with Himself at the same time. “When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” (Col. iii. 4.) Blessed thought ! glorious prospect ! and thou shalt be with Him then ! And, though a secondary, yet a happy thought, in looking forward to that day, thou shalt meet so many there, once known here, but who have gone before. What a day ! what a feast of tabernacles will then be celebrated ! Heaven and earth will be united in one—the vast universe will be filled with His glory. Blessed Lord, hasten it in thine own good time and way, and thy name shall have all the praise !

“Whom have we, Lord, but thee,  
Soul thirst to satisfy ?  
Exhaustless spring ! the waters free !  
All other streams are dry.”

We now follow the Lord to chapter xiv. Here we have further truth on the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. “And I will pray the Father,” He says, “and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever ; even the Spirit of truth ; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him ; but ye



know him ; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you . . . . . But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." The word " Comforter," or " Paraclete," means a person who is charged with and manages our affairs, as dwelling with us : one who comforts us in our trials, guides us in our difficulties, gives us the knowledge of our absent Lord : indeed one who looks after all our interests. It is difficult to conceive how any student of scripture could ever have understood our Lord's words about this divine Person as merely meaning a spiritual influence, gift, or power ; or merely natural talents sanctified by grace. True, the Holy Spirit still works in various ways, as He has always done ; and we should pray that He may work more and more, both in saints and sinners ; but it would be wrong to pray for the Spirit to be poured out, or sent down, when He is here. Surely it would have been wrong, or worse, for the disciples to have prayed the Father to send Christ when He was in their midst.


The world, we know, cannot receive the Holy Ghost, neither can it know Him, because He never became incarnate. He cannot, like Christ, be seen by the world. But faith recognizes His presence, both in the individual Christian, and in the

assembly of God. What can be plainer than the Lord's own words? They need no explanation. Such expressions as "The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name," cannot be explained as only meaning the influences of the Spirit. They describe a real Person, and One that is to abide with the disciples *for ever*. Not for a short time like Christ. He is also to dwell *with them*, and be *in them*, teaching them all things, and bringing all things to their remembrance, whatsoever the Lord had said unto them. Hence the weight and importance of that solemn precept—"And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Eph. iv. 30.

Again, in chapter xv. we read, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me : and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." In chapter xiv., the Lord assures the disciples, that the Comforter, whom the Father would send in His name, would not only teach them all things, but bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever He had said unto them. But here, in chapter xv., His mission is of another character : "He shall testify of me." He bears witness to Christ as the glorified Man in heaven. He comes down from the Son, and as sent by Him : "Whom I will send

unto you from the Father." In chapter xiv. He is spoken of as being sent by the Father in Christ's name: "Whom the Father will send in my name." The disciples also were to bear witness, because they had been with Him from the beginning. The Holy Ghost thus bearing witness to the heavenly side of Christ's glory, and the disciples to the earthly side, are united in holy and powerful testimony to the matchless glory of the Son of man in heaven.

In chapter xvi., the blessed Lord changes the *ground* of the Holy Ghost's mission completely. The higher blessing of the disciples is now before Him: "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is expedient for *you* that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you: but if I depart, I will send him unto you." In chapter xiv. the Lord speaks as if it would be expedient for *Him* to go away. He says to His disciples, in the most touching and appealing way, "If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father:" that is, if ye loved me *enough*. There was no question of their loving Him; but did they love Him *enough* so as to rejoice because He said, I go unto the Father? And what an appeal, and consolation too, these words would be from the lips of a dying friend! If ye loved me *enough*, ye would rejoice because I am departing to be with Christ, which is *far better*. A scene, never to be forgotten, is recalled by these reflections, and is worthy to be noted here. "Father—can't you—



spare me—to Jesus?—you shall—soon follow,” said a beloved daughter to her father, from the very threshold of the unseen world. The family were gathered around the departing one. She had reached her nineteenth year, and was tenderly loved. As the eyelids seemed to close, one of the weeping circle exclaimed, “She is gone now!” The father, sobbing aloud, fell back into his chair. The departing spirit, for a moment, was troubled by the father’s distress; but the Lord gave her that word of richest consolation, and yet of gentle reproof, to the sorrowing, tender-hearted father. She then calmly fell asleep in Jesus. But, oh, what victory! What peaceful triumphing over death, the weaknesses of our nature, and the temporary success of the enemy! Surely such a one appeals to us in the very spirit of the Lord Himself: “If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father.” He was leaving a scene of the deepest humiliation and sorrow. He was about to ascend from the cross, with all its shame and suffering, to the presence of God His Father—the home of love and glory. Could the disciples have thus viewed the Lord’s going away, they would indeed have rejoiced, though with mingled tears of sorrow. And so would it be with us still, could we only rise above the weakness of nature, and contemplate the dear departed “*with Christ, which is far better.*”

But here, the benefit is reversed. It is good

for the disciples that the Lord goes away: "It is expedient for *you* that I go away." Troubled and afraid though they were, it would be their gain for Him to go away. How could this be, seeing the disciples were weak and helpless? The Lord Himself explains the difficulty: "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." The coming of the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, the "Paraclete," in Person, is the explanation. He would lead, guide, direct, correct, sustain, comfort them, and be with them *for ever*. He would take the place of Jesus when He went away; and, because of the work of redemption being finished and Christ glorified, the blessing, communion, and testimony of the disciples would be unspeakably greater. But Christ *must ascend*, in order that the Holy Ghost may *descend*. And so it was: hence we read, that He is "sent;" He is "come;" He is "in them;" He is "with them." He reveals to their sorrowing hearts, in the most blessed way, the finished work and the glorified Person of their exalted Lord. He is the gathering power to the name of Christ as their centre; and the uniting bond of their souls to Himself in heavenly glory. And now all men can see that they enjoy a light, experience a power, and manifest a valour, altogether unknown before.

"The *Comforter*, now present, assures us of thy love;  
He is the blessed earnest of glory there above:  
The *river* of thy pleasure is what sustains us now,  
Till thy new name's imprinted on every sinless brow."

Having thus endeavoured to clear the ground of all misapprehension on the subject of the personal presence of the Holy Ghost as taught by our Lord in these chapters (John vii., xiv., xv., xvi.,) we now return to our more immediate theme, the Church, as "*an habitation of God through the Spirit.*" It would be impossible to come to any satisfactory understanding of the latter subject, without a knowledge of the former.

While fully admitting that the Church in its widest sense is the habitation of God through the Spirit—as it is said, "In whom *all the building* fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom *ye also are builded together*"—our present theme, as thou seest, is more with *individual assemblies* as formed on this great truth. It is the presence of the Holy Spirit duly owned, that constitutes an assembly of saints the dwelling place of God. No company of Christians, however sound in doctrine, rich in gifts, godly in walk, or sincere in their observances, rises to the character of God's assembly, without the scriptural acknowledgment of His presence through the Spirit. Doubtless they belong to the Church of God, and are living members of the body of Christ; but as an assembly they are not on divine ground. Bear this in mind, my soul; it is easily remembered, and it will be easily carried about with thee. There can be no true expression of the Church of God where

the special presence in Person of the Holy Ghost is not owned and submitted to. He is the alone gathering, forming, and sustaining power of the Church. Without His uniting presence, an assembly must remain as so many individual saints, however pure their motives, or sincere their practice. Indeed this is the turning point, as to whether an assembly is a mere society of Christians, or a true expression of the Church of God. But here it may be well to notice, before going farther, that by the words "assembly" and "church," we mean the same thing. Substitute the word *assembly* for *church* throughout scripture, and its true meaning will be clearer.

There may be great weakness on the part of those who "are gathered together" in the Name of the Lord Jesus; but if the Holy Spirit's presence, authority, and sovereign rule be owned, there we have the true principle and expression of the Church—the habitation of God—the place where He loves to dwell. Not because of any worthiness in them more than in others, I need hardly say, but because of the value of that Name around which they are gathered. Now that He Himself is absent, we gather round His Name. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." But mark the fulness of that expression, "MY NAME." Not merely the name of *Jesus*, or *Christ*, or *Lord*, but *what I am—all that I am*. Blessed Lord!

worshipfully we exclaim; what a *resource* in an evil day! What character thy Name gives to the assembly! what blessing to each member! What a centre for such poor feeble ones! And to *know* that we are gathered to that Centre—united to that Centre—eternally one with that Centre, is rest indeed to the soul.

Marvellous truth! Richest in blessing here below! And, happy thought! it is the portion of all thy saints, whether they know it or not. But what of the *attractions* of that Name? What of its *power*? It moves the hearts of those who thus know His Name to gather around it now, just as all the redeemed will cluster around His Person by and by in glory. But it does more. Its power is felt in heaven. Moved by the attractions of that Name, and in sympathy with those on earth who are seeking to honour it, God, as it were, rises from His throne and comes down. He must be where His Son is honoured; yes, and make His habitation there. And need we wonder? Redemption finished—sin gone—God glorified—the Son of man in heaven, and His Name honoured on earth! God is now free to dwell with man. But, remember, *all the attraction is in that Name alone*. The finest building, the most gorgeous services, the most gifted office-bearers, the most intelligent congregation, the most venerated of places, without the Name of Christ as the alone Centre, would present no attraction to God. Such display moves Him



not from His throne. It lacks "the one thing needful"—that which would give a value to all the rest. Still, God loves His saints that are there, and ceases not to care for them; but it is no dwelling place for Himself.

But, on the other hand, a few Christians—plain and simple they may be, with scarcely a suitable place to meet in—come together. The name of the Lord Jesus is their only centre—they "are gathered together" in His name. Very different to each other in many things they may be, but, drawn by the attractions of that one Name, they are found together on Lord's day morning. Suppose they number twenty; to faith, twenty-one would be present. The Lord Himself is there in the Person of the Holy Spirit—there is a sweet sense of His presence to the spiritual mind. It is a real and blessed thing. Not only are we sure from His word that He is with us, but also from the witness of the Spirit. The pledges of a love stronger than death meets the eye. "Remember Me," is His humble but touching request: He asks not that we should gather around the remembrance of His Name this world's glory; but that we should think of Himself. "Remember Me;" yes, "*remember me in the depths—know me on the heights.* Pass with me, in spirit, through the deep waters, where the weeds were wrapt about my head;—I can give you no stronger proof of my love—ascend with me the sunny heights of

heaven—my home and yours.” Thus the Spirit leads—thus the soul feasts on a full Christ. The head is anointed with the most fragrant oil, and the cup overflows with the choicest wine.

But, inquierest, thou, my soul, Will God the Father come to the feast? It is the feast above all others in which His soul delighteth. The table is spread in the very scene wherein He was glorified, through the deep humiliation and sufferings of His beloved Son. So fully did He glorify God; so fully did He blot out sin; that, in honour of the great work and the workman, God comes down and as it were says, Here will I dwell, this is my rest for ever. “The LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread.” *Psa. cxxxii.*

At this feast God is present, in testimony to the infinite preciousness of the work of Christ, and to His presence at His own right hand in heaven; and we may also add, in blessed testimony to the power of that precious blood which hath cleansed us from all sin. What a scene for the eye and the heart of God! What a scene for faith! The Spirit leads: it may be by a gifted brother, or by one known especially for his spiritual-mindedness: but the Spirit is sovereign. He gives the key-note Himself. “He is the Author of peace in all the churches of the saints.” He is the power of

worship. Praise and thanksgiving characterize the breaking of bread. There is nothing to pray for at the Lord's table. We have not to remind Him of anything. He has forgotten nothing. Everything is provided—everything is prepared by Himself. Blessed, royal feast! We can only admire, adore, and wonder. It is a spiritual feast. When the Spirit thus leads, God is worshipped in spirit and in truth. Heaven's joy is tasted on earth. We sometimes wonder if it will be sweeter in heaven. This, remember, O my soul, is the highest expression of thy worship, and the most sacred act in thy holy vocation.

“The veil is rent;—our souls draw near  
Unto a throne of grace;  
The merits of the Lord appear,  
They fill the holy place.

“'Tis finished'—here our souls have rest,  
His work can never fail;  
By Him, our Sacrifice and Priest,  
We pass within the veil.

Within the holiest of all,  
Cleansed by His precious blood,  
Before the throne we prostrate fall,  
And worship thee, O God.”

Thou wilt now see, my soul, and better understand, what the house of God is, and also what we mean by the “breaking of bread.” And needest thou wonder at the peculiar solemnity of the apostle's appeal to the Corinthians when they were

acting disorderly in the Church? "Know ye not," he says, "that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." (1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.) These are plain and solemn words. And mark, they describe, not what the Church will be by and by, but what it is now. Oh! how loud do such facts call for holiness of heart and life—for "truth in the inward parts"—for conformity to His will in all things! Could anything be more solemn, and yet could anything be more blessed? To have a place—to be at home with God in His holy temple—to be a dweller where "the Spirit of God dwelleth," is surely our highest dignity and richest blessing on earth. Certainly after conversion there is none to compare with it.

Here call in thy thoughts, O my soul, centre them all on this great truth. For a while, meditate only on the character, privileges, and responsibilities of God's dwelling place. The thought is wonderful, but it will grow yet more so through thy deeper meditations. Believe the word, however wonderful—obey it, however difficult, and heaven's richest blessings for a soul still in the body are thine. This temple, remember, of which we thus speak, is founded on finished redemption and a glorified Christ. It is a much deeper thing than a mere church question, though the Church is the

place in which all this glory shines. It is plainly called "the house of God—the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Tim. iii. 15.) Let me ask thee not to look at it in its outward character, as it now appears through man's unfaithfulness, but think of it according to the word of God, the claims of Christ, the work of regeneration, and the sealing of the Holy Ghost.

Watch! judge thyself, then, lest thou shouldest forget whose house it is, and who dwells in it. Watch! I say, lest long familiarity with a place should weaken in thee the deep sense of God's presence there. It is no light matter to enter a place, of which faith can say, "The living God is here." As saith the scriptures, "Ye are the temple of the living God." And, "The Spirit of God dwelleth in you." That means in the Church or temple, as it is here called. I would urge these cautions, knowing that habit is apt to produce formality, and formality would be ruinous here. Human thoughts and human forms should have no place in the temple of God. There the Holy Ghost abides for ever. His stay is not transient as was the blessed Lord's. Knowing this—believing this—what then? Surely our truest wisdom, our highest privilege, our richest blessing, our deepest humility, is in submitting to Him. No one who believes that a divine Person is present would ever think of taking the lead. Neither would any company of Christians, believing this,

ever select and appoint a fellow Christian to do so. Both must be the fruit of unbelief. The effect, however, *practically*, is to displace the Holy Spirit: or, rather, to “quench the Spirit.” 1 Thess. v. 19.

Knowest thou, my soul, for thyself, this happy place of thy Lord’s presence? “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.” Is thy nature judged, root and branch? This is no place for the flesh. Is it thy one desire to discern the Spirit’s leading, and to follow His current in the assembly? Wouldest thou not break the silence of that sacred place without being happy in His guidance? This exercise of soul will keep thee closely waiting on thy Lord—will lead thee into deep self-judgment, and to be occupied only with Himself. But this is the place of blessing; there is none other on earth at all to be compared with it. Gathered around the Person of Christ—governed by the Holy Spirit—God the Father delighting in His children and blessing them—this is the assembly—the habitation of God through the Spirit. It is more than “the gate of heaven,” though actually on the earth; it is, to faith, the Holy of holies. Of course it is a searching place for the soul, and few will care to be long there who are not happy in the light of His presence.

Wilt thou now look around thee, my soul, and see if thou canst find any company of Christians that will answer to the word of God thus con-

sidered? If so, thou hast found His dwelling-place on earth. Enter there in faith. But think not, I pray thee, that the Lord is not to be found in other meetings; He may be working graciously and blessing souls in many places. Here we are speaking of the *principle* of an assembly which secures beyond question His presence, according to the promise, "THERE AM I." Blessed discovery! It is the place where the Father reveals Himself to His children—where the Holy Ghost reveals the glory of Christ to His waiting people, even according to the full promise of the Lord: "He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you." The numbers may be few, the disciples may be weak, but these circumstances change not the ground on which they are gathered. The Lord is faithful. If they answer to His character the blessing will flow. "These things saith he that is holy, he that is true." It is thus as the Holy One and the True that we meet Him. Therefore the one, grand, all-important question with all who break bread is, "What is due to the presence of Christ?" Not, what is due to this one, and that one, however much their praise may be in all the churches; but, *What is due to Christ?*

But now, with respect to the Holy Spirit, tell me, I pray thee, Is not the Holy Spirit in every individual believer, and may He not work, and does He not surely work, by office-bearers duly

appointed in the Church? Most truly the Holy Ghost is in every individual Christian, as saith the scriptures, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you?" Hence that solemn word, which I regard as one of the most important precepts in the New Testament, "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." The Holy Spirit thus dwells in the believer, and will continue to do so until redemption is completed, even as to the body; so that there is no fear of a true Christian ever being lost, or one particle of his redeemed dust ever perishing; even the hairs of his head are numbered. The Holy Spirit, in short, has taken possession of the body, and will never lose sight of it, dead or alive, until He delivers it up to God, a glorified body. 1 Cor. vi. 19; Eph. iv. 30; Rom. viii. 11; 1 Cor. xv. 42—44.

Thus far we are perfectly agreed, but still it is quite clear that the apostle, in 1 Corinthians iii. and similar portions, is speaking, not of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in individuals, or of His working by one whom a congregation may have chosen and ordained to be over them; but of the Holy Spirit Himself in the assembly, as the one to direct, minister, sustain, and bless the assembly, or the saints, according to the will of God. "Ye are *God's* husbandry, ye are *God's* building, ye are the temple of the living *God*, the



Spirit of *God* dwelleth in you." These are *God's* words, not mine. And carefully note, I pray thee, how much *God* has to do with the assembly. It is worthy of all note, both as a guard upon our wills, and as a source of unspeakable blessing to our souls. Thus He works, observe, "*Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.*" And "*we are labourers together with God.*" He works in various ways by means of the living members of the body. But then, it is by whomsoever *He* will, not by whomsoever *we* will. We must not hinder *His* working by any fixed arrangement of *ours*. Always leave room for the Spirit to act as He pleases. Being *God*, He works for the good of all: we are partial and selfish. But let me endeavour to make the Spirit's place and action yet more plain.

In answer to the confession of Peter in Matthew xvi., "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,*" the Lord says to him, "*Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*" Now, observe, the living stones were before Him—Peter was a stone—but they were still separate, individual stones. The building was not begun. It was not till after the death, resurrection, and glorification of Christ that the living stones were builded together. Turn now to the Acts of the Apostles. In chapter i. we find that the Holy Spirit is not yet come. The disciples are instructed

to wait for Him, assured that they would be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence; and that they would receive power after that the Holy Ghost was come upon them.\* In chapter ii. He descends in manifested power: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."

This was the gathering "together *in one* the children of God that were scattered abroad," according to the word of the Lord, John xi. 52. The Church of God, we may say, is now formed. The Holy Ghost has come down, forms the unity, takes His place in it, and there to abide for ever! Now the Church has an existence, *in fact*, on the earth. The counsels of God from all eternity are accomplished. The Holy Ghost forms the Church according to the word of the Lord in Matthew xvi., "Upon this rock I will build my church." The living stones are now brought together. The house

\* What has been said, a few pages back, on the "Comforter being *sent* and *come*," may be consulted here, as forming a link between Matthew xvi. and the opening of the Acts.

of God is commenced. The hundreds of believers spoken of in the New Testament are incorporated into "*one body*." Then they were chiefly Jews; the Gentiles were afterwards brought in. Acts x.

Peter begins at once to preach Christ as *Lord*, but with mighty power. He was filled with the Holy Ghost. He boldly charges the men of Israel with the guilt of crucifying their own Messiah; but that God had raised Him up—exalted Him to His own right hand in heaven, and made Him "*both Lord and Christ*." Three thousand were converted and added to the infant Church. "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." This chapter, so wonderful in its records, and so worthy of special note, closes with this statement, "And the Lord added to the Church daily such as should be saved." The Church is now fairly formed—the building goes on—its history is begun, whether viewed as the body of Christ, or as the dwelling-place of God.

Thou wilt now see, my soul, from this rapid sketch, that the Holy Ghost first forms the Church, and then dwells in it. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." He sets

the different members in their several places. "But now hath God set the members in the body as it hath pleased him." Having thus formed the body, and set the different members in their several places, He ministers to it of the fulness and glory of Christ, and guides all its movements.

Now thou canst see the two things—the Holy Ghost in the Church, and in the individual Christian. But just because He is in the body, He is in the members. The soul of man, dwelling in his body, guides and uses its different members, just because it is there. It may use the eye, the ear, the hand, the foot, or the unseen heart; but we should think it strange to hear a person saying, that the soul was in the *individual* members, but not in the body. Just so the Holy Spirit dwells and acts in the body of Christ; only He is perfect in wisdom, love, and power, but the soul is feeble, selfish, and erring. The cause of the blindness of many minds on this subject is ignorance of the "one body and one Spirit." But Scripture is plain, and we who have it are responsible. "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit . . . .the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." This is the Church in its unity, according to the word of God. It is the body—the spouse of Christ, and the habitation of God through the Spirit.

And now, let me add, see that thou grasp fully this great truth. So few seem to do so, or care to

do so. Nevertheless, it has been the great truth before God on the earth for the last eighteen hundred years. It is the temple of God. True, that temple may be defiled by false doctrine, worldliness, or immorality; but God dwells in that which belongs to Christ. His precious blood has made it a habitation meet for God Himself to dwell in. When we think of the Church as the body of Christ—His bride; and as *one* with Him; we wonder not at God's dwelling there.

Through the pride, covetousness, and dreadful wickedness of man, the outward appearance of the Church has completely—sadly changed. But all who are built on the *Rock-foundation* are eternally secure. That Rock never moves. The gates of hell can never prevail against it. Myriads of bodies that belong to Christ now lie under the power of the grave—the gates of hades are closed upon them. But the day is coming when these gates, so long closed, must fly open. Every saint of God, from Adam downwards, shall come forth in glory and victory. The morning of the first resurrection will be the grand declaration of the Lord's promise to His Church: “And the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

“O happy morn! the Lord will come,  
And take His waiting people home  
Beyond the reach of care;  
Where guilt and sin are all unknown:  
The Lord will come and claim His own,  
And place them with Him on His throne,  
The glory bright to share.

The resurrection-morn will break,  
And every sleeping saint awake,  
    Brought forth in light again ;  
O morn, too bright for mortal eyes !  
When all the ransomed Church shall rise,  
And wing their way to yonder skies—  
    Called up with Christ to reign."

Now I see distinctly the difference between the Holy Ghost in the individual, and in the assembly. But there are two or three things still that I would like cleared up before leaving the subject.

I. From what has been said about the Church, I learn that its existence on earth is limited to the period between the day of Pentecost, after the ascension of Christ, and the rapture of the saints before the millennium : thus leaving both the old testament saints and the millennial saints out of the Church. Now, are not all believers in every age the children of God ? and, being possessed of the same life as such, are they not all of the one family ?

True, most true and important, and most delightful to dwell upon. But hast thou not learnt, my soul, the difference between *oneness in life*, and "the unity of the Spirit ?" Every quickened soul in every age must possess eternal life. And no quickened soul can ever perish. There never can be a breach in the family of God. We do read of the possibility of one who has *preached* to others being himself a castaway : but we never read of the possibility of a *child of God* being a castaway.

The very idea is foreign to all scripture, and impossible in the nature of things. A child born must be the child of its parents, good or bad. The apostle does not say, "Lest I, though a child of God, should be a castaway."

The plain truth is this, I believe the Corinthians, like many in our own day, were too much occupied with human eloquence. They were in danger of thinking more of fine speaking than of Christ. This greatly troubled the apostle; hence the strength of his language, and the alarming nature of the case supposed. "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." This is the passage that has made millions to tremble, and which has led many to deny that *eternal life* means *eternal life*; as if the Spirit of truth meant *conditional* life, when He uses the word *eternal* life. Well then, what does this hard passage mean? Simply this: by the apostle thus bringing in himself, and supposing the case to be his own, he presents it in the strongest way possible. His object is to press upon the Corinthians, and upon us all, the solemn fact, that though a man may be a preacher, if he is not subject to Christ—if he is not vitally connected with Him, he is not saved—he is not a child of God. Judas was a preacher, and many, alas, since his day, have been preachers, who never were born again. But some will say, "Was

not the apostle Paul a child of God?" Certainly he was, and he had no fear of being lost. Such a thought, we believe, never entered his mind, and such a thought never ought to have entered the mind of any Christian. But he illustrates the supposed case in his own person, as he usually does, and as public speakers generally do. (See Rom. vii. and Phil. iii.) In the wisdom of the Holy Spirit he is seeking to lower their estimate of mere natural abilities however great. No word can be more awfully solemn to unconverted preachers, but it has no terror to the children of God. But to return.

The common possession of eternal life by every quickened soul, from the beginning to the end of time, is what we may call oneness in life. Besides, the life is from Christ and by the Holy Spirit. But this is not "the unity of the Spirit," spoken of in Ephesians iv. "There is one body and one Spirit." This is something more than all having the same life—though all must have life in order to belong to it. It is a unity in virtue of the Holy Ghost's presence on the earth. And this unity, which He began to form at Pentecost, will be completed when the Lord comes to call His bride away. These are the true limits, and the Lord's coming is the true hope of the Church. "*We wait for his Son from heaven.*" (1 Thess. i. 9, 10.) The body could have no existence on earth, until Christ its Head was seated in heaven, and the Holy Ghost



come down. It is perfectly plain then, from these facts, that none can be included in the Church the body of Christ but the saints of the present dispensation.

II. What is the difference between the habitation of God in the Old Testament and in the New?

It was *typical* in the one, it is *real* in the other. When redemption was *typically* accomplished by the passover and the Red Sea, a habitation for God is immediately desired by the redeemed people. "The Lord is my strength and song, and he is become my salvation; he is my God, and I will prepare him an *habitation*; my father's God, and I will exalt him. Thou shalt bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of thine inheritance, in the place, O Lord, which thou hast made for thee to dwell in, in the *sanctuary*, O Lord, which thy hands have established." (Ex. xv.) This is the first place in scripture in which we meet with the words "*habitation*" and "*sanctuary*." Until redemption was accomplished, God could not even speak about dwelling on the earth. Neither is "*salvation*" spoken of until we come to the passage of the Red Sea. Then we hear the word used for the first time. "And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not: stand still, and see the *salvation* of the Lord." We must have the combined types of complete redemption—the blood of the Lamb and the Red Sea, or death and resurrection—before we can have full salvation.

All these revelations from God, so rich in blessing to man, awaited the full accomplishment of redemption, though typically. The passover is never called salvation, though the most remarkable type of redemption that we have in the Old Testament. But it must be viewed in connection with the Red Sea. There must be the full and final deliverance of the people from the land of Egypt, and the complete destruction of all their enemies, before the congregation of the Lord can know anything of peace, or be the dwelling place of God. Though under the shelter of the blood, and perfectly safe, there was no peace or rest for the people while they were encamped "between Migdol and the sea." Plenty of doubts and fears there. They felt and cried out as if in the jaws of death. This painful fact is typical of every believer's position who has not entered into the great truth of his death and resurrection in Christ. We must see death, the grave, sin, Satan, the world, the flesh, behind us, before we can have perfect peace with God. And this great sight can only be seen from the wilderness side of the Red Sea—from heaven's side of the grave of Christ. No one ever had a glimpse of such truths while encamped "between Migdol and the sea." But, thank God, their doubts and fears did not sink them in the dark waters of judgment. Doubts or no doubts, fears or no fears, the blood of the Lamb is the same, and all whose doorposts were sprinkled with

the blood passed safely and triumphantly through the deep: the feeblest as well as the strongest. "Not a hoof was left behind." The sea stood still—the waters were as ramparts around the Israelites. But the Egyptians, not having the blood of the lamb sprinkled on the doorposts of their houses, sank as lead in the mighty waters. Courage, confidence, boldness, without the doorposts of the heart being sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, are of no avail. Nothing save the "token" of the blood can take the soul through the waters of death; but when that "token" is possessed, nothing can hinder its triumphant passage.

How awfully solemn is the voice of these dark waters to every soul not yet sprinkled with the blood of the Lamb. All the chariots and horsemen of Egypt—all the wisdom and power of the world—are of no avail here. Nothing but the blood of the Lamb can take any child of fallen Adam through the waters of death. The Red Sea was the river of life and the way to glory to Israel; not because they were better in themselves than the Egyptians, but because they were under the shelter of the blood.

Suffer, my dear reader, one word of loving warning, ere I turn to another theme. Hast thou faith in this precious blood? It is the only "token" and passport that will take thee through the river of death. Without it thou must sink, unsaved, in the cold, deep, dark waters

of death. Oh! what an end for the path of pride in this world! And what a beginning of endless woe! O hear, I beseech thee, the word of faithful affectionate warning and invitation now! Be thou young or old—be thou in health or in sickness—be thou, as men reckon, good or bad, believe in Jesus—depend entirely on the efficacy of His blood, and thy sins, however many, are all forgiven, and thy precious soul is saved; yea, though this word meet thee on the very margin of these waters, or with one foot in the sea, and the other on dry land—if thou art only this side of hell! believe the word of God about the blood of Jesus—have faith *unwavering* in the power of the blood—honour it with thy fullest confidence, and it will take thee as safely through, and land thee as safely on the shores of eternal glory, as if thou hadst been a saint for a hundred years! Such is the unlimited, unfailing power of the blood of Jesus. “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.” And again in the New Testament we read, “The blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all sin.” These are God’s own words; believe them now—trust them now, and all is well—well with thy soul—well for ever.

I now return for a moment to finish my answer. In the Old Testament, the habitation of God was founded on *typical redemption*; in the New, it is established for ever on *eternal redemption*. This is enough to account for the difference between them.

“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets [New Testament prophets, associated with the apostles in this work. See chap. iii. 5], Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone. In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God *through the Spirit*.” (Eph. ii. 20—22.) But this theme is inexhaustible. So I must recommend for thy meditation the whole line of truth on this blessed subject, from Exodus xv. to Revelation xxi., from the banks of the Red Sea to the eternal state. It is from the new heavens and the new earth that we have the final testimony, as to God’s chosen, loved, and eternal dwelling place: “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.” Revelation xxi. 3.

III. In what sense can we say that the Holy Spirit dwells in the Church now, seeing it is so defiled, corrupted, and contrary to God?

When we speak of the Church of God, and of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the Church, we are thinking of it in its *redeemed character*; as one with Christ, and as cleansed by His precious blood. Thou must learn to distinguish between the “great house,” or the outward corrupt thing here on the earth, and “the body of Christ”—that which is united to Christ in heaven, by the

Holy Ghost on the earth. Then thy thoughts will dwell on that which is infinitely precious to Him. "He loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Eph. v. 25—27.

This is the Church—the body of Christ; and this is the habitation of God. This is Christ's building, built with living stones; and which partakes of His life and preciousness. (1 Peter ii. 2—9.) One with Him in position, privilege, and glory—the fair and spotless bride of the Lamb—the beloved spouse of the last Adam.

" 'One spirit with the Lord;'

O blessed, wondrous word!

What heavenly light, what power divine,

Doth that sweet word afford!

'One spirit with the Lord;'

The Father's smile of love

Rests ever on the members here

As on the Head above.

'One spirit with the Lord;'

Jesus, the glorified,

Esteems the Church for which He bled,

His body and His bride."

There are other portions of the word which might be profitably studied under the general head of "*The Christian's Vocation*;" but the most important have been touched upon; and if these are well weighed and carried out, they will lead into

many lines of happy service for the Lord—for His saints, and for a Christless world.

What can be more worthy of our deepest study than our *standing, state, and vocation as Christians*? How can we walk, worship, or serve, so as to please Christ, without this knowledge? Besides, it necessarily leads to habitual meditation on the Person and work of Christ, and on the many applications of God's grace in our own blessing, as flowing from Christ's finished work. It is really the study of God's thoughts, affections, and ways towards us in the blessed Lord, in place of being occupied with our own thoughts, feelings, and ways towards God. And how marvellous the blessed effect on our own souls of such a habit of thought and contemplation! May the Lord lead us more and more to meditate on these things, for His own name's sake.

In place of feeling dissatisfied, discontented, unhappy, uneasy, restless, and looking with desire after the things of the world, we shall feel perfectly satisfied, at rest, happy, content. Every desire is met in Christ. He Himself is enough. We know Him, and are at home with Him. We know none other so well. He gave Himself for us. And *now* we have this blessed Christ glorified in heaven to count upon in every step of our journey. We have Him to look to as our one object, and to lean upon, as we go up through the wilderness. He will never fail us nor forsake us. The one

business of life is to follow Him—wait for Him, go to Him, and be with Him for ever.

It is, and has been, our one wish and fervent prayer, that our many readers, and especially our beloved young friends, might be led into the apprehension and enjoyment of these blessed, precious truths. Many, of late years, very many, thank the Lord, have been brought to the knowledge of Himself in early life. With such before our minds we generally write. We desire that they may know, not only their pardon and salvation, but their full deliverance from the world, the devil, and the flesh; and also their full establishment in Christ as risen, exalted, and glorified.

These glorious truths are plainly revealed in the holy scriptures, and especially in these blessed portions, over which, in our meditations, we have been travelling. And let us remember, that they are ours *now*. They are as really and as surely ours, as if we were in heaven. The word of God cannot either be truer or plainer there. Let us then claim these privileges and hold them as our own, on the authority of God's word, and in the integrity of faith.

But let all our readers remember, that, in order to the present and full enjoyment of this blessedness, the heart must be separated from the world in its ten thousand aspects, and Christ Himself must be the one real object of the soul. This is the path of faith. Though the world continues to



be the lawful sphere of our many duties, Christ in heaven is the all-governing object of the heart. The affections must be right with Him—He must be the standard of our judgment and the test of all our ways. In short, it must come to this, "For me to live is Christ." The Lord grant it in His rich mercy.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." (Col. iii. 1—4.) Here we have the true object and the hope of the Christian, and that which characterizes his life here below, and also that which will characterize his eternal and glorious future. But, meanwhile, the Lord would have us to know, and heartily to enter into, all that He has revealed of the Christian's **STANDING, STATE, and VOCATION.**

May we ever be found truly subject to **CHRIST**, obedient to His word, devoted to His service, faithful to the light and teaching of His **SPRIT**, and consistent in all things, that **GOD** may be glorified.

"A little while," and we, no more  
A feeble few, shall meet;  
But there a mighty army stand  
Before His throne complete.  
Sweeter, beyond the "little while,"  
The dawn of morn to view;  
The morning of a brighter day  
Than ever Eden knew."

## CHAPTER IV.

## ON THE CHRISTIAN'S WARFARE.

EPHESIANS VI. 10—18.

In thy further *Meditations*, O my soul, on the Christian's "*Vocation*" there is yet one department which thou wilt do well duly to consider; namely—" *The Christian's Warfare.*" Rare qualities are needed in warriors, and great honours are heaped on the victorious: but who praises the coward? Alas, he stands at the head of the dark list of the lost, in Revelation xxi. 8. "But *the fearful*"—"The fearful" here means those who are afraid to confess Jesus as Saviour and Lord, from the fear of consequences. They are cowards in reference to Christ. This, in God's sight, is a sin of the meanest and blackest character; for such evidently know something of Christ and of His goodness, and yet they are ashamed of His name before men. Therefore, under the ignominious brand of "the fearful," or *cowards*, they are consigned to their own place in the lake of fire.

But these, being altogether unbelievers, cannot be contrasted with those who are valiant for Christ. It is only with believers that we have to do in meditating on christian warfare. Nevertheless, there are some amongst us who are but little skilled in the use of the shield and sword, and

shew but little courage in the day of battle. Training is necessary, with a perfect knowledge of the enemy's position, and of our own vantage ground. Therefore we invite—we entreat, all our readers, and especially our youthful christian readers, to study with us the important subject of the Christian's conflict. You *are* enlisted, you *do* wear the uniform, you *ought* to fight; *victory* is certain, the *honours* are everlasting; and only think of Him who is your "Leader and Commander." You will have no such opportunity of distinguishing yourselves for Christ in heaven. Lose no time then in waking up to the consciousness that you are soldiers, and that you must learn to fight. There is no discharge in this war, and no truce with the enemy.

But what of thine own experience, O my soul, in this warfare? Knowest thou well the sound of the trumpet that calls thee to battle? Art thou always ready and willing to obey the summons? A false humility might lead thee to plead thine own weakness, and a would-be honouring of Christ might lead thee to plead His strength as sufficient without thee; but thou must never plead either the one or the other to get rid of responsibility. And, remember, it is more with the *wiles* than with the *strength* of the enemy thou hast to contend. This is an important consideration and one that must never be forgotten. Who can speak of his wiles, his depths, his snares, his stratagems,

innumerable? These must not be underrated. We need both the wisdom and strength of the Lord to resist them; and of these the apostle here speaks.

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.” This is the first sound of the trumpet, we may say: and to what, we inquire, does it call the saints—does it call thee? Certainly not to survey the stronghold of the enemy, or to shew thee what thou hast to overcome; but sweetly to turn all thy thoughts to the Lord Himself. Before a word is said about enemies or conflicts, thou art called to survey thy strength in the mighty Lord, as seated at the right hand of God in the heavenlies. This is grace—the grace of the Lord Jesus, and like the ways of the Spirit when acting toward us for Him—“Be strong in the Lord.” But this touches a high note of privilege and blessing, as well as of security and strength. Clearly, this is the first thing to be understood: what are we to understand by the words—“IN THE LORD?”

All through this epistle the apostle speaks of the saints as seated together in heavenly places in Christ. In chapter i. we learn that God raised Him up from the dead, and set Him in the heavenlies. In chapter ii. we learn that God, in doing this, laid the foundation of our association with Him there. In chapter iii. we are seen as a testimony to principalities and powers, that they might

learn by this unity the manifold wisdom of God. In chapter iv. the doctrine of the "one body" is unfolded. In chapters v., vi., practical exhortations are given on the ground of these great truths. Hence the saints are addressed in the passage before us as "in the Lord." This is where they are for themselves in virtue of their union with Him as risen and exalted. It is the common heritage of all that belong to Christ; and their own proper place, according to the counsels of God. But here they are exhorted to use it as a fortification against the wiles of the enemy. And this we must do if we would be victorious, and fully enjoy our proper christian privileges.

But in what way, thou mayest ask, am I to fortify myself in a heavenly Christ, against the wiles of Satan? How can he reach me there? It seems difficult to understand the true character of this conflict.

Unless the inquiring Christian knows his position as a member of the body of Christ in the heavenlies, according to the teaching of the epistle to the Ephesians, there will be great difficulty in understanding the true character of this conflict. The portion of scripture before us is evidently addressed to such. It assumes that we have died and are risen again in Christ; that we are sitting in heavenly places, and enjoying our heavenly portion in Him. But Satan and his hosts are also regarded as in heavenly places; so that there

must be conflict if we would practically maintain our position there.

It will be seen then that this conflict is not merely the mortifying of the flesh, or contending with the temptations of this world, though these, of course, have to be overcome. Neither is it, as many think, a question as to the state of our souls before God. He who has clothed us with the best robe, killed for us the fatted calf, and fitted us to be guests in His own presence-chamber, has no conflict with us. And there need be no doubts or fears as to the final results of His grace. It is really a question of fighting with wicked spirits, who deceive and reign in darkness. Hence the exhortation, "*Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places.*" (See marg.)

We are here reminded of the Lord's directions to Joshua, and of Israel's enemies in the land of Canaan. These were types of the mightier and deadlier foes with which the Christian has to fight. The Canaanites were but enemies of "flesh and blood;" we have to encounter wicked spirits in heavenly places, even principalities and powers. These titles give us some idea of their supremacy over the human mind, at least over those whom they have first blinded. (2 Cor. iv. 3, 4.) To

resist such enemies as these, we must be armed with the panoply of heaven—"the whole armour of God." Mere human wisdom and strength are of no avail in this warfare. But it will assist us greatly to consider, first, and briefly, the character of the wars in Canaan.

#### THE WARS IN CANAAN UNDER JOSHUA.

The children of Ham were settled in the land when the children of Israel entered it. But God had set it apart for Israel (Deut. xxxii. 8); and the Canaanites must be expelled from the land of promise.

"Arise," said the Lord to Joshua, "go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses." (Josh. i. 1-9.) Up till now, we may say, there had been no fighting.

The wilderness was the scene of *temptation*—the place of discipline for themselves, not of fighting with others, though occasionally they had to combat foes, as in the case of Amalek. But now that they had crossed the Jordan and received their orders, they must fight for the possession of the land. Every inch of ground would be disputed by the enemy. But they had nothing to fear from the Canaanites: God was with His people, as He said to Joshua, "As captain of the host of the Lord

am I now come." He had given them the land, and accurately defined its boundaries, but specified one condition as the only principle of actual possession ; "*Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses.*"

It was only on this condition that they could possess the land, though freely given them of God. This is an important principle ; note it, and see that thou understand it well. There was no fighting, strictly speaking, until they crossed the Jordan ; after that, the sword was to be drawn, and ought never to have been sheathed while there was a Canaanite in the land. They had only to trust in God and be guided by His word, and victory would follow them at every step. "*There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life.*" This was God's sure word of promise to Joshua their leader. What an honour to be thus led, and led only to triumph—to plant the foot of victory on the neck of every foe. They were never to be left, never to be forsaken ; His presence in power would always be with them, and His word would be a sure guide to them. Only they were to be very strong, very courageous, and observe to do all things according to the word of the Lord. But—alas, alas, we know what happened. They failed—they sadly failed. They followed not the God of Israel, though He was in their midst as a man of war. They never took



possession of all the land which God had given to them. Nevertheless, the word of the Lord abideth sure. The day will come when in virtue of the death of their own Messiah, every man shall stand in his own lot, according to the boundaries assigned by God Himself. But now for

#### THE APPLICATION OF THESE TYPES.

Like Israel of old, the Christian, we may say, enters his heavenly Canaan without striking a blow. Crossing the Red Sea makes him a pilgrim and a stranger—brings him into the great scene of temptation; crossing the Jordan makes him a warrior—brings him into the scene of conflict. Thus we read in Ephesians, the great antitype of the book of Joshua; "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Here then we are clearly taught what God has done for us, not what we have to do for ourselves. In His "rich" mercy and "great" love, He has brought us out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, the wilderness, the Jordan, and landed us in our heavenly Canaan. But we are not raised up to these heavenly places merely to enjoy our rich privileges there; we have enemies to fight, like the people of Israel under Joshua.

It is not so difficult to understand the character of the fighting under Joshua; but what, may I ask, is the character, influence, or mode of action, of these wicked spirits? Stratagem, cunning, and lies, are their most successful weapons. They will challenge thy title, question thy fitness, and in every way dispute thy present possession of the heavenlies. Thou must know thy ground well, at every point, in order to maintain it. And to this end thou must be guided entirely by the word of God, apart from feelings—thou must know what it is to be in heaven as a matter of faith, while still on earth as a matter of fact. Thou must also understand the blessed truth of being in the presence of God in all the acceptancy of Christ, though still here in the midst of difficulties, failures, and infirmities. In short, thou must maintain, in the face of every foe, thy present title to heaven, thy fitness to be there, and thy large possessions as an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. 1 John iv. 17; Romans viii. 7.

One of their most successful wiles is, to insinuate, or boldly to affirm, as the case may be, that Christians cannot enter or enjoy heaven till after they die—that their deliverance is not complete. This is one of the most subtle snares of the enemy, and by this lie thousands are deceived. He insinuates that our deliverance is not complete, either as to the law, the flesh, or the world. Hence the bondage of many. But to those who know the

truth as to their position in a risen Christ, it is a barefaced falsehood. Does not God say in His word, that we are now seated in the heavenly places in Christ; that we may now enjoy the good things of heaven as the fruit of our own country; just as the children of Israel began to eat of the old corn of the land of Canaan when the wilderness manna ceased? But, No, says the adversary, however sure you may think yourselves of heaven, you cannot be there until you die; crossing the Jordan means the act of death. Hence the falsehood of Satan has become the belief of many Christians. "We believe we shall go to heaven when we die," is the doctrine of nearly all Christendom. Comparatively few would say, "We are there already, in Christ, and who shall separate us?" Not, observe, "We hope to join Christ in heaven when we die"—though that also is true—but being joined to the Lord now, we are there already, as one with Him; hence the challenge of faith is, "Who shall separate us?" Unless the Christian is master of his position, Satan will beguile him to settle down in his lie. When we die and go to heaven our fighting days are done. We shall need no armour there, thank the Lord. The soul rests in the paradise of God, and the body sleeps in Jesus until the morning of the first resurrection.

## CHRIST RISEN, THE MEASURE OF OUR DELIVERANCE.

And now, my soul, may I ask, What knowest thou for thyself of these blessed truths? Knowest thou what true christian ground is, as to thy standing in the presence of God? Faith answers, Surely the deliverance which Christ has wrought out for us is perfect. All depends on the completeness of His work. Christ risen from the dead is the measure of our deliverance: and being made the righteousness of God *in Him*, our title is clear to be in the same glory *with Him*. But as the enemy bears me such a grudge, because I am so much better off than he is, he tries his utmost to weaken my hold of the truth, to interrupt my fellowship with Christ, to hinder my enjoyment of His love, and to dim my apprehension of His glory. On the other hand, he will try hard to ensnare with present things, lawful and unlawful. These are some of the things that we have to war against. But the easiest way to victory is to hold fast the truth and walk in the light as God is in the light.

Good, and true, my soul. But in what way is "Christ risen the *measure* of our deliverance?" It is a matter of faith, and perfectly plain to those that believe. We were dead *in sin*, Christ died *for sin*; and we can now say, we have died with Him, or, died in His death. But God quickened us *together*, raised us up *together*, and made us sit

*together* in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. And now, being associated with Him in life, united to Him by the Holy Ghost, we are entitled, as a matter of faith, to regard the flesh as done with before God, as if our old nature had been nailed to the cross, and brought to its end there, and we received our new nature in resurrection. This is what St. Paul says in writing to the Galatians: "They that are Christ's *have* crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." He does not say "they *are* to crucify it," as if it were something to do, or something going on: but "they have done it." And it is done in the case of every one who receives a crucified Christ. Therefore it is all true to faith and in God's sight. The *raising up* of the twelve stones out of the bed of the river Jordan, where the feet of the priests stood, and setting them up at the camp in Gilgal, is a striking type of our being *raised* up with Christ, and seated in heavenly places in Him.

But all who understand the meaning of the Red Sea and the Jordan will have no difficulty on this point. The former shadows forth deliverance from the slavery of sin and Satan, the justification of God's people, and the judgment of their enemies. These blessings flow from the death and resurrection of Christ *for us*. But this brings the people into the wilderness, the place of sojourn; the land lies before them. The latter is a very different type. There is no rod of judgment lifted up over

the waters, as at the Red Sea. When the feet of the priests that carried the ark of the covenant approached the Jordan, the overflowing waters fell back, and the children of Israel passed clean over. They now leave the wilderness, and enter Canaan; the manna ceases, and they eat of the fruit of the land. This shadows forth the blessed Lord going first down into the waters of death, and bringing us into the heavenly places. Clearly, then, the Red Sea represents Christ as dead and risen *for us*; the Jordan, as our death and resurrection *with Him*; or, as one has forcibly said, "The grand point of the Red Sea is what Christ brings us out of, and that of the Jordan is what Christ brings us *into*." Bless the Lord, O my soul, thy deliverance is complete! the world, sin, Satan, death, and judgment are behind thee.

And now, having explained the allusion to the wars in Canaan, the course is clear. Buckle on thine armour, brace it tightly; put to the sword every wrong thought, feeling, desire, motive, or object, by which Satan might gain an advantage over thee. All spiritual blessings in heavenly places are thine; see that thou maintain thy possession of them in present enjoyment. And at the same time see that thou maintain a holy and consistent testimony here on the earth.

*"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."* Here the

apostle repeats the exhortation of verse 11. His own mind is deeply impressed with the frightful array of our foes. He reviews them, and describes their position and character in verse 12. Thereupon he sounds a second alarm in verse 13. "*Wherefore* take unto you the whole armour of God." No part must be left unguarded. The enemy knows how to take advantage of the smallest opening.

The next thing to which the apostle calls attention is, the *character* of the period during which this conflict lasts. He calls it

#### "THE EVIL DAY."

Some take this "day" to comprehend the whole period of the believer's life, or more especially his seasons of trial and suffering; but in this view we lose sight of Christ. There are others who think it refers to the entire period since Christ was crucified. The absence of Christ from the earth, the presence of Satan as the "prince of this world," and the manifestations of his power, as permitted by God, constitute "the evil day." Christ was the light of the world while He was in it, but He was rejected and crucified, and He returned to His Father. Since then this world has been again in darkness and governed by demons. Though of course God is supreme, and overrules all for His own glory and His people's good. Satan is the god whom this world worships,

and the prince whom it follows. How solemn! how awful the thought! What a dreadful place this world must be! Surely we should all care less for it than we do, were this terrible fact believed. See verse 12.

God dwells in the light. How different! how blessed the thought! And His children are privileged to dwell in the light with Him; the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, having cleansed them from all sin, they have been made whiter than snow, and fitted to dwell in the light of heaven. But they have a mission on earth. They are God's light-bearers to the benighted people of this world. "Among whom," says the apostle, "ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life." (Phil. ii. 15, 16.) Hence the struggle—the conflict between light and darkness—between the children of God, and the rebellious principalities and powers who rule over the darkness of this world. And hence, we may add, "the evil day." The enemy hates the light as the thief the watchman's lamp. He will do his utmost to harass and annoy the children of light. He will seek to mislead them in their path, to darken the light that is in them, by insinuating wrong views and wrong applications of the truth; and he will seek by every means to make them falsify their position, both in the heavenlies and on the earth.

This is the enemy, and these are the kind of



attacks which the Christian has to meet and contend with. He has to withstand them, to resist them at every point; and having done all to stand. Having done all that a soldier can do, and however complete the victory he may have gained, yet still he must stand—the war is not over. We must maintain our ground whether in peace or in war, and be found *standing*, after the last battle has been fought and the last victory won.

But in what, may I ask, has the believer strength to oppose the forces of the enemy? There is but one answer to this question. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit, who abides with the Lord's people during the entire period of the Lord's absence; and, consequently, during the entire period of "the evil day;" so that He who is for us is greater far than all that be against us. Bless the Lord! What comfort, what encouragement, what strengthening of the hands to war, what certainty of victory, what security against defeat! This was thy care and love for us, O most blessed Lord! True to thy word of sweetest consolation to the disciples; "I will not leave you comfortless"—as orphans in the world—"I will come to you. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not [not being incarnate], neither knoweth him; for he dwelleth *with* you, and shall be *in* you."

Knowest thou, my soul, what a *good day* that will be for this poor world when the Lord returns? Then it will be the presence of Christ as reigning over the whole earth, and Satan shut up in the bottomless pit. This will make all the difference. The absence of Christ now and the presence of Satan make "the evil day;" but the absence of Satan from the earth then and the presence of Christ will make "the good day"—the bright millennial day, when the whole earth will be filled with His glory. Observe thou that He says, "I will come unto you?" This may have had a certain fulfilment in the coming down of the Holy Ghost, but it can only have its complete fulfilment in the coming of the Lord Himself: as He says plainly in the same chapter, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." Nothing can be plainer—nothing sweeter than these words; and sweeter still the thought, He is not speaking here of *glory*, which will be universal, but of *home*, which will be special, and of the *love* which will characterize it for ever.

Oh, shorten then, in thy mercy, most gracious Lord, "the evil day." It is a day of abounding iniquity, of increasing infidelity, of wars and rumours of wars. And a day, thou knowest, of difficulty, sorrow, and suffering to many of thy people. The whole creation awaits thy coming. "For the earnest expectation of the creation

waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." Oh, then, hasten that day of glory—that long-promised holiday of peace and plenty—of rest and rejoicing throughout the whole earth. Then the nations "shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Isaiah ii. 4.

"Come, blessed Lord! bid every shore  
And answering island sing  
The praises of thy royal name,  
And own thee as their king.

Come, come, with all thy quickening power,  
With one awakening smile,  
And bid the serpent's trail no more  
Thy beauteous realms defile."

But to return to our text. We will now examine the different pieces of the armour of God, that we may know their uses and how to apply them; and first of all we are to have

#### THE LOINS GIRT ABOUT WITH TRUTH.

What are we to understand by the *loins*, the *girding*, and the *truth*, may I ask? These three things would naturally open a wide field for meditation, but as we have dwelt at some length on the *nature* of the conflict, we must be brief on the several pieces of the armour.

1. The *loins* represent the chief seat of strength when duly girded. (Job xxxi. 20; xl. 16.) Peter

applies this figuratively to the inner man when he says, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind." Thereby signifying, that the thoughts, desires, and affections, are the springs of action—the motive power of the soul; and therefore must be kept from exposure to the enemy by indulging our own will. We are only strong when kept from wandering beyond the limits of the girdle. This is of first importance to the christian warrior. The enemy has no hold on a heart thus encircled with the truth of God.

2. *Girding* is the application of truth to the soul—the intimate dealing of the word with the will—the movements of the heart. This is arming for conflict in a most practical and effectual way; but it must be done in the presence of God before we meet the enemy. The soldier's girdle fastens his other pieces of armour more closely to him, whereby he is able to march and strong to fight. "Thou hast girded me with strength," says the psalmist, "unto the battle." (Psalm xviii. 39.) There is also an allusion to the custom of the oriental nations, who gird their long loose garments about their loins that they may not hinder them in their travelling or working. Elijah girded up his loins, and ran after Ahab. (1 Kings xviii. 46.) It is the *bracing up* of the affections—the whole inner man—for Christ and for the things of Christ. When the heart cleaves to the Lord, as the garments cleave to the loins under the tight belt of

the girdle, the enemy cannot reach the gates of the soul.

3. *The truth* is a comprehensive term ; but here the Spirit may refer to a line or character of truth which would be our best safe-guard against the attacks of the enemy—truth suited to the position we are called to occupy. “Having your loins girt about with truth.” The soul is thus to be garrisoned with the truth. There must be no access to or egress from the citadel of the soul, unless searched by the truth. It applies to everything—to both the inner and outer man. But the chief province of truth, when used of the Spirit, is to act upon the conscience and bring it into the presence of God, where our most intimate thoughts, feelings, desires, motives, and affections, may be fairly and fully judged. “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” Heb. iv. 12.

Here, pause for a moment, my soul, and wonder ; and well thou mayest. Mark and meditate on the depths, fulness, and penetrating power of the word of God. What a volume of truth we have in these *seven* words, “Having your loins girt about with truth.” All that is needed for the government and defence of our inward thoughts and outward ways is folded up in these few words.

By taking heed thereunto, thou wouldst be fortified in the first movements of thy soul against the wiles of the enemy. There would be nothing to answer to his suggestions. By this piece of armour, spiritually understood, the soul is maintained in communion with God, and the enemy kept at a safe distance. Thus it was with the blessed Lord—thus it may be with thee, my soul. He is the warrior's example. "It is written," was thy strong tower, most gracious Lord. It was not in *reasoning* with the enemy that thou didst vanquish him; but in the perfect application of the word to thyself, and to the circumstances around thee.

As the Second Man, the Lord moved and acted according to the written word. "Preserve me, O God; for in thee do I put my trust," was the ground He took and the ground He maintained as a servant, though He was a Son. He never acted on His own will. He was girt about with truth. He waited on God. If no word came, He waited still. He would do nothing without the word of God. "It is written," must precede everything. This is safe ground for thee, my soul, and this only is safe ground—"It is written." Forget it not, I pray thee: it would keep thy heart in communion with God, in the midst of all circumstances; but especially in conflict keep it before thee: engrave it on thy shield, inscribe it on thy banner, and let it be thy watchword to discern between friends and foes.

Pole-star on life's tempestuous deep ;  
Beacon when doubts surround ;  
Compass, by which our course we keep ;  
Our plummet-line to sound.

Our shield and buckler in the fight ;  
In victory's hour the palm ;  
Comfort in grief ; in weakness, might ;  
In sickness, Gilead's balm.

#### THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

The second piece of armour commended to the christian soldier is the breastplate, and the metal it is to be made of is *righteousness*—practical righteousness, blameless conduct, a holy walk with God. This gives courage in the day of battle. It would matter little what else the christian warrior possessed if he was without his breastplate. The most vital part would be exposed to the enemy's fire. Besides, being a centre piece, it gives unity to the whole. If a man's conscience reproaches him, and if he knows that the world would reproach him if it knew all, how can he hold up his head and face the enemy boldly? He is thinking about himself, fearing detection and exposure. His breastplate is gone, he fears the blow may fall on the unprotected part. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness ; his countenance doth behold the upright. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry ; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." Psalm xi. 7 ; xxxiv. 15, 16.

When the thoughts and affections are governed

and kept in order by the truth, there will be a good conscience—a holy and a righteous walk with God and before men. This association of ideas seems beautifully united in Ephesians iv. 24: “And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;” or, the “righteousness and holiness of truth.” The truth produces both. Hence the beauty of the divine order. First, the heart; second, the conduct. Righteousness is the due attention to what we owe relatively to God and man. As says the apostle, “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.” (Acts xxiv. 16.) This is practical righteousness—a righteousness which gave the apostle amazing courage, holy boldness, when he stood up before his enemies. Holiness is rather that which repels evil—instinctively repelling that which is contrary to God. Thus the happy combination of the “righteousness and holiness of truth” forms the sterling metal of the Christian’s breastplate.

And now, see that thou well understandest this important truth, O my soul. To lose a good conscience is to be robbed of thy strength in the day of conflict. Only he who has a good conscience can be bold and fearless when called to go forth and face the enemy. But need I remind thee, before closing our meditations on the breastplate, that the righteousness we have been speaking about is



quite distinct from the righteousness of God, in which we stand accepted in Christ Jesus? He is our righteousness, complete and unchangeable in the presence of God; but not in the character of a breastplate. All conflict is over there. But while here we need practical righteousness for successful conflict with our adversary the devil. Nevertheless, the righteousness of God which we are made in Christ Jesus is the foundation of the other. Without the knowledge of this we should be feeble warriors, and an easy prey to Satan's wiles. He who made our peace and finished our righteousness is now in the presence of God for us. Blessed Lord, maintain us while down here in practical righteousness, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." See 2 Corinthians v. 21; Philippians iii. 9; Romans iii. 21, 22; x. 3, 4.

#### THE GOSPEL OF PEACE.

We now come to the third piece of armour in the Christian's panoply. "And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." This part of the armour distinctly refers to the Christian's walk. He is to go forth in peace—shod with peace; and yet he is a man of war, and clad in armour from head to foot. The helmet covers his head in the day of battle, and the shoes his feet. And these he is to wear so long as he keeps the field against the enemy.

But in what way, may I ask, is the christian soldier to be a peace-maker? There seems in this a great contradiction. Admitted, my soul, but the contradiction is only in appearance. The most gentle Christian must be a stern warrior. And more, would I say, in proportion to his power as a peace-maker, will be his power in conflict with the adversary. Here is a point in the divine science of Christianity, worthy of thy most patient study. But now, remember the order, the secret is this :

When truth governs the heart, the conscience is good. We are bright and happy in ourselves, and peaceful in our way with others. There is integrity of heart to begin with, truth in the inward parts, consistency in our conduct, and seeking the happiness of others. The salvation of the lost, the leading of such to know Him who made peace by the blood of the cross, and the happiness of the saved, become the grand object of the peace-maker. Over such an one the enemy can gain no victory. He is unassailable. There is no point exposed. He maintains his ground. But, on the other hand, when there is carelessness as to the saving peace of the sinner, and laxity in our own christian ways, the conscience becomes bad, we are unhappy, we get into trouble, we trouble others; we are exposed to the attacks of Satan, he wounds in many places, we cannot hold up our head.

In such a case, the heart is not governed by truth. The belt, as it were, is unbuckled—the garments are allowed to fly loose. Where are the thoughts now—especially the affections? the painful results of such a course spread far and wide. Persons, families, the Church of God, are troubled. The seeds of discord grow apace, and many chief friends are separated. Satan, thou wilt perceive, has gained a great victory. But stay a moment, I pray thee. Tell me, what was the beginning of all this trouble—this shameful defeat? Just this, my soul, and mark it well; God begins with the heart, and so should we. We are to wear a girdle of truth. This is the first thing. Departure from the truth of God as our only guide exposes the mind to its own resources, or rather, to the suggestions of Satan.

Alas, we have gone out of the way. Then come excuses, explanations, and exaggerations. Practically the girdle has dropped from the soldier's loins, his breastplate is lost, and in place of being shod with peace, he is shod with dissension. One Christian out of communion with the Lord may prove a root of bitterness to many. Unhappy in himself, and vexed with himself, he is soon angry with others. Whereas, when the Christian is in communion, he is at peace *with* God, and filled with the peace *of* God, and goes out in the sweet peace of the gospel to others—to both saints and sinners.

And now, understandest thou, my soul, how the Christian is both a man of peace and a man of war? Yes, not only so, but I see clearly, that unless he be a man of peace he cannot be a man of war. And hast thou also noticed that there is a special honour and blessing attached to the manifestation of this christian grace? Has not the Lord Himself said, "Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God?" But why? Because He is the God of peace—the great Peace-maker; and they are like Him. He gave His Son to make peace. There is nothing on which His heart is more set. Peace, my son, was the language of the father's kiss to the prodigal—the first utterance of his heart. Nothing more manifests our relation to God as His children than peace-making. "Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God."

The expression, "your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," is extremely beautiful. It gives the idea of the Christian carrying peace into every scene which He enters. What a mission—Peace! What a title—Children of God! The reconciliation of the sinner to God, and the blessings of peace to the saints, are the objects of his heavenly mission. (John xx.) Should he enter a scene which has been one of trouble, he will find out the way, if possible, to make it one of peace. But should he fail, he can look to God and patiently wait on Him. His character and mission are Peace.

## THE SHIELD OF FAITH.

Another piece, and another kind of armour, is now introduced—the shield of faith. It is for *defensive* warfare. It defends the soul from the assaults of the enemy. The first three parts, as we have seen, relate to the spiritual condition of the Christian's own soul, and to his walk. But a piece of defensive armour is needed to cover these. Each of them is constantly the aim of Satan's attacks: hence the need of the shield, that his venomous efforts may be ineffectual. "Above all," or, over all; or, added to all the rest, "taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

We have here two things for our meditation.

1. The exhortation; "above all, taking the shield of faith."

2. The argument pressing it; "wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

What then are we to understand by the shield of faith? Faith in God as unchangeable in His grace and love—a confidence in Him, answering to what He is to us in Christ Jesus. It is the full assurance of the heart in the love of God, according to the revelation which He has given of Himself. *God for us*, should be emblazoned on the christian shield. This is more than the faith, observe, that simply receives God's testimony con-

cerning Christ for salvation ; though founded on that, of course. It is a deep and blessed work of God's Spirit in the soul, whereby the blessed consciousness that He is for us, and that His favour is unchangeable, is maintained in the heart. This is the invulnerable shield of faith : it covers the whole man, it is over all. While this shield is raised, no arrow of Satan can possibly reach us. They all fall pointless to the ground. What a mercy, O my soul ! What a provision of grace, to be shielded from the poisoned shafts of the foe ! How dreadful to be stung in the heart, in the conscience, in the ways, by the fiend of hell ! Blessed Lord ! impress our souls with the importance of these words, "Above all." "Above all, taking the shield of faith." Does the apostle elevate this grace "above all" the other graces, as well as "over all" the others ? Enough, however, to mark its unspeakable importance. Still meditate, O my soul, on the character and uses of thy shield, and take a still wider view of what the Spirit has taught us.

How blessed to find that God is often called in scripture the Shield of His people. "Fear not," said God to Abram, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." (Gen. xv. 1.) "For thou, Lord," says the psalmist, "wilt bless the righteous ; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield." (Psalm v. 12.) The living God is His people's shield. What rest, what security this

gives! Behind His ample shield we have nothing to fear.

2. We now turn, for a moment, to the second thing: Wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." The enemy's first and dreadful aim will be to weaken in our hearts this unquestioning confidence in God, to edge in by some means unbelieving thoughts, to insinuate that God is not all love, all goodness. These are his fiery darts, darts of unbelief. Especially when there has been failure; when the heart, by some means, has been turned away from God, will he drive the soul to despair if he can. He will press upon the fallen one the terrible thought that God is against him, that God has abandoned him, that there is no hope. Hence the Lord's prayer for Peter that his faith might not fail him, that he might not be tempted, in consequence of his great sin, to unbelieving thoughts of God. There is no suffering so great as the agony of despair. Those who have witnessed it in others will never forget it. What must it be to pass through it! It partakes of the torments of hell—the forsaken place—the place where hope never enters. Nothing but the shield of faith can quench the fiery darts of unbelief.

The efforts of Satan to seduce, to act upon the desires of the flesh and of the mind, are entirely different to his fiery darts. There is pleasure of a certain kind in gratifying these desires. But there

is no pleasure of any kind in yielding to unbelieving thoughts of God. Despair, more or less, is the result. At the same time, his seductions, if yielded to, expose the soul to his further and hotter attacks. If we have opened the door to him in gratifying an evil desire, one may have to suffer terribly from his fiery attacks before we are restored to the confidence and peace of God. But pray, tell me, how these dreadful darts may be detected and avoided. They are truly awful to think of. Yes, indeed, my soul, they are truly awful. They are called fiery darts, because they are like a consuming fire in the soul; at least if they bring the soul to the point of despair. His great object is to darken the light of God in the soul and hide from it His love and favour. But few cases reach this point, thank God, where accomplished redemption is known. But here, prevention is better than cure; let us see how these inroads of the enemy may be prevented.

The most effectual way is being at home and happy in the presence of God. The personal knowledge of pardon and acceptance in the Beloved—of being complete in Christ, silences doubts, dispels fears, and quenches the fiery darts of the wicked. But the grand sheet-anchor of the soul is the knowledge of God's unchangeable love as He has made Himself known to us in Christ. We may, alas, for a time, become indifferent, careless, lukewarm—turn aside, fall away; but the door is



always left open for our return, and no change can take place either in God's heart, or in His counsels towards us. The heart, in the calm assurance of His love, can say, I change, you change, all change; but He changes not. Circumstances change, friends change, everything around may seem changing; but there is no change in Him. Oh! what a hold this gives the soul of the living God! What peace, what joy, what repose, what happiness, and what irresistible power against the enemy! His arrows cannot reach us here. We are behind the shield of faith. Under the painful sense of failure, the heart is broken by the assurance that His love is the same, and cannot change toward us, though chastening may be necessary. But in place of doubts, or dark despair under His chastening hand, there will be the bowings and the meltings of worship.

#### THE HELMET OF SALVATION.

The helmet of salvation and the shield of faith are intimately connected, though perfectly distinct. The latter is confidence in what God is; the former in what He has done. The shield conveys the idea of a more general confidence in God Himself, the helmet of a more special personal assurance in the deliverance He has wrought for us in Christ Jesus. Thus, as we have seen, the one is *over all*, the other *crowns all*. Our *defensive* armour is com-

plete. We can hold up our heads with holy boldness in the day of battle ; we can meet the strongest enemy, or all the hosts of hell, with invincible courage ; we have put on “the whole armour of God,” we are covered with the strength and the salvation of God. Bless the Lord ! “Complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power.” What enemy can harm us, what enemy can reach us there ? In the light as God is in the light, the rulers of this world’s darkness will never venture there. We are raised in Him even above the angels that never sinned. Wonderful, blessed, glorious truth ! May we use it for His glory, the blessing of our souls, and the defeat of our enemies !

But hast thou well considered, my soul, that our “helmet” is a *known salvation* ? More, much more, than merely hoping to be saved at last. The enemy would soon cast down such a helmet from thy head. Well, but is it not scriptural to *hope* for salvation ? What does the apostle mean when he says, “And for an helmet the hope of salvation ?” Surely nothing can be plainer than that. True, but the apostle is speaking in 1 Thessalonians v. of *the hope of the Lord’s coming* ; not of our forgiveness and acceptance. In this connection it includes *glory*, for which, of course, we hope or wait. Some think that whenever and wherever the word “salvation” is used, it must mean the salvation of the soul from sin and hell.

This is a great mistake, and it has been the means of perplexing many, and leading many into false doctrine. The passage referred to is extremely beautiful. "But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet the hope of salvation." Those here addressed are the children of light and of the day—children that are walking in communion with God in "faith and love," and with the bright, far-seeing eye of "hope," fixed more especially on Christ, who is coming to take us up to be with Himself in glory. This is the true and proper hope of the Christian—of the Church—the hope of her Lord's coming. We have *now* everything but glory. We are still in the natural body, therefore we hope, we wait for the glorious body; but not uncertainly, thank the Lord: no, "we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Romans v. 2; Philippians iii. 21.

But there is another passage which teaches, as many say, that a *known salvation* is impossible in this world—that we must wait till we come to the judgment seat before we can know for certain how it will go with us. It is this, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Now it is said, we may work well for a while, but sadly fail in the end and come short at last.

As in the other passage, the mistake arises from not seeing the meaning of the word "salvation." To see its application the connection must be con-

sidered. Both in this verse and throughout the epistle "salvation" is regarded as a future thing. Paul himself says, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." This, of course, he could not be until he was with Christ in glory. Clearly then our *final deliverance* from conflict of every kind is implied in the word "salvation" as here used. Hence Christ is spoken of as a "Saviour" in the same chapter, when He comes to transform our vile bodies. "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the *Saviour*, the Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Here it is not merely a question of the salvation of the *soul* from sin, but of the *body* from humiliation. The mistake arises from supposing that "salvation" has only one meaning in the New Testament. Those who think so must often feel in a difficulty. For example, in Romans xiii. we read, "For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." How is this to be explained? Simply by the context. There is no difficulty. We find it spoken of in connection with "the day;" but the day had not arrived—the day of glory. But it was coming nearer and nearer every day. Hence the heart is cheered and encouraged in conflict by the Spirit's word which follows: "The night is far spent, the day is at

hand : let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the *armour of light*.

What then, thou mayest still ask, is the real meaning of these words, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Carefully look for a moment, my soul, at what goes before, and what follows after these words. Then thou wilt find the key to the passage. Paul has left the saints at Philippi ; God is with them. Not that God was absent when Paul was present, that is not the question. God never leaves nor forsakes His people. But when a father is present and doing everything for his children, they are disposed to lean on him ; when he is away from them, they must think and work for themselves. Thus it was, so far, with the Philippians. "Wherefore," he says, "my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." The apostle who had laboured among them was now far away, a prisoner at Rome. He was no longer present to help them with his counsel and spiritual energy. They were now cast more immediately on God Himself. Hence he says, "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Therefore, they ought to work all the more earnestly, even with "fear and trembling," seeing God was working in them. He exhorts them to "fear and tremble," not lest they should fall and

be lost, but lest they should dishonour God by any want of zeal, diligence, earnestness, or faithfulness, in the day of trial.

All hinges then, thou wilt now see, on these two things ; the absence of the apostle ; the presence of God. They had now to meet the wiles of the enemy without the aid of Paul's presence ; but God was engaged for them, and acting in them ; therefore their loss was turned into great gain. They were thrown entirely upon God for all needed help, counsel, and guidance. Nothing can be more encouraging than this passage when rightly understood. In place of perplexing and weakening the believer, it nerves him for service and warfare. What a thought, when we find ourselves engaged in such a conflict, to know that God Himself is with us and engaged for us ! At the same time we must not forget that there is a deep and solemn warning in the apostle's words. As if he had said, You have many difficulties and dangers to meet and overcome in your path through the wilderness. The conflict is a serious one : you have the efforts of a mighty, subtle, and active foe to war against ; and I am no longer with you to help with my counsel, to exhort and stir you up by my example ; so that you must be more prayerful, more watchful, more circumspect, more personally dependent on the resources of God Himself. " For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Thus were they

crowned, and so should every warrior be crowned, in the day of battle, with a *known* and an *enjoyed* *salvation*.

The apostle is our noble example in all this, as well as our wise counsellor. It was this helmet of salvation that gave him, when a prisoner and in chains, such boldness and energy in the midst of his enemies. Undaunted by the power of the world that was arrayed before him, he lifted up his head in the conscious enjoyment of his relationship to God, and of his resources in Him; and earnestly wished his judges and his audience were as happy as himself. "I would to God," said Paul to Agrippa, "that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." (Acts xxvi. 29.) He was not thinking about himself, he had nothing to fear for himself; no blow from the enemy could deprive him of his helmet, it was secured by the cross and the glory of Jesus; and brightly it shone before all. This present, known salvation set him free to think about others, care for the good of others, and appeal to the hearts of others, in words of burning eloquence. Thus may we war and fight, with salvation as our helmet, through the power of an ungrieved Holy Spirit.

#### THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT.

The sword is the symbol of *aggressive* warfare. The first three parts of the armour protect us as

to our own state; the second two are *defensive*, the sixth is *aggressive*. We have but one weapon to use against the enemy—the word of God. But if we know how to handle it, or, what is equally important, how to draw it, no enemy can resist it. Any one may *draw* the carnal sword, though any one may not be able to *strike* with it. But not so the sword of the Spirit. We can only draw it aright when guided by the Holy Spirit. It is the sword of the Spirit. That is, we must be walking in communion with God, and in the ungrieved power of the Holy Spirit, to use it either offensively or defensively. Thus the right passage will be suggested to the mind and applied with divine power. Mere human intelligence and human capacity are of no avail in this warfare. The word of God is our only but all-sufficient weapon. It baffles the power of Satan, it detects his wiles, it disables every adversary, it silences the voice of self, it brings light into the scene of conflict, and discovers the dark deceptions of the foe.

But it may be well for thee, my soul, to turn aside for a little and meditate on the Lord's use of the word when in conversation with the Jews and when in conflict with Satan in the wilderness. The former he so answered from scripture that no man durst ask him any more questions; the latter he vanquished with all his hosts and spoiled him of his goods. Oh! for divine skill to use, after the manner of our Lord, the word of God—the Spirit's



sword! Lord, help us to quote the right passage and at the right time; and so to maintain our position according to the word, that the enemy may gain no advantage over us!

But the sword of the Spirit is only used *actively* in our spiritual warfare. Christianity is essentially *aggressive* in its character. It judges all that is opposed to its pure and heavenly doctrines. It wages war with the mighty empire of unbelief in its ten thousand forms. The gospel is to be preached to every creature under heaven and this side of hell. It openly attacks carelessness, worldliness, formality, infidelity, superstition, error, and vice of every kind. It assails no political body, state, or kingdom; but it storms the citadel of individual hearts and consciences, and seeks to win souls one by one to the Captain of our salvation, Christ Jesus the Lord.

When the empire of Satan is thus invaded and threatened, we may rest assured that he will leave no stratagem untried, no force unused, to hinder our progress, and to quench the light of our testimony. Hence the continual, the unending, the unmitigated warfare. But our weapons are spiritual, our victories are peace; the sharp sword of the Spirit piercing the conscience, subdues the heart, and brings the conquered soul in triumph to the feet of Jesus.

## PRAYER IN THE SPIRIT.

We have now had before us the several parts of the armour of God—the panoply of heaven—that which refers to our state both inwardly and outwardly—self-judgment, governed affections, practical godliness, confidence in God, a peaceful and peace-making walk, joy in salvation, the active energy of the Spirit, both in the sword and girdle, by the word. But behind all these there is a hidden spring of power, which gives connection and strength to the whole armour, and without which all would be of no avail. It is dependence on God: a dependence which expresses itself in prayer. “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.”

The strength and blessedness of this position cannot be over-estimated. In all thy meditations, O my soul, there is no point more worthy of thy closest, deepest study. It places the soul in connection with God, and in dependence on Him. Thus, remember, all thy battles are to be fought, and all thy battles will be victories. Observe for a moment the structure of this remarkable verse. It is, “Praying always”—on all occasions—habitual and complete dependence. And, “in the Spirit”—in the power of the Holy Spirit—in communion. “And watching thereunto with all

perseverance," active, vigilant. "And supplication for all saints"—earnestness, interest in others, affection which turns everything into prayer. This is the soul's strong tower—every soul's strong tower. All have not gifts for public ministry—for fighting in the front lines; but all have the privilege of thus drawing near to God, and abiding there.

The spirit of prayer in the christian warfare is like wisdom in the human mind—like gravitation in the material world. It combines, it keeps the different pieces of armour in their respective places, and maintains a mutual dependence the one upon the other. And remember this, my soul, and remember it always, whether in peace or in war. Nothing will keep thee more in the light than "praying always"—nothing will give thee a deeper sense of thine own weakness—nothing brings thee more into communion with the strength and favour of God, and nothing the enemy dreads more.

Be watchful and diligent then, O my soul, in the use of this weapon. See and avoid everything that would make thee unspiritual—that would lead thee away from God, or interrupt thy communion with Him. Thy strength lies in communion. May the spirit of entire dependence on God characterize thee as a child in the family, a member in the body, and a servant in the kingdom.



## CHAPTER V.

## ON THE CHRISTIAN'S HOPE.

## 1 THESSALONIANS IV.

Thou hast done well, my soul, in meditating on the Christian's standing, state, vocation, and warfare; these are subjects of the deepest personal interest, and subjects with which every Christian ought to be well acquainted according to the revelation of God. But there is yet another theme, equally personal and important, on which thou mayest profitably muse for a little; I mean the *Christian's hope*—the hope of thy Lord's return. Here, then, let thy thoughts, and not thy thoughts *only*, but thy affections, be centred. The blessed Lord, the Son of the living God, coming from heaven for thee, is the true and proper object of thy hope—thy expectation. It is a question of affection—a family scene.

The Father's house, into which He will introduce thee, is not the place of governmental glory, but of the manifestation of His grace and love. Thou wilt be in the same house with the Son—this is thy hope. O wondrous, blessed, glorious hope! What grace! What love divine! We may know something of God's love to sinners, but what can we know of the Father's love to the children—of the Bridegroom's love for His bride? The former is compassion, but the latter complacency.

## FAITH AND HOPE.

Hast thou ever thought, my soul, on that strange anomaly so common amongst Christians—that though Christ is the one object of their *faith*, He is not the one object of their *hope*. Many think that the coming of the Lord means nothing more than that He comes for us when we die; and that at the last there will be one general resurrection and one general judgment. It would be difficult to say what is the proper hope of such, for all is indefinite, indeed, we may say, confusion. Even as to the proper object of faith, and its blessed results, all is dark and cloudy.

Nothing, surely, can be more natural, in a christian sense, than that He who is the object of our *faith* should also be the object of our *hope*. But simple as this is, it is all important. Thou wilt do well to trace this twofold path a little.

When we know Christ as the one who loves us, and died for us, we have no difficulty in trusting Him: we believe in Him—we have faith in Him. The knowledge of His love creates the most unquestioning confidence; the testimony of the word to the power of His blood meets all our anxieties. We are happy—perfectly happy in Him. His love answers to every desire of the heart, and His sacrifice to every need of the conscience. With every wish met, and every desire satisfied, we must be happy, and can only love and praise the

Lord. But why is He not equally the one proper object of hope? Why is He not the daily *expectation* as well as the daily *rest* of the soul? Most sure and certain we are, that when a Christian dies, his soul is immediately with the Lord in paradise; and a blessed precious truth it is; but it is never spoken of in scripture as the *hope* of the Christian: rather that we shall not die, but be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. There is no reason or necessity why a Christian should die; Christ has died for him. But if he should die, death to him is called a “falling asleep in Jesus”—a being put to sleep by Jesus. How sweet, how blessed the thought, O my soul! This is the way a believer dies; the poor body is laid to sleep, and the soul ascends on angels’ wings to be with Christ, till the morning of the first resurrection.

But what saith the scripture? faith can only rest on the word of God. Many speak of these things as the “peculiar views” of a particular class of Christians; but the one question is, Has God spoken plainly on the subject? On nothing more so; the difficulty is in the selection; but a passage from Paul’s first epistle to the Thessalonians may be the most convenient to refer to now. *There* we have a special revelation from the Lord, for the express purpose of giving further truth in detail as to the coming glory of the Lord Jesus. Carefully read 1 Thessalonians iv. 13—18.

The Thessalonians, evidently, had been con-

verted by means of a gospel that embraced the truth usually called "The Lord's second coming in glory." This is apparent from Acts xvii., where we find their enemies giving a political turn to their accusations, by saying, "These all do contrary to the decrees of Cæsar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus." No doubt the apostle preached the truth of the Lord's coming to reign in glory. Hence it was, that from the time of their conversion, they were looking day by day for His return. But in the mean time some of their brethren died. This troubled them greatly. Their sorrow was excessive. Not that they had any fear about the salvation of their friends, but because they would not be present to welcome the Lord, and to be received by Him. When the apostle heard of their troubles, he wrote to them at once. They were comparatively uninstructed, and also greatly persecuted both by the Jews and heathen. Their opportunities of learning had been very few. The apostle was not allowed to remain long with them after their conversion, because of the persecution; and the books of the New Testament were not then written. But their ignorance and distress only gave the fitting opportunity for the Lord to reveal His mind more fully on this blessed subject.

In the new revelation which the apostle received, the *order of events* is given. This is important; though no doubt given in the first instance to meet

the sorrowing hearts of the Thessalonians, it is also intended for the instruction of the saints of God in all ages: but the best way will be to go over the verses as they stand; and, first, we would notice,

#### THE SORROW OF THE THESSALONIANS.

Ver. 13. “*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.*” These warm, earnest-hearted, but young Christians had not been instructed as to how the dead saints could be with the Lord when He comes, and share His glory. They were so full of the expectation of the Saviour’s return, that they had never thought of any of them dying before He came; so that they were in great trouble when some of their brethren fell asleep. But now, observe, my soul, and give good heed to what the apostle says to them. Does he find fault with them for their too ardent hopes of the return of Jesus? Did he say they were too much occupied with it? or that they were excited and lacked sobriety? Familiar to thy mind are such sayings from many of thy fellow Christians; but no such word drops from the pen of the apostle. Their waiting for the Lord is mentioned in each chapter of both epistles, and most surely to their praise. Neither does he seek to comfort the bereaved—as is commonly done—by reminding them that they



would soon follow—that they would soon rejoin their dear departed in heaven. No, indeed; true as that might be, he does not refer to it as a ground of comfort. The Thessalonians are maintained in the thought that they were still to look for the Lord during their life-time, and a fresh revelation is given to assure them, that all who have fallen asleep in Jesus will have equally their part in the glory with those who are alive at His coming.

Ver. 14. “*For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*” The first thing that the apostle does is to fix the eye of the sorrowing ones on Jesus—on Him who died and rose again. True comfort is only to be found in looking to thee, O most blessed Lord, and divine strength to glorify thee in our deepest afflictions. There we see victory over death and the grave—there we see the one who died, was buried, rose again, and is now in glory. He is the believer’s life. We triumph in like manner—“*Even so.*” Our life is connected with Him who thus died and rose again, and belongs to the glory. All who have fallen asleep in Jesus will be raised, and leave the earth precisely as He did. “There is this difference,” says one: “He went up in His own full right; He ascended. As to us, His voice calls the dead, and they come forth from the grave, and the living, being changed, all are caught up together. It is

a solemn act of God's power, which seals the Christian's life and the work of God, and brings the former into the glory of Christ as His heavenly companion. Glorious privilege! Precious grace! To lose sight of it destroys the proper character of our joy and our hope."\*

#### THE ORDER OF EVENTS.

Ver. 15—18. "*For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*" The apostle always wrote, we must remember, under the direct guidance and full sanction of the Spirit of God; but here there is something special—something that was required for the instruction and consolation of the sorrowing Thessalonians, therefore he introduces the new revelation with a "*This we say unto you by the word of the Lord.*" We have a similar instance in 1 Corinthians xi., when the apostle says, "*For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you.*" That was given

\* Synopsis of the Books of the Bible, vol. v. p. 90.

to correct an abuse as to the observance of the Lord's supper; *this*, to correct a mistake as to the Lord's coming.

But mark the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to His young disciples; He assures their hearts, that in the order of events connected with His coming, the first that takes place is the resurrection of those who had fallen asleep in Jesus, and that, in place of losing anything by having departed, they will be the first that are ready to go up and meet the Lord. "The dead in Christ shall rise first." So far from those who have fallen asleep in Jesus missing the joyful hour of His coming, they will be raised before the living are changed. This is grace, the grace of the Lord Jesus; at the same time we know that every event connected with His coming shall be accomplished in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, so that the interval cannot be estimated.

But now, my soul, observe in silent wonder the shining forth of this twofold glory of the Lord Jesus: He rises from His throne, He descends from heaven, He gives the word Himself, the voice of the archangel passes it on, and the trumpet gives a well known sound. The imagery is military. As well trained troops know the orders of their commander by the sound of the trumpet, so will the army of the Lord answer instantly to His call. All the dead in Christ shall rise, and all the living shall be changed; and they shall all enter into the

the cloud, and be caught up together, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall they ever be with the Lord. No separation then: therefore the apostle adds, "Comfort one another with these words."

Thus the apostle explains to the Thessalonians how God will bring with Jesus all who sleep in Him. From verse 15 to 18 is a parenthesis, which accounts for what is said in the 14th: "Even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." When the Lord returns in glory, all the saints will be with Him; but, previously, He has awakened the sleepers, changed the living, and translated both to heaven.

This is the first resurrection—the resurrection of the righteous from among the dead at the commencement of the millennium. The wicked dead are not raised till after the millennium, till the day of judgment. 1 Cor. xv. 23; Rev. xx. 5, 11—15.

#### THE RAPTURE OF THE SAINTS.

And now, the saints are gone—all gone—gone to glory—gone to be with the Lord for ever! What a thought—what an event, O my soul! Not a particle of the redeemed dust of God's children left in the grave; and not a believer left on the face of the whole earth! all caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. But who can think—who can speak of the happy reunions on that morning of cloudless joy? Doubtless the person of the Lord will fix every eye and

ravish every heart: still, there will be the distinct recognition of those, who, though long parted from us here, have never lost their place in our hearts. And as all will perfectly bear the image of the Lord, we can never lose sight of Him. Though every one will have his own identity, and his own special joy, yet all will be like the Lord, and the joy of each will be the common joy of all. "O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together," will be a note of praise often sung, as we meet to part no more for ever.

Yes, my soul, heaven is a home, a social place; and surely the blessed Lord who has prepared that home of love will ever have the first thought, the first place; yet He Himself will connect the brightest scenes in glory with the darkest days of the wilderness. This is evident from what the apostle says in the second chapter. At the very moment when he was hindered by Satan from visiting his beloved Thessalonians, who were sorely persecuted, he looked beyond those troublous times and saw his children in the faith around him in the glory. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." But there are many other scenes of earth that will have a bright reflection in the glory. Many cross my mind, some I well remember; but I forbear, their record is on high.

“Hark to the trump! behold, it breaks  
The sleep of ages now:  
And lo! the light of glory shines  
On many an aching brow.

Changed in a moment—raised to life,  
The quick, the dead arise,  
Responsive to th’ archangel’s voice,  
That calls us to the skies.

Undazzled by the glorious light  
Of that beloved brow,  
We see, without a single cloud,  
We see the Saviour now!

O Lord, the bright and blessed hope  
That cheered us through the past,  
Of full eternal rest in thee,  
Is all fulfilled at last.”

Here pause a little, O my soul; meditate on this wondrous scene. Who will meet *thee* there? Who will greet *thee* with a joyous welcome in that happy land? Who will clasp *thy* hand, to be sundered no more for ever? But oh! how completely all are changed, and yet how perfectly all are identically the same. One cannot be mistaken for another; and not one can be unknown. But chiefest of all thy joys that morning, and from which all thy other joys shall flow, will be to see His face, hear His voice, and behold His glory; or, as St. John says, and sums up all blessedness in two expressions; “*We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.*” Surely God Himself could not have done a better thing for us than to make us like Christ; and a richer blessing He could not

have bestowed than to give us to *see Him as He is*—that means, we shall see Him and know Him in all the realities of His love, and in all the greatness of His many glories. This will be the fulness of our joy, the everlasting spring of our never-ending delight.

THE INTERVAL BETWEEN THE RAPTURE AND THE  
APPEARING.

But to where, may I ask, does the Lord conduct His saints after He meets them in the air? To heaven, surely; to the house of many mansions which He has prepared for them, according to His own promise in John xiv: “In my Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” Nothing can possibly be plainer or simpler than these words. Their first meeting in the air may be foreshadowed by Isaac meeting Rebekah in the wilderness. We see in her beautiful behaviour the most reverent love; and we see in his love and kindness the fulfilment of the promises and testimonies of Eliezer: “And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel; . . . . and she took a veil and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done.” This may be like the Holy Spirit deliver-

ing up His sacred charge to the Son of the Father ; though He will dwell in the Church for ever. "And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife : and he loved her." Genesis xxiv.

Having passed into heaven, the saints will then be manifested in the light ; as the apostle says, "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ." (Rom. xiv. 10, 12.) But this does not mean, observe, that the saints, as to their persons, shall stand in judgment. Christ has been judged for them, and they, as He says Himself, shall never come into judgment. But it does mean that all their works and ways will be seen in the light of His presence, and that we shall then know His estimate of all that we have done for Him. Being in our bodies of glory, we shall be incapable of experiencing anything like fear or unhappiness ; but when manifested in the light we shall have a perfect knowledge, according to the mind of Christ, of every moment of our past history, the value which He sets upon it, and the praise which He gives. (1 Cor. iv. 4, 5.) All that was of self or of Christ in our motives, objects, and service, will then be seen—all that we failed to understand in time will be perfectly known then, at least as regards our connection with Christ, His Church and service. But, surely, everything as to ourselves will be lost sight of when seen side by side with His patient grace ; and we shall pass from His



tribunal in admiring wonder and praise at the patience which bore with our ways in the wilderness, and brought us safe to glory. "For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know, even as also I am known." 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

All things being now ready, the marriage of the Lamb takes place, according to the vision of St. John. (Rev. xix.) "The marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." He presents her to Himself a glorious Church, holy and without blemish. (Eph. v.) What a day that will be! What a day even for heaven, so long accustomed to glory! What a mustering of its myriad hosts to do Him honour! But this will be a new glory—the bridal glory of the Lamb! O wondrous thought, transcendent glory! The bride ranks with her Bridegroom, the wife ranks with her husband! *As* He is, *so* she is—*where* He is, *there* she is—*what* He has, *that* she has. And all for ever and ever. But tell me, O tell me this, my soul, will *thine* eyes behold that glory?—will *thy* heart taste these joys?—will *thy* feet stand in that holy place?—will these nuptial glories be thine? What sayest thou?—answer me. At perfect rest my heart is, faith replies: as Isaac confirmed all that had been testified of him to Rebekah, so shall the true Isaac confirm all that has been spoken of Him to His Church, which is His body, and His bride.

The marriage scene, and the marriage supper of the Lamb, are little more than announced; they are not described. But the book of the Revelation is not the place to speak of the Father's house, and the intimacies of love; but rather of the righteous ways of God, and the establishment of His kingdom on earth. Nevertheless, we are permitted to see the bride, the guests, the preparations, and to hear of the blessedness of all present. "Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And immense weight is to be attached to the concluding sentence of this brief account of the nuptial scene: "And he saith unto me, *These are the true sayings of God.*" What grace is thine, O most gracious God our Father, to give such double assurance of that blessed future to thy weak and often doubting ones! May we be faithful to our Well-beloved, to whom we are now affianced, and only think of and prepare for that coming day, which will be the summing up of all blessedness and the consummation of all christian hope.

#### THE APPEARING IN GLORY.

The marriage supper being over, and all things ready, the blessed Lord, as the last Adam, with His heavenly Eve, the glorified saints and the angelic hosts, prepare for the appearing in glory, and for taking possession of the earth. But before accompanying them thither, it may be well to notice

what has taken place there since the rapture of the saints, and what things in general have come to.

When the true Church shall have left the scene, the merely nominal part, left behind, shall be at once and for ever rejected by Christ. (Rev. iii. 16.) Then the Spirit of God began to work in the Jewish remnant, and they, as the missionaries of the new testimony, preached "the everlasting gospel to them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." The judgment of the living nations in Matthew xxv. discriminates as to the results of this testimony; and Revelation vii. shews us the saved multitudes of both Jews and Gentiles by means of "*the everlasting gospel.*" But while the love of God was thus active, and the power of the Spirit thus manifested, Satan was exerting all *his* power and bringing up all *his* forces to corrupt the whole earth, and dispute its possession with the Lord's Anointed.

Mere professors, "because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved," shall be given up to strong delusion, that they might believe a lie—awful doom—they are now at the mercy of Satan. Antichrist and the false prophet—the one the head of the civil power, and the other of the ecclesiastical—fill the whole scene of the Roman earth with their blasphemies. Outside, the nations are angry and mustering their hosts for battle. The dragon and his angels are over-

thrown by Michael and his angels, and their place is found no more in heaven, or in heavenly places. Satan and his angels being cast down to the earth, and knowing their time is short, concentrate all their evil there. (Rev. xii. 7—13.) And such will be his power, that when God ceases to hinder his working—as He will do for a time—men will fall down and worship the beast, and the dragon that gave him his power. Human sin, in the person of Antichrist, who is also filled with Satan, rises to its greatest height, and all is ripe for judgment. But let us now return to our heavenly company.

The Lord is coming: He is on His way. Look up, my soul, what seest thou? Heaven is open; “and, behold, a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.” But mark, He does not come alone; the armies of heaven follow Him. “And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine line, white and clean.” This, we must remember, is a vision which the prophet saw, and not a question of real horses. It is the symbol of the Lord *appearing* in power and great glory. He comes to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. He comes to put down all the wickedness of man and of Satan on the earth. “He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he

slay the wicked." The Antichrist, the kings of the earth, and all associated with them, shall be utterly overthrown. Isaiah xi. ; 1 Thess. i. 7—9 ; 2 Thess. ii. ; Rev. xix.

#### THE THRONE OF GLORY.

Having executed what we may call His *warrior* judgment, He takes His seat as "Son of man, on the throne of his glory," which we may call His *sessional* judgment. It is not taking vengeance on the masses by an act of His power, as when He is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, but calmly discriminating between the righteous and the wicked. He separates them the one from the other. This is the judgment of "the quick." The judgment of "the dead" does not take place till after the millennium ; but no *separating* of the one from the other will take place there. All who stand before the great white throne are judged according to the value of their *own works* ; and, consequently, are condemned and cast into the lake of fire. Only those who are judged according to the value of *Christ's work* can be saved. But, When, some may ask, will the judgment of "the quick" take place ? Before the millennium commences, according to Matthew xxv. Immediately after the Church is caught up, the Lord sends forth messengers to preach the gospel of the kingdom everywhere, and to proclaim the near approach of the king in power and

glory. (Rev. xiv. 6, 7.) Those who believe the message and treat the messengers with kindness, are owned as "sheep," but those who despise them perish as "goats." There is no opening of books here as before the great white throne; all turns on the way the message was received. To honour the king's messengers was the proof of faith; to reject them, of unbelief. The Lord remembers this, and counts what was done to His "brethren" as done to Himself. The "sheep" and the "goats," are the godly and the ungodly of the living nations; the Lord's "brethren" are godly Jews, whom He sent out to preach the gospel of the kingdom.

When the scene is thoroughly cleared of the enemies of the king, as it was at the beginning of Solomon's reign, the millennium in all its glories will be introduced.

#### THE MILLENNIUM.

It may be well to pause here for a moment before speaking of the millennium, and meditate on this solemn scene. Hast thou given it much thought, my soul? In a moment, suddenly, when the world is intoxicated with pleasure, and saying "Peace and safety," the heavens open. The once rejected Jesus of Nazareth comes forth: He is clothed in light and majesty; His breastplate is righteousness; His sword is girded on His thigh: His eyes are as a flame of fire; and on His head

are many crowns. Saints and angels follow in His train, and celebrate His praise. But what of the godless world below? "Every eye shall see him;" and every heart shall be struck with astonishment; the instruments of daily occupation shall drop from every hand, and all the world, with eyes uplifted, shall stand still. But there is no hope for the rejecters of Jesus now. Their death-knell is rung; the Lord's hand has laid hold on judgment; "He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." Amongst the many lessons which thou mayest learn from these approaching judgments, there is one especially I pray thee to remember: Let the solemn realities of thy Lord's coming and kingdom be so mirrored on thy soul as to move thee to increased earnestness, yea, to burning zeal, in preaching the gospel, and in all thy work with precious souls. True, thou wilt be with the Lord thyself, but forget not those who are in danger of being left behind through the deceitfulness of sin. But to return.

We have seen the heavenlies cleared of Satan and his angels; the earth cleared of its wicked kings; the beast and the false prophet cast into the lake of fire; and now we have the binding of Satan. (Rev. xx.) Victory is complete! the hidden source of all the evil is bound in the abyss for a

thousand years. The blessed Lord takes the kingdom. "The kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." (Rev. xi. 15.) This is the millennium—Christ openly, manifestly governing, and Satan bound. These are the two grand features of that blessed period, and by which it is distinguished from all former dispensations.

What a mighty change! what an immense relief to this groaning earth! Satan and his evil angels banished from the abodes of men: Christ reigning, and His risen saints associated with Him on the throne of His heavenly and earthly glory. Then shall come creation's day of boundless blessedness so constantly spoken of in the Old Testament. The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. The mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk and honey. The wild beasts of the field shall become gentle and harmless as the lamb, and warfare and strife shall cease from amongst the children of men. Thus will God reverse the history of man; He will heal his sorrow, relieve his misery; crown him with health, peace, and plenty, and spread joy throughout the restored creation, according to His estimate of the cross of His beloved Son. In that day it will be seen and acknowledged that the cross of the Lord Jesus is



the foundation of the wide spread scene of millennial glory and blessing. Col. i. 20.

There are three ways in which Christ will fully reveal and glorify God—grace, government, and glory. The first He did in His humiliation; the second He will do in the millennium; and the third throughout eternity. Thus the millennium will be the revelation of God in government for a thousand years. All language fails to speak of what its blessedness must be. Satan no longer free to tempt men, and the goodness of God displayed in blessing men; the heavens above, Israel and the Gentiles below, the earth, the sea, the lower creation—all brought under the government of Christ—all embraced in His wide dominions; and all to the glory and praise of God by Him.

Kings shall fall down before Him,  
And gold and incense bring;  
All nations shall adore Him,  
His praise all people sing.  
Outstretched His wide dominion,  
O'er river, sea, and shore;  
Far as the eagle's pinion,  
Or dove's light wing can soar.

But nothing can be more humiliating to man than what we find at the end of the millennium. God will then shew that a thousand years of glory will not convert the human soul without His saving grace. The moment Satan is again free,

and exercises his power, the unconverted portion of the Gentile nations are deceived by him. He gathers them together in rebellion ; but fire comes down from God out of heaven and devours them utterly.

#### THE GREAT WHITE THRONE.

We have now come to the last and closing scene in the history of man—the day of judgment. All is solemn—most solemn—eternally solemn for all who stand before that throne. “And I saw,” says John, “a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away ; and there was found no place for them.” There need be no difficulty on the reader’s part in distinguishing this last sessional judgment from the Lord’s coming, the first resurrection, and the judgment of the living nations. (Matt. xxv.) When the Lord comes, He comes from heaven to earth ; and the earth, as we have seen, is universally blessed under Him. But that is not the case here. There is no earth to come to : both heaven and earth are fled away, and there is no place found for them. It is the resurrection and judgment of the wicked dead at the close of the millennium. All are judged according to their works : the book of life is searched in vain for a single name that stands before the great white throne ; all are condemned, and cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

But before parting, and parting for ever, with so many of thy poor fellow creatures, be exhorted, O my soul, to pause, to reflect, to weigh up in faith's balances, the last sight of those countenances of agony, and the final sentence of the Judge. Remember, thou shalt see those faces no more for ever.

At the commencement of the millennium the saints are seen sitting upon thrones in association with Christ. "They lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." (Rev. xx. 4.) This was their time of public reward for service done to Christ during His absence. "The time is come," says the seer, "that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great." (Rev. xi. 18.) But on the great white throne Christ is seen alone. While it was a question of governing the millennial earth, the saints governed with Him; but now it is a question of eternal judgment, and in this He acts alone. Nevertheless, they will be with Him, according to that all-precious word, "For ever with the Lord."

And thus shall it be: the lost and the saved shall then stand face to face—the righteous with the Lord, the wicked standing before Him. What a sight! what a moment! What a difference now between the two companies! the one in bodies of glory shining in the image of Christ; the other in the naked realities of their sad condition. Stripped

of every false covering, each one must see his sins in the light of divine holiness and righteousness. All must be there. "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them : and they were judged every man according to their works." The depths, the unseen world, are forced to deliver up their miserable prisoners, that they may hear from the lips of the once-rejected Jesus their final sentence. The heavens and the earth are fled away, and nothing is to be seen but the great white throne of dazzling brightness, and the glorious majesty of Him who sits upon it. But all are now gathered, and time is no longer. The guilt and anguish of the heart are seen in all faces ; and the awful sentence, uttered amidst the dreadful silence of that solemn scene, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, will send back the wicked into the depths of woe, woe unutterable. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." But the glory and beauty of the Saviour, Jesus, whom they despised in time, and the myriads of happy saints who surround Him and who shall be for ever with Him, can never, never be forgotten.

Thus closes the history of man, and the events of time. Eternity begins. The wicked lost, the righteous saved ; and all the ways of God for ever vindicated. His love creates new heavens and earth as the future dwelling place of His children ;

and God comes down to dwell among them. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God." Revelation xxi. 1—7.

### THE BLESSED HOME.

There is a blessed home, beyond these azure skies,  
Where saints with Christ in glory live, in life that never dies.  
There is a blessed home, beyond earth's toil and din,  
Where we in white shall walk with Christ, beyond the reach of sin.

There is a blessed home, where prayer is turn'd to praise;  
When in the light of Jesus' love we'll rest for endless days.  
There is a blessed home, where God our Father dwells;  
And every child who enters there, the note of glory swells.

Within that blessed home, around our Father's board,  
The endless feast will then be spread of hidden manna stored.  
Within that blessed home His "new name" we shall bear,  
Inscribed upon the fair "white stone," His special love to share.

Within that blessed home, within our Father's rest,  
Within the everlasting arms, for ever loved and blest!  
O Father, Christ, and home! to be for ever there  
Is joy unspoken, love untold, and bliss beyond compare!

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