

Handfuls On Purpose

By

James Smith

For

**Christian Workers and Bible Students
Outlines, Readings, Studies, Thoughts,
Illustrations, Hints.**

Book F

PREFACE.

IT is with deep thankfulness to the Giver of every good gift that we send forth this NINTH SERIES of "Handfuls on Purpose." It is very gratifying to US that the interest taken in them has been steadily growing from the first ; and as they have been the means of leading many Christian workers into a closer study of the Word for themselves, we rejoice, as this was one of the chief objects of their publication.

In preparing these "Handfuls" we have sought to get at the heart-thoughts of the Word of God, so that weary workers and busy men might find food for the strengthening of their faith, and assisting in their work for the Master.

Without making any claim of literary or critical value, we have sought to give *original* matter, very little if any in the whole series having been copied.

We purpose, if the Lord will, adding one more Volume to the Series, and thus in measure encompassing the task on our heart, of going through the entire Book.

We esteem it a great privilege to have the opportunity of ministering in any small degree, to the encouragement and usefulness of the lowliest of Christ's servants, believing that "inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me" (Matt. 25. 40). In this volume, which we trust will also be found helpful in "the quiet hour," we have once more humbly attempted to fulfil the Apostle's injunction, "Let him that is taught in the Word *communicate* unto him that teacheth in all good things" (Gal. 6. 6). What we have prayerfully received, we herewith prayerfully give.

JAMES SMITH.

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Handfuls on Purpose

Old Testament Outlines

THE GREAT INVITATION.

ISAIAH 1. 1-20.

ISRAEL had fallen into degenerate times: and just as "Moses was born" in the time of national darkness and despair (Acts 7. 19, 20), so did the "Vision" come to Isaiah, the Son of Amos (v. 1). God has His own time and way of unveiling human guilt, and Divine mercy. These two pictures are exhibited before us here in this chapter.

I. **Their Guilty Condition.** They are charged with rebellion. "I have nourished and brought up sons and they have rebelled against Me." He nourished them and brought them up out of Egypt, and through the wilderness, into a land of privilege and plenty. Yet they rebelled against Him. Have we not also, as a people, been nourished and brought up in a land of Gospel light and privilege? Are we still rebelling against Him? This wretched condition was the result of a certain moral process. There was—

I. **INCONSIDERATENESS.** "My people doth not consider." They became more thoughtless and thankless toward their Owner and Provider than the ox, or the ass. When we cease to **regard** the work of the Lord, and to **consider** the operations of His hands in our behalf, we have already entered the path of the backslider.

2. PRESUMPTION. "They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel" (v. 4). Their thoughtlessness has resulted in a wilful and deliberate departure from the Living God. When the backslider has determined to have his own will and way there will be a breaking of the Lord's bands, and a casting away of His cords (Psa. 2. 3).

3. PERVERSITY. "Why should ye be stricken?...ye will revolt more and more" (v. 5). God could not deal with them as sons in chastisement. So far gone were they that they would not "endure" it, but only harden their neck in more bitter revolt (Heb. 12. 5-8). It is pitiful in the extreme when God has to say, "In vain have I smitten your children: they receive no correction" (Jer. 2. 30).

4. CORRUPTION. "Whole head sick... whole heart faint...no soundness...putrifying sores," etc. (w. 5, 6). This sickness, and faintness, these wounds, and sores, can never be healed, bound up, and mollified, apart from Him whom they have despised and rejected. Corruption is the result of being separated from the Source of Life—the Living One. To forsake the Lord is to prefer corruption and death to health and life (Matt. 5. 13).

II. His Merciful Offer. "Come now let us reason together, saith the Lord," etc. (vv. 18-20). These words contain—

1. A REVELATION. They reveal the infinite mercifulness of the God whom they had rejected and offended. Why should He make the first offer to His rebel creatures? "Oh, 'twas love, wondrous love." While we were yet sinners Christ died for us.

2. AN INVITATION. "Come now, let us reason together." God recognises and declares man's kinship with Himself. "Come, let us reason," He does not "reason" with the

brute creation, How gracious this invitation is. God might have driven out the whole nation from His presence as He drove out the man from the garden. "Come now," for where sin did abound grace hath much more abounded (Rom. 5. 20). "Come now," and let us reason together, for sin has been atoned at Calvary's Cross.

3. A PROMISE. "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow." It has been said that "any man can dye his soul with sin, but only God can bleach it." God's power is in and behind His promise to turn the scarlet-dyed clothes of a harlot-soul into the white robes of a blood-washed saint. "Come now," for neither the number nor the depths of your sins need be any hindrance, salvation is of the Lord. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1. 7).

4. A WARNING. "But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword" (v. 20). This is the Divine ultimatum. If men refuse, and rebel against His free offer of mercy and forgiveness, if they will not yield to the Divine *reasonableness*, then their end is destruction. God is merciful, but God cannot lie (Titus 1. 2). If His promises are despised, His judgments will not slumber. Come now, for behold now is the day of salvation.

FAILURE IN THE MIDST OF PRIVILEGE.

ISAIAH 5. 1-7.

This song of the prophet is a parable in honour of Jehovah, recalling His marvellous goodness to His people, and their failure and ingratitude to Him.

I. The Work Done. (w. 1, 2). These two verses contain a brief, but perfect outline of Israel's history. The "fruitful hill"-Canaan. "Fenced" with promises. "Planted with the choicest vine"-His chosen people,

“Gathered out of the stones”—idols, etc. “Built a tower”—Temple. “Made a winepress”—Altar of Sacrifice. “He looked for grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.” Utter failure. All this is typical of what God in mercy hath done for us individually, and as a nation. We also have been brought out of the bondage of paganism and spiritual darkness, and planted beside the “fruitful hill” called Calvary.

II. **The Result Shown.** “He looked for grapes, and it brought *forth wild grapes.*” There was the semblance of the fruit desired, but they were *wild*, utterly inconsistent with their profession, and entirely unfit for His use. There was nothing to satisfy the soul of the great Planter and Protector. **Fleshly works by professing Christians are but wild grapes. They that are in the flesh cannot please God.** Our God is quick to discern the real character of the fruit of His planting. The *wild* grape is the outcome of the old, wild, carnal nature that has not yet been **completely subdued by the new life.** Be not deceived, God is not mocked.

III. **The Challenge Made.** “And now.. .judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard, what could have been done more to My vineyard that I have not done in it” (vv. 3, 4). He had poured out His favours on His vineyard, **but they had stained it with the blood of His Son.** Could He have shown more love, more considerateness, more longsuffering mercy for His people than He did? Think of His dealings with them from Egypt to Canaan. Think also of **His dealings with us, in the gift and sufferings of His Son, and in His merciful providence, that He might have us a people for the honour of His Name.** Now, judge. What could He do more? (Matt. 23. 37).

IV. **The Doom Incurred.** “And now...I will tell you what I will do...I will take away the hedge...and

break down the wall...I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it" (w. 5, 6). Desolation comes upon them because His *protection* is removed, and His *gifts* withheld. The **darkness of doom** is the absence of the light of Grace. When Christ was compelled to turn His back on the temple, He had to say, "Behold your house is left *unto you* desolate." To be left to ourselves is to be desolate. My Spirit will not always strive with man. Repent. Return. Believe. Submit.

FITNESS FOR SERVICE.

ISAIAH 6. f-8.

"IN the year that King Uzziah died I saw. " Uzziah had reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. During all that time "he was marvellously helped till he was strong." But when he became strong, in his own eyes, his heart was lifted up to his destruction. He died a leper, for the Lord had smitten him (2 Chron. 26). At such a mournful time, and in such distressing circumstances, the Vision of ~~the~~ thrice Holy One came to Isaiah. What a change from the vision of a defeated, leprous king to that of *the exalted Throne of the Eternal One. Our day of shame and sorrow may be the day of a new revelation of hope.*

I. A Glorious Vision. "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, " etc. He had seen the downfall of Uzziah, but he saw also *the glory of the unfailing God.* This vision is the reality of that which was seen by the high priest in type, when he passed through the Veil into the "Holiest of All." *The Lord enthroned, and His glory filling the house.* The landscape was there all the time, with its riches and beauty, although we did not see it till the *Veil of mist was rolled away. The pure in heart see God.* We, like the prophet, must have

this vision if we would become meet for the service of God. We must needs see Jesus, our Lord, who humbled Himself to the death for us. "High and lifted up," exalted and enthroned, and the glory of His person and work filling the temple. Satisfying to the full every heavenly and Divine requirement (Heb. 2. 9).

II. **A Humbling Confession.** "Then said I, woe is me ! for I am undone (cut off). . . I am a man of unclean lips," etc. A vision of the highness and holiness of God is a self-humbling sight. "Unclean lips" are but the weapons of an unclean heart. It was when Job saw the Lord that he abhorred himself (Job 42. 5, 6). It is in His light that we see light clearly. This is God's method. First, revelation, then self-discovery, self-abhorrence, and self-abandonment. The vision of Bethlehem, Calvary and Olivet, first smites with conviction then inspires with hope. Having "seen the King, the Lord of Hosts," he has seen *his own* need, and the need of *the people*, for they also have "unclean lips" (v. 5). There will be hope for the people when the servants of God have had a clear vision of God, and of their own condition and need.

III. **A Great Salvation.** "Then flew one of the Seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand" (v. 6). The vision, the confession, "*then*" the live coal. The Seraphim fitly represents the personal work of the Holy Spirit in taking the things of the "Altar" (the substitutionary work of Christ), and applying them to the troubled and unclean soul. The lips were touched with fire because the sin was purged, and the iniquity taken away. This salvation is threefold—

1. PARDON. "Thy sin is covered" (*margin*). Covered by the atoning blood of God's Lamb. Such a covering as only God can cast over the guilt and heinousness of sin (Heb. 1. 3).

2. PURITY. “Thine iniquity is taken away.” Not only is sin covered, but the cause of sinning is dealt with. The iniquity, or lack of equity in the nature, toward God and man is taken away. **Renewed** in your mind, morally straightened.

3. POWER. “Lo, this hath touched thy lips.” The touch of the living coal was as the **sealing of the Holy Spirit** (Eph. 1. 13). It was power from on high putting his *lips* into touch and perfect accord with the holy **Altar**. Only the fire-touched lips can speak out the real significance of the **Cross** of Christ. Pentecost was needed to emphasise Calvary.

IV. A Definite Commission. The call of God was distinctly heard. “I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send” (v. 8). It was not a voice commanding him to go, but a voice revealing to him, in a new fashion, **God’s longing desire to declare His mind and will to the people through His willing servants.** Who will go for us? The man with the fire-touched lips is now ready to say, “Here am I, send me.” He who **has been cleansed, and claimed by the Altar fire, yields himself at once unto God as an instrument of righteousness.** Now that his **uncleanness and unwillingness have been taken away,** the Lord says, “Go” (v. 9).

THE ALMIGHTY SANCTUARY.

ISAIAH 8. 11-14.

THIS message from the Lord to the prophet in times of distress and perplexity, contains a message of guidance and comfort to all who are in similar circumstances.

I. The Danger. Judah was in distress, because Syria and Israel had formed a confederacy against them. **Many also in Judah were disaffected to the house of David,**

and in secret sympathy with the enemies of their country. They were “refusing the waters of Shiloah, which go softly” and rejoicing in the glory of a heathen king (v. 6). To which party should the prophet, the man of God, ally himself? This problem is with the Church to-day. There is a confederacy against it; organised parties of practical atheists. Within the Church herself there are also those who are “refusing the waters of Shiloah (Gospel), which go softly.” Too softly for those who are the secret enemies to the Kingdom of God, and of His Christ, and who prefer the broad, turbulent waters of worldly pleasures and politics.

II. The Remedy. It consisted of—

1. A REVELATION. “The Lord spake to me.. .and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people” (v. 11). Judah had lost sight of God, and of their relationship to Him, and, as a result, were seeking to “associate themselves” with a prosperous, heathen kingdom. But God’s Word to the prophet was, “thou shalt *not walk in the way of this people.*” The Church must choose whether she will separate herself unto God, or form a league with the aggressive forces of infidelity.

2. A REBUKE. “Say ye not, a confederacy. .neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid” (v. 12). God’s Word warns us against glibly using the language of the ungodly. “Say ye not.” Don’t you fall into their snare, or into their manner or spirit of working. Don’t you be terrified at their numbers and organisation. Neither be afraid of their proposals, or propaganda. They shall be “broken in pieces.. . their counsel shall come to naught” (w. 9, 10). Those of Judah who were crying out for a confederacy with Assyria as a protection against the combined forces of Syria and Ephraim, were but showing their fatal weakness, as those who dwelt in the land of

“Immanuel” (v. 8). Such compromising on the part of God’s people needs to be sternly rebuked. Whatever tends to lessen faith in God is dishonouring to Him.

3. A COUNSEL. “Sanctify the Lord of Hosts Himself, and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread” (v. 13). To “Sanctify the Lord of Hosts” is to *set Him apart* from all else as the sole object of **our** confidence. When our Lord said, “For their sakes I sanctify Myself” (John 17. 19), He shows the position He Himself hath chosen for His people’s good. The dangers may seem formidable and fearful, but as the greater always overshadows the less, so, when the Lord of Hosts is sanctified by us and becomes our “fear and dread,” we will not fear what man can do unto us. **Fear Him.** The dreaded mystery of holiness and power is with Him.

4. AN ASSURANCE. “And He shall be for a sanctuary,” etc. (v. 14). He shall become an holy place of refuge and of rest for your soul. **Hide thyself in God, and all the confederacies of men shall never prevail against thee. “God is our refuge and strength.. therefore will not we fear.”** This hiding place is indeed a “dreadful place.” But the more dreadful the place is the more secure are they who hide in it. He will become “a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence” to **those who are opposed to His work and will.** “They shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and taken” that take counsel together against the Lord and His anointed ones. “Say ye not a confederacy,” but say, **God is my Sanctuary.**

THE GREAT FEAST.

ISAIAH 25. 6-9.

THIS is another vision given to the prophet. He sees Mount Zion as a table spread with rich and abundant

provisions for “All people.” It is the Millennial time of fullness and victory for His ancient people, **when** Jerusalem shall become a “praise *in* the earth,” and when all nations shall “Call Him Blessed,” who is their God and King. While the dispensational aspect must not be overlooked, we should like to read these verses, for **our** personal profit, more in the light of the Gospel of the Grace of God.

I. The Place. “In this mountain.” God not only appoints the event, but also the place where it shall be accomplished. He hath appointed Zion as the place of His revealed glory. He also appointed “the place called Calvary” for the revelation of His grace. Here the Lord of Hosts hath made a feast for all people.

II. The Provision. It implies ample sufficiency for the whole need of man. There is—

1. **PERFECT SATISFACTION.** “Fat things full of marrow . . . wines on the lees well refined.” Blessings that strengthen, and that cheer and inspire. There is no leanness of soul, for those who feed in the work and fullness of Jesus Christ. Every promise of His is **full** of marrow and fatness. The wine of His Word is always on the lees of eternal verities. It is old and good. “Wherefore spend money for that which...satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness” (Isa. 55. 1, 2).

2. **FULL SALVATION.** (1) The “Covering” of *Darkness* has been destroyed. “He will destroy the face of the covering cast over the people” (v. 7). The darkened understanding has been enlightened (Eph. 4. 18). The true light now shineth. (2) The “Veil” of *unbelief* has been taken away. This veil that is “Spread over the nations” is taken away by turning **to the Lord** (2 Cor. 3. 15-18).

3. The POWER OF DEATH has been destroyed. "He will swallow up death in victory" (v. 8). Christ, in dying, hath destroyed death, and him that hath the power of death (Heb. 2. 14). The power of death, in itself, is a tremendous power, it is truly the "terrors of death."

4. The ASSURANCE OF COMFORT has been given. "The Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces." The proofs of sorrow and suffering are visible in many faces. The day of His salvation is the day of peace and rest for the soul. A French writer has asked, "Where are now the calm, peaceful faces that were seen long ago?" Christ is our peace, "My peace I give unto you."

5. The "REBUKE" OF FAILURE is taken away (v. 8). The Salvation of God includes deliverance from a life of stumbling and failure. Oh, what reproach lies upon the servants of God to-day, because this full Salvation is not realised. God means all this for His people. "For the Lord hath spoken it."

III. **The Testimony.** "It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God" (v. 9). When God's Salvation is experienced there is no doubt at all as to its God-likeness. This is the expression of a saved and satisfied soul. The word God is in the plural here, and has reference to the Trinity. To know Him, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent by the Holy Spirit, is Eternal Life. Those who can say "This is our God," can confidently add, "And He will save us," for, "We have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His Salvation" (v. 9). We speak that we do know. In a fuller sense, this will be the testimony of God's people, when the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout" (1 Thess. 4. 16, 17). Meanwhile His Salvation is offered unto "All people" (Luke 2. 10). "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God" (Isa. 45. 22).

REBELLIOUS CHILDREN.

ISAIAH 30. 1-3.

OH, how sad it is when the "woe" of the rebellious has to be pronounced by the Lord on His own children.

I. **The Nature of It.** It is seen in their *counsellors*. "They take counsel, but not of ME." Worldly wisdom is preferred to heavenly. It is seen in their covering. "They cover with a covering, but not of My *Spirit*," They clothe themselves with pride, and fleshly energy, instead of the power of the Holy Spirit. It is seen in their *walk*. "That walk to go down into Egypt. " Their faces are toward the world, and their desire is to get into its ways. It is seen in their *Motives*. "To strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt. " They seek worldly strength, and worldly protection, to advance their cause. The heart that is in rebellion against God, and His Christ, is certain to seek the help of the ungodly.

II. **The Result of It.** The result is "*Shame*." "Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame." The strength of Pharaoh may do for a Pharaoh, but it will be your shame as a professed child of God. The strength of Pharaoh lay in the arm of flesh, and there is a curse upon the man "that maketh flesh his arm, and whose *heart departeth from the Lord*" (Jer. 17. 5). Trust in the shadow of Egypt will be your confession (v. 3). Nothing but shame and confusion will come upon the Church of God, if, for the sake of popularity and prestige, she allies with the godless forces of to-day.

OUR REFUGE AND OUR REMEDY,

ISAIAH 32. 1-5.

MAN'S character needs a "double cure." A place of refuge from danger, and a remedy from the disease of sin.

When “A King shall reign in righteousness” within, then the princes of that Kingdom “Shall rule in justice” (v. 1). Note the—

I. **Need Suggested.** We are exposed to the “wind” and the “tempest.” These are the ordinary, and extraordinary trials and dangers that all have to face. The “wind,” the common current of popular error: the “tempest,” the crushing influence of temptation and lust. Then there is the “dry place.” The experience of disappointment and helplessness, finding the world’s cisterns empty in the time of deepest need. Then comes the “weary land” experience. A fainting of the heart at the discovery that the world provides no resting place for the weary feet of an anxious pilgrim.

II. **Refuge Appointed.** “A MAN shall be an hiding place.” Who is this Man? Jehovah says, this is “The Man that is My Fellow” (Zech. 13. 7). The One Mediator between God and men, the *Man* Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2. 5). He is—

1. A HIDING PLACE. That is the feature of His character as Redeemer and Lord. The wind that drives away the chaff cannot move those who hide in Him. “I flee to Thee to hide me.”

2. A COVERT from the tempest. A place of secrecy where the most powerful forces outside cannot find the hidden one.

3. The SHADOW of a great rock. The strength of this protection is here indicated, and especially the blessed fact that this shadow can be enjoyed by those who are presently in “a weary land.” “Behold the Man.”

III. **Blessings Enjoyed.** All who sit under His shadow have great delight. Here are several things which characterise those saved by the Lord, and who are

abiding under the court of His wings enjoying His fellowship.

1. Their **EYES** are clear. "The eyes of them that see shall not be dim" (v. 3). They have seen their need, they have seen their opportunity, now they see God.

2. Their **EARS** are opened. "The ears of them that hear shall hearken." They have heard His invitation, they have obeyed His call, now they eagerly listen to His Word.

3. Their **HEART** is taught. "The heart also of the hasty shall understand knowledge" (v. 4). Yes, those who rest in Him as their "hiding place" shall be taught of the Lord (Isa. 54. 13). The hasty heart shall be righted there.

4. Their **TONGUE** is loosed. "The tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly." There is nothing like the power of the truth of the Gospel for taking the stammer out of a man's tongue, and making him "ready to speak plainly." Plain speaking, on the part of the saved ones, is expected by the Saviour.

5. Their **LIFE** is purified. "The vile person shall no more be called liberal, nor the crafty said to be bountiful" (v. 5, R.V., margin). A purified life means purified morals. Righteousness with God means practical righteousness with our fellow men. The man whose eyes are opened, and whose tongue has been loosed to "speak plainly," will not laud the immoral and the crafty because of their big subscriptions, or high social position. He is no respecter of persons, and must call things by their right names.

THE EXCELLENCY OF OUR GOD.

ISAIAH 35. 1-6.

IN the light of New Testament teaching, this portion is most inspiring. There is a—

I. **Vision of Hope.** "They shall see the glory of the Lord, the excellency of our God," How is this glory,

Revelation of God
in the wilderness
and solitary place.

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or excellency, to be seen ? Here, as in the Gospels, it is seen in the **transforming power of His grace**. The "wilderness," the "solitary place," and the "desert," are made glad and beautiful because of it. The excellency of our God is seen in imparting to the barren waste the majesty of Lebanon, the beauty of Carmel, and the fruitfulness of Sharon (v. 2). Israel, as a nation, is that "wilderness, and solitary place," which shall yet "be glad.. and blossom abundantly" at the revelation of the Lord: but now we may **see the excellency of our God in the face of Jesus Christ** (2 Cor. 4. 6). What transformations He hath wrought in the "wilderness and solitary places" of the souls of men, and of social life !

II. Condition of Need. The people of God are here reminded of three sources of weakness that are hindering their life and work. They have "**weak hands.**" Hands that hang down (Heb. 12. 12). The hands represent the instruments of work. What could even Hercules do with a hammer of soap ? How can a servant work, or a soldier fight, with weak hands ? They are powerless for service. Then there is the "**feeble knees.**" They cannot walk straight and steady. They are easily upset. A little opposition, or the wind of some new doctrine, is enough to impede their progress, or turn them aside. Their knees are feeble, through the lack of the practice of prayer. Another weakness is seen in the "**fearful heart.**" This is the worst of all, and the cause of all. When the heart is pure and strong, the hands and the knees will soon be strong and steady. **Fearfulness is the result of the lack of faith.**

III. Message of Cheer. The servant of God is commissioned to **strengthen** the weak hands, to **confirm** the feeble knees, and **encourage the** fearful in heart (v. 4). But how is this to be done ? Never were many of God's

people so much in need of this, as now. With the work, comes the message of power, "Behold *your* God will come." The excellency of your God consists in this, that He delights to make the desert blossom as the rose, and to make the weak, the feeble, and the fearful, to triumph in His strength. Your God who will come with vengeance on your enemies, and a recompense to His own, He will save you. Let not your heart be troubled because of the signs of the times. Ye believe in God. Behold, He cometh with clouds (Titus 2. 13; Rev. 1. 7). Say to them that are feeble and fearful, Be strong; Behold your God.

IV. **Work of Grace.** The excellency of our God is seen in making—

1. The EYES of the blind to see (v. 5). The eyes are the windows of the soul. In spiritual blindness, it is the *spirit* that is blind; to such, sight is a new faculty (Acts 26. 18; Eph. 1. 18).

2. The EARS of the deaf to hear. As with sight, so with hearing; the ear is but the instrument, it is the spirit within that is made to hear Him.

3. The FEET of the lame to leap (v. 6). The morally helpless, and crippled, by sin and iniquity, are made to leap like an hart. Salvation means renewal (Acts 3. 2-10).

4. The TONGUE of the dumb to sing. Tongues that were silent for God, will, at His touch, break forth into praise (Psa. 15. 15). For in the wilderness of the unrenewed and wasted life, the waters of grace shall break out as streams in the desert. Ye shall see the glory, and the excellency of our God.

THE POWER OF PRAYER.

ISAIAH 37. 14-20.

THE historical setting should be closely studied. A great trouble had come to Hezekiah, the king, because of the

Assyrian invasion, and the imperious attitude of Rabshakeh the captain. "Trouble" has been said to be "A Divine diet for the new man." It is often more profitable than it is palatable.

I. **The Cause of His Trouble.** It was "A letter." Only a letter, but a veritable "Messenger of Satan" to buffet him. For some the postman's bag may contain moral and social torpedoes. Who knows what the next post may bring? This was an attempt to *destroy his faith in God* (v. 10), to dispossess him of his inheritance, and to bring him into *bondage*. The enemies of our souls are always active toward the same end. Their letters may be beautifully written, but they are terribly bitter.

II. **What He Did With It.** "He spread it before the Lord" (v. 14). This solemn act revealed his *faith in God*. He did not spread it before the "face of Heaven," but before the face of an Almighty Personality. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is" (Heb. 11. 6). This also shows his *thoroughness*. He *spread* it. He laid the whole matter, from beginning to end, right before Him. Be definite in your dealings with God. Be as honest and confidential as He wishes you to be. Keep back nothing. Whatever is a trouble to you is interesting to your God and Father.

III. **How He Succeeded.** "The angel of the Lord" became his defence (v. 36). His argument was simple, but irresistible. "Now therefore, O Lord our God, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou art the Lord" (v. 20). "When the angel of death spreads his wings in the blast," woe be to those who fight against the Kingdom of God. By the blast of God they perish (Job. 4. 9). Is there any sorrow too great, or circumstance too perplexing, that the

prayer of faith cannot bring comfort and deliverance ?
 “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed.. nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matt. 17. 20).

POWER FOR THE FAINT.

ISAIAH 40. 28-31.

“HAST thou not known?” There is, oh! so much of the goodness of God revealed to us in His Word that we have, **as** yet, failed to understand or to profit by, that we greatly need a question like this to arrest afresh our attention to our real need, and His Almighty fullness. We are reminded here of the—

I. Need of Power. “He giveth power to the faint. ” He speaks of *power* because he knows we need it. It is for lack of power that we “faint, ” and have “no might, ” and are “weary, ” and the “young men utterly fall” (v. 30). There is to-day much fainting and weariness because of a conscious inability to overcome the power of current evils. An unhealthy moral atmosphere makes it difficult for a spiritual man to breathe. Even “young men ” destitute of this power are an utter failure.

II. Source of Power. “Hast thou not heard that the Everlasting God.. fainteth not, neither is weary? ” (v. 23). “Hast thou not known *Me*?” (John 14. 9). All power is given unto Him. All creative and sustaining power is His. All fullness dwells in Him. If we are workers together with Him who fainteth not, why should we faint? Why this weariness in us if He who never is weary is working in us to will and to do of His good pleasure ?

III. Nature of Power. Power is not something we put on, it is something that puts on us. Something that enters into our being, bringing increased capacity and responsibility. Power, like love, dwells in the life of

God. To have more of His life means more of His power. The spirit of life is the spirit of power (Acts 1. 8). This power is not that of a new resolve, or of youthful vigour, or natural enthusiasm, it is the "power of God," because God has come in mightier measure into the life. Abundance of life means abundance of power.

IV. **Condition of Power.** "They that wait upon the Lord" (v. 31). This *waiting* upon the Lord must be interpreted as an honest confession, that there has been fainting and failure in the past. Because the promise is to the "faint, and to them that have no might" (v. 29). His strength can only be made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12. 9; Heb. II. 34). Wait on the Lord, and change your weakness into His strength (v. 31, *margin*).

V. **Evidence of Power.** "They shall mount up.. .run, and not be weary.. .walk, and not faint." **They** mount up, like eagles, into a higher and purer atmosphere of life where they can run, and not be weary, walk and not faint. The enduement of power implies an ascension of the life into a higher and more mysterious plane of living, far above all the principalities and powers of earth and Hell that would discourage and destroy. He *giveth* power to the faint.

FEAR THOU NOT.

ISAIAH 41. 9-16.

WHAT is here said of Israel? The seed of Abraham is also true of those who are His spiritual seed, the children of God by faith. These promises are made to "My servant whom I have chosen" (vv. 8, 9). If you are a servant chosen of God, then these promises are virtually for you, Each promise is a reason why you should "Fear not." He says, "Fear thou not, for—

I. I am **with thee.** "With you as your shield and great reward" (Gcn. 15. 1).

II. I am **thy God**. Thy God is good, and thy God is almighty.

III. I will **strengthen** thee. If He is the strength of your life of whom should you be afraid? (Psa. 27. 1).

IV. I will **help** thee (v. 10). This implies co-operation. There is no help like His.

V. I will **uphold** thee. The right hand of His righteousness will stay you up.

VI. I will **defend** thee. "They that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of naught" (v. 12).

VII. I will use thee. "I will make thee a new, sharp, thrashing instrument" (v. 15). Every redeemed and consecrated soul will be a new instrument in His hand.

VIII. I will be glorified in thee. "Thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel" (v. 16; see Jer. 9. 24).

HOPE FOR THE NEEDY.

ISAIAH 41. 17-20.

THE "needy," who are they? In every city and country their name is legion. But the "needy" here are the most hopeless of all mortals. Look at this picture of—

I. **Lamentable Failure.** "The poor and needy seek water, and there is none. They are keenly conscious of their need, they are "poor," they seek a common mercy—"water"—they seek it where it cannot be found—"there is none." And they have been seeking until "their tongue faileth for thirst." What a picture of disappointment and desolation. While "the common salvation" is as plentiful and as cheap as water, yet, how many poor and needy souls are seeking it where "there is none," in their own hearts, and works.

II. **Inspiring Promises.** Israel was not asked to dig

wells in the wilderness, they were to drink from the smitten rock. Salvation is of the Lord. To the “poor and needy” three precious promises are given.

1. I will ANSWER them (R.v.). There is no answer to this thirst anywhere else but in God Himself. God is the only answer to the cry of humanity. He so loved the world that He gave His Son. Look unto Me, and be ye saved. God’s answer is near when our absolute failure is recognised and confessed.

2. “I will OPEN RIVERS in the bare heights” (v. 18, R.V.) God’s fullness of blessing often comes from unexpected sources, “bare heights.” “My ways are not your ways saith the Lord.” A tongue failing for thirst is “a bare height out of which He is able to bring rivers of water” (John 7. 37-39).

3. “I will PLANT in the wilderness the cedar.. in the desert the fir tree and the pine” (v. 19). This is part of God’s answer to the poor and needy wilderness of man’s soul. It needs not only the cleansing and refreshing rivers, but the imparting of new principles for the beautifying of the life-like trees in the desert.

III. **God-honouring Results.** “That they may see, and know, and consider, and understand together that the hand of the Lord hath done this” (v. 20). All His works praise Him. Our transfigured lives are a testimony to others of the good hand of our God upon us. When, instead of the thorn and the brier, there comes up the fir, and the myrtle, it shall be to the Lord for a name, and an everlasting sign (Isa. 55. 13). It is a poor testimony for God when the tongue faileth for thirst. But He delighteth to answer our need, even for His Own Name’s sake. It is when the new song is put into our mouth that, “Many shall see and fear, and shall trust in the Lord” (Psa. 40. 3).

SPIRITUAL ISRAEL

O R, WITNESSES FOR GOD. ISAIAH 43. 1-10.

It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs ; neither is it meet to take the Jewish bread, and give it all to the Gentiles. The great and precious promises made in the chapter are for Israel, and much important truth is lost by applying them only to the Church. Israel, like the Church of God, has a glorious and triumphant future before it. Still, all that is here said of the Jew is perfectly true of the Church, and may be forcibly applied to all Christians who are the spiritual seed of Abraham.

I. They are Purchased. "Fear not, I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou art Mine." As Israel was redeemed out of Egyptian bondage and darkness, called into a separate life, and claimed by God as His own, so have we been redeemed from the bondage of sin and Satan, separated from the world, and claimed by our Redeemer as His own purchased possession. Ye are not your own, for ye are *bought* with a price, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ.

II. They are Preserved. "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee.. . When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned" (v. 2). No nation has ever passed through such deep and troublous waters as the Jewish. No other people have had to walk through such fire of suffering and persecution as they. Yet Jacob has not been overthrown, nor has the flame destroyed him. The reason is, "I am with thee." As it is with Israel, so is it with the Church, Only, the sufferings of Israel have been for her own sins, while the sufferings of the Church have been for Christ's sake. Through the fire and the waters of testing and trial must every redeemed one pass. But "Fear not" is the Saviour's word of cheer, for, "I will be with thee" (Psa. 66. 12; see **Psa. 23. 4**).

III. They are Precious. “Thou wast precious in My sight...and I have loved thee” (v. 4). How a wayward, backsliding people can become precious to God is one of the mysteries of His grace. This fact is a proof that whom God loves He loves intensely (Dan. 7. 6). God can do nothing superficially. If He saves, He saves to the uttermost. When He gives life, it is life in abundance. Their preciousness to God is a guarantee of their protection and security. We are precious in His sight, not only because of what He has given for us, but because of what we are now, as members of the body of Christ, His Son.

IV. They are Privileged. “I have created Him for My glory” (v. 7). The *creation* of Israel as a nation is for the glory of God, and He shall yet be glorified in His people in this present world (Hosea 1. 10). We, like them, are His workmanship, created unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them. It is to the praise of the glory of His grace that He hath made us accepted in the beloved (Eph. 1. 5, 6). The Church of God is a new creation in Christ Jesus for His own glory, and this glory will yet be manifested in the ages to come (Eph. 2. 7).

V. They are Powerful. “Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord” (v. 10). A witness is one who has sufficient knowledge to constitute a *proof*. Knowledge, like steam, is a power that cannot be ignored. The Jew is a witness to Christ crucified, the Christian is a witness to Christ risen. Judah and the Church are both witnesses for God. The Jews had committed to them the oracles of God (Rom. 3. 1, 2), which gave them power for God. The Church has committed unto it the Holy Spirit of God that it might have witnessing power for God (Acts 1. 8). Every Jew is a witness, so is every member of the body of Christ. Our witness-bearing depends on what we are, not what

we say. If we are **monuments of His grace** we shall be witnesses for Him. What was said of Christ is true also of every man in Him, "Behold I have given him for a witness to the people."

GOD'S APPEAL TO THE BACKSLIDING.

ISAIAH 44. 21, 22.

THE goodness and longsuffering mercy of our God nowhere shines out more impressively than in **His pitiful appeal to His backsliding people.** "O Jacob, " may remind them of their past pride and failure. "O Israel," of what His transforming grace had made them. **Jacob, the wrestler, was turned into Israel the prince.**

I. An Urgent Call. "O Jacob.. O Israel.. **return unto Me.**" This clearly implies that they had turned away from Him, and that, for His own, and their own sakes, He longed for their return. All backsliding is a turning away of the affections from God to some other person or thing.

II. A Powerful Argument. He gives ample reasons why they should return.

1. I have FORMED thee. Israel, as a nation, would have had no existence but for **the electing grace of God.** They were chosen, not because they were better than others, but because it pleased Him to call them. **Backsliders, think of that!** God requireth that which is past.

2. I have FORGIVEN thee. "I have blotted out as a thick cloud. . . thy sins. " **Have you forgotten the time when He caused the sweet sense of His forgiving love to float into your soul ?** (Psa. 32. 1, 2).

3. I have NOT FORGOTTEN thee. "Thou shalt not be forgotten of Me." In your wilful wandering you have, like the prodigal, forgotten Him, but He has not forgotten you. **"Return. "**

4. **I have REDEEMED thee.** The fact that He hath purchased you with His own blood that you might be His own peculiar treasure, is another strong reason why you should return unto Him (1 Cor. 6. 20).

5. **I have CLAIMED thee.** Return, for, "Thou art My servant." He has not only a claim upon your person, but also upon your service. Think of His infinite goodness in still acknowledging you-even in your present, sinful, and profitless condition-as His servant. "I will arise and go to my father."

GOD'S RELATIONSHIP TO HIS PEOPLE.

I SAIAH 48. 16-18.

"**COME ye near** unto Me, hear ye this." Here is something God is specially desirous that we should give heed to. Let us draw near unto Him, and hear it as fresh from His own lips. "Oh, hear it again." That Christ is the eternal Son of God who was with Him "from the beginning" and who was sent by "the Lord God, and His Spirit," and who hath declared Him who is—

I. **Thy Redeemer.** "Thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel." Who gave Himself for our sins that He might redeem us from all iniquity. Jehovah is our Redeemer in the person of His Son.

II. **Thy Teacher.** "I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit." His teaching is not only instruction for the mind, but the impartation of life and light, of ability to receive and to act. He worketh in us both to will and to do (Psa. 25. 5-10).

III. **Thy Leader.** "I am the Lord thy God...which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go." As He led Israel about and instructed him (Deut. 32), so, by His Spirit, doth He still lead His redeemed people. The Church never was in greater need of being "Led by the Lord" than now.

IV. Thy Keeper. "O that thou hadst hearkened. .. then had thy peace been as a river." They are kept in perfect peace whose mind is **stayed** on Him. Great peace have they which love Thy law (Psa. 119. 165). Hearken to the voice of Him whose blood preacheth peace, and whose life is the pledge that thy peace may be as full and constant as "a river."

DIVINE QUESTIONS FOR THE RACKSLIDING.

ISAIAH 50. 1-3.

THE Jews were captives in Babylon. The sin of idolatry which, in God's sight, was the sin of spiritual adultery, had broken their marriage covenant with the Lord, and separated them from Him. It would seem that while they were in Babylon they murmured and complained against God, and the severity of their condition. Backsliders are slow to blame themselves for their present bondage and misery. But the Lord demands that they face the cause of their separation from Him by asking them five pointed questions, which appeal to any backslider.

I. "Where is the Bill of Your Mother's Divorcement?" Under the law, and because of the hardness of their hearts (Matt. 19. 8), Moses allowed a man to divorce-cut off-his wife if found unfaithful, by giving her a "bill of divorcement." This bill was the *evidence* that she had been put away by her husband (Deut. 23. 1). The Lord demands of those grumbling sons, born in Babylon of backsliding parents, to produce the bill of their divorcement on the evidence that *He* had cut them off. Where is the proof that God is to blame for the backslider's failure and misery? Your iniquities have separated between you and your God (Isa. 59. 2).

II. "To Which of My Creditors Have I Sold You?"

Another permission allowable under the law was, that a father had a right, if oppressed with debt, to sell his children (Exod. 21. 7: Neh. 5. 5). The Divine argument is, did I sell you because of My poverty? Have I had to part with you because I was not rich enough to keep you? If I have sold you, then, name the creditor to whom I have sold you. Backslider, what have you to say to this? Have you separated yourself from God because He had not enough to supply all your need? The truth must be out, and here it is, "Behold, for your iniquities have ye sold yourselves" (v. 1, *l.c.*).

III. "**Wherefore.. When I called was there None to Answer?**" Another charge brought against them was that they had refused to respond to the call of His servants, the prophets. They gave Him no answer, but remained deaf to His entreaties. How is it that while you are so dissatisfied with your position and condition, you still refuse to obey His call to repentance as the way out of bondage into liberty and restoration? He is still calling through His Son, and by His Spirit, to the self-oppressed backsliders. How is it that so few answer Him?

IV. "**Is My Hand Shortened at All that it Cannot Redeem?**" You may have gone far away, but have you gone beyond His redemption point? Have you gone beyond the length of His arm to reach you? Backsliders, answer this question. Is His hand too short for your rescue? Is His blood too weak for your redemption? You think of your distance from God, will you also think of the length of His arm of mercy? He is able to save to the uttermost. If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us.

V. "**Have I no Power to Deliver?**" Your miserable, Babylonian bondage seems to indicate that your God hath no power to deliver you. As long as you remain

in your backsliding state you are dragging the Name and Character of God into public dishonour (chap. 52. 5). As a proof of His saving power He reminds them of what He had done. At His rebuke the Red Sea was made dry, and the river of Jordan made as a wilderness for them. He had power also to "Clothe the heavens with blackness, and make sackcloth their covering" (v. 3). This He did when He delivered them out of Egypt (Exod. 10. 21). This He did when He gave His Son to die for us on the Cross (Luke 23.44). Has He no power to save thee? Then why art thou not saved?

LET US STAND TOGETHER-SUBSTITUTION.

ISAIAH 50. 4-9.

THESE words are mighty with solemn significance, coming as they do-prophetically-from the lips of the suffering Son of God. Although spoken 700 years before the birth of Christ they are becoming, only, on His lips.

I. **His Wisdom.** "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of them that are taught that I should know how to sustain with words him that is weary" (v. 4, R.V.). He had the tongue of the taught even when twelve years of age (Luke 2. 46, 47). Never man spake like this Man. He was taught of God (John 8. 28, 38). He is the "Wisdom of God." His words hath sustained the weary in all generations. Let them dwell in you richly (Col. 3. 16).

II. **His Obedience.** "The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious" (v. 5). Having heard the Word of God, and learned all that it meant for Him, He turned not back, but said, "Lo, I come. ..I delight to do Thy will O My God, yea Thy law is within My heart" (Psa. 40. 6-8). How often, on our part, hath the open ear been followed with a rebellious will! We

see, but do not delightfully obey the vision in a whole-hearted consecration, but often "turn away backward."

III. His Sufferings. "I gave my back to the smiters ...I hid not My face from shame and spitting" (v. 6). He "gave," and He "hid not." Assuring us that His sufferings were purely voluntary. They would be of no value otherwise. The smiting and the *spitting* suggest the twofold character of our Lord's humiliation and agony. The physical and the moral suffering and derision. The scattering of the flock of Israel over the face of the earth is an evidence that the Shepherd has been smitten (Matt. 26. 31).

IV. His Confidence. "The Lord God will help Me, therefore shall I not be confounded.. I know that I shall not be ashamed" (v. 7). He was helped, and not confounded, in the hour of His extreme sorrow, for an angel from Heaven strengthened Him (Luke 22. 43). No one ever needed help more than He did, and no one was ever so confident of getting it. He knew that He was doing the will of the Lord God, and so doubted not. His face was set "like a flint," because there was no wavering in his heart.

V. His Testimony. "He is near that justifieth Me" (v. 8). God was near to Him, and He knew that God was justifying Him in all that He said and suffered. Justified in the Spirit He could truly say, "I am not alone." The sufferings of Christ were also the sufferings of the Father. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.

VI. His Invitation. "Let us stand together." Might we not take this as *our* Lord's appeal to His own. He has identified Himself with us, now we are invited to identify ourselves with Him. It is absolutely true that with Christ we fall or stand *together*. Hear Him say, "Let us stand together"—

1. In the PLACE OF CONDEMNATION. He bore *our* sins

in His own body. He suffered *for us* the Just for the unjust. Let us stand with Him at that Cross bearing together the terrible shame of it. We are condemned already. Let us acknowledge it.

2. In the LIBERTY OF JUSTIFICATION. If we were judged in Christ we shall also be justified in Him (v. 8, *f.c.*) He was justified in that He was raised again from the dead: herein is our justification (Ram. 4. 25). Let us stand together on resurrection ground (2 Cor. 5. 12, **R.V.**).

3. In the LIFE OF CONSECRATION. We are workers together with Him. The life of service is a life of holy fellowship and activity in the Lord. Your enemy is mighty, and your strength is but weakness, therefore, says He, "Let us stand together." In standing together with Him we shall also be found standing together with one another. Then, finally, we shall "stand together" in the presence of His *glory*, being "glorified together."

THE GREAT REPORT.

ISAIAH 53. 1.

THE Prophet, as he **was** moved by the Holy Ghost, passes in vision down through 700 years into the very midst of the days of Christ's humiliation and suffering, and speaks as an eyewitness. Infidelity has no reasonable explanation of this record so absolutely true to fact. "Who hath believed our report?" Notice the—

I. **Nature of the Report.** See chapter 52. 7-15. It contains "Good tidings of Good." It was the publication of "peace" and "salvation" (v. 7). It refers to the prudence and exalted character of Christ the Servant (v. 13). It reveals the *astonishing* fact that His sufferings would be unique among the sons of men (v. 14). It also sounds the note of final victory (v. 15). It is a true report.

II. Character of the Publishers. “Who hath believed *our* report.” To Him gave all the prophets witness (Acts 10. 43). The prophets, moved by the Holy Spirit, were God’s witnesses. They were workers together with Him. The report was His through them. There is no exaggeration or false colouring about it. These reporters are in real sympathy with God and His work. So they ask Him, “Who hath believed *our* report?” Paul beseeched men in Christ’s stead (2 Cor. 5. 20).

III. Responsibility of the Hearers. “Who hath *believed?*” The message is the most wonderful and timely that ears have ever heard. The reporters are the most trustworthy that have ever spoken. The demand is the most reasonable that was ever made—faith. Who hath *believed* our report. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Here, then, is God’s Word of grace and salvation. Where is your faith? It is not enough to believe in the Teacher like Nicodemus. We must show our faith like Rebekah who heard, believed, and followed (Gen. 24). Without faith it is impossible to please Him.

THE ARM OF THE LORD.

ISAIAH 53. 1.

THE “arm” is here used as a figure of the true Christ as the Head of the Church. He is also the “Arm of the Lord.” This metaphor is deeply suggestive. **The—**

I. Significance of It. “The arm of the Lord ” (Jehovah). It is the symbol of almighty power. Christ is the power of God. This power is a living power, an arm that is vitally connected with the Personal and Eternal God. It is no dead force like hydraulic pressure, but a power that worketh by love. His arm is also the symbol of *mercy*. Though His arm be strong to smite, ‘tis also strong to save. His arm hath brought salvation (Isa. 59. 16).

II. Baring of It. “The Lord hath made bare His holy arm” (chap. 62. 10). In making bare His arm (Christ) the Lord has revealed His great power both to smite and to save. What mighty spiritual muscle there is unveiled in the life and death of Jesus Christ. It is the work of the Holy Spirit, and of every preacher of the Gospel, to make manifest the naked and almighty saving arm of God.

THE MAN OF SORROWS.

ISAIAH 53. 3-6.

THE world in every age has had many a sorrowful man, but there has been only one “Man of Sorrows.” The sorrows of the Son of Man were entirely unique and unparalleled. His was the sorrow of a **unique**—

I. Humiliation. Many a man, nurtured in the lap of opulence, has, through accident or failure, been reduced to poverty and shame, but no one ever had so much to give up as Christ had when He “emptied Himself, and took upon Him the form of a servant.. .becoming obedient unto death” (Phil. 2. 7, 8, R.v.). He who was rich-how rich l-for our sakes became poor, and, Oh, how poor !

II. Opposition. The contradiction that He suffered at the hands of sinners against Himself was also unique. Although “A Man of Sorrows” He was despised and rejected of men. Handel was found weeping while setting these words to music. The common sympathy bestowed on ordinary, suffering mortals was denied Him. The opposition of Satan to the “Death of the Cross” was another bitter element in the sorrows of the Saviour. Note the temptation in the wilderness. The *rebuking* of the wind: **the same** word used when dealing with “unclean spirits.” The rebuking of Peter, and the “get thee behind Me, Satan, ” when he said “far be it from Thee, Lord”

(referring to His suffering death). Even when He was on the Cross they cried, "Come down," and we will believe in Thee.

III. **Anticipation.** Many a time have we been constrained to say, "It is good for us that we do not know what is before us" when some sudden and dire calamity has befallen us. These things are mercifully hidden from us. But Christ foresaw all that was before Him. He came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth. . . This He said signifying what death He should die" (John 12. 32, 33). His was also the sorrow of a **unique**—

IV. **Separation.** He trod the winepress alone. He was perfectly at home in Heaven, but He was awfully alone on earth. His very nature, as Holy and Divine, made Him "Separate from sinners," although, He was made in the "likeness of sinful flesh." Circumstances, disposition, and choice, often bring upon men the sorrow of a separated life. No one could feel this so intensely as the **Son** of Man who was also the Son of God.

V. **Relationship.** His was emphatically the sorrow of a unique relationship. "Surely He hath borne **our** griefs, and carried **our** sorrows" (v. 4). He alone could do this as a fond, devoted mother carries the griefs and sorrows of a beloved, suffering child. So intense was His love and sympathy for us as sinful men that He could not refrain from bearing our griefs and our sorrows. It was in this wholly, devoted One that Jehovah was pleased to lay "the iniquity of us all" (v. 6). It was for us that He poured out His holy, sorrowful soul unto death (v. 12). Behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto **My** sorrow. Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? (Lam. 1. 12).

“FEAR NOT, ”

OR, THE HERITAGE OF THE LORD'S SERVANTS.

ISAIAH 54.

“FEAR NOT” (v. 4). Then follows several powerful reasons why God's people should not fear. Closing with these words, “This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord” (v. 17). “Fear not,—

I. “For Thou Shalt Not be Ashamed” (v. 4). Having believed in Him who is the chief corner-stone, elect, precious, thou shalt not be confounded (1 Peter 2. 6).

II. “For Thou Shalt Forget the Shame of Thy Youth” (v. 4). In the forgiving love of God ye shall find forgetfulness of the sins of your youthful ignorance and folly.

III. “For Thy Maker is Thy Husband.. and Thy Redeemer” (v. 5). A threefold relationship. Thine by creation, Thine by redemption, Thine by a mutual choice-“Husband” (Eph. 5. 25).

IV. “For the Lord hath Called Thee.. forsaken and grieved in spirit” (v. 6). If the Lord called us when we were forsaken and grieved because of our sins and failure, how much more may we depend on Him to bless us now.

V. “For with Great Mercies will I Gather Thee” (v. 7). By His mercy hath He saved us, and by His mercies will He, as with Israel, gather us as His jewels.

VI. “For with Everlasting Kindness will I Have Mercy on Thee” (w. 8, 10). He who loved us with an “everlasting love” hath obtained “eternal redemption for us” (Heb. 9. 12).

VII. “For I have Sworn.. that I would not be Wroth with Thee” (vv. 9, 10). The rainbow of promise is now round about the throne (Rev. 4. 3; see Hcb. 6. 18).

VIII. For **“I will Lay Thy Stones with Fair Colours ”** (vv. 11, 12). Your character as a building shall be strong, beautiful, and precious.

IX. **“For All Thy Children shall be Taught of the Lord”** (v. 13). The promise is unto you and to your children (Acts 2. 39). Words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved (Acts 11. 14).

X. For **“No Weapon that is Formed Against Thee shall Prosper”** (v. 17). The gates (powers) of Hell shall not prevail against the purpose of God. See the weapons mentioned in Romans 8. 35-39. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord. Fear not !

THE GOSPEL OF GOD.

ISAIAH 55. 1-3.

THE great verities, and the deep mysteries that are in nature, in no wise hinder us from simply appropriating the things needful for our physical life. Why should the mysteries of the Bible hinder any one from satisfying their spiritual and eternal need? A man does not need to be a philosopher to know how to eat when he is hungry. There is infinite grace in these opening verses.

I. **The Provision.** “Waters, ...wine, milk” (v. 1). This is, of course, figurative language, but profoundly significant as coming from the lips of the Eternal God. “Waters” suggest the abundance of the grace and mercy offered in His Word. Wine refers to their quickening and reviving influence in the soul. “Milk” indicates their strengthening and satisfying nature as a food. It is well known that milk contains all the essentials of life. These are emblems of the promises of God, without which **man** cannot truly live (Luke 4. 4).

II. The Rebuke.

1. About FOOLISH SPENDING. “Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread.” The money of time, of talent, and opportunity, that’s being spent for things that do not bring bread to the real hunger of the soul. Money that might be put to a much better use. If men would only spend half as much time and thought on their souls as they do on the pleasures of the world, they would **find** some “**bread**” for their more real, yet starved, inner man. Spending money for that which does not meet the true need of the man is a poor and foolish investment.

2. FRUITLESS LABOUR is rebuked. “Wherefore do ye.. **labour** for that which satisfieth not?” A poor woman at our door one day, on being asked what hopes she had for Heaven, said: “I expect to do penance.” Working **for** salvation is labour which satisfieth not. What has not satisfied you in the past will not satisfy you in the future. This “labour” may take many a different form. but there is no satisfaction in **it** as a purchasing price.

III. **The Invitation.** Three words are used to express the yielding of the will, and the appropriation of God’s gifts. “Come.. **Buy**..Eat.” The urgency of this call appears in this threefold “Come.” “Ho, every one that thirsteth. Come.. **Come**...**Come**.”

1. Come TO THE WATERS, the Scriptures of truth, pure and clear, from the throne of God.

2. Come and BU Y. Buy wine and milk without money-without a price.

3. Come and TAKE His offered blessing of eternal life as **freely as** if you had bought it. Claim it with as much confidence as you would claim an article that you had duly paid for.

4. Come and **EAT** (v. 2). This blessing is not to be pocketed, but assimilated. It is not something we merely hold, but something, the influence of which, possesses and transforms us. He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. "The Bread of God. ..giveth life unto the world" (John 6. 33-35, 53).

IV. **The Promise.** Certain results are assured by God to those who Hear, Come, Buy, and Eat.

I. There is **LIFE**. "Thy soul shall live" (v. 3). What a life this is. A life righted with God, and for God.

2. There is **DELIGHT**. "Thy soul shall delight itself in fatness" (fullness). This is not the delight of fancy, but of fact. There is never any famine in the Kingdom of God. All the fullness of the Godhead, in Christ, is the source of our supply.

3. There is **CONTINUANCE**. You ask, will it last? Hear what He says. "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David" (v. 3). It is not to those who criticise, but to those who obey the promise is made.

V. **The Appeal.** "Ho, every *one* that thirsteth, Come. " "If any man thirst let Him come unto Me and drink" (John 7. 37). He who made the eye shall He not see? He who made the ear shall He not hear? He who made the spirit of man shall He not understand the deepest needs of that Spirit? What light is to the eye, and music is to the ear, God's precious Word is to the soul. Come ye to the waters.

UNFAITHFUL WATCHMEN.

ISAIAH 56. 10-12.

A **WATCHMAN** is one whose duty is literally to "look about" (1 Sam. 14. 16). The Lord's watchmen are to look about for the aggressive movements of the enemy,

and for any signs of backsliding among His people. What shall become of the people when the Lord has to charge His watchmen with—

I. **Blindness ?** “His watchmen are blind” (v. 10). They see not the danger of the wicked, and so fail to warn him that he may “save his life,” and his blood is required at the watchman’s hands (Ezek. 3. 18). The old note of warning seems to have almost died out of the present day ministry.

II. **Ignorance ?** “They are all ignorant. ” “Without knowledge” (R.v.). They literally “do not know” the mind of God. Modern watchmen are in danger of being so engrossed with the critical opinions of men as to get into darkness with regard to the real purpose of God in their lives. To be ignorant of God’s revealed will is to be a failure (Matt. 15. 14), and a stumbling block.

III. **Cowardliness ?** “They are dumb dogs, they cannot bark. ” Why are they dumb? Because they mistake enemies for friends. Because of the fear of man, and their love of the world. Being blind to men’s danger, and ignorant of God’s will, they have no deep conviction, and so they go on sinning the sin of a guilty silence. “Beware of dogs,” the dumb ones are more dangerous than the noisy ones.

IV. **Laziness ?** “Dreaming, lying down, loving to slumber” (R.v.). “Talking in their sleep” (*margin*). They are too lazy to find out what the mind of the Lord is, and go on talking like men in a dream: and the worst of it is, that they love this sort of thing. They have visions, but they are not the visions of God, but those of their own, blind fancy. They have no message from God to the people, but still they go on dreaming dreams.

V. **Selfishness ?** “Greedy dogs which can never have enough.. . they look to their own way” (v. 11). They

seek their own good, and they go their own way. While this is a feature of unrenewed, human nature, it is to be an emphatic characteristic of the perilous times of the last days when "Men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous" (2 Tim. 3. 1, 2). The covetous man hath no inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God (Eph. 5. 5). In a self-centred life there is no testimony for God and His Gospel.

VI. Recklessness ? "Come ye, say they, I will fetch wine, and we will fill ourselves with strong drink, and to-morrow shall be as to-day, and much more abundant" (v. 12). Such traitors must have an inspiration of some sort. If they have not the Spirit of God, then they will have the spirit of the world. Being out of harmony with the revealed purposes of God, they fall in line with the baser passions and delusions of the people, saying, "to-morrow.. shall be much more abundant" (2 Peter 3. 3, 4). While the Holy Ghost saith, "To-day." All this is being enacted just now before our eyes. Lack of spirituality leads to laxity in morals. Because of the unfaithfulness of the watchmen many to-day are filling themselves with the "strong drink" of a delusive and destructive theology. Every Christian should be a watchman. "What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch. "

PRACTICAL CHRISTIANITY

OR, HINDRANCE, TO PRAYER. ISAIAH 58. 1-9.

THE prophets were not only predictors, they were "instruments of righteousness unto God." They were not only "Seers," they were doers of the Word. God's servants must be *faithful*. "Cry aloud and spare not." Their attitude must be *unmistakable*. "Lift up thy voice like a trumpet. " Their message must be *practical*. "Shew my people their transgressions" (v. 1).

I. **Their Sinful Condition.** They had drifted into a formal observance of religion, but at heart it was practical ungodliness. They took pleasure in knowing His ways, and forsook not His ordinances (v. 2), yet they were practising self-deception and delusion. They seem to think that by appointing a periodical fast, and afflicting their souls, that this would atone for their gluttony and insincerity (w. 3, 4). God is not mocked (v. 5). "Bearing the head like a bulrush, and spreading sackcloth and ashes under him," doth not touch the *sin* of the soul. See Matthew 15. 8; James 1. 22.

II. **The Divine Remedy.** "Is not this the fast that I have chosen?" (vv. 6, 7). Here is God's interpretation of "a fast." His fasts are soul-saving facts. His remedy is exactly suited to the disease. He says the fast *you* need is to—

1. "LOOSE THE BONDS of wickedness" (R.v.). Wickedness, or lawlessness, is spiritual bondage. Every unrighteous thought is a fetter for the soul.

2. "UNDO THE HEAVY BURDENS." Many are carrying burdens that are too heavy for them, burdens that you could help to undo by your sympathy and co-operation. James says, "I will shew you my faith by my works."

3. BREAK EVERY YOKE. "Let the oppressed go free." The yoke of every oppressor is to be broken. Break the yoke of evil habit, fear of man, love of the world, pride of life, self-will, covetousness, etc.

4. CARE FOR THE POOR (v. 7). Give "bread to the hungry." Shelter to the outcast. Covering to the naked. The man who shutteth up the bowels of his compassion from the destitute cannot know the indwelling love of God (1 John 3. 17).

III. **The Assured Result.** "*Then.*" This word is emphasised in the Hebrew.

1. "Then shall thy LIGHT break forth" (v. 8). Obedience to God's will is the clearing of the window through which the light of His favour will shine as the morning.

2. "Then shall thy HEALING spring forth." Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness. This light has healing in its beams. The moral diseases within cannot stand the dawn of the light of Wis truth.

3. "Then thy RIGHTEOUSNESS shall go before thee." Thy rightness with God, and with men, will go before thee like the prayers of Cornelius, as a memorial before God (Acts 10. 4).

4. "Then THE GLORY OF THE LORD shall be thy reward." Righteousness before thee, and the glory of the Lord behind thee. What a testimony this is. Leaving behind the sweet savour of His presence and glory. The Shepherd's care before thee, and His goodness and mercy following thee all the days of thy life. What a rearguard !

5. "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord SHALL ANSWER " (v. 9). Then shall your fellowship with Him be sweet, and your prayers answered. When iniquity is cleared out of the heart, then the way is clear for the Lord to show favour (Psa. 66, 18). If we would receive of Him, "whatsoever we ask, " it will be "because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3. 22).

INTERCESSORS WANTED.

ISAIAH 59. 1-16.

"BEHOLD, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear" (v. 1). So He "*wondered* that there was no intercessor" (v. 16). The *language* is human, but the feeling expressed

is mysteriously Divine. Talking after the manner of men, he wondered that there was no intercessor.

I. Because there was Great Need for Such. The iniquities of the people had separated them from God (v. 2). They were waiting for light, yet walking in darkness (v. 9). They groped like the blind, and stumbled at noon-day (v. 10). Their sins testified against them (v. 12), and truth had fallen in the street (v. 14). Yet no one sufficiently felt the sorrow and sin of the whole situation as to give themselves to intercessory prayer unto God. It was very different with Moses (Exod. 32. 32), and with Paul (Rom. 10. 1). Does the present condition of Church work, and of Church life, not constitute a like demand for intercessors? May the Lord not wonder also—

II. Because of the Encouragement Given to Intercessors. “Behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened that it cannot save ; neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear” (v. 1). He who hath delivered us, will He not yet deliver? (2 Cor. 1. 10). Hath He not set before every intercessor an “open door ?” Every intercessor hath the encouragement of the Son of God who “ever liveth to make intercession for us” (Heb. 7. 25), and also of the Spirit of God who “likewise maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Rom. 8. 26). Now, “Ye that make mention of the Lord keep not silence ” (Isa, 62. 6). He is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (Heb. 11. 6).

III. Because of the Possibilities within the Reach of an Intercessor. If the Lord could then have found an intercessor, what a victory might have been His. Aaron became a passionate pleader when he ran, and “stood between the dead and the living, and the plague was stayed” (Num. 16. 48). Prayer was made without

ceasing for Peter, and he was delivered out of the prison (Acts 12. 5). You remember how the widow got her victory over the injustice of a judge, "and shall not God avenge His *own* which cry day and night unto Him. ..I tell you that *He will*" (Luke 18. 1-8). We who are a kingdom and priests unto God (Rev. 5. 10, R. v.), let us offer this continual sacrifice unto Him, for the honour of His Name, the salvation of the sinner, and the sanctification of the saint.

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

ISAIAH 61. 1-3.

IN these verses we have a brief outline of three dispensations. Grace, judgment, righteousness. The year of liberty, the day of vengeance, and the time of Judah's restoration. This is a great subject for a great preacher.

I. The Preacher. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach." In writing these words the prophet must have been moved by the Holy Spirit, for our Lord personally applies them to Himself in Luke 4. 16. The Spirit came upon Him (Luke 3. 22; Acts 10.38), as the anointing of Jehovah for the work of this ministry. How great must the work be when it took such a person, and such an endowment, to accomplish it.

II. The Message. "Good tidings unto the meek" (poor and lowly ones, R. V. , *margin*). How could there be "Good tidings" if there had not been something wrong, or awaiting, somewhere? And why should the Holy Son of God need the anointing of the Spirit, by the Father, for the declaration of such tidings? Surely the tidings must be "good" and of eternal import to all who hear them when Father, Son and Holy Spirit, are so deeply interested in their proclamation, and when the power of the Triune God is needed to give them effect. What is the news?

1. HEALING FOR THE BROKENHEARTED. "He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted." They that be whole need not a physician. How are hearts so easily broken? Why are so many disheartened? There must be many, and powerful, adverse influences at work. Yes, the world, the flesh, and the Devil. The result is defeat and failure. But He says, in Me is thine help. He hath sent **Me**. All that I am, and have, and do, is for thy heart's good. His Word and His work can heal the broken in heart, and bind up their wounds (Psa. 147. 3).

2. LIBERTY FOR THE CAPTIVES. "He hath sent **Me** to proclaim liberty to the captives." He only has the right and power to make such a proclamation. Who are the captives? Those who are enthralled by influences that delude and destroy. Souls who are fettered by sin and Satan. Christ can proclaim liberty because He hath been anointed by Jehovah to burst the prison gates. By His death and resurrection He hath broken every barrier down, and conquered every foe.

3. VISION FOR THE BLIND. "Opening of the eyes to them that are bound" (R.v., margin). There is not only healing and freedom offered, but also a new vision of spiritual things. Spiritual darkness is the bondage of many. Christ hath been sent to give light. He is the light of life, and of the world.

4. GRACE FOR ALL. "To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." The jubilee of freedom, and restoration to an afflicted world. Christ alone by the anointing of the Spirit was able to make such an announcement as this. Who else would dare to fix the time and conditions of man's acceptance with God. This is now the day of salvation by grace, the time when the Lord holds His gracious reception (2 Cor. 6. 2).

When the Anointed One read these words at Nazareth

(Luke 4. 18-20), He, contrary to all custom, “closed the book” without finishing the sentence, because “the day of vengeance of our God” had *not* yet come: but it will certainly follow at the close of this jubilee year of grace, when the Church shall be “caught up” (2 Thess. 1. 7-9).

LONGING FOR GOD OR REVIVAL.

ISAIAH 64. 1-3.

THE previous chapter closes with these ominous words, “We are become as they over whom Thou never bearest rule” (R.v.). When God’s people become like those over whom He has never had control, it is an awful proof of ingratitude and lawlessness, and a powerful argument for revival.

I. **The Need Felt.** “Oh, that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that *Thou* wouldest come down.” This is, of course, figurative language, expressive of a real spiritual experience. There is need for a “rending” of the heavens when the sin of backsliding has closed them, so that communion with God has been cut off. Even heavenly things may hide the Heavenly One. The veil of the Temple had to be rent, ere liberty of access could be enjoyed. “Oh, that THOU wouldest come down.” The remedy for every need is in Him. A new manifestation of His power and glory would put to shame the sins of His people, and the false confidence of the ungodly. The soul’s everlasting need is God, the world’s dying need is God.

II. **The Work to be Done.** Mighty things are needing to be done. There is need for—

1. **A MELTING WORK.** “That the mountains may flow down at Thy presence.” Mountains of difficulties, created by man’s sin and vain imaginations. Mountains of selfishness, that dishonour God and hinder Him from

working. Mountains of indifference, that block the channel of blessing.

2. A **BURNING-UP WORK**. "As when fire kindleth the brushwood" (R.V.). The brushwood of vain thoughts, self-confidence, and fleshly energy, needs burning up, to make room for a more healthy growth. Brushwood is a poor substitute for the golden grain. "Our God is a consuming fire."

3. A **WARMING WORK**. "Oh, that Thou wouldst come down.. as fire that causeth the waters to boil." When the heart is made to boil like a pot, because of the power of His holy presence, then the affections will be hot. Lukewarmness cannot exist where this fire is. Then the *prayers* will be hot. Out of a burning heart will come burning desires, clothed in burning words. Then the testimony will be hot. When the heart is made to burn within us, while He talks to us, the tongue will become a flame of holy fire to speak forth the glories of His Name. "He maketh His ministers a flame of fire."

III. **The Result Sought**. "To make Thy Name known to Thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Thy presence." We may long for the manifestation of the power of God for our own personal deliverance, but the mightier argument is, "That **Thy Name** may be known." He seeks to be sanctified in His people, that the heathen may know that He is God. His Name is His glorious character. They that know His Name will put their trust in Him. When God the Spirit comes in power, it is to glorify the Name of the Eternal Son (John 16, 13, 14). Be filled with the Spirit, then for you the heavens will be opened, thy mountains shall flow down, thy brushwood burned up, and the waters of thy affections and heart's desire made to boil. So shall His Name be known, and others made to tremble at His presence.

THE NEW CREATION.

ISAIAH 65. 17-25.

THE closing chapters of this book are largely devoted to the coming glories of God's ancient people, and to the world-wide blessing that will flow out through them at the appearing of His Kingdom and glory. Note here some of the features of this new era.

I. There will be a Renewal of Natural Environments. "Behold, **I create** new heavens and a new earth" (v. 17). The glory of this new creation will be such that "the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." The "prince of the power of the air" will have no place in these heavens. Nor shall the fruit of the curse of sin ever appear in the new earth. **Righteousness shall dwell there (2 Peter 3. 13).** Creation shall then cease her groaning (Rom. 8. 22).

II. There will be a Regenerated People. "Behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy, and **I will.. joy in** My people, and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard" (vv. 18, 19). The people who have been a byword among the nations shall then become a joy and a praise on the earth. The well-known "weeping place" at Jerusalem will then be deserted for ever. In this day shall **this nation be born again into a new life of fellowship with their crucified King.** Then their sorrow and sighing shall flee away (Isa. 35. 10).

III. There will be Lengthened Lives. "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man who hath not filled his days, for a child shall die an hundred years old." With the new creation will come all the blessings of great longevity. Not only long life, but also the assurance that **the days will be filled up with fruitful and joyful service.** This is the gift of God to them, as **eternal** life is the gift of God to us through Jesus Christ

our Lord. If one should die at an hundred years old, he would be reckoned as a child. The blessings of God's grace means the enlargement of all that is deepest and best in the human soul.

IV. There will be New Social Conditions. "They shall build houses and inhabit them ; they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them...My chosen ones shall long enjoy the work of their hands" (vv. 21, 22). They shall not build and another inhabit. They are assured of life, and of success in their labour. Bank failures, industrial strikes, and blighted crops, will be unknown and unthought of. Sickness and poverty will then have fled away, their disciplinary influences will no more be needed when the King Himself appears.

V. There will be a New Enjoyment of God. "It shall come to pass, that before they call I will answer ; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear" (v. 24). What a change this will be compared with the present condition of the Jewish nation, and what a happy prospect for a desolate world. God's ear is never heavy that it cannot hear, but man's lust for self-glory hinders the operation of His grace. When God can "joy in His people" (v. 19), He will speedily answer their call.

VI. There will be an End of all Strife. "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together," etc. Then surely shall "man to man a brother be." The wolves and lambs of social and political life have been long at deadly variance, then they shall "feed together" in the bountiful mercies of their God and Saviour. The serpent alone receives no advantage in the new Kingdom. "Dust shall be the serpent's meat." It will not fatten much on that fare. Then shall the angelic song be fulfilled, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill among men." For nothing shall hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain. saith the Lord" (v. 25).

CALLED AND EQUIPPED.

JEREMIAH 1. I-10.

THE prophets of old knew nothing of human ordination, and instead of rushing hurriedly into the Lord's work, they frequently shrank from it. Moses said, "I am not eloquent." Isaiah said, "I am a man of unclean lips." Jonah fled in fear. Jeremiah exclaimed, "Oh ! Lord God, I cannot speak." **But out of weakness He ordains strength.**

I. **The Call.** "Before I formed thee.. I knew thee.. I sanctified thee, and ordained thee" (v. 5). **He was called before he was created, and set apart before he was born. The prophet could neither explain it nor deny it.** His call, like all others, was the result of Sovereign grace. **My sheep, He says, know My voice.** Whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate, etc. (Rom. 8. 29).

II. **The Excuse.** "Ah, Lord God! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child" (v. 6). A *child* is not expected to be an eloquent speaker, **it is expected to be obedient, and trustful.** The "Kingdom of God" must be received as a little child. **Our sufficiency is not in ourselves, but of God (2 Cor. 3. 5).** It is not to the wise and prudent that the great things of the Kingdom are revealed, but **"unto babes" (Luke 10. 21).**

III. **The Commission.** "Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to **all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak**" (v. 7). The prophet has but one Master, and one purpose in his life, **to go where he is sent, speaking the Word at His commandment. One is your Master, even Christ.** The Lord may ask, "*Who* will go?" but He never asks His servant, "*Where* will ye go?" **It is expected of God's called ones that His own message be faithfully spoken.**

IV. **The Encouragement.** "Be not afraid of their faces: **for I am with thee to deliver thee**" (v. 8). In
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declaring God's will there will be many "faces" that will frown with rage, but be not afraid of *them* when you have the smiling face of God's approval with you. To obey God is to oppose the course of this world. Darkness cannot overtake you while the true light of His presence is abiding in you (Heb. 13. 6).

V. **The Equipment.** "The Lord put forth His hand and *touched* my month.. *Behold*, I have put My words in thy mouth" (v. 9). This Divine touch corresponds with the touch of the tongue of fire in the upper room. His "touch" and His "words" are beautifully and vitally associated. With the Divine commanding there goes the Divine enabling (Isa. 6. 6, 7). The touch is the evidence of a personal contact. The hand of the Holy Ghost makes the Word to burn like a fire.

VI. **The Work.** "**See**, I have set thee...to root out, and to pull down.. .to build and to plant" (v. 10). A destructive work is to be done before the constructive work is begun. The garden must be cleaned of weeds before the good seed is planted. That tottering wall must be pulled down before a proper defence can be built up. Sin must be put away, and the soul put right with God, before a powerful character can be built up. It is the "good and honest heart" that brings forth much fruit. Sow not among thorns. The instrument to be used, in this work of regeneration, is the *Word* of God, which is quick and powerful to the casting down of imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God (2 Cor. 10. 4, 5).

WHY IS HE SPOILED?

JEREMIAH 2. 1-24.

ISRAEL a servant? A home-born slave? Why is he spoiled? (v. 14). ("Why is he become a prey?" R.V.) Sin spoils all that it touches. How sad to think of lives

full of glorious possibilities being deliberately spoiled for God by becoming the prey of an alien power. Even a dead fly may spoil the ointment. See—

I. What He Was. His past condition is characterised as one of great privilege and opportunity.

1. There was FELLOWSHIP. "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals" (v. 2). A delightful walking with God because there was agreement, the holy bliss of a new and first love.

2. There was OBEDIENCE. "Thou wentest after me in the wilderness." Following Him with willing and triumphant feet, even through a waste and howling desert.

3. There was SEPARATION. "Israel was holiness unto the Lord" (v. 3). Separated from Egypt unto God, and a witness for Him. What a high and holy position! How are the mighty fallen? Such were some of you, but,—where are you now?

II. What He Did. Israel has gone astray. "My people have committed two evils" (v. 13).

1. They have FORSAKEN ME, the fountain of living waters." In forsaking God they turned their back on the source of all good. To forsake any one is just to treat that one as if you knew him not. He began to act as if the Lord had no claim on him, and as if he had no more need of Him.

2. "They have HEWED OUT cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water." In turning away from the "fountain of living waters Israel discovers the need of trying to invent for themselves some substitute, and their best imitation of God's fountain is a "broken cistern" that can hold no *water*. The "living waters" represent soul-satisfying grace and truth. To forsake these for the man-made cisterns, of this world's honour, wealth, pleasure, and philosophy, is to let go the substance, and

vainly hunt the shadow. They can hold no spirit-refreshing water (Isa. 55. 1, 2).

III. What He Became. “Spoiled” (v. 14). Why? Because he forsook Him who is the Fountain, and sought by his own works to find satisfaction without God. ■ This is the delusion of a sin-blinded soul. ■ Anything is spoiled when it becomes unfit for the purpose for which it was intended. Israel is spoiled for God because he has “become a prey” to others (R.V.). ■ Other lords have got control over him. ■ Selfwill and love of the world have so possessed him that he has become their spoil.

1. He is spoiled like a DEGENERATE PLANT (v. 21). “I planted thee a right seed: how then art thou turned into a degenerate plant?” The damage is not in appearance only, but deep down in the heart, the **character** is changed. There is virtually a reversion to type.

2. He is spoiled like a STAINED GARMENT. “Though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much soap, thine iniquity is marked before Me” (v. 22). The nitre (mineral), and soap (vegetable), of man’s invention, like **the** “broken cisterns,” can do nothing to atone for the evil of departing from God.

3. He is spoiled like a WILD ASS (v. 24). An ass is a very useful animal, but a wild ass represents only wasted energy, uncontrolled and fruitless efforts. ■ Such is the backsliding in heart in the sight of God. Though thou hast been a prey to the enemies of God, thou mayest yet be a praise by returning to God.

BACKSLIDING.

OR, MODERN DANGERS. JEREMIAH 8. 5-9.

BACKSLIDING is not a crisis, it is a process: a gradual sliding down the hill of “Holiness unto the Lord,” into the low valley of the old self-life. Declension usually

begins in unwatchfulness, and neglect of secret fellowship and trustfulness in God. "Why, then, is this people slidden back?" (v. 5). The reference here is to Judah and Jerusalem: but there are some salutary lessons for us in this present age. The causes of their backsliding and the evils incurred find their antitype in modern times. There was—

I. **Perverted Belief.** "They hold fast deceit" (v. 5). A perverted heart soon leads to a perverted faith. When the fountain of truth is forsaken, it is easy to believe any lie that may seem to favour such a condition (2 Thess. 2. 11, 12). He feedeth on ashes because a deceitful heart hath turned him aside (Isa. 44. 20).

II. **Misleading Testimony.** "They spake not aright" (v. 6). How could they *spea*k aright, when they were not able to *think* aright? The Lord "hearkened and heard," but in this case no "book of remembrance was written," because they feared not the Lord, neither thought upon His Name (Mal. 3. 16). Their words were dishonouring to Him, and hurtful to others.

III. **Self-complacency.** "No man repented of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?" (v. 6). Their condition was one of "wickedness" in the sight of God, but so deluded were they that they had no thought that repentance was needed. When a backslider, who has lapsed in conduct, is conscious of his guilt, there is some hope of immediate confession; but those who lapse through a perverted mind, and have settled down in self-satisfaction, having *come* under the spell of some moral delusion, their case is indeed hard and pitiful (see 2 Cor. 4. 4).

IV. **Fleshly Enthusiasm.** "Every one turned to his course, as a horse rusheth headlong in battle" (v. 6, R.V.). There is no lack of self-confidence; they pride

themselves in what they can do. They are more energetic in going their own way, than the servants of God often are in His way.

V. Ignorance of the Signs of the Times. “The stork.. *the* swallow and the crane knoweth their appointed times, but My people knoweth not the ordinance of the Lord” (v. 7, R.V.). These birds, true to their natural instinct, observe their times, and yield to the call; but Israel, with their “fatal gift of freedom,” refuses to obey. This is solemnly and sadly true of many of God’s people in these present times, which are ominous with indications of coming events. But there are those who, true to the Spirit’s teaching, discern the signs of the times, and who look for the new Heaven and the new earth promised. When God’s people “know not the appointed times,” they are in great danger of being deluded and deceived by the god of this world.

VI. Vain Confidence. They say, “We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us. But behold the false pen of the scribes hath made it (the law) falsehood” (v. 8, R.V.). When false teachers pervert the Word of God and turn it into a lie, then blinded souls believe the lie, and say, “We are wise.” They swallow the poison, and boast that the law of the Lord is with them. “Lo, they have *rejected* the word of the Lord; and what manner of wisdom is in them?” (v. 9, R.V.). The wisdom that is in them when God’s Word is rejected, is that which is “foolishness with God” (1 Cor. 3. 19).

A SOLEMN DIALOGUE.

JEREMIAH 8. 19-22.

THE prophet’s manner in dealing with these future events is somewhat dramatic. There are differences of opinions as to how they may be interpreted. We shall note—

I. **The Divine Question.** “Why have they provoked Me to anger with their images and vanities?” (v. 19). “Is *not* the **Lord** in Zion?” Then why seek help in the work of your own hands, and the “strange vanities” of your own imaginations? A picture of guilt and depravity of man’s natural enmity to God, and spiritual stupidity. A man nowhere plays the fool so perfectly as in his professed religious life.

II. **The Mournful Reply.** “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved” (v. 20). In answer to God’s question this is a confession of disappointment, and a cry of despair. Their cisterns of hope have turned out broken ones that can hold no water. They are like those who were depending on a plentiful harvest to save their lives, but nothing but famine stares them in the face. Like the foolish virgins, they have found the “door shut.” The evil heart of unbelief leads to a dungeon of darkness.

III. **The Message of Sympathy.** “For the hurt of the daughter of My people am I hurt” (v. 21). This may be taken as the voice of the Lord **through the prophet. It is true** of both. God feels the terrible hurt that has come upon His people. He was wounded for our transgressions. The tears of Jesus Christ, shed over the great hurt of Jerusalem, were proof enough of how deeply He felt the hurt in His own soul. If His people are “dear to Him as the apple of His eye,” it shows how tender the heart of God is toward them. In all their afflictions He was afflicted.

IV. **The Frank Confession.** “I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on Me” (v. 21). Yes, that is the word, “black.” Black with shame and guilt because of unbelief and pride. “Astonishment!” Yes, that is the other word. Astonished at your own sinfulness and folly

in provoking the Lord, and astonished at His great pity and compassion for you even in your well merited misery. What is more astonishing than the grace of God as seen in the face of Jesus Christ? If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us.

V. The Gospel of Hope. “Is there no balm in Gilead : is there no physician there ?” (v. 22). Is there no provision in Gilead, is there no one there mighty enough to heal your wounds, and restore your souls to true spiritual health and hope ? It is said that the balm of Gilead was used for healing the bites of serpents. The bite of the old serpent, the Devil, can only be healed by the balm of Christ’s Cross, and the Physician that is found there. You say, “I am black.” Yes, but is there no healing balm in Calvary ?

VI. The Searching Rebuke. “Why then is not the health of My people recovered?” (v. 22). The balm and the Physician are there. Why then are ye not healed ? Free and effectual provision has been made in Christ for your salvation. Why then are ye not saved ? Is there no wisdom to direct, and power to overcome, in the Holy Ghost? Why then is not the *health* of His people, in these days, recovered ? Has Calvary lost its power? Has the Great Physician vacated His place of mercy? Why then not prove the all-sufficiency of His grace by living a healthy, God-honouring life.

SOMETHING WORTH GLORYING IN.

JEREMIAH 9. 23, 24.

THREE times in this chapter is the Divine “Me” emphasised in the Hebrew (w. 3, 6, and 24). God, Himself, is the source and centre of all good, and ought to be the undivided Object of all man’s glorying.

I. What Some Glory In. There are three phases of

worldly glory. Wisdom, might, and wealth. Each has its votaries.

1. The WISE are tempted to glory in their wisdom. Worldly wisdom is the principle thing sought for by the worldly man, and he may glory in it just as another man may glory in his shame, as something that belongs to himself, as the fruit of his work (Isa. 5. 21).

2. The MIGHTY are tempted to glory in their might. It is all the same, whether that might is physical, intellectual, or social. Whatever distinguishes one man from his fellows **is** apt to become a cause for selfish glorying.

3. The RICH are tempted to glory in their riches. To them there is a sort of divinity in their wealth, and they glory in their golden god.

Thus saith the Lord, "Let not the wise glory in his wisdom," etc. All this glorying is in vain, for the wisdom of the wise will He bring to nothing...for God hath chosen the *foolish things of the world* to confound the wise...that no flesh should glory in His presence (1 Cor. 1. 27-29). The things that are foolish to the world are the "things that are freely given us of God" through Christ Jesus.

II. **What We Should Glory In.** "Let Him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth ME." A modern philosopher spoke of Him as the "Great Unknowable." But it is possible, in a limited sense, of course, to understand and know Him. And this knowledge is the **only** thing worth glorying in. "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (1 Cor. 1. 31). All other glorying will finally be put to shame. It is life eternal to know Him and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent (John 17. 3). How is God known? Through the revelation of His Word, and more fully by His Son (John

1. 14-18). There are three reasons given us here why we should glory in Him—

1. Because of His **LOVINGKINDNESS**. “I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness” (v. 24). **Because of the excellency of His lovingkindness the children of men put their trust in Him** (Psa. 36. 7). This great lovingkindness is seen at its flood-tide in the gift of His Son (John 3. 16; see 2 Cor. 4. 6). He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is Love.

2. Because of His **JUDGMENT**. “Righteousness and judgment are the foundation of His throne” (Psa. 97. 2, R.V.). The judgments of God in the past have all been against wickedness and for righteousness. Witness the flood, Sodom, God’s dealings with the nations, especially His ancient people Israel. **We glory in God’s judgment of sin, and also of the sinner, at the Cross of His crucified Son.**

3. Because of His **RIGHTEOUSNESS**. Righteousness, crowned with lovingkindness, is the character of our God. Our Lord, His Son, gloried in this when He prayed, **“O righteous Father”** (John 17. 25). Our Advocate now is **“Jesus Christ the Righteous.”** “He is the Lord, the Righteous Judge, who will give the crown of righteousness to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Tim. 4. 8, R.V.). **Let us then show our glorying by seeking first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness.** “For in these things I delight, saith the Lord” (v. 24). **“Let him that glorieth glory in this.”**

CONCERNING THE DEARTH.

JEREMIAH 14. 1-9.

TIMES of dearth are testing times. Surely God hath a perfect right to withhold His gifts when, and, as He may. A dearth of water, or a dearth of spiritual power and

fruitfulness, *may be intended* to have a salutary influence on the sufferers. "My ways are not your ways," saith the Lord. Notice the—

I. Evidence of the Dearth.

1. There was SORROWFUL PERPLEXITY. "Judah mourneth, and the gates thereof languish" (v. 2). The nation is distressed in soul, so that the gates-the market place-are deserted.

2. There were EMPTY VESSELS. "Their little ones (servants) returned with their vessels empty." All this is solemnly suggestive of the time of a spiritual drought when God's refreshing and reviving Spirit is withheld, and when there is a languishing of the work of God in the gates (Churches), and when the servants present only "empty vessels" to a thirsty household. No wonder that—

3. "SHAME AND CONFUSION covered their heads" (v. 3, l.c.). When the well of God's Word becomes dry and personal experience *chapt*, then empty vessels and dissatisfied souls will be plentiful. The dearth of conversions means the dearth of power.

II. Cause of the Dearth. "O Lord, our iniquities testify against us.. .our backslidings are many; we have sinned against Thee" (v. 7). If the Heaven that is over us be brass, and the earth under us iron, it is because of our iniquities and backslidings. The iniquity that separates from God separates from the Fountain of Living Waters. The dew of His refreshing Spirit does not fall upon the barren desert. Shame and empty vessels are the consequences of backsliding hearts.

III. Remedy. But can there be a remedy for a drought? Yes, when man's moral condition has become the cause of Heaven's rebellion. The remedy lies in our *attitude* toward the Lord Himself as a mighty Saviour. "O the Hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of

trouble.. .Why shouldest Thou be.. .as a mighty man that cannot save ?” (vv. 9, 10). This is a confession and an appeal. “Do Thou for Thy Name’s sake ” (v. 7). We need to waken up to the fact of our God’s almightiness to deliver, and to the infinite depth of His compassion for His people. “Why shouldest Thou be...as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night ?” (v. 8). Why should His behaviour toward us, as our personal Redeemer and Friend, be more like a wayfaring man than our abiding Companion and Helper? The reason is we have become, through our worldliness and unbelief, unfit for His fellowship. Still His desires are after His own to bless them with “abundance of life” (Luke 24. 29). There is no use of us saying, “Yet Thou, O Lord, art in the midst of us, and we are called by Thy Name” (v. 9), if we refrain not our feet from the paths of error and unbelief (v. 10). The remedy for spiritual drought is confession, restoration, and resignation (v. 22; John 15).

A CONFESSION AND A PLEA.

JEREMIAH 14. 17-22.

I. The Need. The condition described in verses 17-19 is that of desolation and hopelessness—“A great breach” (v. 17). “A famine” (v. 18). A sense of rejection and despair. “We looked for peace, but no good came ; for healing, and behold dismay” (v. 18, **R.V.**). **What a picture of the soul’s condition without God.**

II. The Confession. “We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, ” etc. (v. 20). There is no other honest way of dealing with our sin. As God loves a cheerful giver, **He also desires an honest confessor** (see Psa. 32. 5; **1 John 1. 7**).

III. The Plea. It is based on the *honour* of His Name. “Do not abhor us for Thy Name’s sake” (v. 21). It also

appeals to the *dignity* of His throne. "Do not disgrace the throne of Thy glory." The throne of His glory was the "Mercy Seat" in the Temple. It was the "Throne of Grace." This throne will never be disgraced by sending the humble, needy ones empty away. It had also reference to the *truthfulness* of His Word. "Remember, break not Thy covenant with us." He is faithful that hath promised. The exceeding riches of His grace has ever an open channel toward us through Christ Jesus (Eph. 2. 7).

IV. **The Resolve.** "Art not Thou He, O Lord" (who can cause rain and give showers) "therefore we will wait upon Thee" (v. 22). The God that answered Elijah, by both fire and rain, is well worth waiting on. For all the moral diseases and troubles that are sure to follow a spiritual dearth there is no remedy but in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit of God. His promise is, "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground." Wait upon the Lord.

The language here used is truly that which befits penitent lips, but it may be used, as Judah did, in an impenitent spirit (chap. 15. 1).

THE EXPERIENCES OF A WITNESS.

JEREMIAH 15. 16-20.

As witnesses for God we may learn much from the experiences of the "Holy men of old." Their dangers and temptations, as well as their privileges and responsibilities, were very **much akin to our own.** Note his—

I. **Joy in God's Word.** "Thy words were found, and I did eat them: and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart" (v. 16). This may refer to God's first message spoken to him, as recorded in chapter 1. 7. This joy in God's Word implies two things—

1. That we are perfectly sure that it is the Word of God, and—

2. That we have really received it into the heart--eaten it-so that it has become the hope and inspiration of our lives. The Word of God is sweet to the taste of the believer, but it must needs often produce bitter effects in the heart when it begins its cleansing operations (Rev. 10. 9).

II. Identification with God's Name. "For I am called by Thy Name, O Lord God of Hosts." When God's Word gets into the heart God's Name or character must be stamped on the life. Likeness to God is the mightiest testimony for God. To receive Christ Jesus as "The Word of God" is to be conformed to the image of God.

III. Separation from God's Enemies. "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers," or them that made merry (R.V.) in their sins and over sacred things. "I sat alone because of Thy hand." Those whose delight is in the Word of the Lord will not be found walking in the counsel of the ungodly, or standing in the way of sinners (Psa. 1. 1, 2). How can we witness against "All ungodliness" if we are in any way identified with it? (see 2 Cor. 6. 17, 18).

IV. Perplexity at God's Dealings. "Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable.. . Wilt Thou be altogether unto me as a deceitful brook?" (v. 18, R.V.). The deceitful brook is the one that fails and dries up at the very time when its refreshing waters are most needed. Will God so prove a failure to His servant in the time of need? A feeling of disappointment has crept over his spirit because God's purpose does not seem to run parallel with his expectations. The prophet had yet something more to learn. In the time of perplexity and seeming defeat, wait.

V. Assurance from God. God speaks. The fountain

of living waters again break forth. The brook of Divine faithfulness has not proved deceitful (vv. 19-21). Look at—

1. THE PROMISES. “Thou shalt be as My mouth.. I will make thee a fenced brazen wall (stability)...They shall not prevail against thee...I am with thee...I will deliver thee...I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible. ” They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength by receiving fresh assurances from His Word, of His grace and goodness, His presence and *power*.

2. THE CONDITIONS. “If thou return.” Get back to thy first love, into real, unclouded fellowship with God, and unquestioning obedience. “If thou.. stand before Me.” Abide with Him, and act as before His face. “If thou take forth the precious from the vile. ” Call things by their true name, and give to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that *are* God’s. Then the God of Peace shall bruise Satan under your feet, and make you more than conquerors through “Him with whom we have to do. ”

THE CURSED AND THE BLESSED.

JEREMIAH 17. 5-8.

Two classes are contrasted here, in most simple, but emphatic terms, being prefaced by a “Thus saith the Lord.” There are certain spiritual and unalterable laws that must come into operation according to our moral attitude to God and to His Word. His blight must come upon the godless as surely as His blessing comes on the godly. The curse means blessing withheld.

I. Who **are the Cursed?** “Cursed be the man that *trusteth* in man, and maketh flesh his arm, *whose heart*

departeth from the Lord.” To trust in man, and make flesh the arm of our confidence, is heart departure from the Lord. Neither Judah’s salvation, nor ours, can come through the wisdom of man, or the power of any of earth’s princes (Psa. 118. 8, 9). Salvation is of the Lord. It is the evil heart of unbelief that departs from the living God (Heb. 3. 12). There is a faith in humanity which is but a denial of God.

II. What is the Curse? “He shall be like the heath in the desert” (v. 6). The heath in the desert is deserted by the refreshing showers of Heaven. “He shall not see when good cometh.” He shall be like a blind man incapable of seeing, or profiting by those mercies that are within his reach. “He shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness.” He shall live in a state and condition that is barren of the promises of God. The godless often seem to prosper greatly with regard to earthly possessions, but as in God’s sight they are destitute and miserable (Rev. 3. 17). Their soul doth truly “inhabit parched places” (see Job. 8. 11-13).

III. Who are the Blessed? “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is” (v. 7). To cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils, and to give the Lord the undivided confidence of the heart, is the secret of full and eternal blessedness. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him (Psa. 2. 12). Note these two words, “trust” and “hope.” The trust is but a counterfeit if hope does not spring out of it. When we truly trust the Lord we will certainly expect much from Him. “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is **stayed on Thee**: because he trusteth in Thee” (Isa. 26. 3, 4).

IV. What is the Blessedness? The blessedness is very great. This blessed man has—

1. A GOOD POSITION. "He is like a tree planted by the waters " (v. 8). Planted for a purpose, not like the heath in the desert growing wild--without grace. The believer is planted in Christ, a position of security, and infinite favour.

2. A PLENTIFUL SUPPLY. "That spreadeth out her roots by the river. " All the resources of the continuous flow of the river of God's grace are at the disposal of this blessed man whose hope the Lord is. "Spread out all the roots" of your affections and desires into the river of His Word and will, for "My God is able to supply all your need according to the riches of His grace."

3. A HAPPY IGNORANCE. "He shall not see when heat cometh." The drought has no effect upon the tree that's planted by the waters of an unfailing river. What are "wild alarms" to others do not disturb his soul.

4. AN EVER FRESH EXPERIENCE. "His leaf shall be green." Abiding freshness belongs to all who abide in Christ, and in the current of His gracious purposes. The leaf of his testimony will be ever green.

5. A BLESSED FREEDOM. "He shall not be careful in the year of drought." Freedom from care when *appearances* are all against him. Living on the promises of God saves from all fearfulness in the day of trial.

6. CONTINUAL FRUITFULNESS. "Neither shall cease from yielding fruit. " The never-failing river of life produces in those who receive of its fullness a never-failing fruitfulness unto God (Rev. 22. 2; John 15. 5, 6; 16). This blessedness cometh by faith.

THE MARRED VESSEL.

JEREMIAH 18. 1-6.

THE prophet of the Lord is sent to the house of a potter that he might get an object lesson on the work and will

of God. God can put a new meaning into the common affairs of life. Even the ants, and the lilies, can teach the sluggard and the overly anxious. The prophet is humble enough to obey the call, and willing enough to learn the mind of the Lord, even through the actions of an illiterate potter.

I. The Clay. This represents the “house of Israel” (v. 6). Dug out of Egypt, and brought into Canaan, the great Potter’s house where He desired to work in His people. Like Israel, we have been taken out of the clay pit of darkness and slavery, and brought into the Kingdom of His dear Son, that He might fashion us after His own image. The clay is the raw material.

II. The Wheels. “Behold, he wrought a work on the wheels.” The wheels of God’s promises, purposes, and providences, were all working together for their good (Rom. 8. 28). Being in the Kingdom of God we are in the special sphere of His favour and grace. All our circumstances are but the wheels in which our spiritual character is being formed. The lives of all the Bible saints are witnesses to this. We should not shirk our tribulations knowing that “tribulations worketh patience, and patience experience.”

III. The Potter. “Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in Mine hand, O house of Israel.” The Lord Himself is the Potter. Oh, what possibilities there are for us, as for Israel, being in “His hand.” Think of your position, and of His purpose with you in placing His mighty hand upon you. See what Nehemiah was able to accomplish because of the hand of God upon him (Neh. 2. 8). The Potter’s purpose is to make the best possible use of the material that is in His hand. “The Giver of all grace, who has called you to share His eternal glory, through Christ, .will Himself make you perfect”

(1 Peter 5. 10, *Weymouth*). The wonder-working hand of God is the Holy Spirit who worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

IV. The Vessel. “The vessel that he made was marred in the hand of the potter, so he made it again another vessel.” Even in the hand of the Divine Potter the vessel (Israel) was marred. Through disobedience they became another dishonoured vessel. Because of unbelief they have been cut off, and are still, as a nation, a marred vessel. Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief. If the Holy Spirit, as the hand of God, is to fashion us into a vessel meet for the Master’s use, there must be no unyielding part in our nature. The hard grit of a perverse will, or the sand of self seeking, will hinder and mar the work of the Heavenly Potter, whose gentle hands are so sensible to the least resistance. Every backslider is a marred vessel. Many like Saul, are marred because they have disobeyed the Word of the Lord. What might we not have been if the Divine Potter had had His will all the time with us ?

V. The Application. “Cannot I do with you as this potter ? saith the Lord.” Thank God, although the vessel has been marred, “He can make it *again* another vessel.” The regenerating Spirit is able to restore the marred vessel into something like the image of Him who worketh in you mightily. The vessel may have been dishonoured by resistance, but it has not been disowned. Can God do with *you* as this potter ? Can He ? Are you as clay, soft, pliable, and refined, in His hand ? If so, the Potter’s purpose may yet be fulfilled in you. He still needs vessels to bear His Name (character) among the nations of the earth (Acts 9. 15). Every vessel made meet for His use will be a vessel used in His service,

TONGUE SMITERS.

JEREMIAH 18. 18-20.

THE man of God will never be understood by the man of the world. We see the—

I. Purpose of the Persecutors. “Come, let us devise devices against Jeremiah.” The devices devised by the ungodly against the servants of God are many. They have nothing against him, **but must, in their enmity, devise something.** Yet, they confess that “the law shall not perish.. nor the word from the prophet. ” They are convinced that the “law” cannot be broken, and that the testimony of God’s man will not fail. Yet they say, **“Come, let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.”** They know he speaks the truth in God’s Name, yet they smite him with the tongue of scorn and of calumny, and determine not to give heed to his message. **This is surely a most humbling evidence of the enmity of the carnal mind against God.**

II. Appeal of the Prophet. He appeals—

1. **To the LORD HIMSELF.** “Give heed to me, O Lord,” etc. **The tongue of the slanderer is as a poisoned arrow, but there is refuge in God from the strife of tongues. When others give no heed to our message it is good to realise that God gives heed to our cry.**

2. **To DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS.** “Shall evil be recompensed for good?” No, God is not unrighteous to reward faithfulness with shame and defeat. The devices of the wicked shall never block the channel of Divine mercy and power to His own people. If we ask a fish will He give us a stone ? He appeals also—

3. **To HIS OWN FAITHFULNESS.** “Remember that I stood before Thee to speak good for them, and to turn away Thy wrath from them.” **While they were devising devices against him, he was pleading with God for them.**

While they were speaking evil of him, he was speaking “good for them.” Like the Greatest of all prophets, he prayed for his enemies, and like Him also, he was hated without a cause (John 15. 25). The servant of God is clear of the blood of the lawless and the unbelieving when he can say, as he looks up into the face of the Eternal Father, “Remember that I stood before Thee.. .for them, ” as Abraham did (Gen. 18.22). Pray for them that despitefully use you, remember that ye are the salt of the earth.

The terrible imprecations which follow in verses 21-23, show the awful judgments from which he sought to save them. Now, as it were, he steps aside from his pleadings, and allows the merited wrath of God to fall upon them. This the child of grace dare not do.

PASHUR.

JEREMIAH 20. 1-6.

THIS short biography is full of warning to those honoured with authority, but who, in their pride of social position, despise and reject **the** testimony of the Word of God at the mouth of His servant.

I. His Position. “The son of a priest, and chief governor in the house of the Lord.” From his connection, and official position, you would expect that he would be in real sympathy with the Lord’s prophet. But, No I While he superintended the house of the Lord he was at enmity with the purpose of the Lord. A religious position does not always mean a religious condition.

II. His Enmity to God’s Word. “He heard Jeremiah . . .and smote him, and put him in the stocks” (vv. 1, 2). God’s message was opposed to his thoughts and desires (19. 14,15), so he insulted and imprisoned the messenger, As a straw may show which way the wind blows, so a word

or a look may reveal the enmity of the heart against the truth of God.

III. His Sudden Exposure. "The Lord hath not called thy name Pashur ("most noble," or, "joy round about") but Magor-missabib"—*fear* round about (v. 3). Men may call themselves what they may, but God will name them according to what they are. Men may call themselves believers when God calls them unbelievers. A man is what God sees him to be. He is not mocked.

IV. His Deceitful Life. "Thou hast prophesied lies" (v. 6). His lies were manufactured to discredit the Word of God at the mouth of Jeremiah the prophet. Like Elymas the sorcerer, he sought to *pervert* the right way of the Lord. But the perverted and the perverters shall all be put to shame.

V. His Doom. "Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself" (v. 4). What could be more terrible than this, a man a terror to himself? A sinner carrying his own brimstone in his own bosom as the product of his own deeds. Who shall deliver him from this body of death?

A CHEQUERED EXPERIENCE.

JEREMIAH 20. 7-11.

THE prophet here gives us a little bit of personal testimony. Within the compass of these few verses there is such a variety of experiences as makes one feel that he was a man of like passions with ourselves.

I. He was Enticed of the Lord. "O Lord, Thou hast enticed me, and I was enticed" (v. 7, *margin*). Another reading is, "Thou hast overcome" me, or, "Laid hold on me, and I was overcome." He was overcome by the enticing influence of the Word of God, it was "Stronger than I, and prevailed" (v. 7). This is the initial

experience of a true prophet, a preacher, or a Christian. He himself must be "laid hold on," and "overcome" by the power of God's truth if he is to speak it in power.

II. He was Mocked by Men. "I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me." The man who has been "overcome" by God is derided by men. The godly man is still "Made a spectacle unto the world" (1 Cor. 4. 9). Marvel not if the world hate you.

III. He was Indignant at the Treatment. "Since I spake, I cried out" (v. 8). He complained against the violence done to the truth. Reproach for the Word of the Lord was hard to bear. Moses behaved differently (Heb. 11. 26).

IV. He was Discouraged at Results. "Then I said, I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His Name" (v. 9). Faithful testimony had brought but reproach. Why should he persevere? Oh, this is so very human. We would be more faithful to God if we were getting more personal profit and pleasure by it. Shame!

V. He was Inspired by the Word. "But His Word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones... and I could not stay" (v. 9). This is how God "overcomes" by His Word in the lives of His people. We cannot but speak when the truth becomes like liquid fire in the heart (Acts 4. 20). Is it possible to have heard and believed the Gospel of God without feeling the woe of not preaching it? (1 Cor. 9. 16).

VI. He was Misunderstood by His Friends. "All my familiars (every man of my peace) watched for my halting." Even his choice acquaintances were ready to catch any seeming slip of the tongue, and to report it to his enemies. The unfavourable, gossiping of pretended friends is one of the sore trials of the servant of Christ.

Personal friends who understand not your spiritual character and mission.

VII. **He was Encouraged by the Lord.** “But the Lord is with me as a mighty, terrible One” (v. 11). The prophet’s Saviour is more mighty and terrible than his oppressors. If God be for us who shall prevail against us? (Rom. 8. 31). When His Word burns like a fire in the bones the mighty and terrible One is at hand. Be not dismayed, for I am thy God.

THE FALSE AND THE TRUE.

JEREMIAH 23. 24-32.

THERE are two classes of prophets, or preachers, referred to here, whose successors are still with us: those who dream dreams, and proclaim them as the Word of the Lord, and those who have received God’s message into their own hearts, that they might preach it.

I. **The Dreamers.** They say, “I have dreamed, I have dreamed” (v. 25). **They** have dreamed, so all the world should listen to them. Dreams may at times be very interesting, but they are destitute of authority. The dreamer is to tell his dream **as a dream**, but he is a “prophet of the deceit of his own heart,” if he dares to substitute the imaginings of his own sleepy brains as the “Word of the Lord.” These dreamers, like their modern followers, “prophesy lies, ” and “think to cause My people to forget My Name by their dreams” (v. 27). Such teachers as devise their own message, and declare it in God’s Name, were never sent by Him. “Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams.. I sent them not, nor commanded them, therefore, they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord” (v. 32). God’s people would profit much more to-day if His servants would dream less, and trust more to His revealed will, and

fearlessly proclaim it. These filthy dreamers are always exposed to “seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils,” and those who will not endure sound doctrine, as in these latter days, will readily heap to themselves such man-pleasing teachers (2 Tim. 4. 3).

II. The Receivers. “He that hath My Word” (v. 28). He hath the Word, because he received it from the Lord. There is a vast difference between knowing the truth, and theorising, or dreaming about it. The apostles could say, “We speak that we do know.” “What is the chaff to the wheat ? saith the Lord” (v. 28). Just what a dream is to the revelation of God. The imaginations of the unrenewed mind are but as chaff in the reckoning of the Omniscient One. God’s Word is not a fancy, nor a phantom, it is “A fire, and a hammer” (v. 29). Something that can make itself felt when in operation. God’s Word is wheat to feed, fire to burn, and a hammer to break. “He that hath My Word,” He says, “let him speak My Word faithfully.” Worldly wisdom, as exhibited in the dreamer’s dreams, is but the savour of death unto death. The wisdom of God, as revealed in His Word, is the savour of life unto life.

FAITHFULNESS AND FOOLISHNESS.

JEREMIAH 26. 1-16.

DRYDEN has said, “To take up half on trust, and half on try, name it not faith, but bungling bigotry.” There was no “bungling bigotry” in the mind of Jeremiah, his attitude to God and to the people was one of fearless integrity.

I. The Commission. “Stand in the court of the Lord’s house, and speak.. .all the words that I command thee to speak unto them ; diminish not a word” (v. 2). In the Lord’s house there must be no diminishing of the

Lord's Word. Those who attempt to modify the force of God's Word lest the princes of the people should be offended, are in danger of the curse pronounced in Revelation 22. 19. What the "worshippers" in our cities need, as well as those in the "cities of Judah," is a faithful declaration of the whole truth as it is in Jesus Christ, that they may "turn every man from his evil way" (v. 3).

II. The Message. "Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord; If ye will not hearken to Me, to walk in My law.. . then I will make this house.. .and this city a curse" (vv. 4-6). When the blight of God comes upon His *house* because of unbelief and disobedience, then the curse comes upon the city, and to "*all the nations* of the earth. " **A backsliding Church is a social and national curse.** How can the house of the Lord maintain its dignity and power as a witness for Him if the light of Divine truth has grown dim?

III. The Opposition (vv. 8-11). "The priests, the prophets, and all the people, said.. .Thou shalt surely die ...Why hast thou prophesied in the Name of the Lord, saying, This house.. .and this city shall be desolate," etc. ? **The same charge was made against the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 21. 23).** God's Word, by the mouth of the prophet, cut at the root of their pride, the "*house,*" and the "*city,*" both dishonoured, and degraded, by their sins. **What is the Lord's house, or the Lord's city to Him, when His people have backslidden in heart from Him?** To kill God's prophet would not kill God's purpose. Every preacher of righteousness will surely become a "*pestilent fellow*" to hypocritical professors.

IV. The Call to Repentance. "Then spake Jeremiah . .The Lord sent me to prophesy against this house... Therefore **now amend your ways...**and **obey the voice**

of the Lord” (vv. 12, 13). The messenger can take back nothing, the responsibility of saving the “house and the city” lies in *their* repentance and obedience (Hos. 14. 2-4). If churches and cities are to be delivered from desolation and oppression, then let the ‘Voice of the Lord be obeyed.’”

V. The Personal Testimony. “As for me, behold, I am in your hand.. .but know.. .for a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all these words” (vv. 14, 15). The same language is found in Joshua 9. 25; 2 Samuel 15. 26. Every true servant of the Lord is more concerned about the faithful delivery of His message, than the deliverance of himself out of the hands of the enemies of God. When a man knows that he has the unerring Word of God in him and with him his soul is anchored.

VI. The Voice of Reason. “Then said the princes.. . This man is not worthy to die, for he hath spoken to us in the Name of the Lord our God” (v. 16). The princes and the people were more amenable to reason than the priests and the prophets. Religious pride and bigotry is often the bitterest enemy to the truth of God. The common people heard Christ gladly. Raw heathenism is not such an obstacle in the way of the Gospel as a Christianised paganism. “My sheep hear My voice, and they follow Me.”

CLAIMING THE PROMISES.

JEREMIAH 29. 10-14.

THESE words form part of the letter which Jeremiah sent to those who were captives in Babylon (v. 1). This letter like the Gospel of God, is a revelation of His mind and will to those who, because of their sins, and iniquities, have become the slaves of an alien power.

I. The Thoughts of God. “I know the thoughts that I think” (v. 11). If great men have great thoughts,

what shall we say of the thoughts of God. What might this world not give to know what God's thoughts are.

1. **They are PERSONAL** thoughts. "Thoughts that I think *toward you*." Neither science nor philosophy can tell what God thinks of us. The heavens may declare His glory, but His own lips must tell me what He thinks of me. This He does in Christ, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

2. They are **PEACEFUL** thoughts. "Thoughts of peace and not of evil." Guilty man naturally imagines that God's thoughts toward him are thoughts of war and destruction. But, "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." "My thoughts are not your thoughts, saith the Lord" (Isa. 55. 8). The Cross of Christ is God's thought of peace toward a warring world. He hath made peace by the blood of His Cross.

3. They are **PROSPECTIVE** thoughts. "To give you hope in your end" (R.V.). Or, to secure for you a blessed future. God's purposes with Judah are not yet fulfilled (Zech. 12. 9, 10; 14. 20, 21). There is also a glorious future for the Church of God (Eph. 2. 7). The thoughts of God, revealed to us, and believed by us, inspires with a new and blessed hope, not only for this life, but also for the life which is to come (see Psalm 139. 17).

II. The Expectation of God. When God reveals His thoughts to His people, He expects that they will receive them, and act accordingly. He says—

1. "Ye shall **CALL** upon Me" (v. 13). How shall we call on Him of whom we have not heard? But now that we have heard, faith and prayer are expected to be exercised. God looks for His promises to be claimed.

2. "Ye shall **SEEK** Me, and find Me, when ye shall

search for Me with all your heart.” It is not enough to cry for deliverance, we must seek for the Deliverer. When His thoughts are so good and gracious towards us, why should we not seek the embrace of His Person? Those who see Him with all their heart make a whole-hearted discovery, for, when there is the purity of heart, there is the vision of God (Matt. 5. 8). “Seek, and ye shall find” (Luke 11. 9, 10).

III. The Promises of God (v. 14). These promises are the proofs of His exceeding great and precious thoughts to usward who believe. He promises—

1. TO HEARKEN. “Ye shall pray unto Me, and I will hearken unto you” (v. 12). His ear is not heavy that it cannot hear, neither is it too far away, or too much occupied with others, to hearken unto *you*.

2. TO ANSWER. “I will be found of you” (v. 14). God promises to reveal and surrender Himself to the seeking soul, and, oh, what a find! Infinite *goodness* and fullness for the soul’s eternal need.

3. TO DELIVER. “I will turn away your captivity.” The bondage of sin He turns away by the revelation of His power; the bondage of darkness He turns away by the dawning of His light; the bondage of the world, the flesh, and the Devil, by the revelation of His Cross, His Word, and His Spirit.

4. TO RESTORE. “I will gather you. . .and bring you again into the place.” Their sin drove them away, but God’s grace would bring them back. Christ suffered, the Just for the unjust, that He might *bring us to God*. As every Jew will yet be gathered out “from all the nations,” so every child of God will yet be gathered out as members of the Body of Christ (Acts 15. 14).

RUIN AND REMEDY.

JE^REMIAH 30. 11-22.

ISRAEL is a helpless captive in Babylon. All other nations have forsaken them in their time of need. A picture of a soul's ruin, and the world's indifference to its condition.

I. The Ruin. They are described as being—

1. GUILTY. "Because thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee" (v. 15). Sin leads to bondage, to suffering, and disappointment.

2. BRUISED. "Thy bruise (hurt, R.V.) is incurable." Sin has crushed man's soul out of its original shape. Man has absolutely no cure for it.

3. WOUNDED. "Thy wound is grievous." Heart rebellion against God is an awful gash in a man's, or a nation's, moral being. It is very grievous in its results, as they reach into Eternity.

4. FRIENDLESS. "There is none to plead thy cause" (v. 13). While in the "far country" the prodigal found no one to plead his cause. No man can redeem his brother. But *we* thank God for 1 John 2. 1.

5. HELPLESS. "Thou hast no healing medicines" (v. 13). Man's wisdom and ingenuity has invented many medicines, but there is no *healing* in them.

6. DESTITUTE. "All thy lovers have forgotten thee" (v. 14). The hewn-out cisterns have proved broken and worthless. Their lovers have proved mockers.

7. MISERABLE. "Why criest thou" (v. 15). It is the cry of hopeless despair. "Out of the depths have I cried," The discovery of our infinite poverty and need makes such a cry irresistible,

II. The Remedy. The cure for a sinner's woes is found in God alone, in His Presence, and His Promise. "I am with thee, saith the Lord, to save thee" (v. 11). Emmanuel, our Hope (Matt. 1. 21-23). In His sevenfold promise there is a perfect salvation. He promises—

1. HEALTH. "I will restore health unto thee" (v. 17). Restoration to Himself means health. "He is the health of my countenance" (Psa. 23. 3).

2. HEALING. "I will heal thee of thy wounds." Saved, not only from sickness, but also from unsoundness. The wounds may be deep, but not too deep for His healing power.

3. FREEDOM. "I will bring again the captivity" (v. 18). There is, not only healing, but emancipation from the power of the enemy.

4. FRUITFULNESS. "I will multiply them, and they shall not be few" (v. 19). An increase of numbers as the result of a better testimony for God.

5. HONOUR. "I will also glorify them." Despised and rejected of men they may be, but accepted and honoured of God they will be. Those who suffer for Christ shall also reign with Him. On the other side of the flood they sang the Song of Moses.

6. PROTECTION. "I will punish all that oppress them" (v. 20). The overthrowing of the Egyptians in the Red Sea is a warning to all who follow God's people with the intent of their hurt. His redeemed are His peculiar treasure.

7. ALL-SUFFICIENCY. "I will be your God" (v. 22). No greater promise could God give. No fuller blessing could He offer than this. "Lo, I am with you all the days." See Hebrews 13. 5, 6, Revised Version. Observe God's "I wills" in this provision,

THE RESTORATION.

JEREMIAH 32. 37-41.

HERE again, as in chapter 30, God's promise to deliver consists of seven "I wills."

- I. I will gather them out-Separation (Eph. 2. 3-5).
- II. I will bring them in-Safety (John 10. 27).
- III. I will be their God-Assurance (I John 3. 1).
- IV. I will give them one heart-Unity (John 17. 20, 21).
- V. I will make a covenant with them-Satisfaction (2 Cor. 6. 17, 18).
- VI. I will put My fear in their hearts-Worship (Acts 9. 31).
- VII. I will rejoice over them-Praise (Phil. 3. 1).

GREAT, HIDDEN THINGS.

JEREMIAH 33. 1-9.

THE reference is to Jerusalem desolated by war. A picture of a ruined life through sin and unbelief.

- I. The Condition of Blessing. "Call upon Me" (v. 3).
- II. The Mighty Promises. "Great and hidden things."
 1. RENEWAL of health (v. 6).
 2. REVELATION of abundance of peace and truth (v. 6).
 3. DELIVERANCE from bondage (v. 7).
 4. RESTORATION of ruined things (v. 7).
 5. CLEANSING from all iniquity (v. 8).
 6. GOD-HONOURING testimony (v. 9).

THE RECHABITES.

JEREMIAH 35.

JONADAB, the son of Rechab, was a strong, wise man. His life and testimony was a protest, Elijah-like, against the

sins of the age, Baal-worship, and intemperance. The Rechabites were a separate family living in patriarchal fashion-dwelling in tents (v. 6), and observing the vow of the Nazarite (Num. 6. 2-4). As they were used as a rebuke to Judah, so may we learn much from them.

I. They were the Sons of a Good Father. Jonadab was a man zealous for the cause of God (2 Kings 10. 15, 16). A righteous, courageous, and consistent example on the part of a parent goes a very long way in the formation of the character of the son. The good, as well as the evil, that men do live after them in their children.

II. They were Severely Tested. "Bring them into the house of the Lord...and give them wine to drink" (v. 2). They had come into the city for safety when the King of Babylon and his forces came into the land (v. 11). Now they are tempted by the prophet, in God's own house, to break their vow of abstinence. **Truly, they might have been excused in the circumstances.** City temptations are strong for young men in every age, especially now. How many are still tempted to take the intoxicating wine in the house of God, by God's own servants at "Communion Seasons," when the house of prayer smells like a saloon.

III. They were Faithful to their Convictions. "They said, We will drink no wine, as our father commanded us" (v. 6). Although their father was dead long years ago, and although no one might have reproached them for taking it on such an occasion, **yet they remained true to their father's wish and their own consciences.** Of course, Jeremiah knew well that they would not touch it, if they had his purpose and God's message would have been thwarted. The proverb, "When in Rome do as the Romans do," is often cowardly and immoral. This lax, accommodating principle has been the ruin of multitudes.

IV. **They became an Example to Others.** Their faith in their father, their obedience, and devotion, to his word and will, were used by God to rebuke His people's unbelief and disobedience. "They obeyed their father's commandment :...I have spoken unto you.. . but ye hearkened not unto Me" (v. 14). They were faithful to their father's words spoken three hundred years ago, but God's professed sons had disregarded and forgotten His words. How true is it still that, in our human and temporal relationships we show far more fidelity, than in our spiritual and eternal. The Rechabites had received but one command, and they obeyed. God's people had servants and prophets sent again and again (v. 15), repeating His Words to them, yet they hearkened not. How slow men are to believe God.

V. **They were Rewarded.** "Because ye have obeyed your father, and kept all his precepts.. . Jonadab shall not want a man to stand before Me for ever" (vv. 18, 19). Their obedience to their parent was well pleasing unto the Lord (Col. 3. 20). As a family they lived long on the earth. This is the special blessing attached to the "Honouring of thy father and mother" (Eph. 6. 1-3; Exod. 20. 12). Obedience to God's Word is rewarded with *everlasting* life (John 3. 34-36). All who honour His Word shall stand before Him for ever.

BURNING THE BOOK.

JEREMIAH 36.

THE Book of God, like the people of God, has, in every age, suffered persecution. It has been tortured and ruptured, pierced and ridiculed, burned and buried, but it has quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, stopped the mouths of lions, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Here we see Jehoiachin burning it, but God gave it a resurrection in a mightier form.

I. The Message Given. (1) It was from the Lord. "Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee" (v. 2). Like the Gospel of Christ, it was a revelation from Heaven. (2) **It** was a message of solemn warning. "Against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations" (v. 2). Like the Gospel, it was of universal import. (3) It was sent in mercy. "It **may** be that Israel will **hear...and** return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their sin" (v. 3). Like the Gospel, it was a manifestation of God's love for them, and His desire after their salvation.

II. The Message Heard. "**So** the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll...and he read it in the ears of the king" (vv. 20, 21). What a privilege to hear such words of faithful warning mingled with Divine forbearance and mercy. The importance and responsibility of hearing His Word, and giving heed to it, is powerfully evidenced here. It was the most critical moment in the life of the king. Hear, and your soul shall live.

III. The Message Rejected. "He cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire" (v. 23). Any fool could do that. There are some people's tongues like penknives, they cut to pieces the Gospel of God. There is a penknife called "higher criticism" that has done its own share of destructive work, but the most common and persistent weapon used by the ungodly against the Word of God is "an evil heart of unbelief." It was not with the "roll of a book" that the king had to do, but with the God of the book. The paper, or the preacher, may be easily cut to pieces, but not so the message, the Word of God endureth for ever. There are many who would not bum the book, but who are *not afraid*, nor rend their garments when its words **are** read (v. 24),

IV. **The Message Renewed.** Another roll was taken and “all the words of the book which the king had burned in the fire” were written, “and there were **added** besides unto them many like *words*” (v. 32). The force of the message was augmented by resistance. God will never lower His demands because of the opposition and hatred of men (Acts 5. 40-42). No man is done with God’s Word when he has rejected and destroyed it. That same Word will yet judge him. A man might as well expect to improve the weather by breaking the barometer, as to relieve his soul by rejecting God’s message. The unbelief of some will never make the Word of God of none effect. Remember that He who is “The Word of God” was resurrected from the dead.

THE VOICE OF THE LORD.

JEREMIAH 38.

“OBEY, I beseech thee, the voice of the Lord...so it shall be well with thee” (v. 20). The “voice” here stands for the Word of the Lord. It is—

- I. A Warning voice (vv. 3, 4).
- II. A Humbling **voice** (v. 2).
- III. A Hated voice (w. 4-6).
- IV. A Convicting voice (secret concern, v. 14).
- V. An Assuring voice (v. 20).
- VI. An Infallible voice (chap. 39. 2-7).

JEHOIACHIN’S DELIVERANCE.

JEREMIAH 52. 31-34.

“She sat and wept; with her untressed hair
 She wiped the feet she was so blessed to touch;
 And He wiped off the soiling of despair.—*Coleridge.*”

THE Divine threatenings in Leviticus 26 find their terrible fulfilment in the reign of Jehoiachin. “Be not deceived,

God is not mocked.” Sin brings to ruin every nation and individual that yields to its dark and foulsome dominion. The king of Babylon was Jehovah’s sword of vengeance in the punishment of Judah for their rebellion against Him. Jehoiachin was taken captive and thrown into a Babylonian prison, where he remained for the long period of thirty-seven years. But Babylon’s new king, **Evil-merodach**, had mercy on him, and in grace wrought a marvellous change for him, giving us an illustration of the wonder-working grace of God.

I. Delivered. “He did lift up Jehoiachin out of prison” (v. 27). This was his first necessity. He could in no wise lift himself up. The grace of God which bringeth salvation has **a** mighty uplifting power. “He brought me up out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay” (Psa. 40. 2) ; and from the darkness and thralldom of Satan into the Kingdom of God’s dear Son. As with the king of Judah so with us ; there is no uplifting into liberty without the exercise of Royal Authority.

II. Comforted. “He spake kindly to him.” The law has no kind word of comfort to speak, but grace has. By grace are ye saved. All those ransomed by the power of Christ are comforted by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The religion of man attempts to speak comfortably to men in the prison of sin ; the religion of God first saves, then comforts. The blood of His victory goes before the water of His consolation. He knows how to speak a word to the weary. In all the coming ages God’s people will show forth His kindness towards them through Christ Jesus (Eph. 2. 7).

III. Exalted. “He set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon.” Jehoiachin had the pre-eminence among the other kings who were as captives in Babylon. The whole incident may **be pro-**

phetic of Judah's future exaltation and glory, as it is suggestive of the spiritual uplifting enjoyed by those who are risen and exalted into heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Abounding sin and failure is conquered and overcome by the much more abounding grace of God. If man's fall through sin has been great, his uplifting through grace has been greater. He can make the homeless beggar of the dunghill meet to sit among the princes of Heaven. "Oh, to grace how great a debtor!"

IV. Clothed. "He changed his prison garments." The prison garments speak of guilt, defeat, shame, and bondage ; but now they are gone, and garments of beauty take their place. So it is with those whom grace hath saved. The old things which spoke of failure, degradation and imprisonment, are put off, and those things have been put on which tell of glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life. A change will soon be evident when once a soul has been emancipated from the law of sin and death—the filthy rags of self-righteousness give place to the righteousness of God, which is unto all and upon all them that believe (Zech. 3. 3).

V. Honoured. "He did eat bread continually before him." He had the daily privilege of having fellowship with him who had delivered him from the house of bondage. The prisoner was now the constant companion of his Saviour . The grace of God not only saves and transforms, but brings into abiding fellowship with Himself. The kindness of David wrought the same gracious work for Mephibosheth (2 Sam. 9. 7). The door of our King's banqueting-house is always open for His own specially invited guests. Eat, O friends !

VI. Supplied. "His allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life."

1. It was an ALLOWANCE. It was not a reward, or something given as wages. It was something placed at the disposal of him whom the king delighted to honour. It was the provision of grace. How much has God placed at the disposal of those who have been saved by His grace? All the unsearchable riches of Christ.

2. It was a DAILY allowance. "A daily rate for every day." Take no thought for your life. "My grace is sufficient for thee." To-morrow's allowance will come with to-morrow's need.

3. It was given him OF THE KING; out of the king's fullness, and from his own gracious hand were all his wants supplied. "My God shall supply all your need" (Phil. 4. 19).

4. It was an allowance FOR LIFE. "All the days of his life." The royal promise covered his every need. All is yours, for ye are Christ's.

THE LIVING CREATURES.

EZEKIEL 1.

It was when the prophet was "among the captives" that the "heavens were opened, and he saw visions of God" (v. 1). John was in the Isle of Patmos when the revelation came to him. These "visions of God" which came to Ezekiel the priest, whatever be their import to Israel, are strikingly symbolic of the Church of God as seen in Revelation 4 (read R.V.). These living creatures resemble the Church in—

I. **Their Origin.** They came "out of the midst of. . . a whirlwind. . . a great cloud, and a fire" (vv. 4, 5). A fire that was "infolding (taking hold of) itself." The fire, cloud, and whirlwind, are suggestive of God of Mystery and of Judgment, all of which appear in the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ. The Church is born

of **God** in the mystery of godliness, and delivered from the judgment of sin (Acts 2. 2).

II. Their Character. They are “Living creatures,” literally “living ones. ” They are not dying ones. Not of the earth earthy, but from Heaven. They are living ones whose life is akin to God’s, partakers of the Divine nature. Heirs of eternal life.

III. Their Appearance. “They had the likeness of a MAN” (v. 5). Created after the image of Him who is the Son of God, in righteousness and true holiness. The Church is in the likeness of the Man Christ Jesus. Having—

1. The face of a MAN for wisdom, and reverence in worship (v. 10).

2. The face of a LION for courage and strength in battle.

3. The face of an Ox for patience and perseverance in service.

4. The face of an EAGLE for clear vision, and heavenly power in testimony.

Each had four wings, power to obey the Divine commission, and to keep themselves out of sight. With two they “covered their bodies” (v. 11).

IV. Their Movements. “They went every one straight forward” (v. 12). This method of action proves that they were of one mind, and dominated by one great purpose. How could it be otherwise when, “whither the Spirit was to go they went? ” That the Church of God might go straight forward in one Spirit, doing His will, was partly the burden of Christ’s great prayer in John **17** (Rom. 8. 14; John 17. 22).

V. Their Influence. “Their appearance was like burning coals of fire.. .like lamps.. .the fire was bright, and out of the fire went forth lightning” (v. 13). He

maketh His ministers a flaming fire (Psa. 104. 4). The early Church was endued with "Cloven tongues like as of fire" (Acts 2. 3). "Burning coals," "lamps," and "lightning, " are self-assertive, they are not to be hid. Be filled with the Spirit, and the coals of thought will burn, then the lamp of life will shine, and the lightning of conviction and revelation go forth (v. 14).

VI. Their Accompaniments. "And when the living creatures went the wheels went with them" (w. 15-21). The rings of the wheels were so high that they were dreadful.. .and full of eyes.. .and the Spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels. Symbolic of the Providence of God in relation to His redeemed people. "All things work together for good to them that love God,. .called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8. 28. See 2 Chronicles 16. 9). They were mysterious ("dreadful"), unerring ("full of eyes"), and in perfect accord with the living ones-the same Spirit was in them. What a comfort to the Church of God.

VII. Their Translation. "The living ones were lifted up from the earth" (v. 19. See chapter 10. 19). When they are lifted up the wheels are also lifted up. This is a solemn thought for an ungodly and Christ-rejecting world. The Church shall be lifted from the earth (1 Thess. 4. 17). But when the wheels of Almighty grace cease to move in the world, the flaming fire of retribution will be kindled (2 Thess. 1. 7-10). Life from God is the guarantee of life *with* God.

EQUIPMENT FOR SERVICE.

EZEKIEL 2, 3.

THE first great essential in service is a "vision of God" (chap. 1. 1). A vision of His greatness, His holiness, and unfailing mercy. Saul, who became Paul, was not "disobedient to the heavenly vision." The vision comes

through the revelation of His Son in the Scriptures of truth (John 1. 18). Here are some characteristics, which, without fail, belong to the true servant of God—

I. **They are Spirit-possessed.** “The Spirit entered into me” (chap. 2. 2). The revelation of God prepares for the entering of His Holy Spirit into the heart. Be filled with the Spirit. He is always ready to possess every consecrated life.

II. **They are God-sent.** “He said unto me, I send thee” (chap. 2. 3). Those who are Spirit-taught, will be Spirit-sent. “As Thou has sent me into the world,” said our Lord, “even so have I also sent them into the world” (John 17. 18). The vision of Calvary preceded the Pentecostal enduement and witness-bearing.

III. **They are Willing Recipients of His Word.** “He said, Son of Man...eat this roll, so I opened my mouth” (chap. 3. 1-3). His words are spirit and life (John 6. 61-63), so the Spirit-taught soul receives them gladly. He receives the roll of the book, just as a little child receives its food. **He** opened his mouth, and the Lord filled it, “and it was in his mouth as honey for sweetness.” If the Word of God was more simply and fully received, there would be more delight in it, and more power through it.

IV. **They are Courageous.** “Behold, I have made thy face strong,” etc. (chap. 3. 8). A “strong face,” is an evidence of great force of character. Leaders of men have usually a strong facial expression. God can make your character to be strong and powerful. The fear of man is foreign to the man of God.

V. **They are Obedient.** “The Spirit took me up.. . and I wept in bitterness, in the heat of my spirit” (v. 14). The Word of the Lord was sweet in his mouth, but somewhat bitter in its practical operation. But although

there was bitterness to his soul in following the guidance of the Spirit, he obeyed. Paul gloried in tribulation **also**.

VI. **They are Humble.** "Then I came to them of the captivity.. .and I sat where they sat" (v. 15). This was how he reached the lapsed mass. He obeyed the Spirit of God, and went and sat down among them. Those who labour for Christ, must act like Him, humbling themselves for the sake of others.

VII. **They are Faithful.** "I have made thee a watchman" (chap. 3. 16-21). The watchman must "warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life." The wicked need warning, and the man who has seen "visions of God" is alone able sufficiently to give that warning. Paul was a faithful watchman, and could say, "I am pure from the blood of all men" (Acts 20. 26-31). Study to show thyself approved of God, a **watchman** that needeth not to be ashamed (2 Tim. 2. 1.5).

THE TIME OF LOVE.

EZEKIEL 16. 1-20.

ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine. In this chapter we have a revelation of the marvellous love and grace of God. Judah is here represented as a helpless, forsaken infant, perishing in the open field. The time of Divine love came when He, passing by, pitied, and saved with a great salvation. The need of a ruined Jerusalem is the need of every ruined soul.

I. **A Picture of Destitution.** Could any figures of speech be more expressive than this ?

1. **HELPLESSNESS.** "I saw thee weltering in thy blood" (v. 6, R.V.). Jerusalem did not see herself in this sorrowful plight. God's judgment of sin is quite a different thing from man's (Rom. 3. 19; 5. 6).

2. HOPELESSNESS. “None eye pitied thee.. .to have compassion upon thee” (v. 5). No one is capable of pitying the sinner who knows not the holiness of God. Men can understand the sadness of poverty, shame and crime committed against himself or his fellow men, but not sin as against God. In this sense “No man can redeem his brother.” In humanity there is absolutely no hope for man as guilty before God.

II. A Picture of Salvation. “Behold thy time, the time of love” (v. **8**). The time of love was when “He passed by, and looked upon thee.” Our time of love is now, while God in mercy and grace is passing by in the Gospel of His Son, beholding in pity and compassion our sin and misery. The proof and power of that love is seen in what He did.

1. HE SPARED. “I said unto thee, Live” (v. 6). He only could speak the Word of Life to this blood-stained outcast. He who “spared not” His own Son spared this sinning soul. The salvation of God is the sparing of the soul in unmerited mercy from guilt and death. Saved by grace *alone*.

2. HE CLEANSED. “Then I washed thee with water.” Blood, the figure of pollution and sin, was washed away. Every spared one is a washed one (Gal. 1. 4). The life He gives is a clean life.

3. HE COVERED. “I spread My skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness” (v. 8). He acts the part of a near kinsman (Ruth 3. 9). The skirt of His righteousness is unto all, and upon all them that believe.

4. HE CLAIMED. “And thou becamest Mine” (v. 8). Oh, what a change! From the “open field” of sin and shame, into the bosom of the family of God. From self-degradation and hopelessness, into the Kingdom of grace and of glory.

5. HE ANOINTED. "And I anointed thee with oil" (v. 9). It is God's will that all His claimed, cleansed, and covered ones should be anointed with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1. 8; 19. 2).

6. HE CROWNED. "And I put. . . a beautiful crown upon thine head" (v. 12). He who began the good work of saving grace, carried it on to completion, so that we become "perfect through His comeliness" (v. 14). The crown is the emblem of dignity and power. The crowning day is coming, and now is.

7. HE USED. "Thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty" (v. 14). "Perfect through My majesty which I had put upon thee" (R.v.). "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them" (John 17. 22). Let your light so shine before men.

III. A Picture of Desecration (w. 1520). In every age God has had occasion to make the same sorrowful complaint against His ungrateful people. Blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, yet backsliding in heart, and using their God-given prestige for selfish and worldly ends. This picture is a very sad one, and all the more so that the sin shown in it is so common. It is the desecration of **their**—

1. BEAUTY. "Thou **didst** trust in thine own beauty, and playdest the harlot because of thy renown" (v. 15). This is what we sometimes term "religious pride," using the influence God in grace hath given us for base, selfish purposes.

2. GARMENTS. "Thy garments thou **didst** take, and deckedst thy high places" (v. 16). The garments given her for glory and beauty (w. 10, 11) desecrated to the adorning of a false and God-dishonouring religion. The teaching of Christ is now being used by some preachers for the building up of a new and unscriptural system.

3. TREASURES. "Thou hast also taken My gold and My silver.. .and madest to thyself images of men" (v. 17). Devoting the gifts of God to the honour and praise of men. The gold and silver of Divine truth debased, as if it were only the message of men.

4. CHILDREN. "Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto Me, and these hast thou sacrificed. . . thou hast slain My children" (w. 20, 21). What an awful charge! A backsliding Church is a murderer of its children. Those born of the Gospel of God, in the day of His power and grace, are often sacrificed and "devoured" by false teaching. All this has come about by having a "weak heart" toward the Lord God (v. 30). Let us take heed lest there be in any of us an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

SIN AND DEATH.

EZEKIEL 18. 1-23.

GOD charges the people with misrepresenting facts. He says, "What mean ye that ye use this proverb.. . saying, The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (v. 2). Hereditary influence may be great, but that will not absolve from personal responsibility. "Behold, all souls are mine. . . the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (v. 4). There is no escape from this. Some searching and encouraging lessons are taught in this chapter. Notice that—

I. **All Souls Belong to God (v. 4).** He is the Author and Bestower of life. He is the Father of spirits. Souls in the deepest sense are spirits, and should glorify God as the chief end of their existence.

II. **Each Soul is Individually Responsible to God.** "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (w. 4, 20). No

man here is to die for his father's sin. The sinning son of the just man shall die in his sins (vv. 5-13), and the righteous son of a sinning father shall not die for his sins, but live (vv. 14-17). Every man must give an account of himself unto God. No man is condemned because of Adam's sin, but because "All have sinned."

III. Righteousness is the Condition of Life. "If a man be just, he shall surely live" (w. 5, 9). A just man *is* literally a *lawful* man, a law-abiding man. A man whose life is in harmony with, and guided by, the holy law, or Word of God. Through Christ, the righteousness of God is now unto all and upon all that believe. All that believe are justified from all things (Acts 13. 38, 39). Apart from grace there is "None righteous, **no**, not one."

IV. Wickedness is the Condition of Death (v. 20). Wickedness here is literally *lawlessness*, the opposite of the *just* who are *lawful*. A lawless soul is a soul living in the sphere of death. Enmity to God's Word and will is the evidence of it. Those who are a law unto themselves are the murderers of their own souls. Repent and believe.

V. Sin and Death are Inseparable. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (v. 20). The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6. 23). "Wages" are something duly earned, and that must be justly paid. The soul that sinneth shall die, because, in sinning, the soul is choosing death rather than life. The presence of sin means death, as the absence of light means darkness.

VI. God has no Pleasure in the Death of the Lawless. "Have I any pleasure at all that the lawless should die? saith the Lord God" (v. 23). God's character, His Word, and His work in the Person of His Son, all emphatically declare His displeasure at the death of the sinning soul. Could any protest be louder than the cry of the Christ of

God upon the awful tree, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." His will is that all men should be saved by coming into the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2. 4).

VII. **Conversion is the Way into Life.** "He should return from His ways and live" (v. 23). The Lord is no respecter of persons, His "way is equal" (v. 25). "Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out." Except ye be converted-turned to the Lord-ye cannot enter the Kingdom of life. I am come that ye might have life. Come unto Me. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways, for why will ye die.

WARN THEM FROM MB.

EZEKIEL 33. 7-11.

THE prophet is here reminded that he has been set apart as a "watchman unto the house of Israel" (v. 7; see chap. 3. 17-21). If there were no **danger** there would be no need of the watchman. The enemy is ever seeking whom he may devour. What He said to Ezekiel He now says unto all, "Watch" (Mark 13. 37). Notice the—

I. **Responsibilities of the Watchman.** They are twofold.

1. "TO HEAR the word at His mouth" (v. 7). The watchman must not only have eyes to see and a mouth to speak, but ears to hear the Word of God as from His own mouth. The first necessity is to hear Him, and to enter intelligently and sympathetically into His mind and purposes.

2. To ^{WARN} them from Me. " Warn them, because there is impending danger; and warn them from Him, as one who is wholly devoted to His will. The watchman's responsibility lies in making men feel their responsibility to God.

II. **Responsibility of the Warned.** The “wicked” here are literally the lawless. Observe **their**—

1. **CONDITION.** “O lawless man, thou shalt surely die” (v. 8). Sin is lawlessness, and lawlessness is death. Death is the result of alienation from God.

2. **OPPORTUNITY.** “Warn #em from Me.” Through the prophet they were distinctly “warned of God.” It is sad to be deluded and deceived, but it is surely a mercy to be faithfully warned of our danger. “Except ye repent ye shall likewise perish” was not spoken in anger, but in love. The warning comes from God just as directly as the invitation of His mercy (John 3. 36).

3. **RESPONSIBILITY.** “If **he do** not *turn from his way*, he shall die in his iniquity” (v. 9). The warning is “to turn.” If he turns not he shall die in his sins, his blood shall be upon his own soul. Regeneration is the work of the Spirit of God; but **conversion—turning about—at** His bidding is an act of our own will. The trumpet warning of the law may be despised, and the trumpet blower may be reckoned behind the times, but turning from sin and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only way into the Kingdom of God, which is righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

III. **Attestation and Appeal of the Wronged One.** “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked (lawless); ... turn ye, turn ye from your **evil** ways, for why will ye die” (v. 11). This is the agony of Divine love that found its fuller expression in the dying cry of His beloved Son on the atoning tree: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” “The Lord is... longsuffering to usward, not willing that any should perish” (2 Peter 3. 9). “He that taketh warning shall deliver his soul” (v. 5).

HYPOCRITICAL PROFESSORS.

EZEKIEL 33. 30-33.

HYPOCRISY is literally the acting of a part on a stage, assuming a character that is unreal. A "saint abroad and a devil at home" is how Bunyan puts it. Those who "steal the livery of the court of Heaven" to serve themselves on earth are hypocrites of the most ardent type. Take a look at their behaviour as here depicted. See them in—

I. **Connection with God's Servant.** "Talking against thee by the walls and in the doors of their houses." This manner of tale-bearing, behind the wall and in the home, is most reprehensible. This secret, God-grieving tittle-tattle against His servants is not overlooked by Him. All closet work, whether it be good or bad, is open to His eyes.

II. **Connection with God's People.** They say, "Come, let us hear what is the Word from the Lord. . . and they sit before thee as My people sit, and hear thy words." They put on the form of Godliness so long as it helps their own personal interests. They assume the habits of God's people, while they secretly sneer at the real work of God. The only time they are among God's people is when they are hearing His Word.

III. **Connection with God's Message.**

1. **THEY HAVE PLEASURE IN HEARING IT.** "They hear Thy words. . . and lo, Thou art unto them as a very lovely song, as one that. . . can play well on an instrument." Ezekiel must have been an attractive preacher, with "a pleasant voice," and playing well, as on an instrument; and his message was, even to those hypocrites, "a very lovely song." That is just exactly what the message of God to sinful man is, "A very lovely song." But woe be to those who only hear it as a song for the ear, instead

of a message for the heart. How much preaching there is to-day that "tickle the palate, but do not make men feel the bitterness of sin." Good and entertaining preaching, that is to Godless hearers like a tune well played on an instrument, or a lively song sung with a pleasant voice. But in this case, as in very many others, the preacher was not to blame.

2. **THEY IN HEART REJECT IT.** "They hear thy words, but they will not do them ; for with their mouth they **shew** much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." They love in a measure to hear God's message, but they will not receive it. "With their mouth and with their lips they honour Him, but have removed their heart far from Him" (Isa. 29. 13). Such base and deceitful conduct brings upon such the "woe" pronounced upon all religious hypocrites, who are "like unto whited sepulchres" (Matt. 23. 27, 28). It is awfully possible to flatter Him with the mouth, while lying to Him with the heart; but as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he before God. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the heart man deceiveth unto everlasting condemnation.

FAITHLESS SHEPHERDS.

EZEKIEL 34. 1-10.

HERE are six conditions of need mentioned as expressive of sin and soul destitution, making clear the great need of faithful shepherds.

1. Their Work.

1. To feed the **HUNGRY** (v. 3).
2. To strengthen the **WEAK** (v. 4). Weak through disease.
3. To heal the **SICK** (v. 4).
4. To bind up the **BROKEN** (v. 4).

5. To bring in the DRIVEN AWAY (v. 4). Backsliding.

6. To seek the LOST (v. 4).

II. Their Faithfulness.

1. They were SELFISH. They fed themselves and starved the flock (v. 3).

2. They were PROUD. They ruled with force, self-will, and not with love (v. 4, L.C.).

3. They were RUINOUS. The flock were scattered (v. 5). They became a prey to the beasts of the field (to false doctrine and lax example). "They wandered through all the mountains (false philosophies) and upon every high hill" (pride of intellect) (v. 6). The sheep became like distracted souls, seeking light and help in other godless religions.

4. They were DISOWNED of God (v. 10). Take heed to thyself. "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (1 Peter 5. 2, 3).

WHAT GOD WILL DO FOR HIS SHEEP.

EZEKIEL 34. 11-30.

As the unbelief of some cannot make the faith of God without effect (Rom. 3. 3), neither can the unfaithfulness of God's shepherds make the faithfulness of God to fail. With regard to His sheep—

I. He will search and seek them (v. 11). They shall hear His voice (John 10. 27).

II. He will deliver them (v. 12). The power of the enemy shall not hold them.

III. He will bring them (v. 13). Separate them for Himself.

IV. He will feed them (v. 14). Bring them into good pastures (Psa. 23).

V. He will rest them (v. 15). Cause them to lie down.

VI. He will bind up the broken (v. 16). Broken and useless members.

VII. He will strengthen the weak (v. 16). Weak through sickness and weariness.

VIII. He will judge their cause (w. 17-22). When tempted, annoyed, and persecuted.

IX. He will watch over them (w. 23-25; Heb. 13. 20).

X. He will bless them and make them a blessing (v. 26).

XI. He will abundantly satisfy them with good (vv. 29-31).

THE GREAT CHANGE.

EZEKIEL 36. 25-32.

THESE wonderful words refer primarily to Israel's restoration. Under the law the heart of His people had become like a stone, but through His infinite grace a new heart would be given them, so that by the constraint of love they would walk in His ways. God's method in dealing with a sinful heart is revolutionary, it is a regeneration.

I. The Disease. "A stony heart" (v. 26). A heart that is "stony" is—

1. COLD. It has become insensible-past feeling. All warmth of affection for God and His Word has died away.

2. HARD. Not easily impressed. Unyielding as a rock. Indifferent to all the gracious influences of light and the force of spiritual truth. Callous.

3. DEAD. Incapable of spiritual motion. No vitality toward God. Deaf to His call and dumb for His Name.

II. **The Remedy.** "A new heart will I give you.. . a heart of flesh." The only cure for a stony heart is a *new* heart. Polishing or carving a stone into an altered and improved form will not make it a "living stone." A heart of **flesh** is—

1. A NEW HEART. It is the gift of God, and takes the place of the stony heart, and so renewing the whole man. It is not only new to the man who gets it, but its manifestations are new to all who see them.

2. A SOFT HEART. Sensitive and childlike, easily impressed by the things of God. The stony nature has disappeared.

3. A WARM HEART. The love of God has found a home in it, and is shed abroad through it. It glows with compassion for the perishing, and burns with indignation against sin and iniquity.

4. A LIVING HEART. Once dead, but now alive unto God. A heart fitted to have communion with the living God. When Sir W. Raleigh was asked to adjust his head on the block he said, "It matters little how the head lies if the *heart* is *right*." Is thine heart right with God ?

III. **The Results.** The new heart opens the way for the fullness of the new life, The new character reveals itself **by**—

1. POSSESSING HIS SPIRIT. "I will put My Spirit within you" (v. 27). His Spirit is the new motive power in the life. This new moral machinery requires a new power (Rom. 8. 9).

2. WALKING IN HIS STATUTES. "I will cause you to walk in My statutes." The daily life is made to become pleasing unto the Lord. To walk in His way is to walk with God.

3. DWELLING IN HIS LAND. "Ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers," etc. (v. 28). The good

land of His providence is the inheritance of all who have been made “new creatures in Christ Jesus. ”

4. RESTING ON HIS PROMISES (w. 29-32). They are exceeding great and precious, so that we might delight ourselves in the Lord, because for His own Name’s sake hath He done all this for us (v. 32).

THE BONES AND THE BREATH.

EZEKIEL 37. 1-10.

THESE bones refer to “the whole house of Israel” (v. 11). As a nation, they are scattered over the open valley of the whole world, separated bone from his bone, and very dry, But the time will come when the breath of God’s Spirit shall come upon them, and they shall “stand upon their feet an exceeding great army” of witnesses for God and for His Christ. But surely there is a present-day application of all Scripture, divinely breathed. **Observe—**

I. **How the Vision Came.** “The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit” (v. 1). We must be “in the Spirit” to see things as they really are as God sees them. This is where revival begins.

II. **What the Vision Was.** “A valley full of bones.” A picture of utter desolation. A wrecked and ruined people. “Very many” and “very dry. ” Through their backsliding and indifference to God’s Word they had become like bleached bones ; no evidence whatever of spiritual sap or life in them; dried up through pride, worldliness, and self-dependence. The same principles produce the same results to-day, but how few see it.

III. **A Testing Question.** “Son of man, can these bones live ?” (v. 3). This question can only come home to those whose eyes have been opened to see the awful need of spiritual life. The blind man would answer, “What

bones ? **I don't see any bones.** Things are quiet and peaceful, and the valley is lovely and attractive. "Think of the responsibility that rests with a Spirit-taught man ! **The** opened eye is a new opening for work. If God hath **given us** to see the need of others, does He not mean to use us for their deliverance ?

IV. A Thoughtful Answer. "I answered, O Lord God, **Thou** knowest." He only could know, for He alone could make them live. Science, art, and all the philosophies of men have no remedy for a soul dead in sin and dried up with iniquity. "THOU knowest." Salvation is of the Lord. It is good in a crisis like this to cast ourselves on the wisdom and power of God.

V. The Remedy. The Divine remedy is revealed when the need has been seen and painfully felt. It is two-fold. He is commanded to speak to the bones on God's behalf (v. 4), and to speak to God on their behalf (v. 9). Preach the Word of the Lord (v. 4) and pray for the power of the Holy Ghost. The preaching is to be in the faith of His promises. "Behold I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live" (v. 5). It is the Spirit that quickeneth. The results were according as he had said (v. 10). An army of men raised from the dead stood upon their feet, ready to breathe out their God-given life in His service. "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be.. . alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6. 11).

WATERS TO SWIM IN.

EZEKIEL 47. 1-12.

THIS mystical river is full of prophetic significance. In the time of Millennial blessing rivers of living water shall **flow** forth from the sanctuary of the Holy City into the desert and waste places of the earth (**Zech. 14. 8**), and "everything shall live whither the river **cometh**" (v. 9).

But this river may also be regarded as a beautiful emblem of the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel of Christ, **or** of the Pentecostal outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

I. **The River.** A free, spontaneous outburst.

1. **ITS SOURCE.** "Out from under the threshold of the house" (temple) (v. 1). Out from the holy place, the place of the "Mercy seat," the throne of God. Like the Holy Spirit, it proceeded from the Father (John 15. 26).

2. **ITS COURSE.** "The waters came down.. .at the south side of the altar" (v. 1). Yes, the only way these life-giving waters can reach a perishing world is by way of the altar-the Cross of Christ. The Holy Spirit was not given till after Christ had suffered and was glorified (see Rev. 22. 1).

3. **ITS FORCE.** It grew in *power* and plenitude, although it had no tributary. The streams of earth can add nothing to the river of God. It became a river that could not be passed over. It had power to heal (v. **8**), to revive (v. **9**), and to bring forth fruit and abiding freshness (v. 12). Such is the power of the Holy Spirit working in those who believe in Him as the Scripture hath said (John 7. 38, 39). It is a symbol of the unsearchable riches of Christ and the boundless love of God.

II, A Growing Experience of the River's Depth and Power. Being obedient to the Divine Leader, he was brought in vision into a progressive experience of this fullness of blessing. Three times over we are told that "He brought me *through*," indicating that these were not final conditions, but the way to something deeper and better—a passing experience. Note the **order**—

1. **ANKLE DEEP.** "He brought me through ; the waters were to the ankles" (v. 3). It was but a shallow acquaintance with the river of life, but still, he was in it. This

stage represents the “Spirit of *Faith*, ” the definite act of stepping into the current of the Divine will, although that will as yet is but little known.

2. KNEE DEEP. “Again He brought me. . . the waters were to the knees. ” The only way the waters can rise upon us is by our getting deeper down. Knee deep represents the “Spirit of *Prayer*. ” When the knees are captured for God there will be delight in His fellowship. It is possible to be a believer and yet have no liberty in prayer. Although this is but the second stage of the Christian life, how many fail to attain unto it, because they refuse to be led (v. 2).

3. LOIN DEEP. “Again... the waters were to the loins” (v. 4). The loins stand for the secret of the strength of a man. The river has laid hold of his strength. This represents the “Spirit of *Power*. ” The praying Christian will soon become a witnessing Christian. His loins are now girded with the power of God. When a man is loin deep there is less of the man seen, and the depth of the river is in greater evidence. Those only ankle deep make a big show of themselves, and misrepresent the fullness of the waters.

4. SWIMMING. “Afterward . . . the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over” (v. 5). The swimming Christian has got beyond his depth, and is now being borne up by the river of God. This last stage represents the “*Fullness* of the Spirit. ” **I**nstead of wading through, he is now resting on the waters. This is an experience that cannot be passed over. There is nothing better than this in earth or in Heaven. The perfection is not in us, but in the abounding fullness of His provision for us. ““Waters to swim in. ” “Launch out into the deep. ”

THE MAN OF PURPOSE.**DANIEL 1.**

THE book of Daniel has been cast into the critics' den, but, like Daniel, it shall yet escape from the mouths of the lions. Rationalists are rejecting it because of its miracles and prophetic utterances. The Lord Jesus Christ approved of it, for it formed part of the canonical Scriptures in His time. Sir Isaac Newton said that "Christianity itself may be said to be founded on the prophecies of Daniel."

After the siege of Jerusalem (v. 1), Daniel had been taken captive to Babylon, a distance of about eight hundred miles. He was probably about fourteen years of age at that time.

I. His Character. We know nothing of his parents, but judging from his character as a lad, he must have been nurtured in a God-fearing home, for the soundest principles of life had been early formed. One has said: "There is nothing rarer than personality, for there are so many causes that hinder both interior and exterior, so many hostile forces to crush, so many illusions to lead astray." Blessed is that young man who can truly say, "I know in whom I have believed," etc. A personal knowledge of God is the mightiest of all safeguards for city life,

II. His Temptations (vv. 5, 6). Testing times will come. These are needed for our moral and spiritual development. The king's command was to select blameless youths, skilful and wise, to take the honoured place of students at the Royal College, and to "stand in the king's palace." It was to be a three years' course, to learn the tongue of the Chaldeans. The Chaldeans were the politicians, philosophers, theologians, and teachers of the nation. What an opportunity for a young, bright, hopeful man! But how could *he* eat that meat and drink

that wine which had been consecrated to idols, and defile his conscience? The worldly man sees no difficulty, but rather a grand chance to attain honour and earthly glory; but it is very different with the man who is abiding in the fellowship of God.

III. His Purpose. “He purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself” (v. 8). This in our days would be called “narrow-mindedness and puritanical bigotry.” In this connection see Paul’s advice (Rom. 14. 21). **That man is of little value for God who is not able to stand against popular opinion.** The Talmud says: “A myrtle tree remains a myrtle even in the desert.” A man of God should act as such in any circumstance. **God is not influenced by man-made conditions.** A lad of fifteen years was following the plough near the Carse of Gowrie, the horses stopped in the middle of the furrow. At that moment this question came to his mind: “**Might I not make more of my life than I am doing?**” and straightening himself up, he said, “**God helping me, I will be a missionary.**” That lad was Dr. James Stewart, of Lovedale. Keep a conscience void of offence.

IV. His Reward. “**God made Daniel to find favour**” (v. 9, R.V.). This was a great crisis in the life of Daniel. He was found faithful, and God promoted him. Henceforth he is marked as a leader of the people. Faith in God, and plain fare (v.15), got the victory for both body and soul. “Their countenances were fairer and fatter than all who did eat the king’s meat.” Godliness is profitable. **Why?** Because it is the highest type of character and the **best possible relationship to God and men.** The wisdom that profited Daniel was not found in the schools of the learned, **but in the closet of communion with the God of Heaven.** Determine to know nothing among men save **Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and the wisdom of God will be in you.**

THE MAN OF FAITH.**DANIEL 2. 16-28.**

THE pleasures of the ungodly are easily spoiled. Because of a dream, the king's spirit is greatly troubled. The vision had vanished from his mind, and he demanded of his wise men that they should make it known (v. 5). **A** thing with them impossible (v. 10), but a new opportunity for the God of Daniel to manifest His wisdom and power.

I. Faith Exercised. It would seem as if the executioners were on their way to carry out the king's mad decree (v. 5), when Daniel "went in and desired of the king that he would give him time and he would show him the interpretation" (v. 16). How did he know that he would succeed in this? He believed that His God knew all about it, and that by coming into closer touch with Him the wisdom of God would be given him. All **things** are possible to them that believe. Paul could say: "**Be** of good cheer for I believe God" (Acts 27. 25).

II. Prayer Answered. "*Then* was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision" (v. 19). Daniel invited his three companions to a night of prayer. They spread the matter before the God of Heaven, and *then* was the thing revealed. Prayer does not bring God down to our thoughts and actions, it brings our thoughts and actions up into His. Contact with God means being made like God.

III. Thanks Given. Daniel said, "Blessed be the Name of God for ever.. .He changeth the times.. .He giveth wisdom.. . He revealeth the deep and secret things" (vv. 20-23). If we would pray more, we would praise more. The secrets of the Lord are with them that fear Him. Draw near to Him and He will draw near to you.

IV. Testimony Borne. "There is a God in Heaven that revealeth secrets.. . as for me, this secret is **not revealed**

to me for any wisdom that I have" (vv. 28-30). What a consolation this is. The door into this favour is open to all. The Holy Spirit has been given to guide into truth. He searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.

THE ALMIGHTY STONE.

DANIEL 2. 31-45.

DANIEL, by living in the fellowship of God, became a man of visions, and the interpreter of the Divine mind. The vision of the "Great Image" came to the king in a dream, perhaps that Daniel may have the opportunity of revealing the purposes of God in the ages to come. The different parts of the image represent successive kingdoms (vv. 38-40). The Stone is the symbol of Christ, who shall yet dash the nations to pieces like a potter's vessel, when there shall be "no place found for them" (w. 34, 35, 44). Seven times in Scripture is our Lord Jesus Christ called a Stone, the symbol of strength and durability. We shall note four instances that refer to Israel, the Church, the Nations, and to the World.

I. As a Stone, Israel Stumbled over Christ. He was to them "a Stone of stumbling" because He came in the form of a Servant. As a Stone He was rejected by the Jewish builders (Matt. 21. 42), although He had been laid in Zion as the Foundation by Jehovah (Isa. 28. 16). Christ warned them that "Whosoever shall fall upon this Stone shall be broken" (Matt. 21. 44). They fell on it, and as a nation were broken, and are yet scattered abroad, dashed to pieces like a broken vessel.

II. As a Stone, the Church was built on Christ. When Peter confessed Him as "The Christ, the Son of the Living God," Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build My church" (Matt. 16. 16-18). After Pentecost when Peter declared that the lame man had been healed through faith

in the Name of Jesus, he also added, "This is the Stone which is set at nought of you builders, which is become the *head corner*" (Acts 4 . 10, 11). We still come to Him as unto a "*Living Stone*" (1 Peter 2. 4). He is the Author of eternal life. Other foundation can no man lay. There is none other Name.

III. **As a Stone, Gentile power shall be broken by Christ.** "A Stone, cut out without hands, smote the image" (v. 34). In our days "hands" count for much, but this revolution shall be brought about "without hands." The image represents Gentile authority, "the kingdoms of this world." Their end shall come suddenly, like the Calling of a stone from Heaven, and upon whom it shall fall it shall grind to powder (Matt. 21. 44). The whole image was "broken to pieces." His coming will be like a thief in the night, unexpected by those who are asleep, it will be like "lightning" (Matt. 24. 17), unmistakable. No need saying, To here, or To there, when the lightning flash comes, it is self-evident to all. Then the Babel tower of this world's Godless principles will be a heap of ruins, for like them they have brick for *stone*. This appearing of Christ cannot possibly refer to His *first* advent. Then the Roman kingdom was not divided like the ten toes. Gentile power was not destroyed at His first appearing. He then came as a Babe, not with the crushing force of a falling stone, taking vengeance on them that knew not God.

IV. **As a Stone, the World will yet be filled with the Glory of Christ.** His coming is not the end of the world, but the beginning of a new world. The Stone becomes a great Mountain, and *fills the whole earth* (v. 35). A mountain is the symbol of the Kingdom's strength and stability. When He comes in great power and glory, He who is strong to *smite* will also be strong to save. To understand this chapter read Psalm 72. "He shall put

down all rule and all authority and power, for He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. 15. 24, 25). "Then the kingdoms of this world shall become the Kingdom of our God, and of His Christ." His Name is, and for ever will be, above every name. All nations shall yet call Him blessed.

THE NONCONFORMISTS.

DANIEL 3.

THESE two images in chapters 2 and 3 represent man's rule and man's worship. This "image of gold" to be set up in the plain of Dura was the visible expression of Nebuchadnezzar's "new theology." It was to be a great affair. But true godly living is a very simple thing. A Revelation is needed. This new popular religion brings a new trial to the servants of God. There was—

I. Their Temptation. A new national idol had been set up (w. 3-5). Man's unenlightened ingenuity is always setting up some new thing as an object of worship. It is all the more delusive with its grand musical attractions (v. 7). On the king's part it was but another exhibition of despotism and religious intolerance, another form of "man's inhumanity to man." The temptation at this time to Daniel and his three fellow-believers was to—

1. **SAVE THEIR SITUATION.** They had been "set over the affairs of the province of Babylon" (chap. 2. 49). As government officials they held a high social position, and perhaps received a good salary. Demas forsook Paul when worldly advantage was to be gained (2 Tim. 4. 10). It was also a temptation to—

2. **SACRIFICE THEIR CONSCIENCE.** It affected their relationship with God. Of course all that the king demanded was conformity, what all sham religions are satisfied with. James Renwick, the last of the Scottish

martyrs, was offered freedom if he would “but let a drop of ink fall on the paper.” But, no, when it was to be the sign of the denial of Christ.

II. **Their Testimony.** “Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us... We will not serve thy gods” (vv. 17, 18). This showed their—

1. **FAITH IN THE POWER OF GOD.** “If so be our God is able.” Those who are serving God daily are not likely to be cast down suddenly. True hearted service gives stability of character in the time of trial.

2. **SUBMISSION TO THE WILL OF GOD.** “But if not... we will not” (v. 18). They would rather bum than turn. Like Job, they could say, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust” (see Acts 4. 19, 20). They were in Babylon, but they were not of it.

III. **Their Triumph.** They were cast into the furnace because of non-conformity, but “the fire had no power” (vv. 26, 27). The wrath of man is a poor, impotent thing in presence of the power of God. Their sufferings brought them—

1. **A NEW SENSE OF FREEDOM.** “Lo, I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire” (v. 25). Liberty to walk in a furnace was a new experience for them. They could truly “glory in their affliction.” They were not saved from the fiery furnace, but they were saved *in* it, which was a much greater deliverance. The peace of God in the heart is an indestructible principle, beyond the reach of any fiery trial. The world cannot take it away.

2. **A NEW SOURCE OF FELLOWSHIP.** There was a *fourth* in the fire, “like the Son of God.” In being cast out by men, they were brought into sweeter communion with the Son of God. It was so with Paul and Silas (Acts 16). Bunyan, Rutherford, Madam Guyon, and multitudes of others who suffered for Christ.

3. A NEW OPPORTUNITY FOR SERVICE. “The king promoted them” (v. 30). Their sphere of usefulness was enlarged after their deeper experience of the power of God. What a testimony they had to give, as men who had passed from death into life ; who were dead, but are now living in the power of a resurrection. Every severe trial borne for Christ’s sake will bring a new revelation of Divine possibilities, that we may go back to live with a new force in our being. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering, and the servant is not greater than his Master. By refusing to bow to the image of gold man had set up, the image of God was more firmly set up in their own hearts.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR--RUIN AND REMEDY.

DANIEL 4. 29-37.

“ALL Scripture. . . is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness.” In the experiences recorded in this chapter there is something that might reprove our selfishness, correct our actions, and instruct in the righteousness of God. This personal testimony of Nebuchadnezzar was given as a Royal Edict (v. 1). One may know much about the ways of God and yet be an utter stranger experimentally to His saving grace. Think of—

I. His Privileges. He had been favoured with special opportunities. In chapter 2 we see God revealing to him in that “Great Image” the character and history of Gentile rule. He heard Daniel, the man of God, interpreting that vision. He had seen the mighty power and grace of God in saving the three Hebrews from the fiery furnace. He had also publicly confessed that there was no other god like the God of the Hebrews (chap. 3. 29). More than that, he had been solemnly warned of God by this vision of the

great tree hewn *down* (v. 14), and of his heart being changed into a “beast’s heart” (v. 16). He was moreover counselled to “break off his sins by righteousness, and his iniquities by *shewing* mercy” (v. 27). How many there are in this day of grace who likewise have been as **mercifully dealt with by visions, warnings, and encouragements. Their need, like this king’s, is repentance toward God.**

II. His Pride. “At the end of twelve months he walked upon the palace of Babylon.. .and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built ? ” etc. (vv. 29, 30). These *twelve* months were days of grace, but as “all things” seemed to “continue as they were,” **the warning of God was neglected and forgotten.** On the royal palace, about four hundred feet high, he had a full view of “Great Babylon” lying around him, four-square, with a circumference of about sixty miles. There were twenty-five streets intersecting each other-150 feet wide and about 15 miles long. The city had a hundred brazen gates, and was walled about with a massive structure three hundred feet high and eighty feet broad, so that two chariots with four horses abreast could pass easily on the top. This wall was also ornamented with two hundred and **fifty** towers. The river Euphrates ran slowly through the midst of the city. The great bridge built by the king, **and** the royal palaces on each side, with the gorgeous temple and the magnificent “hanging gardens,” might all be before his eyes when he said, “Is not this great Babylon that I have built.. .by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty ? ” (v. 30). **When the Pharisee said, “I thank God that I am not as other men,” he was also glorying in his great Babylon of self-righteousness. Cardinal Wolsey gloried in his Babylon of “worldly honour.”** All glorifying that is not in the Lord will come to naught.

III. **His Downfall.** “While the word was in the king’s mouth, there fell a voice from Heaven saying, The kingdom is departed from thee,” etc. (vv. 31, 32). Pride goeth before a fall. He who was glorying in the grandeur of his own works is now driven out from the presence of men as a raving maniac. The root cause of it was rebellion against the *Word of God*. Sin, like lunacy, separates and unfits for the fellowship of God.

IV. **His Recovery.** “At the end...I lifted up mine eyes to Heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me” (v. 34). What an awakening! To find himself living the life of a beast! The beast life is that of eating and drinking, with no knowledge of God. There are multitudes which need just such an awakening. What he wanted was understanding. To cut his hair, clip his nails, and to cast a royal robe over him was not the restoration that he needed. Outward reformation can never stand for an inward apprehension. The eyes of the understanding must be enlightened. It is not a new faculty, but a new vision of guilt and of God. The prodigal made this discovery “when he came to himself.” The evidence of his sound conversion was, “Now I *praise* the King of Heaven” and *confess* that “those that walk in pride He is able to abase” (v. 37).

BELSHAZZAR’S DOOM;

OR, SINNING AGAINST LIGHT.

DANIEL 5. 22-31.

A HEATHEN genius once made a beautiful goblet, with a serpent coiled up at the bottom, with a pair of gleaming eyes, open mouth, and fang ready to sting, so that when the drinker emptied the cup the fearful thing suddenly appeared. Such are the pleasures of sin. At last they bite like a serpent. Such was the experience of **Belshazzar**

at the end of his great godless feast (v. 1). Inflamed with wine, he demands that the **holy** vessels of the Lord **be** brought (v. 2), but in the same hour the hand of judgment appears (**v.5**), and terror pierces his proud heart. **Belshazzar is a solemn warning to those who are *sinning against the light*.** Look at—

I. His Opportunity. “O Belshazzar.. **thou** knewest all this” (v. 22). All what? See chapter 4. 27-34. He knew all about his father’s (or grandfather’s) *pride* and downfall, how he was humbled by God to the degrading life of a beast, and how when he looked up to Heaven **his** understanding returned again to him. **He knew all this, yet went on in his life of sin and godlessness.** Many sin in ignorance, but how many to-day are sinning against the “knowledge of the truth,” like the Scribes and Pharisees of old ; living the darkness of sinful pleasure, rather than the light of God’s salvation.

II. His Guilt. “He lifted **himself** up against the Lord of Heaven” (v. 23). It is easily seen how this was done. He simply ignored the light and warnings of God, and put material and sinful things in the place of the “Lord of Heaven.” **The gods of silver, gold, brass, and iron had more influence over him than the “God of Heaven.”** The present-day form of this is following certain popular opinions and ignoring the revelation of God’s will as declared in His Word. **Lifting “himself up” by his own thoughts and works, and denying the Lord that bought him.**

III. His Failure. “**Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting**” (v. 27). The weighing process may have occupied several years. **The Lord is slow to wrath.** Character is formed through a course of actions. **By Him actions are weighed.** Job once uttered this request, “Oh that I were weighed in an even balance.” **God’s balances**

are always just. While the sinner is thoughtlessly going on in his evil course, God is silently weighing him in His unerring balance. He was found *wanting*. Wanting in faith, in love, and in submission to His will. Belshazzar was uninfluenced by all God's providential dealings with him. Without any heart response, he "passed on and was punished." Judas, and all like him, will ultimately find "their own place," a place of their own preparing.

IV. **His Doom.** "That night was Belshazzar..slain" (v. 30). In the night of his greatest glory-the night of his great delusion. While he feasted, the Medes and Persians stealthily entered the city, and an unexpected end suddenly came. Lust, unbelief, and indifference are no protection against the overwhelming power of rejected truth. Those weighed and found wanting by God are destitute of all power of resistance. The thunder cloud of God's judgment may *gather* slowly, but when the lightning flash comes it will be sudden, irresistible, and fatal. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ?

DANIEL-STEADFAST IN THE FAITH.

DANIEL 6.

DANIEL has now been probably sixty-eight years in the city of Babylon. He had lived under the reign of three kings, and was about eighty-five years old. He had had many severe trials and temptations, but he remained faithful to his God, his conscience, and his fellow-men. Notice his-

I. **Integrity.** "We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it concerning the law of his God" (v. 5). His enemies themselves are witnesses to the purity of his life. His character was invulnerable. As a man of prayer and of faith he was faultless, even in the

details of his arduous business life. The undercurrent of his nature was as pure as the upper. This was the secret of his moral strength. The daily life is perhaps the severest test of the Christian character, but the pure in heart shall see God, and seeing Him they shall endure.

II. **Steadfastness.** “When Daniel knew that the writing was signed he went.. .and prayed, and gave thanks before God, as he did *aforetime*” (v. 10). Their plot was to get the law of the Medes (unalterable) to clash with the law of Daniel and his God. Although he knew that they had succeeded in making and setting a trap for his feet, he trusted in God and went on as *aforetime*. Circumstances, adverse as they were, had no effect in changing his holy purpose to be true to God, and his own conscience. General Gordon, when in the Sudan, used to lay his handkerchief at the door of his tent each morning while he prayed, and no one dared to enter till the signal was removed. Courage, brother, do not stumble in your prayer life. Be steadfast in your faith and practice.

III. **Sufferings.** He was doubtless persecuted through envy (v. 3). Their dastardly scheme seemed to succeed. Daniel is condemned to the lions. This was the Persians’ mode of capital punishment, as the fiery furnace was that of the Babylonians. This is one strong proof of the authenticity of the book. This was a great crisis in the experience of the prophet. Must all be sacrificed to appease the wrath of these haters of godliness? Every sacrifice we make for God brings for us a fuller enjoyment of the salvation of God.

IV. **Deliverance.** “My God hath shut the lions’ mouths,” etc. (w. 20-22). This was a new experience of the power of God. While his enemies are rejoicing over his supposed destruction, Daniel is rejoicing in a new salvation. God will vindicate the faith of His own true

servant. **He is** able to do exceedingly above all that we think.

V. **Faith.** “Because he believed in his God” (v. 23, *l.c.*). God will not deny Himself. **To trust Him is to put Him on His honour.** The secret of victory in the Christian life lies deep down in **our oneness of life and purpose with Him.**

VI. **Doom of Enemies.** “They were cast into the den and their bones broken in pieces” (v. 24). The triumph of the wicked is short.. They digged a pit for the servant of God, and they themselves fell into it, as Haman was hanged on his own gallows. **As these enemies of Daniel had to do with Daniel’s God, so the enemies of the Gospel of Christ have to do with the Christ of the Gospel. To reject the Word of God is to reject the God of the Word. The wrath of God must abide on the unbeliever (John 3. 36). Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.**

THE END OF THE MATTER.

DANIEL 7.

“**HITHERTO is** the end of the matter” (v. 28). What has been here referred to is prophetic of the final condition of things in this world. This book is divided into two parts. Chapters 1-7 give the narrative portion unbroken. Chapters 7-12 give the prophetic references unbroken. Chronological order is not adhered to. **Daniel, as a man of vision, was a man of action. The visions of God and His truth ought ever to have practical results.**

I. **The Vision.** This revelation and the interpretation are a repetition of the vision of the image in chapter 2. The four parts of the image correspond perfectly with the four “beasts” seen here. As the Stone broke in pieces the image of the Gentile kingdoms, so here the “Son of Man” takes the dominion from the beasts (vv. 12-14). The world-kingdoms are all as “beasts” rising up out of the great sea

of humanity. The “beasts” referred to, note, are all beasts of prey-savage, oppressive, ferocious. Not like the ox or the sheep. These powers, represented as strong, unreasonable, brute forces, contain a sorrowful reflection on **our** boasted civilisation. They have been permitted **by** God to rise up into power and authority for some wise purpose. Even nations may need surgical operations as well as individuals. Part of the vision has been already **fulfilled** in the downfall of the Babylonian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman kingdoms. The rest will as certainly **follow**.

II. **The Blessed End (v. 28).** A new monarchy **is** coming. The history of the “Beast” kingdoms has been written in tears and blood. **The new Kingdom will be the Kingdom of God and of His Christ.** What notable events !

1. **THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN.** “Behold the Son of Man came with the clouds of Heaven” (v. 13). He is the new Head of humanity. The “beasts” are from the earth. He is the Lord from Heaven. Study the parable of the “Nobleman” in Luke 19. See Matthew 24. 27 as to the suddenness of His appearing.

2. **THE DESTRUCTION OF THE BEASTS’ POWER.** “**They** had their dominion taken away” (v. 12). They have had a long rule, but the world hath not learned to know God, and never will through beastly government. **“Tis the Man Christ Jesus, now crowned Lord of all, whose right it is to reign.** He shall reign, and **the** uttermost parts of the earth shall become His possession.

3. **THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEW KINGDOM.** “And there was **given Him** dominion and glory, and a kingdom, . . . and all nations shall serve Him” (v. 14). This kingdom will be *universal*—“All people, nations, and languages.” It will be everlasting—“An everlasting dominion which shall not pass away.” **Every tongue shall confess Him Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

4. THE VICTORY OF THE SAINTS. “And the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom” (v. 22). So the promise will be fulfilled: “The saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom” (v. 18). Blessed “end of the matter” this! It is the *saints* that shall rule, not the *sects*. Know you not that the saints shall judge the world? (1 Cor. 6. 2). Fear not, little flock, it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. Yes, there is a good time coming for the trusting, toiling, suffering servants of God. “If *children*, then heirs.” We must first possess the Divine *nature* before we can enter into the Divine inheritance. A criminal has no place or say in the state, he is always treated as an alien. Neither can a sin-loving soul have any place in the Kingdom of God, which is righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. “My hope, ” said a dying saint, “is in the justice of God—the justice of God to Jesus Christ.” Ye are complete in Him.

DIVINE LEADING.

Psalm 107. 7.

1. He leads like **a Saviour**, out of the desert of sin (Deut. 32. 10).
2. He leads like **a teacher**, into the knowledge of self and of God (John 16. 13).
3. He leads like **an eagle**, above the things of earth (Deut. 32. 11, 12).
4. He leads like **a shepherd** into pastures of greenness and paths that are right (Psa. 23. 2, 3).
5. He leads like **a guide** who is faithful to the end (Isa. 58. 11).
6. He leads like **a father** dealing with a weary child (Deut. 1. 31).
7. He leads as **a lamb unto** the living fountains of eternal delight (Rev. 7. 17).

EXPOSITORY OUTLINES.

New Testament.

JUSTIFICATION.

ROMANS 3-5.

IN the book of Job (chap. 25. 4) this great question is asked: "How can a man be justified with God?" And in these chapters before us we have a clear and decided answer. The importance of the question *demand*s a plain heart -satisfying answer. The question is often asked: "How can a man get on best in the world?" How can a man be healthy? How gain the favour and patronage of men? How can a man be happy? etc. But when a man discovers himself a guilty sinner before God his question is: "How can a man be **justified?**" We shall try and answer this question by asking a few others.

I. **Do all Men Alike Need to be Justified?** In Romans 3 we read, "All are under sin" (v. 9); "All the world guilty" (v. 19); "All have come short" (v. 23). The portrait of both Jew and Gentile under the law is distinctly drawn in verses 10 to 18. And the result sought is "**every mouth stopped,**" **every** conscience smitten, every soul guilty before God. Each one believing and becoming subject to the judgment of God (see **margin**). All must be justified alike, for all are condemned alike, "for there is no difference" (v. 22).

II. **What is it to be Justified?** In these chapters we notice a sevenfold blessing possessed by the justified. Taking the facts as we find them, they are these—

1. To be justified is to be **FORGIVEN** (chap. 4. 7, 8).

2. To be justified is to be **SAVED FROM WRATH** (chap. 5.9).
3. To be justified is to be **RECKONED RIGHTEOUS** (chap. 4. 9).
4. To be justified is to have **PEACE WITH GOD** (chap. 5. 1).
5. To be justified is to **REJOICE IN HOPE** (chap. 5. 2).
6. To be justified is to **POSSESS THE LOVE OF GOD** (chap. 5. 5).
7. To be justified is to be **RECONCILED TO GOD** (chap. 5. 10).

In view of these precious blessings, what is **it not to be justified**? The difference is as far apart as light and darkness, Heaven and Hell.

III. **Who is it that God Justifieth?** “Oh,” says the wisdom of man, “I believe God justifies the good and the godly.” But what saith the Scriptures? “He justifieth the **ungodly**” (chap. 4. 5). “For **Christ died for the ungodly**” (chap. 5. 6). “He came to save **sinner**.” So “while we were **sinner** Christ died for us (chap. 5. 8). He came not to call the righteous, therefore how could God justify them, whom Christ had not called? **Man must take his place in the ranks of the ungodly before he can be justified in God’s sight.** It is very humbling, but it is the “**bowed down**” He raiseth up.

IV. **How can God Justify the Guilty?** **Jesus was delivered for our offences,** and raised for our justification (chap. 4. 25). God hath set Jesus forth to be a propitiation that He might be just and the Justifier of him which believeth on Jesus (chap. 25, 26). **God can justify the guilty, because atonement has been made for them** (chap. 5. 11). The propitiation was God’s own appointment. He Himself paid the price of atonement (Exod. 30. 15); and that price having been fully paid, He is just in justifying the believers in Jesus. **Man’s guilt is first forgiven,**

then God **can** righteously justify. He **cannot** justify men in an ungodly state, it is the **believers** in **Jesus** He justifies, for when we believe in Him we are forgiven and so fit to be justified.

V. Will a Man not be Justified by his **Good Works** ?
 “By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified **in His sight**” (chap. 3. 20). If a man does as well as he can (and who does that?) will he not be justified? Yes, in the sight of men (James 2. 21), but not in the sight of God. “If Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory (in the sight of men), but not **before God**” (chap. 4. 2). **There can** be no good works in God’s sight unless they come from a good heart. And the fact that a man trusts his own goodness instead of God’s proves that his heart is still at enmity against Him.

VI. In what Way does **God** Justify a **Man** ? He justifies him judicially, as by His **own** righteous act as Judge, the moment **he believes in Jesus as his atoning Substitute**. But there are three words that occur ten times in this fourth chapter that clearly express the nature and manner of **this** justification. **These words are, “counted, ” “reckoned, ” “imputed. ”** Thus the righteousness of God is counted, reckoned, imputed to the believer. In the same sense as our sins were laid on or imputed to Christ. It is wholly a **Di vine** reckoning. **This righteousness is “upon all that believe”** (chap. 3. 22) just **as** surely as He bore our sins in His own body. Where is feeling then? It is excluded. The question is : What hath the Lord done ?

VII. **Can a Man be Justified by simply Believing?** Yes, completely, at once, and for ever-and in no other way. **God justifies the believer in Jesus** (chap. 3. 26). Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith (chap. 3. 28). Therefore being justified by **faith**, we have peace with God (chap. 5. 1). Abraham **believed** God, and

it was counted for righteousness (chaps. 4. 3-16; 3. 22; Acts 13. 39). The *believing is ours*, the counting is God's. By faith we count on God's Word being true, and act accordingly. He that does not reckon on this is an unbeliever; and he that believeth not is condemned already (John 3. 18).

JOY IN GOD.

ROMANS 5. 11.

"Joy" has been defined as the "smile of happiness, and the flower of glory." This joy is—

I. **Needed.** There is room for a broader "smile of happiness" on the countenance of our life and work. But the smile may be on the face while an aching sorrow is in the heart. This joy comes through the experience of God's salvation, but how possible it is to know God, and yet, like David, to lose the "joy of His salvation" (Psa. 51. 12). Where there is spiritual bondage there can only be a joyless testimony. It is when the captivity of the soul is turned back that the joy becomes so great; then we are like men that dream (Psa. 126. 1).

II. **Possible.** It is the will of Christ that His joy should be in us (John 15. 11). Christ's joy was the joy of conscious fellowship with the Father. This "oil of joy" is a blessed substitute for the spirit of heaviness. No Christian worker should be without it. Even when he goes forth weeping, bearing precious seed, he knows that he will doubtless come back rejoicing, bringing sheaves with him (Psa. 126. 5, 6). Peter and John found this joy possible even while suffering shame for the Name and cause of Jesus Christ (Acts 5. 41; see Acts 16. 25).

III. **Conditional.** It is joy "in the Lord" (Isa. 61. 10). It is not joy in ourselves, in anything we have or are. It is joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained reconciliation (Rom. 5. 11).

This holy gladness can come from no other source, and from no other condition. There is a joy that is like beauty in a face, it is attractive, hut only skin deep: this joy is as deep as the heart of the Eternal God; it is joy unspeakable and full of glory (1 Peter 1. 8). To rejoice in the Lord is to be joyful—

1. In His NAME. His Name stands for all that He is in His essential character (Psa. 20. 5).

2. In His WORK. The redeemed of the Lord shall come with singing, and everlasting joy upon their head (Isa. 51. II).

3. In His WORD. When His words are believed the soul must rejoice, as one who has found great treasure (Neh. 8. 12).

IV. Effectual. It is “your strength” or “stronghold” (R.V., *margin*). Joy is strength, in the same sense in which despair is weakness. Joy in the Lord is one of the most aggressive of all spiritual forces. It was D. L. Moody who said that “God never uses a discouraged man.” This joy is a power, because it is the evidence of a life happily adjusted to the perfect will of God. This strength is needed to overcome the manifold temptations that are ever at hand (James 1. 1-3), and to uphold when we are made partakers of the sufferings of Christ (1 Peter 4. 13). If joy in the Lord is to make us strong, then let us rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, rejoice. The Lord Himself fulfil His joy in us for His own Name’s sake (John 17. 15).

THE BELIEVER’S RELATIONSHIPS.

ROMANS 6.

THIS chapter explains the “death and life” character of the Christian. The beginning, the cause, and effect of both are clearly stated. To the unspiritual this statement is full of inexplicable riddles. And even to many who know

Christ it is full of mysteries. To those who are taught of the Spirit it is an exact portrait of the birth and life of the new inner man. It teaches—

I. The **Believer's Relationship to Christ.** This connection is of the closest possible kind. It implies--

1. DEATH WITH CHRIST. "Crucified with Him" (v. 6). "Baptised into His death" (v. 3). "By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body" (1 Cor. 12. 13). Our **first connection with Christ is with His death.** Our first dealings with God must be as a sinner. Life for God implies the death of self. "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live." The question of sin must be settled first. **It is settled for us in our identity with His death.**

2. BURIAL WITH CHRIST. "**Therefore we** are buried with Him" (v. 4). When a man is buried he is supposed to be out of sight, and on the fair way soon to be beyond all possibility of identification. If the death has not been real the burial will not take place. We don't bury as long as there is a spark of life remaining. So the old man will not be put out of sight as long as he lives. You might try to hide him and conceal his working, but if he is not dead he will be seen or heard somehow.

3. RESURRECTION WITH CHRIST. "Like as Christ was raised from the dead so we also" (v. 4). Resurrection can only follow where death has taken place. The power of the old life must go before the new can come; and this new life is wholly **from God.** It is a being born from above, a new creation. "**You hath He quickened who were dead.**" As surely as we have been dead and buried, so surely are we risen. "**Passed from death into life**" (John 5. 24).

4. LIKENESS TO CHRIST. "**We shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection**" (v. 5). This resurrection likeness is the result of being planted in the *likeness of* His death. If we have not felt the pangs of crucifixion we cannot have

the resurrection image, any more than we can have day without night. This is the Divine likeness, the likeness of a conqueror, one endued with power.

II. The Believer's Relation to Sin. It is—

1. THE RELATIONSHIP THAT LIFE HAS TO DEATH.

“Reckon yourselves dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God” (v. 11). Sin is not dead, but the believer is to be dead to it. Death puts an end to fellowship in this life. There is a great gulf fixed between the living and the dead. No passing from one to another. So ought it to be with the Christian and sin.

2. THE RELATIONSHIP THE ACQUITTED HAVE TO THE BROKEN LAW. “He that is dead is freed (justified) from sin” (v. 7). When a man has been acquitted before the Court, the law has no more claim on him. So the believer has been liberated from the claims of sin. The claims of the law end in death. Having therefore died in Christ, we are justified from sin. It will still make demands, but, remember, ye are *free* (v. 18).

3. THE RELATIONSHIP THE VICTOR HAS TO THE VANQUISHED. “Sin shall not have dominion over you” (v. 14). It is a foe disarmed, a king dethroned; as one whose power and authority are destroyed, but whose nature remains unchanged and unchangeable. A frozen serpent (that is powerless until warmed), over which we have the mastery and can easily destroy. Sin was once our master, but we must no longer “obey it” (v. 12).

III. The Believer's Relationship to Service. It is—

1. ONE OF PERSONAL SURRENDER. “Yield yourselves unto God” (v. 13). They first gave themselves unto the Lord. The whole man, with his affections and desires, must be consecrated to God. Some are prepared to yield time and money, but still reserve *themselves* for themselves,

Your members are to be yielded **as** His servants to righteousness (v. 19).

2. ONE OF HEARTY OBEEDIENCE. "Ye have obeyed from *the heart*" (v. 17). There can be no true service without hearty obedience. There is much service done to please man. God looketh upon the heart. If a man has not obeyed the *doctrine* of Christ he cannot be a *servant* of Christ. His *truth* and *work* go together.

3. ONE OF SINGleness OF PURPOSE. "Become servants to God" (v. 22). "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord." Call no man master in this matter. If a believer has got the single eye, where is man-pleasing? There is often a wide difference between men-pleasers and God-pleasers. "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price."

NO CONDEMNATION.

ROMANS 8. 1.

I. **What?** "No condemnation!" What a happy privilege! What a blessed hope! All the black dread past blotted out. Blessed are the people that are in such a case.

II. **When?** "Now." "There is therefore *now* no condemnation." Then this great blessing may be enjoyed in this present life. We may walk through this world of sin and sadness with the assurance in our hearts that we are forgiven, and that our sins have already been judged, and that the night of guilt is passed and the day of peace hath dawned in the soul.

III. **Why?** Because "In Christ Jesus." He is the Refuge of the soul. God is our refuge and strength. Here the soul is as secure as Noah was in the ark. To be "in Christ" is to be cleansed from all sin, and wrapt up in the

centre of God's eternal purposes. To be in Him is to be a branch in the True Vine, fitted to bear fruit. In Christ, we are complete, for He is made of God unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption (I Cor. 1. 30). In Him, we are *not* found with our own righteousness, but clothed upon with the beauty of the Lord. If any man be in Christ he is a new creation, therefore there is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.

THE LAW OF THE SPIRIT.

ROMANS 8. 2.

THE law of the Spirit is as certain as the law of gravitation. He has His fixed method of operation, although, like the wind, He goeth where He listeth.

I. Its Nature. "It is the law of *life*." "The law of the Spirit of life." The law of the living One. It is the Spirit that quickeneth. The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. The moral law cannot give life, its force is only felt in making sin exceeding sinful. "I through the law am dead" (Gal. 2. 19).

II. Its Sphere of Action. "The law of the Spirit of life *in Christ Jesus*." This law of life can only operate through the Prince of Life. The living truth of God comes to us through Him who is the Word of God (John 3. 34). The Spirit of the Lord was upon Him to preach good tidings to the meek. The last Adam was made a life-giving Spirit (I Cor. 15. 45).

III. Its Power. "Hath made me *free* from the law of sin and death." The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is mightier than the law of sin and death, bringing deliverance and freedom. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty. "Stand fast therefore in the liberty

wherewith Christ hath made us free” (Gal. 5. 1). Having been made free from sin, it is that we might become servants to God (Rom. 6. 18-23). The sting of death is sin, but thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15. 56, 57).

THE CONDEMNATION OF SIN.

ROMANS 8. 3.

I. The Weakness of the Law. “What the law could not do.” The law can do much for it is “holy, just, and good,” but it cannot forgive sin. It is utterly weak to justify a sinner. “By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified.” The law made nothing perfect (Heb. 7. 18).

II. The Love of God. “God sending His own Son.” *In this* was manifested the love of God toward us (1 John 4. 9). Who can measure the depths of this love in allowing His “Only Beloved” to be identified with human sin and guilt (John 3. 16).

III. The Grace of Christ. “His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.” What grace is this on the part of the Son! “The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.. . full of grace and truth. Although in the form of God, and equal with God, He made Himself of **no** reputation.. . and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2. 6-S). By grace are ye saved.

IV. The End of Sin. “And condemned sin in the flesh.” By the offering of His body as a sacrifice, He hath finished transgression and made an end of sin as an obstacle in man’s way to God. “He was made sin for us.. . that we might be made the righteousness of God in *Him*” (2 Cor. 5. 21). We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all (Heb. 10. 10). Sin was condemned in Him that we might be justified in Him.

THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW.

ROMANS 8. 4, 5.

I. Its Character. The law is righteous, and demands righteousness. It is "Holy, just, and good." **It** is an expression of the righteousness of God. By the law is the *knowledge* of sm. They are ignorant of God's righteousness who seek to establish their own.

II. Its Fulfilment. "The law might be fulfilled in us." Fulfilled by our submitting to the righteousness of God in Christ, for He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. *Love* is the fulfilling of the law. For with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness. We can only be made the righteousness of God *in Him*, who was made sin for us (1 Cor. 5. 21).

III. The Condition. "Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." They who would rejoice in Christ Jesus can have no confidence in the flesh (Phil. 3. 3). To walk after the Spirit is to walk in the mind of Jesus Christ. Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lusts **of the flesh**. Those led by the Spirit are not under the law. Walk in the Spirit and the righteousness of the law will be abundantly fulfilled in you, for the fruit of the Spirit which is "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control," will be manifested. Surely the law could not have a better fulfilment than this. These are not *works*, but the *fruit* of the indwelling Spirit (Gal. 5. 16-25). Those created after the Spirit will mind the things of the Spirit (v. 5).

THE CARNAL AND SPIRITUAL MINDS.

ROMANS 8. 6, 7.

I. The Carnal Mind. "The carnal (or fleshly) mind is *death*." There is absolutely nothing in it that is pleasing **to God**. **He** that soweth to this fleshly mind shall reap

corruption, the proof of death. They that are in the flesh cannot please God. The carnal mind is not death in a passive sense, for it is even worse than that, it is "enmity against God," and so very bitter that *it* cannot possibly be *subject* to the law of God (v. 7). A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit. The only cure for the carnal mind is crucifixion. Saul was delivered from his fleshly mind when he said, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" "I am crucified with Christ."

II. The Spiritual Mind. "To **be** spiritually minded is life and peace." It is the evidence of a great change. Life and peace are the results of this new Spirit-creation. The enmity has been slain by the Cross. They now **sow** to the Spirit and reap life everlasting. The spiritual mind is a mind illumined by the Spirit of truth, enjoying the love of God, and seeking the carrying out of His purposes. They are alive unto God, and thus members are yielded to Him as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6. 11-13). It is the good tree that cannot bring forth evil fruit (Matt. 7. 18). It is a condition of life in Christ and peace with God.

IN THE SPIRIT.

ROMANS 8. 8, 9.

I Not in the Flesh. "**Ye** are not in the flesh," although still in the body. They that are *in* the flesh (carnal mind) cannot please God, for they are in a state of death (v. 6). Ye are not in that condition, for ye have passed from death into life, being born of God.

II. In the Spirit. Not in the fleshly mind is to be in the spiritual mind. Not to have the Spirit of Christ is to be none of His. The *flesh* stands for sinful, helpless man the Spirit is the holy, mighty, life-giving One. To be in the Spirit is to be in God, bound up in the bundle of the living ones.

III. **The Spirit in You.** “If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ?” (1 Cor. 3. 16). After that ye believed ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts (Gal. 4. 6). The indwelling Spirit is the secret of Divine wisdom and power. He is able to work the good will of God in the heart and through the life. If the Spirit of God who leads into all truth, is in you, then you need not that any man teach you (John 2. 27).

THE RESURRECTING SPIRIT.

ROMANS 8. 10, 11.

I, **The Cause of Death.** “Sin.” “The body is dead because of sin.” Sin was the death of the soul, it is also the death of the body. In Christ Jesus both soul and *body* will yet be delivered from its power (John 11, 25, 26).

II. **The Secret of Life.** “The Spirit is life because of righteousness.” The Spirit brings life because it brings the soul of the believer into *rightness* of relationship **with God**. “He that is joined unto the Lord is one Spirit” (1 Cor. 6. 17).

III. **The Abode of the Spirit.** “The Spirit that raised up Jesus dwell *in you*.” When Christ was restored to the home of His Father’s bosom, the Holy Spirit came to seek a home in the hearts of those redeemed by His blood. “He shall abide with you for ever,”

IV. The **Relationship Between the Spirit and Christ.** “If Christ be in you...His Spirit dwelleth in you.” The indwelling or abiding of Christ in the Spirit is often spoken of as synonymous. “Strengthened by *His Spirit in the inner man*, that *Christ may dwell in your hearts* by faith” (Eph. 3. 16, 17). The precious truth is

this, that Christ's presence and power is realised by us in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given to us. Hear what the Spirit saith.

V. **The Power of the Spirit.** We are taught here that—

1. HE RAISED UP CHRIST FROM THE DEAD. He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit (1 Peter 3. 18). This same mighty Spirit who hath quickened us into newness of life quickened Him.

2. HE SHALL ALSO QUICKEN YOUR MORTAL BODIES. He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise us up also (2 Cor. 4. 14). This corruptible must put on incorruption. The Holy Spirit, who hath begun the good work *in* us, will perfect that which concerneth us, even our mortal bodies. By the same Spirit shall they be changed like unto His own glorious body (2 Cor. 5. 4, 5).

THE NEW LIFE.

ROMANS 8. 12-14.

I. **This is a Life not After the Flesh.** "We are debtors not to live after the flesh." Fleshly wisdom or energy could never produce such a life. It is a life which ye have from God. Born of God.

II. **This Life Owes Nothing to the Flesh.** "We are debtors *not to the flesh.*" It received nothing from the flesh, gave nothing to it. The new man owes the old man nothing. Let the time past suffice for the will of the flesh.

III. **This is a Life Opposed to the Flesh.** "Mortify the deeds of the body." The salvation brought to us by the grace of God teaches us to deny *all* ungodliness. Paul kept his body under lest he should be cast aside as a useless weapon (1 Cor. 9. 2-7).

IV. **This Life should be in the Power of the Spirit.** "If ye *through* the Spirit." In yielding to the Spirit we shall obey the truth, thereby our souls shall be purified

(1 Peter 1. 22). This is God's great purpose concerning us (2 Thess. 2. 13).

V. **This Life is to be Under the Control of the Spirit.** "Led by the Spirit." When the Spirit comes within us it is that we might "walk in His ways" (Ezek. 36. 27). He will guide you into all truth.

VI. **This is to be a Life of Fellowship.** "Sons of God." Beloved now are we the sons of God. Our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Communion, of the Holy Ghost.

THE PRIVILEGES OF SONSHIP.

ROMANS 8. 15-17.

In our present condition we are very slow to apprehend all that is meant by being "Sons of God."

I. Sons **are Delivered from Bondage.** "They have not received the spirit of bondage." The fear of the law has been taken away (Exod. 20. 18, 19). As many as are **of the** works of the law are under the curse. Perfect love casteth out fear.

II. **Sons have the Spirit of Adoption.** "We have' received the Spirit of adoption." They are not only **adopted**, but they have the true *Spirit* of children born of God.

III. **Sons Acknowledge the Father.** "We cry Abba Father." "I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, **Father**, the Maker and Lord of all is my Father.

IV. **As Sons they have the Witness of the Spirit.** "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we **are** the children of God" (1 John 5. 10).

V. **As Sons they are Heirs of God.** "If children, then heirs." Having been joined to Christ they become **joint-**

heirs with Christ, and He is "Heir of all things." All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

VI. **As Sons they Suffer with Him.** "If so be that we suffer with Him." The disciple is not greater than his Lord. If ye be reproached for the Name of Christ, happy are ye.

VII. **As Sons they shall be Glorified with Him.** "Glorified *together*." The Head and the members are not separated in suffering, nor in glory. The will of Christ the Son has made this sure (John 17. 24). Having been made partakers of the divine nature they shall also be made partakers of His heavenly glory.

THE FUTURE MANIFESTATION.

ROMANS 8. 18-25.

I. **It is a Great Reality (vv. 18, 19).** "It doth not yet *appear* what we shall be." Just now the world knoweth us not as it knew Him not. When He shall appear then shall we *appear* with Him.

II. **It will be the Deliverance of Creation from Bondage (v. 21).** When Adam sinned the ground was cursed for his sake. At the appearing of the Second Adam, the Lord from Heaven, the curse will be rolled away.

III. **It will have an Effect in every Creature (v. 22, *margin*).** The glorious *manifestation* of the sons of God will herald the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to every creature.

IV. **It will be the Redemption of the Body (v. 23).** The sealing of the Holy Spirit is *until* the day of Redemption, when we shall have a body like unto His own glorious body (Phil. 3. 20, 21).

V. **It is a Time Earnestly Longed for (v. 23).** We look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. The Spirit and the Bride say, Come, and let him that heareth of the

Coming Saviour say *Come*. Come, Lord Jesus-Come quickly.

VI. The Prospect of it gives Joy in Suffering (v. 18).

Our present affliction is *light*, knowing that it worketh for us an eternal weight of glory *while we look* at the things which are *unseen*. Like Moses let us have respect unto the recompense of reward, and endure as *seeing Him* who is invisible. The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

THE PLEADING SPIRIT.

ROMANS 8. 26, 27.

I. The Spirit is Needed. “We know not what we should pray for as we ought.” Without the guiding Spirit the Lord would need to be saying to us continually what He said to the mother of Zebedee’s children, “Ye know not what ye ask.”

II. The Spirit Helpeth our Infirmities. He imparts the needed wisdom whereby we may know *our* need and Christ’s fullness.

III. The Spirit Maketh Intercession for the Saints.

It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. The indwelling Spirit pleads for the saint before both God and men. Being filled with the Spirit is the sure way to prevail, both in prayer and testimony.

IV. The Spirit Maketh Intercession with Groanings.

The groanings of the Spirit are often realised by a soul *thirsting* for God in silently waiting before Him in the unspeakable solemnity of holy adoration.

V. The Spirit Maketh Intercession According to the Will of God.

What was true of the Son is also true of the Spirit. Him God *heareth* at all times, because He

delights to do His will. If we are “praying always in the Spirit” we are praying always according to the will of God. If we ask anything according to His will He heareth us. Believe in the Holy Ghost.

VI. The Searcher of Hearts Knoweth what is the Mind of the Spirit. Solomon says: “The prayer of the *upright* is the Lord’s delight.” How will He delight, then, in the prayer of the Holy Spirit ! The great Heart-Searcher looks for the mind of the Spirit in us. Let our wills to Him be given. _____

THE ALL-SUFFICIENT PROMISE.

ROMANS 8. 28.

I. To Whom it is given.

1. TO THE LOVING ONES. “To them that love God.” We love Him because He first loved us. He seeks first, not the work of our hands, but the love of our hearts.

2. TO THE CALLED ONES. “To them who are the called according to His purpose.” “Beloved of God called to be saints.” Make your calling sure (2 Tim. 1. 9).

II. The Nature of It. It is—

1. GREAT. “All things.” All things that pertain to life and godliness are included here. “All things are yours.”

2. ACTIVE. “All things *work*.” In the kingdom of grace everything is constantly on the move for the believer’s good. As *in* the material world, there is no standing still here.

3. HARMONIOUS. “All things work together.” There is no jarring or irregularities where all is working according to His *purpose*. All is right for the called of God, even when it seems most wrong. “Believe ye that I am able to do this ?”

4. PRECIOUS. “All things work together *for good*.”

Jacob said, "All these things are against me," but they were all for good (Gen. 50. 20). Have faith in God.

5. SURE. "We know." We know, because we know the faithfulness of the God in whom we trust. Faithful is He that hath promised. And because we *know*, our hearts are kept in perfect peace with regard to things present and things to come. "My grace is sufficient for you."

THE ETERNAL PURPOSE.

ROMANS 8. 29, 30.

I. The Great Purpose of God.

1. **THAT HIS SON SHOULD BE THE FIRSTBORN** among many brethren. He humbled Himself, but God hath highly exalted Him. In all things He must have the pre-eminence.

2. **THAT BELIEVERS SHOULD BE CONFORMED** to the image of His Son. As His workmanship, we are created *in Christ Jesus*, who is the image of the invisible God. Be not conformed to the world.

II. **The Footsteps of Grace.** It is profoundly interesting to notice the workings of infinite love on the way out to seek and save the lost.

1. **FOREKNOWN.** "Whom He did foreknow." "I knew thee before thou camest forth" (Jer. 1. 5). Written in the book of life, before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1. 4).

2. **PREDESTINATED.** Appointed according to the will of God. In Acts 4. 28 the same word is translated determined. Whom He foreknew, them He hath appointed.

3. **CALLED.** There is no room for cavilling at these things. Let us say with Paul, "*It pleased God*, who called me by His grace." Called through the Holy Ghost to be a separate people unto Himself.

4. **JUSTIFIED.** "Whom He called, them He also *justi-*

fied." It is God that justifieth. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect ? Justified freely by His Grace.

5. GLORIFIED. "Whom He justified, them He also glorified." The glory which thou hast given Me, I have given them." If we suffer with Him, we shall also be glorified together by having a body like unto His *glorious* body.

THE GREAT CHALLENGE.

ROMANS 8. 31-35.

I. Who can be Against us if God be for us ? (v. 31).

"The Lord is on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me" (Psa. 118. 6). Greater is He that is *in you* than he that is in the world. All the resources of God are for those who are for Him.

II. **Who can Condemn when Christ has Died for us and is risen again? (v. 34).** Having died with Him, we are now risen with Him. Free from the law. To them who are in Christ Jesus there is therefore now no condemnation, neither by God, man, angel, nor Devil.

III. **Who can Lay Anything to our Charge when God has Justified ? (v. 33).** The heritage of the servants of the Lord is, "No weapon that is formed against them shall prosper" (Isa. 54. 17). When Satan attempted to bring a charge against Joshua, the Lord rebuked him (Zech. 3. 1, 2).

IV. **Who shall Separate us from the Love of Him who Gave Himself for us? (v. 35).** "I have given unto them eternal life, they shall never perish, neither shall any *pluck them out* of my hand." The Lord's people purchased by His own blood, are too precious to be easily parted with. The Father having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.

V. **Who can Hinder God from Giving us all Things when He Spared not His Son ? (v. 32).** Being reconciled,

we shall be *saved in His life* (Rom. 5. 10, **R.v.**, margin). In Him every need will be met. Ye are Christ's, and all things are yours. How will He not *with Him* freely give us all things ?

MORE THAN CONQUERORS.

ROMANS 8. 35-37.

I. We are to be Conquerors. Not slaves to the fashions and pleasures of the world, but victors for God. Having been born of God, we belong to the upper class, and overcome the world through faith.

II. We are Conquerors in the Midst of Suffering. Tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword. All these are still with us, but faith gives the victory. We are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake. This present world always keeps in the place of death those who have the life of Jesus in them, but they conquer still, and press on to know Him.

III. We are More than Conquerors. Enemies are not only conquered and subdued, but brought as willing servants into the work of the Lord. Saul was more than conquered when he became a preacher of the Gospel he so much hated. Take note of this. To be more than conquerors we must be more *than conquered*. It is not enough that we be overcome, there must be the willing and entire surrender of ourselves into the hands of God, to say, to be, and to do all that He may appoint.

IV. We are More than Conquerors through Him. The power of conquest and aggressive work for God is not in ourselves, nor in our plans and organisations, but in the God who worketh in us. Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. They overcame by the blood of the Lamb. The blood of the Lamb is the sharp edge of the sword of the Word, the Spirit's holy weapon. Cling to it, use it.

THE LOVE OF GOD.

ROMANS 8. 38, 39.

I. **Nature of It.** “**The love** of God.” God is love, so that in manifesting His love He manifests Himself. Herein is love. Yes, herein is God. Not that we loved Him, but that He loved us. Behold, what love!

II. **Channel of It.** “Which is in Christ Jesus.” He is the Mediator *between* God and men, the Ladder that reaches from earth to Heaven. In Him was manifested the love of God toward us that we might live *through* Him. “I am the Way.”

III. **Objects of It.** “**Us.**” He loved us and gave Himself for us (John 3. 16). Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sin.

IV. **Power of It.** “Neither death,” etc “shall be able to *separate* us from the love of God.” “I have loved thee **with an everlasting love.**” The trifling things of this world may be allowed at times to separate our love from Him, but, bless His Holy Name, nothing can separate from His love. His love is stronger than death.

V. **Assurance of It.** “I am persuaded.” It is a great testimony when we can say in truth, “We have *known* and **believed** the love that God hath to us” (1 John 4. 16). Having the love of God shed abroad in our hearts, and going on living day by day as those who believe in the infinite and everlasting love of God, this is the secret of a restful, joyful, contented life. “I am persuaded that nothing shall separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

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SELF-DEDICATION.

ROMANS 12. 1, 2.

IN the foregoing chapters Paul has been dealing with fundamental doctrines. Now he comes to the application, for he is no mere theorist. Christianity is intensely practical, and the *beseeking* of the apostle proves how keenly he feels it. The Christianity of some is like a certain fish that is almost nothing but head. Whole-heartedness for God ought to characterise every Christian, and this is evidenced by our presenting our bodies a living sacrifice unto God.

I. The Sacrifice to be Offered. “Present your *bodies*.” We are so apt to be content with committing our *souls* unto Him, and to give the body as a sacrifice to the soul. We seem to think that *our bodies* are all our own, and that our souls belong to God. Now the body is the temple of soul and spirit, and the medium through which these act, and by which they manifest themselves. The inner man thus acts through the outer man. Then the medium ought to be in the hands of God as well as the individual actor. In fact, unless God has full charge of the whole being, the Divine power will be withheld. He does not give *us* power so much as He desires to manifest His power *through us*. Each one must *present his own body*, as the Jew presented his lamb, and *left it* in the hands of the priest.

II. The Nature of this Sacrifice. It is to be—

1. A LIVING Sacrifice. The death of Christ has swept for ever all dead sacrifices from the altar. Now He seeks living ones. That is, we are, as it were, to live *on the altar*. The old sacrifices were on the altar only for a few moments. Ours is a CONSECRATED LIFE. “To me **to live** is Christ.”

2. A HOLY Sacrifice. “Know ye not that your bodies
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are the temple of the Holy Ghost ?” This temple must be holy, for God dwelleth in you, and in offering the body a sacrifice we offer Him what He has already claimed and sanctified for Himself.

3. An ACCEPTABLE Sacrifice. In the margin of the Revised Version it is “*wellpleasing* unto God. ” Not only acceptable, but in reality satisfying to God. God is not fully pleased with regard to our salvation until we offer ourselves a willing, holy, sacrifice unto Him. We are saved to serve.

III. **The Motives Urged.** These are twofold.

1. THE MERCIES OF GOD. “I beseech you by the mercies of God. ” “Great are Thy mercies, O Lord” (Psa. 119. 156). What are His mercies toward us? Think of His love in Christ, His forgiveness, His peace, His joy, His Holy Spirit, His promises (chap. 8). These should constrain us to yield ourselves entirely up to Him. The goodness of God ought to lead us to repentance in this matter of withholding from Him what is His due, nay, what is His own by right of purchase (1 Cor. 6. 20).

2. THE REASONABLENESS OF THE SERVICE. “Which is your reasonable service. ” It is but rational that we should yield ourselves to God if He has redeemed us to Himself. It is but reasonable that He should have *all*. Then it is most unreasonable to withhold what is His.

IV. **The Consequences of this Sacrifice.**

1. A NONCONFORMING TO THE WORLD. “And be not conformed to the world. ” This is the remedy for worldly conformity. A definite yielding of ourselves unto God and a *constant* acknowledgment of the same. There is no likelihood of the dead following the fashion of this world. “Reckon ye yourselves dead. ” “He gave Himself for us that He might deliver us from this present evil world” (Gal. 1. 4). Those who are wholly in God’s hands are not

much troubled as to whether this or the other thing is consistent with the Christian life. He decides.

2. A TRANSFORMING OF THE CHARACTER. "Be ye transformed by the *renewing* of your mind." The transforming of the outward life will just be in proportion to the renewing of the inner man. When Christ was transfigured it was but the visible manifestation of the glory within. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." Many long for the renewed life who wish not the renewed mind. The yielding is ours, the transforming is God's.

3. A NEW EXPERIENCE OF **THE** GOOD WILL OF GOD. "That ye may prove what is that good...will of God." Many have never proved the goodness and perfection of the will of God, because they have not given themselves wholly to God. And so the will of God to them *is* irksome. They dread it, instead of delight in it. The will of God is *perfect*, and only in His will are our lives perfect before Him. When the acceptable sacrifice is presented the acceptable will will be proved. He is able to work in us both *to will* and to do of His good pleasure.

OUR REASONABLE SERVICE.

ROMANS 12. 1.

THE thought of sacrifice runs through the books of the Bible like the crimson thread in the ropes and cords of government. Sacrifice has two general aspects: (1) As a gift, handed over for the good of another, as in Mark 7. 11; (2) As an object of "burning" to be utterly used *up*, as in Leviticus 1. 9. Cain's offering belonged to the one class, and was incomplete. Abel's belonged to the other, and was acceptable. Both were voluntary acts, and so became a revelation of character. Here are three reasons why sacrifice *on* our part is most reasonable: Because—

I. Sacrifice was Made for Us. "Christ loved us and

gave Himself for us" (Eph. 5. 2). *'Himself for our silts'* (Gal. 1. 4). What a costly sacrifice for such a purpose. By the sacrifice of Himself He hath put away sin for ever, as an obstacle in the sinner's way of approach unto God (Heb. 9. 26). In giving Himself, He gave all that He was and had: not an impoverished self, for He who was rich for our sakes became poor, that we, through His self-emptying, might become rich (2 Cor. 8. 9). He, as the "corn of wheat," willingly died, that He might bring forth fruit in the lives of those for whom He died. If He gave Himself for us, surely we should give ourselves for Him.

II. Sacrifice is Asked of Us. "I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God" (Rom. 12. 1). Why the **body**? Because the body is the instrument, or weapon, of the Holy Spirit, which dwelleth in you. The possibilities of the body' for good or evil, are tremendous (Rom. 6. 13). How often backsliding and failure may be traced to the unconsecrated members of the body. To be a "living sacrifice" is to **be** continually and completely at God's disposal. This is "holy and acceptable to God." And also because of its **acceptability** to Him, it is most reasonable that it should be given. The yielding of ourselves unto God is the root and branch of self-denial, without which there can be no true discipleship (Matt. 16. 14). It is true in the deepest possible sense, that "Ye are not your own, for ye have been bought with a price: **therefore we** should glorify God in our bodies and our spirits which are His" (1 Cor. 6. 20). Is it not reasonable that God should have His own, that which He hath bought with His own blood? We are robbing God when we are keeping back this part (bodies) of His purchased possession.

III. Sacrifice Ensures Greater Blessing for Us.

In presenting ourselves "a living sacrifice" to God, we are

saving ourselves from being “conformed to this age, ” and also putting ourselves into that position in which we can “prove the good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12. 1, 2). The goodness and beautiful perfectness of the will of God we shall never prove in our own personal experience until we are completely abandoned to it; just as we cannot prove the power of water to sustain our own bodies until we have made an entire committal. A life wholly surrendered to God is the only reasonable life which a Christian can live. It is the secret of usefulness, because it means the proper adjustment of the faculties and functions of our being to the perfect will and purposes of God. Every gift laid on the altar is sanctified by the altar.

SEALED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

EPHESIANS 1. 13.

HERE is *Weymouth's* translation of Ephesians 1. 13: “In Him you Gentiles also, after listening to the Message of the truth, the Good News of your salvation—having believed in Him—were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit. ”

I. The Seal is the Holy Spirit, which was promised, and is now given. His presence in our hearts is the evidence of our approval in the sight of God (2 Cor. 1. 22, R.V.). As a seal may be marred and broken, so the Holy Spirit may be “grieved” and “quenched. ”

II. The Sealer is God, who gives the Spirit to them that believe. “Him hath God the Father sealed” (John 6. 27). He that wrought us for this very thing is God, who gave unto us the earnest of the Spirit (2 Cor. 5. 5).

III. The Sealed are they “who have heard the Gospel of salvation, and have trusted in Christ” (Eph. 1. 12, 13). It is “**because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Sons into your hearts**” (Gal. 4. 6).

IV. The Significance of the Sealing. It is usually

given as the closing act of a bargain. Mohammed is called by the Moslems, "the seal of the prophets," because they believe him to be the last of that order. The sealing of the Holy Spirit speaks of—

1. SECURITY. The stone laid at the mouth of the den where Daniel was imprisoned was "sealed with the king's signet" (Dan. 6. 17) that the purpose *might not be changed*. The sealing of the stone at the sepulchre of Jesus was also with the same intent. Those who are chosen of God, "according to His purpose," are built upon that foundation of God, which standeth sure having this seal. "The Lord knoweth them that are His." None shall pluck them out of His hand.

2. OWNERSHIP. When the Holy Spirit descended upon the Son of God there came also the voice saying, "This is My beloved Son." Those sealed by the Spirit are owned of God. All who are *established* by God in Christ are also anointed and sealed (2 Cor. 1. 21, 22). The blood of Christ redeems to God. The Holy Spirit possesses for God. God's marked men are those whom the pleasure-loving world would avoid, those who "sigh and cry" (Ezek. 9. 4).

3. AUTHORITY. The seal is the sign of authority. Joseph and Mordecai were both clothed with royal authority when they received the seal of the king (Gen. 41. 41, 42; Esther 8. 3). Possessed of the king's seal, they acted in the king's name; so we possessed of the Holy Spirit are to act "in Christ's stead" (2 Cor. 5. 20). They are witnesses unto Him in whom the power of the Holy Ghost has come (Acts 1. 8).

4. LIKENESS. A seal imparts its own image to the object sealed; that is, if the object is in a condition to receive and retain the image. Not even the Holy Spirit can imprint the image of Christ on a hard and stony heart. The humble and contrite heart will have God the Holy Ghost dwelling with them (Isa. 57. 15). Those sealed by the Spirit will have

the mind of the Spirit, which is "the mind of Christ." The work of the Spirit with us produces the character of Christ in us. Yield yourselves unto God. He is able to work in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

THE POWER OF FAITH.

1 JOHN 5. 4.

AN old writer says, "Faith is the *foot* of the soul; so it comes to Christ. Faith is the *hand* of the soul ;so it receives Christ. Faith is the *arm* of the soul ;so it embraces Christ. Faith is the *eye* of the soul ;so it looks upon Christ. Faith is the *mouth* of the soul; so it feeds on Christ. Faith is the *lips* of the soul ;so it kisses Christ. "

I. Faith is Precious. It is infinitely precious, because of its own infinite possibilities. With it, nothing needful is impossible. It is the hand that takes with firm, unflinching grip the faithful promises of the God of salvation. The fruits of faith are precious. By it we are justified (Rom. 5. 1), sanctified (Acts 26. 18). It is by faith we "live" (Rom. 1. 17), "stand" (Rom. II. 20), "walk" (2 Cor. 5. 7), "wait" (Gal. 5. 5, R.V.). It is a soul-revolutionising grace, because it involves the surrender of the will to the living, transforming Word of God. "To take up half on trust, and half on try, is not faith, but bungling bigotry. " God glorifies faith, because faith glorifies God. Without faith it is impossible to please Him.

II. Faith should be Progressive. Paul commended the Thessalonians because their "faith grew exceedingly. " Faith cannot but grow when there is a growing knowledge of God, and of the fullness and faithfulness of His Word. Faith, like love, will not be driven or forced, it must needs be fed and inspired. The manner of its growth is "from faith to faith" (Rom. 1. 17). Not from one confession of

faith to another, but it may be from little faith to great faith, from great faith to greater faith, from the greater human faith into the absolute and perfect “faith of God” (Mark 9. 22, *margin*). The “faith of God” is God’s faith in His own Word and work. He shall not be discouraged, His Word shall not return to Him as having missed the mark. Lord, increase our faith, and let it grow up and out, into the faith that Thou Thyself hast in Thine own Spirit-breathed Word and blood-sprinkled work.

III. Faith shall be Triumphant. Faith lays hold of the mightiest of all weapons, when it grips the Word of God, which is the Sword of the Spirit. The victories mentioned in Hebrews 11 were all achieved by the weapon of faith. The world’s truly mighty ones have all been men of faith. The hands of Christ were omnipotent, because they were the hands of faith. This is the victory that overcometh the world even our faith (1 John 5. 4). By faith we overcome the world—

1. Like ENOCH, by being translated out of it into the Kingdom of God’s dear Son (Heb. 11. 4).

2. Like NOAH, by accepting God’s warning, and entering the ark of God’s salvation (Heb. 11. 7).

3. Like ABRAHAM, by obeying God’s call, and stepping out into the unknown (Heb. 11. 8).

4. Like MOSES, by refusing to be called the son of the world; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God (Heb. 11. 24-27).

5. Like JOSHUA, by marching round the walls, and expecting their downfall (Heb. 11. 30).

6. Like GIDEON and DAVID, by subduing kingdoms. . . and obtaining promises (Heb. 11. 32, 33). These all obtained a good report through faith. “Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God.”

LOVEST THOU ME?

JOHN 21. 15.

“LOVEST *thou* ME ? ” Let this tender but heart-searching question of our Lord come home to our own hearts. It is not enough for Him that we love His words and works if Himself be not the chief object of our affections. If **“’Tis what I love determines how I love, ”** then love for Christ, the **“altogether lovely, ”** should determine the manner and intensity of our love for others.

I. Love Desired. **“Lovest thou Me?”** Three times with varying emphasis did Christ put this question to Peter (John 21, 15-17). Zeal for truth without a personal devotion to the Son of God, as the embodiment of Divine love, is not true piety, but an exhibition of **“mildewed theology. ”** In uttering these words to Peter, the Son of Man was but seeking that fruit which could alone satisfy His own gracious heart. In degree, our love cannot be equal to His, but it ought in kind to resemble it.

II. Love Acknowledged. Where there is love to Christ, He is always quick to recognise and confess it. The woman in Simon’s house who had washed, wiped, kissed, and anointed His feet because **“She loved much,”** was not only noticed and commended, but used by the Lord as a powerful rebuke to the frozen-hearted Pharisee (Luke 7. 44-47). It is only love alone that can understand love, and make an adequate response. Perfect love casteth out fear.

III. Love Manifested. Love must reveal itself, it cannot be hid. If God loved the world, that love is seen in the gift of His Son. If Christ loved the Church, then He gave Himself for it. If we love God, then we shall love our brother also. Love to Christ will show itself—

1. By **SEEKING** Him. It was Mary’s love for Him that

constrained her so passionately to seek Him (John 20. **15**). The love of Christ constraineth us. Whom seek ye?

2. By CONFESSING Him. Peter said, "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee" (John 21. **15**). With the waning of our first love comes a waning of our desire for testimony. If we love Him with all our heart, then we shall confess Him with all our strength and might.

3. By SERVING Him. After Peter's threefold confession of love for Him, came the Lord's threefold injunction to serve Him. "Feed." *Feeding* His sheep and His lambs—not thrashing or amusing them—is the evidence of love for the Lord Jesus Christ. "Love, which is the essence of God, is not for levity, but for the total good of man," is how Emerson puts it. Jacob's seven years' service for Rachel seemed but a few days, because of the love he had for her. Love lightens labour.

4. By SACRIFICING for Him. The love that cannot sacrifice is shallow and hypocritical. The sinner in Simon's house, because of her "much love," sacrificed her "hair" and her "precious ointment" to Him (Luke 7. 38: see also John 12. 3). The apostle who could say, "He loved me and gave Himself for me," did also say, "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die for the Name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21. 13). "Love can be bought with nothing but with itself." Just as the highest act of God's love was the sacrifice of His Son, the express image of Himself, so the highest act of human love is the sacrifice of self for the glory of God.

THE PRIESTHOOD OF BELIEVERS.

REVELATION 5. 9, 10.

IT is well for us to keep in mind the difference between priesthood and apostleship. The priest represented the people before God, the apostle represents God before the

people. Jesus Christ was both Apostle and High Priest. God's purpose in grace was to manifest Himself to man ; this He might have done without any human medium, but it pleased Him to call Aaron and his sons, that they might, through sacrifice, act as mediators between Him and the people, thus shadowing forth Him who was to be the great High Priest and only Mediator between God and man. Christ was a Priest after the order of Melchisedec—royal priesthood—having no predecessor and no successor. By His birth He set aside the Aaronic priesthood, by His death the veil of the temple was rent in twain. He offered Himself a sacrifice, and entered “by His own blood.” Now we who believe have been redeemed to God by His blood and made unto God kings and priests.

I. Our Calling. No man taketh this honour unto himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron (Heb. 5. 4). Aaron was chosen of God, and his sons were chosen with him (Lev. 8. 2). We are chosen in Christ—and what a mystery—before the foundation of the world. The sons of Aaron were priests by birth. There is no other way of getting into the priesthood that God accepts and owns but by being “born from above.” Neither a priestly robe nor a priestly profession constituted a priest; the sons of Aaron were priests independently of these. In these days it is to be feared that many are substituting the robe and the profession for the call of God.

II. Our Character.

1. WE ARE CLEANSED. “Aaron and his sons were washed with water” (Lev. 8.6). Whom He calls, them He also justifies. The call of God implies cleansing from all sin. Called to be holy. There can be no fitness for service till the question of sin has been settled and guilt put away. “Except I wash thee thou hast no part with Me.”

2. WE ARE CLOTHED. “And Moses brought Aaron's

sons, and put coats upon them” (v. 12). Aaron, as a type of our great High Priest, wears the “breastplate,” and is clothed with robes of “glory and beauty ;” the sons, as representing believers, put on the “pure linen,” which speaks of the righteousness of the saints, which is the righteousness of God unto all, and upon all them that believe.

3. **WE ARE CLAIMED.** “The blood was put upon their ear, hand, and foot” (Lev. 8. 24). The blood speaks of redemption, redeemed to God, and claimed by **God**—“priests unto God” (Rev. 5. 10). The blood-sprinkled foot, hand, and ear may remind us of a blood-purchased body, soul, and spirit. Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are His.

4. **WE ARE SANCTIFIED.** The anointing oil was sprinkled upon them and upon their garments (v. 30). This holy anointing shadows forth the blessing of Pentecost. The precious ointment flowed from the head of Aaron, the high priest, clown to the skirts of his garments. This was fulfilled at Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit, typified by the oil, was poured out over the head of Him who is our great High Priest, down to “your sons and daughters” (Acts 2. 17), who are as the skirts of His garments. No priest was allowed to officiate without this anointing; before we can be “priests unto God” we must be anointed with this heavenly oil. For what is called “Divine service” there must needs be a Divine fitness.

III. Our **Privilege.**

1. **WE ARE PRIESTS UNTO GOD.** As ambassadors, we are sent forth for God. It is to be lamented that these offices are so largely confounded among men in their Christian practice. Before God, we should ever come with solemn, sacred. humble, heart-felt awe. As priests, there

must be no frivolity, no **pretence** nor unreality. Before men, as witnesses, there must be no **flinching**, no wavering, or cowardliness; the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, must be told out. Alas, when men invert this order, and bring the brazen face to God and the velvet tongue to the ungodly.

2. AS PRIESTS, WE HAVE LIBERTY OF ACCESS. Only the priest was allowed to pass through the veil into the presence of God. Oh, what grace to be permitted to stand before God! By Him-who was sacrificed for us-we also have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5. 2). Liberty of access surely implies liberty of success.

3. AS PRIESTS, WE OFFER SPIRITUAL SACRIFICES (1 Peter 2. 5). The world sets little value on a humble "broken spirit," but it is a sacrifice of sweet savour unto God (Psa. 51. 17). May we so be saved from all pride and self-will, that the incense of a "broken spirit" may ever ascend. If this is our character and condition we shall be well fitted to offer the sacrifice of praise which shall glorify God.

4. AS PRIESTS, WE MAKE INTERCESSION. Abraham acted the priest when he pleaded for Sodom; Moses, when he interceded for the people; Paul, when he prayed for Israel. What a privilege and power prayer is! And it is within the reach of every Christian. Many may not be able to sing or preach, but all can "make intercession." If as priests we were more frequently in the secret place of the closet, we would prevail more as princes with God and with man. The people of Israel were blessed after the priest had been in the presence of God. So our Father will not reward us openly as witnesses unless we have been much with Him secretly as priests (Matt. 6. 6). Believer, are you using this privilege as you ought?

OUR GOD A CONSUMING FIRE**HEBREWS 12. 29.**

HERE are a few striking words used in Scripture to describe the essential character of God. (1) God is Spirit (R.v., *margin*). Herein is seen His indivisibility and greatness. (2) God is Love. This reveals His unfathomable and unchangeable goodness. What a privilege to dwell in such an abode (I John 4. 16). (3) God is Light. And this, because He is Love. In Him is no darkness at all. No uncertainty. No unrighteousness. (4) God is Fire. Not in figure, but in reality—a consuming fire. This solemn, dreadful, aspect of God’s nature is frequently overlooked. Herein is the death of sin and self; herein is the life of holiness. This is the God with which we as Christians have to do. It was as fire God first appeared to His servant Moses; this made the place holy ground, and although the bush was not consumed, we may be assured that everything unclean within the bush would be burned up. We carry about with us daily the mystery of the burning bush “Know ye not that God dwelleth in you ? ” Yet the frail bush of our bodies is not consumed. We have this treasure in **earthen** vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God.

I. As a Fire our God Consumes. On the altar, the fire, as a symbol of God’s presence, was ever burning. On the altar of our heart, as on the throne of our being, there still dwells the Spirit of burning. This holy fire cannot suffer the approach of that which is unclean. The Nadabs and Abihus of pride and self-conceit are instantly devoured (Num. 10). It was a self-crucifying revelation Paul received, when it pleased God to reveal His Son *in* him (Gal. 1. 15, 16; 2. 20). The Holy of Holies was such, because the pillar of fire abode there. Hence there was no way of entrance without blood. May the Blood of Jesus so

guard the way of access into our inmost soul, where the Holy Spirit dwells, and may this holy fire consume all that would approach *without* the blood.

II. As a Fire our God Purifies. The presence of God was the purifying and the sanctifying of the Temple. It is true now, that when the Lord the Spirit suddenly comes into the temple of our body He is like a refiner's fire. "Who shall stand *when He appeareth?*" (Mal. 1. 3). There must be no other authority when He appeareth; every power of our being must become subject to Him, and in the submitting they are purified. As every vessel of the Tabernacle was given to God, and claimed and used by Him, so the members of our body are to be yielded to Him as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6. **13**).

III. As a Fire our God Empowers. What a real power fire is. Think of the fire-driven engines that push the mighty ironclads like ploughshares through the deep. Wherever fire is, its power is felt. "Our God is a consuming fire." Can He be in us without a Divine power being seen and felt? When the disciples were baptised with the Holy Ghost and with fire it could not be hid. "These men," they said, "are full of new wine." When the *live* coal touched the lips of the prophet, how quickly the power was seen in him. "Here am I, send me" (Isa. 6). The indwelling fire is the remedy for all formality and coldness in the Lord's service. It is the eternal enemy of the chilly, freezing breath of unbelief. "He shall baptise you with fire." Are you willing to be baptised with this baptism ?

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CHRIST IN ME.

GALATIANS 2. 20.

PAUL had two distinct revelations of Jesus, While on the way to Damascus Jesus was revealed to him. This revelation slew the enmity of his heart and converted him to

God. Then he writes to the Galatians that "It pleased God to reveal His Son *in* me" (Gal. 1. 16). This second revelation proved his sanctification and fitness for service, for he adds, "That I might preach Him among the heathen." How barren and fruitless our testimony for God is until Christ in all His power and sufficiency is revealed—not only in Heaven—but *in us*. Then, like him, we can triumphantly say, "I live, yet not I, but *Christ liveth in me*." If Christ is in me, then I must be—

I. A New Creature. When the "Living One" enters, then the reign of death ceases, "I am come that ye might have life." Regeneration is the incoming of the "Life of God" into the soul by the Holy Spirit. Which were born, not of blood—it is not hereditary; nor of the will of the flesh—it is not by carnal energy; nor of the will of man—it is not by intellectual power, *but of God*. How will evolutionists explain this? Until Christ is trusted and received there can only be death and degeneration; but when He enters into the heart and life of man how completely His Word is fulfilled: "Behold, I make all things new."

II. A Temple of God. Solemn thought. Shall God in very deed dwell with men? "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?" (1 Cor. 3. 16). As God came down and dwelt in the temple of Solomon, so God the Holy Ghost has come to dwell in the body of each believer, to show forth the glory of His grace and power (1 Cor. 6. 19, 20). The indwelling of the Spirit implies the all-cleansing of the blood. Cleansed, possessed, used. Spirit, soul, and body.

III. Governed by His Will. "Not My will, but Thine be done," was a gleam of Heaven's glory from Jesus as the temple of God. The house cannot stand that has two opposing wills within. If I **recognise** "Christ in me,"

then all my ways and purposes will be heartily submitted to Him. The earth is His footstool, but He sitteth not on a footstool, but on a throne, the centre of power and authority. The reign of **Christ** within is the divine remedy for unruly passions, ungovernable tempers, fruitless testimony, and the spirit-grieving life of selfishness. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done in **us**, as it is in Heaven.

IV. **In Possession of all Sufficiency.** The continual needs of the spiritual life are very great, but all fullness dwells in Him, and if He dwells in us, then we may be filled with all the fullness of God. Surely the “unsearchable riches of Christ” are sufficient to meet the daily and hourly demands of our new and God-given natures. “Christ in me.” What a reservoir to draw from. Christ in me, to fill up every crevice in my being, as the waters cover the deep. Christ in me, to impel and constrain, as the steam in the engine. “God is able to make **all** grace abound toward you, that ye always may have all sufficiency in all things” (2 Cor. 9. 8).

V. **Sinful Pleasures will have no Attraction for Me.** “If any **man love** the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” What fellowship can light have with darkness? If Christ fully satisfies the desires of the heart there will be no cravings for things contrary to His will. When Christians hanker after doubtful things, it is an evidence that Christ is not fully trusted. She that is satisfied with her lover does not seek another. The cabbage leaf cannot have the attraction for the butterfly that it had for the caterpillar. Those whose lives are hid with Christ in God will set their affections on all things above.

VI. **Willing to Sacrifice for Others.** If Christ is **in** me, then **the** Christ-like life will be manifested. “He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister” (Matt. 20. 28). He glorified God by a life of self-sacrifice
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for the good of man. He did not seek popularity by striving and crying in the street (Matt. 12. 19). If Christ is in us there will be no striving for the chief seats of honour ; no courting the praise of man. Since Christ hath loved us, and given himself for us, ought we not, through love to the perishing, give ourselves *to* God for their salvation ?

VII. More than Conqueror. The Christ-possessed soul will come into contact with principalities and powers, with rulers of the darkness, and with wicked spirits, in a way that others cannot understand; but “greater is He that is *in you* than he that is in the world” (1 John 4. 4). Let us never forget while fighting against unbelief, unrighteousness, and all the powers of darkness, that the battle is the **Lord’s**. God, who dwelleth in you, He doeth the works. “God working in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2. **13**). How the apostle must have realised the power of the indwelling Saviour when he exclaimed, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” By faith we, too, must reckon on His almighty power, so great things will be done in His Name. Doubting or ignoring “Christ in **us**” is the source of weakness, fruitlessness, and discouragement in the service of God. Believe God, that Christ by the Spirit dwells in you; reckon always in His presence, power, and fullness, and soon you will sing, “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ !”

THE RESURRECTION.

1 CORINTHIANS 15. 20-22 ; 35-58.

THERE were some in the Corinthian Church who taught that “there is no resurrection of the dead” (v. 12). **To** combat this fatal error, and to establish the doctrine more firmly in the minds of the saints, Paul wrote this **mag-**

nificent compendium of the subject. There is nothing like it anywhere; no, not in all the world, for the great apostle here delivers that which he had *received* from the risen Christ Himself (vv. 3, 4). The great truths of this resurrection chapter are—

I. The Resurrection of Christ. “But now is Christ risen from the dead” (v. 20). The Christ of the *Scriptures* must die, be buried, and rise again (w. 3, **4**). That Jesus was the Christ was proved by His rising from the dead, and appearing to Cephas, and to “five hundred brethren at once” (vv. 5, 6). To deceive five hundred *brethren* at once would have been about as great a wonder as rising from the dead, especially when these brethren were at first very *sceptical*. This is no myth, but a fact established by many infallible proofs (Acts 1. 3).

II. The Resurrection Hope. “If Christ be not raised, your *faith* is vain ; *ye* are *yet* in your sins, and they who have died in this faith are *perished*” (w. 17, 18). Upon this foundation—the resurrection of Christ—this Spirit-taught apostle builds the *whole* structure of the Christian faith. The death of Christ will avail us nothing if He is *not* risen and accepted of God in our behalf. He died for our sins, but He must be raised and exalted with God’s right hand ere forgiveness could be preached in His Name (Acts 5. 31). If Christ be not raised, there is no hope for man (Rom. 5. 10).

III. The Resurrection of the Dead. Nothing but confusion and error can come to those who think that Paul is here speaking of a general resurrection at the last day. The *dead* referred to in this chapter are those who have “fallen asleep *in Christ*” (v. 18). “Even so *in Christ* shall all be made alive” (v. 22). All are in Adam, but all are not in Christ. “They that *are Christ’s* at His coming” (v. 23). The wicked dead shall have no part in the *first*

Handfuls on Purpose.

resurrection (Rev. **20. 5**). **How** could he speak of *them* as “sown in dishonour, and raised in *glory*?” (v. 43).

IV. The Resurrection Body. Paul now raises this great double question, and proceeds to answer it. “How are the dead *raised up*? and with *what body* do they come?” (w. 35-49).

1. It will NOT be the SAME BODY that is sown in the grave (v. 37). Thank God, there will be no cripples in Heaven ; no deformed bodies there.

2. It will be a GOD-GIVEN BODY (v. 38). A body in everything pleasing to Him, and worthy of a redeemed spirit (2 Cor. 5. 1).

3. It will be a body in every way SUITED TO THE INDIVIDUAL SPIRIT. “To every seed his own body (v. 33). One body may differ from another body in glory, as “one star differeth from another” (vv. 41, 42).

4. It will be an INCORRUPTIBLE BODY (v. 42). Incapable of death, disease, or decay.

5. It will be a BODY OF GLORY (v. 43). Like unto His own glorious body (Matt. **17. 2**).

6. It will be a body of POWER (v. 43). Not subject to the laws of earth. Every material fetter broken.

7. It will be a SPIRITUAL BODY (v. 44). Entirely subject to the volitions of the blood-washed spirit (1 John 3.2). Then shall we be in the *image* of the heavenly (v. 49).

V. The Resurrection Mystery. “Behold I show you a mystery,” etc. (w. 51-54). Here the apostle reveals a truth that had hitherto been veiled, and, strange to say, a truth that is still veiled to many, although revealed, viz., that all the children of God shall *not* die, but that all must be changed (v. 51). The Lord Himself will come, and those who are alive and remain at that time shall be caught up *together* with those who have fallen asleep in Christ, but

who shall then be raised from the dead (Thess. 4. 15-17). In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the dead shall be raised, and we (those living at that time) shall be changed (v. 52). It is appointed unto men-not **all** men-once to die (Heb. 9. 27).

VI. The Resurrection Song. This song is entitled, "Death swallowed up in victory" (v. 54). It is a victory over the *power* of sin, and sin, too, that was **strengthened** by a holy law (v. 56). It is a perfect victory over all the effects of sin. "O death, where is thy sting?" Where is not the effect of thy poison in these new bodies of ours? "O grave, where is thy victory?" Once thou didst claim our bodies as thy spoil, but thou hast been eternally defeated in this new incorruptible body. But this is a song of **praise as** well as of triumph. "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory **through our Lord Jesus Christ**" (v. 57). He alone could "swallow up death in victory" (Isa. 25. 8). This will be the complete fulfilment of Hosea **13. 14.** Notice there His "**I wills.**"

VII. The Resurrection Incentive. Paul now closes his great argument with an exhortation which is full of motive power. "**Therefore,** my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast" (v. 58). Seeing that such glorious prospects **are** before us, what manner of persons ought we now to be?

1. There should be STABILITY OF CHARACTER. "Be ye stedfast, immoveable." Let not the unbelief of others turn you aside from the faith of this Gospel.

2. There should be CONSTANCY OF SERVICE. "Always abounding in the work of the Lord," knowing that it is not in vain; for in the resurrection state, and at the Judgment-Seat of Christ, the reward will be given (Rev. 22. 12). Every man's work shall be tried of what sort it is (1 Cor. 3. 12-15).

THE ASCENDED LORD.

LUKE 24. 50-53; ACTS 1. 4-11.

“HE led them out as far as to **Bethany.**” From **Bethany** He started on His journey to the Cross of shame ; from there also He starts on His journey to the Crown of glory. Here the disciples witnessed their Lord slowly rising up before their eyes. While His body was gradually ascending into the Heavens, He “lifted His hands and blessed them,” and as He blessed He slowly vanished into the cloud that carried Him into Heaven. Do we wonder that after He was gone they still stood “gazing up into Heaven ?” They had scarcely awakened to the fact of His resurrection when they beheld another wonder equally momentous and glorious. “Truly, this was the Son of God.” If our worldly hopes are crucified with Christ, we shall have new and brighter hopes in His resurrection and translation to the Father’s throne. Associated with the Ascension, we have brought before us some of the “things which accompany salvation” (Heb. 6. 9). Let us give earnest heed to them.

I. **The Baptism of the Holy Ghost.** “Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 1. 5-8). Jesus died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and ascended for our enduement with the power of the Holy Ghost. The power of the Holy Spirit upon His disciples was the witness that Christ, the Crucified One, was now in the presence of the Father (John 16. 7). These early and true-hearted followers did not believe, as the great majority of modern Christians do, that the fruit of Christ’s **death was** the sum of salvation; they waited, and received the fruit of His Ascension-the baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2. 4). “Did ye receive the Holy Ghost when ye believed?” (Acts 19. 2, R.v.).

II. **Witnessing for Christ.** “Ye shall be witnesses

unto Me, ” etc. (Acts 1. 8). So faithful were these **Spirit**-filled disciples that in a short time they had “filled Jerusalem with the doctrine” (Acts 5. 28). The power of the Spirit was with them, so we read that “with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” (chap. 4. 33). We are unauthorised witnesses for Christ unless we have been “endued with power from on high. ” Our teaching and preaching will be but “sounding brass” unless we are “filled with the Holy Ghost”—just a sounding trumpet; no divine articulating voice. That we may be true witnesses for Him, let us receive the “promise of the Father” as well as the promise of the Son.

III. **The Hope of His Coming Again.** “This same Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go” (v. 11). To say, as some do, that the coming of the Holy Spirit was the coming of “this same Jesus” is not only a denial of the personality of the Spirit, and an insult to common sense, but also a **wilful** perversion of the Word of God. It looks, says the author of “The Coming Kingdom of God, ” as if some men so hated the thought of a returning personal Christ that they are prepared to believe any absurdity rather than accept it. “The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout” (1 Thess 4. 16). This is the hope of the Church of God, which is being presently *called out (ekklesia)* as a witness to His Name. This is the Bride for which Christ has promised to come and “receive unto Himself” (John 14). As soon as the Lord was out of sight the disciples were taught to believe in and to *look for* His coming again. This is the hope that cheers in service and purifies the life (1 John 3. 3).

THE SECOND ADVENT.

1 **THESSALONIANS 4. 13-18; 5. 1-6.**

THIS is a subject full of vital interest for these latter days, Paul’s teaching here is clear and urgent. In every **chapter**

of this epistle he refers to the Lord's Coming. In the portion before us he states several facts that might be looked at separately.

I. That the Lord will Come Again. "The Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven " (v. 16). This is not the coming of death, neither is it the coming of the Holy Spirit. It is the coming of "the Lord Himself." It is as much a *personal* coming as when David anointed himself and *changed his apparel* and came into the house of the Lord (2 Sam. 12. 20).

II. That those who Sleep in Jesus will Come with Him (v. 14). All those who have died in the faith have been put to sleep in the grace and presence of Jesus. So when He comes He brings those redeemed spirits with Him, for they are His own peculiar treasure, bought by His own blood, and cannot be separated from Him.

III. That those who are Alive when He comes shall not go Before those who are Asleep (v. 15). Neither time nor circumstances can give any precedence on that day. Those who have died in the Lord shall lose nothing by it ; those who remain alive at His coming shall be spared the pain of dying, but shall not have any advantage thereby in the way of pre-eminence before Him (2 Cor. 4. 14).

IV. That the Dead in Christ shall Rise First (v. 16). All those who have died trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ, having been saved by His grace, shall have a part in this "*first*" resurrection. It will only be "they that are *Christ's* at His coming" (1 Cor. 15. 23). Blessed and holy is he that hath part in this first resurrection ; on such the second death hath no power. The rest of the dead, who have died in their sins, shall not be raised till one thousand years after (Rev. 20. 5, 6).

V. That all Shall be Caught up Together (v. 17).

When Christ comes those Christians who are living on the earth shall be “changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,” and *together* with those who have been raised from the dead will be “caught up” to meet the Lord in the air. They are all one in Christ Jesus. One shepherd, one flock.

VI. That we Shall be for Ever with Him (v. 17).

To be *for ever* with Him, who is the Wisdom and Fullness of God, for whom all things were made, and by whom all things consist, implies more than tongue can tell or **finite** minds can grasp. They follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Then shall Christ’s own prayer be answered, “With Me where I am” (John 17. 24). Surely we may comfort one another with these words (v. 18).

VII. That this will be an Awful Day for the Unbelieving. While *they* are saying “Peace and safety.” He shall come as a thief in the night, then “sudden destruction shall come upon them” (w. 1-3). A thief does not give any warning as to the time he will break into the house. He will be careful to choose the most *unexpected* moment. Sudden and everlasting destruction from the *presence of the Lord* will be the doom of every Christ-rejecter at His coming (2 Thess. 1. 9). These are terrible words ; their terror lies in the fact that they are true, and that this **fulfilment** may be at any moment. Are you prepared ?

VIII. That the Christian should be Looking for His Coming. All who are Christ’s are the “Children of light,” having been saved from the darkness that is in this world through sin. They are “not of the night,” sleeping the sleep of indifference or unbelief, but are those who are expected to “watch and be sober” (w. 5, 6). It is high time to wake up, for now is your full and final salvation nearer than when ye believed (Rom. 13. 11).

SUFFERING FOR CHRIST.

2 CORINTHIANS 11. 24-33.

WREN Paul was called as a *chosen* vessel to bear the Name of Jesus Christ before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel, the Lord uttered these significant words : “For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for My Name’s sake” (Acts 9. 15, 16). He who would live godly, by receiving Christ’s Word, occupying His place, acting only in His Name, and for His glory, must suffer; for the world still lieth with the wicked one, and the carnal mind is still at enmity against God. “Woe unto you when all men speak well of you.” The sufferings of this servant of God were terrible. See **the**—

I. Reason why He Speaks of Them. Some “false apostles and deceitful workers” had been glorying in themselves, and seemingly doing all they could to belittle the name and character of Paul. He condescends (as a fool) to take them on their own ground by giving them a list of his sufferings and perils in the cause of Jesus Christ. Had the great apostle not played the fool for once, we never would have known the half of all that he endured in faithfulness to his Master. The fact that he felt ashamed to speak of his *sufferings* for the Christ who had died for him shows the nobleness of his true inward character.

II. Nature of Them. They are simply appalling. It is almost hard to believe that any one man could go through such **an** ordeal in the course of a single lifetime. Five times lashed, at the hands of the Jews, receiving 39 strokes each time. Three times beaten with rods by a Roman official. Three times shipwrecked and tossed in the deep, perhaps clinging to a spar for a whole “night and a day.” Many long and wearisome journeys. Endured eight different kinds of *peril*, suffered eight kinds of bodily privations, and, beside all this, having the personal care

of all the churches upon him. But all this tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, and peril did not separate him from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8. 35). How like his sufferings were to those “many sorrows” which marred the face of his Holy Master, and how truly did he thereby become a “partaker of the sufferings of Christ. ”

III. Effect of Them. He did not mourn over them, he *gloried in* them (w. 30, 31). He did not look upon them as misfortunes, but as marks of his Master’s favour. They were medals won in his battles for the Lord (2 Cor. 12. 9, 10). Glorifying in tribulation was an article in Paul’s creed (Rom. 5. 3). He knew that if “we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with Him ”(2 Tim. 2 .12). Perhaps this was one of the reasons why they could sing praises in the prison, with bleeding backs and aching limbs (Acts 16. 25). Only those who look at the things which are unseen, can possibly “esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt (Heb. 11. 26). “If men revile you and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you **falsely for My sake**, rejoice and be exceedingly glad; for great is your reward in Heaven. ”

THE CHRISTIAN’S ARMOUR.

EPHESIANS 6. 10-20.

BUNYAN was wise in sending his Pilgrims into the **armoury** immediately after supper. As soon as we are brought into communion with God, we need to be fitted for the fight of faith. All who are in the Kingdom of God’s dear Son have got the forces of the kingdom of Satan against them, so they need to be panoplied with the whole **armour** of God. Let us look at—

I. The Enemy. “Not flesh and blood, but principalities, powers, world rulers, spiritual hosts of wickedness”

(v. 12, R.v.). All the authorities of Hell and all the rulers of the darkness of this world, who are in league with the Devil, are opposed to the progress of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ. Not *flesh and blood*, but that wicked spirit that works in the children of disobedience, using flesh and blood as an instrumentality (Eph. 2. 2). Our warfare is not so much with mortal beings as with the immortal powers of evil that rule in their lives, and that come to us in the form of the “wiles of the Devil.” These wiles are very varied, and are adapted to suit the different tendencies of the age or the individual. If he fails with his wiles he will surely try his “fiery darts” (v. 16). These may come as unclean thoughts shot into the mind like ignited arrows from the pit. Truly, in the face of such a mighty and invisible foe we need the whole **armour** of God.

II. **The Armour.** Our putting on of the **armour** of God simply means being fortified against all the powers of evil by those virtues or moral excellences by which the Son of God was able to withstand all the temptations of the Devil (Col. 2. 15). This **armour** consists of six **parts**—

1. THE GIRDLE OF TRUTH. The loins of the mind are to be girded with the truth as it is in Jesus Christ, and so made strong to think and act for Him. This *truth* is “light from Heaven,” which scatters all the darkness of doubt and fear, and enables one to speak out what they do *know*, and not what they *don't know*, like those who don the girdle of doubt.

2. THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. A conscience void of **offence** toward God and men, is that *rightness* which is as a protecting breastplate for the peace and joy of the *heart*. This breastplate Christ constantly wore, because He always delighted to do the will of His Father,

3. THE SHOES OF PREPAREDNESS. The “Gospel of

peace” provides for our feet the shoes of preparedness, so that we should be always ready to do His will and to run in the way of His commandments. Those who have received the Gospel of peace should have swift feet to publish it (Isa. 52. 7).

4. **THE SHIELD OF FAITH.** The Roman shield was **so** large that the soldier could hide himself completely behind it, thus it was above or over all. This was the shield behind which David sheltered when he faced the terrible Goliath. This piece of **armour** signifies that unstaggered confidence in God which always overcomes (**1** John 5. 4).

5. **THE HELMET OF SALVATION.** The assurance of salvation is a mighty protection for the **head** in these days when there is so much false teaching all about us. The strength of this helmet lies in the fact that God Himself is our Salvation. This piece, like the others, is the *gift* of God, so we are to *take* it.

6. **THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT.** The sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, not the thoughts or opinions of men. Jesus Christ did not fail to use the *written* Word when assaulted by the arch-enemy of God and man (Matt. 4. 4). There be many in our days that seem at a **loss** to know where to find this sword now ; the Devil has so blinded their minds that they imagine that the “Word of God” has been buried in a heap of ancient rubbish, and so they go on fighting with the rotten sticks of their own theories. Nothing but failure and shame can follow where the Word of God is not preached, because the Holy Spirit of God, the author of life and blessing, can use no other weapon. It is the sword of the Spirit.

III. **The Warfare.** The attitudes to be maintained in this conflict **are—**

1. STANDING. “That we may be able to *stand.*” Having

been *justified* freely by His grace, and accepted in the Beloved, we have got a blessed standing, from which the great enemy of souls is ever seeking to drive us. The stratagem of the Devil is to get in between our souls and God, that the source of our spiritual supply may be cut off.

2. **WRESTLING.** "We wrestle against principalities," etc. In this warfare we cannot hide ourselves in the host. Wrestling is a personal conflict, an individual contact with the enemy. By putting on the whole armour of God every single Christian is to overcome by faith in Him who is able always to give the victory.

3. **PRAYING AND WATCHING.** This will not only keep the armour bright, but will keep it on. Polished armour hanging up in the hall of our creed will not save us in the day of battle. A praying heart and watchful eyes will never be taken unawares by the scouts of the kingdom of Satan. Daniel prayed three times a day, and, in spite of the trap carefully set by his enemies, he triumphed. This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

PAUL'S LAST LETTER.

2 TIMOTHY 4. 6-18.

THERE is always a special pathos about the last words of loved ones. Such are very frequently a revelation of the inner character and life. It is so with this final message from the pen of our beloved apostle. As we bow our ear to catch this message, as it were from his dying lips, we are not left to faintly guess what he means. There is a telling ring in his voice, his mind is clear, his words are emphatic, and speak out volumes of truth. They speak of—

I. **Perfect Resignation.** "I am now ready to be offered." He who had poured out his life in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ was now *ready* to have his blood

poured out as a sacrifice for Him. At one time he was in a strait about this (Phil. 1. 23), but now he was ready. He was like one who had everything packed up in readiness to step on board that ship which was to take him to a better country. Be ye also ready.

II. Assured Success. "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course. I have kept the faith" (R.V.). He was perfectly confident that his life and testimony as a servant of the Lord was no failure, but that the will of God in calling him to His work had been fulfilled in him. As a *warrior* he had **fought** and conquered ; as a **racer** he had abode in the course and honourably finished the race ; **as a custodian he** had firmly *kept* the faith delivered to him. He was faithful unto death (Rev. 2. 10).

III. Joyful Hope. "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown," etc. The Lord, who was his **righteous** Judge, had this crown *laid up* for him, although **Nero**, the *un*-righteous judge, had laid up for him a sword. In view of his crowning day, Paul could joyfully sing: "O death, where is thy sting ? " The Lord always **lays up** treasure and honour for those who faithfully serve Him now in the day of His rejection at the hands of men (James 1. 12).

IV. Painful Experiences. It was surely with a deeply grieved soul that the aged apostle told of "Demas, " who **had forsaken** him, "having loved this present world," and of Alexander, the coppersmith, who had done him "much evil, " and of how that "no man stood with him" while on his first trial, but "all forsook him. " In all this Paul was a sharer of his Master's sorrows (Matt. 26. 56). "Only Luke is with me." Love of the world, back-biting, and cowardliness are still the sins that bring sorrow to many a faithful servant of God. In the world he had tribulation, but in Christ he had peace.

V. Forgiving Love. "I pray God that it may not be

laid to their charge. " He is true to the Spirit of his Master in praying for those who "despitefully used him and persecuted him" (Matt. 5. 44). This ought to be the desire of all who have themselves experienced the forgiving grace of God. To overcome the *evil* actions of others with your *good* actions is to fight in the **armour** of God.

VI. **Divine Faithfulness.** "Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me and strengthened me" (v. 17). While giving his "**first** answer" before the unrighteous judge, he doubtless experienced the fulfilment of the Lord's promise: "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which is in you" (Matt. 10. 19, 20). Paul's last testimony, like that of Joshua, is to the unfailing faithfulness of his God and Saviour (Joshua 23. 14). "Lo, I am with you **always!**"

VII. **Unfailing Confidence,** "The Lord *shall* deliver me from every evil work, and *will* preserve me unto His heavenly Kingdom" (v. 18). Come what may, there is no shadow of doubt or tremor of fear in the heart of this noble man as to his present safety from all *evil* and his future reward and eternal satisfaction in the coming Kingdom of His glory. He is assured that the sufferings of this present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in that day when "He shall appear." Look up, for the day of your redemption draweth near.

REJOICE IN THE LORD.

WHY should Christians need to be exhorted to rejoice in the Lord? Does the lack of joy in Christ not betray a lack of faith. We shall observe **the—**

I. **Object of the Believer's Joy.** We are to rejoice—

1. **IN THE LORD** (Psa. 35. 9). Not only must we be in Christ to rejoice in Him, but He Himself must be to us our all.

2. In the Lord AS OUR GOD (Joel 2. 23). Jesus said, "I ascend unto My God, and your God," Do we know what is meant when we say, "My God, my Father?" A God for a Father.

3. In the Lord AS OUR KING (Psa. 149. 2). We may well be joyful in *our* King, for there is no king like Him.

4. In the Lord AS THE HOLY ONE (Isa. 41. 16). Only those who love holiness can taste of this joy. The pure in heart shall see God, and glory in Him, as the Holy One.

5. In the Lord AS THE SAVING ONE (Phil. 3. 3). When Christ is received by faith it is then that the Simeon song is sung: "I have seen Thy salvation."

6. In the Lord AS THE ALL-SUFFICIENT ONE (Hab. 3. 17). If our joy is in the blessing instead of in the Blesser it will soon wither.

II. **Ground of this Joy.** Every good gift is from above. "That My joy might remain in you." We rejoice in the Lord—

1. BECAUSE OF HIS SALVATION (Psa. 35. 9). Oh, the grace, which brought salvation, and delivered us from the fearful pit of guilt, and cleansed us from the miry clay of sin.

2. BECAUSE OF HIS COVERING (Isa. 61. 10). He clothed the first sinners with coats of skin-implying sacrifice. So we are covered (Rom. 3. 22).

3. BECAUSE OF HIS WORD (Psa. 119. 14). His faithful word, when believed, or eaten, becomes the joy and rejoicing of the heart.

4. BECAUSE OF HIS FAITHFULNESS (Psa. 5. 11). Those who put their trust in Him may rejoice, because they shall never be put to shame.

5. BECAUSE OF HIS PROTECTION (Psa. 28. 7). He is not only our Shield to defend, but our Strength to sustain.

This sense of safety ought to increase our joy. Fear is the flight of happiness.

6. BECAUSE OF HIS ASSISTANCE (Psa. 63. 7). How often, as a loving Father, has He stretched forth His helping hand in our time of need.

7. BECAUSE OF HIS REVIVING. If our spiritual life droops, so does our joy. Every revival of life is a revival of Joy.

8. BECAUSE OF **HIS** PRESENCE (Psa. 16. 11). There is fullness of joy in His presence now as well as hereafter. This joy might be ours always for has He not said, “**Lo, I am with you alway?**”

9. BECAUSE OF HIS JOY (Zeph. 3. 17). You may well rejoice in the Lord when He rejoices over thee with singing.

III. Character of this Joy. It is—

1. HOLY JOY (Lev. 23. 40). It is a rejoicing *before* the Lord; the joy the high-priest had in entering into the holiest of all; the joy that Jesus had.

2. A GREAT JOY (Isa. **61.10**). Great in the sense of being divine, Godlike, and signal.

3. A THANKFUL JOY (Joel 2. 23). The heart that is glad in the Lord delights to pour out its gratitude to the Lord.

4. A HOPEFUL JOY (**Zech.** 9. 9.) This Heaven-born joy anticipates the coming King, in whom, though now we see Him not, yet believing, we rejoice.

5. A CONTINUAL JOY (Phil. 4. 4). If we rejoice in His Name, and know that His Name shall endure for *ever*, then we may rejoice in the Lord *alway*.

6. A GOD-GLORIFYING JOY (Psa. 89. 16). Glorifying, not in our own name, but in His, Oh, for more of this pure gladness which magnifies His precious Name !

7. A TRIUMPHANT JOY (Hab. 3. 18). It is not bound

up with the things of this world, but in the eternal God Himself,

8. UNSPEAKABLE JOY (1 Peter 1. 8). We call it joy, but the fullness of the delight, the ecstasy, the bliss, no language can tell. "God, my exceeding joy."

IV. **Consequences of this Joy.** Rejoicing in the Lord is the happy mood that makes our lives most fruitful. This joy—

1. GIVES FITNESS TO SACRIFICE (2 Chron. 23. 18). Our offerings must be made with rejoicing (Rom. 12. 1). The Lord loveth a cheerful giver.

2. GIVES POWER FOR TESTIMONY (Psa. 107. 22). His works are to be declared with rejoicing. If the joy of the Lord is not in our own hearts our declarations will be of little avail.

3. GIVES DELIVERANCE FROM SELF (Phil. 3. 3). If our joy is only in Christ Jesus our confidence will be also in Him.

4. GIVES STRENGTH FOR SERVICE (Neh. 8. 10). The joy of having God's promise ought to strengthen us in our work, as it did Nehemiah.

5. GIVES COURAGE FOR WITNESS-BEARING (Psa. 20. 5). If our joy in the Lord were measured by the height of our banners, how would it stand with us? Rejoice, again, I say, rejoice ; rejoice in the Lord.

ASK AND YE SHALL RECEIVE.

MEN ought always to pray, and not to faint. Those who pray most have most encouragement to pray. Their testimony is : "I love the Lord because He hath heard my voice."

I. **The Promises.** They are—

1. SURE (John 16. 23). "Verily, I say unto you." Think of the Promiser. I, who made the Heavens and the

earth. I, who have all power; the faithful and true Witness, the God who cannot lie, the Lord thy Redeemer.

2. **SIMPLE** (Matt. 7. 7). The statements here are **such** as any child might understand. How gracious our God is to put such great and mysterious truths in such child-like language, so unlike the wisdom of this world.

3. **SUFFICIENT**. This "*whatsoever ye shall ask*" is surely a wide door and effectual. There is enough here for the life that now is and for the life which is to come. His "How much more" (Luke 11. 13) is surely sufficient to assure His willingness to give. All the promises are "**Yea** and amen" in Him.

II. **The Conditions**. Like the promises, they are plain and simple. That **we**—

1. **ASK** (Matt. 7. 7). As children, we are to let our requests be made known in a child-like fashion.

2. **ASK OF THE FATHER** (John 16. 23). Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. We have liberty of access. What a privilege!

3. **ASK IN THE NAME OF JESUS**. Let us ever remember that this new way is through the rent veil of the Redeemer's flesh, but let us come with boldness.

4. **ASK ACCORDING TO HIS WILL** (1 John 5. 14, 15). If the Word of Christ is dwelling in us richly, then we will ask those things which are pleasing to Him.

5. **ASK IN FAITH** (Mark 11. 24). He that cometh to God must **believe**. "**Elias** was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed, and the Heaven gave rain." Believe and thou shalt see.

6. **ABIDE IN HIM** (John 15. 7). The branch not abiding in the vine need not pray to be filled with sap. Seeking His glory, ye may ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

7. THAT OUR HEART DOES NOT CONDEMN US (1 John 3. 21, 22). It is possible-and, alas, so common-to ask with the lips what the heart never expects. He answers us not by the length and breadth of our petitions, but of our faith.

III. **The Hindrances.** We don't speak here of hindrances to praying, but of those things which hinder the answers.

1. **INSINCERITY** (1 John 3. 21). It is quite possible to keep up the form of prayer and to be asking great things from God, while the heart is condemning it all.

2. **WILFULNESS** (Psa. 66. 18). Conscious of iniquity in the heart, but unwilling to confess it. First get reconciled to God about this matter, then bring your petition.

3. **SELFISHNESS** (Jas. 4. 3). Oh, the pride and subtlety of self asking divine things to feed the fires of its lusts. We pray for success that we might be successful. He will not give His glory to another.

4. **IMPATIENCE** (Psa. 40. 1). David says : "I waited patiently and He heard my cry." Don't be a run-away knocker. Have the patience of God. If God can afford to wait so well might we.

5. **UNBELIEF** (Mark 11. 24). This closes the door of expectancy. All things are possible to them that believe. Have faith in God. Believe ye that I am able to do this ?

IV. **The Examples.** In the above texts we have some soul-inspiring examples of how the Lord answers prayer, and from which we may learn—

1. **THAT THE LORD IS INTERESTED IN ALL THAT CONCERNS HIS CHILDREN** (1 Sam. 1. 27). What was a reproach to Hannah (barrenness) the Lord rolled away (2 Peter 1. 8),

2. **THAT WE SHOULD BRING ALL OUR WANTS TO THE LORD** (Exod. 17. 4-7). Be careful for nothing, be prayerful in everything (Phil. 4. 6).

3. THAT WE SHOULD EXPECT **THE** VERY THINGS WE **ASK** (Ezra 8. 21). Hannah said, "For *this* child I prayed." Although Paul did not get the thorn removed, yet from the fact that he prayed *three* times we see that he had been taught to expect what he asked (2 Cor. 12. 8).

4. THAT THERE IS NOTHING TOO HARD FOR THE LORD (2 Kings 4. 23). Though he be dead, yet shall he live. Look unto Me, for *I* am God.

5. THAT **THE** LORD OFTEN GIVES FAR ABOVE WHAT WE ASK (1 Kings 3. 9-14). Elijah prayed that he might die (1 Kings 19. 4), but the Lord translated him into Heaven.

6. THAT THE PRAYER OF FAITH IS THE **MIGHTIEST** WEAPON ON EARTH (1 Kings 17. 30-39). Think of what it has done in the past, is doing now, and might do in the future through you-only believe.

THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT.

I. Source of the Fruit.

1. THE SOURCE IS NOT IN THE BRANCH. The branch cannot bear fruit of *itself* (John 15. 4, 5). In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. Might as well expect figs from thistles as the fruit of the Spirit from the carnal mind.

2. THE **SOURCE IS** IN CHRIST HIMSELF. All the fullness of the Godhead dwelleth in Him. He, as the true and living Vine, has His roots in the Eternal Father. He as Man is the Bowl into which the oil flows from the living trees, and from which all the lamps receive their supply (Zech. 4. 2), and are filled with the fruits of righteousness.

3. THE SUPPLY IS BY THE HOLY SPIRIT (Rom. 5. 5). The sap in the vine is a beautiful metaphor of the Holy Spirit flowing through Christ into those who are abiding in Him. The sap quickens into newness of life.

4. IT FILLS THE ABIDING BRANCH with the life of the

vine (John 6. 63). So by His Spirit are we made possessors of the Divine life. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His.

II. Characteristics of the Fruit-Bearers. They are—

1. **CHOSEN ONES** (John 15. 16). As withered and worthless branches they have been chosen of God. While we were like the unwashed outcast in Ezekiel 16, He passed by and set His love upon us.

2. **ADOPTED ONES** (Rom. 8. 15). Not only chosen, but adopted into His family; planted into the Living Vine, and made partakers of the fullness therein. "All one in Christ."

3. **ABIDING ONES** (John 15.5). Those who feel and know that their life and strength depend entirely upon their union with the Living One. When first planted into Christ they were as dry as the boards of the Tabernacle.

4. **SANCTIFIED ONES** (Rom. 15. 10). Having been chosen and adopted, they have been sanctified-set apart—for the Lord's use. When the Spirit possesses the Christian, as the sap does the engrafted branch, it is that God might be glorified in him.

5. **RECEIVING ONES** (Acts 1.8). They have nothing to give until they have first received of His Holy Spirit. What can a branch give to a vine before it becomes a part of it? Well may the branches say, "What have we that we have not received?"

6. **POSSESSED ONES** (1 Cor. 3. 16). The branch not possessed by the sap is a withered one, and cannot show forth the character of the vine. "Abide in Me and I in you." It is God who dwelleth in you; He doeth the work.

7. **FILLED ONES** (Acts 2. 4). The branch must first be filled with sap before it can be fruitful. Fruit is the result of abundance of life. Be *filled* with the Spirit.

Handfuls on Purpose.

III. **Character of the Fruit.** Here we would observe, and let us put emphasis on the fact—

1. **THAT THIS FRUIT IS THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT** (Eph. 5. 9). It is not of the Christian-apart from the Spirit—but the outcome of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit abiding in the Christian. The branch does not *labour to* bring forth fruit, but the sap does, and so it is the fruit of the sap. “It is God who worketh in you.”

2. **THIS FRUIT MEANS THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST** (Rom. 5. 5). If the Holy Ghost sheds abroad in our hearts the love of God, it is that this string of pearls, mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13, and worn by Jesus Christ, might be exhibited in us. If this love is begotten in us by the Spirit it will enable us to bring forth such fruit as that mentioned in Colossians 3. As the sap takes the things of the root and reveals them on the branch, so does the Spirit take the things of Christ and show them unto us, that they might be manifested through us.

3. **THE FRUIT IS THE PROOF AND POWER OF THE CHRISTIAN.** “**By their fruit ye shall know them.**” The light of a Spirit filled life will lead others to glorify our Father in Heaven. If Christ dwells in our heart by faith the features of His character will be seen in our life.

IV. Preciousness of the Fruit.

1. **IT BRINGS GLORY AND PRAISE TO GOD (Phil. 1. 11).** **Herein** is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit. Christ said, “I am the true Vine, My Father is the Husbandman.” How much this Husbandman must have rejoiced over the fruit of this Vine.

2. **IT BRINGS SATISFACTION TO THE HEART OF CHRIST (Cant. 4. 6).** **To see His own image in the lives of His people must be** fruit sweet to His taste. The fruits that

bring praise to the Father are all His own. **“His** pleasant fruits. ”

3. IT IS A WITNESS TO **THE** GRACE AND POWER OF **GOD** (Acts 1. 8). A fruit-bearing Christian is a wonderful exhibition of Divine mercy. They are witnesses, through the Holy Spirit, to the mighty saving, satisfying power of Jesus Christ.

4. IT LEADS **OTHERS** TO BELIEVE IN GOD (Acts **2. 41**). “They seeing your good works, may glorify your Father. ” When they saw the boldness of Peter and John they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus. If we abide in Christ we shall be like Joseph, “A fruitful bough by the well, whose branches run over the wall. ”

SPIRITUAL WEALTH.

Proverbs 10. 22.

- | | |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. It is Needed, | .. “The Blessing. ” |
| 2. It is Divine,.. | .. “The blessing of the Lord. ” |
| 3. It is Abundant, | ... “It maketh Rich. ” |
| 4. It is Enduring, | .. “He addeth no Sorrow. ” |

WAKE UP.

1 Thessalonians 5. 6.

1. A melancholy fact-Others are asleep, because blind and insensible.
2. A timely warning-“Let us not sleep. ” Spiritually this is an age of drowsiness.
3. An urgent call-“Let us watch **and** be sober, ” because the Devil is busy, and Christ is coming.

GOSPEL OUTLINES.

THE GOSPEL TRUMPET.

JOEL 2. 15.

It is surely most fitting, in the present religious condition, that at the opening of this year we should hear this urgent call to the Lord's trumpeters to "Sound an alarm." Spiritual slumber and apathy to soul-saving work seem to have settled down upon the modern Zion. "Minding earthly things" an attitude over which the apostle wept (Phil. 3. 19), appears to be the special tendency of the Church to-day. If the watchmen who see *this sword* are silent, who shall sound the alarm ?

I. The Trumpeters. In Numbers 10. 8 they are the "Sons of Aaron," those who have come into the sacred privilege by *birth*. The trumpets were of silver that they might give a clear, sweet, distinct sound. The Gospel of God is no harsh, uncertain note, when sounded with loving, consecrated heart and lip. In Ezekiel 33. 6, the trumpeter is a watchman. The servant of God is not only a priest to worship, but also a watchman to warn. His eye is to be quick to discern the signs of the times, and His lip ready to sound forth the needful note.

II. The Uses of the Trumpet-may indicate the work of the preacher and the character of the Gospel.

1. It was blown OVER THE BURNT-OFFERINGS and sacrifices (Num. 10. 10). This was the joyful sound of atonement. Blessed are the people that know this trumpet sound (Psa. 89. 15, R.V., mar&)-redemption and peace by the blood of His Cross.

2. It was blown AT THE ANOINTING OF A KING (2 Kings

9. 13). Sound out the tidings that the Crucified One is now crowned with glory and honour. This is what Peter did (see Acts 10. 38-40).

3. It was blown **BEFORE THE ARK OF GOD (1 Chron. 15. 24)**. The coming of this symbol of His presence was heralded by the watchful, joyful trumpeter. "Behold, He cometh!" Sound out this blessed note, ye watchmen of the Lord.

4. It was **BLOWN TO WARN** (Ezek. 33. 4). The day of battle is ever with us. The power of sin and the hosts of Hell offer no truce. If there is no warning given, who shall prepare himself for the battle ?

5. It was blown **TO SOUND AN ALARM** (Joel 2. 1). This prophet sees the mustering of the nations. "A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness," for the "day of the Lord cometh." Sound an alarm, for the awful day is approaching when upon all "faces shall gatherblackness" (v. 6). This note of "alarm" is not wanted in these days, but it never was more needed. Awake ! Awake !

III. The Responsibility of the Trumpeters. Some of the trumpeters may be so blind that they do not see the danger ; but if they see.. .and blow not the trumpet.. . the blood of those who perish, through their cowardly neglect, will God require at their hands (Ezek. 33. 6). The Lord's watchmen should be the first to see, and the first to sound the note or warning. A faithful witness delivereth souls. We should be instant in season, for the time will come when "the voice of.. . trumpeters shall be heard no more" (Rev. 18. 22).

THE LADDER OF GRACE.

COLOSSIANS 1. 9-14.

PAUL'S letters are as much alive to-day as when they were first read in the Churches 1800 years ago. Why do they still

live and thrive increasingly amid the fires of adverse criticism ? Because the living breath of Christ is in them. Who could preach like Paul ? Only those who could pray like him. The pulpit is weak to-day because the closet is cold. We have here one of Paul's wonderful prayers for his brethren. This passage seems like a ladder of grace, making a way from darkness to light, from emptiness to fullness, from death to life. Paul, standing on the heights of grace, counts the steps from the top downward; but we **shall understand it better by beginning at the bottom.** **The first step, then, of this ladder of life is—**

I. Forgiveness. Forgiveness of sins is the first blessing God offers man, although many think, in their ignorance, that this is the last benefit man can get from God. There is a good deal of Protestant Popery abroad—a kind of belief that God only forgives our sins when we come to die. If this was so, surely Paul must have been very presumptuous when he said, as he does here, that “In Him we *have* the forgiveness of sins.” Until we have received the forgiveness of our sins, we have not advanced one step **heavenward.** **The first round on the ladder is forgiveness.** **The second is—**

II. Redemption. “We have redemption through His blood.” To redeem means to buy back. In these evil days the redemptive work of Christ is largely ignored in certain quarters. When an article is taken out of the pawn, it is said to be redeemed, and when redeemed it is out of the hands of the broker, and into the hands of the purchaser. The old pawnbroker to whom we had sold ourselves for naught is the Devil. **But Christ, having redeemed us by His blood, claims us as His own.** **The next step upward is—**

III. Translation. “He hath translated us into the Kingdom of His dear Son.” Only redeemed ones can grow

in this Kingdom. The process of translating is a mystery. There is nothing like it in nature as far as we know. No passing from one kingdom into another. The mineral never becomes vegetable, and the vegetable never becomes animal. But by the grace of God a sinner can be translated into a saint. This is evidenced by the changed lives of **many** round about us.

IV. **Deliverance.** The next step is “delivered from the powers of darkness.” Sin, like a mighty vampire, has spread its darkening wings over the minds of men. With regard to spiritual things, we are, apart from God-stone blind. The power of darkness is a fearful power. How many are enveloped in its misery. God delivers us from it by opening the eyes of our understanding, and planting our feet upon the rock of His eternal truth. The next step lifts us into great hope.

V. **Partakers.** “Made partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.” Partakers, not purchasers. It is said that in England’s palace one day, the King asked his nobles by what title they held their lands. Immediately hundreds of swords flashed in the light. They replied, “By these we won them, and by these we will keep them.” It is not so with us. Christ, the sword of our excellence, has conquered for us. We reap because He hath sown. We win because He hath triumphed. We inherit because He hath died. The next step is—

VI. **Strengthened.** This word reminds us that we are still in the place of weakness, work, and warfare ; and suggests sufficiency for all our need. “Strengthened with all might.” As thy days so shall thy strength be. But notice that the strength here spoken of is to be manifested in patience and longsuffering. Restlessness and a short temper are sure signs of weakness.

VII. **Fruitful** in every good work **is the next round in**

this ladder. The work of Christ has brought the possibility of a truly successful life, within the reach of every man. If a man plants rotten potatoes he cannot expect good ones. The redeemed life should be fruitful in every good work. Apart from Christ our lives are as barren as branches severed from the vine. The last and highest experience is—

VIII. **Filled** with the knowledge of His will, etc. This implies walking in the light and rejoicing in certainties. The higher we climb in spiritual experience the more clear the air becomes. Many never seem to get out of cloudland ; they seem content to abide in the midst of doubts and fears. How many of us have started on this ladder of life ? Here is a man who wants to climb with the world on his back. Here is another riding on his church with the confession of faith under his arm. Here is another so filled with pride that he is puffed up like a publican or rather like a Pharisee. But the first step implies forgiveness—so the **first** act on our part must be confession.

BACKSLIDING-ITS CAUSE, COURSE, AND CURE.

JEREMIAH 2. 1-37.

THE prodigal did not arrive among the swine the first day he left his father. The course of the backslider is gradual. A little thing at the fountain head may alter the course of a river. A little sin “in” the heart may change the current of a life. We have here—

I. **A Happy Condition.** “When thou wentest *after* Me in the wilderness Israel was holiness unto the Lord” (v. 3). These words suggest two important truths.

1. That to please God we must follow Him.
2. That in *following Him we* are holiness unto the Lord. Holiness is the fruit of obedience and fellowship. This is

the root thought of consecration, and exceedingly practical. While Peter was rejoicing in the Lord, he could say, "To whom can we go?" but when doubt and fear arose in his heart he forsook Him and fled. The obedient followers of Christ will never be found mourning beside the broken cisterns.

II. **A Foolish Step.** "They have forsaken Me and hewed them out broken cisterns," etc. (v. 13). God is the Fountain of living waters; when He is forsaken men have to **hew** for themselves. And what do they get for all their labours? "Broken cisterns that can hold no water." Disappointment (Rom. 10. 4). *Labouring* for living waters is an evidence of God unknown or God forsaken. It is the gift of God (John 4. 10). How vain to seek the streams without the fountain; how foolish to seek the blessing without the **Blesser!** "All my springs are in Thee." All my blessings in Christ are but foretastes of His inexhaustible fullness. The *forsaking* is always followed with the *hewing*. When a man has lost his pleasure in the prayer meeting he will be likely to seek it in the dram shop; when the Bible becomes dry the novel will be sought. "Broken cisterns."

III. **A Sorrowful Contrast.** "I planted thee a noble vine ; how art thou turned into the degenerate plant?" (v. 21). Oh, think of it! Forsaking God means degeneration in life and character. If you have begun to pray less you have begun to degenerate. If you have a growing dislike for the company of the godly, the process of degeneration is fast going on. If you are not bearing the rich fruits of former years it is because you are a degenerate plant. The vine cannot thrive in a barren land; no more can ye. If we would continue to be fruitful, let us **abide** where the Lord hath planted us (Rom. 6. 3; John 15. 4).

IV. **A Fruitless Attempt.** "Though thou wash thee.. .

yet thine iniquity is marked before Me, saith the Lord” (v. 22). It is very common for the backslider in heart to keep up the *form* of godliness when the power is gone, but though they take the nitre of earnestness and the much soap of profession, yet is their iniquity marked before God. Solemn words ! Be not deceived ; God is not mocked. A backslider can no more wash himself than an unbelieving sinner. He that *covereth* his sins shall not prosper. No amount of outward *pretence* will atone for secret sin in sight of God.

V. A Solemn Change. “Thou hast taught the wicked ones thy ways: also in thy skirts is found the blood of souls” (w. 33, 34). How guilty and responsible are those Christians who have forsaken the Lord and gone back to the world. They dishonour Christ by their lives, which teach the wicked a Godless religion—a religion the world loves. By forsaking the blood that cleanseth from all sin the blood of souls is on their skirts. If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness !

VI. A Presumptuous Plea. “Yet thou sayest, I am innocent, I have not sinned” (v. 35). A backslider has arrived at about the last stage of degeneration when he begins to justify himself; he has got into the painless state of spiritual mortification.

VII. A Dismal Prospect. “The Lord hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them” (v. 37). The confidence that is not placed in the Lord Himself is sheer presumption. Special meetings may be got up, new methods may be invented, some excitement may be awakened, but if thy *heart* is not right with God thou shalt not prosper. “Man looketh *on* the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. 16. 7). It is possible for a backslider, in reforming his manner of life, to regain the confidence of his Christian

brethren, but unless there is cleansing and heart restoration to God he shall not prosper. He may be a branch among the other branches, but if he is not in fellowship with the life-giving Vine he is but a withered branch, and shall not prosper.

VIII. A Gracious Remedy. "Return thou back-sliding Israel, for I am merciful, saith the Lord" (chap. 3. 12). Oh, how simple the condition, "Only acknowledge thine iniquity" (v. 13). Oh, how encouraging the offer, "I am *merciful*." Oh, how gracious the promise, "I will heal" (v. 22). If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive. David acknowledged his transgression and was forgiven (Psa. 32. 5). The prodigal confessed and was restored (Luke 15). Return, confess, rejoice.

SOLOMON AND THE QUEEN OF SHEBA;

OR, CHRIST AND HIS SERVANTS.

1 KINGS 10. 1-10.

A GREATER than Solomon is here (Matt. 12. 42). We have perhaps a picture here of the glory that shall yet characterise the "Greater Solomon" and His servants in the age to come (Isa. 60. 1-6). What brought the Queen of Sheba to behold the wisdom and glory of Solomon has brought many a humbler one to behold the greater glory of Jesus, viz., "the hearing of faith." We might consider—

I. What She Heard. "She heard of his fame."

1. THE FAME OF HIS RICHES. "Silver was nothing accounted in his days" (v. 21). But what are the riches of Christ? (Eph. 3. 8; Col. 2. 9).

2. THE FAME OF HIS WISDOM. This was the wisdom that cometh from above (1 Kings 3. 12). Many seek after wisdom (v. 24) who reject Christ, the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1. 24-30; James 1. 5).

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3. THE FAME OF HIS POWER. Concerning the *Name of the Lord*. If Solomon's intimacy with God made him great, what must we say of Him who was "God manifest in the flesh?" (Phil. 2. 9).

II. **What She Did.** She did not make light of it, like those in Matthew 22. 5. Nor postpone it like Felix (Acts 24. 25).

1. SHE CAME TO HIM. This was much better than merely thinking *about* him. When the prodigal came to himself he came to his Father (John 6. 37).

2. SHE COMMUNED WITH HIM. "She told him all that was in her heart" (v. 2), and the king hid nothing from her (v. 3). A full confession brings fullness of blessing (Psa. 32. 5-7). Oh, the joy of telling Jesus! Cast thy burden on the Lord (Matt. 14. 12).

III. What She Saw.

1. SHE SAW HIS WISDOM. Having come to Christ, the wisdom of God in the scheme of redemption has greatly amazed us (Eph. 1. 4-8).

2. SHE SAW HIS HOUSE. The Church of Christ as an house fitly framed together is the next marvel (Eph. 2. 19-22).

3. SHE SAW HIS TABLE. The great and liberal provision God has made in Christ for His own (2 Cor. 9. 8).

4. SHE SAW HIS ASCENT. (Probably the arched viaduct that led from his house to the Temple.) The ascent of the "Greater than Solomon" was much more glorious (Acts 1. 9).

5. SHE SAW HIS SERVANTS. (a) Their *position*—"Sitting" (Luke 10. 39). (b) Their *privilege*—"Continually with thee *hearing thy wisdom*" (v. 8; John 6. 45). (c) Their pleasure—"Happy are these, thy servants" (v. 8; Psa. 100. 2; Rom. 5. 1 D).

IV. What Followed. The results were manifest—

1. **SHE WAS HUMBLLED.** “There was no more spirit in her.” Seeing the Lord means a downfall (Acts 9. 4; Rev. 1. 17).

2. **SHE CONFESSED.** “It was a true report.” Those who come to Jesus will be forced to acknowledge the truth of the Gospel.

3. **SHE PRAISED.** “Blessed be the Lord.” This is the result of a satisfied soul (Psa. 103. 1-5).

4. **SHE GAVE.** “She gave the king gold” (v. 10) “Yield *yourselves* unto God” (Rom. 12. 1, 2).

ELIJAH ON CARMEL;

OR, FAITH VINDICATED.

1 KINGS 18. 19-39.

THERE are only two religions : (1) The Religion of Man ; (2) The Religion of God. Man's religion may have much that is attractive and pleasing to men, but it lacks power and *authority*. It is a lifeless body. The religion of God is attested as Divine by miraculous fire from Heaven in *answer* to believing prayer (v. 37; Acts 2. 3). We have here—

I. The Religion of Form and its Followers.

1. **THEY ARE MANY.** “Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty” (v. 22). A depraved religion will always be popular with a depraved humanity (Matt. 27, 21). The proverb, “*Vox populi, vox Dei,*” is in spiritual matters untrue (Matt. 7. 13).

2. **THEY ARE EARNEST.** They cried aloud and cut themselves with knives, ” etc. (v. 23). Zeal, but not according to knowledge (Rom. 10. 3), is like a steam-engine on the wrong track. Good misdirected.

3. **THEY ARE DECEIVED.** “Neither was there voice, nor any to answer” (v. 29). The favour and power of God is not to be purchased with self-effort (Titus 3. 5 ; **Acts**

8. 20). *The fire* of the heavenly baptism will not come upon us by leaping upon the altar and cutting ourselves (1 Cor. 13. 3), it is by faith (Gal. 3. 14 ; John 7.' 38, 39).

II. The Religion of God and His Worshipers. It cannot be said of Christians that they worship they know not what (1 John 5. 20).

1. THEY are COMPARATIVELY FEW. "I only remain" (v. 22). Here is but one against four hundred and fifty, but that one is not Elijah, but God, whom Elijah trusted. The battle is the Lord's (read **1 John 4. 4**).

2. THEY ARE DELIBERATELY FAITHFUL. "Come near unto Me." See the calmness of Elijah. No "leaping and cutting" with him. He makes not haste, because he believes in God (Isa. 28. 16). Oh, for such faith (James 5. 17).

3. THEY ARE DIVINELY FAVOURED. "Then the fire of the Lord fell" (v. 38). Our God is a consuming fire. When He comes He consumes the stony heart, and licks up the dust of sin (Matt. 3. 11, 12).

III. The Call of the Prophet for Decision. "How long halt ye between two opinions?" (v. 21). Notice—

1. THAT THERE ARE TWO OPINIONS. God's and **man's**. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, saith the Lord." They are as wide apart as light and darkness. Which do you follow? (See Psalm 139. 17).

2. THAT THERE ARE MANY WHO HALT BETWEEN **THEM**. The choice is between the "wisdom of man" and the "wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1. 19-30), between sin unto death and obedience unto righteousness (Rom. 6. 16).

3. THAT THEY ONLY ARE SAFE WHO DECIDE FOR **GOD**. When the *people* saw it they said, "The Lord, He is God," but the *prophets* were slain at the brook (v. 39). What are the results of seeing the "goodness and severity of God" at the Cross of Christ ?

SOME FACTS ABOUT PRAYER, FOR MEN.

LUKE 18. 1.

“MEN ought always to pray, and not to faint.” So said the Lord of men and of salvation. Then—

I. Prayer is a real thing. It is something of intrinsic value. “He that cometh to God must believe that He is” (Heb. 11.6). A man once confessed that, “Before I was converted I prayed to nobody. Now I pray to God.”

II. Prayer is a simple thing. Any child can pray. It is the offering up of our desires unto God. It is asking because we feel our need, and believe that we can receive. There is no mystery in this.

III. Prayer is a **desirable** thing. “Men *ought* to pray.” They ought to pray, just as they ought to work and eat. Men ought to deal fairly with God, as they ought to deal fairly with their fellowmen. It is their duty and privilege.

IV. Prayer is a **manly** thing. “Men ought to pray.” Man is the only animal that can naturally look up. Some men live the brutish life by never looking up. Lift up your face to God, and maintain your dignity as a man.

V. Prayer is a **constant** thing. “Men ought *always* to pray.” He ought to keep on praying, just as he keeps on desiring. Men ought to exercise their bodies daily to be healthy and strong ;so ought they to exercise their souls toward God. Continue in work if you wish to grow rich in the world’s goods. Continue in prayer if you would grow rich in faith and grace.

VI. Prayer is a **testing** thing. “And not to faint.” It is easy to grow weary in this well doing. Ye shall reap if ye faint not. Praying always and *not fainting* is the evidence of strong faith. The trial of your faith is precious.

VII. Prayer is a **profitable** thing. “Ask and ye shall receive.” Our Lord would never have said that “Men ought always to pray” if He did not mean always to give. As a proof of this, see the little parable in verses 2-7.

THE FAITHFUL SAYING.

1 TIMOTHY 1. 15.

THIS is the Apostle's own testimony, a declaration of his own experience (w. 12-15). The "saying" is not his own, he got it from others. It is of world-wide significance.

I. **It Reveals the Love of God.** Nature may seem "red, tooth and claw." God is love.

II. **It Reveals the Grace of Christ.** "Christ Jesus came into the world." Where from? What to do? (1 Cor. 8. 9).

III. **It Reveals the Need of Man.** "Came into the world to save sinners." He came not as a capitalist to assist in case of failure, but as a Saviour to save.

IV. **It is a Faithful Saying.** It is in perfect accord with the character of God and the condition of men. It has come from the lips of Him who is the Truth (John 7.17).

V. **It is Worthy of all Acceptation.** Worthy of being accepted by all, and worthy of being altogether **accepted by all classes and conditions of men.**

EBENEZER.

1 SAMUEL 7. 12.

THE circumstances connected with this "stone of help" are suggestive of the way into spiritual victory. There was—

1. **Conscious Need.** "All ... lamented after the Lord" (v. 2).

2. **Confession Made.** "We have sinned" (v. 6).

3. **Separation Demanded.** "Put away strange gods. . . serve Him only" (v. 3).

4. **Substitution Acknowledged.** "Samuel took a sucking lamb" (v. 9).

5. Deliverance Wrought. "The Lord thundered.. and discomfited" (v. 10).

6. Testimony Given. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" (v. 12).

THE RULE OF CHRIST'S PEACE.

COLOSSIANS 3. 15.

1. **A Wonderful Theme.** "The peace of Christ " (R. v.) • Nothing could disturb it (John 14. 27).

2. **A Blessed Possession.** "The peace of Christ in your hearts. " In Me ye have peace (John 16. 33).

3. **A Happy Government.** "The peace of Christ *rule* in your hearts" (arbitrate, R.V., margin).

4. **A Gracious Calling.** "To the which also ye were called. " We don't climb into it, we are called into it.

5. **A Mystical Union.** "In one body. "

6. **A God-honouring Result.** "Be ye thankful " (Eph. 5. 20).

"CERTAINLY I WILL BE WITH THEE. "

EXODUS 3. 12.

THINK of—

1. The **Character** of His Presence.

2. The **Purpose** of His Presence. Guide, defend, comfort.

3. The **Power of His** Presence. Purity, plenty, progress, praise.

LESSONS FROM THE HARVESTFIELD.

SONG OF SOLOMON 7. 11.

"LET us go forth into the field" and learn—

1. That a **harvest time will come.** Seed sown shall not always remain a hidden thing,

2. That much comes from little. Some an **hundred-fold**. They who sow wind, reap whirlwind.

3. That a fruitful life comes through death. "Except a corn of wheat die, it abideth alone."

4. That like **comcs** from like. "Whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he reap."

5. That when we cease to grow we **begin to die**.

6. That grain is most valued when **ripe**.

7. That the chaff and the wheat grow together.

8. That the harvesting does not **alter** its character.

9. That the harvest is followed with a sifting.

FEAR NOT.

ISAIAH 43. 1-10.

FEAR not, for—

1. I have redeemed thee (v. 1). Purchase.

2. I have called thee (v. 1). Grace.

3. I will be with thee (v. 2). Fellowship.

4. I have loved thee (v. 4). Favour.

5. I will gather thee (v. 5). Hope.

6. I have created thee for My glory. Privilege.

7. Ye are My witnesses (v. 10). Responsibility.

THE BELIEVER'S JOY IN THE LORD.

HABAKKUK 3. 17-19.

1. The believer has joy. "I will rejoice" (v. 18).

2. It is joy in the Lord. "I will joy in.. . God."

3. It is the joy of salvation. "I will joy in the God of my salvation."

4. It s the **joy** of satisfaction. "My strength."

5. It is the joy of anticipation. "He will make me to walk upon high places."

6. It is a joy that adversity cannot **destroy**. "Although.. . yet" (w. 17, 18).

WONDERFUL LOVE.

EZEKIEL 16. 4-14.

I. **The Condition of the Sinner.**

1. UNWASHED. "Neither wast thou washed" (v. 4).
2. UNPITIED. "None eye pitied thee" (v. 5).
3. EXPOSED. "Cast out in the open field" (v. 5).
4. LOATHSOME. "To the loathing of thy person."
5. OPPRESSED. "Trodden underfoot" (v. 6, *margin*).

II. **The Love of the Saviour.** Seen in His—

1. COMING NEAR. "I passed thee by" (v. 6).
2. INFINITE COMPASSION. "I looked upon thee ; behold thy time was a time of love" (v. 8).
3. WORD OF POWER. "I said unto thee, Live" (v. 6).

III. **The Privileges of the Saved.**

1. SHELTERED. "I spread My skirt over thee" (v. 8).
2. WASHED. "Then washed I thee" (v. 9).
3. CLOTHED. "I clothed thee" (v. 10).
4. ANOINTED. "I anointed thee" (v. 9).
5. GIRDED. "I girded thee" (service) (v. 10).
6. ADORNED. "I decked thee with ornaments" (v. 11).
"Thy beauty perfect through *My* comeliness" (v. 14).
7. CROWNED. "I put a beautiful crown upon thy head" (v. 12). Saved by grace alone.

THE BLESSED MAN.

PSALM 112.

I. **The Cause of his Blessedness.**

1. He FEARS THE LORD (v. 1).
2. He has a fixed TRUST in the Lord (v. 7).
3. He has a CHARACTER like the Lord's (v. 4, *l. c.*).

II. **The Nature of his Blessedness.**

1. He has DELIGHT in the Word of God (v. 1).

Handfuls on Purpose.

2. **His** CHILDREN are honoured (v. 2).
3. His HOUSE is well furnished (v. 3).
4. His RIGHTEOUSNESS endureth for ever (v. 3 .
5. He has LIGHT in time of darkness (v. 4).
6. He is SAVED from all fear (w. 7, 8).
7. He shall be EXALTED (v. 9, *l. c.*).
8. His ENEMIES shall be humbled (v. 10).

THE EXPERIENCES OF A SOUL.

PSALM 119.

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Breaking (v. 20). | 4. Fainting (v. 81). |
| 2. Cleaving (v. 25). | 5. Waiting (v. 109). |
| 3. Melting (v. 28). | 6. Trusting (v. 167). |
| 7. Longing (v. 175). | |

THE DIVINE KEEPER.

PSALM 121.

THE word "**keeper**" occurs in this Psalm six times in the Revised Version.

I. His Ability to Keep.

1. ALMIGHTY. "Made the Heaven and the earth. "
2. EVER AWAKE. "He slumbereth not. "

II. The Manner of His Keeping.

1. He keeps the SOUL (v. 7, **R. v.**).
2. He keeps from OPPRESSION. "The Lord thy *Shade*" (w. 5, 6).
3. He keeps from EVIL (v. 7).
4. He keeps while in the routine of DAILY BUSINESS. "Thy going out and thy coming in" (v. 8).
5. He keeps to the END. "Even for evermore. "

CAPTIVITY TURNED INTO SINGING.

PSALM 126.

THERE was—

1. **Bondage.** “Captivity of Zion” (v. 1).
2. **Prayer.** “Turn again our captivity, O Lord” (v. 4).
3. **Answer.** “The Lord turned” (v. 1).
4. **Astonishment.** “We were like them that dream” (v. 1).
5. **Joyfulness.** “Our mouths filled with laughter and singing” (v. 2).
6. **Fruitfulness.** “Then said they, ” etc.
7. **Encouragement.** “They that sow in tears shall reap in joy” (vv. 5, 6).

HE IS ABLE.

PSALM 145. 14-21.

1. To Uphold the fallen (v. 14).
2. To Raise the bowed down (v. 14).
3. To Give Meat in due season (v. 15).
4. To Satisfy the living (v. 16).
5. To Fulfil the desires of them that fear Him (v. 19).
6. To Save them that cry (v. 19).
7. To Preserve them that love Him (v. 20).

EBENEZER.

1 SAMUEL 7. 12.

I. The Way to it.

1. **CONFESSION.** “We have sinned” (v. 6).
2. **CONVERSION.** “**Return unto** the Lord” (v. 3).
3. **CONSECRATION.** “Prepare your heart and serve Him only” (v. 3).

II. The Manner of it. It was through—

1. SACRIFICE. “A lamb for a burnt offering” (v. 10).
2. INTERCESSION. “Samuel cried unto the Lord.”
3. JUDGMENT. “The Lord thundered” (v. 10).

III. The Influence of it.

1. Look UP. “The Lord hath.”
2. Look BACK. “Hitherto.”
3. Look BEYOND. “He hath” and He will.

CHRIST OUR LIFE.

COLOSSIANS 3. 4.

1. He is the **Source** of it (John 10. 10).
2. He is the **Confidence** of it (John 10. 28).
3. He is the **Sustenance** of it (John 6. 50).
4. He is the **Object** of it (Phil. 1. 21).
5. He is the **Example** of it (1 Peter 2. 21).
6. He is the **Security** of it (Col. 3. 3).
7. He is the **Crown** of it (James 1. 12).

HAVE FAITH IN GOD.

MARK 11. 22.

THIS is a word of encouragement for **the—**

1. **Seeking Sinner** (Acts 16. 31).
2. **Trembling Believer** (Psalm 73. 23).
3. **Tempted Follower** (Gen. **15. 1**).
4. **Bereaved Sufferer** (Gen. 45. 26).
5. **Penitent Backslider** (Isaiah 55. 7).
6. **Discouraged Worker** (Isaiah 59. 19).
7. **Dying Christian** (Psalm 23. 4).

THE YOKE OF CHRIST.

MATTHEW 11. 28, 29.

1. **What it Means.** Fellowship *with Himself*, walking with Him. Gripped and fastened to the same divine purpose.

2. **Who are to Take it?** All who would follow Him, sharing His sufferings and glory.

3. **What is Found in it?** “Rest to the soul.” Rest in His will, way, and work.

THE FACE OF JESUS.

To see His face is to get a vision of Jehovah Jesus. What is to be seen in that face ?

1. **Perfection.** “The glory of God in the face of Jesus” (2 Cor. 4. 6).

2. **Consecration.** “Look upon the. face of **Thine** anointed” (Psalm 84. 9).

3. **Determination.** “He stedfastly set His face to go up, etc.” (Luke 9. 51).

4. **Substitution.** “His visage (face) was so marred more than any man” (Isa. 52. 14; Isa. 53. 2, 3).

5. **Rejection.** “They did spit on His face” (Matt. 26. 67).

6. **Glorification.** “His face like the sun” (Rev. **1. 16**; Matt. 17. 2).

7. **Consummation.** “From whose face the earth and the Heaven fled away” (Rev. 20. 11).

8. **Salvation.** “Cause Thy face to shine and we shall be saved” (Psalm 80. 3). Seek His face (Psalm 27. 8).

PETER' S FALL.

MARK 14.

DOWNWARD steps—

1. **Self-confidence**, verse 29.
2. **Proud Boasting**, verse 31.
3. **Unwatchfulness**, verse 37.
4. **Cowardliness**, verses 50-54.
5. **Ungodly Company**, verse 54.
6. **Denying the Lord**, verse 71.
7. **Weeping**, verse 72.

RARE YOUNG MEN.

1 JOHN 2. 14.

1. **Their character.** "Ye are strong."
2. **The evidence** of their strength. "Ye have overcome the wicked one."
3. **The source** of their strength. "The Word of God abideth in you." His Word is pure, peaceable, and powerful.

THE WORD OF GOD NO VAIN THING.

DEUTERONOMY 32. 47.

I. What the Word of God is Not. "It is not a vain thing."

1. Because its **QUICKENING** power is needed (Psa. 119. 5).
2. Because it has **ILLUMINATING** power (Psa. 119. 195).
3. Because of its **IRRESISTIBLE** power (Jer. 23. 29).

II. To Whom it is No Vain Thing. "It is no vain thing *for you.*" For *you* who have heard and believed.

III. Why it is No Vain Thing. "Because it is *your life.*"

1. It is the **SOURCE** of your life (1 Peter 1. 23-25).
2. It is the **SUSTENANCE** of your life (1 Peter 2. 2).
3. It is the **STRENGTH** of your life (Eph. 6. 17).

THE LADDER OF GRACE.
COLOSSIANS 9. 1-14.

THIS passage should be read in its reverse order to get progressive experience.

1. **Forgiveness** of sins (v. 14).
2. **Redemption** through blood (v. 14).
3. **Translated** into the Kingdom (v. 13).
4. **Delivered** from the power of darkness (v. 13).
5. **Partakers** of the inheritance (v. 12).
6. **Strengthened** with all might (v. 11).
7. **Fruitful** in every good work (v. 10).
8. **Filled** with the knowledge of His will (v. 9).

EMBLEMS OF THE CHURCH.

- I. As a **pearl** it is costly (Matt. 13. 46).
2. As an **house** it is orderly (1 Peter 2. 5).
3. As a **pillar** it is a witness (1 Tim. 3. 5).
4. As a **flock** it is dependent (1 Peter 5. 2).
5. As a **family** it bears His image (Eph. 3. 15).
6. As a **wife** it is vitally connected (Rev. 19. 7).
7. As a **body** it *is all* of *one* (Eph. 1. 22, 23).
8. As a **candlestick** it is exalted (Rev. 1. 12).

SETTLED.

PSALM 119. 89.

- I. **What is Settled ?** "O Lord Thy Word is settled, "
- II. **Where is it Settled ?** "Settled in Heaven. "
- III. **What is the Result of this Settlement ?**
 1. This **is a ROCK OF REFUGE** for the weary (Matt. 11. 28).
 2. This **is a STAFF OF STRENGTH for the Christian** (John 10. 35).

3. This is a **DART OF DEFIANCE** for the **Devil** (Eph 6. 17).

4. This is a **DISMAL DIRGE for the impenitent (Psa. 9. 17 ; John 3. 36).**

ENOCH.

HEBREWS 11. 5, 6.

This is a short but most inspiring biography. “**Enoch**” means **dedicated**.

1. He pleased God. This proves that he had faith in God (v. 6).

2. He knew that he pleased God. “He had this testimony.” This must have been to him a great source of **comfort** and **courage**.

3. How he pleased God. “He *walked* with God” (Gen. 5. 24).

4. The result of pleasing God. “He was translated.” Death had no power over him. It is so with the life that is hid with Christ in God. “By **faith he** was translated.”

THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT.

Acts 1. 8.

To the believer the power of the Spirit is the power of an ever present Divine **Personality** (John 16. 7-14).

1. His is convicting power (John 16. 8, **margin**).

2. His is life-giving power (John 6. 63).

3. His is teaching power (John 16. 13).

4. His is revealing power (John 16. 14).

5. His is witnessing power (Acts 1. 8; Rom. 8. 16).

6. His is interceding power (Rom. 8. 26).

7. His is indwelling power (1 Cor. 3. 16; 6. 19)

"BELIEVE AND THOU SHALT SEE."

JOHN 11. 40.

THIS statement may be regarded as a word of—

1. **Rebuke** to the questioning unbeliever.
2. **Guidance** to the anxious seeker.
3. **Comfort** to the suffering believer.
4. **Cheer** to the discouraged worker.
5. **Hope** to the dying Christian.

HEART-TROUBLE AND ITS CURE.

JOHN 14. 1.

I. **The Disease.** Heart-trouble. "Let not your heart be troubled." This disease is common. Its causes varied. Its cure humanly impossible.

II. **The Remedy.** "Ye believe in God, *believe also in Me.*" In **ME**—

1. As the **SON** of the Father (v. 2).
2. As the **PROVIDER** for His own (v. 2).
3. As the **WAY** to the Father (v. 6).
4. As the **IMAGE** of the Father (v. 9).
5. As the **REPRESENTATIVE** of the Father (vv. 10, 11).
6. As the **ANSWERER** of prayer (vv. 13, 14).
7. As the **GIVER** of the Holy Spirit (v. 16).
8. As the **COMING** One (v. 3).

WHAT MEANETH THIS?

ACTS 2. 12.

THE gift of the Holy Spirit, which was a source of "amazement" to some and "mockery" to others, is full of precious meaning to us who believe.

1. It means that He who died for our sins is now exalted at the right hand of God (v. 33; John 7. 39).

2. It means the **fulfilment of** prophecyy (v. 16).
3. It **means** that Christ has *power* to fulfil **His** promises (chap. 1. 5; 11. 4).
4. It means **power for testimony (w. 17, 18).**
5. It means fullness of blessing for every believer (vv. 38, 39).
6. It means that God can mightily use weak things (v. 7).
7. It means that God would have **all men to** be saved (v. 21).

ASSURANCE OF VICTORY.

JOHN 16. 33.

1. The Christian's Sphere of Service. "In the world."
2. The Christian's Source of Suffering. "In the world ye shall have tribulation."
3. The Christian's Secret of Comfort. "In Me ye might have peace."
4. The Christian's Source of Joy. "Be of good cheer."
5. The Christian's Assurance of Victory. "I have overcome the world."

HEART-SEARCHING.

1 SAMUEL 16. 7.

1. Two **Aspects of Man.** The "outward appearance" and the "heart." These are often contradictory.
2. **The Judgment of Men.** "**Man looketh on the outward appearance.**"
3. **The Judgment of God.** "The Lord looketh on the heart." Man says, "Reform." God says, "Repent."

SEED THOUGHTS.

SEED AND BREAD.

“For as the rain cometh down from Heaven.. that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth” (Isa. 55. 10, 11).

THE seed is the word, and the Word of God is the incorruptible seed. As the rain comes down from Heaven to water the earth, so this Word comes forth from the mouth of God to revive the hearts of men.

Oh, ye pilgrim witnesses, that go over the broad field of this world as sowers for the Son of Man, see to it that the basket of your heart is filled with the good seed of the Kingdom.

The Word of God is God’s own seed for the sower. Ye need no other. All else is chaff compared with this. But remember it is not merely Scriptural words you are to sow, it is the *Word of God*, or God’s own message to men; and you will find that this seed will grow best when planted in its native shell of simple Scripture language. This seed is also to be the “bread of the eater.” If the Word of God is not the food and strength of the preacher’s own soul, he will sow it but sparingly indeed. All who live must eat. If we live by faith in the Son of God, His Word will be sweet unto our taste.

THE WORD AND THE HAND.

“Now Lord, grant unto Thy servants, that with all boldness they may *speak* Thy Word, by *stretching forth* Thine *hand* to heal” (Acts 4. 29, 30).

GREAT boldness is needed to preach God’s Word. There

are so many who are ready to *threaten* when His Word is courageously spoken. But after all something more is needed if souls are to be wounded with a sense of sin, and healed by His mighty grace. Unless *His hand* is stretched forth with His Word, no healing power will be felt. The hand of God's Spirit is greatly hindered where there is doubting and fearfulness ; but don't let us imagine that our boldness and faithfulness alone will suffice to bring souls to Christ. We must remember that it is the "Spirit that quickeneth." Along with our testimony there must be stretched forth that almighty and invisible hand that can lay hold on the hearts of ungodly men and turn them whithersoever He will. When this hand is stretched forth signs and wonders will be done. Have faith in God.

THE SHADOW OF PETER.

"They brought forth the sick into the streets, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow them"
(Acts 5. 15).

EVERY shadow was not the shadow of Peter. It took two things to make Peter's shadow--light and his own *presence*. Wherever Peter went walking in the light he carried with him the influence of his shadow. Every Christian, walking in the light of God, will have a shadow accompanying him. Those who walk in the darkness of doubt will carry no healing virtue with their presence. Alas for those who are aping at somebody else, and losing the power of their *own* presence. No sick ones will be helped by the shadow (influence) of such hollow pretenders.

THE FACE OF AN ANGEL.

"And looking stedfastly on Stephen, saw his face, as it had been the face of an angel" (Acts 6. 15).

THERE are but few angel faces to be seen in this selfish, sin-distorted world. The features of the soul not *infre-*

quently stamp themselves upon the countenance. If the angelic image of Jesus has been impressed upon the "inner man," some of the halo of His glory will be seen without. Observe it was when Stephen was charged with **blasphemy** that the sweet calmness of an angel rested upon his face, proving that in this holy man's heart there was no railing for railing, but **contrariwise**. When some Christians are being persecuted and maligned, the face of a fiend is more easily seen. Oh, love your enemies, and pray for them that despitefully use you (Acts 7. 60).

PRAYER AND HUNGER.

"Peter went up to pray, and he became very hungry"
(Acts 10. 9, 10).

PRAYER is a healthy exercise. There are many who know nothing of real soul-hunger, because they spend so little time in prayer. Lack of prayer is one of the most fruitful causes of spiritual dyspepsia. Much prayer creates much hunger for the Word of God, which is the bread of life. If you have lost, or are losing, your appetite for spiritual things, arise and pray, and soon you will be glad to "Arise and eat."

BELIEVING AND TURNING.

"A great number believed and turned unto the Lord"
(Acts 11. 21).

WHAT good will **your** so-called belief do you if it has not resulted in your *turning* to the Lord? Many profess to believe, but they continue in their sins. The faith that saves is the faith that turns our hearts and lives to Christ. It is not your believing that saves, but the Lord on whom alone your faith must rest. It is not, "Believe and be saved," but, "Believe on **the Lord Jesus Christ**, and thou shalt be saved."

SMITTEN.

"The angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory" (Acts 12. 23).

THE cause of the sudden downfall of this proud ruler should be a warning to all, especially to the preacher. Public speakers are greatly tempted to seek the honours of man more than God. The worms of pride and self-conceit have already begun their destructive work when we cease to give God the glory. It is quite possible to make a great oration and preach very eloquently, and yet at the same time, as far as spiritual power is concerned, be smitten of God. In the eyes of men the appearance may be as fair and beautiful as Jonah's gourd, but if God is not honoured the deadly canker-worm is at the roots.

ALTARS OF BRICK.

"A people that provoked Me to My face, burning incense upon altars of brick" (Isa. 65. 3).

As the altar sanctifieth the gift, it must therefore be holy. God had expressly said that in making an altar of stone: "If thou lift thy tool upon it thou hast polluted it" (Exod. 20. 25). On the altar, the gifts of the worshippers are to be laid, therefore the *altar* itself must not in any way represent the *workmanship* of the offerer. Is it not to be feared that many still provoke the Lord to His face by offering incense on altars of brick. The altar of the Cross is ignored, and the mud-burned altar of human wisdom and self-righteousness is substituted, offering God anything, on the ground of our own worthiness is simply provoking Him to His face (Rom. 10. 1-4).

DO NOTHING RASHLY.

“Ye men of Ephesus, seeing *that these things cannot be spoken* against, ye ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly” (Acts 19. 36).

It was a wholesome advice the town clerk gave the uproarious multitude who crowded the theatre at Ephesus, and who had been yelling for two hours, “Great is Diana of the Ephesians !” He seemingly had great faith in the image which fell down from Jupiter, and so had no fear of men damaging the character of the divine goddess. Might Christians not now be the better of the town clerk’s counsel amidst this uproar about the methods of so-called “Higher” and rationalistic critics of the Holy Scriptures? We believe the truth revealed in the Bible has come down from Heaven, and cannot be successfully spoken against. Therefore let us be quiet and do nothing rashly.

“I THANK MY GOD. ”

“I thank my God *always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you*” (1 Cor. 1. 4).

It is delightfully easy to thank God for the grace we ourselves have received, but it requires great grace to thank God always for the grace which is given to others. Even Christians are apt to be jealous and envious, thinking themselves better fitted to serve God than their neighbours. Such selfishness can never walk in the fellowship of the Spirit. “In honour preferring one another.” We are unfit to be used of God as long as we are unwilling to acknowledge and thank God for the grace and gifts He has bestowed on others for the edifying of the Body, the Church. This readiness to thank God always for the grace given to others shows a spirit in full and sweetest fellowship with the mind and purposes of God.

SPEECH AND POWER.

“I will know not *the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power*” (1 Cor. 4. 19).

“**THAT WAS** a good speech.” “He is a very eloquent speaker.” Such language is common, but Paul has another way of judging such tongue deliverances. “I will know not the speech, but the power.” Unspiritual minds can only judge the speech, the outward form—they know not the power. What power is this, by which the very heart-life of Christians is revealed? It is that holy, gracious, gentle, heart-melting, inscrutable something called “anointing,” that makes eternal and spiritual things very real and precious and powerful to those who hear. The Holy Spirit acting through the heart and speech of the preacher. Without this power all preaching is but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbals. May our speech be always seasoned with such salt.

SUFFERINGS AND CONSOLATION.

“For *as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ*” (2 Cor. 1. 5).

THE sufferings of Christ were peculiar. He suffered on account of His holiness. He was so like the **Father**—being “the image of the invisible God”—that all who loved not the Father hated Him. He suffered also because of His faithfulness. He spoke the truth, and because the world loved not the truth He was despised and rejected of men. If we, as Christians, have consecrated ourselves to God to do His will and to manifest His truth, as Christ did, we shall understand something of the sufferings of Christ. But it is here where we are misunderstood and hated by the world, that the “consolation also aboundeth by Christ.” To drink deeply of the heavenly comfort, we must enter fully into the spirit and sympathies of Christ.

THE OPEN FACE,

“But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image”
(2 Cor. 3. 18).

THE open face is needed in approaching the mirror of God's Holy Word, if we would see ourselves as we really are, and be transfigured into the image of the Lord of glory. The Word of God will have no transforming power in our hearts if we look into it only with that blinking critical eye that proudly sits in judgment upon the truth. The Lord give us that frank, open, honest face that rejoices in the truth, that our inner man may be changed into His image. If the truth of God transforms not our hearts and lives, we have not the open face.

WHAT SEEK YE?

“Then Jesus turned and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye?” (John 1. 38).

JESUS did not say, “Whom seek ye ? ” because He knew they sought Himself; but, “What seek ye ?” What is it in Me that ye seek ? Ah, this opens a wide door of entrance, there is so much in Jesus worth seeking. Some only seek to look at Him, others seek His forgiving smile. There are others who seek to know His dwelling-place, that they might abide with Him. What seekest thou, O my soul? Seek His wisdom to guide thee. Seek His peace to possess thee, His power to keep thee, His Spirit to abide in thee and transform thee into His Divine image. Seek that His will may be done in thee as it is done in Heaven, and that His presence may be an abiding reality with thee. Seek, and ye shall find.

GOD AT HAND.

“Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off?” (Jer. 23. 23).

WHAT a comfort to the believer that God, even our God, has been pleased to reveal Himself as a God at *hand*. Always within reach, always at hand to answer the cry of need, and to bless the touch of faith. Oh, the fullness of love and power that dwells in Him, and all this at hand for every time of need. Why should we be fretful and discontented with such a Friend continually at hand? But, alas, how many deal with Him as if He were for ever afar off and beyond the grasp of their feeble faith. “Lo, I am with you *always*.” A God at hand ! What strength this should give. What holy courage this Divine nearness should inspire.

 THE BREAD OF GOD.

“For the Bread of God is He which cometh down from Heaven, and giveth life unto the world” (John 6. 33).

THE Bread of God is not only the bread of life, but the life-giving and life-sustaining bread from Heaven. God has in mercy reckoned up the real need of this **poverty-stricken**, starving-to-death world; and so gave His Son, as His gift of bread, for famished souls. The bread of fashion, of riches, or worldly preferment, soon becomes stale. There is no real soul-nutrimment in the bread baked in the world's oven. The life-giving bread must come from the life-giving God. Jesus Christ, the Bread of God—the Bread that delights the heart of God—and, oh, what grace that this Bread has come from Heaven to give life unto the world. Have you received it ? Are you feeding on it ? He that eateth this Bread shall live for ever.

HIMSELF FOR OUR SINS.

"Our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for our sins"
(Gal. 1. 3, 4).

WHAT a contrast! Himself-ur sins. He gave the law to expose our sins. He gave Himself for our sins. The law is a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. How deep must the love of Christ be for sinful man, when He gave Himself as a price for the redemption of the guilty. How helpless and hopeless man's condition must have been when nothing less than HIMSELF could suffice to save. How wide the door of salvation must now be, since Himself hath opened it. He gave Himself-the well-beloved Son. How willingly God the Father would accept this gift! Having given Himself, men have now their choice between Himself and their sins. Receive Him!

NOT AFTER MAN.

"But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man" (Gal. 1. 11).

THE Gospel is not after man's wisdom, for it is foolishness to the worldly-wise. It is not after man's affections; the carnal mind is enmity against it. Seeing then that the Gospel is contrary to the mind and will of man, it could not be evolved out of the *inner consciousness* of man. It is not of man, neither can it be of the Devil, who hates it unto death. It is of God. This truth was burnt into the very bones of Paul's moral nature, and should burn in the bones of every Christian-born, not of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. The Gospel is supernatural and Divine, therefore doth the natural man despise it. To them that believe it is the power of God.

THE PURCHASED POSSESSION.

“Until the *redemption* of the *purchased possession*, unto the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1. 14).

THIS is a truth, great, deep, and wonderful. This title embraces the whole Church of God, and suggests the mystery of God’s gracious and eternal purpose. God has a possession—this possession is His people, redeemed by the blood of His Son (v. 7), and sealed with the Spirit of promise (v. 13). In this present time God, by the Spirit through the Gospel, is gathering out a people for Himself. Not yet has He got the full lot of His inheritance, but they shall be Mine, saith the Lord, when I make up my jewels. How marvellous that by His death and resurrection, Christ, in purchasing an inheritance for us in God, should at the same time and by the same means purchase an inheritance for God in us who are His people. By and by the kingdom shall be delivered up to the Father, and God shall be All in **all**.

ROOTED.

“*Rooted and built up in Him*” (Col. 2. 7).

YES, rooted and *built up*. Not stuck in and tied up. The tree that is well rooted does not need outward props to keep it right. Rooted in Christ. Every longing and desire centred on Him, and abiding in Him, will be fully supplied from Him.

From Christ must come the building material. In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. We are built up in His likeness, just as His Spirit, as the life-giving sap, flows and abides in us. Out of Him there is no life, and consequently no growth, no building up.

We will be unhealthy Christians unless *all* the roots of our being are resting in Christ alone. Rooted in Him, barrenness will be impossible.

HIS SON IN ME.

“It pleased God to reveal His Son in me” (Gal, 1. 15, 16).

WHAT a revelation! Paul had Christ revealed *to* him on the way to Damascus. Now he speaks of Christ revealed *in* him. What a change! The image of the invisible God begotten in him ! What a mystery ! What a reality ! His Son in me, in the gentleness and meekness of His gracious character. His Son in me in His love for perishing sinners. His Son in me in His patience in suffering. His Son in me in His faithfulness to the truth. His Son in me in His delight to do the will of God the Father. His Son in me ! This is the death-warrant to pride, **self-seeking**, and every unhallowed lust ; to all backbiting and every impure motive. His Son in me-this is the secret of consecration, and of a life of power and fruitfulness for God. “I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. ”

THE UNSEARCHABLE RICHES OF CHRIST.

“Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph. 3. 9).

THIS may be regarded as the explanatory title of Christ’s great atoning work. All the difficulties and mysteries of redemption are met and revealed in the “unsearchable riches of Christ. ” How can a sinner’s guilt be put away and the sinner justified ? How can a heart at enmity with God be changed and filled with the love of God? How can the righteous claims of a holy law be satisfied with regard to those who have no power and no desire to yield to its claims ? How can God be just and yet justify the ungodly ? How can the poor soul of man be possessed with the Spirit of God and brought into the fullness of **Divinity**, being

conformed into His image ? The answer to all this, and infinitely more, is found in these wonderful words: "**The** unsearchable riches of Christ. "

FOLLOWERS OF GOD.

"Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children" (Eph. 5. 1).

THE root idea here is the **imitation** of God. We cannot imitate those we do not know. To imitate God we must know Him, and to know Him means eternal life, without which we can in no way resemble Him. Imitating God means the manifestation of a life which is Divine. Christ was the perfect **image** of His Father. He must so live in us that this Divine imitation may be begotten. **in** our character and lives. He has left us an example, that we should follow His steps. It is so much easier imitating some eminent Christian than Christ, and **in** so doing become self-satisfied. Are we imitating God in His compassion for the perishing, in His jealousy for His own glory, in His mercy and **longsuffering**, in His **self-sacrificing** love ?