

The Earthly Relationships
of
The Heavenly Family.

A SERIES OF ADDRESSES

DELIVERED BY

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THE EARTHLY RELATIONSHIPS OF THE HEAVENLY FAMILY.

INTRODUCTION.

THE subject I have selected for these meetings is "The Earthly Relationships of the Heavenly Family," and I have done so feeling deeply the responsibility, specially for this reason, that these subjects are usually either altogether omitted from public ministry or else spoken of lightly as if they were of little consequence. But I am persuaded that they are of the utmost practical importance, if we are to glorify God, and if we are to be used by God in testimony for Him.

It is our duty and our privilege to give heed to every part of God's teaching so that His Word may regulate our whole lives.

I make no apology for speaking upon particular relationships, such as husband and wife, parent and child, in a promiscuous assembly. I believe it is the will of God that we should *all* know His mind about *all* these matters; for even though we may not be in some of these relationships, there are nevertheless, general principles connected with each which it is for the blessing of us all to know.

Reference has been made (in prayer) to the presence of those who are recently converted, and I should hope never to forget the presence of such. I thank God that it is so, and I believe no subject dealt with from the Word of God in the love and unction of the Spirit will fail of interest and profit even to the new-born soul, and I think that this will be specially characteristic of our subject this afternoon.

The forming of earthly things into representations of heavenly things is one of God's ways from the first. Creation was designed

by God to be a representation of spiritual unseen things. We find it in the very first chapter of the Bible (see 14th verse), "And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be *for signs.*" So that these heavenly bodies were intended by God not merely to mark off the days and the years but to be for "signs" or "types" —types of spiritual things.

We all are familiar also with the record of the creation of Adam and Eve, and how the Spirit of God shows us that their creation was intended by God to be a representation of the great New Testament truth of "Christ and the Church."

So also God appointed that the Tabernacle should in all things be made after the pattern shown to Moses in the mount, in order that it might be a complete representation of things unseen in the heavens. In like manner God intends that in the ordering of the earthly life of His people, who now constitute His

dwelling-place through the Spirit, there should be a representation *to* Him, and a showing forth *from* Him to the world of divine heavenly relationships answering to those which pertain to our life down here.

And I am bold to say that if a Christian household (I mean a household in which the father and mother are Christians) be ordered in all its different relationships according to the instructions that God has given us in His Word, that household, though not free from affliction, not free from discipline, shall nevertheless have a sweetness and a peacefulness that shall be a very antepast of the rest and peace of Heaven. God means that such should be the case, and if we only give heed to the fashioning of our lives according to the heavenly pattern, we shall find how blessed and profitable it is.





I.

HUSBANDS AND WIVES.

NOW, let us turn to Eph. v. 21, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God"; and as the apostle has written this word it seems natural that he should next go on to address the subject one, in the relationship he is about to speak of. So he begins with the wives—"Wives, submit yourselves," &c.; read verses 21 to 33. Read also in Colossians iii. 18, 19, also 1 Tim. ii. 8-15, Titus ii. 1-5, and 1 Peter iii. 1, "Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word"—here is a word for any Christian wife who has an unsaved husband—"that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives." Read also verses 2 to 7.

I have read these as being the principal

scriptures which bear upon the subject, and would now shortly seek help as to their teaching. Turning again to Eph. v., I would ask you to notice that the burden laid upon the wife is summed up in two words, "subjection" and "reverence." The burden laid upon the husband is summed up in one word, and that is, "love." And does not that open up to us a grand spiritual reality? Does it not tell us that the place in which God has put us, in relation to the Lord Jesus, is summed up in these two words, *subjection* and *reverence*? All our blessing consists in our individual subjection to the will and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in our giving Him, as a Divine Person, as one of the ever blessed Trinity, His place as Lord in the deepest reverence of our souls. I am persuaded that for old and for young there is no truth more needful for us to know in our inmost soul than this—*that all our blessing is summed up in subjection to the will of Christ, and in reverence for His holy Name.*

You see at a glance, as we read Eph. v., that the thought of earthly relationships being "types of the heavenly" so occupies the apostle's mind that he can scarcely get away from it, so he adds, "But I speak concerning Christ and the Church." God would have us know that we are put in these earthly relationships as His redeemed people. True, they pertain to this life—to the flesh; they all shall be dissolved and pass away—they are only for a moment. Nevertheless, so long as we are in them here, we are called to represent in them the mind of the heavens, the mind of God, the mind of Christ, the character and ways of God. Thus these earthly relationships become elevated and sublimed: being representations of things Divine, they have a significance and a glory that the world knows nothing about, and it is our highest privilege and our honour to accept the will of God concerning us, and seek to live in every relationship according to His revealed will.

SUBJECTION OF THE WOMAN.

Now, notice at the very outset that that which is laid upon the wife is *subjection*. I believe this is fundamental. There can be no order without government. There must be rule. There is a head to direct and control the body; and it is a remarkable fact in physiology that the brain literally controls and guides every member of the body. And so it must be, for God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of the Church (1 Cor. xi. 3). God is supreme ruler and governor, all things are directed and controlled by Him. Sin is a disturbing element of rebellion that has crept into God's creation (not without His permission) in order that He might demonstrate great truths and problems we know not how far reaching. This *sin*, only taking the fruit of the tree, was *rebellion against the will of God*. And wherever blessing is brought in, it can only be on the principle of Divine control. You and I are brought to the Lord Jesus Christ to know and be subject

to that control. And in the relationship of the wife to the husband, God has assigned to her the subject place. Her husband is to be her director, controller, and ruler, as well as her provider. This is God's will.

In some parts of the world men regard the women as if they were inferior creatures, and they sit and make the women do the work, but God gives us right and true thoughts about her. Practically then, the wife is put in the subject place. It is hers to own the authority of her husband, and the Lord will bless every such pattern wife. This is the first step in the ordering of the household, the wife subject to the husband. If the children see that the wife is not subject to her husband, will the children be subject to their parents?

ADAM AND EVE.

Bear in mind that this is the foundation relationship of all society. It was the first instituted by God on earth when He took the woman and fashioned her from the rib of

Adam. And most beautiful is the way of God in this creation. He caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, type of that deep sleep of death which the Lord of Glory slept for us. He opened his side (the first surgical operation), took out a rib, and out of that rib He builded a woman. Adam could therefore say of her, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." Oh! it is not merely that the Lord Jesus came down and took our nature upon Him, but that we are formed out of Him, formed by "new creation" out of Him, "bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh."

It has been beautifully yet quaintly remarked by Matthew Henry, "Eve was not taken out of Adam's head to top him, neither out of his feet to be trampled on by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected by him, and near his heart to be loved by him." Very quaint, but very beautiful. So you see the glory and dignity God has put upon the woman.

GROUND OF SUBJECTION.

But now mark, in 1 Tim. ii., there are two grounds upon which the woman is given the subject place. The first ground is connected with CREATION, and the second ground is connected with TRESPASS. The first ground is in the 13th verse, "For Adam was first formed, then Eve." That was the order of creation, and the Spirit of God from that very fact instructs us that the woman is therefore in the subject place. None the less honourable on that account; but if the woman was to be a type of the Church and its relationship to Christ, how could God assign to her any other place? Taken out of him, formed for him, presented to him, and to share equally with him his dominion over the creation — such was Eve to Adam, such is the Church to Christ, and such is the view God means every wife to have of that relationship in which she stands to her husband.

Respect is the basis of all affection. I speak this most solemnly to many young

people who are here to-day. Respect must be the basis of all true lasting affection. If your affection is a mere passing flippant liking, it will not stand the test of the wear-and-tear of daily life. But where affection is rooted in respect for the person, there is a ground in which affection will develop.

Now, notice the next ground. The first is founded in the order of creation, the second is connected with trespass. "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." The woman acted without her husband. The woman dallied with the Serpent without consulting the man that God had set over her. She acted upon her own self-will, she failed in respect to her husband. That is the first failure we detect in Scripture.

We therefore conclude that Eve's partaking of the forbidden fruit was the outcome of the prior sin of not owning the authority the Lord had put over her.

And may I not apply it? The Church,

putting forth its hand after the joys of this world, was the result of her having first failed in subjection to Him whom God had set over her. If God's saints only saw it, all the evil and havoc that has been wrought in connection with the testimony for God on the earth has arisen from not apprehending this very truth of Eph. v., that as Eve was made subject to Adam, and the wife to her husband, so the Church was to be subject to Christ. And the Church's blessing can only be secured as she comes back to that very position, which she long ago forsook, of owning the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is written, "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." Evidently, had Eve consulted her husband, Satan's subtlety would not have availed to deceive her; and does not this let us into a marvellous secret as to what led Adam to share the woman's fate? I am persuaded that Adam's partaking of the fruit with her was not the result of ignorance, but of love. Adam

allowed the woman that God had given him to be the idol of his heart, and in effect said, "I will share her fate. She has sinned and fallen, and I will sin and fall with her." What a type of the "second Adam," who shared not our sin, but who in love has borne our curse! Well may we sing—

" 'Twas love that sought Gethsemane,
Or Judas ne'er had found Thee ;
'Twas love that nailed Thee to the tree,
Or iron ne'er had bound Thee.

" 'Twas love that lived, 'twas love that died,
With endless life to bless us ;
Well hast Thou won Thy blood-bought bride,
Worthy art Thou, Lord Jesus !"

DIVINE LIMITATIONS.

Now, let us glance again at Eph. v., 24th verse, "Therefore as the Church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." Let us distinctly understand that there are many scriptures which have to be taken in connection with other scriptures, otherwise they are

liable to be misunderstood. When God says here that the wife is to be subject "*in every thing,*" He cannot intend by that to teach that the woman is to be subject to her husband in things that are contrary to the revealed will of the Lord. This is a limitation that must ever be kept in view. It is equally plain in Scripture that we ought to be "subject to the powers that be" (Rom. xiii.); but you remember, after that Peter and John were laid hold of for teaching in the name of Jesus, and the powers that then existed commanded them "not to teach nor preach in that Name," though perfectly willing to be subject to the authorities, yet, when it came to be a question of obeying God or man, they said, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts iv. 19, 20). Thus we see that there is a limit to obedience. There is no limit as far as *our will* is concerned; but where it comes to be a question of *the Lord's*

will, then the limit comes in, whether it be with the wife to the husband, the child to the parent, or the subject to the powers that be. If, for example, the husband wants his wife to tell a lie, subjection to the Lord forbids it, for subjection can be only "*in the Lord.*"

Col. iii. 14, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord." There is the limitation, "*as it is fit in the Lord.*" Do not for a moment suppose that this subjection means that there is to be no expression of thought, no representing of matters of difference. There may be occasions many in which the wife has quicker perception, or a better understanding, of what the will of the Lord is. There may be a Priscilla that is ahead of her husband in knowledge, but it does not follow from this that the wife is to usurp authority. Her differing judgment may be expressed with all subjection. So also with children to parents, and younger to elder.

Timothy, as a young man, was exhorted to entreat the elder brethren as fathers, giving

them the reverence that was their due. The subjection of the wife to the husband (if, on the other hand, there is the love of the husband to the wife) will never be the subjection of a slave, but subjection in love and respect. And even if there be not due affection and consideration on the part of the husband, she will nevertheless be subject, because it is the will of the Lord and well pleasing to Him. Therefore let every Christian wife bear in mind that this willing yielding of the subjection that the Lord commands to her husband, and giving him reverence, is pleasing to Christ, and is in His sight an ornament that adorns her, and a service that will be rewarded on that day. It is a representation to others and to Him of the true relationship in which the Church stands to Himself.

REVERENCE.

Then as to the question of reverence, turn to 1 Peter iii. 6, "Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord." Now, you know the verse in which that occurs in Gen. xviii. is

just a laugh of unbelief! There is nothing noble in the verse except the one word, and the Spirit of God picks it out, because it expresses the reverence that is due to the husband. Not that the husband is always such a character that he commands the reverence (it would be a good thing if it was always so); but this reverence is not to be yielded on the ground of character, but because the Lord says it, and because it is that which He demands of the Church;—that she give Him, not only the place of authority, but that she also should worship Him and honour Him equally with the Father. It matters not what the husband may be, even if unconverted and coming home drunk on the Saturday night, the wife's business is—in all matters where she can with a good conscience do it—to submit herself to his will, and never to expose his sin, or speak of him disrespectfully. As a consequence, when the ungodly husband beholds the chaste and heavenly character of the wife's conversation, the Lord will put His

seal upon it, and cause her testimony and self-denial to be the means of blessing to him.

ADORNMENT.

And before we leave this point, a word as to adornment. I am persuaded that God would have His children to pass through this world as unobservable as possible. I say as unobservable as possible, for there is such a thing as casting off worldly adornment and putting on something else equally noticeable, like our friends the Quakers, who wear either black or drab, or the wearing of a certain grotesque-shape bonnet, and a ribbon with some inscription on it. Thus man ever runs to extremes. Now, I believe God's mind as to the adornment of His people is, that they should wear "modest apparel," consistent with the position they occupy, and as women professing godliness, such as in no way to attract the eyes of others. If, when you walk into an assembly, everybody looks at your gaudy or costly array, then you are off the ground of faith. God has thought fit to speak of these things, and by

His Holy Spirit has written them down in His eternal book. They are there for our instruction, and it is our blessing to obey them. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." And tell me, would you rather have the ornament of great price, that attracts the eye of man, or would you wear the ornament of great price that the Lord of glory looks down upon with admiration, even the meek and quiet spirit that bears the harsh, quick word, and answers not again, content to be unnoticed and unobserved, seeking only to walk quietly and meekly with God? The Lord knows what it costs to be thus adorned!

Those He sees thus adorned here He will adorn with glory hereafter! I may remark, in passing, that these instructions concerning dress and adorning are all given to the woman, for the reason that it is necessarily the woman's weakness. I have sometimes thought, when Achan saw "the goodly Babylonish garment, and the wedge of gold," that the garment was for his wife and the gold for himself. But be

that as it may, we read of Saul clothing the women with scarlet, and putting earrings in their ears. The man after the flesh takes this way of gratifying the people. God has spoken of these things, and therefore the need of them. Sisters in Christ, give heed to the Word, and seek in all your ways to be pleasing to the Lord Jesus. Give Him the first place, and you will never regret it.

THE HUSBAND'S RESPONSIBILITY.

Now, I must turn to the other side of the question. Let us go back again to Eph. v. 25-27: "Husbands, love you wives," &c. As I said at the beginning, the burden laid upon the husband is summed up in one word, "love"; for all Christ's actings for His Church, and to His Church, are but the outcome of the love that is in His heart. Now, if the child of God is told to love his wife as Christ loved the Church, I ask you what is the measure of that love? I do not know how God could have put it stronger; and this

opens up another point. There are some people—indeed, many—who are gracious and godly, and, fearing lest they should not please God, they are afraid to love. A husband perhaps afraid to love his wife too much, or a mother afraid to love her child too much. But from the example of Christ we are taught that you cannot love too fervently. Love is not idolatry. Idolatry is the putting of the object of love in the place of God, so that when God says, “Go there,” my love constrains me to go another way, and I go contrary to God. He sees that to be idolatry. It is not the love that is the idolatry, but putting the object that God tells me to “love as Christ loved the Church” in the place of Himself, in order to please or enjoy the object of my love. That is idolatry; and as we have “a jealous God” to deal with, many a time a Christian has had his idol taken away. How often it has been said, when some loved child has been removed, “That was the dearest one of them all to me.” Yes, it was *the idol* that

was taken away. The Lord knows how to deal with us ; but remember, He is a jealous God, and if we want His blessing along with His gifts, it is not by stinting our love, that will be scant enough measure at the best, but by never suffering the object of our love to come in the place of God. It is God first, and everything else after.

Another point. There is all the difference in the world between human love and divine love. The chief feature of human love is that it seeks to enjoy its object. Divine love seeks always to bless its object. The natural thought of love is, How can I get the fullest enjoyment of the object of my love? And so the husband allows the wife to take away far more of his thoughts than he ought ; and so parents may spoil their children rather seeking to please and enjoy them than to bless them.

Now, remember that the Lord's love to us never comes down to seek enjoyment in us, apart from our spiritual condition. The Lord Jesus would rather have us separated from His

fellowship, and have no joy in us, than go down to walk with those who are walking in conscious disobedience. Therefore "He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it," that He might do what? Enjoy it? That will come by-and-by. He does not get much enjoyment out of it now. "That He might sanctify and cleanse it"; that He might make it conformable to Himself. That is His first thought. Thus, depend upon it, He will get the greatest enjoyment in the long run. He can bear to wait now, for He well knows that He will get His enjoyment of His completed body and bride, "the Church," by-and-by. It is painful work sanctifying and cleansing the Church now, but He is looking forward to the day when He will present it to Himself. Eve was presented to Adam by Jehovah, but the Lord Jesus will present the Church to Himself.

"Meet companion then for Jesus,
For Him—from Him made;
Glory of God's grace for ever,
There in me displayed!"

He will get His joy in His people by-and-by, but meantime He has to do the hard, hard work. "As many as I love (and because I love them) I rebuke and chasten." Is it hard work for love to lift the rod and chasten? Yes; but it is only love that dare do it! The Lord's love is such that, at all costs, He will sanctify and cleanse, and He looks for His joy when He comes and makes us like Himself.

In 1 Peter iii. 7 there is a word to the husband: "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel."

Mark that "the weaker" is the one that is to be most honoured. The weakness is not *inferiority*, it is not weakness in that sense. The "weaker vessel" means the more delicate or fragile vessel. The flowers of the field are exquisitely formed, but they are weak and easily injured. That is the thought here. And because of that weakness, which the Lord

knows, and which is part of creation, and not as resulting from sin, therefore He says, "Give honour to the wife." The wife is least able to defend herself against wrongs, and therefore protection is the part of the husband. She is the least able to care for herself, therefore to love, cherish, and support is the responsibility of the stronger one.

Another point. "As being heirs together of the grace of life that your prayers *be not hindered.*" Fellowship must be cultivated. Why? "That your prayers be not hindered." God only knows how anything that comes in to mar fellowship hinders prayer! If a root of bitterness creeps into an assembly, what a bar it is to fellowship. Is it any wonder that the prayers are hindered and do not go above the roof? Such are discordant notes. They are not making one sound like the 120 trumpeters in the temple, or the 120 disciples in the upper room, who were "of one accord." The relationship of husband and wife is so close that any disagreement, any dryness,

allowed to go on, will hinder fellowship. Then you do not like to kneel together in prayer. Perhaps you drop it ; you give it up, until the Lord comes in with some sore stroke of His rod and brings you both down to *fellowship in sorrow*, and then your prayers go up again together ! There must be fellowship between husband and wife.

And tell me, young man, young woman, what of being yoked the living to the dead ? Two hearts yoked together that cannot join in one cry to the blessed God ! God save us from a curse like that, the living being yoked to the dead ! These subjects are practical, and more might be said. I have only touched upon those points that seem to be the most prominent and important. May God teach us, by His Spirit, concerning the rest, and add His blessing.





II.

PARENTS AND CHILDREN.

READ Eph. vi. 1-4; Col. iii. 20, 21; 1 Tim. v. 4; 2 Tim. i. 5, iii. 1-5. I have read these passages as being the principal ones bearing directly upon the subject before us, viz., PARENTS and CHILDREN. I would remind you that all these earthly relationships are intended by God to be representative of the heavenly, the spiritual—the great realities of which these are truly but the shadows. Thus God would have the child, the son or daughter, to represent on earth “the Son of His love,” who was ever obedient to His Father’s will, who ever trusted in His Father’s wisdom, love, and power, and who did always those things that pleased Him. Jesus was truly the wise Son that maketh a glad Father (Prov. xv. 20). The God and

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ ever delighted in that blessed Son, and that Son, as a necessary consequence, always found joy in His Father. Everything else might be against Him, but He always had His joy in God. We saw last Lord's-day that the instructions to the wife were summed up in one word, "subjection"; and those to the husband in the one word, "love." So I think the word that seems to sum up the relationship of the child to the parent in the scripture is

"OBEDIENCE,"

It is still the subject place: and as we saw the Church's blessing lies in its subjection to the will of its Lord, and the wife's in subjection to her husband, so the child's blessing lies in subjection to the will of its parent, as Jesus found all His joy and blessing in obeying the will of His Father. This is the first thing that all young children have to learn. They have to be taught it. They have to be instructed that, as the parent,

being a child of God (for it is to such I speak), owns subjection to his Father in Heaven, so his child, in order to experience the blessing of God, must be in subjection to his father on earth. This relationship belongs to the foundation of all social order. God has made these fundamental relationships in social life very strong. How strong the tie that binds the husband and wife together! Alas, in these days when natural affection is at a low ebb, it may be found in many cases there is little affection between husband and wife; but this is not God's order, nor God's thought. The tie is indissoluble. It is the very closest, for if a man love his wife he is said to love his own flesh. So also with parents and children. God has made the affection of the parent to the child, and the child to the parent, to be one of the very strongest bonds on earth.

It is only a symptom of that disintegration that sin has wrought, and is increasingly working, in these last days, that natural affection seems to be dying out. It is not

gone. There is still a good deal of it in the world, and we bless God for it. But it grows less, and we are led to believe it will grow less as evil and the power of Satan abound in the world.

But among God's people, grace, instead of diminishing these natural bonds and affections, rather binds them the closer, elevates, ennobles, and purifies them. A Christian child ought to love his parent beyond any other, and a Christian parent ought also so to love the child, because God has shown us what is the love and subjection of His dear Son to Him, and also His love and care over that beloved Son and over all those who are in Him.

COMMANDMENT WITH PROMISE.

I would ask you now to turn again to Eph. vi. You notice in the second verse we read that the commandment under the law is referred to by the Spirit of God. We do not often have any of the ten commandments

brought forward in this definite way in the New Testament. But here we see that the mind of God does not change. His commandments were good for Israel, and they are good for us also. This one is referred to as being the first commandment to which God attached a promise. You see by this how the Spirit of God in the New Testament teaches us to look carefully at the words of the Old Testament. Modern criticism reproaches God and His Word by putting the Old Testament at the bar of human reason, criticising it and declaring it to be full of mistakes. But we find no such way of dealing with the Old Testament Scriptures in the New. Here they are uniformly spoken of with the utmost reverence by the Lord and His servants, and always referred to as an infallible authority, against which there can be no appeal. The very words are noted, and even the order of the words is in some cases specially pointed out. The fact of this being the first of the ten commandments to which God attached a promise is dwelt upon

in order to give it special weight with children who seek to please God. And what is the promise? "That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."

This is not an earthly dispensation: our inheritance is not like that of Israel in the land of Canaan, or on the earth at all; our hope and expectation is in the heavens. Nevertheless I have no doubt whatever that the Spirit of God really intended that the words here should be taken as they are given: that it is a very great blessing and privilege from God, even in this dispensation, to live long on the earth. It is our one opportunity to serve Him, to glorify Him, to be the means of winning souls for Him, to be the means of blessing to His people in leading them into the knowledge of His will and His ways. With all this, and the coming recompense in view, it must be an inestimable blessing to live long on the earth. I believe it will be found that, although these things cannot be taken without exception—there are exceptions

to every rule, and God in His sovereignty does according to His will—nevertheless it will be found that, as a rule, those who honour their father and mother receive blessing from God and have their lives of usefulness prolonged.

HONOUR.

And notice the word here is not simply “obey,” it is a word of much wider scope than that. It is “honour.” If you honour a parent, that necessarily includes obedience; for if there is no obedience there is no honour. But the word “honour” means far more than obedience. There may be obedience of a sullen nature and of a legal character, but not of love, not of delight. It is of the Son of God that it is written, “I delight to do Thy will.” This is more than mere legal obedience. God complained of Israel, “If I be a Father, where is Mine honour?” (Mal. i. 6). Israel refused to render Jehovah the honour that was due to a Father; but His own dear Son gave Him the honour, and therefore His

obedience was the obedience of delight. Lively, hearty obedience is that which brings blessing to the child and joy to the parent, and nothing else does.

But "honour" includes more than this; it includes a respectful way of acting and speaking to and of parents. In these last days perhaps few things are more observable than the dishonouring way that parents are spoken of and to. In many cases the father is not called "father," but "the governor," the only thing recognised being his place of authority. The mother is not called "mother," but "the old lady," or some such irreverent name. "Father" and "mother" are sacred titles; but the terms nowadays in common use show that God's thoughts of the honour that is due to the father and mother are not apprehended.

PIETY AT HOME.

I would refer again to 1 Tim. v. 4, and ask you to note that word, "To show piety at home" and "to requite their parents." Now,

this is a word for children of maturer years. What I have been speaking of so far has been rather for young children, and might perhaps have been more appropriately spoken in the Sunday school, although there are some here young enough to receive the benefit ; but the words I now refer to are applicable to those who are of maturer years, but are still children in the sense of having parents alive—such as a widowed mother, and perhaps a grandmother.* The word is “to requite their parents.” Oh, dear young people, you do not know what it is to have a parent’s care, and a parent’s anxiety, and a parent’s labour for their child ! You little know what you cost your parents when you were infants. You little know the weary hours of labour to keep you in comfort and that you might lack nothing ; the nights of anxious watching when you were sick, of which you never thought again when you were well ; the groanings of a burdened heart that have been poured out in

* The word rendered “ nephews ” might be “ grandchildren.”

secret to God about you. You little know what you cost your parents !

It is well for you young people to consider these things, and that it is the will of God that you should have the privilege of *requiting* to some extent that care and labour. And if your parents are spared to you till they are old and infirm, and they need your care and your support, grudge it not, but count it your privilege and joy to support them ; recognise it as a responsibility that God has laid upon you to requite your parents, to see that they lack for nothing that you can possibly provide them with, to see that in all respects you honour them and give them joy as they sought when you were young to care for you, and to give you all that was good, and to make you happy. You will find in this there is blessing. I never knew one yet that honoured and cared for his parents whom God did not bless. I have known others that disobeyed God's command, when cursed selfishness triumphed, and they have been brought to sorrow. Depend upon

it, those that respect not, honour not, and support not their parents when they need their care are disowning a claim that God has put upon them, and they will surely come to grief.

TRUTH IN THE PROMISE.

We ought to observe the ways of God. In this dispensation God has withdrawn further from immediate interference with the course of things on earth than in any previous period. He works no miracles; He does no wonders that the natural man can perceive. Even in that recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, the shipwreck of the apostle Paul—the last piece of history we get in the book—no miracle was wrought. They were all brought safe to land, and faith could see the hand of God as plainly as if a miracle had been wrought. The world might say it was all chance, and see no wonder about it; but faith could see it was the hand of God. If your eyes are open to observe the providence of God you may yet discern His recom-

penses and judgments, and oftentimes the repayment of evil to men's faces, although not in the same apparent way as when Elijah called fire down from heaven. It is our privilege to watch God's ways in His all-wise providence in the world and among His people. Therefore I say any whose eyes are open to observe these things will find that still there is truth in this promise of God to those who honour their father and their mother.

Just a word or two in the book of Proverbs xiii. 1—"A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner heareth not rebuke."

The Lord Jesus Christ was the "wise Son." He gave ear to His Father's instruction, and He did always those things that pleased Him. Antichrist will be the scorner, that heareth not rebuke, and in his day, when men are gnawing their tongues for pain, with these very tongues they will "*blaspheme God.*" Every child is walking in the way of the one or the other. He is either a child that is hearing his father's instruction and profits thereby, or else scorning

rebuke and taking his own way. The one is the way of Christ, the other the way of Antichrist.

Then take another passage, Prov. xv. 20—“A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother.” Now, you know there are a great many lads who have a sort of respect for their father, but they think it beneath them to have respect for their mother.

Perhaps your father or mother are not altogether worthy of respect; but it is pleasing to God you should honour them all the same. Hear them reverentially, and, as far as you can, seek to please them.

WORDS OF KNOWLEDGE.

Another passage I would refer to is Prov. xix. 27—“Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge.” In the Epistle to the Hebrews, twelfth chapter, there is a quotation from the book of Proverbs which says: “Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son,” &c. (verse 5).

So that there again you have an instance of the reverential way in which the Spirit of God calls us to regard the Old Testament. Here, as noted in Heb. xii. 5 concerning another scripture, God is speaking to you and me as His children—"My son," &c. We ought, therefore, to listen attentively.

Where are the words of knowledge? They are in this book we call the Bible. "Cease, my son," to hear modern higher criticism, to read books that bring the precious Word of God down to the level of a human production, set it at the bar of human reason, and criticise and condemn it. Cease to have anything to do with such teachers and their works. Occupy yourself with "the Word of God," "the words of knowledge," "the words of wisdom," and cease to hear any other kind of instruction. Many a one has taken up a book through mere curiosity and has received a fiery dart into their minds, and a stain upon their conscience, which they have never quite got rid of.

THE HEARTS OF CHILDREN.

Prov. xxii. 15—"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."

I am not speaking to parents; but let children ever understand this, that because they are children of Adam, because they are born of a corrupt stock, therefore it is that foolishness is bound in the heart of a child. Even the little child of two years old will show its pride, its self-will, its determination to have its own way. It will show its disrespect for father and mother, and slap its mother in the face. Such is human nature! The very same thing that develops itself into what we see around us—the total disregard for parental authority. In the child of a year old you will see the very same spirit, and unless it is dealt with firmly, perseveringly, lovingly, it will go on and develop to the child's own sorrow and to the grief of the parents. However pleasant they may be to their parents, "foolishness" is there, and God would have parents to use the wisdom

that He has given, that this foolishness might be curbed and driven out of them.

A SIGN OF THE "LAST TIMES."

Now, just a word upon 2 Tim. iii. "In the last days," and I am persuaded we are already in "the last days"—they are said to be "perilous times"—perhaps more intelligibly, "difficult times," that is, times in which it is more difficult than ever it was to know and carry out the will of God. Here we have drawn, by the Spirit of God, a picture of the "difficult times," and I only ask you, in the present connection, to notice that one of the features is "disobedience to parents." You find on every hand that young people will have their own way. They will choose their own companions, their own amusements, their own path in life, if they are permitted to do so. They will go from their parents' roof because they resent and will not brook the good and gentle restraint of parental care. What is the consequence? Many a lad has gone off to sea, and has had to rough it aboard ship, and

then come back, having found out it is not better than home. Another goes into the army. He is attracted by the red coat and medal. And he who would not submit to the reproof of his parents is ordered shortly to walk straight up to the cannon's mouth! Wherein is this better than if he had remained at home? Only that he has got gratifying his own will. He has no more liberty or privileges; everything is diminished that was for his good. He has got his own will, that is all! You will find, young friends, that your own will is the hardest chain you can be bound with. "Ephraim is joined to his idols. Let him alone." To be left alone, left to the despotism of your own will, is the severest chastening that God can send.

It is to this despotism of self-will that all things are tending in this world.

THE UNRESTRAINED WILL.

The world will not own the authority of the One whom God has made both Lord and Christ.

The cry is "liberty, equality, and fraternity,"

and socialism is its embodiment; and its popularity consists in its proposal to give man the greatest scope for the exercise of his own unrestrained will. But where is there harder bondage than that of the "trade's union," which denies a man the right of working for his support if he bow not to its authority?

And out of the elements of human will there will develop the last great dominion upon earth—the rule of one who shall be the people's choice, and from whom will be expected the perfection of liberty and goodwill; but, alas, instead thereof, only direst bondage. The image he sets up must be worshipped, and his mark—the mark of servitude to Satan—must be received on penalty of death and prohibition to buy or sell. Neither religious nor commercial liberty here. Man's self-will culminates in bondage.

To this end all things social and political are now tending, and the prevalence of disobedience to parents is one of the signs that the end is approaching.

WORDS TO PARENTS.

Now let us glance a little at the other side of the question—God's instructions to the parents. Eph. vi. 4, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Col. iii. 21, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged." I doubt not there is some very serious danger that parents are hardly alive to, or there would not be this twice-repeated charge not to discourage or provoke their children. There is such a thing as a parent asserting his will in such an arbitrary and inconsiderate way that it simply provokes opposition. Even in the assembly those who rule may provoke opposition by asserting what they believe to be the will of God *in a domineering way*.

Children have got feelings as well as parents, and love would consult these feelings and not ruthlessly wound them. Even if the necessity for punishment arise the child should be made to feel that it is the doing of love and con-

science, and not a mere arbitrary asserting of authority. Chastening is very often the outcome of the heated, provoked spirit of the parents. Oh, that parents would learn before they deal with children seriously about faults to deal with God first. In this way there would be less of the provoking.

THE FATHER FIRST.

Notice, the burden is laid here upon the father. This must be taken in connection with what we were looking at last Lord's day. In God's mind the father and mother are one, and must never on any account, in discussing matters, show differences of judgment in the presence of the children. If they see that their parents are not at one they are quick to discern who is on their side, and well they know how to take advantage of it. God's thought is that the father is the head of the house, and the mother is in all her ways to be subject to, and in sympathy with, the father. Hence, the instructions as to bringing up the children are to the father, and

the responsibility lies with him ; but it is of universal observation, and seen clearly in Scripture, that the mother, in the earlier years of children, has necessarily far more influence over them than the father : hence the importance of father and mother being of one mind—the father endorsing the instruction of the mother, and the mother so acting that she knows her authority will be upheld. A father and mother must be one in their authority or the house goes to wreck.

The same principle holds good as to rule in the assembly. Those having oversight ought first to be of one mind. Their differences should be discussed quietly among themselves, as a father and mother would discuss their differences apart from their children. Then, being of one mind, authority is easily maintained, and there is not the same danger of provoking to wrath.

TRAINING OF CHILDREN.

Notice that expression, “ Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”

Nurture gives the idea of nourishment, or the supply of every kind of need.

The grace of God has provided for all our requirements, both as guilty sinners and as needy creatures. We have daily recurring needs, both of our souls and our bodies, and the Lord provides for all.

Admonition gives the idea of the claims of the Lord: His expressed, revealed will as binding upon those who are the subjects of His nurture. Thus the nurture and admonition go together, but the nurture must come first.

Thus, by word and life, by teaching and example, the parent is to set before the children the grace of the Lord as the One who provides for every need, and the claims of the Lord to the hearty obedience of every part of His revealed will.

It is the privilege of parents to count upon God to bless such upbringing. He has given His word, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it."

THE CHILDREN OF CHRISTIANS.

It is matter of common observation that many dear Christians have had very wild children. There is no rule without its exceptions, but if you and I knew the history of these wild children, perhaps we might find a secret cause that we would not have supposed. Perhaps we would find that in the first three years of its life the child had been spoiled. The discipline and restraint had not been begun early enough. Perhaps the father had not endorsed the mother's instructions, or the mother had not carried out the father's will, and, when the children discovered it, they had only to take part with the one or the other in order to get their own way. I have known such a family, and often wondered that their children did not grow up to be a comfort to them.

The secret was that when they could not get their own way with their mother they got it with their father, and when they could not get it with their father they got it with their

mother. Anyhow, they got their own will when young, and then, when grown up, they took their own course in spite of all remonstrance.

If you and I as parents go contrary to God's instructions we are "sowing to the flesh" and we shall not fail to "reap corruption." The sorrow will come back upon our own heads, unless God in His mercy is sought unto and grants repentance to those whom we ourselves had been the cause of stumbling.

BIBLE EXAMPLES.

Gen. xviii. 17-19. I do not know any instance in all Scripture of obedience that is comparable with the obedience of Isaac when he allowed Abraham to bind him. He was a young man and could have resisted it. I have not the slightest doubt but that he was trained up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and he knew the blessing of obedience. "I would rather die than disobey my father," would be his language; a type of the blessed

Son of God, who said, "I delight to do Thy will," although it was the suffering of the Cross. Then take another instance of the opposite. 1 Sam. iii. 11-13. Now it was not that Eli did not remonstrate with his sons; he did; he spoke to them, he remonstrated with them (1 Sam. ii. 22-25). But *it was too late*; Eli had allowed them to have their own way when they were young. It is the sapling that must be trained, and, depend upon it, the earlier the instruction and the rule of the loving parent is begun with the child the better. Soon it becomes habit with the child to obey, then the battle is gained and all becomes easy. One other instance. 1 Kings i. 5, 6. These two sons of David, Absalom and Adonijah, were the children of a very beautiful woman, and were doubtless very handsome young men. Perhaps their beauty was their curse. David allowed them to have their own way. He could not bear to rebuke them, to discipline them, to curb their will. He would have displeased them, and this he could not

bear. But a parent *must* displease his child betimes. But beware that you are not always displeasing your child.

Beware lest you fail to take opportunities you might have of pleasing them, of showing your approval of them, and of giving them credit when they do right and well. Be as liberal and frank when you show your approval as when you show you are displeased. Never let the child be provoked to say, "There is no pleasing of them."

THE CHASTISEMENT OF CHILDREN.

Parents ought to let their children know and feel that they love them ; even when using the rod they ought to be made to feel that the parent's heart is broken by doing it. The idea of chastening when one is hot with anger, irritated at the annoyance the child has caused them, is foreign to Christian discipline. Often when such temper is shown it is the parents who ought to be chastened rather than the child. May God give parents to see it is a

solemn thing to chasten. "He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."

He does it in love. So much so, that before His chastening hand is off us He draws us to Him to pour out our heart into His ear and own how bad we were. The dealing of the parent ought to be with the conscience of the child, always to show *it is sin against God*, and in this way you bring the truth of the Gospel and of the need of the Saviour before the child as nobody else has power to do. The Sunday-school class is valuable, but it can never supply the place that the parent ought to occupy.

THE SALVATION OF CHILDREN.

Parents may confidently account that God will save their children. We have His expressed promise even to the jailer, "Thou shalt be saved *and thy house*," and why should not all the children of God's true people believe? If we commend Christ to them—the Gospel to them; if we seek diligently to instruct them, we can surely count upon God to bless and

make us the means of their conversion as well as of their godly upbringing. And remember in these days we need special wisdom from God in order that children may not be brought up according to the world's evil ways and foolish fashions. Grace does not run in the blood, it is not hereditary, nevertheless it often runs in the line, as with Timothy in his grandmother and in his mother. Grace often descends from parent to child, not by nature, but by the blessing of God.

One thing strikes me lately in meetings in Scotland and Ireland. God is working in saving the children of His people. This is a special way of God in preparing for the end. What a grand thing it will be when the whole family goes up to meet the Lord. Like the Philippian jailer's, the house of Crispus, and others. Why should it not be so? May God's children covet this grace of Him, that whole households be saved and ready to meet the Lord when He comes.



III.

MASTERS AND SERVANTS.

READ with me the following scriptures as bearing upon our subject:—Eph. vi. 5-9; Col. iii. 22-25; 1 Cor. vii. 20-24; 1 Tim. vi. 1-5; Titus ii. 9, 10; 1 Pet. ii. 18-21. Note in Peter that the word rendered “thankworthy” in verse 18, and that rendered “acceptable” in verse 19, are the same word that elsewhere is rendered “*grace*.” So it might be read “For this is *grace*,” &c. Read also Is. xlii. 1-4 and 19-21.

THE OBEDIENT SERVANT.

In this relationship, as in all the others we have been looking at, we have the pattern of heavenly things. The Master and the Servant is one of the relationships in which we find our Lord Jesus stood to His Father. He was not only the Son, He was also the Servant, or Bond-servant; and we have Him frequently

in the book of Isaiah called "My Servant." Where the Lord Jesus is spoken of as Servant, it is pointed out that whatever discouragement, opposition, and difficulty He might meet with, He would in the end be successful, and this success was to be achieved by His implicit obedience to the will of His Master. He was the obedient Servant as well as the obedient Son. He says (Ps. xl. 6, marg.), "Mine ear hast Thou bored"; doubtless an allusion to the Hebrew servant whose ear was to be bored with an awl to the doorpost, and thereby he became responsible to serve his master for ever. Our Lord Jesus was the obedient Servant unto death, "even the death of the Cross." Self-pleasing or man-pleasing had no place in His thoughts or ways. He had only One to look to, and only One to listen to; and just because He was the obedient Servant, therefore He was the One whom God pledged Himself to uphold. "Behold My Servant whom I uphold." God was able to make Him stand, and God did make Him stand; and because

He was the *obedient* Servant and the *upheld* Servant, therefore He was the Servant in whom His Master, Father, and God ever found delight; if God delighted in Him, God was sure to make His way successful, and the issue is, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till He have set judgment in the earth."

THE EXALTED SERVANT.

He is now at the right hand of God. The fulfilment of Isaiah xlii. has not yet come to pass. Has He failed? No. Is He discouraged? Nay, verily; He is rewarded at the right hand of the throne of God, and patiently waiting until every word be fulfilled. Now, God would have us to understand from His relationship as Master to Jesus as the Servant what our relationships, one toward another, are as masters and servants. Just as in the case of the husband and wife. The Lord Jesus is the pattern for the husband, and the husband's ways ought to be after that pattern. The Church being put in subjection to the Lord, as the wife to the husband;

therefore the wife's place is after that same pattern, the place of subjection. So also with the father and the children. The Father in Heaven had one beloved Son upon earth in whom He was well pleased, and that subject, obedient Son, who was ever a joy to His Father, is the pattern for the Christian son upon earth, even as that Father's love, and care, and watchfulness, and faithfulness to His Son is the pattern of what a Christian father's care to his children and family upon earth should be.

THE NEW TESTAMENT SERVANT.

The same principle holds good as to master and servant. God would have the earthly to be a counterpart of the heavenly. In the New Testament the word "servant" in all these passages we have read is literally "bond-servant." It is not the thought of our modern arrangement, in which the servant becomes a servant voluntarily, and engages for so much a week, which engagement terminates at will, due notice being given. That is not the New Testament thought of master and servant, and therefore

there is always some difficulty in applying to present-day conditions such passages as we have read. But although the terms of engagement differ, the relationship is the same; the principles which God has given in Scripture applying to bond-servants and heathens are equally applicable to the existing state of things around us. These many guiding scriptures did not cease to apply when slavery ceased. Though servants are not now bond-servants, but free, made free in the happy liberty of the government under which our lot is cast, free to engage or disengage, the only condition being that they abide by contract, still these divine instructions remain in force, and blessing can only be secured by loyal adherence to every word God has written. The divine principles equally apply, whether it be one who may be made free by the payment of a certain sum, like a soldier, or one engaged for a week, a month, or a year.

MUCH ABOUT SERVANTS.

I am sure it must have struck you how much

more is written upon this relationship than concerning any other of the relationships we have considered. Possibly one reason for this is, that the large majority of the Lord's people in those days were of the class of bond-servants. "Not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called" (1 Cor. i. 26). They were mostly the poor of this world, and being the poor of this world they were mostly in the bond-servant position. And our blessed Lord never respects persons ; in His esteem all His own are looked upon as valued at the price of His own precious blood, therefore He speaks more in detail, more in the language of warning, and more in the language of promise and encouragement to those who were in the position that must have often been irksome to the flesh and hard to bear, involving, doubtless, many hardships and many wrongs, and yet from which the great bulk of His people were called.

UNLAWFUL SERVICE.

In 1 Cor. vii. 20 (just glance at it a moment)

there is the twice-repeated exhortation, "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called," and in the second passage (verse 24) it is "therein abide with God." There are many callings in which one may be called by the grace of God, but in which it would not be possible to remain *with God*. There are unlawful callings in which a Christian could not abide with a good conscience. It is the will of God that each one who is in any such calling or position should seek deliverance from it at once, and at all costs; being the Lord's free man he must keep a good conscience. The Lord must be the first to be recognised in the matter. But here the calling spoken of is that of a bond-servant, and it says though you be a bond-servant, care not for it, do not be troubled about it, do not be thinking if you were free you could serve God so much better. Get rid of this thought; you have as large a sphere of service, though you are a bond-servant, as He sees fit to assign to you, for you are "the Lord's free man." You

are no longer under bondage to man ; free from sin and Satan, "bought with a price," you are the servant of the Lord Jesus, and He put you there, and He means you to shine just there where He has called you.

SCATTERED WITNESSES.

On our streets at night you will notice lamps scattered all along from north to south and east to west. What would you think of a proposal to get all the lamps in the city brought together into George's Square? The lamps are set where they are meant to shine ; so those who were converted were called in very diverse positions. One in Cæsar's household, one the chamberlain of the city, one an Areopagite, one there, one here ; but the great bulk of mankind being of the serving class (not the rich, or noble, or mighty), therefore the Lord calls many from that class, and means them to shine where He calls them. The exception is if you cannot abide "with God," out of it you must be. Now let us remember this, that if God has called you as serving in a mason's yard,

or a joiner's shop, or at a mill loom, or as a household servant, He has called you for the very purpose that *there* you should let your light shine. There is the spot where you can best serve the Lord who has made you free, and there is the divinely-appointed sphere of your service and testimony, the place to adorn His doctrine ; it is there that your life is to be an advertisement for your God. Has that been apprehended? Have we apprehended that whatever our position is, that is the place where God means us to be?

CONTRACT SERVICE.

I am not saying anything at all, mark you, about liberty of contract, of one giving his warning and leaving, and getting better employment. In all these things, we are variously circumstanced, and each one must seek guidance for himself ; the one thing to be sure of is, however attractive the promotion or advancement may be, that God is with us, and that every step is taken in His fear. If the root of it is simply covetousness, to get up

in the world, advancement in life, that is an unworthy motive for a Christian. God would have us to put Him first. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God," &c., as His "righteous Servant" ever did, and He will see that you lack for nothing. These earthly blessings are but the *trifles* with God; they shall all be "*added*," or thrown into the bargain, so to speak. "Your heavenly Father knoweth that you have need of these things." Only set Him first, and we will be astonished to find how He can load and bless us, even when things seem crooked, rough, and impossible.

INSTRUCTIONS TO SERVANTS.

Let us now look at some of the details of the instructions given.

"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling" (Eph. vi. 5).

There is a great difference between godly fear and slavish fear, between the fear that a child has lest he offend a loving parent and the fear that hath torment.

I remember once hearing of a household servant in a wealthy family; there were costly things in the drawing-room, vases worth hundreds of pounds, and her duty was to dust the room. She would say, "I never go into that room without trembling in case I break some of these things." This serves to illustrate our position as Christians. Not that you are handling brittle ware, but that every hour and every day of your life the honour of our Lord is at stake, and the whole doctrine of Scripture is to be commended or brought into ridicule, according as you obey or disobey its teaching.

EXALTED SERVICE.

I would have you notice in these passages that the Lord dwells more upon the adorning of His doctrine in speaking to servants than to any other relationship. To the wife with an unconverted husband, there is almost the promise that her godly, chaste behaviour, "without the word," will be the means of winning the husband for the Saviour. But to servants is specially granted the unspeakable honour,

the high blessed privilege of adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour. Thus, whether to their fellow-servants or employers, they can speak after a fashion that no one else can ; they can speak with voice and with life under the blessing and control of the Lord Jesus Christ. From such, one word would come with more power than ten thousand words from a street preacher, or from one whose life is not adorning the doctrine. Thus, as "upon those members of the body which we think to be less honourable we bestow more abundant honour" (1 Cor. xii. 23), and as in the case of the wife the Lord puts honour upon "the weaker vessel," so He puts honour upon servants, the high honour of being where they can exhibit the mind and ways of Christ in a way that is almost impossible in any other position. As regards the expression "fear and trembling," at your leisure refer to such passages as "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. ii. 12) ; Titus being received with fear and trembling (2 Cor. vii. 15) ; such scriptures

proving that it is not slavish fear, but a godly concern for the name and honour of the Lord in the manner of our behaviour.

“In singleness of your heart as unto Christ.” You find the same thought in Col. iii. 23, “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.”

SERVING THE LORD CHRIST.

Now, what is the meaning of that? If I understand it aright, it means this, that whatever your work or occupation — whatever capacity you are serving in—God would have you, when you start your work in the morning, to get your eye off your master and mistress (excepting in as far as you require to know their will) that you may serve in singleness of heart, without being distracted by any other consideration, going about your day's work as work for the Lord. It is that if you get up to sweep the carpet, or to labour in the workshop or at the loom, whatever the duty is, act so as if the Lord were standing at your side, saying

in your heart, "I am sweeping this carpet for my Lord"; "I am weaving this cloth for my Lord." Your earthly master or mistress may be a hard one, and never pleased, but it is your privilege to get your eyes off them. You are not doing it for them, you are doing it for the Lord, your eyes are on Him. You will have no rest or comfort in your life, no recompense from Him, nor will you be made a blessing where you are unless you see it thus. You will kick and rebel, like "a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke," unless you see it thus, and learn that you are in all things serving the Lord Christ.

On one occasion, I remember, tea was prepared for me by a dear Christian. She had washed the cups and prepared it all with her own hands, and she told me afterwards that as she was doing it the thought came into her mind, "how joyfully, how carefully I would do all this if, like Martha of old, I had been making ready the tea for Jesus!"

But, she added, "I *was* doing it for Him."

She had learned the meaning of that word, "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

Don't you see how the whole complexion of labour changes with the thought? How labour is lifted up into the sphere of worship; how God thus dignifies and ennobles it, however common-place it may be?

Thus Jesus, His blessed Servant, wrought at the carpenter's bench until He was thirty years old, and there glorified His Father.

It is written concerning Him in Isa. xlii. 19, "Who is blind, but My Servant? or deaf, as My Messenger that I sent? who is blind as He that is perfect, and blind as Jehovah's Servant?"

He was blind to every consideration but one, His Father's glory. As one blind and deaf He saw and heard nothing, though at every step a thousand influences were brought to bear upon Him to turn Him aside from the path of obedience. He had His eye upon God alone; He had but One to please.

So should it be with us, and if you and I were living like this what a different life we would oftentimes lead!

CHRISTIAN SERVANTS.

Many say they would not have a Christian servant in their employment. I thank God I cannot join in this cry. I can speak well of Christian servants; not that I have found them perfect (I am not perfect myself), but Christian servants have been the best I have had. But I know it is not always so; the complaint in many a case has been too well founded. They have often proved themselves more unwilling to oblige, and less disposed to take the heavy end of the burden, than a good-natured worldly man or woman. Such things are a reproach, a shame, a denial of the gospel! There ought to be none so accessible in time of need, none that can be so counted on, none whose master can depend upon them for doing the work well as the Christian.

“Not with eye service.” What does that mean? It is serving when your master’s eye is not upon you, exactly as if he were looking at you. Some are like the boy with his novel under the lid of the desk. He reads the novel when the master goes out at the door, and when he comes in, down goes the lid of his desk and he is busy writing! This is eye-service. There is a man who, as long as his foreman is away, can go round the corner and stand half an hour or so smoking his pipe. He thinks nothing of his master’s time. Can such an one be said to be trustworthy? If there was not the danger of “eye-service,” it would not be spoken of in this way.

It is a reproach and dishonour that such things should happen with Christians, and, where this is the case, his eye is not on the Lord. He has no thought of the recompense then.

The future recompense for faithful service here is specially set forth in connection with the servant. “Whatsoever good thing

any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free" (Eph. vi. 8); also see Col. iii. 24, "Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance."

RESPONSIBLE SERVICE.

Let us ever remember that we have a Master to whom we are responsible, and to whom we must surely give account. Our life is like a web in the weaver's loom. It has to be brought in and examined by the master, and when our web of life is woven and our Master has examined it, we shall receive a recompense for each thread that is done rightly therein. But each one shall also receive for the wrong that he has done, "at the judgment-seat of Christ." The nature of the receiving for the wrong will not be the receiving of punishment; it is not being sent to purgatory. That is not the idea; nevertheless there will be a suffering of loss. I do not know whether there may not be present

recompense in the Lord's providential dealings in this world, as we saw in the case of the behaviour of children to parents. I believe the child that dishonours his parent will not be prospered by God; and so it may be with the servant and his master, those who do not obey the Word will not be prospered here, and will receive for wrong-doing at the judgment-seat.

OBEDIENT SERVICE.

Another point I want you to look at, is in Titus ii. 9, "*Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things.*" That is the very same word which Paul uses in 2 Cor. v. 9, "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of (well-pleasing to) Him." The servant is to make it his business to please his master well, because in so doing he is pleasing his Master in heaven. Now, mark the next word, "Not answering again." Not gainsaying. It just

means taking patiently what may be said, even quick, unreasonable, or angry words. Is it not the case in daily life that many Christian servants have no idea of fulfilling this word, but treat their master or mistress with disrespect, "answering again" and "giving as good as they get," and perhaps a trifle better? Thus they disobey the Lord's command, as effectually as if they lied, or stole, and yet never think of confessing it to God as sin, but go on the next day as if nothing had happened. Yet they have sinned against the Lord, dishonoured His doctrine, and brought His gospel into reproach. Ought not such erring ones to have sought His forgiveness, and restoration? We need the Lord to enable us by His grace to serve Him acceptably. It is written in Heb. xi., "Through faith they subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness"; it requires the same faith to do the one as to do the other, and that means it requires God. You cannot expect the grace, help, and comfort of the Lord Jesus in your work if you

have been displeasing Him, and not exercising *self-judgment* concerning these things about which God has thought fit to write so particularly.

HONEST SERVICE.

Verse 10, "*Not purloining.*" This is not exactly *stealing*, it is just not being strictly honest in little things. That is the idea in the word "purloining." I doubt not you have heard the children's rhyme, "It is a sin to steal a pin." Who would think seriously of stealing pins, or sweetmeats? Yet a conscience exercised before God would no sooner take a pin, or a sweetmeat, than they would take a sovereign. They would show "ALL good fidelity in ALL things."

And remember that those who are employed by time, that is paid by the hour, or by the week of so many hours, are "purloining" every time they waste their master's time. To leave your work when your master's back is turned, even if it were to preach the gospel, would be defrauding and disobeying him.

I remember a servant girl sent out with a child in a perambulator on a fine summer day, instructed not to leave the child. She disobeyed, left the child in the perambulator to go round the field with tracts where many persons were, and before she got back the child had taken a fit. The girl may have meant well, but God could not bless her in disobeying her mistress. She was serving the Lord best when doing her mistress's will faithfully. Do I say that in order to discourage giving away tracts, and speaking to fellow-workmen? Nay, verily! But there is a time for everything. If you are paid by time it is your master's time, and it is "purloining" to employ it for anything else than your master's work.

"That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." Everything I have to do, from the time I get up till I go to bed, affords me an opportunity to ornament or adorn and so to commend the gospel of God. I ought to let men see how good is His

doctrine by my good works. In conclusion, glance at 1 Pet. ii. 18, "Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward."

SUFFERING WRONGFULLY.

Verse 19, "*For this is grace, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.*" Did you ever notice that it is in this very connection, this hard position for a servant to occupy, that the sufferings of Christ are brought in?

Verse 21, "*For even hereunto were ye called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps.*" The example of One who was wrongfully accused, who got laid to His charge things that He knew not of; they charged Him falsely, and watched every word that came from His lips that they might wrest it, and turn it against Him. He "endured the contradiction of sinners against Himself." Yet He endured it patiently, and thus He

left the example for us. And does He regret it now? Does He regret that He did not turn round and wither them? No. In the midst of it all He was a joy to His Father's heart, and God has recompensed Him with the honours and pleasures that are at His right hand for evermore! Dear friends, if you can get your eye off your earthly master or mistress however froward and hard to please they may be, and only see that it is the Lord putting upon you the honour of being unto God a sweet savour of Christ, then the Marah bitterness of your lot will be turned to sweetness, and when the time comes for the recompense you will find that He has marked every smart, every bitter word, every sigh, and every tear that you weep in secret, for eternal recompense. Then instead of a murmur at the hardness of your lot there will be a thanksgiving that He called you under such a hard master. A story is told of one who was falsely accused to the king and put in prison and in chains. But one day his innocence

was brought to light, and the king commanded his accusers to bring him forth. "Take off his chains and weigh them," said the king; and when it was done he commanded to give him their weight in gold! Would he not wish that the chains had been ten times heavier than? We will wish, perhaps, in that day of recompense that our opportunities of suffering for Christ were ten times more. Such sufferings are a reproduction of the grace that dwelt in fulness in the Son of God. God delights in seeing that grace reproduced in His people. O may He give us to see how these precious teachings of the Spirit lift up our work from the mire of drudgery, setting us as free men, serving the King of Glory.

WORDS TO MASTERS.

Very little is said to masters, but what is said must not be overlooked. Eph. vi. 9, "*And, ye masters, do the same things unto them.*" That means that the master is to act upon the same principle, for he also has a

Master in heaven, who sees him, who has His eye upon all his behaviour, and to whom he, as well as the servant, has to give an account. "Ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening." In those days, I suppose that masters were at liberty to use corporal punishment to their bond-servants. That might be limited by law, but anyhow there was no end to their threatenings. It is a poor thing to be always threatening. It is not God's way. God would have masters and mistresses to show patience and gentleness to their servants, after the pattern of the patience of God with us. We serve Him so imperfectly, and yet He patiently instructs, again and again teaching us the same lesson. Thus God would instruct us by His example. There may be a point at which an unruly, disobedient servant must be dismissed; as I have said before, there is liberty of contract. And the proper warning being given, whether by the master or by the servant, the contract terminates, and the relationship is dissolved. But in that

matter also there must be walking before God, and seeking to have the mind of the Lord. Whatever step is taken it must be in the fear of God in order to have His blessing.

JUSTICE IN MASTERS.

“*Knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with Him*” (Eph. vi. 9). As to “respect of persons,” look at Col. iv. 1, “Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal.” Now, that which is just, I presume, is that which is agreed upon. Perhaps it had a fuller meaning in the days of bond servants. Such were not paid weekly wages, but under unscrupulous masters were often subject to great injustice. The servant then was not in a position to bargain. But in our days the servant is as free as the master when entering upon an agreement. Whatever is agreed upon that give fully and freely, for that alone is just. As the Lord teaches in the parable. At the eleventh hour the first says, “These

last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day." But he said, "Didst not thou agree with me for a penny?" (Matt. xx.). That was justice. So that it is as much the master's responsibility to give every penny agreed upon, as the servant's to serve every minute of the time he is employed. "Give that which is just and equal." Now I put that alongside of Eph. vi. 9, "No respect of persons with Him." Not that an unskilled servant is to be paid the same wages as the skilled, the diligent servant the same as the slothful, a short-time servant as much as one who works many hours per week. The idea in "respect of persons" is favouritism, and giving undue preferences, thereby raising a spirit of envy and jealousy.

Giving that which is "equal" as well as that which is "just," implies no "respect of persons." The repetition of the word, "Your Master in heaven," is most solemn. It tells us that He takes cognizance of our business

affairs, and marks each contract entered into, each servant engaged and dismissed, and that concerning all these things account will have to be rendered to the Lord. How important, then, that all be done in the fear of God.

Well is it for that master who habitually sets himself at the bar, examines his own work in the light of the Word and in the presence of God, and so anticipates the judgment-seat. This applies to every relationship, for whatever position God has put us in, that is the sphere in which we are to serve the Lord.

Some have the idea that serving in the Gospel, and that only, is "the work of the Lord." God forbid that I should disparage that most glorious work, but let it not be forgotten that there are many departments in the blessed service, and that God is to be served and honoured as much in the household, the workshop, and the business, as on the platform or at the open-air meeting.



10.

SUBJECTS AND RULERS.

READ in the Epistle to the Romans xiii. 1-8. Verse 2, "Receive to themselves damnation," or, properly, judgment; verse 5, "Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake,"—not only because if you are not subject you will suffer for it, but also for "conscience' sake," because it is the will of the Lord; verse 6, "For they (that is, the tax gatherers) are God's ministers," &c. 1 Peter ii. 13-17: note on verse 16, "servants of God," read "bond-servants."

In these relationships which we have been considering, we have seen that God addresses words of counsel both to those who rule and to those who are to be in subjection. He addresses husbands as well as wives, parents

as well as children, masters as well as servants ; but here it is noticeable that we only have in this relationship the one class addressed—only subjects—and I think it devolves upon those who think that a Christian should be a politician to explain how it is that in the New Testament, whilst God has revealed His will fully concerning every other relationship in life, He has given no instructions to Christian rulers. I shall take that up (God willing) later on, but in the meantime let us look at the instructions given to us as subjects. Turn again to Romans xiii., and bear in mind that at the time this was written the government was in the hands of the Roman emperor ; power belonged to the Romans. The head of the Roman empire was a heathen, and his government was anything but what we should call a good government. In fact, to us who are accustomed to the peace and liberty of this land, it would have been considered intolerable. Yet it is of that government then existing that the apostle writes, “Let every soul be

subject unto the Higher Powers ; for there is no power but of God. The powers that be, the presently existing powers (the Roman Government), are ordained of God," so that this passage is not at all to be qualified by the nature of the government, which may be good or it may be bad. It is generally admitted by thinking people that any form of government is better than no government ; because man left to himself, uncontrolled, is in the condition most favourable to the development of the evil that is in him. Lawlessness leaves man to develop his worst instincts. Even in those days God had so appointed that the Roman government for the most part condemned the outward evils of life,—robbery, murder, and so on,—and so stood in the defence of those who were honest and upright. Thus all government in God's providence has more or less the features of what government ought to aim at, viz., the protection of the rights of the subject, and the condemnation of the vicious, the cruel, and the

guilty. If subjection was inculcated in those days of Roman dominion, how much more it becomes us as subjects

UNDER THE BEST GOVERNMENT

that ever existed in the world—the government under which is found most liberty for good, and most repression of evil—to be implicitly subject to the existing authorities. And remember that this passage teaches us that it is God in His providence, as we read in many other scriptures, Proverbs, Psalms, &c., who raiseth up one to authority and power and putteth down another. It is God by His providence that permits certain forms of government to pass away, and other forms to come in, and even in our own land the changes that take place through the votes of the people are by no means uncontrolled by the hand of God. As Christians, we have to recognise the government now existing. Next year if a Liberal government comes into power instead of a Conservative,

to us, as Christians, it is the same. The Queen is on the throne by the will of God. It is by God's providential dealings that we have such perfect protection to person and property; and it is our privilege to recognise this as of God, and give Him thanks for it. Moreover, a government involves a revenue, therefore, as a necessary result, the payment of taxes.

OUR OWN GOVERNMENT.

The government of this country is very expensive, but, nevertheless, very cheap in comparison to many other countries, although it takes a revenue of £90,000,000 a year to maintain it. Here, however, we are taught that it is not a hardship but a privilege that God puts upon us, to pay the tribute, the tax, the dues that the government exacts for its support. It is not our business as Christians to question what purpose these are put to; but to be subject to the powers that be, and to recognise the collector of taxes to be "God's minister attending on this very thing," whether

it be for water or gas, for army or police, for poor or for education. I don't believe we get better value for our money in any article we buy than we do for the taxes we pay. We have no conception of the value of the liberty we enjoy, the protection to lives and property in this highly-favoured land, where the murderer is searched out and executed, the thief and the robber apprehended and punished—and where every law-abiding subject, however poor, has the whole power of the government to protect him. Unlike other lands there is no such thing known in this kingdom as a judge being bribed to give unjust judgment. Trial by jury is an additional safeguard and guarantee of equity. The Queen lives in the affections of her subjects; her character remains, after so many years, untarnished, and her influence in favour of what is just and pure is incalculable. Oh, the blessing, the inestimable blessing, that neither you nor I ever heard the sound of war; we never heard a gun fired for destruction

within this realm. Let us thank God for such a blessing, and not forget the request that God has put into our lips in 1 Timothy ii. 1, 2.

PRAYERS FOR RULERS.

Looking at the whole of this chapter and what follows, I take it chiefly to concern the public assembling of God's people. This I gather partly from the words, "prayers, intercessions," &c., being in the plural, and also from the next chapter which treats of rule and order in the Church. It appears that it is one of our first privileges and responsibilities, that the Church should make prayer to God for all classes and conditions of men. Prayer is to be made for "all men," whether it be King or Queen, cabinet minister, or magistrate; all that are by the providence of God in authority claim our prayers. "*For this is good,*" &c. It is possible to be under a government where we might be quite at liberty to live "in all honesty," and not "in all godliness." We might be where to carry out the word of the

Lord would involve persecution even unto banishment or death. At this present time, in some other lands, there is scarce permission at all for God's people to come together in the name of the Lord. If we were in Russia, we might, for so assembling, be transported to Siberia. We are under a government which permits us to live "in all godliness and honesty," bearing testimony to the truth, even in the open air. It is sad and pitiful when God's children abuse such a privilege, and make themselves a nuisance to their neighbours. I grieve that Christians should be so foolish as to insist upon marching a brass band through the streets on the Lord's day. Our brethren who do such things at the command of a human leader are sadly mistaken, and are doing damage thereby. It is only raising the wrath of man—it is not the reproach of the cross, neither is it following in the footsteps of our rejected Lord. Of Him it is written, "He shall not strive nor cry, nor lift up His voice in the streets." That does not

mean that He would not preach at the street corner, but He would never raise a tumult; He would never go about contending for His rights. So did our blessed Master, and so ought His servants.

THE POWER OF RULERS.

Then glance again at Romans xiii. Notice the expression, verse 4, "For He beareth not the sword in vain." Now remember that "the sword" is a different thing from "the rod." The rod pertains to the family, the sword to the government; and the sword means nothing more nor less than the power of life and death. It is well that God's children should be clear about this. "He that sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed," was God's appointment when He constituted government in the hands of Noah. It was not an arrangement that originated under Moses, under the law; it was *continued* under the law, but it was God's appointment when He first ordained govern-

ment in the earth. The reference to the sword signifies the power of life and death ; and all government in the world must have this power as its ultimatum, or else it would be no government. When our Lord Jesus comes to take the power and to reign, this power will be His. The modern sentimentalism that would do away with capital punishment is the thought of man and not of God, confounding rule in the Church and rule in the world. Some think that the world ought to be governed on the principles of grace. But the thing is a contradiction. The world can never be governed on the principles of grace. When the Lord comes to reign it is written, "Let the earth rejoice," but also "A fire goeth before Him and burneth up His enemies round about Him" (Ps. xcvi). "Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet" (Isa. xxviii. 17). It is evident, therefore, that government on the earth involves the power of life and death ; and it is not for us to wish it otherwise.

OBEDIENT TO RULERS.

Our business is not to do anything that will make us obnoxious to a good government, but "by well doing to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (1 Peter ii. 15). "And who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good?" (1 Peter iii. 13). Peter said that, well knowing he would suffer as a martyr for Christ. Although the Lord told him he would be lifted up on a cross, yet Peter says, "Who is he that will harm you?" That word of Christ to Peter was as the chariot to Elijah, as the whirlwind that lifted him up to heaven. So then, apart altogether from the character of the government, it is our business to be subject, to pay what is righteously laid upon us for its support, to pray for those in authority, to fear nothing, but be followers of that which is good. And notice again and again we are exhorted to give *honour* as well as *tribute*. The Lord J sus affirmed the principle by saying, "Render unto C sar the things which are C sar's, and unto God

the things that are God's" (Matt. xxii. 21). What an opportunity for the Lord Jesus, if He had been a patriot after the world's ideas, or a politician, to tell the Jewish people they ought not to be subject to the Roman power. Roman coin was circulated in the country, and they ask, "Is it right to render tribute unto Cæsar or not?" (Matt. xxii. 17). The answer is, "There is no power but of God." And so also as to "honour." In these days there is little honour given to those in authority. Nevertheless, it is a privilege. The apostle said, "I magnify mine office," not "I magnify myself." It is their office, not their personal character, that demands honour. If it be the King, I am bound to honour him. If it be the sheriff, I am bound to honour him. It is our privilege to honour those who by God's providence are put in a position over us, and to show it by our manner and ways as well as by willingly paying our taxes. I counted it an honour some time ago, when in the North of Scotland, as well as a duty, to take off my hat and salute the

Queen, which she acknowledged as any other lady would do.

SHOULD CHRISTIAN SUBJECTS BE
“ POLITICIANS ” ?

To be a politician involves necessarily entering into the discussion of the many questions which form political parties. To discuss them involves being well informed upon them all, otherwise the only course open is blindly to follow the party leader. If it is a Christian's duty to take part at all, then it must follow that if so qualified he should publicly as well as privately seek to advance the views he contends for. If he enters the arena upon one subject, he cannot avoid entering upon other subjects. If he is to be a politician at all, then he should be an all-round politician, whose wisdom, force of conviction, and determination to carry forward what he deems right, will give him weight and leadership.

Now if God had meant a Christian to become a politician and to aspire to positions of influence

or authority under the world's government, I am right well assured He would have given instructions as to how to attain such ends, and how to behave under such conditions.

But God is silent. Not a syllable of instruction has He given to show a saint how he is to conduct himself as either helping to constitute a government, or co-operating with a government, or in any way acting as a political agent.

I take that silence to be very significant, seeing that it forms so marked a contrast to the two-fold instructions given concerning all other earthly relationships. I contend that this divine omission is not accidental but intentional.

Remember that in the past dispensation God had a nation—the nation of Israel—and a king appointed by Himself over that nation. There was no such distinction in Israel as political government and ecclesiastical government. The nation of Israel constituted the congregation of Jehovah. There was but one statute book in Israel—"the law of the Lord."

Neither the people nor the king had power to make a law. God was their Law-giver; the king and the judges were but the administrators of the law as given in the divine statute book.

But when Israel had utterly failed to carry out the will of Jehovah, dominion was taken from them and put into the hand of the Gentile.

TRANSFERENCE OF AUTHORITY.

From the time that supreme authority in the earth was given by God to Nebuchadnezzar, political power was separated from religious statutes and ordinances. Israel were to own in their captivity the dominion that God had given to the Gentile, they were to "render unto Cæsar the things that belonged to Cæsar"; but by so doing they never surrendered their allegiance to Jehovah, but were bound to "render unto God the things that belonged to God."

Therefore the godly captives in Babylon would not "defile themselves with the king's

meat." Whilst owning the political power to be of God, they made no surrender of their responsibility to obey the law of the Lord in all that pertained to religion and morals.

With Nebuchadnezzar began what our Lord calls "the times of the Gentiles" (see Luke xxi. 24); that period during which Gentile power was in the ascendancy. From Nebuchadnezzar till the appearing of the Lord Jesus as King of kings, the Gentile has dominion in the earth; and Israel as a nation is either captive, or granted, as in the days of Ezra and until Christ, a certain degree of liberty and self-government, or else as now "scattered and peeled."

GENTILE RULERS.

The character of Gentile government is shown by God in the Book of Daniel in two distinct visions; the one to Nebuchadnezzar, the other to Daniel. To the king it takes the form of a glorious image of which he is the head. To the prophet it is four wild, monstrous, ravenous and destructive beasts. And these

representations are characteristic, for to the carnal mind, world-government still appears glorious and attractive, whilst to those who have the secret of the Lord it is monstrous, arbitrary, and oppressive, from first to last, whether autocratic or democratic.

That in our day, and in this country, government allows such liberty and secures so many blessings is of the overruling providence and mercy of God, but it is by no means the general character of Gentile dominion.

This is attributable mainly to the fact that Christianity became a mighty force in the earth, and allied itself with the world power, thereby introducing into government many righteous and beneficent principles. But this ascendancy of Christianity was only gained at the cost of surrendering its heavenly character and hope. The Church ceased to be an unworldly stranger and pilgrim passing on to a heavenly city, and settled down to be a citizen of earth, allying itself with earthly power in order to reform and renovate the world that rejected her Lord.

THE PRESENT RULE.

The first three kingdoms represented by the first three beasts in Daniel's vision each passed away before the power of its successor.

The fourth continues to the end, and only passes away at the coming of the Lord in glory. Therefore the details given regarding this kingdom are more abundant.

In the Book of Daniel, distinct reference is made to the Babylonish, the Medo-Persian, and the Grecian or Macedonian dominions.

The fourth kingdom had no existence; but if we turn to the Gospel by Luke we are left in no doubt as to what the fourth kingdom is.

In Luke iii. 1, 2, we read, "Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar, the word of the Lord came unto John," &c. The particulars here given suffice to fix the date without controversy. Here, then, the fourth kingdom is definitely pointed out by God. Under the Roman power the Lord Jesus was born. In Revelation it is seen as a dragon standing ready to devour

the man-child on whom earth's hopes depend. Under that power Messiah is cut off; under it Jerusalem is reduced to desolation and trodden down, and we know assuredly that the same power will continue and attain its greatest dominion under Antichrist, until "the stone cut out of the mountain without hands"—the stone rejected by the builders, but made the head-stone of the corner—falls upon it and reduces it to powder.

APOSTATE RULE.

This kingdom having the longest duration of the four, also passes through various stages, and finally is formed into ten kingdoms, some in which the monarchial form of government, represented by the iron, prevails, and some in which the democratic, republican, or socialistic forms prevail, as represented by the clay. But whatever its form, its principles are such as to be a preparation for the final apostasy. The whole ten kingdoms will agree to give universal authority to the "lawless one,"

who, utterly spurning the will of God, the Word of God, the people of God, and the Christ of God, shall exalt himself, do according to his own will, and claim universal worship and universal dominion in the earth.

By no leavening process, therefore, is the world's government to be transformed into the reign of Christ. Ripe for judgment,—it shall be dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel, and be made as the chaff upon the summer threshing-floor.

FUTURE RULE.

Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews, the seed of David, is raised from the dead, according to the gospel Paul preached (2 Tim. ii. 8).

For His coming and His kingdom we wait ; our hope to be for ever His associates in His everlasting reign.

It was no vain boast which Satan made when he offered the Lord all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, saying, " That is

delivered unto me, and to whomsoever I will I give it" (Luke iv. 6), for he actually does give it to the man of his choice, as we read in Rev. xiii. 4, "And they worshipped the *dragon* which gave power unto the *beast*." Thus, in a deeper sense than is generally supposed, is Satan the "god of this world" and the "prince of this world."

The Saviour would accept no promotion from Satan, either directly or through the people (see John vi. 15). He detected Satan's voice in Peter's suggestion to evade the cross, and doubtless He detected the same inspiration in the people's desire to make Him king. He would accept dominion from none but His Father, though well He knew that the path to His crown must needs be by the cross and the grave.

A CHRISTIAN GOVERNMENT!

Under what form, then, of the world's government is the Christian to enter into politics? Under which of the wild beasts shall he take

office? Where does he find in the Word of God his warrant to ally himself with government or party to attain ends which he supposes will be for the general good? Where in Scripture prophecy is there a trace of a "Christian government," any more than of a reigning church? As well might we speak of a Christian seven-headed wild beast!

Who will venture to deny that the alliance of the Church with the world power, however plausible and apparently advantageous, cost the Church its heavenly character, and that not as an accident, but as the necessary consequence of the position?

And can the individual become a politician, and bend his energies to further the views of government or party, and not likewise surrender his heavenly character and citizenship?

OUR POWER.

Are we, therefore, powerless? Have we no resource, as we see how Christian liberty is endangered and lawlessness gaining the day?

Yes ; we have the place of priestly power, the place of intercession and prayer. Who can tell how God in His wisdom may find out ways to order the current even of this world's politics, for the continued and increasing liberty for the Gospel to be preached, and for His people to carryout Hiswill in public and private assembly?

Let us, therefore, be subject to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake ; let us be thankful to God for the liberty and peace we enjoy, and make our individual and united prayer unto God to overrule all political movements for His glory, the good of His people, and the furtherance of His Gospel.

Then, as strangers and pilgrims here, let us confess our heavenly character and citizenship, and in no wise ally ourselves with the world in its earth-born movements and world reformation schemes, whether political or social, but wait for His appearing who shall be to this poor, sin-stricken earth the fulfilment of every hope, whose eternal Kingdom shall be "righteousness, and joy, and peace."



APPENDIX.

SUBJECTS AND RULERS.

[AN esteemed correspondent, while the foregoing pages were appearing in the *Witness*, addressed to the author the letter which follows. The author's remarks on the letter referred to appear in smaller type.]

IN reply to your challenge, addressed to the supporters of the view that a Christian may be a "ruler," to show why in the New Testament God has given no instructions to Christian rulers, may I remind you that no instructions are required for this as distinct from any other position of responsibility? The ruler is to "eschew evil, to do good, to seek peace, and to ensue it." He is to "judge righteous judgment."

These being instructions for all believers under all circumstances, they do not touch the question at issue as to whether a Christian ought to be a politician.

He is to be a terror to evil-doers, and to praise them that do well.

This quotation is here expressed as if it were an exhortation to Christian rulers, but reference to Rom. xiii. will show that it has no place among the exhortations of the chapter, but is a statement as to what rulers are to be, always speaking *of* such in the third person and never *to* them.

Like elders in the Church and bishops in their families, he is to *rule well*.

Elders, as to rule in the Church, are specially addressed and instructed ; therefore no question arises as to whether a Christian should be an elder, overseer, or pastor.

It is idle to say that the expression "rule well" is indefinite and requires enlargement. Everyone knows what ruling well means. And no doubt if the New Dispensation had involved any change in this respect the beautiful language of 2 Sam. xxiii. 4 would

have been further enlarged. "He that ruleth over men righteously, that ruleth in the fear of God, he shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, a morning without clouds," &c. Blessed office! Christ-like service truly!

- 2 Sam. xxiii. 4 refers to a dispensation in which no such distinction obtained as this dispensation necessitates, viz., between *world-government* and *church-government*. The world-kingdom then was Jehovah's congregation; and in the day prophetically spoken of in this passage the same conditions will again be found—the king of the nation will be the ruler of the congregation. The Queen is nominally the head of the Church of England now, but we know that such a relationship is utterly unscriptural, the principles of world-government and of church-government being incompatible.

Happy they who, whether in the factory, the ship, the farm, the family, the Church, or the State, are by grace enabled so to walk and so to rule!

- "The factory, the ship, the farm"—all these come under the head of masters and servants, and are therefore directly and specially contemplated in

Scripture as possible for Christians. So "the family" and also "the Church."

But if you still object that rule in the State was so important a sphere as to require some special instructions, I reply that the Holy Spirit in no part of the practical or ethical Scriptures gives directions for possible future needs of the saints.

This may be so, but we do not admit that in those days none were converted to God in positions of responsibility under the world's government, as soldiers, magistrates, &c. We believe there were such, and whilst no command is given to *withdraw immediately* from such positions, there are principles essential to the Christian order of things that would necessarily sooner or later detach them from the same; and again we assert that there are no instructions or exhortations to such which could be construed into a sanction of the occupation of such positions by a Christian.

He dealt with the day then present, and the customs and requirements of the time, merely giving *principles* for our guidance under circumstances not then present.

Surely there are principles, precepts, and examples

in the Old Testament sufficient to guide *parents and children* at all times. Yet parents and children are addressed specially in the New Testament, and in addressing them the Old Testament is actually referred to in confirmation. It is not enough to account for the absence of such address to rulers to say that principles of rule are found in the Old Testament.

For the sect of the Nazarene there was then no need of such instructions, as there were no cases of Christian rulers requiring them, nor for centuries after. But the principles are given, and are amply sufficient.

Is it not a little dangerous to suggest that the absence of instructions absolves saints from duty?

The absence of specific instruction cannot absolve from DUTY, but the question in dispute is *whether it is a Christian duty* to take part in the world's politics and government !

Will you, when dealing further with this subject, refer to like absence in regard of the observance of the Lord's-day ; the institution of marriage, both as to monogamy and the use of a rite ; the age for baptism of believing

children ; the use of forms of praise and prayer ; &c., &c. ?

G. F. T.

We do not think the propounding of further difficult questions has any bearing upon the one under consideration ; nevertheless, we may say as to those named, that either there is New Testament instruction as for monogamy, or they are matters of Christian liberty and discretion. The use of forms of prayer we except, but need not discuss.

J. R. C.

