

**“Thousands of them
that love me.”**

EXODUS XX. 6

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"THOUSANDS OF THEM THAT LOVE ME."

PLEASE READ AND STUDY

EXODUS XX. 6, 14 AND XXI. 1-6 ;
DEUTERONOMY XXII. 24, " THEN
YE SHALL BRING THEM BOTH ;"
JOHN VIII. 2-12, 41, 42 ; JOHN
XIV. 21.

THE line of things which I desire to bring before you is based on that expression in Exodus xx. 6, "Thousands of them that love me." Very early the scriptures shew what God's aim was, what He was seeking for. In spite of the fall, in spite of man's departure from Him, God set out to secure for Himself thousands of them that should love Him. Of all places in scripture, the law of Sinai is that in which we should be least prepared to find such an expression, for the law makes demands upon us which we are quite incapable of carrying out. Yet enshrined in the first table of the Decalogue is the fact that God could shew mercy unto thousands of them that love Him.

I would like to trace how God secures those

that love Him, and does it in spite of what they are, so that all the glory should accrue to God.

The law has been given, and the ten commandments still hold good. The coming here of the Lord Jesus Christ and His dying has made no alteration publicly in the course of the world; the world has not altered its course because it murdered Christ, nor has God made any outward alteration. The law and the ten commandments still hold good for man as man. Timothy i. proves that, "For the law was made not for the righteous, but for the lawless." (1 Tim. i. 9.) So it still obtains. What underlies the first commandment is that room is left for the revelation of the Godhead. God, in forbidding an image to be made of things on the earth or under the earth, was preparing beforehand for the truth of the One who was to come. He was making room in man's heart for the incarnation of Christ; therefore He would tolerate no image of anything created with a view to worship. God forbade that absolutely, in order to claim men's hearts for Him in whom God was to be fully revealed, who was to be *the Image* of God.

It is clear to see that the law was not only prohibitive, "Thou shalt not," but it was also protective. The second table gives laws which should protect our relationships; in honouring

our father and mother ; in securing the relationship of husband and wife ; then to protect our lives, “Thou shalt not kill.” God made laws to protect our good name, “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour,” and He made them to protect our property, “Thou shalt not covet . . . any thing that is thy neighbour’s.” So the essence of the law is not merely prohibitive, but to protect us. How touching it is to see that this was God’s thought in the giving of the law.

But we are faced with the fact of weakness in ourselves, and that we cannot carry it out. No mere man has ever carried out the law ; such a man could not be produced. A Paul might think he had, but he shews that he had not by his own confession in Romans vii. : “I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” (Rom. vii. 7.) It has often been said that the sting is in the tail, and it is so with the tenth commandment ; it dealt with man’s motives and heart. Though a man might walk blameless, still he was convicted in that way when the law came, which said, “Thou shalt not covet.” And so Paul says “when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died” ; he died morally. (Rom. vii. 9.)

Now the next chapter (Exo. xxi.) brings to light the Hebrew servant. He serves his master for six years, which is the period of

man's responsibility, six being man's number. Typically, this was Christ—the only Man who ever fulfilled His responsibility. I do not imagine that any of us here would think that he has fulfilled his responsibility, that he has carried out the requirements of God in a flawless way. If we could do that, it would involve that we were perfect. Now this Hebrew servant carried out the law of God. He came in "by himself," "with his body." (See margin.) That evidently points to the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, the One that came here. Though subsisting in the form of God, He came here in bondman's form, which involved the relationships and obligations and everything that was proper in man Godward. It was His taking up not only flesh, but all that would belong to flesh, and He served for six years. He fully carried out human responsibility.

Then the secret comes to light *why* he served for six years—he served *for love*; he did not serve for wages, but for love. "I love my master." The whole position is given in the New Testament. We have the blessed fact brought to light, that where we were totally unable to carry out the requirements of God, one Man has done it. He has served for six years, and the motive which carried Him through was love for His Master—love for God. That is a perfect Man, One who never broke

down ; it comes to light that He served because He loved His Master, and in order that He might retain His children, because otherwise He would have had to leave them. That He might retain them, His ear was bored through with an aul, a mark of perpetual servitude, a mark of Christ's death.

Do not confuse the two thoughts. One is, “A body hast thou prepared me,” for thus the Spirit of God quotes Psalm xl. in Hebrews x. 5. He does not say there “Mine ears hast thou digged” but, “a body hast thou prepared me.” The Hebrew servant comes in with His body, He took a place of obedience. Obedience does not belong to the Godhead. It is for God to command and His creature to obey, but the Lord came into human condition in which it was proper for Him to obey, even unto death, and His ear was bored through. He is content to abide a Servant for ever, and to make good the years of His service, to make it available for His children. So He says, “I love my master, my wife, and my children ; I will not go out free.” He brought to light the children in resurrection and could say, “Behold I and the children which God hath given me.” (Heb. ii. 13.)

I have referred to the scribe in Mark xii. 'to whom the Lord states the law. “The Lord our God is one Lord : and thou shalt love . . .

thy strength . . . thy neighbour as thyself." When the scribe hears that, he says, "Well, Master, thou hast said the truth: for he is one"—that is, God is one. He had apprehended the blessed Godhead, he had come into the light of the revelation of it. So he replies—to love Him with all the heart and his neighbour as himself is more than the whole Jewish order of things; to love God is more than all Judaism could have unfolded. Now this scribe found something more magnificent altogether than that of which he was the lawful exponent: he found the Hebrew Servant; he had come in his soul to the knowledge of the fact that the Hebrew Servant stood before him—One who loved God perfectly, and His neighbour as Himself; he had found the Hebrew Servant, and the whole ceremonial law was superseded in his sight henceforth. Then the Lord says to him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

But the Lord did not leave the scribe there. We might say, "What commendation for the scribe!" The disciples might think that one of the scribes would add a little touch of grandeur to them, that people would say: "There is a good deal of dignity and respectability about these people after all; they have a scribe amongst them." So the Lord says, "*Beware of the scribes, which love to go in*

long clothing.” A scribe had just answered discreetly, yet the Lord says, “Beware of the scribes.” It meant in effect, “You, scribes, will have to get rid of yourselves; if you have found Me, you will have to cut your links with yourselves,” the long robes and all that goes with them. It is a searching word for ourselves.

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Let us pursue our theme—how thousands of them that love Him are brought to light. I cannot unfold it as I would, but I want to encourage you on the line of Christianity. We may think if we could only keep the ten commandments we should get on well. But God gave Israel two thousand years to see if they could keep them, and they could not. No one but the Hebrew Servant ever did. As a boy, when death invaded our home, and I realised that I too might some day have to face God, I thought—“If I could only keep the ten commandments!” Self-confidence is born in every one of us. We think we could do a great deal better if we tried; if we had a chance over again we should manage better. If we think we are capable of fulfilling our responsibility, even as Christians, we have somehow missed the truth. Everything is breakdown on that line. You may say, “I am a converted person.” Well, thank God for that; but if you are, that

does not shew you can carry out your responsibility. Now I want to occupy you with Him who *did*.

We have read a difficult chapter in John viii. The difficult portions of scripture often yield the most fruit. Those who have followed out the framework of scripture are perfectly well aware that these few verses of John viii. were left out by many transcribers, who were afraid the moral teaching would lead to looseness and license. But I think it bears its own evident marks of being the truth, and we need not be afraid of the truth.

It brings us face to face with this: we have read in Exodus xx., "Thou shalt not commit adultery"; in Deuteronomy, that those who committed that sin should be stoned. Here the Lord Jesus Christ is faced with one who had committed that very sin openly. There can be no equivocation about it. What will He do? It was a most astounding position. Would He enforce the law? If not, how could He be right? Here was the Hebrew Servant actually present, and the violation of one of the commandments of the law. It might have been murder, or covetousness, but it was adultery, a broken relationship. This chapter shews our present position in regard to our responsibility with God, and our proper relation to the commandments.

Now in John viii. we find the scribes and the Pharisees. It is a very solemn position. The scribes come again into view: they were the expounders of the law of God. They treasured the word of God with very great care, and could, I doubt not, have given the chapter and verse for any portion of the Old Testament, and the meaning too in a human sense. But their hearts were steeled against the incarnation of Christ: they refused to admit it even if they recognised it. The Pharisees, on the other hand, were the religionists of the day. We have to bear in mind that this character of things comes out in our own hearts. We may be able to give chapter and verse, and yet be without the spiritual power of the truth. Where are we in our souls? That is the point. Are we of the thousands of them that love Him? If we are, we shall be prepared for the exposure that this chapter shews; we shall be prepared to stand in the light.

Further on we shall find a reference to those that love Him. My point is how they are brought to light. This poor woman was brought to Him, and they set her in the midst. In Deuteronomy it states that they *both* should be brought out and stoned; but in this case the weaker one was brought forward, and the stronger one let go. They set her in the midst,

and say unto Him, Master, Moses commanded "that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?" They had it all in the letter—"that such should be stoned." Think of telling the Lord what Moses wrote! Why, the Lord wrote it; He is the Author of the whole of the scriptures through the Holy Spirit. "This they said, tempting him, that they might have to accuse him." Here is the broken law in fullest evidence; yet the Hebrew Servant had fulfilled man's responsibility to the full. Was He there to enforce its penalties? What was He to do? If He did not enforce it, was He countenancing sin? and if He did enforce it, where was the grace? What He did was, He stooped down, and with His finger wrote on the ground.

I said earlier that the coming of the Lord Jesus and His death have changed nothing outwardly. That is important to lay hold of. But I will tell you what He *has* done; He has left two indelible marks upon this earth. He has written on it, and He has written twice. He has stooped down, and has written on it twice. The first writing was the incarnation, and the second writing was His death. Both these facts have left absolutely indelible marks here. Nothing will ever erase them. And He wrote them with His finger, which shews that His manhood was involved in that way; He did it

deliberately in regard to man. The necessity of His death for sin was proved, and He set His own signature to it. He wrote with His finger on the ground.

No leaders of religion have left such marks. If you only take the outward marks of His incarnation, what is our calendar for? The years date from the time of Christ's birth—Anno Domini—and all have to submit to it except the Mahometan world. He was enrolled in the Roman annals when He was born, and He was subject unto the Roman Empire. It is remarkable that a special census was made, but was not completed until another ten or twelve years. So, too, with His death. His death is registered under the Roman Empire. What was written in the annals of the Roman Empire was: “This is Jesus the King of the Jews.” Universal rule is involved in the thought “King of the Jews.” The Jews would have liked to cut it out; but Pilate would not erase it, he said, “What I have written I have written.” This is an indelible mark outwardly, and He *is* yet going to be King of the Jews.

These are outward marks, but when you come to the inward marks He has written they are equally indelible. The fact that the Son of God has become man has left an indelible mark. In becoming man He has

become man for ever; it was no temporary matter, coming in "with His body"; acceptance of human condition was no temporary matter. If He died it did not imply leaving manhood. He took His body again; He took it in a glorified condition, but He is a man for ever. That has left a most tremendous mark upon this earth.

So is His death an indelible mark. When Christ died nature trembled, the sun was darkened, the rocks rent, there was a mark forced upon inanimate nature. In the region of death the graves were opened and the dead rose. What a mark was there! Then, again, what a mark it has left for us, dear friends. What a mark for those that love Him, privileged as they are to shew the Lord's death till He come. His death is His supreme title to Lordship here. All this is written on the earth and is going to be accounted for to God.

Now notice the results for these men. The stooping down was His testimony to the necessity of the cross for the ending of that order of man. Here was their opportunity; had they accepted it they could have stepped into grace and blessing; had they seen what His stooping down involved, had they recognised Him as the Hebrew Servant—but these men did not recognise Him. He stooped down and wrote upon the ground—fulfilling human

responsibility to the full and making His death and His name available for them. It would have altered for them the whole position from law to grace. But they would not accept the position, for they were not prepared to accept the exposure which was involved in it. He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

Now they sealed their fate. “So when they continued asking him”—they rushed on to their fate. That is what man does if he does not accept God’s grace. Now what does the Lord do? “He lifted up himself”—now they got Exodus xix., Sinai. The whole of Sinai rose up before their view. They might have expected Exodus xxi., but this was more than they bargained for. The Lord had said, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.” That was Sinai. He could assume that position for the moment, He would convict them of sin. The accusers would not admit the exposure of themselves and went out, and the law must give conviction. That poor woman was exposed too, but she remained, and she must be sheltered. He was throwing the protective arms of divine power around that woman; He was throwing round her the arms of prohibition and protection. She was being protected, and that she might be protected Sinai should come into view for the moment, and He let the light of Sinai

shine into those wretched men's conscience for the moment. The light of Sinai is more than any one can bear; it will convict anybody who takes the ground of fulfilling his responsibility.

Now, having done that, again He stooped down and wrote upon the ground. Do you think He brought Sinai on them to condemn them? No, He did not; it was to protect the woman. That is what He had done; and when He stooped down and wrote on the ground a second time it was the blessed figure of His death. He was the only One who could cast the stone, for He *was* without sin. "He that is without sin among you." Who is without sin here? Well, if you say you are without sin, you deceive yourself. That is 1 John i. 8. "He that is without sin among you"—*He* was the only One who could have cast the stone, but He did not; He stooped down and wrote again upon the ground.

That was their second opportunity. When He wrote on the ground the second time, it meant not only His incarnation, but His death, and all that was involved in His death. He made a clean place for those guilty men to step on to if they would. The admission of sin made them eligible to step on to the ground of His death, but they would not; they had too much self-esteem. Have you too much self-esteem to step on to the ground He has made

available for you? They had reputations to maintain. Only one Man had a right to a reputation, and do you know what He did with it? Look at Philippians ii. and see. You know if we have a good reputation we cling to it tenaciously. The Hebrew Servant made Himself of no reputation. (Phil. ii.) These men had too much self-esteem. There was a clean place on to which they could have stepped with the woman, but they preferred to be outside His presence for ever. They *went* out. “And they which heard it went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last.”

It was a terrible choice to have adopted. They had a choice between stepping on to the clean place He had made for them, or of going out from the presence of the Blessor for ever. Sinai shewed them incapable of lifting the stone, and this was their last opportunity of blessing. They went out, and Jesus was left alone with the woman. The Hebrew Servant had protected the woman. There was no question but that she was guilty, but she had accepted the exposure under the cover of His presence, and gained the good of those two writings on the earth. She did not go out, though when her accusers had gone out there was nothing to detain her. She might have gone out too, but she did not. She was well

off; she was in the presence of the Hebrew Servant. Exposure had only proved that she was incapable of fulfilling her responsibility, but she was in the presence of Him who had absolutely fulfilled it to the letter.

He said to her, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" And she said, "No man, Lord." Not a man on earth, when brought to his bearings in the presence of the Lord, was capable of condemning that woman. And the Lord said, "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." Why did He say that? Because He had written on the ground the second time; His death should remove that very sin, with the sinner, from the presence of God. The woman (the sinner) was removed; she stepped into the light, and she vanished in the light. We may vanish in the light, too, if we will accept exposure. In the next verse the Lord says, "I am the light of the world." You will not walk in darkness if you step into the light, "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light. . . . the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." There is a clean place in which you can walk and on which you can stand.

Then in the middle of the chapter the Lord speaks to the people who were claiming that God was their Father, "One is our Father,

even God,” claiming that to which they had no right. They got their answer in verse 42. The Lord says, “If God were your Father, ye would love me.” That is how the thousands of them that love Him are brought about. They accept the exposure; I do not mean merely as sinners, but they accept exposure as saints. Only One has fulfilled His responsibility; and this is the test He puts as to lifting up the stone. They cannot take it up; but they can accept the double blessing of the two writings on the ground. Then they have a new origin: God is their Father. They get a new origin then, they spring in that way from a new source, and the effect is they love Christ; they recognise in Christ Him who is pure and holy, Him “who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.” He glorified God in every act, He could say, “I do always those things that please him.” (John viii. 29.) We come to appreciate Him, because we are born of God. “If God were your Father, ye would love me.”

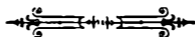
Then in chapter xiv. 21 we find the royal answer to Exodus xx. 6, “thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.” He says, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” If you want to shew your practical love for Christ, it is by having His commandments, and

keeping them. They are connected with His blessed Person. It is as much as if He should say, "This is the way; walk ye in it." His commandments are not merely prohibitive, they are for protection and guidance.

You may be going along a country road, and there may be plenty of notices to shew that "Trespassers will be prosecuted" at the sides; but you are not concerned with those: you are looking straight ahead. It is not the commandments at the side of the road: it is those straight ahead. His commandments are not grievous; we are not under Sinai; we have passed out of that order of things, because Christ has gone out: He passed through it, and He says, "This is the way; walk ye in it." If you walk in His way you prove that you love Him. "He that keepeth my words, he it is that loveth me." It is not legal enactments, it is love of a *Person*. It is not that He says to you, "I should never expect you to break down"; but He says, "Follow *me*." Then people might start to do it and fail. But the Lord says, I will look after you. If you cherish My commandments, it proves that you love Me, "he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father . . . and I will come to him, and will manifest myself to him": that is, I will make Myself known to him in a peculiar way.

Dear friends, do you not think that shews

how the thousands of them that love Him are brought to light? How God secures them, not by legal enactments, but by presenting Christ as the Hebrew Servant, the One who carries out every responsibility in love, as proved in the two indelible marks of His incarnation and His death.



“IF ANY MAN LOVE GOD.”

PLEASE READ AND STUDY

EXODUS XX. 6, “THOUSANDS
MY COMMANDMENTS”; LUKE VII.
42, “TELL ME LOVE HIM
MOST?”; LUKE VII. 47, “FOR SHE
LOVED MUCH”; 1 CORINTHIANS
VIII. 1-6; XIII. 1-13; XIV. 1,
“FOLLOW AFTER CHARITY.”

A BRIEF recapitulation may help. We started with the verse in Exodus xx., “Thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.” That was written on the first table of the Decalogue; we thought it an extraordinary expression, and that it was a wonderful place to find it in, where indeed we might least have looked to find such a thought. Just think of God’s expressing Himself in this wise; His eye could stretch forward and see ahead, and in spite of man’s failure and incompetence He could speak of “thousands of them that love me.” God can speak of things in a way that we cannot. God could speak of the things that be not as though they were. We must remember the incapacity on our part: it will save us from trouble if we bear that in mind. Thus God could speak of the thousands of them that love Him.

My object has been to shew how those thousands have been brought to light, for it is not natural to anybody to love God. We never love God on any natural lines whatever; you have got to be produced, in a sense, you have to be given a new nature, which is capable of loving God, a being formed by God. If it were innate in the creature to love God the death of Christ would not have been necessary. It is natural to man to hate God. Love is of God and is out of heaven.

When God gave the Decalogue to man He brought in the Hebrew servant, and I shewed how the Hebrew servant coming in “with his body” typified the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ: how He thoroughly carried out human responsibility. He served for six years, and when He had completed the six years He declined to go out free, but remained in order to secure His children. Then the secret comes to light as to *why* He served—He served for love; not for money, but for love.

Then comes the symbol of His death, the boring of His ear through with an aul, and He becomes a Servant for ever. That is the pledge to us that the Lord Jesus Christ is a Man for ever, a Man in resurrection, having passed through death. His incarnation is not in any way on the line of the “theophanies” of the Old Testament, that is, the condition of

man assumed just for the moment and laid aside again; the incarnation is an enduring and abiding fact. It is a blessed thought that the Hebrew Servant—the Lord Jesus Christ, has fulfilled man's responsibility, has fulfilled it absolutely and carried it out in love, in love to His Father; and we can come in as children. It is a very simple illustration, and a very blessed one; it puts us on a right line.

Then, again, I have sought to shew as to the character of our responsibility that the demands of the law have been in no way abrogated, but we see our responsibility fully carried out in the Lord Jesus Christ, so that we are in Him, entirely connected with another order of man. We are under the divine eye in Christ, connected with another order of man.

It must be indisputable to us, I think, that God's thought in bringing us into blessing was love. It raises the whole question *why* God made man at all. We might think that God would have been content with the intelligent creation He was already surrounded with; He was surrounded with holy angels, beings of extreme intelligence, spirits of flaming fire, hearkening to His word in perfect obedience, lowliness and humility. Why was not God satisfied with angels? I suppose for the same reason that were we in the position to have a

retinue of servants they would not satisfy our hearts; the obedience of a train of servants would never fill a man's heart. Much less could angelic obedience fill the heart of God, because God's nature is love, and so He could not be gratified by mere obedience, blessed and right as it is in its place from the creature to the Creator. The divine secret is brought to light; it comes out on the very lips of the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke vii.), where in that simple incident of the woman in the Pharisee's house, the Lord Jesus, in propounding to the Pharisee about the creditor and the two debtors, asks the very pertinent question, “Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?” Now you see that brings to light what the Lord was seeking. You may say He sought obedience. Very good; you could not love if you did not obey; but the point was, “Which of them will *love* him most?” Then He thoroughly exonerates the woman and vindicates her, “for she loved much.” What should we have put in there? We should never have put that in, “she loved much.” But that was the point on which He could put His finger. She had carried out, according to her capacity, the courtesies which His host had discourteously omitted, the proper courtesies to an honoured guest; and the Lord marked it. He does not like negligence; the

Lord marked Simon's lack of courtesy and that the woman supplied it in double measure.

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We may turn now to the other two scriptures. They are very deep ones, yet they will help us further in the line we want to pursue, how the thousands of those that love Him are brought to light and how they are formed. In Luke vii. we find that this woman "loved much." Now take 1 Corinthians viii. It is a mysterious chapter. I do not intend to go into the purpose for which it was written, our relation to idols, but there is a parenthesis, an explanatory parenthesis, which is of deep value to us.

Let us dwell on it. "Now as touching . . . idols, we know." It breaks off there and says "we all have knowledge." There is what pertains to proper christian knowledge. Christians are not fools, dear friends, they should have divinely-given intelligence beyond any man of this world. If any one in this world is competent to say "we know," and consciously as the fruit of knowing God, it is a Christian. Now this comes in in parenthesis, and it will be a help to us if we take it up rightly. Paul says: "We all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." Knowledge is not what you have by divine gift, it is the things put before you in Christianity for your learning, and the ques-

tion is what you do with them. We might say that those who have followed the christian pathway for a great number of years, faithful men, have stepped into a vast amount of knowledge, divine knowledge, scriptural knowledge, perhaps more than a great number of Christians generally. The question is, what effect has it had upon them? Properly speaking, the effect should be to subdue them. It says here, “knowledge puffs up”: that is the natural effect of knowledge if one is not in self-judgment; knowledge comes to you and puffs you up. It was, alas! the case with the Corinthians; they were very proud of their knowledge; instead of subduing them, it had puffed them up. It should have subdued them to think how little they knew. A wise man would say, “It appals me to think how little I know.” If you were walking up a hillside, you would notice that every step gave you a view you little dreamt of; every step would reveal to you what a limited prospect you had before. That is so with divine knowledge; it should not elate us, it should subdue us at the sense of our own ignorance. We do know very little, and we shall never know fully while we are down here. The knowledge of the scriptures has its place, but the abiding power of Christianity is God's own nature, which is love. Therefore love builds up, while knowledge

puffs up. Love edifies or builds up—it is the same word.

Now if we are to be here in the power of Christianity, we must be built up. God does build up. If we are to come into the power of Christianity, what we are naturally must be entirely displaced by the death of Christ; there must be built up in us, in our souls, an entirely new character of being capable of entering into divine love, and the enjoyment of its expression. So love builds up; it is the essential character of Christianity.

Then, "If any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." That is, if any man thinks that he consciously knows things he requires to learn that he does not know divine things as he ought to. But, "if any man love God." Here we come to the great possibility of the Decalogue—if any one love God. It is not only a divine possibility but a divine reality; if any one love God—it is not a natural product, mark you, "the same is known of him." Now *the same* refers to the one who loves God, and *Him* refers to God, there is no doubt about that. I believe with Mr. Darby, from the setting of the verse, that that is the only correct interpretation of the verse. "The same is known of him." Here is divine knowledge; it is a question of

God knowing man, and loving God is the response of man to God. Love to God is the God-given response to it; to love God brings one into the view of God. God is perfectly holy, and sin and lust and the things which mark man naturally cannot get into the view of God. It is impossible; were it possible, God must judge them straight away.

When the Lord Jesus Christ was made sin for us, darkness came in—the blessed God hid His face. But what does come into the view of God? It is love, that which is forming in the hearts of those that love Him; it is what brings you into the view of God. In Luke vii. what brought that woman into the view of Christ? Morally she was a woman of the streets, publicly known as a sinner; but there was a new spring in her soul which brought her absolutely into the view of Christ. He could put His finger on it, and say, “she loved much.” It was not human love, but it was divine love which found its expression in ministering to the Person of Christ. “If any man love God, the same is known of him.” You come into the view of God in connection with love, with the divine nature. It is not scripture knowledge, it is not prowess, it is not heroics, it is not those things which bring you into the view of God, *but*—it is *love*. It is well to remember it.

Verse 6 gives us the revelation of the blessed Godhead; it is God not according to His nature, but positionally, if I may say so, and therefore presented to us in the Father. "As concerning therefore . . . there is none other God but one." It was to clear the ground, the atmosphere in which the Gentiles had existed. "For though there be many that are called gods"; they had been under the power of paganism, the presentation of many gods. But "to us"—there is a clean sweep made of paganism—"there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for him." What rest of soul for us! one God presented to us in the Father. It is no question here of the nature of God, or of the Persons of the Godhead, but it is the public position in which they come out.

"And we for him," that is response to Him. "And one Lord"—we are under no other control in Christianity, but under one Lordship—"one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things." Everything sprang into existence by that blessed Man; He commanded, it was done; light shone out of the darkness through Him; by Him all things are created; "By whom are all things, and we by him"—*by Him*. He is the administrative Source of all control and blessing, so that we are held in control. Love builds up; nothing else builds up. "If any man love

God,” (ver. 3) that man, “the same,” comes into the view of God.

* * * * *

Now turn to chapter xiii. I feel incapable of saying much as to it, knowing, as I do, so little about it. Yet it is of the deepest importance; it gives the character of divine love, which is the very nature of God. “Charity” is the old form of the word; it is love in its adaptability to its surroundings. Charity is a lovely word—love in its adaptability to its surroundings. However, we will substitute for it love.

Love came from heaven; it is foreign to everything pertaining to fallen man, and it does not come to light in unfallen man. It is a plant of heavenly growth. Even as to the word itself, it is worth telling you that according to an indisputable authority* the word is not found in the classics, in men’s writings of olden time; but it was born within the bosom of revealed religion. I do not say of Christianity, for the word occurs in the Old Testament, “Abraham loved Isaac,” and so on; but it is a sacred word born within the bosom of revealed religion.

Now love in its very character is not of earth, and this chapter gives its character in

* Trench (N.T., Synonyms).

certain surroundings. It was brought out of heaven; it came through the Lord Jesus Christ. He brought it here, and it was in its very essence foreign to all man's conceptions. It runs athwart all our conceptions. There is nothing of weakness or sentimentality about it; it is powerful, holy; it can express itself in perfect manhood. There is nothing of effeminacy in it; but all that is proper to true manhood. I ask you to look at it in that way, because it withers if you link it up with human sentiment. That is not the character of divine love; love is robust according to the divine thought of manhood.

Now this chapter brings to light love in activity in the christian assembly. We all know what that is to some extent, I suppose. This chapter is in a remarkable setting between chapter xii., which gives us Christ's body here, and chapter xiv., which gives the activity and intelligence seen in that body. Now this chapter xiii. is the heart, so to speak, of the church. It traces how this heavenly product—love—and it is more than that because it is God's own nature—behaves itself in wholly uncongenial surroundings. If you speak of heaven, there is nothing uncongenial there; the gates of heaven could not admit anything uncongenial. But there comes out of heaven one blessed Man, and with Him love; love, an

entirely new thing, comes out of heaven. How would it behave? What would be its character in connection with what is entirely opposed to it? What is its effect? We are in uncongenial surroundings where everything is opposed to us, but love has come to light in the blessed Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. First, we see it expressed in His holy Person here in manhood; we see the manner of His blessed behaviour, in which everything was in accord with divine love in its very nature. Secondly, how far we are built up in it. Love builds up, and it is only in the measure in which we are subjects of divine workmanship that we ourselves shall be built up to express divine love in its own sphere, as set forth in this chapter. Read the chapter down and think of the way Christ behaved Himself when everything was opposed to Him. That is how love acts; it is a heavenly product found amidst the adverse influences of this earth. See what love did in the pathway of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is helpful to read the chapter in the light of what came out in Him. Love was in Him absolutely and perfectly expressed, even when we might have thought He would have acted otherwise. We were looking at the scribe in Mark xii., to whom the Lord could say, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." Then immediately He adds, "Beware

of the scribes." Would divine love act like that? we might say. Yes; He says, "Beware of the scribes"; a sharp rebuff. Yes, but a rebuff of divine love. Divine love is not weak or feeble, it acts with its own character of strength according to truth.

Without love you are nothing; it is our spiritual measure here. The spiritual measure of the Christian is only so far as he is formed in love. "The divine nature" of which we become partakers is love expressing and reproducing itself, characteristically of course, not essentially, for no creature can partake in deity. But love alone brings us into the eye of God, into the view of God.

Turn for a moment to the chapter; it was rather the end of it I had in view. But first of all what a catalogue we get here. Ability to speak, that is no good; the gift of prophecy, innate conscious knowledge of all prophecy; all mysteries; all objective knowledge that can be gathered up in scripture. You may have read much and be primed up in it and able to dole it out. But it is no good without love. Then some people have a vast amount of faith. But it does not matter what else you have, if you have not love you will be nothing. You may have that which will earn you titles in this world, or you may even go to the length of being a martyr. You may be a martyr for

your own opinion; many people have become martyrs through self-will or ignorance. What is the end of it? Without charity, nothing.

Now we get the blessed character of love; there are eight or nine qualities enumerated here. “Love suffereth long, and is kind”; does not that come home to most of us? “It vaunteth not itself”—think of that. Is there a man who does not advertise himself? How we love to speak of ourselves. But when they came to John the Baptist they said, “Art thou that prophet?” And he said, “No.” “Charity vaunteth not itself.” “Is not puffed up”; no, knowledge may do that, but love edifies. Then it “doth not behave itself unseemly.” We may be of humble birth as regards this world, but if love is active it will not behave itself unseemly. The Lord marked the lack of human courtesy: “Thou gavest me no water for my feet.” Then love “seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked.”

Now all those are negative qualities, lovely and passive in character, yet not passive resistance but yieldingness. Love, passive in character, expresses itself in the divine nature, in Christ Himself. So love “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth.” I am afraid that even amongst the saints there is often a consenting to evil. We hear the remark, “I thought he would go wrong; he is

just the sort of man." But love "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." Love "beareth all things," and it is guileless; it "believeth all things, hopeth all things," and it "endureth all things." What a catalogue! These are the positive activities of divine love, verified in the pathway of the Lord and to be looked for in His saints. Love never faileth. It is a source which will never run dry; you can never overdraw your account there—it never faileth. You may go on drawing and drawing from this bank. But you may say, "I need so much." Never mind, the resources are there. No matter how trying the case you can go on with them. I could not if the resources were in myself, but I have a source to draw upon which will never fail. Love *never* faileth. How long is never? Well, it will stand good at all events while we are down here.

But there are things that *will* fail. You may be a prophet, and bring the knowledge of God, but if you get away from God your power fails. "Whether prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away." Mere christian knowledge shall vanish away; how much more the knowledge that pertains to this life? A man may spend half his short life in gaining knowledge of a profound subject, but

when he dies he still has but learnt part of it. If he goes to heaven he will not take that with him. All that will be left of him will be that part of the man that has been formed by divine love and nothing else. The fruit of the exercises, the castings on God incidental to acquiring that knowledge, and brought to light by it, will abide. Love alone will abide.

“We know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child” (Ver. 11.) It is a great thing to see a proper child, one who understands as a child and thinks as a child. But the time comes when we leave childhood behind. Paul says, “When I became a man, I put away childish things.” He is bringing in a human illustration for this purpose. In the present we are children, and we cannot get beyond it; we have not yet reached man’s stature. That is future; we shall never be men down here. I know there are other passages where we are spoken of as becoming men, but this chapter is to shew that we are here in a condition where *full* knowledge is not possible. This is to keep us in our proper position, to keep us from being puffed up. The apostle is really using an illustration in which he looks forward to a time “when that which is perfect is come.” “We know in part”—that

is as far as we can get, that is the child stage. A child takes up various branches of knowledge and struggles over his Latin exercises, his grammar, his arithmetic, but he sees how the whole thing fits in when he becomes a man. Very well; now we only know in part, and we cannot get away from that. That is why there are four gospels. If we did not see in part, we should only need one gospel; but the putting together of things is not yet.

The truth as a whole is not yet before our view, but "when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." We learn in part; that should humble us and prevent our thinking that we know everything. Does any one think he knows anything? This scripture should greatly subdue us, for it teaches us that the little knowledge we have only shews how much there is yet to know. In the learned professions of this world, any true man is only convinced of the depth of his ignorance the further he goes. How much more in divine things! So, "we see through a glass, darkly." That refers to looking through a window in olden days which was made of mica, a semi-transparent substance through which all was seen as in a haze. So though we see the same things now, we see them obscurely, but then "face to face."

Thus, and thus only, by divine power, the

thousands of them that love Him are brought to light and God gains the answer to His own heart.

Oh, dear friends, “ Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for *them that love him* ” ! (1 Cor. ii. 9.)



“BEFORE HIM IN LOVE.”

(EPI. I. 1-12.)

IN closing these papers it may be well to turn to Ephesians i. Read the first four verses, which are all summed up in this: “that we should be holy and without blame before him in love”—*in love*. There, I think, we get the climax of what we have had before us. God’s purpose was that His sons should be holy and without blame before Him *in love*. I would like to give you a little idea of it as I see it myself. What is stupendous is that God should have found it possible through redemption to select, from among His created beings, any whom He could take up and lead into His mind and will, those to whom He could give His confidence, so that they should be capable of sharing His thoughts and mind. Ephesians i. tells us how man can be made capable of entering into the mind and thought of God. There must be an immense distance between the Creator and the creature: “As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are . . . my thoughts than your thoughts.” Could there ever be any drawing near? How could creatures be made capable of understanding God in any way whatever? Could man enter into the thoughts of God, much less love Him?

We are here in the midst of a material creation. We handle things which are material, and we know that such things exist. As far as we can trace from scripture, this material creation, in its present form, is going to last about seven thousand years, and then it will have served its purpose. The whole point is, what has God made the present creation for?

I want to shew you something very marvellous from this chapter. Before ever the earth was made, before that moment when the morning stars sang together—outside time—God had His own purposes and counsels as to what He was going to do. These purposes and counsels centred in the Son, who was yet to become Man; and these purposes and counsels had reference, not to angels, but to an order of beings inferior to angels in power and might, an order not then created—man. Now God had His purposes and counsels about man before He created him, and what God determines to carry out must be carried out in spite of everything that comes in. So that if God purposes to bless man in the way it is written in His word, it *must* be done, no matter what comes in. All the hosts of evil might assert themselves against God's purposes, but nothing will alter them.

If we read the first six verses of Ephesians i., in which these counsels are unfolded, we do not

get a hint in them that sin had ever come in. We are simply told what God meant to do before the world began, and how He is going to carry it out. In this scripture there is no question raised of sin, salvation, death, or anything of that sort, but we are simply told the way in which God has blessed His sons, and the way He is going to carry out His blessing. Here we are in this world of sin and death and under all the disaster of the fall, and to be told by God what His thoughts are outside of it all is indeed wonderful. There are six verses in Ephesians i. which are outside the question of sin, like those in Genesis before the fall of Adam and Eve. Eve is the first and only real type of the church. She is the wife of the *man*. It is wonderful to think that God should not only unfold to us His counsels and purposes in Christ, but that He should set to work to make us capable of understanding them.

Now I would revert again to the thought of this created universe. God has something infinitely greater than what is natural, and that is, that which is *spiritual*. The material will all pass away; all will go; there is nothing abiding about it. God has brought in this material creation as a scene in which to form what *will* abide and will never pass away. When He has done with it, He will roll it up and set it aside, just as a garment may serve

its purpose for a time. In a cold winter you get out your overcoat, and you wear it through storm and wind, but when spring comes you fold it up. That is what God will do with created things. After the seven thousand years, or whatever period it may be, He says, “As a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed.” They have been the platform upon which He has seen fit to bring to light, in spite of the ruin of the fall, the objects of His purpose, the thousands of those that love Him. Then He will fold them up, for they will have served their purpose. The natural will give place to the spiritual, that which is imperishable, because formed in the very nature of God, in love. We measure everything by time, but there is no time with God. There is no past or future with God, except as to His dealings with this earth. Eternity will be an endless variation, not a monotonous prolongation of time, but ever new, ever fresh. (Eph. iii. 21, “unto all the generations of the age of the ages.”) Now God is speaking in this scripture from the standpoint of eternity. Time refers to us here, but it does not refer to God. Before the clock of this world was started, God had His purposes. Wisdom is personified in Proverbs viii., pointing forward to the Lord Jesus, but there was no man then. The mighty angels were there, though they did not

enter into God's counsels and purposes, but now in His grace He unfolds them to us in order that we might enter into them.

The sons of God by creation (Job xxxviii.) celebrated His creatorial power, but the sons of God by predestination and redemption know His heart and have part, characteristically, in the divine nature. Their response is in the intimacy of relationship and love.

Look at verse 4, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." That refers not merely to individuals, but the company of the sons, that is, His church; that is what God has effected. It is quite true that this epistle was written to a local company; there were conditions in it which encouraged the apostle to write thus to them. He says, "I also, having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints"—that was what encouraged him to write. The marks and evidences of love in this little company at Ephesus gave him something to go upon. You can soon tell in a meeting whether you have something to go upon; sometimes you have the sense that your voice is hitting the wall. I have had that experience sometimes, and it is humbling enough to make one weep. But Paul felt that his voice reached the saints, and that he found a welcome there, and that there was an atmo-

sphere which could help the truth. The apostle could set forth God's purposes and the steps He would take to bring to light those that love Him; that God was going to make them divinely capable, through the work of the Spirit, of taking in His thoughts.

The natural man is incapable of taking in a single divine thought. You may as well talk to a blind man about the colour of the scenery as to speak to an unconverted person of the things of God. The blind man would say, “I know nothing about it.” You send an unconverted man to college and train him until he has the Bible at his finger ends, but he would know *nothing* of the things of God, for they are of the Spirit and *spiritually* discerned. God is going to make His sons capable in spite of what they are by nature, morally capable of entering into His mind and thoughts. God is not going to do that in them viewed naturally after the flesh, but He can and does bring it to pass in them spiritually. No amount of education would bring it to pass. You might get an unconverted man and seek to unfold to him the things of Ephesians i., and he thinks he will get hold of them by study: he goes to college and studies theological books, and after three or four years he comes out knowing the letter of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, but he knows nothing of what is

spiritual, he has not touched the thoughts of God.

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After Ephesians i. 1-6 God takes account of our *state* and He deals with that, but only brings it in incidentally as His way of accomplishing His purposes. The fact was that we were *lost*, and what we needed was redemption, so after verses 1-6 we get "in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." God had to clear us. A man might have a house and he may be unable to pay for it; there may be a mortgage on the house. This man cannot do what he likes with the house; he cannot say "It is my house" until he has liquidated the encumbrances on it. Now God's sons were under liability. There were offences to be dealt with, and the enemy had got a claim on them. Like Pharaoh who said of Israel, "They are my people, I will not let them go," but God claimed them. He said, "Let my *son* go." The blood of the passover lamb in Egypt shewed that all liabilities with respect to that people were met. There was redemption.

Now God has effected redemption for His people to-day in bringing in Christ, "the beloved," in whom we have redemption through His blood. Dear friends, what is so wonderful is that we are redeemed for God in the only

perfect Man. We, as in the sinful man, are removed by a sinless Man dying for us. Our conduct was offensive to God, and therefore there must be the removal of what is offensive to the eye of God. God clears us, for that is necessary to the bringing in of His purposes, and He will not let anything stand in the way of His purpose. “According to the riches of his grace.” A man might say, “I have got forgiveness of my sins and I do not want anything more.” Do you think God is perfectly satisfied with that for you. If *you* are content with just getting your sins forgiven, God is not. You may have got all *you* want, but has God got all *He* wants? Your side of the question is not everything. There is God’s side. He does not want mere selfish sinners saved by grace who do not desire anything more. He wants those who *love* Him. My joy may come in incidentally, but God did it for His own pleasure. You may say, “What a happy man I am.” That is all right, but the point is that God did not do it merely to make you happy, but to gratify His own heart.

It says here, “Wherein he hath abounded toward us,” and “according to the riches of his grace.” That is the measure of it. God has met our need, but He has not met our need according to *our* measure of it, but according to His heart and the greatness of His purpose

for us. The prodigal son had a small idea of his father's grace. He would have been perfectly content to have been a servant, but that would not have satisfied the heart of his father. The grace of God is not merely what meets our need, but what meets His heart. His grace is not merely to effect the forgiveness of our sins, but to connect us with another Man, another world, another order of things altogether, by the Spirit. You may say, "By the grace of God I am a forgiven sinner." That is all very true, but you are a great deal more. You stand connected by that very grace with Christ in glory, and with an order of things which is outside the present material world altogether.

"According to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath *abounded* toward us." Beautiful thought! But you may have said; "How are we to be capable of this?" Read verse 8: "Wherein he hath *abounded* toward us in all *wisdom*." Wisdom is the right use of knowledge. You become educated in the schools of this world until you are surfeited with knowledge, but you may not know how to make use of it; everything is valueless unless you can apply it. Wisdom is the power to apply knowledge. God has provided for all that we need. Supposing for a moment a person brought up in humble circumstances unexpectedly becomes a peer. Do you not think he would feel very

much out of place? He might purchase a book on etiquette and study it, but he would soon be exposed. You do not get hold of divine things in that way. *God, by the Spirit, makes us acquainted with Himself, builds us up in His own thoughts, so that we should be capable of rejoicing with Him in His purpose.* “He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure,” which good pleasure He has unfolded to us, “which he hath purposed in himself,” to gratify His own heart.

God's love is a jealous love, pure and holy, and it is His good pleasure, “purposed in himself for the dispensation of the fulness of times; to head up all things in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth.” God's good pleasure is, on the one hand, awaiting the thousand years of the millennium to find its answer on earth from His earthly people. His good pleasure will then be in public display—Satan bound, death largely set aside, except as penalty, God's nation (Israel) will then be brought to light, and a new heart will be given them. The saved nations on this earth will be brought into the light of God, to live here in blessedness, and “the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea.” It will be a wonderful moment for the earth, and God will greatly delight in it.

Wisdom is looking forward in Proverbs viii., but the answer to this on the earthly side will be in the millennial world. On the other hand, it will be the moment of accomplished purpose as to the church, for the full result of the work of the Spirit will be reached when the church is seen as the complement of Christ in all the blessed administration of the universe of bliss. And this as flowing from and dependent on the fact of her place before His God and Father, as holy and without blame in love. Thus all will be secured for the praise of His glory, through the heading up of all things, both in heaven and on earth, in Christ.

To hold all things in Christ is what God is set on. His order is, "First that which is natural, but afterward that which is spiritual." The natural order of things is to give way to the spiritual. A Christian may perhaps take up an extremely difficult profession among men. He may, for instance, choose to be a doctor, and he has to spend five years of his life in study before he can take up the profession at all, then he has to spend practically the rest of his life in learning; but all that has been acquired at such immense labour and cost will pass away. Technical knowledge has no place in heaven. You say, "What a pity that all his study should go for nothing." But do you not see that there were exercises in his

path which cast him upon God? The very difficulties of the man's profession and the consequent exercises were all used of God in discipline to free him in view of the formation of what is *spiritual*, of that which will abide. There is no more use for the natural, the moment of education is passed, but the spiritual remains. Knowledge will vanish away, but the results of His ways with you during the moment of natural life here will never pass away, for by His Spirit tastes and desires were thus formed in your soul which can only find their answer in God Himself, and in the great system of blessing He is bringing about in Christ. That is how God is using the present natural order of things in view of the formation of what is spiritual. He will head up all things in Christ, things which are in heaven and in earth, and when that comes publicly to pass He will take the present creation and fold it up like a garment. “As a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed.”

God will bring in a *new* earth, an earth large enough for the millions of blessed men that will be on it. God will make an earth as big as His heart dictates. There will be a new heavens and a new earth. Then all things will be headed up in Christ, both the things which are in heaven and on earth.

On the heavenly side, the great result of it all

will be that God will secure His purpose to present us "holy and without blame before him *in love*," answering to His thoughts and sharing His confidence. I could not get up and thank God to-day that I am holy and without blame before Him in love, but I can thank Him for any measure in which I am given to understand His purposes. In so far as we are His workmanship we can thank Him for that, and look forward to the time when He will bring His purpose in Christ wholly to pass in the saints.

Now we have travelled a long way from Exodus xx., from the "thousands of them that love him" down here, to being presented "holy and without blame before him in love," and there is a great deal between, but God's grace is sufficient, and He is capable of carrying us through *in spite of ourselves*. Our greatest obstacle is our will. Man's will and God's will never harmonize, but He has made known to us the mystery of *His* will, so ours must be broken. Depend upon it, if we study His will we shall appreciate it, and He will be able to unfold to us more of what it is as we pass through this world.

P. R. M.

46, THE CHASE,

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