

# THE OPENED HEAVENS:

MUSINGS ON THE  
EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

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By J. G. B.

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*Printed in Hong Kong by*  
**EMPIRE PRINTING COMPANY,**  
653, King's Road, 2nd fl., Hong Kong.

“**THERE** are some who, because the epistle is not descriptive of us as the church, see nothing in it for us. Truly it is not *about us*; it is only about Christ.”—G. V. W.

MUSINGS  
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**Chapters I, II.**

The Epistle to the Hebrews strikingly illustrates one quality of the Book of God. It may be read in various lights; yet no one ray interferes with another. In six or seven ways this epistle could be read with the greatest ease. I will specially look now at the first two chapters. It opens the heavens to you as they now are.

How blessed is the introduction of such a thing to the heart! You look up and see the physical heavens above you; but it is only the superficial heavens you see. This epistle introduces the inner heavens to you, and not in a physical, but in a moral character. It introduces us to the glories surrounding and attaching to the Lord Jesus, now accepted in the heavens. We are thus enabled to see the heavens in which He has sat down, what He is about there, and what will succeed

those heavens. When the Lord Jesus was here, as we learn in Matthew iii., the heavens opened to get a sight of Him. There was an object here then worthy the attention of the heavens. He returned—and the heavens had an object they had never known before—a glorified Man. And now it is the office of our epistle to shew us the heavens as the place of this glorified Man. And as in Matthew iii. we get the heavens opened to look down at Christ here, so in the Hebrews you get the heavens opened that you may look up at Christ there.

But supposing you ask, Is that all the history of the heavens? Have you gone to the end? Indeed I have not. In chapters iv. and v. of the Apocalypse we get the heavens preparing for the judgment of the earth. Then at the close of the volume I find the heavens not only the residence of the glorified Man, but of the glorified church. What a book it is that can present to us such secrets as these! It is a divine library. You take down one volume from your shelf, and read about the heavens; in another volume you read of man in ruins; take down a third and you read of God in grace; and so on, in precious, wondrous variety.

Now we will set ourselves down before chapters i. and ii. “When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right

hand of the Majesty on high." That is just taking up the pledge I gave—that the epistle is going to open to us the heavens. The Lord has been here purging our sins, and He has gone up to occupy the heavens as the Purger of our sins. Supposing I had been to a distant country, I might describe it to you so as to fill you with delight and with desire to visit it. But when the Holy Ghost comes and shews you the distant heavens, He does more than this—He shews you that your interests are consulted there. Our Representative is seated in the highest place and seated there in that very character. Is it possible to have a more intimate link with the place? It is a wonder we are not all on the wing to get there as soon as we can! To think that because He came to die a wretched death for us He is seated there! I defy you to have a richer interest in the heavens than God has given you.

Now in verse 4 we see that not only as the Purger of our sins, but in the verity of His Manhood He is there, seated above the angelic hosts. We have seen already what an interest we have in Him as the Purger of our sins. Now the chapter introduces Him to us as the Son of man above angels. Man has been preferred to angels. Human nature in the person of Christ has been seated above angelic nature, though it be in Michael or in

Gabriel. The whole of chapter i. is thus occupied in giving you two sights of Christ in heaven. What two secrets they are! The Purger of our sins, and very man, like ourselves, seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

I read the first four verses of chapter ii. as a parenthesis. Do not you like these parentheses? The Holy Ghost speaks the language of nature. We see friends when conversing together turning a little aside to converse about one another; so the apostle speaks here—"I am teaching you wonderful things. Do take heed that you let not such things fall on a careless ear." We must not be mere scholars. If we be disciples of a living master in the school of God, we shall have our consciences exercised while we are pursuing our lesson. That is what the apostle is doing here. That parenthesis falls on the ear most sweetly and acceptably.

But though a parenthesis, it opens a new glory to us. How the field of scripture teems with fruit! It is not a thing you have to till diligently and get but little fruit. That parenthesis contains another glory of Christ. (Surely we ought not to need exhortation!) He is seated there as an Apostle—my Apostle. What does that mean? He is a preacher to me. God spake in times past by the prophets, He is speaking to us now

by the Son; and Christ in the heavens is the Apostle of Christianity. And what is His subject? Salvation. That salvation which, as the Purger of our sins, He wrought out for us; and which, as the Apostle of our profession, He makes known to us. There is more furnishing of the heavens for you.

Then verse 5. returns to the theme of chapter i. It goes on with the distinctive glories of Christ, as super-eminent, above angels. "For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come." What is "the world to come"? It is the millennial age, which we read of in Psalm viii. We have three conditions of the Son of man here. "A little lower than the angels"; "crowned with glory and honour"; and "set over the works of God's hands." So that the world to come is not put in subjection to angels but to the Son of man. Now you find that you have an interest in this glorified Man. I was saying that if I went to a distant land and described to you its scenic wonders, you would desire a sight of them. But this epistle shews you that you have a personal interest in these glories. Is there a single point that the Son of man has travelled in which you have not an interest? The apostle traces it here for you. So that again I say this epistle is opening the distant heavens to your view, and shewing you the glories



that attach to Christ, and that you have an immediate, personal interest in those glories.

In verse 10 a new thought comes in, "to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Only pause here for a moment. It became the glory of God to give you a perfect Saviour. Do you believe it? What thoughts rise on the soul when we come to that! Are you in possession of Him, so that you never in a single thought are tempted to look beyond Him? We have got an unquestionable, infallible salvation, one that will stand the shock of every coming day.

From verse 11 we further see our interest in the glorified Man. "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Not ashamed! Tell it out that earth and heaven may hear! This glorified Man is a brother of the elect of God. He is not "ashamed" because of their dignity. Not merely because of His grace, but because of their personal dignity. He has appointed me a share of His own throne. Is He ashamed of His own doings—of His own adoptings? Do not get creeping, cold thoughts as you read scripture. Our thoughts of Christ should be such as to take captive our old man—to bear us on eagles' wings. "In the midst of the church will I

sing praise unto thee.” Christ raising and leading the song of the ransomed ones, and not ashamed to be found in their company! “And again, I will put my trust in him.” He did that when He was here, and we do it now. “And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.” There is our interest in the glorified Man.

Then we return to see what He was in humiliation. “He took not on angels; but he took on the seed of Abraham.” He left the angels where He found them. The angels excelled in strength. They kept their first estate, and He left them there. Man excelled in wickedness, and He came and linked Himself with man. Then verse 17 introduces us to another glory that attaches to Christ in the heavens. We see Him there as our High Priest, ever waiting with reconciliation for sins, and succour for sorrows. The epistle teems with divine glories. It is massive in glory and ponderous in the divine thoughts that press into its short space.

## Chapters III, IV.

We were observing that one leading characteristic of this epistle is that it gives us a look into heaven as it now is—not as it was in Genesis i., and not as it will be in Revelation iv. or xxi. The heaven of Genesis i. had no glorified Man in it, no Apostle, no High Priest. The heaven of Hebrews has all these. That being the general character of the epistle, we looked at the Lord Jesus as in that heaven. Then we were observing how the Lord is there as a glorified Man—as the Purger of our sins—as our Apostle preaching salvation, and as the High Priest making reconciliation for sins. Every page is fruitful in casting up the glories of the Lord Jesus now in heaven.

Now we will take up chapters iii. and iv. Having been introduced to the heavens where Christ is, and to the Christ that is in those heavens, chapters iii. and iv. turn a little round on themselves and look a little sharply at us and tell us to take care now that we are travelling along the road in company with Him. The first thought is that we are to consider Him in His faithfulness. The exhortation here is commonly misunderstood.

For what are we to consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession? Is it to imitate Him? The religious mind says so. But that is not the point of the passage at all. I am to consider Him as faithful, for my sake, to God; faithful so that I might be saved eternally. If I do not consider Him so, I have more than blunted the point of the passage and lost the sense of grace. The word should be, not "was faithful," but "is faithful," or "being faithful." Not in walking down here but now in heaven. I look up and see Him discharging these offices, faithful to Him that appointed Him. What business have I to imitate Him in His high priesthood? I am to consider Him for my comfort.

What a constellation of grace there is in all that! The grace of God that appointed Him, the grace of the Son that discharges the work, and the grace that opens chapter iii. is infinite in magnificence. Could there be sublimer exhortation or diviner doctrine? We get the Son in the highest heavens, there seated as the Purger of our sins, the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, and could any exhortation be more divine than that which tells me to sit still and look at Him in His faithfulness up there?

Then in verses 3 and 4 and onward we get further glories unfolded in contrast with

Moses. The first dispensation is here called a house. It was a servant to serve a coming Christ—Moses and the house are identical. All the activities of that dispensation were worth nothing if they did not bear testimony to a coming Christ: therefore it was a servant. When the Lord comes, on the other hand, He comes as a Son, to claim that which is His own as His own; and the whole thing now depends on this—Will the house, over which He is set, be faithful to Him?

What is your faithfulness? To continue in confidence and hold the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end. “Christ for me, Christ for me!” I will take nothing but this all-sufficient Christ. Cling to Him day by day till the wilderness journey is over. Then you are part and parcel of that house over which He presides as a Son. He not only presides over it, but He claims it as His own—a dearer thought. It is quite right to be subject to Him, but He tells you to lie near His heart. Faithfulness is not merely being subject to the headship of Christ. If I am lying on His bosom then I am faithful. So that when the Spirit comes to exhort, in chapters iii. and iv., He has not left the high and wondrous ground of chapters i. and ii.

Then, having come to that point, He turns aside to Psalm xcv. If you begin to read at Psalm xcii. and read to the close of Psalm ci.

you will find it a beautiful little millennial volume. It is exhortings and awakenings of the Spirit of faith in Israel, summoning them to look forward to the rest of God.

How is that brought in here? The wilderness journey of Israel is a beautiful, lively picture of the journey the believer is now taking from the blood to the glory. People sometimes at the opening of chapter iv. turn it on themselves. But rest to the conscience is not the thing that is thought of at all. It assures us that we are out of Egypt and looking towards Canaan. The danger is, not lest the blood should not be on the lintel, but lest we should break down by the way, as thousands did in the wilderness. It never calls you to re-investigate the question of having found rest in the blood, but to take care how you travel along the road. When He speaks of rest, it is the rest of the kingdom He talks of, not the rest of the conscience. Then He calls the whole age through which we are passing one day—"To day." It was a short day to the dying thief, a short day to the martyred Stephen. A longer day to Paul, and a longer day still to John; but let the wilderness journey be short or long, it is one day, and you are to hold by Christ to the very end. If you are to be partakers of Christ, you must hold fast to the end.

Now, what is the Christ of verse 14? A Christ crucified? No, Christ glorified. You are made partakers of Christ in the kingdom if you hold fast by Christ crucified. Let this "to day" ring in the heart and conscience every hour. Holding to a crucified Christ is my title to the rest of a glorified Christ. Two things contest this with you—sin and unbelief. Do you not recognise these two enemies as you pass along? Shall I continue in sin? Am I to give place to one wrong thought? I may be overtaken, but am I to treat them other than as enemies? Then unbelief is an action of the soul towards God. You and I do not know what saintly character is—what it is to be between Egypt and Canaan—if we are not aware that those two things stand out to withstand our passage every day.

Chapter iv. still pursues the subject. The Christ of chapter iii. 14 is the rest of chapter iv.; Christ glorified—rest glorious. He has us out of Egypt. The exhortation attaches to a people out of Egypt. We have left the blood-sprinkled lintel behind. The glorious Canaan is before us. Take heed lest you come short of it. "Unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them." The gospel, not of the blood of Christ, but of the glory of Christ. It took one form in the ear of the Israelites and it takes another form

to us; but to them, as to us, rest was preached.

Then He beautifully falls back on the Sabbath rest of the Creator. The blessed Creator provided Himself a rest after creation. He promised Himself a rest in Canaan after bringing them through the wilderness. Adam disturbed His creation-rest. Israel disturbed His Canaan-rest. Is He, therefore, disappointed in His rest? No; He has found it in Christ. The secret of the whole Book of God is, God retreating into Christ when man in every way had disappointed Him. Christ is the One who has worked out that rest, and who holds it now, and it remains with Him both for God and for His saints. "Therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein." It is no longer a fallible thing depending on Adam or on Israel, therefore let us take care that we do not come short of it.

Now we get two ways in which to use Christ. We had two enemies in the end of chapter iii., now we have two uses of Christ in the end of chapter iv. We are to use Him as the Word of God and as the High Priest of our profession. Is that the way I am using Him? These two uses stand opposed to sin and unbelief. Let the Word of God discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. Instead of giving place to your lusts



and vanities, invite the entrance of the two-edged sword, that makes no allowance for a single bit of sin. And when you have dragged out the enemy—found some favourite lust lying in this corner and some unsuspected vanity in that, what are you to do with them? Take them to Christ and let His high priesthood dispose of them in the mercy and grace that are in it.

There we pause for the present. We have seen the heavens opened, and looked in, and found there a Man arrayed in glories, every one of which I have an interest in. Then comes the exhortation. Two enemies beset you—take care. Instead of yielding to them make use of the two-edged sword; and when you have found them out, take them to Jesus. There is a beautiful suitability between the Christ that is exhibited up above, in chapters i. and ii., and you and me as we are exhibited here below in all the characteristics of chapters iii. and iv.

## Chapters V., VI.

We will read now to verse 10 of chapter v.; and from there until the close of chapter vi. we may observe that the apostle turns aside to a parenthetical warning. He is full of that style; and our style with one another is full of it. Such little breaks and interruptions in a discourse are always grateful to us.

In the first ten verses of chapter v. a most weighty matter is introduced to our thoughts. In the first verse we get a general abstract thought of priesthood. It is that thing which serves men in their relationships to God. Then the character of service is presented to us—"That he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins"; that is, that He may conduct both eucharistic services and penitential or expiatory services before God. He stands to conduct our interest with God in whatever form. He is "taken from among men" that He may have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way. He is not taken from among angels, therefore we read in Timothy, "the man Christ Jesus." God in ordaining a Priest for us has chosen One who can have

compassion. We find at the close of chapter vii. that the Lord Jesus was separate from infirmity. But the priest here was one who by reason of infirmity could sympathise. The Lord Jesus had to learn how to sympathise, as well as to learn obedience by the things which He suffered.

Under the Old Testament scriptures two persons are distinctly set in the office of the priesthood—Aaron in Leviticus viii. and ix., and Phinehas in Numbers xxv. The difference between them was this: Aaron was simply called into the priesthood; Phinehas acquired a title to it.

When we come to the Lord Jesus we find that both these, Aaron and Phinehas, are seen in Him. He was "called of God, as was Aaron." Aaron was a mere called priest. The priesthood of Numbers xxv. stands in contrast with Aaron's. Phinehas was not called, as was Aaron, but he acquired his title. How did he do this? He made an atonement for Israel in the day of their great breach, touching the daughters of Baal-Peor and enabled the Lord to look with satisfaction again at His erring camp. Phinehas stood forward to avenge the quarrel of righteousness and to make atonement for the sin of the people. "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Phinehas . . . hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel . . .

Wherefore say, Behold I give unto him my covenant of peace . . . even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood." Nothing can be finer than this. You could not have a more magnificent light in which to read the Christ of God than in that act of Phinehas. Aaron was never in this way entitled to a covenant of peace. So you have these two Old Testament lights in which to read the priesthood of the Lord Jesus.\* He was the true Aaron and the true Phinehas.

Both these are brought out here. The blessed Lord Jesus was called into office, as was Aaron; but He was in office because He made an atonement. This earth was like the outside place of the temple, where the brazen altar was. The Lord Jesus is now seated in the sanctuary of the heavens, which God has pitched, and not man, because He has passed by the brazen altar on earth. He has passed it by and has satisfied it. Nothing can be simpler, and yet nothing can be more mysteriously grand. How did God bear witness to the satisfaction of the brazen altar? By rending the veil. Then it is an easy thing to pass in. If God has rent the veil am I to let it be rent for nothing? If it be now rent I have as much right to go inside as the Israelites of old were bound to keep outside. By satisfying the altar He has

\* Melchisedec was a third. (Heb. vii.)

passed by the rent veil into the sanctuary in the heavens. All that is brought out here. He glorified not Himself to be made a High Priest.

Why is it a matter of honour to be made a high priest? You will tell me that nothing can dignify the Son of God; and I grant it. But let me ask you, Do not men know what it is to have acquired honour as well as hereditary honours? The son of a nobleman goes to battle and may he not acquire honours as well as his hereditary family dignities? And tell me, which will he value the most? Those which he has acquired. He himself is more honoured by them. His hereditary dignities are his, and no thanks to him; but his acquired honours are more specially his own.

Divine things are illustrated by human things. Who can add anything to Him who is God over all, blessed for ever? But the Son has been in the battle and acquired honours that would never have been His if He had not taken up the cause of sinners; and dear and precious honours they are to Him! That word "called" is very sweet in the original. God "saluted," "greeted" Him when He seated Him in the sanctuary, as He greeted Him when He seated Him on the throne—"Sit thou at my right hand." The Epistle to the Hebrews shews, in the opened

heavens, a throne as well as a sanctuary.

In verses 7, 8 and 9 we find some very weighty truths connected with ourselves. "Who in the days of his flesh" (let us mark that with holy reverence), "when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death." The scene of that conflict was eminently marked in Gethsemane. What was the transaction there? He properly shrank from undergoing the judgment of God against sin. "And was heard for his piety." He was heard because death, the wages of sin, had no claim on Him. His claim to deliverance was allowed. Instead of the judgment of God being sent to wither His flesh, an angel was sent to strengthen Him.

Yet He suffered death. He might have claimed His own personal exemption from it, yet He went through it. He learned obedience to His commission by travelling from Gethsemane to Calvary, and He now presents Himself to the eye of every sinner on earth as the Author of eternal salvation.

We see the Lord in Gethsemane pleading, as I may express it, His title against death. His title is owned; yet, though death has no claim on Him personally, He says, "Thy will be done." He might have gone from Gethsemane to heaven; but He went the

rather from Gethsemane to Calvary; and so, being made perfect there, He became the Author of eternal salvation to all who receive Him. Then, when the altar was satisfied, the sanctuary received Him, and there He is.

In creation God planted a man in the garden in innocence; in redemption God has planted a Man in heaven, in glory. There is a glory that excelleth. The glory in redemption leaves the glory that was once in creation as a nothing.

Now we have got down to verse 10. Observe that the language of verse 10 is taken up in verse 20 of chapter vi., and the argument there has not advanced beyond this verse 10. Supposing, then, I were to take you to chapters i., ii. and iii. of 1 Corinthians, you would find the apostle there hindered in his teaching. "You are carnal; I cannot teach you with the rich treasures I have stored up for the church." It is so here; only there the evil that hindered was moral; here it is doctrinal.

It was very difficult for the Hebrew to detach himself from the things in which he had been educated. He was "unskilful in the word of righteousness." The legal mind is apt to take up righteousness as Moses did, as a thing demanded from us. God takes it up as a thing that He will give us.

And in the next chapter, finding this hindrance among them, he sounds an alarm, as in the opening of chapter ii. he sounded an exhortation. A carnal mind and a legal mind are two great villains. They are both little foxes that spoil the vintage of God.

“Now,” says the apostle, “you must leave these things. I must put you down to another volume, and that volume is perfection.” “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened,” etc. That is, “It is not within my reach to do it.” We must leave it to God whether they be brought back or not. It is just between themselves and God. It is a terrible thing, having known Christ, to go back to ordinances; but I have no warrant to say that it will not be forgiven in the person of many who have thus been ensnared but have come back.



## Chapters VII.

To look carefully at the Melchisedec priesthood of Christ is important to our souls. Therefore, for the present, we will lay aside the parenthesis at the close of chapter vi. and read part of chapter v. and the whole of chapter vii. We are looking at the priesthood of the Lord Jesus as reflected in Aaron and Phinehas. Aaron, we saw, was simply called into his office; Phinehas earned his office. We will now look at the Melchisedec phase of the same priesthood.

Supposing I said to you that this world is a scene of forfeited life—you would understand me. Life is but suspended death. To return to life is to return to God. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. Sin worked the forfeiture of life; consequently, if I can make a return to life, I make a return to God. In two characters God visits this world—as a Quickener and as a Judge; and John v. tells us that we are all interested in one or other of these visits. Now it is the office of this epistle to let every poor believer in Jesus know that he has returned to life and that his business now is with the living God and with God the

Quickener. "The living God," is an expression that occurs often in this epistle. "Departing from the living God," "To serve the living God," "The city of the living God." The living God thus occupies the field of my vision both now and in glory. I am now not to depart from Him which intimates that I have got back to Him. I have escaped from the region of death and got back to the region of life; and by-and-by in glory I shall find "the city of the living God."

The question is, How have I got back to Him? The epistle beautifully unfolds that. It is a magnificent moral subject to trace the Lord Jesus in His ministry through the four gospels and see Him from the beginning to the close of His history, displaying Himself as the living God in this world. To mark Him at Gethsemane—to mark Him giving up the ghost—then as the living God rising from the tomb and bestowing the Holy Ghost. We see the living God in a scene pregnant with death. It is the office of this Epistle to the Hebrews very specially to present Christ as the living God. The apostle is full of the death and the cross of Christ. It would not be the Epistle to the Hebrews if it did not take up Christ in His vicarious character.

But though we see the Lamb on the altar, we see the vacant sepulchre too. We have

remarked before that the Lord Himself always attaches to the story of His death the story of His resurrection. "The Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death . . . and the third day he shall rise again." We have the same thing here, only in a doctrinal and not an historic way. The cross is often named, but always in company with the ascension. Take the opening of the epistle—"When he had by himself purged our sins." How did He purge them? By death. Death looks at you at the very opening of this epistle; but at once you read, "Sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." Again we read, "That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." Does the story end there? No; He is "crowned with glory and honour." What is done historically in the gospels is taken up doctrinally in the Hebrews.

The Holy Ghost is considering the living God in the Person of Jesus, as Jesus was exhibiting the living God in His own Person. So again chapter ii., "That through death"—death looks again at you, but what follows—"he might destroy him that had the power of death." Have I not again the empty sepulchre as well as the altar and the Lamb? I go in this epistle to find an empty grave;

but not as "Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary." I expect to find it empty. Their mistake, dear women, was that they expected to find it full. I go expecting to find it empty and I do find it so. When I see the Lamb on the altar and the empty sepulchre, I have got hold of victorious, infallible life. That is the rock-life of which the Lord spoke to Peter.

In chapter v. we find that in Gethsemane He transacted the question of His title and was heard for His piety. He had a moral title to life. Then He surrendered that moral title and took His vicarious place. From Gethsemane He walked on to Calvary. Gethsemane was a wonderful moment. There the great question of life and death was settled between God and Christ; and instead of taking the journey He was entitled to up there, He went along the dreary road our sins put Him on down here. There is exceeding blessed interest about all that.

At Calvary, again, we find Him in death; but the moment He gave up the ghost everything felt the power of the Conqueror. He had gone down into the darkest regions of death, but the moment He touched them every one felt the power of the Conqueror. The earth quaked, the rocks were rent, the graves were opened, and the bodies of the saints arose.

If we look in John xx. we see not merely the vacant tomb, but the tomb strewed with the tokens of victory—the linen clothes lying, and the napkin, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. We shall never be able to read the mystery of the Christ of God if we do not remember Him as the living God in the midst of death, getting victories worthy of Himself. We see Him in death rending the veil. In the grave we see the napkin lying wrapped together by itself to tell the story of conquest. We see Him then with His disciples, and He is exactly the living God of Genesis i. We find God there breathing life into the nostrils of man—the Head and Fountain of life. In John xx. the Lord shines under our eye as the Head and Fountain of infallible, unforfeitable life, breathing on the disciples and saying, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost.”

In this epistle we find Him in that character, as entitled to life and as holding it for us. That is His Melchisedec priesthood. He is not merely the living God. He might have been that if He had gone to heaven from Gethsemane; but He went to heaven from Calvary, and is now there as the living God for us; and God is satisfied—to be sure He is satisfied. How could He be otherwise? Sin has been put away and the

blessed God breathes the element of life. It is, so to speak (with worshipping hearts may it be spoken), His native element, and He is satisfied. And God has expressed His satisfaction. But how? When Christ rose in the face of the world that said, "We will not have this man to reign over us," God said, "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool." That was His satisfaction in a rejected Christ.

When Christ ascended the heavens in another character, as having made atonement, He put Him in the highest heavens with an oath, and built a sanctuary for Him—"the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." Is it possible for Him to shew us in more interesting form that He is satisfied with what Christ has done for us?

Are the services of such a High Priest enough for me? They must be so. I am in connection with life, and every question is settled between me and God. He is King of Righteousness and King of Peace, and He dispenses all you want in the royal authoritative virtue of His own name.

The moment you get the living God expanded in this epistle you find that everything He touches He communicates life for eternity to it. His throne is for ever and ever—chapter i. tells you that. His house

is for ever and ever—chapter iii. tells you that. His salvation is eternal—chapter v. tells you that. His priesthood is unchangeable—chapter vii. tells you that. His covenant is everlasting—chapter ix. tells you that. His kingdom cannot be moved—chapter xii. tells you that. There is nothing He touches that He does not impart eternity to. To entitle the Epistle to the Hebrews in a word, we might say it is “the loaded altar and the empty sepulchre.”

Christ has put Himself in possession of life, not to keep it to Himself. The living Jesus in the highest heavens says, “Now that I have got life, I shall share it with you.” Oh, the depth of the riches!

## Chapters VIII.

We meditated as far as verse 7 of chapter vi. and there we left it, taking up chapter vii. Now we will read the close of chapters vi. and viii. But before we pursue the doctrine of the epistle we will look a little at what we called the hortatory parenthesis in chapter vi. At verse 10 of chapter v. we left the doctrine, and from that to the close of chapter vi. is a parenthesis. The apostle having turned aside to exhort them, we were observing that the thing he feared in the Hebrews was not moral, as in the Corinthians, but doctrinal pravity. And do we not see such moral varieties around us now? One has a Corinthian bias, another has a Galatian bias. The thing he feared in the Hebrews was giving up Christ as the Object of their confidence.

What is the dressing that God is giving your heart now? (Ver 7.) It is not law but grace. Moses was on the principle of law—the Lord Jesus was on the principle of grace; and free, happy, grateful hearts are the herbs meet for such tillage. How is your soul before God? Do you apprehend Him in judgment or in grace? Is the com-



munion of your soul with God in the liberty of grace or in the fear of a coming day of judgment? If the last, it is not yielding herbs meet for Him by whom it is dressed. Thorns and briers are the product of nature. They are the natural product of a corrupt scene, whether it be the earth I tread or the heart I carry within me. Supposing I am acting in a legal, self-righteous mind—dealing with God as a Judge—is not that natural? But these are all thorns and briers. But if I walk in the filial confidence of one who has trusted in the salvation of God, that is the earth yielding fruits meet for Him by whom it is dressed.

Now what is the ground of the apostle's persuasion of "better things" touching them in verse 9? Not confidence in the simplicity of their apprehension of grace, but that the fruits of righteousness were seen among them—beautiful things that accompany but never constitute salvation. Therefore the apostle, seeing this beautiful fruitfulness, says, "Though I am sounding an alarm I do not attach it to you." Having got on that ground he pursues it to the close of the chapter, and does not return to what is doctrinal till he reaches chapter vii. He prays them to continue to minister to the saints. Does your knowledge of Christ lead you to two things—secret communion of soul with

Him and practical energy of christian walk and faithfulness? "Now," says he, "do you go on with the beautiful, practical work you have begun. Do not be slothful, but followers of them who by faith and patience inherit the promises."

Then he brings out Abraham as one who did not slack his hand to the end. Abraham not only got the promise in Genesis xv., but went on in patience till it was confirmed by an oath in Genesis xxii. We are called not only to faith, but to the patience of faith. May you not have a consolation and yet not a strong consolation? We see it in Abraham. He had a consolation in Genesis xv. and a strong consolation in Genesis xxii. A saint once said to me, "In that last sickness the Lord brought me so near Himself that I felt as if I had never believed before."

The apostle would have us like Abraham in Genesis xxii., that "we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to take hold upon the hope set before us." This passage is commonly misquoted. It is not a sinner running to the blood for refuge, but a saint running to the hope of glory from the wreck of every prospect here. This is enough to try us. Do you and I sit on the wreck of everything here? Are we promising ourselves hopes for to-morrow? Abraham was a man who fled from every

prospect here to lay hold on the hope of glory. The apostle says, "Lay hold upon the hope," not on the cross. The word of God has an intensity that commonly escapes us. Now he returns to the Levitical figures. Does your hope enter within the veil? Have you not a hope about to-morrow? What is the thing the expectation of your heart hangs about? Is it the hope of the return of Christ, or the promises to-morrow?

"Whither the forerunner is for us entered." The Lord Jesus is here brought out in a new character. We see Him in heaven, not only for us as our High Priest, but to secure a place for us with Himself. Oh! if we could unfold the glories of the present dispensation! It is full of glories. Jesus is now in heaven in the glory of a Forerunner—a High Priest—the Purger of our sins. There He sits arrayed in glories. He will put on other glories in the millennial heavens. He will also be King of kings and Lord of lords on the millennial earth. He is not that now; but there are glories in which He is displayed to the eye of faith. Do you go and meditate, broken-heartedly, on the glories of "these last days," as they are called in this epistle.

But we pass on to chapter viii. "We have such an high priest who is set on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens;

a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." What exquisite words! What glories filled the heavens in the days of creation? The sun, and moon, and stars were set there. His fingers garnished them. And pray, have not they garnished the present heavens? If there were glories set in the superficial heavens by the fingers of God, there are glories set in the interior heavens by the grace of God. One of these glories is a tabernacle which the Lord has pitched there. Christ came down from the eternal bosom to glorify God on the earth. Was there anything too brilliant in the way of glory in which to array such an One?

What intercourse we get here between God and His Christ—between the Father and the Son! And among the glories that awaited Him there was a temple pitched by the Lord Himself. The sun comes out of his chamber to run his course. The Creator built a habitation for the sun in the heavens. (Psa. xix.) God in redemption has built a habitation for the High Priest; and He is seated there in the highest place of honour. Christ could not be a priest here. The place was divinely occupied. It has been foolishly said, He could not go into the holiest. Surely He could not, for He came of the tribe of Judah. Did He come to break God's ordin-

ances or to fulfil all righteousness? What business had He in the holiest? A priest of the tribe of Levi, if he found Him there, would have been entitled to cast Him out. He was entitled to everything, but He came as a subject, self-emptied Servant. Did He intrude on the two poor disciples at Emmaus? Much less would He, a Son of Judah, as He was, intrude in God's house.

Here we pause a little. In this epistle we find one thing. From the beginning to the end the Spirit is taking up one thing after another and laying it aside to make room for Christ, and when He has made room for Christ and brought Christ in, He fixes Him before us for ever. And we must all submit to it. Has not God laid you aside and brought in Christ in your stead? Faith bows to this. It is what He has done in every believing soul.

So in chapter i. He lays aside angels. "To which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?" Oh! how faith consents to it! Oh! how angels consent to it! Next we see Moses laid aside. "Moses verily was faithful . . . as a servant . . . but Christ as a Son over his own house." We can part with Moses because we have got Christ—as the poor eunuch could part with Philip because he had got Jesus. Then in chapter iv.

comes out Joshua. But he is laid aside also. "If Joshua had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day." Christ is set before me as the true Joshua who really gives me rest. Then Aaron is set aside to let in the priesthood of Christ; but when I have it before me I have it for ever. He is the Administrator of a better covenant. The old covenant is done away because the Lord has nothing to say to it. And at the close we read the beautiful utterance, which might be the text of the epistle, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." He being brought in is the same for ever.

What a magnificent thought it is to think of God bringing in the blessed Jesus to the displacing of everything! That is perfection, because God rests in Him. This is exactly the sabbath of old, when God rested in creation. Now God rests in Christ, and that is perfection; and if you and I understand where we are, we are breathing the atmosphere of perfection—an accomplished work—a sabbath.

There is nothing more fruitful in glorious luminaries than the Epistle to the Hebrews. It is an epistle of untold glories, and of inestimable value to the conscience of the awakened sinner. It is the title of my soul to breathe the atmosphere of heaven itself;

and if I do not do so, shall I put a cloud on my title because my experience is so poor?

Now at the close of chapter viii. we see another thing set aside—the first covenant. The covenant that Christ ministers never waxes old. “Your sins I will forgive, your iniquities I will pardon.” There is no wrinkle on its face; no grey hairs upon its brow.

The Lord touches everything and fixes it before God for ever; and God rests in it. He perfects everything He touches. While everything gives place to Him, He gives place to nothing. And would not you have it so? Would not John the Baptist have it so? When they came to him and said, “Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold, the same baptiseth, and all men come to him,” he answered, “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.” This ought to be the instinctive utterance of your heart and mine. If the Spirit has dealt with you in your soul you ought to say; “Blessed be God for it! He has set me aside to bring Jesus in.” There is wonderful unity between the discovery we get here and the

experience of our own souls. We shall never get to an end of these glories till we are lost in an ocean of them by-and-by—a sea without a shore!



## Chapters IX., X. 1-18.

We closed at chapter viii.; and pursuing the structure of the epistle we will now read chapter ix. down to chapter x. 18. This is the last section of the doctrinal part; and then to the close we get moral exhortations. From the opening of chapter ix. to verse 18 of chapter x. is one argument.

Suppose we linger a little over the structure of the epistle. Did you ever present a little distinctly to your mind the glories that belong to the Lord Jesus? There are three forms of glory that attach to Him—moral glory, personal glory and official glory. From the manger to the cross was the exhibition of His moral glories. In “these last days” the Lord is exhibiting some of His official glories, and by-and-by He will exhibit more of them, as in millennial times. The prophets of old spake of His sufferings and the glories which should follow—not glory. But His personal glory is the foundation of every one of these.

This is a grand subject for our constant meditation—the glories of the Lord Jesus from the womb of the virgin to the throne of His millennial power. All through life He

was exhibiting His moral glories. The scene for these is past now, and He has taken His seat in heaven; but that has only given Him an opportunity to display others. The four gospels give me a view of His moral glories here. In the Epistle to the Hebrews I see Him seated in heaven now in a constellation of official glories. In other writings we get His coming glories. Whenever you see Him you cannot but see Him in the midst of a system of them.

In these chapters ix. and x. you get what He was doing on the cross, the foundation of every one of His present glories. In the first eight chapters we get a varied display of the conditions of the Lord Jesus now in heaven; and now, as the sustainment of all these, in chapters ix. and x. we have an account of the perfection of the Lamb on the altar.

Do you ever make "these last days" a subject of thought? Why is the Spirit entitled to call the age through which we are passing the "last days"? We shall have other days after these. Why then does He call them the last days? Beautifully so—because God rests in what the Lord Jesus has accomplished, as thoroughly as He rested at the close of creation in the perfection of His own work. It is not that in the unfolding of the economy of God we shall not have other ages; yet, in the face of that,

the Spirit does not hesitate to call these the "last days."

In all the Lord has done He has satisfied God. He perfects everything He touches, and makes it eternal, and God does not look beyond it. Everything is set aside till Christ is brought in, but there is no looking beyond Him. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever." Now the moment I get God resting in anything I get perfection; and the moment I get perfection I am in the last days. God has reached satisfaction, and so have I. Christ may be unfolded in millennial days; but it is the very same Christ that we have now. Shall I get Moses then or Joshua? They are all (treated in the light of Christ) "beggarly elements." All give place one after another; but Christ being introduced to the thoughts of God, God rests in Him; and when you come to see where you are, you are in God's second Sabbath—and see how one thing exceeds the other! The rest of the Redeemer is a much more blessed thing than the rest of the Creator. In Christ you have got perfection—the rest of God—and you are in the "last days."

Now when we come to chapters ix. and x. we see Christ, not properly or characteristically in heaven, but on the altar. The glories that surround Him now have been given to

us one after another—the glory of the priesthood—the glory of the Purger of our sins—the predestinated Heir of the world to come—the Apostle of salvation—the Dispenser of the covenant that never gathers age to itself—the Giver of the eternal inheritance—these are the glories of “these last days.”

In chapter ix. 10 we see the cross that sustains them all. How blessed it is to track from Matthew to John a path of moral beauty. Was the Lord Jesus in office here? No; He was here in subjection. When I have looked at Him thus I am invited to look upwards. Is it One travelling in moral beauty I see there? No, not that specially; but it is One who has been seated at the right hand of the Majesty with an oath in the very midst of glorious beauties—One whom the satisfied, unrepenting heart of God has seated there. It was the testing purpose of God that seated Adam in Eden. It is the unrepenting heart of God that has seated Christ in heaven.

And now we come to read the perfection of His work as Lamb of God, as the grand foundation of all these glories. He would not have perfected His moral glories here if He had not gone on to the cross and died there. He would not have had His official glories in heaven if He had not gone on to the cross and died there. When the Lord

Jesus was hanging as the Lamb of God on the accursed tree and over His bleeding brows was written the inscription in every language, "This is the King of the Jews," they sought to blot it out—but God would not have it blotted out. He would have the whole creation know that the cross was the title to the kingdom. The inscription that Pilate wrote on the cross, and God kept there, is very fine.

Supposing the cross sustains the glory, according to the inscription, now tell me what sustains the cross itself? Is the cross without a foundation? The secret comes out in these chapters: as the cross sustains your hopes it is the Person that sustains the cross. His personal glory is the sustainment of the cross. If He were less than God manifest in the flesh, all He did was no more worth than water spilt upon the ground. Of all the mighty mystery of official, millennial, eternal glories, the cross is the support and the Person is the support of the cross.

He must sustain His own work, and His work must sustain everything. This is just the argument of these chapters.

There was a veil hanging between the place where the priests ministered and the mystic dwelling-place of God. That veil was the expression that that age gave a sinner no access to God. Were there not sacrifices?

Yes, there were; and God's altar was accepting them. But they were "gifts and sacrifices that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience." Beautifully then, at this point, He comes to your heart and demands a note of admiration. "For if the blood of bulls . . . sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

Supposing we inspect the old tabernacle, and see the beggarliness of all its elements—that the blood of bulls could not bring you into the presence of God; and from the beggarliness of all that, look at the satisfyingness of the blood of Jesus, will you not exclaim, "How much more shall it purge our consciences?" That is the way you are to come to the cross—laying doubtings and questionings aside, and losing yourself in admiration. The thing the Spirit does is to take you gently by the hand and lead you up to the altar at Calvary, and tell you who is the victim that is bleeding there. None but one who was personally free could say, "I come to do thy will." Have you any right to a will? Has Gabriel or Michael? To do God's pleasure is their business; but here was One who could offer Himself without

spot to God. "How much more," then, shall such a sacrifice purge our consciences and introduce us at once to the living God? That entitled me to say, that while we look at His glories—His official glories—we see that the cross is the sustainment of them all.

But if the soul does not know the personal glory of the Lord, it positively knows nothing. That is the secret you get here. He, for whom God prepared a body, through the eternal Spirit, satisfied the altar. Yes, satisfied the brazen altar before He went into the holy sanctuary to do the business of God's priest. And atonement flows from satisfaction. If I find out that Christ's sacrifice has answered the cravings of the brazen altar, I see that my reconciliation is sealed and settled for eternity.

The Epistle to the Ephesians tells you to stand upon this, and look round about you at the glories of your condition. The Epistle to the Hebrews shews you the glories of Christ's condition in the compass of about three hundred verses. What a world of wonders is opened! You sustained by what He has done; and what He has done sustained by what He is.

## Chapter X. 19-39.

We are coming now to another beautiful part of the epistle, and as we hinted to a new division of it. We will read from verse 19 to the close of chapter x. You may have observed the general structure of the epistles. Take the Ephesians, for instance: in the first three chapters we get doctrinal truth, and in the last three the moral application of it. So in Colossians, Galatians, Romans, etc. Now in Hebrews it is the same, and we are just entering now on the practical application of what has gone before.

“Now the full glories of the Lamb adorn the heavenly throne,” as a beautiful hymn of Dr. Watts says. Constantly through this epistle we have been looking up and seeing this. But let me ask, do you see glories anywhere in “these last days” that are not attaching to the Lord in heaven? You will tell me that all glory belongs to Him, and I grant it; but I tell you, you ought to see glories attaching to yourselves. Such is the wondrous working of God, that He has made the poor sinner a glorious creature. These same last days that have set Christ on high, in the midst of the glories, have set the poor



believing sinner down here in the midst of glories.

I want that you and I be girt up to an apprehension of them. We do not wait for the kingdom to see glories. Is it no glory for you to have a purged conscience? Is it no glory to be fully entitled to be in the presence of God without a blush? no glory to call God, Father? to have Christ as your Fore-runner in heavenly places? to enter into the holiest without a quiver of conscience? no glory to be introduced into the secrets of God? If we can lift up our heart and say, "Abba, Father"? if we can lift up our heart and say, "Who shall condemn?" or "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" If we can believe that we are bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh; that we are part of Christ's fulness, will any one say there is no glory in all that? So that this epistle introduces us to most precious thoughts. It tells me to look up and see Christ adorning the throne, and to look down and see the poor sinner shining on the footstool.

The world sees nothing of these glories. We only apprehend them in the glass of the word by faith; but I do say boldly, that I do not wait for the kingdom to know what glory is. I look up and see the Lamb in acquired glories. I look down and see the saint in gifted glories. Now the moral application

begins. "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus." There I look at myself; and will any one say there is not glory in such a condition? That is my title. Now the exhortation is that you are to enjoy your title. To enjoy is to obey. The first duty you owe to God is to enjoy what He has made you, and what He has given you. "Let us draw near." Use your privilege, as we say. It is the first grand duty of faith, and I am bold to say it is the most acceptable duty of faith.

How narrow we are to enjoy these glories. Do you ever look at yourself in the glass of the word? We are very much accustomed to look at ourselves in the glass of circumstances—in the glass of relationships. If we say in the secret of our heart, with exultation of spirit, "I am a child of God"; if, with exultation of spirit we can say, "I am co-heir with Christ," that is the way to begin obedience. Here it is exactly that. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith."

We should look on ourselves as the priesthood of God. The priests of old were washed when they were put into office. Then every day their feet were washed before they entered the tabernacle to serve the Lord. The pavement of God's own presence was

not stained by the foot of the priest. He went in, in a character worthy of the place. Are you occupying the presence of God all the day long in the consciousness that you are worthy of the place? How will you be presented before Him by-and-by? Jude tells you—"faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." You ought to know that you are in His presence now faultless or without spot. We cannot put ourselves in the flesh too low; and we cannot put ourselves in Christ too high. If one may speak for another, we find it much easier to degrade ourselves in the flesh than to magnify ourselves in Christ. That last is what the Spirit is doing here.

Now He tells me, having got into the holiest, what to do there. If I know my title to be in the presence of God, let me know also that I am there as the heir of a promised glory; I am there to be kept there till the glory shines out. We are the witnesses of a class of glories, just as the Lord Jesus is the witness of a class of glories. We are in a wealthy place; and having got in there we are to hold our hope without a quiver. "Let us hold fast the profession of our hope without wavering" (as the word should be). If we got in without a quiver, we are to hold our hope without a quiver. That is what our God has called us to. We are there with

boldness; and being there, we are to talk of our hope. And we are to talk of charity also, "to provoke unto love and to good works." What exquisite service! Who can utter the beauties of these things?

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together . . . but exhorting one another." When you get into the house, what are you doing together? Are you to be down in the depths of conscious ruin? No; but exhorting one another to love and to good works. These are the activities of the house. We dwell together in one happy house, exhorting one another, and so much the more as we point to the sky and say, "Look! the dawning of morning is near; the sky is breaking." We want a great deal more to exhort one another to know our dignity in Christ than to know our degradation in ourselves. It is very right to know ourselves poor worthless creatures. Confession is very right; but to gird up the mind to the apprehension of our dignity is much more acceptable and priestly work than to be ever in the depths. "Out of the depths have I cried unto thee." Here we see ourselves accepted; holding our hope without wavering; exhorting one another; and saying, as we point to the eastern sky, "The dawn is coming."

Then, having thus conducted us to verse 25, he brings in a solemn passage about

wilful sin. We read the counterpart of this in Numbers xv., where presumptuous sin is looked at. Under the law there were two characters of offence. A man might find a thing that was his neighbour's, and deal falsely about it, or he might lie to his neighbour, and there was a trespass offering provided. But when a man picked sticks on the sabbath day he was to be stoned at once. There remained nothing for him but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation." It was presumptuous sin, flying in the face of the legislator. This is the presumptuous sin of the New Testament. It is running in the face of the God of this dispensation, as the gatherer of sticks ran in the face of the God of the law. We are not to be careless about sin. If we do the least sin we ought to be broken-hearted about it. But that is not the thing contemplated here. It is a defection from Christianity.

Then, having come to verse 31, he exhorts them to "call to remembrance the former days." Let me ask your souls, "Do you all remember the day when you were illuminated?" One might say, "The light shone brighter and brighter upon me." I believe Timothy may have been such an one. Timothy, I have often thought, under the education of his godly mother, may have passed gently into the flock of God. But

most people know the moment of their illumination; and if there is a moment of moral energy in the history of the soul, it is the day of its quickening. Why do not you and I carry the strength of that moment with us? Is He a different Jesus that we have now? When I know that the day was when all was over between God and me, and that now the day has come when all is over between the world and me, that is practical Christianity. What was that day that he called on them to remember? The day when, being illuminated, they "took joyfully" the spoiling of their goods. Why was this? How does he account for it? Their eye was on a better inheritance. Let me grasp the richer thing, and the poorer thing may pass away for aught I care.

We can account for victory over the world just as easily as we can account for access to God. That, let me say, is just the knot that this epistle ties. It puts you inside the veil, outside the camp. In the wondrous, divine, moral character of Christianity, the grace and the blood of Christ work exactly contrary to the lie of the serpent. The lie of the serpent made Adam a stranger to God, and at home in this polluted world—inside the camp and outside the veil. Christianity just alters that. It restores us to citizenship in the presence of God, and strangership

in the world; and verse 35 of this chapter is the one verse in this epistle that knits these things together.

Hold fast your confidence and it will be the secret of strength to you. Where do we see victory over the world? In those who are happiest in Christ. Why are you and I so miserably down in the traffic of the world? Because we are not as happy in Christ as we ought to be. Give me a soul that has boldness and joy in God's presence and I will shew you one that has victory over the world.

Now the apostle tells us that a life of patience intervenes between the day of illumination and the day of glorification. I am not to count on a path of pleasure—a path of ease—a path of prosperity—on being richer or more distinguished tomorrow than today; but I am to count on a path of patience. And is not there glory in that? Yes, there is companionship with Christ. No greater glory is or can be yours than to be the companion of your rejected Master. That is your path. "If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." He was not ashamed to be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They were strangers here; but if we become citizens here, instead of strangers—strike alliance with the world—He who could say, "I am the God of my strangers," can say to the citizen of the

world, "I have no pleasure in him."

May you and I exhort one another to love and to good works, and, pointing to the eastern sky, say, The day is dawning. Amen.



## Chapter XI

We have reached chapter xi. I think we observed that chapter x. 35 was a connecting link between the two great thoughts of the epistle—that Christianity puts you inside the veil and outside the camp—that is, it undoes the work of Satan, which estranged you from God and made you at home in a corrupted world. The religion of the Lord Jesus just comes to upset his (Satan's) work. Nothing can be more beautiful than the anti-thesis which thus shews itself between the serpent and the serpent's bruiser.

The "great recompense of reward" shews itself in the life of faith that we are now going to read about. We are called, as John Bunyan says, "to play the man."

If happy within we are to be fighting without. This chapter xi. shews us the elect of all ages "playing the man" in the power of this principle of confidence.

"Cast not away therefore your confidence," for it thus shews that it has "great recompense of reward." Faith is a principle that apprehends two different things of God. It views Him as a justifier of the ungodly, as in Romans iv.; but here it apprehends God

as “a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” The moment you apprehend God by a faith that does not work, you enter on a faith that does work. And while we rightly cherish a faith that saves our souls, let us not be indifferent to a faith that serves our Saviour. How boldly we sometimes assert our title, but do we value our inheritance? It is a poor wretched thing to boast in our title, and yet shew that the heart is but little moved by the hope of the inheritance. Just so, if I boast of a justifying faith, it is a poor thing to be indifferent to the faith that we have here in chapter xi. “Now faith is the confidence of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

Then you are told that it was the strength of all the worthies in old times, who through it “obtained a good report.” It is another proof that, as we have said, everything in this epistle is to set aside law. If I take up the law as the secret power of my soul to do anything for God I am not doing it for God but for myself. The law might chasten and scourge me and call on me to work out a title to life. But that would be serving myself. Faith sets law aside. Then, having established faith as a working principle he begins to unfold the different phases of it from the beginning. I believe verse 3 may have a reference to Adam. If Adam

was a worshipper in the garden, it was by faith. He may have looked behind all the wonders that surrounded him, and apprehended the great Artificer.

Now some say they can still worship God in nature; but when we left innocency we left creation as a temple and we cannot go back there. Nature was a temple to Adam; but if I go back to it, I go back to Cain. Here we come to Abel and to revelation. We are sinners; and revelation, which unfolds redemption, must build us a temple. You must take your place as worshipper in the temple that God in Christ has built for you.

Then we come to Enoch. Enoch's was an ordinary kind of life; but he spent it with God.

We are told in Genesis that he walked with God, and here we are told that he pleased God. As the apostle says in 1 Thessalonians iv., "Ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God." To walk with God is to please Him. Can anything be more welcome to us than the thought that we can give complacency to God? There was nothing in Enoch's life to make history; but whatever condition of life may be ours, our business is to walk with God in it. It is beautiful thus to see an undistinguished life going before a life of great events. You may hear some say,

“A poor, unnoticed thing am I, compared with some who have been distinguished in service for the Lord.” “Well,” let me reply, “you are an Enoch.”

Now Noah's was a very distinguished life. Faith laid hold on the warning. Faith does not wait for the day of glory or the day of judgment to see glory or judgment. Faith in the prophet did not ask for his eyes to be opened. Faith here for one hundred and twenty years seemed to be a fool. Noah was building a ship for dry ground; and he may well have been the mockery of his neighbours; but he saw the thing that was invisible. How rebuking to us! Supposing you and I lived under the authority of coming glory: what fools we should be!

But I should not have passed over the word I took for my text. “He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Again, I boldly say, you would not have had that definition of faith in Romans iv., “A rewarder of them that diligently seek him”! “Why, what legal language!” some would say if they read it in a book. Ah! but it is beautiful in its place. The faith of a saint is an intensely working thing. Will God be a debtor to any man? No; He will pay to those who sow bountifully.

Abraham's life is next; and a picture of the varied exercises of faith. There was

a magnificence in his faith—a victorious quality—a fine apprehension—all these qualities of faith come out in the life of Abraham. He went out blindfold; but the God of glory led him by the hand. So he came to the land; but to him not a foot of it was given. He must have the patience of faith; but whatever fell from the lips of God was welcome to Abraham. Abraham walked all his life in the power of the recollection of what he had seen under the hand of the God of glory.

Now supposing I tell you that the vision of Stephen has gone before every one of you. You need not be expecting the same vision that Stephen saw, but you have seen it in him. They may carry you to the stake; but you may say, “I have seen heaven opened over me, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.” If you and I are simple, true-hearted people, we shall just go forth as Abraham did when he had seen the God of glory.

Then Sarah’s was another kind of faith. We must see God as a Quickener of the dead. Noah understood God so. The Israelites, under the blood-stained lintel, received Him in the same character. Death was there, and attached to every house in the land; but the Israelites knew God as the Quickener of the dead. That is what Noah, Abraham, Sarah,

apprehended of God. If I make God less than a Quickener of the dead, I make myself more than a dead sinner. It is as a Quickener of the dead I must meet with Him.

The thirteenth is a beautiful verse. The first thing to do to a promise is to apprehend it—then to exercise faith about it—and then to receive it by the heart. They “embraced” them. Their hearts hugged them. How far has my heart hugged the promises? One knows his own “leanness.” But surely the closer we hug them the more blessedly we shall consent to be strangers and pilgrims in this world. This is a wonderful picture of a heart put into faith. Did they speak of strangership because of leaving Mesopotamia? No; but because they had not reached heaven. They might have found their way back. Abraham could tell it to Eliezer; but that would not have cured their strangership.

Supposing there were a change in your circumstances, would that cure your strangership? Not if you are among God’s people. Mesopotamia was no cure. Nothing could cure, end, or close their strangership but the inheritance. On they went to heaven; and God was not ashamed to be called their God.

In chapter ii. we read that Christ is not ashamed to call us brethren. Now, we read

that God was not ashamed to call these strangers His people. Why is Christ "not ashamed to call them brethren"? Because they stand in one divine, eternal purpose with Him. One family embraces the elect and Christ. How could He be ashamed of such a people? And if you have fallen out with the world, God is not ashamed of you. For God Himself has fallen out with it, and He could not be ashamed of you, because you are one mind with Him. Therefore, when they said they were strangers, God called Himself their God. Our hearts are terribly rebuked here. How much lingers in them of striking alliance and making friendship with the world!

Then we see Abraham in another light.

Every hope of Abraham depended on Isaac. To give up Isaac seemed not only to become a bankrupt in the world, but to become a bankrupt in God. He might have said, "Am I to become a bankrupt in God and in Mesopotamia?" There could not have been a higher stretch in the believing principle. Have you ever feared God making you a bankrupt in Himself? Has He turned away never to return?

Well, he got him back in a figure; sealed as a fresh witness of resurrection. Do we ever lose anything by trusting God in the dark? If ever any one trusted Him in the

dark it was Abraham.

After passing him we come to Isaac. Isaac shewed his faith by blessing Esau and Jacob concerning things to come. This is the little, single bit of his life that the Spirit looks at. If we inspect his life, we shall find that that is the eminent work in it. That act shines out under the eye of God.

Jacob is more remarkable, as Noah had been more remarkable than Enoch. His was a very eventful life; but the only thing we get here is—"by faith he . . . blessed both the sons of Joseph." This is exquisitely beautiful. It shews how much in christian life may be rubbish. I do not believe Jacob's life was an exhibition of a servant of God. It was an exhibition of a saint who went astray, and whose whole life was occupied in getting back; and we do not get this act of faith till we come to the close, when he "blessed both the sons of Joseph." There he came in contact with things unseen, and things that came across the current of nature. His life was the life of a man recovering himself; and just at the close he did this beautiful service of faith to God in the face of the resentments of his own heart and the appeal of his son Joseph.

But Joseph's is a lovely life—a life of faith from the beginning. Joseph was a holy man throughout; but there was magni-



ficent outshining of faith just at the close. He had his hand on the treasures of Egypt and his foot on the throne of Egypt; yet in the midst of all that he spoke of the departing of his brethren. That was seeing things invisible. That was the one thing the Spirit has signalled as an act of faith. Why did he talk in this way? He might have said, "Ah! I do not walk by sight. I know what is coming, and I tell you, you will go out of this land, and when you go, take me with you."

The general course of his life was unblameable, yet we do find in his words as he was departing the finest utterance of faith. And now that is what you and I want. Do you want to be righteous only? You must be so; but will that constitute a life of faith? You must seek to get under the power of things hoped for—things unseen—the expectation of the Lord's return; and till you do so in some energy you may be blameless, but you are not walking that life of faith by which "the elders obtained a good report." Thus, so far we see faith as a working principle. Not the faith of the sinner, which is a no-working faith. The moment the no-working faith has made me a saint I must take up the working faith and live in the power of it.

But we must go on. We will not forget

what we hinted—that the whole of this chapter xi. depends on, and is the illustration of, chapter x. 35. The stronger our faith is, the more our soul is in the possession of mighty, moral energy. This chapter shews how this principle of faith gained the day. Do not read it as if it were the praises of Noah, Abraham, Moses, and others. It is the praises of faith as illustrated in Noah, Abraham, Moses, and others. What a simple, blessed thing Christianity is! I stand in admiration of it when I see how the devil has wrought a two-fold mischief in putting us outside the veil—inside the camp; and how Christ has wrought a corresponding two-fold remedy. Do I rejoice in the thought that I have gained God though at the loss of the world? That is Christianity.

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child.” What is the meaning of that? It means that when he was born there was an expression in his countenance that faith read. “Beautiful to God” is the word. There was a certain beauty in him that awakened the faith of Amram and Jochebed; and they were obedient to it. Was there not a beauty in the face of the dying Stephen? Ought not his murderers to have been obedient to it? They stand in moral contrast to Moses’

parents. Under the finger of God they saw the purpose of God and hid the child.

Now in Moses we see a beautiful power of faith. It got a three-fold victory—three splendid victories, and the very victories you are called to.

First, his faith got the victory over the world. He was a foundling, picked up from the Nile and adopted as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. This was personal degradation translated into adopted magnificence. What did he do with it? He "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter." What victory over the world that was! We like those things that put worldly honour on us. Moses would not have it; and sure I am faith is set to the same battle and challenged to get the like victory to this day.

Next we see Moses getting victory amid the trials and alarms of life. "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king." What a terrible thing the life of faith is to nature! You have got a victory to-day—you must stand again to-morrow. "That we may be able to withstand . . . and having done all, to stand." Here the pressure of life was coming on Moses after the attractions of life had got their answer.

Then, in the third instance, Moses had an answer for the claims of God. It is magnificent to see a soul braced in the power of a

faith like this. "Through faith he kept the passover." The destroying angel was going through the land, but the blood was on the lintel. From the very beginning grace has provided the sinner with an answer to the claims of God; and it is the simple office of faith to plead the answer. God provided the blood and faith used it. Christ is God's provision. He is God's great ordinance for salvation; and faith travels along with Him from the cross to the realms of glory.

Then, "by faith they passed through the Red Sea"—"by faith the walls of Jericho fell down"—"by faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not." And what more shall we say? It is the story that animates the whole of scripture. The story of grace and faith—grace on God's part and faith on ours—gives animation to the whole book of God. *We are never called outside the camp till we are inside the veil.*

The early chapters of this epistle shew the sinner his title to a home in God's presence; and then you are to come forth from that home and let the world know that you are a stranger to it. That is the structure of this beautiful epistle. It tells us our title to be in God's presence before it opens the calling that attaches to us. Before Abraham was called out to a land that he knew not, the "God of glory" appeared to

him. Does he ever send a man a warfare at his own charges? Does He ever send you to fight with the world before you are at peace with Himself? Everything is for me from the moment I turn to God. I am called in God, to everything that is for me. I am come "unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," etc. This is chapter xii. Before ever David was hunted as a partridge, he had the anointing oil of God upon him.

We must linger a little on the two closing verses. They are very weighty, precious, pregnant verses. These elders obtained a good report, but with the good report they did not obtain the promise. It reminds me of the prophet Malachi. "A book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels." They are not His made-up jewels yet, but He has their names in His book, and He will make them up and display them as His jewels by-and-by. So with these elders. Why have they not yet obtained the promise? Because we must first come in, in the rich furniture of this evangelic dispensation, or all they had in their beggarly dispensation would never have done for them.

We find the word "better" constantly occurring in this epistle. "A better testament"—"a better covenant"—"some better thing for us"—"which speaketh better things than that of Abel." And we find the word "perfect" in constant use also; because now everything is perfected. Everything is perfected that gives God rest, as we have already said, and God is not looking for any satisfaction beyond what Christ gives Him. He has His demand answered—His glory vindicated—His character displayed—and all in Christ.

Now what is this "better thing" in the last verse? If we had not brought in our Christ, so to speak, nothing would have been done. God having introduced Christ in this dispensation, all the old saints that hung on it are perfected. For in one light of it, we look at this epistle (as we will now do briefly and rapidly) as a treatise on perfection. Thus, in chapter ii. we read that it became the glory of God to give us a perfect Saviour; not merely my necessity, but God's glory required it—"It became him"—consulting for His own glory. It became Him to give the sinner an author to begin salvation, and a captain to close it. The difference between an author and a captain is just the difference between Moses and Joshua. *Moses was the author* of salvation when he picked up the

poor captives in Egypt; *Joshua was the captain* of salvation when he carried them across the Jordan right into the promised land. Christ is the One who carries us both through the Red Sea and the Jordan—the One who did *the initiative work of Moses, and the consummating work of Joshua.*

Then in chapter v. we read, “being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation.” Not moral perfection—we all know He was morally stainless—but perfection as “the author of salvation.” He would never have been perfect thus if He had not gone on to death; but as it behoved God to give us a perfect Saviour, so it behoved Christ to make Himself a perfect Saviour. Then in chapter vi.: “Let us go on unto perfection,” the apostle says, that is, let us “read our lesson on this subject.” Some read this as if they were to go on till they got no more sin in themselves. That has nothing to say to it. It is as if the apostle said, “I am going to read you a treatise on perfection, and you must come and learn it with me.”

Then he goes on with the subject in chapter vii. He says, you cannot find this perfection in the law. “The law made nothing perfect.” You must look elsewhere. By the law here is not meant the ten commandments, but the Levitical ordinances. In the midst of these beggarly elements you

must look elsewhere for perfection. Chapter ix. thus shews you that it is in Christ and tells you that the moment faith has touched the blood the conscience is purged, and chapter x. tells you that the moment Christ touches you you are perfected for ever. Not in moral stainlessness in the flesh—there is no such thing here.

The moment Christ touches the apostleship He perfects it. The moment He touches the priesthood He perfects it. The moment He touches the altar He perfects it. The moment He touches the throne He perfects it. And if He perfect these things He will, as to your conscience perfect you, a poor sinner. So this epistle is, in one great light, a treatise on perfection. God gave you a perfect Saviour—Christ made Himself a perfect Saviour. Let me go on to perfection. If I seek it in the law I am in a world of shadows. When I come to Christ I am in the midst of perfection. “And there I stand, poor worm,” as Gambold says.

Therefore these saints could not get the inheritance till we came in laden with all the glories of this dispensation. But now they can share the inheritance with us, when the full time comes.

What glories shine in this epistle! What glories fill the heavens, because Christ is there! What glories attach to us because



Christ has touched us! Is it no glory to have a purged conscience—to enter into the holiest with boldness—to say to Satan, “Who are you, that you should finger God’s treasure?” We creep and crawl when we should be getting into the midst of these glories and encouraging our hearts.

## Chapter XII

We will now read chapter twelve. We have looked at the doctrine of the epistle. We are now eminently in the practical part of it; yet the blessedness of the doctrine shines out too. I would just say this first, we have been looking at the various characters in which the Lord has entered heaven. Now here in verse 1 we get Him in heaven in another character. Do not many crowns belong to Him? Will not you put a royal crown—a priestly crown—on His head? Can you put too many crowns there? What a cluster of glories fill the eye as we look at Christ in heaven by the light of this magnificent epistle!

Now among other characters we see Him there as the One who perfected a life of faith on earth—"the author and finisher of faith." The counsel of God is busy in crowning Jesus. It is the delight of the counsel of God to crown Him—it is the delight of the Spirit of God to exhibit Him as crowned—and it is the delight of faith to see Him crowned. God, the Spirit, and the faith of the poor, believing sinner, all gather round Him, either to crown Him or to delight in

seeing Him crowned.

Now we see Him owned in heaven as the One who perfected the life of faith. He passed through it to perfection from the manger to the cross and is so accepted in the highest heavens. That of course put Him in collision with man. "Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself." This is beautifully pregnant with the thought that He was "separate from sinners." You would not dare to take that language to yourself. It is too lofty a style for any but the Son of God to take. Was anything like that said of Abraham or Moses? No; the Spirit would not have talked so of one of them. So when you put the Lord Jesus in the wear and tear of life in company with martyrs, you see Him, as in all other things, taking the pre-eminence.

It is so natural for the Spirit to glorify Christ! If He is looking at Him officially, as in the first part of this epistle, it is easy to look at Him with many, many crowns upon Him. Or, looking at Him here, it is easy for the Spirit to put this crown of peculiar beauty on His head. He "endured such contradiction of sinners against himself." It is a description which your heart would condemn you for taking to yourself, though you might be called to the stake.

The cross, in one aspect, was martyrdom. Jesus was as much a martyr at the hand of man as He was a victim at the hand of God. It is as a martyr we see Him here—and as such we are put in company with Him. “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.” You have no deeper enemy than your own heart to strive against. It was sin in the Pharisees—sin in the multitude—sin in the chief priests—that carried the Lord Jesus to the cross. But He never had a bit of sin in Himself to strive against. It was sin in others.

The apostle then goes on to put you, as a chastened sufferer, in company with the Father. Here we drop company with Christ. For He never was under the chastening of the Father. The moment I get under the scourging and education of the Father, I have dropped out of company with Christ. I am deeply in His company when travelling the path of the martyr. I am not a step in His company when I am under the chastening of the Father.

So from verse 5 onward you are in company with your heavenly Father. Oh! these sacred, divine touches—that know when to introduce Christ and when to let Him disappear! How, or in what form of excellency to display Him, and how to let Him out of sight! There is a glory, a completeness, in

the very way in which the task of the Spirit is executed. He walks through life enduring the contradiction of sinners. I walk through it striving against sin. Then I am in company with the chastening of the Father—all resulting in a blessed participation in His holiness, but Christ is not there with me. If you put all the wit of aggregated intellects together, could it give you these divine touches that glitter in the book of God?

In verse 12 we are exhorted not to let our hands hang down. There is no reason why it should be so. Though you are under the scourge there is not one single reason why your hands should hang down or your knees be feeble; for the Spirit has shewn you yourself first in company with Christ and then with your Father who loves you. Is there any reason why you should travel as if you did not know the road? This is a beautiful conclusion. We all know how the hands will hang down; but I set my seal to every word of this and say, "Truth, Lord." There is no reason that we should be faint-hearted. Then having come to that he looks round. Do not let your own hands hang down; and in connection with others follow peace—in connection with God follow holiness. "What communion hath light with darkness—what concord hath Christ with Belial?"

“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you.” If you consult at your leisure Deuteronomy xxix., you will find a root of bitterness there spoken of; but it is a different kind from this. There it arose from some man taking up false gods—here it is failing of the grace of God. The whole epistle has it as its bearing and purpose, to nail your ear, in scripture language, to the doorpost of Him that is speaking of grace. It is not a lawgiver that is heard, but One who is publishing salvation from the highest heavens. Angels and principalities and powers are made subject to the Purger of our sins; and the Purger of our sins has taken our conscience up to the highest heavens and every tongue that could lay a charge against us is silenced, as we read in Romans viii. (See also 1 Peter iii. 21, 22.)

Now take care lest you fail of the grace thus published. It may end in the profaneness of Esau. It has been said by another that this reference to Esau must have been very striking to the mind of a Jew. “If you fail of the grace of God, you will be left in the position of one whom your nation repudiates.” I do not care what you take up in His stead, if you slip away from Christ you may be to-morrow in the position of the reprobate Esau. How does Esau stand

before you? As the type of that generation who by-and-by will say, "Lord, Lord, open to us." But their tears will be as ineffectual as Esau's by the bedside of his dying father. He came too late. So when once God has risen up and shut to the door they will find no place of repentance. This verse 17 is very solemn. It tells me that that action of Esau is the presentation to our thoughts of that which is still to be realised in an Esau generation—and only in such—"Behold ye despisers, and wonder and perish." Esau despised his birthright, and this generation have refused the grace of God and despised the Christ that has passed through the world and died for sinners.

After this, in verse 18, we get a magnificent sight of the two dispensations. It is as if the apostle had said, "I have been shewing you a martyr path, but now I tell you that the moment you look to God every thing is for you. The martyr path and the chastening of the Father are only further proofs of love.

Now, leaving Christ and the Father, we come to God; and you see that all the eternal counsels of God have clustered to make you a blest one, as they have clustered to make Christ a glorious One. Do not be afraid. You are not come to the mount that might be touched and that burned with fire. Turn

your back on it. The more advisedly I have turned my back on it the more advisedly I have met and answered the grace and wisdom of God and rendered the obedience of faith. Am I to be turning round my head—to be looking over my shoulder—to be giving it some glances? Is that the obedience of faith? Then as to my face. Where is that turned to? To a cluster of blessedness. I was introduced by my own self-confidence to law and found not a thing for me. Now I have turned my face right round and I see everything for me. “Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, and to God the Judge of all.” The Lord, even in judgment, is for us, for it is one office of a judge to vindicate the oppressed. Then, “the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling.” Everything is for you. And that is where your face is undivertedly to direct itself. Let your face be right fully turned to the one hill, and your back be right fully turned to the other hill.

But here at this place, in chapter xii., you are at the very beginning of the epistle again. In chapter ii. we read, “How shall



we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord." Now we read, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." From the beginning to the end the Spirit is nailing your ear to the door of the house of the Master of grace.

Then it very solemnly closes: "Our God is a consuming fire," that is, the God of this dispensation. From the fires of Sinai there was a relief by turning and taking refuge in Christ; but there is no relief if God's relief is despised. If you turn away from the relief this dispensation brings in, there is no more relief. "Our God is a consuming fire."

What, I ask you, puts you in company with God like simplicity of faith? As we said before, the purpose of the eternal counsels and the joy of the Spirit is this, to put crowns on the head of Christ; and when I am simple in faith I am delighting to fill the field of my vision with these glories. Thus I am put in the most dignified company I could be in—God and the Holy Ghost. The Lord grant that you and I may be there! If we know these things, happy, thrice happy are we if we rest in them!

## Chapter XIII

We are closing the epistle, and we get what is common in all the epistles—some little details. It is eminently the structure of Paul's epistles to begin with doctrine and close with exhortation. So it is here. "Let brotherly love continue."

Then a brother may be a stranger. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers." And to encourage them to that duty they are reminded that some in their own history entertained angels unawares. Then another duty—"Remember them that are in bonds," and the encouragement follows—"as bound with them." Take your place in the body of Christ as His prisoners, not prisoners corporeally but mystically. When he speaks of suffering for Christ's sake he appeals to you in your mystic place; but when he speaks of suffering adversity (ver. 3) in a common, ordinary way, he appeals to natural life "as being yourselves also in the body."

Then we get the divine duties of purity and unworldliness. Unworldliness is expressed in the words, "Content with such things as ye have," not seeking to be richer to-morrow than to-day. Then the Lord

speaks in verse 5, and you answer Him in verse 6. It is the response of faith to grace—the reply of the heart of the believer to the heart of the Lord God. Then comes the duty of subjection—“Remember them which have\* the rule over you.” Not a blind following of them, as when they were heathens (1 Cor. xii. 2) following dumb idols. Are you to be led blindfold? No; you are to be led intelligently. “No one calls Jesus, Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.” We are living people of a living temple. So it is, “considering the end of their conversation.” They died in faith, as they preached faith.†

Now he leaves all that and starts in verse 8 from another point; and this verse 8 may be called the motto of the epistle. Only in one light I grant. What I mean is, that as we have seen before, the Spirit of God in this epistle is looking at one thing after another—taking a passing glance at angels, at Moses, at Joshua, at Aaron, at the old covenant, at the altars with their victims, and setting every one of them aside to let in Christ. And you would not have it otherwise. With your whole heart and your whole soul you set your seal to that. Let

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\* Rather “which have had.”

† As one said shortly before he died: “I have preached Jesus, I have lived Jesus, and I long to be with Jesus.”

all go to make room for Christ; and when Christ is brought in, do not let Him go for anything. This is what you get in verse 8. He is gazing for a moment at the object of the epistle. "I have displaced everything to let Him in, and now keep Him before you." It is a most blessed peroration of the whole teaching of the epistle.

Then there comes a corollary—a conclusion to that: "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines," doctrines foreign to Christ. You have got everything in Christ; take care to hold fast by Him. Then if I get Christ as my religion I get grace. "It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace." The Lord is set before you and me as the sum of our religion, and that religion is a religion that breathes grace to the poor sinner.

Now do not read verse 9 as if you could to some extent establish your heart with meats. Observe the punctuation; a semicolon after "grace" cuts it off from the close of the verse. Meats do nothing for you; as he tells you in another place—"touch not, taste not, handle not." They bring neither profit nor honour to you. Suppose you accumulate carnal religious observances. If Colossians ii. tells me there is no honour in them, this tells me there is no profit in them. When probed and searched out they are all

to the satisfaction of the flesh. The moment I get the Lord brought in, I get the heart established in grace. Did you ever hear it remarked that not a single religion on earth takes grace as its secret but the divine religion? It is keeping God quiet, if you can, with them all. God's religion is the only religion ever thought of that takes grace for its basis. This is exactly contemplated here. Do not be carried about by doctrines foreign to Christ.

“We have an altar.” What is the altar of this dispensation? It is an altar exclusively for burnt offerings—eucharistic services. The Jews had an altar for expiatory sacrifice. We have no such altar. Christ has been on the altar of expiation, and now we as priests minister at an altar of eucharistic services. We remember that the Son of God has bled, and we serve at an altar where we know sin as cancelled, blotted out, thrown behind the back; and there at your altar you are rendering a constant service of thanksgiving. But they that go back to the services of the tabernacle have no right, no competency, to stand as priests at the altar of this dispensation. Many a loved and loving soul is struggling with a legal mind, but that is a very different thing from displacing Christ for anything, as the Galatians were doing, putting a crutch

under Him. The Spirit in this epistle does not quarrel with the poor struggling soul, but if you are seeking to offer expiatory sacrifices and not holding your altar diligently for eucharistic services, you are blaspheming the sacrifice of the Son of God.

Now, having put you at your altar, and also within the holiest, he shews you your place outside the camp. Jesus was accepted in the holiest by God and He was put outside the camp by men. You are exactly to be with Christ in both these places. That is where this dispensation puts you; and if ever moral glory attached to a creature of God it is that which attaches to you at this moment. Called outside the camp with Him to bear His reproach! Are angels in such conditions? Did He ever say to them, "Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptations"? Angels are never invited to be the companions of His sorrow. He has never put such honour on angels as on you. Therefore by-and-by the church will be nearer the throne than angels. "Here have we no continuing city." Christ had none.

But further, we see in verse 16 another beautiful thing, another character of service for your altar: "To do good and to communicate forget not." In various scriptures we find that the more joy we have in God, the more large-hearted we shall be to one

another. It is the very character of joy to enlarge the heart. As in Nehemiah viii., where the prophet tells the people, "Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength. . . . And all the people went their way . . . to send portions, and to make great mirth." A man that is happy himself can afford to look round and make others happy with him.

After this the apostle comes to those who have present rule. Those in verse 7 are those who had died. Is this a blind subjection, I ask again? No; you are to take knowledge of them. "They watch for your souls." Office without power, without the unction of the Holy Ghost, is a thing this dispensation does not know; and if we know of it, we have got into the corrupt element of it and out of God's element. It is a part of your fidelity to God to keep the dispensation in purity; and mere official authority is an idol.

This vessel of the Holy Ghost, this mightiest servant that ever served in God's name, comes down to the feeblest saint, "Pray for us," and he asks it on the authority of a good conscience. Could you ask another to pray for you if you were

purposing to err? I will answer for it, you could not. And here it is on the ground of a good conscience that the apostle asks prayer. Then he gives them a subject of prayer. Oh! the familiarity of scripture! You are not taken out of your own world of affections and sympathies. Then he breaks out into his doxology.

Now, if we remember what we were saying to one another we shall find here something new and strange. We get the Lord in this verse 20 in resurrection not ascension. The great theme of the epistle is, as we have seen from the beginning hitherto, Christ displayed in heaven, but here the apostle does not go beyond resurrection. Why in closing does he bring down Christ from heaven? He has been keeping our eyes straining after Him into heaven, and just at the close He brings Him down to earth. Yes, for it is very sweet to know that we need not travel beyond death and resurrection to come in contact with the God of peace. You have reached the God of peace when you have reached the God of resurrection. Resurrection shews that death is abolished. Death is the wages of sin; and if death is abolished sin is abolished, because death hangs on sin as the shadow on the substance.

The covenant is called "everlasting," be-



cause it is never to be displaced. The old covenant was put away. The new covenant is ever new, never abrogated. The blood is as fresh this moment to speak peace to the conscience as when it rent the veil. So when we come to daily life we are brought down to be in all simplicity in company with the God of peace that has raised the great Shepherd from the dead by the blood that has sealed remission of sins for ever. So you may forget sin. In one great sense we shall remember it for ever, but as far as that which constitutes your condition before God you may forget it for ever.

Then he prays that God may adjust and mould us to do His will. What poor adjustment there is in you and me compared with that verse. We are awkward in our business, as if we were not at home in it. And then, at the last, he just closes by a few common words to the brethren. "Grace be with you all. Amen."

## CONCLUSION.

We may remember that I have observed several distinct lines of thought running through this epistle. In taking leave of it we may consider it and see how these various lines all meet in harmony and give us in result a conclusion infinitely divine. The lines of thought are these:

(1) The Spirit is displacing one thing after another to let in Christ.

(2) Having brought in Christ, the Spirit holds Him up in the varied glories in which He is now filling the heavens.

(3) The Spirit shews how Christ, being brought in, acts on everything to perfect it; that whatever a glorified Christ touches He perfects; and among other things He perfects our consciences.

(4) This being so, on the ground of my reconciliation as a sinner I am introduced to a temple of praise.

These four things may be looked at independently, yet it is very blessed to see that they acquire fresh glory when seen in connection one with another. Now I do say there is a magnificence in such a divine writing that needs nothing but itself to tell its

glory. I am in contact with something that is infinitely the mind of God, with some of the most wondrous discoveries that God can make of Himself to me.

But ere we quit our sweet and happy task we will look a little particularly at these four things. In chapters i. and ii. the Spirit displaces angels to let in Christ. In chapters iii. and iv. He displaces Moses and Joshua. In chapters v., vi. and vii. He displaces Aaron. In chapter viii. He displaces the whole covenant with which Christ has nothing to do. In chapter ix. He displaces the ordinances of the old sanctuary with its altars and services to let in the altar where Jesus as the Lamb of God lay. One thing after another He takes up and sets aside to make room for Jesus. This is a delightful task to the Spirit. God knows His own delights. If the Spirit can be grieved He can be delighted too.

Then having brought Christ in, what does He do with Him? He keeps Him in for ever. Christ has no successor. When the Spirit has got Him in He gazes at Him. And what is it to be spiritual? It is to have the mind of the Holy Ghost. Have you ever delighted to get out of the house to make room for Jesus? Indignantly the Spirit talks of the things we have been looking at as "beggarly elements." Have you ever

treated them so? The Spirit sees no successor to Christ. In the counsels of God there is none after Him. Is it so in the counsels and thoughts of our souls?

So, having kept Him in, He gazes at Him. And what does He see in Him? He sees glory upon glory. In chapter i. He sees Him seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high, as the Purger of our sins, and hears a voice saying, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." He looks in chapter ii. and sees Him as our Apostle talking to us of salvation. Then He finds Him as the Owner of an abiding house, as the Giver of eternal rest, and sees Him in the sanctuary above, seated there with an oath, and hears Him uttering the salutation, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." In these various ways the Spirit delights in Christ. Then in chapter ix. we see Him looked at in the heavens as the Bestower of the eternal inheritance, having first obtained eternal redemption.

In chapter x. we see Him seated there in another character, with this voice saluting Him, "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool." Have you ever in spirit followed Christ up to heaven and heard these voices addressing Him? We want to give personality to the truth. We are terribly apt to deal with it as mere

dogma. I dread having it before me as a thing I could intellectually learn. In this epistle it is the Person that is kept before you; it is a living One you have to do with. These are heavenly realities. Moses pitched a temple in the wilderness. Solomon pitched a temple in the land; God has pitched a temple in heaven. And oh! how it shews what an interest God has in the sinner, when for our Priest He has built a sanctuary, and that because He is our Priest and about to transact our interests. Then in chapter xii., when He had ascended, He was received and seated in heaven as the Author and Finisher of faith.

That is the second line, and we see how it hangs on the first. The Spirit, having fixed Christ before us, displays Him to us.

The third thing we get in this epistle is perfection. If I get Christ perfect as Saviour, I get myself perfect as saved. If I am not saved Christ is not a Saviour. I am not speaking now of a feeble mind struggling with legality, but of my title—and I have no more doubt that I have a right to look on myself as a saved sinner than that Christ has a right to look on Himself as a perfect Saviour. Salvation is a relative thing. If I take myself as a sinner to Christ and doubt that I am saved I must have some doubt of the perfection of His Saviour-

character. But we have already looked at the epistle as a treatise on perfection. It became God to give me none less than a perfect Saviour. Wondrous! He has linked His glory with the perfection of my conscience before Him. He has condescended to let me know that it became Him. Does it become you to come and serve me in some capacity? You might do it through kindness, but I should not think of saying so. Yet that is the language God uses.

So then, in the third place, we find the epistle a treatise on perfection. Not, however, the perfection of millennial days. Christ will be the Repairer of every breach. But the greatest breach of all was in the conscience of the sinner. There is mischief and confusion abroad in creation still. There is mischief abroad in the house of Israel. Christ has not yet set His hand to repair that. There is a breach in the throne of David—Christ has not yet applied Himself to heal that. But the mightiest breach of all was between you and God. By-and-by He will turn the groans of creation into the praises of creation; but He began His character as a Repairer by applying Himself to repair the breach that separated you from God; and now we have boldness to enter into the holiest.

And then, in the fourth place, we find in

this epistle the Spirit doing nothing less now than building a temple for praise. Is He about to tack up the veil again, which the blood of the Lamb of God has torn in two? Is He going to revive the things that He has indignantly talked of as “beggarly elements”? Unspeakably glorious is this fourth and last thing. The Spirit of God has built a temple for you to praise Him—the fruit of your lips giving thanks to His name.

What have we not in this epistle? Though we may look on each line of thought independently, yet they do lend to each other exquisite and increased glory. The Spirit is, as it were, making a whip of small cords, and telling all to be gone to make room for Jesus. Of course I know they were willing to go. John the Baptist uttered the voices of them all when he said, “He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.” Moses, Aaron, angels—all were delighted to be put out of the house for Christ.

These things are combinedly serving your soul by introducing you to deeper apprehensions of the Christ of God. What a servant to our souls the Holy Ghost is in this dispensation—as the Lord Jesus was a

Servant from the manger to Calvary.

I believe we each need individually to be fortified with truth. We do not know how far Romanising and infidel errors may be getting ahead. If we have not the truth, we may be the sport of Satan to-morrow. I will give you an instance of it. The Galatians were an earnest, excited people (and I do not quarrel with revival excitement); they would have plucked out their eyes for the apostle, but the day came when he had to begin afresh with them from the very beginning. "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you." There was excitement without a foundation of truth; and when mischief came in the poor Galatians were next door to shipwreck—and this epistle is a witness to the same thing. The Hebrew saints were unskilful in the word. But we must be fortified by truth. A state of quickening wants the strengthening of the truth of God.

And now what shall we say? O the depth of the riches! O the height of the glory—the profoundness of the grace—the wonder of the wonders—God unfolding Himself in such a way that we may well cover our faces, while we trust Him in silence and love Him with the deepest emotions of our souls! But some of us can surely say, "My leanness, my leanness!"