1 John - Commentaries by John Nelson Darby

Letters 2, John's Epistles

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Dear Brother,—What constitutes the difficulty of the first chapter of the Epistle of John, and indeed of the whole Epistle, is that the doctrine there is presented in an abstract manner. But, on the whole, I believe that the thought of the Spirit is this: God is no longer hidden; we have communion with Him in the full revelation of His grace—" with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ." Under the law, God did not come out; man did not go into His presence. Now, the Father is revealed in the Son, and has given us a life in which we enjoy communion with Him. But then it is with God Himself—no longer a veil -and God is Light; He is perfectly pure, and reveals everything. Now, since there is no longer any veil, and God is revealed, we must walk in the light as He is in the light. But in this position we are perfectly cleansed by the blood of Jesus; then we enjoy fellowship one with another.

It is this full revelation of God which is of the essence of Christianity; fullness of grace, introducing us into communion, and the Father known in the Son; but it is with God, if it is true, and God is light. The communion is with God, according to His nature, and without a veil. But, if we come to Him, it is as washed in the blood of Jesus Christ His Son, and we are before Him without a veil, white as snow. Now the Christian walks in the consciousness of this, having a nature suited to it; we are light in the Lord. But it must be in the light, as God Himself is in the light; everything is judged according to the revelation of God who judges all things. We are in the light as God is in the light.

These things are written that we sin not. If any man sin, the remedy is in the first verses of chapter 2 But the verses of which you speak teach us that we are in the light as God is in the light. Now, if we speak of fellowship when we are not there, we lie, for He is that light.

September, 1871.

Letters 3, 1 John

1 John 1:7 I believe to be an abstract statement, as I might say, Quinine cures intermittent fever: it is its quality and effect. Abstract, absolute statements characterize John: "he cannot sin;" "the wicked one toucheth him not." As to verse 9, it is the same, only it is subjective—the state and act of the person. If a person confesses his sins he is forgiven: his soul must be in that state to be forgiven. Only when it is at the outset, it is justification once for all, afterward governmental: in the first case, non-imputation; in the second, the dealings of God with His people or children. And the difference is important, connected with the revelation made in Christianity.

I thank God for the blessing He has bestowed upon your work. May He keep us near Himself, and that Christ may be all, so that our life may be the production of Christ, and nothing else. His coming will indeed be joy. Our full happiness is laid up in treasure there. We wait for it till He comes. Till then it is the word of His patience and serving Him.

Affectionately yours in the Lord.

Dublin, 1880.

Notes and Jottings, Hebrews 7, Reading Meeting Held at 3, Lonsdale Square.

In 1 John 1, verse 7 is absolute. I am walking in the light, as God is in the light. We have fellowship one with another. And the blood cleanses from all sin. These are the three parts of Christian standing.

The law takes up the conduct fitting for man as man; but, now the vail is rent, the question is, can I stand in God's presence in the full light, without any vail at all? This is quite another thing. If I can stand there, then I can have to say to God. And I have boldness to enter into the holiest, and the effect of the light is to show me that I am as white as snow.

Ques. Then would you say that every Christian is walking in the light?

Yes, he is walking in it, but I would not say according to it; he may not even know his privileges.

Ques. Would you say that a Christian is walking in darkness when he commits sin?

He would be walking according to darkness.

Ques. Does not John suppose a Christian walking in darkness?

No, never. I get no uncertainty; as being a Christian my walk is in God's light, according to His nature. The passage does not contemplate failure or otherwise.

If any one cannot view such statements abstractly, he will never understand them at all.

Ques. But in Gal. 5:17 it says, " Ye cannot do the things that ye would "?

That is really nonsense, and abominable doctrine, too; the flesh tries to hinder me from walking spiritually; the true reading should be, " So that ye should not do."

Ques. Is being " in Christ " the same thing as having the Holy Ghost?

It is not the same thing, but I know it by the Holy Ghost. " In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you," that is when the Holy Ghost is given.

Ques. It says that Christ as High Priest is " made higher than the heavens "?

Yes, because that is where I must go.

Bible Treasury: Volume 13, Letter on Subjects of Interest: Fellowship

London, 1871.

I have not the least doubt that the apostle, when he said (1 John 1:7), “We have fellowship one with another,” spoke of fellowship with saints among themselves. There are three elements of Christian life. The first is to be in the light as God is in the light, without a veil. One must be found in the presence of God fully revealed. If one does not keep oneself there, one cannot be in communion with Him.

The second is, that, being in His presence, it is not with us the egotism of the individual, but the fellowship of the saints by the Holy Ghost, in the enjoyment of the full revelation of God Himself.

The third is, that we are white as snow, so that we can find ourselves with joy in this light, which only makes manifest that we are all that the mind and heart of God desires in this respect, that which our heart desires also before him. The idea is abstract and absolute, it is the value and efficacy of Christ's blood. It is not only the washing away of sin; there is an efficacy besides, which is not lost. My soul once washed, I am always before God, according to the efficacy of this blood. The washing away is rather by water, although in virtue of this blood. (See John 13, and the “red heifer.") But here it is the value of the blood in itself, and mark it well: “if we walk in the light, as God is in the light.” It is indeed a real state; but the apostle does not say “according to the light.” It is our position, now that the cross has revealed God without veil. As men interpret this passage generally, they ought to read, “If we do not walk according to the light, the blood cleanses us.” But it is not a question of any such thing here.

It is at the beginning of 1 John 2 That one finds that provision made, or what is necessary in case of failure. I do not doubt that the light searches us; but here God does not see evil, He sees the man cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

At verse 8 the consideration of acknowledged sin begins. No doubt the blood purifies us from everything, but when we think of the existence of sin in us, the knowing that the blood purifies us from everything, we are led to another gospel truth, namely, that we are dead with Christ. (Rom. 6; Col. 2; 3; Gal. 2) It is for practice, and is directed against the movement of sin in the flesh. If sin has acted, we are led to confess, not the sin in the flesh, but that which it has produced (1 John 1:9); then we are pardoned and cleansed. This is true at the beginning, but true also in the details of life.

The different characters which Christ takes in respect to these last days are these-” the Holy and the True.” Yes, this is the character which He takes, what He wishes in His own, in their walk, when He shall come soon. We have to watch over ourselves, and over our brethren, that thus it may be. I feel, for my own part, that we have in these days to watch very particularly over this holiness, though it is always an essential thing for the children of God. Evil is in the world, but we are in the hands of God. Christ has entered after the evil, and gained a complete victory over him who was the chief of it; thanks be to Him! He holds in His hands the keys of death and hades; but the time has not yet come to take away the evil from off the earth. God uses it for our good, but the evil is there.

Bible Treasury: Volume N6, Walking in the Light

In 1 John 1:7 we have the three parts of our Christian condition, looked at as men walking down here.

First, we walk in the light as God is in the light, everything judged according to Him with Whom we have fellowship.

Next, what the world does not know anything of, “we have fellowship one with another.” That is, I have the same divine nature with every Christian—the same Holy Ghost dwells in me; so that there must be fellowship. I inset a perfect stranger traveling, and there may be more communion with him than with one whom I have known all my life, just because the divine life is there. It is a natural thing to the new creature; there is fellowship.

But besides these, I am cleansed— “the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin.”

We are in the light as God is in the light; we have fellowship together; and we are cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ.

J.N.D.

Notes on John's Epistles, 1 John 2:1-11, Notes on

THE two first verses connect themselves as a kind of supplement to the preceding chapter. He had put before them this privilege of fellowship with the Father and the Son, which must be in the light; and there was this perfect remedy, the blood of Christ, which presents us clean in the light. Now he says, “These things I write unto you, that ye sin not.” The object of all this was that they should not sin. “And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” It is not exactly the same thing as in Hebrews, where we find a Priest with God, because there the question is of the possibility of our coming to God. There it is making good the truth that we can. go to God, and it has that character throughout. But all through the Gospel and Epistle of John he speaks of more than merely going to God as a public worshipper. Here we are much more intimate with Him. It is a different thing that I can go and worship before God and approach Him, or that I am in intimate fellowship with Him. We get into relationship with him. Whenever he speaks of grace, he speaks of the Father and Son, and when of light he speaks of God. In John 8., where they are all convicted of sin, it is God. “Before Abraham was, I am.” When He gets to grace, He speaks of being a good Shepherd, who gives His life for the sheep, and whose voice the sheep know. He says there is as much intimacy between you and me as between me and my Father. There is the perfect revelation of love in an intimate relationship like that.

Advocacy here is connected with the Father. Where communion is interrupted, it is restored: we do not cease to be sons and to be accepted. It is not a question here of whether as a sinner I can come to God or not, but of the loss of this intimacy which the least idle word destroys. And that makes it still further plain that accepted persons are spoken of here. It is not a question now of God's accepting. Not even priesthood had to do with that, still less advocacy with the Father. It supposes that we are naughty children, and that the freedom of this intimacy is destroyed, and Christ takes the place of Advocate to restore it. Grace works, but is never any mitigation of sin in itself: it is no allowance of sin.

The ground is thus laid in this remarkable manner. There are two things to consider; our standing in the presence of God, and on the other hand, the evil which is inconsistent with it. Christ has met both. “We have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the righteous.” That never changes. The place which we have with God abides there, because Christ, the righteous One, is there. The perfectly accepted person is in the presence of God, and God is honored about the failure. “And He is the propitiation for our sins.” So that the advocacy of Christ with the Father is founded upon this acceptance, first of His Person and then of his work for us. We are accepted in the Beloved, and that never changes, because that righteous one always appears in the presence of God for us. And yet the Lord does not allow anything contrary to Himself. Sin is not passed over. “have an Advocate.” And yet, if He is the Advocate for these persons who have failed, it is because He is the propitiation for their sins. There is perfect acceptance. Having met all requirements about sin on the cross, we are put in the presence of God in the acceptance of Christ Himself.

“He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.” This bloodshedding is put upon the mercy-seat, in virtue of which we can go and preach the gospel to every creature. It does not mean that all are reconciled, but that the testimony of God's mercy went out not to Jews only, but to every creature in the world. Through this blood we can stand in His presence; but there failure comes to be the question for the conscience of the saint, and then comes in the advocacy of Christ.

But now he takes up another subject. The practical tests before men that we have got this life. In the main we may say that love to the brethren and righteousness or obedience are the grand tests. This eternal life we have seen in contrast with sin, sustained by the grace of Christ. Now we come to the same life shown in its fruits down here; and they were calling in question whether they had this life or not. Therefore he gives, in order to keep them in the consciousness and certainty that they had that life, these traits of it, which some of those of high profession had not. “And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” I would just observe here that throughout this Epistle you will find God and Christ so entirely confounded or united in the thought of the Apostle, that he speaks of one and then of the other as the same thing. Look at the last chapter. “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in This Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.” God is revealed to us in Christ. It may seem confusion, but it brings out the glory of the Person of Christ. So here, (ver. 28,) “And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him.” He begins with Christ's appearing, and the same sentence ends with God himself. So here, with regard to God's commandments. “Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments.” They are Christ's commandments, and yet they are God's too. “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar and the truth is not in him.” A man says he knows God and does not keep His commandments—the truth is not in him, because this life is an obedient life, and if Christ is our life, the principles of Christ's life are the same in us. If the principle of obedience is not there, life is not there. But that is not all. “Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know, we that we are in him.” That gives a great deal more than the mere fact that he is a liar, if he says he knows God and does not keep his commandments. Another thing to be remarked is this. All John's statements are absolute. He never modifies them by bringing in the difficulties or hindrances that we may have in the body. “He that is born of God,” he says in chap. 3., “does not commit sin.” He is speaking there according to the very essence of the nature. The divine nature cannot sin. It is not a question of progress or degree, but “he cannot sin because he is born of God.” He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.” (chap. 5.) The wicked one touches the Christian often; but he never can touch the divine life: and John always states it in its own proper absoluteness, according to the truth itself. There are plenty of other scriptures that show our inconsistency. But if the flesh acts, it is not this new life, but you get the measure of it in itself. “Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected,” &c. That is absolute. if I am only saying an idle word, that is not keeping His word.

This is an immensely blessed truth. Because if I was under law and took his word in that way, I should have nothing to do with life. It tells me to love God, and in that I fail. But here the revelation I have of God in Christ is perfect love. The love of God is manifested, and if His word dwells in our hearts, His word is love and His love is perfected in us. “if a man keeps his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.” In him not only towards Men. If the word is kept, that word is the power of Christ in us, and that is the perfect love of God enjoyed in the heart. We may fail in keeping it, but the Apostle does not give these kinds of modifications, but the truth in itself; and it is thoroughly true, and experienced in the measure that the word of God is kept in the heart. The Holy Ghost is the power, bat we cannot separate that from the word. He is in us, and we have got that love in our souls—God's love as manifested in Christ. Supposing I got disobedient, I get sin in my heart instead of Christ.

“Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.” Now he says we are in Him. We dwell in God. If I say I am in Him, I have got this strength and shelter in Him. Now you must walk as He walked. Christ is my life. Then I must walk like Christ. Not to be as He was—but we are not to walk according to the flesh. Therefore he does not say, You ought to be what Christ

was; but that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk even as he walked." If you say you abide in him, you are there always: you should always walk as He walked. There is never any reason for walking after the flesh. The flesh is in us, but that is no reason why we should walk after it. I am always at liberty to walk spiritually. There is liberty before God as to the walk. If I have got a fleshly nature, a commandment comes contrary to the will of that nature. I want to go into town, and I am ordered oft into the country. I do not like it. But supposing I was longing to go into town, and my father says, You must go into town; why then to do the commandment is liberty. So now all the commandments of Christ are according to the nature that I have got already. Christ is my life, and all Christ's words are the expression of that life. And therefore when Christ's words are given to me, they only give me the authority to do what my nature likes to do. All the words of Christ are the expression of what he was. They told out His nature and life and being, and when we have got that nature, they guide and direct us. Therefore it is real and holy liberty. We ought to walk even as He walked.

"Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment, which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning." That is, from the beginning of Christ—His manifestation down here.

"Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you," &c. Because they were looking for something new. One thing, he says, I boast of is that it is old, because it is what Christ was when upon the earth. But if you will have something new, it is Christ as your life by the Holy Ghost now. It is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing and the light now shines. It was true in him when here below, but now all this truth of the divine nature is as true of you as of Christ. Therefore it is new enough. It is old, because it was in Christ Himself; but it is new, because it is in you, as well as in Christ Himself.

So far we have had the first great principle of the divine life—obedience—walking in righteousness. Now comes the other side: loving the brethren. You are in the light, for God is light. Well then, God is love, and you cannot have one part of God without the other. If you have the light, you must have the love. Christ, when He was here, was the light of the world; but he was love too, and therefore if you have him as your nature, you will have both. "He that said he is in the light, and hated his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him." In its very nature and way there is no occasion of stumbling. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes." This is true really in detail. Because if I am walking in hatred to my brethren, I am walking in darkness. But the Apostle only gives the principle here. It is an old thing, because it was in Christ on earth; but is a new thing, because it is true in him and in you. "He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." We get there what I many call the characteristic tests of Christ our life. One is light—obedience—for no righteousness can be, unless it is obedient. Christ says, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Therefore we get this principle of obedient dependence which is righteousness. The other is love.

Here then we have, first, as a supplement to the previous chapter, the advocacy of Christ; and then, in the other parts of the Epistle, the tests of this divine life as manifest in obedience and love to the brethren. In the life of Christ Himself all was most wonderfully, perfectly, and blessedly brought out.

Notes on John's Epistles, 1 John 2:12-28, Notes on

This comes in now as breaking in upon the general course of the epistle, and giving an account of why he wrote, and what he felt in writing.

And first we find him speaking to all Christians, whom he calls "little children," and then addressing different classes of Christians, and telling why he wrote to theme. It is his heart opening itself out to those to whom he was writing; and then we get some important practical truths.

In verse 12, the "little children" is the same as in verses 1, 28, but different from the "little children" in verses 13, 18. In the former, he is speaking of all Christians, and calls them his "little children" whereas, in the other verses, it distinguishes between the young men, fathers, and the babes as these young Christians. But in the 1st, 12th, and 28th verses, the word includes all saints.

"I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you, for His name's sake." That is true of all Christians. It is their universal condition. He had said before, "Hereby we do know that we know him if we keep his commandments." This was not to throw any doubt upon Christians being forgiven, but to stablish them in the truth, because he says, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins am forgiven for his name's sake." That was a settled thing; they were all forgiven, and he wrote unto them because they were forgiven. A person that is not forgiven, the epistle does not apply to. He takes that ground in writing to them. "He says, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you, for his name's sake." That was the common condition of all Christians.

But now, when he comes to the different classes of Christians, there is a different character and position given to each of them. "I write unto you, fathers, because you have known him that is from the beginning." Amongst the little children of verse 12, there may be old Christians and babes. The fathers had known "Him that is from the beginning." We have seen before, that means Christ in the world; His person manifested in flesh. "Ye have known him that is from the beginning." That is where all experience ends. Not in a knowledge of self merely, as being occupied with it, but in such a knowledge of it as empties us of self, and gives us Christ. When a person is a young Christian, he is occupied with his feelings; it is all fresh and new to him, and it is right enough he feels such wonderful joy in being forgiven. But, as you grow up, you get more and more emptied of self and occupied with Christ. Christ is this, and Christ that. In verse 14, he only repeats the same thing when writing to the fathers. He has a great deal to add, when he writes to the young men, but, to the fathers, it is still, "Ye have known him that is from the beginning." We learn our own foolishness and weakness, and so are cast upon Christ, and learn more of the depths of His grace, the perfectness of His person. All right experience ends in forgetting self and thinking of Christ.

Next, he comes to the young men: "I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one." Having Christ with them, they have got strength in conflict and in service—they have overcome Satan. Then he says, "I write unto you babes, because ye have known the Father." Here again, we get another remarkable fact as to what he thought about Christians. That is, the babe in Christ—they that were but children, had the Spirit of adoption. He has no idea of the weakest Christian not knowing that he was a child of God. To know Christ well, in the riches and excellence of His person, is to be a father in Christ. But the youngest Christian knows that he is a child, and that the Father is

his Father. It is like all Christians being forgiven—it is his place as a Christian. “We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but we have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father.” It is not that you will not find persons doubting. You will find many a person who if you ask him whether he is a child of God or not, will think it very humble to doubt about it, but who, in his prayers, cries “Abba Father,” with all his heart. It is between him and God.

Repeating it over again, he has nothing to add to what he has said to the fathers, because all ends in Christ. With the others he goes more into detail, because of the difficulties of the way, and he brings out the secret of strength for them—the word of God, in the midst of this world, where nothing is owned of God—God's mind comes into this world, and that it is what we want. There is no way in the desert, as is said in the Old Testament. The word of God is God's way in the midst of a world where there is none. Therefore, when they are in the conflict, he says, “I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.” That is the word by which Christ Himself overcame, when the wicked one came and offered Him all the kingdoms of the world, He answered by the word—He overcame the wicked one.

Then He warns them:—Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” These things belong to it. All the glory of this world is not of the Father at all.

And the more we look into John, and indeed all through the New Testament scripture, you get two great systems brought out plainly. He does not say you do not love Christ. But there is one great system that belongs to the Father, and another that belongs to the world. Everything belongs to God as a Creator; but morally all is departed from Him. It was the devil that made this world, looked at as a moral world. God made paradise, and man sinned and got out of it, and then made up this world. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and builded a city, and called it after the name of his son. Then God sent His Son, and they would not have Him, and thus it was a judged world. God has put it fully to the test; without law, under law, and then by His Son: and then He says, It is all judged. But then He has a way of His own, the Father has, and you cannot have both. If you love the world, the love of the Father is not in you. You may be tempted by it, and have to overcome it; but if you love it, the love of the Father is not in you; because He has got a system of His own, and you are going to the other system. It is so, all through. In the gospel we get divine life in the person of Christ, and in the epistle, this divine life in the person of Christians. In John 8, you will see the same truth. “Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world,” There is no middle path with God. If they are of this world, they are from beneath; and if they are not of this world, they are from above. He says, I am not of the world; I am from above: because He came from the Father. You are of the world, and therefore from beneath, because it is Satan's world. So here—if the love of the world is in you, the love of the Father cannot be. There is another divine system, where the love of the Father is displayed, and if you belong to that, you have to overcome the world. It is not of the Father: it does not belong to that system.

Then he adds this:— “The world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” Satan's works cannot last. They are seductive while they are there, but they cannot last: “but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” —We have the same thing in another epistle. “All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth forever.” So here. “He that doeth the will of God abideth forever” —he that follows that word. The word of God brings all this into us, and that is what we have to follow.

Now he turns to the third class, having given this warning to the young men. For when a Christian is first converted, he would not thank you for the world. But when he has got on a little, that freshness fades; the world gradually eats out his freshness. If he is not careful if his soul is not full of the things that are not seen, he gradually slips into the world. If he is full of Christ, he does not even see the things around. in chap. 5. John speaks of overcoming the world. There is the loss of all power and spiritual enjoyment, if the spirit of the world comes in; you cannot think of the things which the world suggests and the things of the Father at the same time. If the Holy Ghost is suggesting divine things to me, I have the present consciousness of belonging to all these things.

He turns, in verse 18, to the little children, and he tells them, “It is the last time.” That is a remarkable expression, because 1800 years have gone on since then, and it remains equally true that it is the last time; only the Lord, in His patience, is waiting, and not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But it is the last time, because the power of evil has come in. When Christ was here, and was rejected, the power of evil was in the world. Then, when God raised up the Church by the presence of the Holy Ghost, while Christ was on high, so that a man was in heaven, and the Holy Ghost in the world—there came power of redemption into the middle of Satan's world. That was not the last time. But now antichrists had come in, and he says, “this is the last time,” because even this had failed, and nothing will come after this but judgment. “Little, children it is the last time; and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us; but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” These babes in Christ had broken with the world—done with its course. But here was a new kind of evil in the very place of divine power; persons setting up themselves, abandoning Christ, and that was more dangerous. They had broken with the world, and knew what it was. But here comes in spiritual wickedness in heavenly places. He warns the babes against these enemies of the last times. Thank God we have the warnings now. The Apostle Paul even says, these are the last days, which is stronger still. But there is entire security where Christ is looked to. It is remarkable how He looks at the presence of the Spirit of God in the saints. He may be a babe; but God will not suffer him to be tempted above that he is able to bear. There may be the young men, but God gives them discernment; they know not the voice of strangers. These people may come to them with ever so much pretension, but it is not a voice they know. They know the voice of Christ, and they follow Men.

We saw that the babes in Christ knew the Father, and now we find further that these very babes have the divine unction, so that they will be able to judge through divine knowledge. He is pressing upon them their own competence, not as others, in themselves, but as taught of God, to avoid all snares. It is the subtlety of Satan, and therefore he warns the little ones more against it. “But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no he is of the truth. Who is a liar but He that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son.” There he gives us the full character of the antichrist. There were many antichrists, because the spirit of it had come in. Here it is the full character of it. It takes a certain Jewish character denying Jesus to be the Christ. And it is opposed to Christianity, denying the Father and the Son.

Then he presses another point of immense importance, because people in these days use a great many fashionable words, such as development.

“Let that, therefore,” the apostle says, “abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father.” It is the person of Christ. Instead of talking about the Church as a body that teaches, I say it is taught.

The thing that is revealed in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, that which was from the beginning. But if my soul is resting upon that, the truth about Christ as taught by the Holy Ghost, I am taught of the Father. “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes... of the Word of life.” And now he says, “Let that therefore abide in you which ye have heard from the beginning.” It is the person of Christ that is the great thing, and it was by the revelation of that, that the Church itself was formed. It exists in virtue of being taught of God. The Church had nothing to do with teaching at all. God may raise up individuals in the Church to teach, but the thing pressed upon us is that which we have heard from the beginning. It is a test of divine truth that we hold fast the starting point—Jesus Christ. This is what tests everything. Where people insist upon the authority of the Church, they never have the certainty of being children. If I am taught of God, I shall know what I have got for certain. Faith is always absolutely certain. IF I have got the Father, I know that I am a child. I may be a naughty child, but still I am a child. “If that which ye have heard from the beginning remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life.” He has promised me eternal life, and I shall have it; it is a perfectly settled thing.

“These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all thing's, and is truth, and is no he, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.” There is real divine teaching. God may use an instrument to put it before us, but there is no real faith in the soul except where there is this unction of the Spirit of God. There may be convictions of sin before we get our souls clear as to being saved. But the moment I am divinely taught the person of Christ, say I have got eternal life—the life that God sent into the world.

A babe in Christ being most in danger he enters into these kind of warnings; but a person grown up, into Christ knew very well where these things came from. What we should think now would be very learned things in Christianity, he says to the babes; but the great thing that marks those that are the most advanced—the fathers—is their knowledge of Christ.

Christian Truth: Volume 38, 1 John 2:15

Even if we do not cling to the world, how it clings to us 1 If Christ had His place in our hearts it could not. If it were last night that the Lord Jesus had been put to death by the world, would any of us be "hail fellows well met"? What matters if it were last night or over 1900 years ago. Some are insisting on belonging to this world and to Christ, too. Christ had nothing in this world, and my business is to pass through it as earnestly and as fast as I can.

Letters 2, Good in the Midst of Evil; Self Knowledge

I was very glad to get your letter, and though I have let a long time slip without answering it, it was not want of interest in its contents, nor failure in thinking of you, but I have a train of work which makes some letters, letters of leisure, where it is not necessity of answering, but just, on the contrary, interest in the work and in the laborer.

We go on through the toils of service, where as good in Christ it has to make its way, and make itself effectual by divine strength in the midst of evil and alienation from God, and, as to testimony, adapt itself to it. That was what was so beautiful in Christ. In heaven all is good. God is there, and only goodness and holiness, and nothing inconsistent with it. We cannot be simple, or want simplicity there, for God fills everything, and we and all are what He would have us. It is an infinite "I am" of good.

But Christ was something else. He was divine good, and infinite, but good adapting itself, showing itself infinite in being always itself, and yet adapting itself to all the wants, sorrows, miseries, sins, that were in this poor world. We get to God, get to the Father by it, because He has got to us. What a wonderful thought it is, to see Godhead emptying itself, thereby to prove itself love, as no angel could have known it—coming down as man even unto death, and to be made sin, that I might learn what God is in death, where sin had brought me; and absolute obedience in man, in what disobedience had brought us into; death, the way of life; the extreme of man in weakness—where (as to this world) it ended, the place where God is revealed and triumphant, and the power of Satan destroyed. But the Christian redeemed by this, and according to this, has to be this good, to express, walking in holiness, divine love in this world, by manifesting the life of Christ, and seeking the deliverance of souls.

What a calling! and what a privilege! But, oh, how we do shrink into self-judgment if we compare ourselves with Him! We have to do it sometimes. God (as you speak in your letter) passes us through it when needed. We know there is no good thing in us, but to know the working of evil, which we always need at the beginning, and sometimes by the way, is another thing—overwhelming sometimes, I do not mean as to doubting His love, but as occupying us with self-vileness, instead of with His blessed love and Himself. But it is really put away in Christ, and hence, when we have, in a certain sense (that is, as to the need of real uprightness of heart) adequately judged ourselves, all the flood of His grace flows in again, and we can think of Him, and not of ourselves. There are no shallows then, but they are there, and there is still the danger (until long and deeply exercised) of having to go through it again. And it is a terrible thing to think of turning the eye off Christ, and on to what is vile, for self is vile. It is this that marks the "fathers" in Christ. John has much additional to say to the "children" and "young men" when he repeats his warnings, but to the "fathers" he only says they "have known him that is from the beginning." That was their characteristic existence. 'How blessed it is! Oh, that we could walk so as to keep ourselves in the love of God! It is not knowing the Father; that was the children's place, the place of all, but Him that was "from the beginning"—Christ as manifested here.

I find the constant tendency even of work for the Lord, and an active mind, ever is to take us out of the presence of God, and nature is instantly up: I do not mean evil in the common sense, but what is not God, and the condition of my soul when God is there. There is a will and a right the heart claims (not willfully), instead of adoring recipiency and lowliness, with confidence and trust of heart. For God present puts us

in our place, and Himself in His place in our hearts; and what confidence that gives, and how self is gone in joy! Our great affair is to keep in His presence; and the diligent soul shall be made fat. He that seeks, finds. May the Lord give you and myself to labor on undistractedly. It is not, through grace, in vain in the Lord. He does not give me as (I am thankful to say) you, present encouragement—I have no doubt my fault, and His wisdom -but I am content to be anything in His hand, and thankful to be anything. A servant is to serve where he is set, and I have been a good deal (and content to be it, though my heart might desire more direct work sometimes) a "hewer of wood" and "drawer of water" to the saints, but thankful to be allowed to be anything. The Lord be abundantly with you.

Affectionately yours in Christ, etc.

[1873.]

Letters 3, Worship of Christ; Worship of the Father, The

Mr.—assures me, for I had written to him, that he is quite sure that he joins heartily in praise and worship to the Lord Jesus Christ. He has only wanted the full sense of sonship to be known and of nearness to God in Christ. Now this is right and many fail in it, and have the feeling they can approach Christ, and trust in His love, but not God. The spirit of adoption is greatly wanting in many. When there was a man at Auburn in Maine (I forget his name) with whom I also had to do, and who opposed prayer and praise to the Lord Jesus,—had also a correspondence with him to show him he was wrong, but then both our efforts were useless.

It is possible some may have objected to it really. If they will not worship a Man, the angels will, and moreover, every knee bow to Him, of men and infernal beings. While scripture puts us into the glory with Christ and like Christ, it carefully guards the personal glory and title of Christ. Moses and Elias were seen in the same glory as Christ, but the moment Peter would put them on a level, they disappear, and the Father's voice is heard declaring He was His beloved Son. The heavens were as open to Stephen (through Christ's death) as to Christ when He came up from Jordan; but Stephen looks at Him as an object, as Son of man, and is changed morally into His likeness: heaven looks down on Christ, and, instead of conforming Him to anything, the Spirit seals Him as He is, and the Father owns Him as He is. It is down here He says, "the Son of man who is in heaven." It is He who came in in subjection by the door, the Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep, who says, "I and my Father are One." If there is the divine and human nature in Him, there is only one Person. And he who says, I will not adore a man, is, to say the least, in danger of denying the unity of the Person. He who has seen Him has seen the Father. The Man who spoke to Philip and washed his feet, could say, and did at the same time, "Believest thou not that I am in the Father and the Father in me?" Stephen, full of the Holy. Ghost, addressed himself to the Son of man, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Authority is given to Him to judge "because he is the Son of man;" but it is "that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." Is that refusing to worship Him? See John 5:18; the Jews were more consistent.

To separate the Son of man and Son of God is to dissolve Christ. See John 3:14, 16. See again, 1 John 5:20, "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. This [He,] is the true God and eternal life." But Jesus is the name of Him who was born of the virgin Mary, and Christ is the anointed Man. And the apostle emphatically adds in contrast, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." There is a most striking passage in 1 John 2:28 and 3:1, 2. The inseparableness of personality and the distinction of nature is very striking-" Before him at his coming," "is born of him" in verse 29, so that we are "sons of God" 1), and yet the world "knew him not"-" sons of God" (ver. 2), but we like Him when He shall appear. All this blessed truth is lost if we dissolve, as I have called it, Christ. And yet I must know Him as a man: that is the distinctness of the nature, for He prayed to God and died, and yet He "was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death"-when in the form of God, "made Himself of no reputation" ( ), yet, being thus, could say, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." "No man knoweth the Son but the Father." But he who loses these things loses the Son. Speaking of worshipping a man is losing the Person of Christ. And if the angels are to worship Him [Heb. 1:6], worship is a just service as to what is-for it is not our being exempt which is in question, but His being entitled to it. And there it is Christ, though His Godhead is brought out, yet as incarnate; for it is said, "when he had by himself purged our sins," and He is "the first begotten" (not the "only begotten"), and Psa. 2 is quoted where He is distinctly celebrated as Messiah-Christ, or, as in English, "His anointed."

But I fear there has been too much discussion: refusing to worship the Lord is a very serious error, but discussion about His Person seldom leads to much fruit. I have spoken as plainly as possible, that there may be no mistake about my judgment of refusing to do it. But you or others may have wrongly estimated what Mr. wished to put forward. It is not only in replying to me, but in his controversy with the man at Auburn, that he rejected the thought of not worshipping the Lord—to whom "every knee shall bow" (and that puts Him in the place of worship, as "have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal" shows). But his statement to me is quite clear. It is possible some, not inclined to worship Christ as is due, may have profited by expressions to support their false state of heart. Hasty conclusions are not always wise. Firmness against false doctrine is always right. But there are a great many who are in the Martha state—" what thou askest of God," who, as not really free, cannot go directly to the Father, nor worship anybody rightly, and cannot worship under the conviction the Father Himself loveth them—not questioning God's love in sending His only begotten Son, but who do not enter into the present privilege of direct address to the Father, as those who are in His presence and enjoy His love there -loved as Jesus Himself is loved, wonderful as such a word is, this love being in them....

Affectionately yours in the Lord.

Dublin, 1880.

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Notes on John's Epistles, 1 John 2:28-29 and 3:1-11, Notes on

The apostle takes up again in this twenty-eighth verse all Christians in general, with an exhortation to abide in Him. You get here God in Christ so before the apostle's mind, that he says “Him,” without saying who He is. He had been talking about the anointing— “even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him.” Previously, it was rather God as such spoken of; but “when He shall appear,” we know Christ is meant thereby.

“And now, little children, abide in Him; that when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” If they did not abide in Him, the apostle had lost all his work. It would have been so far to his shame. You get the same thing in the second epistle, (ver. 8,) “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.” It is just what the apostle says in Corinthians. (1 Cor. 3:12, &c.) If we build upon the foundation, wood, hay, and stubble, the work will be burnt: there will be loss: he is proved to be a bad workman. The apostle here is pressing upon them to abide in Christ, that he may not be ashamed as a bad workman. It is “that we may have confidence and not be ashamed,” &c. Not you may have confidence, &c. Just what you get in the second epistle.

Then he takes up the second great object of the epistle—that communication of the divine nature of Christ, as our life, which gives us the same traits and characters that there are in God Himself— “which thing is true in him and in you.” God is love, and the Christian loves. God is holy, and the Christian is so too. In His almighty power, God, of course, is alone. But in what may be called the character of God, inasmuch as we are born of Him, we are like Him. And this divine nature enables us to enjoy God, as well as to be like Him.

Then, again, we see that God and Christ are so absolutely one, that the apostle says, “that we may not be ashamed before Him at His coming;” but immediately adds, “If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that everyone that doeth righteousness is born of Him.” We are born of God, yet it would appear to be speaking of the same that should come—which is Christ. We find the same truth in Dan. 7. The ancient of days described there, in Rev. 1 is the Son of man. We get in Christ what the character and nature of God is, in a man as living in this world; and then he shows that it is true of us too, as having the same life. He is righteous; and if a man doeth righteousness, he is born of Him. He has this nature. “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God.” When once you come to grace, we have the Father spoken of again. We are called God's children because we really are so. “Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not.” Who? Now the “Him” means Christ. The world knew him not: it does not know us for the same reason. We have the same life and character that He had. The world cannot recognize and own what is of Christ in us, because it did not recognize it in Christ. It is extremely remarkable and blessed for us to see this man, the humblest man that ever was, and to find out what He really was, that God really became a man. The Word was God, and was made flesh.

We have got the same life; and when we have found Christ, we know that we have found God in all His blessedness close to us. And the world cannot know us. It does not know God, and cannot know us. You will find persons with a difficulty as to knowing whether it is Christ or God here, because the apostle carefully puts them together.

“It doth not yet appear what we shall be.” It has not been seen what we are to be. The apostles saw it for a moment in the transfiguration; but as to the revelation of it, it does not yet appear. But being saints of God, having the same life, we know that we shall be like Him. He identifies God with Christ, and in a sense identifies us with Him. His glory is not yet manifested; but we shall be like Him, for “we shall see Him as He is” —not as He will be, but as He is now in heavenly glory at the right hand of God. The flesh could not see this and subsist. Daniel fell as one dead, and John too, at the appearing of it. But we shall be like Him, and therefore capable of seeing Him as He is. This is a matter of infinite blessedness. We are to be conformed to the image of God's Son, that He may be the first-born among many brethren. If we were only conscious that there was all this blessedness, and yet had the thought, I am not to be like it, that would not be joy: whereas we are in it with the consciousness that we are the same. “We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” That is, in glory as He is at the Father's right hand, and we shall see Him in that way.

“And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” That is, the hope of being like Him— “that hath this hope in Him,” that is in Christ—the hope of being like Himself. It does not say that he is pure as Christ is pure. But I have got the glory; and as it is mine, and I am going to be like Him, I must be as like Him as I can now. I must purify myself, and He is the measure of it. We are called by the glory to be up to it practically. The apostle says, “I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” I have not got this resurrection from the dead, but I am pursuing it. But when Christ comes, He will change our vile bodies—and then we will have got it. The connection between glory and present walk is striking. As long as we are down here in. this corruptible body, there is not a bit of glory. But the Spirit of God applies all this glory to the affections. I long to be like Christ, and therefore I get like Him in spirit. It is like a man that has a bright lamp before him at the end of a long passage. I have not got the lamp till I get to it, but I get more of it at every step. So with the glory. I have not got it till I am in it; but I get more of it the nearer I move towards Christ. So in Ephesians, He loved the Church, and gave Himself for it. He was washing and cleansing it, and would take away all spots. But it was that He might present it to Himself without spot. The spirit takes of the things of Christ and presents them to us, and transforms us into the likeness of Christ. In Philippians he is speaking of the spiritual effect, by actual resurrection, upon the heart. “That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” It is the actual thing, and he gets it applied to his heart now. “Not as though I had already attained, but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.” Christ, in grace, had laid hold of him for the glory. Now he sees the glory, and follows after it. It is the glory in resurrection applied to the man's heart all along the road. So it is here. “Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.” This bright and blessed glory fixes the affections and purifies the heart and forms the proper Christian path. It is a sanctifying hope—the soul being occupied with Christ, so that it is kept out of the evil.

He then goes on to another thing. If I go and commit sin, it is the lawlessness of the flesh, and nothing to do with Christ. “Whosoever committeth sin, committeth lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.” He does his own will in spite of God if he can. Because without the law sin was in the world. It is a kind of background he is taking. If you are not purifying yourselves, as Christ is pure, it is the lawlessness of the flesh; it is entirely opposite to Christ. There is no middle path. There is nothing good in this world. It is either Christ or flesh. Man is fallen and out of paradise, and there is nothing owned at all of man now. God made paradise, and man is out of it; and He made heaven, and man is not in it. But between the two there is nothing that God owns. God never made the world as it is, nor man as he is, i.e., not the moral state that the world and man are in. It grew up when God had driven man out from His presence. Then Cain went and built a city, and established himself and his seed outside God. It must be either “ye are from beneath,” or “I am from above.” “I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” If the law, then, is applied to the flesh, of course the flesh transgresses it.

“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin.” There was no sin in Him; and He came to do this away.

Then he takes in the strongest way the opposition between the two. “In him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him.” He is taking the two things as opposed in every way. Because, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves,” he says to the same persons. But here, “Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not,” &c. The divine nature cannot sin. The thing that is born of God cannot sin, and that is ourselves so far as we are in Christ. As the apostle says, “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” Of course, that is not sin. The saint is never looked at as in the flesh; but “he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.” It is not merely that you are changed, but you are made partakers of the divine nature. “Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.” He has got the same nature which walks in the same path. Christ has died as regards our guilt, and what is spoken of now is the communication of this nature. A man might come and make a great boast of high doctrine, and not do righteousness. Then I say, “That is not the divine nature. We have it in Rom. 6: “How shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein?” You are dead. How can you be living in sin? Through carelessness you may fall into it, but that is not living in it. In general he takes what the truth is in itself, that we may know it in all its force. “He that committeth sin is of there devil.” He takes the opposite thing altogether. “For the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin.” How can he “For his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” It does not say, “he ought not to sin,” but “he cannot.” It is not a question of progress, but of the nature. The nature a man is born of is the nature he has, Take any animal you please, and this is true of it. We are born of God, and we have got that nature, and I say that cannot sin. I have got the treasure in an earthen vessel—that is true. The flesh is there, but the new nature is a sinless nature. It is, “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin,” &c. “In this the children of God are manifested and the children of the devil: whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” There are the two traits which show themselves in a thousand details of life—righteousness, practical righteousness and love of the brethren. Mere amiable nature you find in dogs and other animals, it is animal nature; but the love of the brethren is a divine motive. I love them because they are of God. I have communion in divine things with them. A man may be very unamiable naturally, and yet love the brethren with all his heart; and another may be very amiable, and have no love for them at all. Lower down, he says “We know that we have passed from death unto life, be. cause we love the brethren.” It is the great test of the divine nature. It is the life of Christ which is in us, reproduced in our ways and walk. It is not merely avoiding sin, because there is more in Christ than the absence of sin. There was the manifestation of this divine nature. He was the divine nature walking through this world, and He had special love to the disciples, as we shall have special love to the brethren. He was a new being, introduced into this world to manifest God in it. And that is what we have always to do—to represent God in this world. “Ye are the epistle of Christ.” People ought to read Christ in you, as they read the Ten Commandments on the tables of stone. If they read that, they will not read evil. We have the flesh to struggle against, but not to walk after. It is not an effort to try and be like Christ, but that being full of Him it comes out. Therefore He talks of abiding in Him. So “he that eateth me abideth in me.” He has become our life, but he is also our life in every-day exercises. We are sent to be in the world to manifest God. Then comes difficulties and hindrances, and if we are not full of Christ we give way to them; whereas if we are full of Christ, we manifest Him in them. If not, we show heat, temper, or some evil thing. But there is no need of living in the old nature. We never can excuse ourselves for living in it, because Christ is ours.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Expository 7, 1 John 3:1-10: The Positiveness of Life in Christ

If we weigh the state of the church, we shall find a great deal of what is negative in the Christian life, and contentedness with what is negative. For example, a man sees sin, he takes for granted that there must be sin in him, and it is true and well that he should know it, provided it be not working; he sees the blood of Christ, and is happy. If his flesh is kept in check as to positive sin, and the blood of Christ is seen, he is content. That is what I call negative-a person settling in himself that sin is, and is met by the cross of Christ. It is not as speaking lightly of the cross that I say this. There is nothing like the cross. God Himself is glorified by it. The glory we can have with Christ, but on the cross He was alone.

This condition flows greatly from all that is of nature not having been judged, and the heart then occupied with Christ. When there is a positive life in exercise which attaches itself to Him, and sees the excellency in Him, it never can be satisfied without seeking to have and be that which it sees in Him. Being free from sin-freed, if you please (for when this word is used in Scripture it refers to slavery), there is the positive activity of delighting in Christ. The heart is so far delivered from sin as to delight positively in Christ.

John takes up a positive active life, in the activity of which he supposes the Christian lives, and which has joys and delights of its own. " If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him. Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons [children] of God! "

I get the nature of which we are made partakers shown from the life which is lived. If He is righteous, we know that every one who doeth righteousness has the manifested character of that nature, is born of Him. Where has it come from? From God. I recognize this relationship of a child by the nature that is manifested. The apostle is not merely thinking of what we are in the title of righteousness, but of whom we are born-whence we draw our life. Hence it is that he says in verse 9, " cannot sin," for it is the nature of God in which we live as born again. He takes the truth up, as he does on every subject, in its own absoluteness, without modifying it by the contradictory principle in us. But the result of the possession of this life is brought in in remarkable terms. We are born of God, but the life which we have received is that eternal life which was manifested in Christ; chap. 1: 1-3. Hence he says, " It doth not yet appear what we shall be," no one has seen the glory, " but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." We shall be like Him; it is from the blessed consciousness of this, and the object thus set before us, that the activity of this life now flows. " And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself " (he does not say is pure, but) " even as he is pure." That is, the measure and standard which he has before his soul is Christ as its object.

How different this is from the negative state, occupied with sin, perhaps thinking how I shall get rid of it! I am a child of Adam is the thought of such an one; no, I say, I am a child of God. If we are sufficiently emptied of self to have Christ before us in this double way, as the life in which we live, and the object for which we live, then the affections are associated with the object we like; and He is not merely object but life. The power of the life is exactly in the measure in which Christ is the object. There is where a Christian is happy. His soul's affections are set free and occupied with Christ. He is the One we love and delight in, and we want to be like Him and with Him. If your heart is dragging through the world, and you are trying to get as free from all the spots as you can, you cannot be happy. This positive life is real liberty of heart, and that is

what happiness means. He purifies himself as He is pure.

If I am not living this life of Christ, the old lawless thing is active. When there is not the activity of divine life, there is not merely failure in this, but there is the activity of the Adam life, and it is always lawless. " Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not," and whosoever eats His flesh and drinks His blood abides in Christ and Christ in him; that is, if I am eating Christ and occupied with Christ, I do not commit sin, nor is my mind living in the sphere in which it has power. If you are not abiding in Him, you will get down to the other state I have spoken of, the mere avoiding of positive evil, while living in the sphere of thought in which flesh can find itself at home, while the spiritual affections are dull and inactive. " He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous." I am in Christ on the same footing of righteousness, as to my walk down here, that He is, as partaker of the same nature and looking forward to a perfect conformity to Him. We have a positive life in itself, which is itself. There is this positive life in connection with Christ who is our life, and this life lives entirely on Him. " I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," etc. This is the way it lives. It has these two traits- practical righteousness, and love of the brethren.

A word on the way the soul gets into this living on Christ and with Him. I do not believe you can ever do that until you get free in your conscience. Till then you cannot get beyond this negative conflict with sin, which avoids the evil the new life sees and judges. If I have the new life, I find the sin in me; and if I have not the consciousness of divine righteousness, I cannot delight in Christ as set free; that is, I must think of the sin. Is not God holy? And have not I sins? not merely guilt, but sins in my members? Yes; then " he that committeth sin is of the devil." Well, I commit sin, and hence I am afraid. That is, the workings of flesh come back on my conscience, and I must be occupied with self. The soul is not discharged from self as the ground of its standing before God, though there be divinely given, self-humbling conviction of sin, enough to be cast over on divine righteousness in Christ. It has not been brought to see that the case is perfectly hopeless and then to be cast over entirely on Christ. When brought to this, I am taken out of flesh by this work of redemption in Christ, so that I am made the righteousness of God in Him, and I do not look at myself to know if I am righteous before God.

What a contrast between that kind of negative life, with the head just above water and which says, I am alive, so I ought to be thankful, and this positive joyful life which goes out in active energy after Christ! But in order to this the staff of confidence in self must be snapped. If your hearts are with the world, this is not living on Christ. You have these difficulties because you are inclined to them and nourish what is the seat of them by continually letting your heart move on in the sphere where Christ is not. Christ Himself is not enough your object. There is surely grace enough in Him to help, when He is looked to, and His strength is made perfect in weakness.

Notes on John's Epistles, 1 John 3:11-24 and 4:1-7, Notes on

WE again see in the first of these verses the proof of what “the beginning” is here. The great thing we have to look to, as regards life and what that life is, is Christ manifested in this world. “This is the message that ye have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.” We get Christ very distinctly there as the One who alone could give us the true measure and character of all else: He is the truth. Divine light, such as this, was not till Christ came. He was the faithful witness. Then you find another thing: there is the evil life or old Adam, and the good life, which is Christ. Both principles are at work. In the one there is hatred and his works evil, just as in the other we find love and righteousness. These go together. It began in Cain and Abel and has gone on ever since. Those that are really God's people are hated. Therefore it is said that “he was of that wicked one and slew his brother.” “In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” It was the spirit and nature, the being departed from God, of which the devil was the spring and the strength. “For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous.” You must not be surprised, therefore, if the world hates you. It is natural to man. In the first place, Satan is the prince of this world, and besides that, it is the nature of man as he is. We were in death spiritually, and wherever that was the case, the spirit of Satan ruled and governed, and therefore there was hatred of God's children. But then there is this new life, and “we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren.” If a man does not love the brethren, he abides in death. That is where we all are naturally. He is looking at the very principle of life. If I only find a sign that it is a wild apple tree, I know what the tree is. On the other hand, get the life of Christ, and the fruit answers to it. It is not a change of human nature as it is, because that abides in death. But the new life that comes is a life that bears its own fruit, just as that which is grafted into a tree. What sprouts up from the old stock is what came from the nature of the tree before.

“Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” He has not this good graft. It is a clear case.

Then he rises up to the source of it. “Hereby perceive we love.” What is this love? How can I tell it In that He laid down His life for us. And if Christ is really my life, He will be the same thing in spirit in me, as He was Himself. Christ kept the law because He was born under it. But the law calls upon man to love God and his neighbor, and that Christ did. But, besides that, He was the manifestation of God's love to man, and specially to His disciples, when they did not love God. That is what we have got to be. Christ, who was the activity of His love, laid down His life. We perceive what this love of God is by this. But you ought to manifest this same thing. It is an immense privilege. Not only I am required to do certain things, but I am called upon to be a witness of God in a world that is without Him. And there is no limit to it. I ought to go as far as Christ went. And there have been some that have done this to death. Many martyrs have laid down their lives for Christ. “We ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” Besides the immense privilege, it is an essential truth. We have to manifest God in this world, because Christ is in us. That is, if we are children of God, there is communion with the source of it, and then there should be the display of it in our walk—the epistle of Christ known and read of all men.

“Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” We have another mark there in the dwelling of the love of God. It is not merely love to God, because it is the spirit in which a person walks himself towards his brethren. It is the power of this divine nature dwelling in us which will show itself in love to God and man. The love of God dwelling in us is the way of God Himself, who through the Spirit thereby brings His love into us. It is not God's love to us, but it is the power of that love working in us, and therefore it will soon show itself to others. “My little children, let us not love one another in word,

neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.” Now he looks to the effect of walking with God, as giving, not the knowledge of forgiveness, but confidence. He wrote to them because they were all forgiven; but if I want to have my heart assured before God, I must walk in this way. If my intercourse with God is a constant reproach, you cannot call it confidence. If I am not walking according to God, I must either get away from Him, or if I find myself in His presence, His Spirit is constantly reproaching me, and that is not confidence.

“For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.” He knows a great deal about me that I do not know myself. If a child has got a bad conscience, he sneaks about, if his father is coming; but if not, he runs to meet him and throws himself into his arms. But he cannot have that kind of confidence, if his heart reproaches him. That is what we have always to look for:—to be with God, and in entire confidence with Him—no thought behind that perhaps He has something against us, not as to condemnation, but as to present confidence. How far it goes, the entire, full counting upon God—counting upon His present activity for us! It is not only a question of the day of judgment, but it is the present dealing of the soul with God, and of God for the soul. “Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.” In chap. 5 it is said, “This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.” We are brought into a present, confident spirit with God, so that we expect everything good from Him. If a child is going on naughtily, he cannot go on in confidence. He may say, My father loves me, but he is going to give me a whipping. But when the heart is all right, the child expects everything that flows from his father's love. So here. “Whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight.” That has nothing to do with acceptance, but with the every-day out flowing of the Father's kindness, so that the child counts upon it. It is the terrible effect of looking at acceptance and forgiveness as the end of the Christian's course, that this confidence is almost unknown. The apostle began with forgiveness: “Your sins are forgiven you, for his name's sake;” and now he is speaking of the confidence of the heart towards God. You get this in John 14; 15 (ver. 23:) “If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him,” &c. That is not the grace that saves. In the latter it is, “We love him, because he first loved us.” There it says, (ver. 21,) “He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” He is speaking of the present exercise of this love to Christ.

It is a great thing to say I have only to ask according to God's will, and I am sure to get it. He loves us in such a way that I can ask nothing without an answer. I want power, and I get it directly. I want some hindrance removed out of the way, and it is removed directly. I may ask my Father here for something, and he may tell me I cannot do it. I cannot attend to you. But that is never the case with God. You can ask nothing, according to His will, without getting it. In a right path I have the whole power of God at my disposal. I may see mountains before me—all Satan's power. But never mind. If you are walking right, “ask what you will, and it shall be done for you.” You have thorough present confidence in God. He is never too busy to hear us. All that we can come about is ours. Whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments,” &c. It is the direct government of God with our souls. This is where the question, between us and God, right and wrong, comes in. As regards our responsibility as men, we were ruined. Now we are saved, and God's dealings meet us on that ground, and then he delights to do everything for us. It is not what we will, but “whatsoever we ask.” It is the will of the new nature; i.e., obedience really. In that path of obedience God always heard Christ, for He was obedient, and God hears us; He puts us, in this life of Christ, into the same place as Christ.

“And this is his commandment that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another as he gave us commandment. And he that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in God, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” He comes now to another most important point. Not merely that there is life, but that God by His Spirit dwells in. us. There is power of communion as well as life. God dwells with him who is love. It is not merely that I am redeemed. But as it was said of Israel, “They shall know that I am the Lord their God that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them;” so it is said of us, “Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost.” Christ was the obedient One, and God dwelt in Him; and he who is an obedient one now, God dwells in him. Christ said, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” In us it is only derivatively by His Spirit; but still He dwells in us. In the obedient man God dwells as in Christ Himself. “And hereby know we that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.” That is, it is the presence of the Holy Ghost with us that gives us the consciousness that God dwells with us. He does not add in this latter part of the verse that we dwell in Him; but simply that the effect of the presence of the Holy Ghost was and is, that we know that God abides; in us.

Then he warns them against false spirits. (Chap. 4: 1-6.) Every spirit is not the Holy Ghost. Many false prophets are in the world. The saints must beware. The question is not, whether a man be converted; but whether he who speaks, speaks by God's Spirit or a demon. The touchstone is the confession of Jesus come in the flesh. He who is guided of God confesses Jesus Christ Himself so come (not merely that He is come.) To confess His coming is to recognize a truth: to confess Jesus Christ come in the flesh is to own the person and lordship of Jesus. Once a demon is discerned, it is important to treat it as a demon: otherwise your sword is broken in your hand. To yield to human considerations, to play the amiable under such circumstances, will find you powerless against Satan. It is not to have communion with God in His thoughts of Satan. How precious is the word before such dangers! Holding it fast, with uprightness and humility, nothing will stumble us. God is faithful, and will guard the feeblest of His own. But outside this submission to God and His word, no matter what may be the beauty of a man's sentiments, or his ability, he will sooner or later fall under the power of the enemy. But we come to a new point here. Besides the life of Christ, there is the dwelling of God in us and of us in God. This was fully manifested in Christ, and the more we think of that, the more we shall see that the new life we have is a dependent life. Our Lord Himself said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God shall man live.” Therefore we see He was a man praying always—leaning on His Father. For though He was God, He never used that to take a false position as man; but He took the place of dependence. That is where He puts us—in the place of dependence, and therefore the place of power from above. It is not a question of sincerity, but of that lowliness which is the sense of dependence and looks for help and power from Another.

What a privilege and motive for holiness, that God dwells in us! And when we want to glorify God, the presence of His Spirit is the power. How distinctly God has come into close communion with us, and brought us into intimacy with Himself by forgiving us and saving us and giving us a life in which we walk with Him! It is a life of constant trial here, but of having Himself by the Holy Ghost as our power dwelling in us as we walk through the world. And this is what we have to see to: that the life of the saint should be developed according to Christ. And it is there that daily experience comes in, and we find our weakness if we are not looking to Christ.

Notes on John's Epistles, 1 John 4:7-21, Notes on

Another great fact, brought in at the close of what we last saw, was the giving of the Holy Ghost. In the first verse of this chapter, the apostle drops that to distinguish between spirits, not merely evil men. But there is a much greater action of Satan going on in the church of God than we are apt to suppose, and if we do not treat it as such, there is no power. If we come to terms with it, we cannot have power, because God cannot come to terms with Satan.

Then there is another thing in the sixth verse:" We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Thereby know we the Spirit of truth, and the spirit of error." Receiving the apostles' teaching is one of the tests of knowing God. "He that is not of God heareth not us." A person that does not listen to the Scriptures as such is not of God at all.

He comes now, with the additional fact of the Holy Ghost being given, to the third part—love of the brethren—and shows you how deep its source goes. It is not merely obligation, or righteousness, but the very nature of God Himself, what He is, as Christ is the pattern of human righteousness. He goes to the very nature of God Himself as such. "Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God." It comes from Him, has its source in Himself. "Love is of God." Because we have got His nature, we can say that "every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him." But there I stop. It is a course of righteousness. But now I say, "every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." It is not merely duty that I do; it is the true nature itself that I have. If a person has this nature, he has that of God. John is not speaking of mere natural affections: these you have in the brute beasts. But it is a question of the divine nature. That which marks divine love is, that it is first of all while we were yet sinners. It is above evil. Where sin abounded, grace has much more abounded. He that loves knows God. That is a great thing to say. I know what a man is because I am a man. An animal cannot tell what I am, because he has not my nature. In that way, when we love, we have the nature of God—we know what God is. There may be a great deal to learn, but still we have got the nature, and therefore know what that nature is. "He that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God." If that new nature is in me I enjoy it: I have a nature capable of enjoying it. Every nature enjoys what is suitable to it. If we have the divine nature we enjoy God. We know Him in the way of enjoyment of that which belongs to our very nature.

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love." If I have it not, I do not know Him, because that is what He is. It is an immense truth, as regards the saints, that I know God. I have got the nature that enjoys God: and that is what everlasting enjoyment will be.

"In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." The apostle turns outside to get the proofs of this love. He is not looking inwards, as others do. "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us." If I want to know divine love, God's love, I do not look within; because "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." There is another thing here which spews the perfectness of this love—it had no motive. It is what God was. "If we love them that love us, what reward have we?" The manifestation of this love has a double character here. First, the Son is sent to be the propitiation for our sins. He loved us when we were guilty and deified. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," &c. God's love to us has its proof in this—when there was nothing at all in us to bring—when there was not a movement in us towards God, there was in God towards us. We had no spiritual life, but we were guilty, looked at as born of Adam. Therefore, this love is a perfect love. It has no motive in us, and, therefore, is perfect in itself; and it is exercised towards us according to our need. Here we have the proof of this love.

"Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." How he draws the practical conclusion! If God has so loved me, I ought to love the brethren. I ought to get above all the disagreeable things and untowardness, because God loved me when I was as untoward as possible.

Now we come to another thing. It is God Himself present. Not merely have I got the divine nature, but God is present in a very remarkable way. "No man hath seen God at any time." How can I know and love a being that I have never seen? "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." The Apostle Paul expresses it in a different way. "The love of God," he says, "is shed abroad in our hearts." Now, what makes it so remarkable here! If we look at John 1:18, it is said there, "No man hath seen God at any time." How can I know and love a person I have never seen? "The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." That is, in the gospel, which is to bring Christ before us, I find the sense to be this:—Well, you have not seen God, and yet you have; because He who was the very delight of the Father—who is in the bosom of the Father—the immediate and closest object of the Father's delight—He has declared Him. Therefore I do know Him. It is the answer to the difficulty, that no man ever saw God. Christ has made him known to me. Here, in the epistle, it is, "no man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." That which is revealed in Christ is brought directly into our own hearts, because the Holy Ghost is in us. When Christ was in the world, it was the Son casting out devils and doing mighty works. And yet He said, "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." Now, by the Spirit, He says, "We will come unto him, and make our abode with him." He makes God dwelling in us the answer here to not seeing God—as Christ being in the world was then the answer to not seeing God. Having washed us in the blood of the Lamb, He comes and. dwells in us. We have a knowledge of God in that way. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." It is not merely that the nature is there, but God is there. "Hereby know we that we dwell in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." This is the way we have the consciousness that we dwell in God, because, as God dwells in us, and He is infinite, we have the consciousness of dwelling in God. He is our home: we dwell in Him: He is our abode. It is the presence of the Holy Ghost that gives the consciousness of God's being there.

Still he turns back to objective truth. "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." I have got God in me, and have the knowledge of that love. How did He prove it to me? By sending His Son to be the Savior of the world. The proof of it is that which has been done without me—not anything within me. A person might say, But I have not got that. Then I say, You have got nothing. If you say, That is too high for me: I cannot speak of God as dwelling in me; then I answer, You are not a Christian at all. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God." He does speak of the blessed consciousness of it as our portion, but then he declares that it is the truth as to every Christian; and therefore if I am not enjoying it, there is something that is hindering me. If we had the Queen in the house, and did not trouble ourselves about her, we should have no enjoyment of the honor and privilege of having such a guest. And we may be going on in such a way as to have no consciousness of God's being in us. It shows a habit of living without intercourse with the God who dwells in us. The Christian has a life from God, which lives with God. He says therefore, after having spoken of this, "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God

in him.” That is the kind of character he gives of a Christian: “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us.” There is no uncertainty. “God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God,” &c. It is the very nature of God.

Now he goes on. We have seen the love manifested when we were mere sinners, when we were guilty and dead. That was the starting point with us. We were spiritually dead: there was not a single movement in our hearts towards God. And then God loved us. But we had a natural life from Adam, and therefore were guilty: and then God sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Then the next thing is, that we dwell in God and He in us: we have this blessed communion by His being in our hearts. Then be comes to the third thing in. the 17th verse. “Herein is love made perfect with us, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as he is, so are we in this world.” Now it is not merely that He has loved me when I was a sinner, and that I enjoy Him in communion, but that all fear for the future is taken away entirely. I get boldness for the day of judgment: that is a different thing. It is blessed love that Christ came into the world for such sinners as us. But then there is the day of judgment. When I think of the love, I am all happy; but when I think of the judgment, my conscience is not quite easy. Though the heart may have tasted the love, the conscience not being quite clear, when I think of judgment I am not quite happy. That is what is provided for here. “As he is, so are we in this world.” The love was shown in visiting us when we were sinners; it is enjoyed in communion; but it is completed in this, that I am in Christ, and that Christ must condemn Himself in the day of judgment, if he condemns me, because as He is, so am I in this world. I am glorified before I get there. He changes this vile body and makes it like to His glorious body. When I am before the judgment-seat, I am in this changed and glorified body: I am like my Judge. If He is my righteousness, as He is, that I am now; because it is Christ's work, and Christ's work is finished, and Christ is appearing in heaven for me. And thought I have exercises and trials of heart, yet, “As he is, so am I in this world.” There love is perfected. God Himself can do nothing more blessed than to make me like Christ in His presence. There is an end of judgment practically as an object of dread, because I am the same thing as my Judge. He judges by His own righteousness, and that is my righteousness: I am that. I am united to Him, and, in that sense, am the same as Himself. There love is made perfect, that I may have boldness in the day of judgment. There has love been shown, and it makes me miserable if my heart does not answer to it. I have not got boldness in the day of judgment. There is a judgment, and in order that love should be perfect in our hearts, there must be no dread of judgment. In order to have all its perfectness, I must have boldness in the day of judgment, and that 1 have by being as Christ is. That is true now. It is not that we have got the glory yet; but it is true as having Him for my life, and being united to Him. Now he draws the conclusion at once. “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear.” Fear is all gone. If I am dreading my Father, I cannot enjoy His love—there is torment in that. Love casts out fear. There is nothing to fear if God loves me perfectly, and does nothing but love me. That is what the Lord Jesus says: “I have declared thy name unto them and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them and I in them.” And so again He says, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you.” The same peace that He had Himself He has given unto us. He was not dreading His Father. He had ineffable peace and delight. Well, “As he is, so are we in this world.” Then comes, as a consequence of knowing this love, “We love him, because he first loved us.” That is the fruit and consequence in our hearts. All this love which He has shown to us, has been in us and is perfected with us. “We love him because he first loved us.” The heart turns back in thankfulness and love to him.

But now, as through this epistle, the apostle brings a kind of counter-test. “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” If his image in the saints does not draw out any affections, you do not really love Him. You may say you do, but it is not true. We find running all through the epistle, this kind of counter-tests. Another remarkable thing we see here. Even love itself does not get out of the place of dependence in its exercise, “And this commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also.” However blessed may be the workings of the divine nature in us, it is always in the shape of obedience. That was true even of Christ. Speaking of His own death, where His perfectness was brought out fully, he says, “The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given me commandment even so I do.” It was still the commandment, as well as love. So love makes us serve and love the brethren, and yet it is obedience. Whatever is not obedience is not Christ. It is not a commandment against our nature, because we delight in doing what God commands. Still it is obedience, although it is the obedience of a joyful nature that has pleasure in obeying; and that, through God's dwelling in us and revealing Himself in that very way, in this nature, in our souls.

It brings the position of the Christian to a wonderful point: his actual condition in the way of connection with God. It is not merely that the Holy Ghost dwells in us in the way of power, (that would be a proof of the holy Ghost's, i. e. of God's, being in us,) but it would not prove that we are in God.

When we think what kind of enjoyment and privileges we have here, what foolish creatures we are not to realize God more and to enjoy Him! “The diligent soul,” it is said, “shall be made fat.”

The Christian Shepherd: 2003, Boldness Before God

“Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17).

Some Christians do not give this verse all its power; they refer it simply to our position before God respecting the day of judgment.

Whatever judgment may come, the saint has nothing to do with it. For if there remains a question about judgment, there can be no boldness before God. There is nothing more comforting than the perfect confidence of having God as my Father.

I cannot get my heart’s affections in full play if I think God is going to judge me, but I have the Spirit of adoption, and if I sin or do wrong, I run to my Father directly, because I know my Father is not going to judge me for that sin.

God is my Father and will not judge (except as a Father, now, for my correction by the way). Therefore boldness is needed for the exercise of the spiritual affections in me.

We ought to remember this, for Christians often shrink from it, but it is evident that if I am hesitating whether God is going to bless me or to judge me, I cannot love Him.

J. N. Darby (adapted)

1 John 4

If we look at man, we shall find his whole history in the history of Adam. What Adam was in the garden, man has been ever since, from the garden to the cross. God tried man, but man only marred all he was trusted with.

When God chose a nation it was no better. The people were idolaters, the kings rebellious, the priests soiled their garments, so that they could not stand before God. Whatever God has given in creation, providence, law, or grace, man has abandoned. When the Lord from heaven came, the iniquitous nation rejected Him. But He never fails, and God will prove His love and wisdom by meeting His own people in every single thing, in which man has broken down. All will come out in glory, as the positive fruit of the cross. We learn a great deal more of what God is by knowing man; and we learn a great deal more of what man is by knowing God. If we look at the church, man is just the same. The mystery of iniquity working, the spirit of demons amongst them, the love of many waxing cold, until there is not one righteous one left, but all closes in perfect ruin.

God gives a power apart from man. He gives a new life—a life in His Son. In virtue of Him, it cannot fail. It is eternal life—life in Christ. God was perfectly manifested in the Son, when He came down from heaven to give life. But this is not enough. What about my sins? Where are my sins? To have life without the question of sin being settled will not do. Christ had them on the cross. Christ came down from heaven to put my sin away, and He did put it away and can say, “at that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you” (John 14:20). Christ's life is in me—“eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” I have His life, not His Godhead, of course. As surely as I have partaken of the life and nature of the first Adam, so have I life in the second Adam. “If any man be in Christ, there is a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). The divine nature is there. It is in a poor earthen vessel, it is true; but the nature is divine, and I should be showing it out in my life and character.

The more I know of God, the more shall I exhibit what He is. The more I look at Him, the more I shall be like Him.

What made Moses' face to shine? Was it looking at himself? No. It was being with Jehovah and looking at His glory. Moses did not know that his face was shining until he was asked to veil it. He was not occupied with himself: the object before him was God. He had been looking at God, he was absorbed in God, and so shows out God's glory. It will be the same with us. If Christ is the object before me, I shall not be thinking of myself, but of Him. I shall be exhibiting Him, dwelling upon what He is, and not upon what I am doing. If my eye is upon Christ, I shall resemble Him (feebly indeed) in holiness, and humbleness, and love. I find it in Him in all its blessedness and beauty; I see it in all its perfectness, and in looking at Him, I am changed into His image. In Him there is all the new nature can crave or desire. In Him I can rest, and delight, and rejoice.

What never-ending joy to know the Son of God is come! Satan works, it is true, but “ye are of God” (1 John 4:4). This settles the whole thing. No longer of the old nature, living and acting according to the life of the first Adam; but in the power of the new nature, that we derive from God. What a thing to be partakers of the divine nature, made higher than angels. This is a most blessed truth, “Ye are of God,” of Him, whose nature is divine. And this divine nature cannot be in us, but by Himself. Christ has washed us from our sins in His own most precious blood. He has baptized us from above with the Holy Spirit and sealed us with the Spirit of promise. “He that hath wrought us for the self same thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit” (2 Cor. 5:5). He has given us a power which is above Satan's power. “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.” “Ye are of God.” I am brought to God. I am born of God. I rest in God. I learn to know God, because I have got the nature that can know Him, just as I could only know what man is by having his nature.

I do not know all about God, that is true; but I have no uncertainty. Suppose I have a friend, I may not know all about him; but he is my friend, and I rejoice in him as such, I have no questionings as to his affections, because I do not know all about him. Well, God is my friend, and I have a blessed rest in knowing Him as my friend. If God is my friend, what more can I need? What can be more blessed? To know God, I must have His nature. I cannot know the nature of what I am not a partaker of. I do not know angels. I am not a partaker of the nature of angels.

We see two things in this chapter which give the soul immense delight. Verse 9 shows us the way God makes His love known. In verse 17 we see how His love is made perfect. In verse 9 God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we may have life through Him. That we may have life who were dead, that we may be partakers of a life that flows from the manifestation of God's love—a life separated altogether from nature and nature's affections and pleasures. It cannot be linked up with selfishness. And what is my nature: is it not mere selfishness? If I look at my motives from day to day, what shall I find them? Are they not self? Take business (we are not speaking of the rightness of the thing), what is the motive? Is it not self? We have no idea how we are under the influence of self. Is it not true that the trifles of dress more occupy the thoughts of many than all God has done in sending down His Son from heaven to save sinners? It is a positive fact, and it is no use to try to hide it from ourselves. We cannot hide it from God.

On the other hand, the more I look at this love, the more I see of its perfectness. It is said “for a good man some will even dare to die” (Rom. 5:5). But when there was not one single good thing in us, God commended His love to us. It was purely grace shown to us in the cross. We were just sinners and nothing but sinners when Christ died to save us. And I can never understand what God's love really is, until I can say I am merely a sinner. If you do not know what God's love is, it is because you have not learned that great truth, that you are but a sinner. What is it that God has given to save sinners? The very nearest thing to His heart, the most precious boon He had to bestow, His own beloved and only begotten Son. There is no accounting for His love; there is no estimating it. The thing most of all dear to Him was the Son of His bosom, and Him He gave. There is no limit to His love. He has given me Christ, and there is no end to what I have in Him. The Son of God given for my sins, He goes down into these depths and brings up life. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10). How can I know that God loves me? By looking at the perfect object of His love, and this gives me rest. Why? Because in Him I see how wondrous is the love that sent down His Son to give me eternal life, and be a propitiation for my sins. If I have not rest, what I want is a deeper sense of sin. I must learn what sin is at the cross; and then I shall see the love that has met it and suffered for it, and thus my soul gets rest.

Christ's love was not the theory of one who comes and merely tells what God is, but the practical exhibition of Him. He shows out God in all the variety of His unreserved and immeasurable love. Compare verse 12 with verse 18 of John 1, “No man hath seen God at any time”—He who “is [not was] in the bosom of the Father” must declare Him. The Son must tell what can be known of the Father. On Christ hangs everything. All hindrances are gone for the believer through Him; all sin is put away by Him. I here get a place of intimate nearness to God in Him. I have learned at the cross what God was to me as a sinner; and now I have to learn how He meets my wants as a saint, by feeling my need and bringing it to Him. To be hungry is not enough; I must be really starving to know what is in His heart towards me. When the prodigal was hungry, he went to feed upon husks; but when he was starving, he turned to his father's house, and then learned the love of the father's heart.

In verse 15, how low God comes! “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.” How He steps down to meet us, so that every one shall be left without excuse. “Whosoever shall confess.” The babe who can but just confess Christ has eternal life, as truly as the strong man in Christ. It is not a question of what I am, but of what Christ is. I am lost sight of. All hangs on what God is. How can I know His love? Must I wait for its full display? No, He has shed abroad His love in my heart, by the Spirit He has given me. Verse 16, “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” If I am dwelling in God, I am dwelling in love, and should be showing out love by looking at Him and not at others. Verse 17, this is a wonderful thing to say, “as he is, so are we in this world.” He has taken His seat at God's right hand, and brings me there.

We are now before God in the righteousness of Christ. He is my life, and I cannot be really, nor ought to appear in anything separated from Him. “Herein is love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment” (1 John 4:17).

Does the heart get exercised about judgment? Does the thought of standing before it distress you? Why should it be so? Is not He, my righteousness, the judge? Has He not perfectly put away my sin and purged my conscience from all guilt, so that I can rest in God without fear; having no longer any painful uncertainty, but calmly looking forward in the full assurance that Christ has been judged in my stead, and brought me into blessed fellowship with that love, which gives me boldness in the day of judgment? “As he is, so are we in this world.”

“There is no fear in love” (1 John 4:18). If there is the smallest doubt or distrust in the heart towards God, you are not made perfect in love; for “perfect love casteth out fear.” There are things to fear, it is true; we may well fear sin, and the influence of our own selfish interests. But the practical effect of resting on God is to cast out all fear, and make the heart perfect in love. His love is perfect. We have but to own it, bow to it, accept it as ours in Christ, and bless Him for it. This is to be made perfect in love.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Practical 2, Love of God, The

1 John 4:9

We find that God is dealing with men according to everything that He is in Himself—dealing with their hearts and consciences by presenting to them all that He is; and we know that He is holy, righteous and love, so that we may look at these things as being brought ourselves truly to God. “Without holiness no man shall see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14). This shows the necessity of separation from evil. “In him is no darkness at all.”

Again, there must not only be separation from evil, but righteousness as regards guilt. For there has not only been opposition to God, but we have failed in duty and are the subjects of defilement and guilt. He did not merely say, when they had eaten of the forbidden fruit, judgment must follow. And this proves the perfect love of God. It is not said, He is holiness: indeed mere holiness would but repel the sinner: He is holy. He is just, and therefore there must be judgment; but He is love, and love draws me. This is the spring of all His dealings until He is forced to action—not naturally forced—forced by reason of evil; for He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and therefore is forced to turn away the eye—in that sense forced to have done with evil. He may be active, calling to repentance, and He is—but no remedy. He does not execute judgment now; but the day will come when He will set aside the power of evil, and not only prove that He is the God of judgment, but that He makes those He blesses eternally happy in holiness, for He is holy love. He is light; and if I am there in the light, it shows me all that is not light, and all is judged. We delight in holiness therefore, because He is holy, but love is His nature; that is what He is. Judgment would condemn; but “now is the accepted time,” in the which He exercises grace in receiving sinners to the full blessedness of fellowship with Himself. Whatever your state may be, God is perfect in His love, and He would make us enjoy and walk in it now. It is not in heaven we shall learn it. We shall be there everlastingly in His presence; but to enjoy it, I must learn it here, or I could not have the enjoyment of it there. Our nature, selfishness, and unbelief hinder down here: still they, after all, only magnify the grace that exercises love in spite of all. He will bring us to the knowledge of perfect love. “Perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment” (1 John 4:18). It may be very reasonable that it should be so, but still it is torment.

Do any of you fear when thinking of God? You have torment, for “fear hath torment,” when it is connected with the conscience, however man may seek to bury his conscience (and he does succeed in hardening it). Now Satan may even use truth to alarm and make one despair and think there is no love and forgiveness. But where God awakens the conscience, it is always to teach something about His goodness. As in the prodigal son, whatever may be the character of the alarm, the reason for it is in God Himself; and God would have us to know it. If I could get my pardon from any other source than God, I do not learn His love. For instance, if I seek peace in ordinances, it is not love but fear. The effect of true ministry is to put the soul in direct contact with God. False ministry is the bringing in of something between the soul and God. There having been a revelation of God to the soul, it can never get rest until received from God, and until then there is no rest. And you will discern what is of God from what is not of God by this test, that it turns to God. He blesses by the revelation of His love. This delivers from the corruption of the truth—secures the soul from error until there is perfect peace. If I have that, I know Him. What else do I want? The soul, however quickened and secured, must have the blessed consciousness of perfect peace with God. I must, of course, seek to do His will and seek fellowship with Him, and prayer, but neither as satisfying God, nor quieting myself, or it ceases to be prayer. What God does for your souls is, He is bringing you into the joy of His perfect love in His presence; and oh! what a spring of joy does this bring into the soul. “Who shall separate us”? “More than conquerors” (Rom. 8:37).

Now in this epistle and in this chapter, remarkably, it is what the divine nature is. “God is love.”Whatever might occur in the history of the church of God, He is unchangeable, and if only one soul were to remain true, and all the rest were gone astray, and the whole nominal church to go another way (if they say God is not love, is not truth), Christ is the image of the invisible God. He has been here—light and love, and that is what God was, manifest in the flesh, and you will find these in the children. It is the family character of the children of God, light and love; God’s nature, both in Christ and in all the children. All through this epistle it is the essential nature of Christ that is dwelt on—what is essentially divine. That makes it more remarkable how when He has brought the soul to peace, He makes it to rest not in anything in self, but in Christ’s work. We must have the divine nature, but how do I get this nature? I find a perfect manifestation of His love. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us.”

I must have the new nature first to know this, and the soul is brought into the perfect light and joy of it without a cloud, daily and hourly finding the joy in which we can go on in the grace He has towards us. Where is this found? In Jesus Christ Himself. “No man hath seen God at any time.” He found us “dead in trespasses and sins.” What was God to us when thus “we were by nature?” The effect and consequence of our condition was “wrath”; “but God, who is rich in mercy.” Here is no mention of anything required of us, but the simple fact of what we were—“dead in trespasses and sins,” and it at once turns to what God is: “but God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love,” bringing out the contrast of what we were and what God is. We were dead in sins. God brought out the means of our approaching to Himself, though a God of judgment, through Christ’s sacrifice. From Abel downwards God was showing mercy; so Abel’s faith testified how man was to approach to God. “And as Moses lifted up the serpent,” etc. (John 3). That changed all God’s dealings. God was to be approached before, but when Christ comes, it is another thing. Man is clearly proved to be a child of wrath. If man is dealt with as man, he refuses to come to God—“none righteous.” When Christ comes, it is altogether another thing. God now approaches man, which is grace; not man the means for man to come to God; but God coming to man. He visited men in their sins, that they “might live through him.” All was darkness, degradation, and idolatry. God takes them out of that condition that they might live through Christ. “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son,” and thus we are brought into His presence. The life I have as a saint is the fruit of the love of God—life communicated by grace; not creation putting me in a position and sustaining me, but when I have failed, His grace has abounded over it, and given me this life in Christ, when I was dead and enmity against Him; and the very truth that I have life is the proof of His love. We live through His only begotten Son. He is bringing us into His presence, and putting before us His beloved Son, in whom all His delight was from eternity. And is this the God for whom I wrought? And the soul adores the wondrousness of His love, for it is no longer the thought of how I must get to God. God has come to me in His grace. If I take the righteousness of God without this, there would be the appearance that God is harsh. Now if I get this life—love known and holiness known—my conscience becomes not only as a natural conscience, judging sin, but I learn to judge it according to God, because I am brought into the light. “If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.”

“Herein is love, not that we loved God.” The first thing, legal commandment, disappears; though we ought to love God, it is true, as the commandment demands. “Not that we loved God.” It is the fruit but never the ground of my fellowship with Him, because I learn God has loved me in my sins; and I learn, though excellent, it is a thing not required of a sinner. If it is required, I am lost! I now am showing another thing—that the sinner is loved when he does not love God. It is the sinner’s need that draws out His love. We may say, I do not find I live through Him. In one sense, it is right it should be felt; but when it is only that, the effect is to turn our eyes in on ourselves, and so to dishearten. Grace is working and can be seen by others, though not visible to the one who feels it. But I say, I do not find I love. You mistake the whole matter. “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us.” Well, I admit it, but I do not see I have a share in it, for I do not feel its effects. But we see, He sent His Son to be a propitiation for our sins, and that is the proof of His love. It is the eternal enjoyment of it to know eternal life in the Son; but down here we often question it, because we do not see this love in us. He is “the propitiation for our sins.”

Ah! now I can see, when I believe that. In Him, in His death, is the ground of my rest. Therein I learn what love is towards such a sinner as I am. I turn to look at it, not in myself, but in Him; and I rest in God. What my soul rests in is what He is, and what He has done. He hath “sent his Son to be the propitiation.” God has loved me not only when I wanted it, but according to His sense of my want. He has not mistaken my case; the propitiation is made for my sins— Christ on the cross—and we can say, “Herein is love,” etc. I have found God. My soul rests there. The cloud is taken away forever. God has given His Son. If you say, but there is such and such a sin, I answer, that it is for the sins you had or have that Christ died; for He died for your sins. You ought to hate them. He has the man and his sins before Him. He does not put away the man but his sins. Indeed He cannot bear sin, and therefore He must put the sinner in his sins away, because He cannot bear the sins, if they are not put away. The love of God has wrought a work to bring the sinner without his sins into His presence. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever ... ” (John 3:14-15).

First, there is Christ meeting the need of all who come unto God; and then we learn why it is—for “God so loved the world.”. It is important we should know not only our need of Christ in approaching God, but that God in His love gave His Son that we might approach Him. “And we have known and believed the love.” Faith is always certain, and so I set to my seal that God is true. Thus believing and looking to God, my soul is certain. “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God.” My soul rests in His love. And now I have communion—seeing the work He has done to cleanse my sin, as I learn it in Christ, and am perfectly happy. Why should such an one murmur or be cross? “We have known and believed the love.” “God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.” He connects it with Christ. God does not expect fruit from man, but His grace produces fruit. Man had no life from which God could expect anything, and so He gives a new nature in Christ, that He may produce it. When the divine nature is communicated, we look for it then in ourselves, and that always works in a soul quickened of God.

Do I find many sins in myself? He is the propitiation for our sins. I believe this, and I enter into communion. Why do you find fear and torment when you find sin in yourself? Cannot you trust that love? Have you not believed the love God has towards you? Have you not had the Father on your neck in your rags? You must know the love God has to you, and then you know God. “Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment.” It is Christ all through who is spoken of as He and Him, without reference to His name, the apostle’s mind being so full of Christ as not to deem it needful to mention it. God’s love was manifested to us in His sending His Son, that we might have life and righteousness; now it is perfected that we may have boldness in the day of judgment. I am in Him who is judging. He is my righteousness: why should I not be bold? “As he is, so are we in this world.”

The effect of grace is the cause that we should feel sin, and know it blotted out, as well as live through Him. “The glory which thou givest me I have given them ... .that the world may know that thou sent me, and hast hast loved them, as thou hast loved me” (John 17:22-23). “There is

no fear in love.” It is a matter of communion. “Perfect love casteth out fear.” We are called to learn God’s love by the communication of what Christ is for us; and then we are in Him before God as Christ is. If so, I find rest to the heart: it rests in God—knows God is perfect—knows He has met all its need and all its sin put away, and that He is perfect love. Thus we “joy in God.” “We love him, because he first loved us”; and we pass through this sorrowful wilderness, leaning on Him who is bringing us through it. Do your souls rest in the love of God? Granted that He ought to be loved; but you are not honoring God, if you do not trust what His love has been in the work of Christ on the cross. The whole is perfected. He Himself has done it, that you might trust Him, giving His Son to die as well as life in Him, which also the believer has.

And you who would come to Him must come just as you are, and then you will know God, and He will enable you to trust in the perfectness of the work which put away sin—the blood of Jesus Christ His Son.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Practical 2, Divine Perfectness of Love

1 John 4:17

The love of God is presented in two very distinct ways in this chapter. First, in verse 9 as manifested in giving His Son for us, and then in verse 17, in its double fruit of love and light in us.

God’s love in contrast to man’s love is distinguished by this, that while man must have something to draw out his love, as it is said, “For a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:7-8). God’s love is without motive, there being nothing attractive in the object that calls it out. “In due time Christ died for the ungodly” (Rom. 5:6). God’s love sees no good in us. The brightest proof of God’s love and man’s enmity was seen in the cross. They met there, and the superiority of God’s love was manifested; as Jethro says, “In the thing wherein they dealt proudly he was above them” (Ex. 18:11).

Having shown out the first fruit in verse 9, that is, the open manifestation of His love to us while we were yet sinners, we learn His purposes and counsels about us as saints; in the second place, in verse 17, “Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world.” This is a very different thing from His first visiting us in our sins. “Herein is love with us made perfect.” The perfectness of God’s love toward His saints is seen in the bringing them to be like Himself. The sovereign grace of God puts the saint into the same place as Christ, that we may have the same kind of fellowship with the Father that Christ had. So in John 14 the Lord says, “My peace I give unto you”—that is, the peace He had with the Father—“not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” The world has a character of a benefactor, and that it sometimes gives generously I do not deny, but then it is by helping a man, as he is, out of the resources which it has, which may be all very well, because by helping him it is only taking care of itself; but it is evidently a different thing here, for Christ takes us clean out of our condition, putting us into the same relationship with the Father as Himself.

The world cannot give in this way; there is no guarding anything for self in Christ’s unjealous love, but in us there is.

Therefore He could say, “Not as the world giveth, give I unto you” (John 14:27). His delight was to show that the Father loved them as He loved Him. “The glory which thou hast given me, I have given them ... that the world may know that thou sent me, and hast hast loved them, as thou hast loved me” (John 17:22-23). Jesus not only loves them Himself, but He will have it known by the world that they are loved by the Father, as He Himself is loved. Can there be anything more disinterested than this? (Though the word “disinterested” fails to give the full meaning.) Still all this is guarded, for Christ ever keeps His place as the eternal Son of God. As at the mount of transfiguration, the moment there is the question of putting Moses and Elias on an equality with Jesus, they both disappear: for when Peter said, “Let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias, while he yet spake behold a cloud overshadowed them,” and instantly they vanished. “And behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son.” It is not said, “hear them,” but “hear ye him.” And when the voice was past Jesus was found alone.

If Christ in His wondrous grace reveals Moses and Elias as His companions and associates in glory, the moment Peter in his foolishness gives utterance to the thought that would place them on an equality with Christ, they must both vanish from the scene. It does not say, “as the Father loves me,” but “as he loved me” (as a man), for however Christ may bring us into the same place with Himself, if we elevate ourselves to an equality with Christ, immediately we shall be above Him; and it is ever the case that the more a saint enters into his elevation as being brought into the same place with Christ, the more he adores Christ as God over all, blessed for evermore.

This is ever to be borne in mind. The thought in verse 17, “As he is so are we,” is of putting the saints in the same place as Christ. If I have righteousness, it is a divine righteousness, “We might be made the righteousness of God in him”; if eternal life, it is a divine life, “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear”; if glory, it is the same glory, “The glory which thou givest me I have given them”; if it is the inheritance, we are “joint-heirs with Christ”; if love, it is the same love wherewith the Father loved Christ, Thou “hast loved them, as thou hast loved me” (John 17:23). The love is the most difficult thing for us to enter into, but the Lord would have our hearts enjoying it.

All that we have in Christ is brought out in this passage, in this general expression of God’s grace to bless us, not only by Christ but with Christ. Christ could not be satisfied unless it was so, we being the fruit of the travail of His soul. “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me.” Again, “I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:3). The Father’s love is seen in giving His Son to die for us, and thus bringing us into the perfect place. Some Christians do not give verse 17 all its power. They refer it simply to our position before God, respecting the day of judgment. Whatever judgment may come, the saint has nothing to do with it, for where there is a question about judgment, there can be no boldness.

There is nothing more comforting than the perfect confidence of having God as my Father. I cannot get the affections in full play if I think God is going to judge me. But if I have the Spirit of adoption, and I sin or do wrong, I run to my Father directly, because I know my Father is not going to judge me for it; for God is my Father and not my Judge. Therefore boldness is needed for the exercise of spiritual affections in me. And we ought to remember this, for Christians often shrink from it, but it is evident that if I am hesitating whether God is going to bless me or to judge me, I cannot love Him.

Then observe another thing. There is a great difference between spiritual desires and spiritual affections, though both have the same root. Spiritual desires, if the relationship which would meet them be not known, only produce sorrow. Take an orphan, for instance, in a family where the parents' love to the children is witnessed every day; the sorrowful experience would be, Oh, that I had a father! The child who has its parents has the same desires, but the relationship exists of parent and child, and it knows the joy and gladness. As the children of God we must have the consciousness of the relationship in which we stand to God. It is not merely that we have a divine nature, which gives us spiritual desires, but we must also have a consciousness of the relationship into which we are brought by the power of what Christ has done.

It is clear there never could be a question between Christ and His Father, as He daily and hourly enjoyed the consciousness of His Father's love. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17). So also He says, "My peace I give unto you." Again He says, "That they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (John 17:13). The Father's delight was in Christ, and He knew it in the daily enjoyment of it. Well, "as he is, so are we." While Christ lays the ground of our relationship by being the propitiation for our sins and the source of our life, yet it is not by Christ's righteousness that I get boldness. I must be righteous, of course; I cannot have boldness without it, but besides this there is another character God has toward me, that of a Father; and I have another character towards God, that of a child. I have not only righteousness, but I am a son.

And here I would notice the defectiveness of some of our hymns, which call Christ our brother. We never find in Scripture that Christ is called our brother. In the fullness of His grace He is not ashamed to call us brethren. My father is a man, but I do not call him a man. It would show a want of filial reverence in me if I did.

In nothing is the power of the Spirit of God more shown in the child of God than in the suitableness of his expressions and feelings towards God. If we are really enjoying the place of infinite privilege, the source and giver of these privileges will maintain His own proper place in our hearts. Theorizing about it will not do. A common expression is, We cannot be always on the mount. So far this is true, because we all have our place of service down here; but I would observe, that being in the mount of God's presence always humbles, though when a saint gets down again he may be proud of having been there. Paul was not puffed up when he was in God's presence caught up to the third heavens; but, after he had been there, he needed a thorn in the flesh lest he should be exalted above measure. The heart is never proud in God's presence, and, only when it is really there, is it really in its right place, for when out of it the flesh turns everything into mischief. "As he is, so are we," not only in the same standing and acceptance as Christ, but brought by the communication of His life into the same relationship as Himself. While in the beginning of the epistle the foundation is laid deep and wide in the cleansing blood, still the grand subject of the epistle is the place into which we are brought. "Herein is love with us made perfect." If my heart has seized the truth that God as a Father is acting in grace towards me, there is no place for fear. In all my need, and even in that with which I ought to have nothing to do, in all my sin, I fly to Him. I could not in my sin fly to my judge, but I have confidence in my Father's love and I fly to Him without fear; for "perfect love casteth out fear" (1 John 4:18).

In all sins and follies I can always look to Him who gave His Son for me. That is where grace puts me. The proof of God's love is, He has given His Son; the perfection of His love is, that He has brought us into His presence.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Practical 2, Capacity for Knowing Divine Love, and How We Know It, The

1 John 4:7-19

I would add to the paper on 1 John 4 some observations of a somewhat different character, though partly referring to the same truths. The verses which I would seek in a measure to unfold are from verse 7 to 19. There are two subjects in these verses—the capacity for knowing divine love, and the manifestation or proof of it, or more generally how we know it. First, as regards the capacity of the saints, that in them by which the blessedness of God's love is known and enjoyed, it is twofold: first, participating in the divine nature (vs. 7); secondly, God's dwelling in us (vs. 12). This gives it its full and perfect character and forms the link with the manifestations of this love, for this reason, that we cannot then separate the capacity to enjoy God and the manifestation of God, because as dwelling in us the manifestation of Himself becomes power to enjoy Him.

Hence, though for convenience sake, I have separated the two points, capacity to enjoy and the manifestations of divine love which reveal it to us to be enjoyed, and this division for other objects is exceedingly important and never lost sight of in Scripture, yet as regards God's dwelling in us it is imperfect. We cannot here separate the capacity and the means. Next, then, as regards the means of knowing the divine love, it is first manifested to us in its true nature in Christ's coming into the world to save in love, that had no motive in us; secondly, it is perfect in us in that God dwells in us and sheds it abroad in our heart; thirdly, it is perfected with us in that, even while we are in this world, we are as Christ is with God, so that we have boldness in the day of judgment.

The whole is connected with the subject of the entire epistle as displaying the traits of the divine nature in us by the communication of that eternal life which came down from the Father, so that these things should be true in Him (Christ) and in us, as had been shown as to righteousness (1 John 2:29; 1 John 3:1-24). Only the communication of life is completed here (love being the very nature of God and not an attribute) by the perfect manifestation of that love, and even by the dwelling of God in us. Righteousness and love are the two great characteristic traits of the divine life, but the latter is what God is. I do not say God is righteousness, though He is righteous; but I do say He is love. Righteousness refers to others. Love is what He is in Himself.

But to proceed now to the examination of the verses, and first our capacity to enjoy the love of God. The apostle exhorts the saints to love one another, "for," says he, "love is of God." It is so in its nature, for it is what He is. Hence when a man loves with these divine affections, he is certainly born of God, for he participates in His nature and he knows Him, for he knows what that nature is, for he participates in it. A mere animal cannot enter into my thoughts as a man, for it has not my nature so as to be able to do so. If we have the elements of this nature as ours, we are clearly born of God and know Him, for that is His nature. This is the first essential principle of our capacity for the knowledge of God as love, the participation in this nature, and a most blessed one it is. Our being born of God, our receiving life is a real thing. It is our being made partakers of the divine nature. But for the full completing of this power of knowing God we must bring in not only the divine nature as communicated to us, but God Himself. This is still connected with its manifestation in loving one another. No man has seen God at

any time. If we love one another, God dwells in us and His love is perfected in us. Thus the divine presence becomes the power of knowing God, of His love being perfected in us. We know that we dwell in God and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. Paul (though, as he is wont, in a more dispensational way) tells us the same truth: “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Rom. 5:5).

It is here said, remark “of” His Spirit, because it is not a display of power—as it might be when it is simply said His Spirit, as in chapter 3: 24, where consequently it is not said we dwell in Him—but such a working of the Spirit in the power of divine life that there is communion in the elements of the divine nature. We love, for He loves. “He hath given us of his Spirit.” Our being partakers then of the divine nature and God dwelling in us form our capacity for enjoying God in love.

I turn now to those things in which that love is manifested and proved. First, we have verses 9-10. In speaking of him that loves being born of God and knowing God, the soul might have been thrown quite back on itself to search the love there and fall into mysticism. But the Spirit of God at once, while clearly laying down this partaking of the divine nature, turns the eye of faith to what is wholly outside us, in order to have the proof and learn the character of divine love. “In this was manifested the love of God toward us.” This comes out in the fullest and most blessed way. He sent His only-begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. I was dead then—I live through another. It was pure and perfect love in the mind of God Himself—the expression of what He is in this love, for there was nothing in me to attract or awaken it. I was dead. But God gave the one blessed object of His undistracted and undisturbed love—His only-begotten Son—for me when I was dead. Herein, then, was love, not that we loved God (this was law work), but that He loved us.

But this leads to another aspect of the state of the sinner. He was guilty as well as dead, but Christ came to be the propitiation for our sins. That is the pure love of God without a motive, but what was in Himself took us up when our state was one of death and guilt through sin. It was in this state and as being in it we were loved; and the love applied itself to this. I look for it therefore in God and know its absolute completeness in Him. There was only a needy undeserving object in me. It was to my state of sin this love applied. If I look at the cross where it was displayed, I have no part in it but my sin. The love of God there was manifested in this that we, dead in sin and guilty, might live through Him, and know that propitiation was made for our sins.

I now turn to the last of the three points I mentioned—love perfected with us. It is in this: that as Christ is, so are we. Love was manifested to us in that He came to us in love when we were in our sins. It is perfected in that, as Christ is, so are we. We can say “in this world,” for it is here that we learn to know we are, in Him, the righteousness of God in unclouded light. How can I but have boldness in the day of judgment, when I am as the judge before whom I appear? And so it is with us. He comes and fetches us Himself and changes our bodies into glorious bodies by the way; so that, when we appear before Him, we are like Himself in glory. But this comes about by a real communication of life. We say we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God. “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory” (Col. 3:4). Paul, as I have said, treats it more dispensationally, but it is the same truth. I know I am as Christ is, now that He is gone to my Father and His Father, my God and His God. Risen, after He had completely put away our sins, He has taken us in the power of resurrection out of the whole case we were in and put us in a new one before God, even that in which He is. To be as Christ the Son, before God our Father, is all that love could do. Thus love was manifested in visiting us in our sins; it is perfected in putting us in Christ’s position before God, and that livingly.

But there is more. I have reserved for the last what comes second in the chapter, because it speaks of our present enjoyment of this blessing. I have already referred to it in speaking on the point of our capacity to enjoy. It is said (vs. 12), “No man hath seen God at any time.” What is the remedy for this seeming impossibility of knowing Him? The answer here is, If we love one another, God dwelleth in us and His love is perfected in us. Here is a wonderful way of knowing God, of enjoying in the most perfect way His love. How great is the intimacy when He dwells in us and gives us to feel immediately the sweetness of His present love! No intermediate means to assure us of it merely, precious as we have seen these are and absolutely necessary to found our souls in the certainty that He does love us: we know it because we enjoy it directly with Himself. He has been pleased to come and fill our hearts with the consciousness of His love and to abide there. He becomes the home and object of confidence for our hearts, because He dwells in our hearts. He can dwell in us because of Christ’s work and our cleanness and righteousness in Him.

Here, we can say, is rest—here is peace, the spring of joy, and the intelligence and pledge of what we shall enjoy with God above. This passage is the more remarkable through its correspondence with John 10:18. The same difficulty is raised. “No man hath seen God at any time.” And how is it met there? “The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (John 1:18). Not who was, mark: He who is the one object in whom the Father’s love concentrated itself in the most immediate enjoyment and delight— He has declared Him as He Himself knew Him. So he that hath seen Him hath seen the Father. Thus by the Son’s coming into the world, we may, through grace, know God. This, along with the consequent promise of the Spirit on His departure, is the great subject of John’s gospel: God made known as the Father by His revelation in the Son. But how is the same difficulty met here? God dwells in us. We know it by this great result of Christ’s work that cleansed and justified. God dwells in us, and makes us enjoy by His presence a love which has allowed nothing to hinder its making itself our own, and has communicated itself to our hearts by dwelling in us, so that we know that nothing hindered its communicating itself to us. We know it because it is communicated, and God is nearer to us than any other object in the world. He dwells in us. Wonderful place given to us!— not an earnest of God’s love (there is of the glory), but that love itself perfected in us, because He is there, and whom would we wish but He, and where He is, who shall compete with Him?

One sentence remains in the passage which I would notice. Some may say, This is too high for me, I cannot pretend to enter into all this, must have something simpler. Friend, nothing is simpler than the presence and love of God, where it is enjoyed. That is what is wanting. And now, to show you how without excuse you are, it is written, “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God.” Do you confess that Jesus is the Son of God? God dwells in you then. How are you treating such a guest?

Allow me to add one correction of a thought fundamentally just, and one correction of an error of expression or copy. Read, It does not say, “As the Father loves me,” but, “as he loved me.” That is, it is not the infinite and eternal delight, but the Father’s love to Christ as one walking down here.

The other remark I would make is this, that, while the contrast between knowing God as a father and as a judge is most just and most important, it is well for the Christian to remember that in a certain sense it is just as father that He is judge. As regards final judgment, or the

imputation of sin, the Father judges no man, but has committed all judgment to the Son. The perfect work of Christ, which has put away our sins and thus secured us from the judgment of them as guilt, brings us to call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judges according to every man's work. That is what delivers us from judgment as to guilt, brings us into that holy and gracious care which never overlooks anything in the children, and judges it according to the Father's own nature, in the privilege of communion with which the child is fully brought. The word of Christ was, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name" (John 17:11). That perfect love of God which has brought us into the enjoyment of itself has not changed Him into whose communion it has brought us, so that He should allow any evil. Indeed it would not be love. He deals with us in grace; He warns, chastens, and if He chastises, it is that we should not be condemned with the world; but He allows no evil in His government of His children more than finally in the government of the world.

Bible Treasury: Volume 19, God Dwelling in Us and We in God

The eternal life which was with the Father has been manifested and has been imparted to us: thus we are partakers of the divine nature. The affections of that nature acting in us rest by the power of the Holy Ghost in the enjoyment of communion with God Who is its source: we dwell in Him and He in us. The actings of this nature prove that He dwells in us. The first thing is the statement of the truth that, if we thus love, God Himself dwells in us. He who works this love is there. But He is infinite and the heart rests in Him. We know at the same time that we dwell in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. But this passage, so rich in blessing, demands that we should follow it with order.

He begins with the fact that love is of God. It is His nature: He is its source. Therefore he who loves is born of God, is a partaker of His nature. Also he knows God, for he knows what love is, and God is its fullness. This is the doctrine which makes everything depend on our participation in the divine nature (vers. 7, 8).

Now this might be transformed on the one hand into mysticism, by leading us to fix our attention on our love for God, and love in us, that being God's nature (as if it was said, love is God, not God is love), and by seeking to fathom the divine nature in ourselves; or to doubt on the other, because we do not find the effects of the divine nature in us as we would. In effect he who does not love (for the thing, as ever in John, is expressed in an abstract way) does not know God; for God is love. The possession of the nature is necessary to the understanding of what that nature is, and for the knowledge of Him Who is its perfection.

But, if I seek to know it and have or give the proof of it, it is not to the existence of the nature in us that the Spirit of God directs the thoughts of the believers as their object. God, he has said, is love; and this love has been manifested toward us in that He has given His only Son, that we might live through Him. The proof is not the life in us, but that God has given His Son in order that we might live, and further to make propitiation for our sins. God be praised! we know this love, not by the poor results of its action in ourselves, but in its perfection in God, and that even in a manifestation of it toward us, which is wholly outside ourselves. It is a fact outside ourselves which is the manifestation of this perfect love. We enjoy it by participating in the divine nature, we know it by the infinite gift of God's Son. The exercise and the proof of it are there.

The full scope of this principle, and all the force of its truth, are stated and demonstrated in that which follows. It is striking to see how the Holy Spirit, in an epistle which is essentially occupied with the life of Christ and its fruits, gives the proof and full character of love in that which is wholly without ourselves. Nor can anything be more perfect than the way in which the love of God is here set forth from the time it is occupied with our sinful state till we stand before the judgment-seat. God has thought of all: love toward us as sinners, in verses 9, 10; in us as saints, verse 12; perfect in our condition in view of the day of judgment, in verse 17.

In the first verses the love of God is manifested in the gift of Christ: first, to give us life—we were dead; secondly, to make propitiation—we were guilty. Our whole case is taken up. In the second of these verses (10) the great principle of grace, what love is, where and how known, is clearly stated in words of infinite importance as to the very nature of Christianity. Herein is love, not that we loved God (that was the principle of the law), but in that He loved us, and sent His Son to make propitiation for our sins. Here then it is that we have learned that which love is. It was perfect in Him when we had no love for Him; perfect in Him in that He exercised it towards us when we were in our sins, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for them. The apostle then affirms, no doubt, that he who loves not knows not God. The pretension to possess this love is judged by this means; but in order to know love we must not seek for it in ourselves, but must seek it manifested in God when we had none. He gives the life which loves, and He has made propitiation for our sins.

And now with regard to the enjoyment and privileges of this love:—if God has so loved us (this is the ground that he takes), we ought to love one another (ver. 11).

No one has ever seen God: if we love one another, God dwells in us. His presence, Himself dwelling in us, rises in the excellency of His nature above all the harriers of circumstances, and attaches us to those who are His. It is God in the power of His nature which is the source of thought and feeling and diffuses itself among those in whom it is. One can understand this. How is it that I love strangers from another land, persons of different habits, whom I have never known, more intimately than members of my own family after the flesh? How is it that I have thoughts in common, objects infinitely loved in common, affections powerfully engaged, a stronger bond with persons whom I have never seen, than with the otherwise dear companions of my childhood? It is because there is in them and in me a source of thoughts and affections which is not human. God is in it. God dwells in us. What happiness! What a bond! Does He not communicate Himself Co the soul? Does He not render it conscious of His presence in love? Assuredly, yes. And if He is thus in us, the blessed source of our thoughts, can there be fear or distance, or uncertainty, with regard to what He is? None at all. His love is perfected in us. We know Him as love in our souls: the second great point in this remarkable passage, the enjoyment of divine love in our souls.

The apostle has not yet said, "We know that we dwell in him." He will say it now. But, if the love of the brethren is in us, God dwells in us. When it is in exercise, we are conscious of the presence of God, as perfect love in us. It fills the heart, and thus is exercised in us. Now this consciousness is the effect of the presence of His Spirit as the source and power of life and nature in us. He has given us, not "His Spirit," the proof that He dwells in us, but "of His Spirit:" we participate by His presence in us in divine affections through the Spirit; and thus we not only know that He dwells in us, but the presence of the Spirit, acting in a nature which is that of God in us, makes us conscious that we dwell in

Him. For He is the infiniteness and perfection of that which is now in us.

The heart rests in this, and enjoys Him, and is hidden from all that is outside Him, in the consciousness of the perfect love in which (thus dwelling in Him) one finds oneself. The Spirit makes us dwell in God and gives us thus the consciousness that He dwells in us. Thus we, in the savor and consciousness of the love that was in it, can testify of that in which it was manifested beyond all Jewish limits, that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. We shall see further another character of it.

If we compare verse 12 of our chapter 4. with chapter 1:18 of the Gospel by John, we shall better apprehend the scope of the apostle's teaching here. The same difficulty, or if you will, the same truth is presented in both cases. No one has ever seen God. How is this met?

In John 1:18 the only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him. He Who is1 in the most perfect intimacy, in the most absolute proximity and enjoyment of the Father's love, the one, eternal, sufficient object that knew the love of the Father as His only Son, has revealed Him unto men as He has Himself known Him. What is the answer in our Epistle to this same difficulty? “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.” By the communication of the divine nature, and by the dwelling of God in us, we inwardly enjoy Him as He has been manifested and declared by His only Son. His love is perfect in us, known to the heart, as it has been declared in Jesus. The God who has been declared by Him dwells in us. What a thought! that the answer to the fact that no one has ever seen God is equally that the only Son has declared Him, and that He dwells in us. What light this throws upon the words, “which thing is true in Him and in you!"2 For it is in that Christ has become our life that we can thus enjoy God and His presence in us by the power of the Holy Ghost. And from this we have seen the testimony of verse 14 flow.

We see also the distinction between God dwelling in us and we in God, even in that which Christ says of Himself. He abode always in the Father and the Father in Him; but He says, “The Father who dwelleth in me, he doeth the works,” Through His word the disciples ought to have believed in them both; but in that which they had seen—in His works—they had rather seen the proof that the Father dwelt in Him. They who had seen Him had seen the Father. But when the Comforter was come, at that day they should know that Jesus was in His Father—divinely one with the Father.

He does not say that we are in God, nor in the Father,3 but that we dwell in Him, and that we know it, because He has given us of His Spirit. We have already noticed that He says (chap. 3:24) “hereby we know that he [God] abideth in us because he has given us his Spirit.” Here he adds, We know that we dwell in God, because it is—not the manifestation, as a proof, but—communion with God Himself. We know that we dwell in Him; always, as a precious truth—an unchangeable fact; sensible, when His love is active in the heart. Consequently it is to this activity that the apostle immediately turns by adding, “and we have seen and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.” This was the proof for every one of that love which the apostle enjoyed—as all believers do—in his own heart. It is important to notice how the passage thus first presents the fact of God's dwelling in us, then the effect (as He is infinite)—our dwelling in Him, and then the realization of the first truth in conscious reality of life.

We may remark here that, while God's dwelling in us is a doctrinal fact and true of every real Christian, our dwelling in Him, though involved in it, is connected with our state. Thus chapter 3:24, “He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him.” Chapter 4:16, “He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him.”

Love one to another is indeed taken as the proof that God is there, and His love is perfected in us—this to contrast the manner of His presence with that of Christ (John 1:18). But what we thus know is dwelling in Him and He in us. In each case this knowledge is by the Spirit. Verse 15 is the universal fact: verse 16 brings it fully up to its source. “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us.” His nature is there declared in itself (for we joy in God); God is love, and He who dwells in love dwells in God and God in him. There is none anywhere else: if we partake of His nature, we partake of it; and he who abides in it abides in God Who is fullness of it. But then remark that while what He is is insisted on, His personal being is carefully insisted on. He dwells in us.

And here comes in a principle of deep importance. It might perhaps be said that this dwelling of God in us and our dwelling in Him depended on a large measure of spirituality, the apostle having in fact spoken of the highest possible joy. But although the degree in which we intelligently realize it is in effect a matter of spirituality, yet the thing in itself is the portion of every Christian. It is our position, because Christ is our life, and because the Holy Ghost is given us. “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God.” How great the grace of the gospel! How admirable our position because it is in Jesus that we possess it! It is important to hold fast this, that it is the portion of every Christian, the joy of the humble, the strongest reproach to the conscience of the careless.

The apostle explains this high position by the possession of the divine nature—the essential condition of Christianity. A Christian is one who is a partaker of the divine nature, and in whom the Spirit dwells. But the knowledge of our position does not flow from the consideration of this truth, though it depends on its being true, but of that of God's own love, as we have already seen. And the apostle goes on to say, “We have known and believed the love that God hath to us.” This is the source of our knowledge and enjoyment of these privileges, so sweet and so marvelously exalted, but so simple and so real to the heart when they are known.

We have known love, the love that God has for us, and we have believed it. Precious knowledge! by possessing it we know God; for it is thus that He has manifested Himself. Therefore can we say, “God is love.” There is none beside. Himself is love. He is love in all its fullness. He is not holiness, He is holy; but He is love. He is not righteousness; He is righteous.4

By dwelling then in love I dwell in Him, which I could not do unless He dwelt in me, and this He does. Here he puts it first, that we dwell in Him, because it is God Himself Who is before our eyes, as the love in which we dwell. Therefore, when thinking of this love, I say that I dwell in Him, because I have in my heart the consciousness of it by the Spirit. At the same time this love is an active energetic principle in us; it is God Himself Who is there. This is the joy of our position—the position of every Christian.

Verses 14 and 16 present the twofold effect of the manifestation of this love.

First, the testimony that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Quite outside the promises made to the Jews (as everywhere in John), this work is the fruit of that which God Himself is. Accordingly whosoever confesses Jesus to be that Son enjoys all the fullness of its blessed consequences.

Secondly, the Christian has believed for himself in this love, and he enjoys it according to its fullness. There is only this modification of the expression of the glorious fact of our portion—that the confession of Jesus as the Son of God is primarily here the proof that God dwells in us, although the other part of the truth equally says that he who confesses Him dwells also in God.

When speaking of our portion in communion, as believing in His love, it is said, that he who dwells in love dwells in God; for in effect that is where the heart is. Here also the other part of the truth is equally true; God dwells in him likewise.

I have spoken of the consciousness of this dwelling in God, for it is thus only that it is known. But it is important to remember that the apostle teaches it as a truth that applies to every believer. These might have excused themselves for not appropriating these statements as too high for them; but this fact judges the excuse. This communion is neglected. But God dwells in every one who confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, and he in God. What an encouragement for a timid believer! What a rebuke for a careless one!

J. N. D.

Satan's World: June 2015, Overcoming the World

Worldliness is a terrible hindrance to the saint. The world is opposed to the Father, as the flesh opposes the Spirit, and the devil opposes Christ.

The difficulty lies in that we do not maintain nearness to Christ, which allows the world to come in and hinder. Then I am open to all sorts of error, for if I am not near Christ, I will not like to be bothered with correction. It is very troublesome and disagreeable sometimes to have to do with saints; one will not give up this thing, and another that. Then if we ourselves are at a distance from Christ, we shall be ready to give up on our brethren and shall not take the pains to help them get right when they are wrong. So Moses said, when in a wrong spirit, “Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that Thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom?” (Num. 11:12).

Faith not only sees Christ in the glory, but sees also the connection between the glory of Christ and the saints, and it is that which enables us to go on. So Moses said of Israel, not only that God was their God, but also they are “Thy people.” The real hindrance is the world. The world desires entertainment, and it will be entertained with religion if it cannot get anything else. But what I know of the world’s path, spirit, affections and conduct is that it has crucified my Lord; not in its affections and lusts merely, but by wicked hands it has crucified my Master. Suppose it was but yesterday that you had seen Pontius Pilate the governor, the chief priests and the elders putting Christ to death, would you feel happy today in having fellowship with them? The stain of Christ’s blood is as fresh in God’s sight as if it had been done but yesterday; the time which has elapsed since makes no difference in its moral guilt.

The question then is, Am I in my heart to get under the power of this world, or am I to overcome it? When Christ was down here, in all the beauty and attractive grace in which God the Father could delight, there was not found in the world one thought or sentiment of common interest or feeling drawing them to Him. The world in all its classes — rulers, priests, Pharisees, and the multitude — have all been associated in hanging the Son of God upon a cross; such is the world’s heart. If I have seen the glory of Christ’s person and see that He is the very Son of God who came down and was turned out by the world, can I be happy with that world? The link between the natural thoughts and affections and the world exists in every heart, so that in all kinds of things, even in walking through the streets, I constantly find that which attracts my eye, and my eye affects my heart.

Nothing will overcome the world in my heart but the deep consciousness of how it has treated Christ. Take my children, for instance: Do I want them to get on well in the world? Must I have good places for them in it? Nothing but knowing the place Christ had in it will overcome the world in my heart. There is no possibility of getting on with God unless the world is given up and the heart is satisfied with Christ. Christ must be everything.

Look at Abraham’s history: He sojourned in a strange country where he had no place to set his foot on. So we are not of the world, and this is the test of our affections, for as we are not at once taken out of the evil, we must have our hearts exercised to godliness. It is very easy to overcome the world when the love of Christ has made it distasteful. Satan is the god of this world. Perhaps you will say, That is true of the heathen world. Yes, but it is also true of much more than the heathen world. Although it was not till after the rejection of Christ that it was brought out, it was true before. God had spoken by His servants the prophets, and the world had beaten one, and stoned another, and killed another; then He said, I will send My beloved Son — maybe they will reverence Him when they see Him. But Him they crucified, thus proving that Satan was the master of man. So the Lord said, “O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee.” You will not have spiritual discernment or power of motive unless the heart is kept near to Christ. When I am near Him, I do not want the world. If my delight is in that in which God delights, that is Christ, then I can overcome. “Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

If I say, Why must I do everything for Christ? that very question proves that I have a heart away from Christ, calling it bondage to do all to the glory of God. It is not that we are to scorn the world in the least way, for God’s grace is for every poor sinner that will receive it. It is the spirit of the world in my own heart which I have to overcome — that by which my heart is in danger of being led away.

The heart that is resting on, looking to, eating, and feeding on Christ gets the consciousness of what the world is, and it overcomes. The Lord keep us in humble dependence on Himself. His grace is sufficient for us; His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

J. N. Darby (adapted)

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Expository 7, 1 John 4-5: The Love of God, the Love of Saints, and Overcoming the World

God’s love, in contrast with man's is distinguished by this, that while man must have something to drew out his love (as it is said, " For a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love to us-ward, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us "), God's love is without motive, there being nothing attractive in the object that draws it out. " In due time Christ died for the ungodly." God's love sees no good in us. The brightest proof of God's love and man's enmity was seen in the cross: they met there, and thus showed the superiority of God's love; as Jethro says, " In the thing wherein they dealt proudly He was above them." Verse 9 sets out the open manifestation of His love to us while we were yet sinners. We learn His purposes and counsels about us as saints, in the second place, in verse 17-" Herein is love with us made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world." This is a very different thing from His first visiting us in our sins. " Herein is love with us made perfect." The perfectness of God's love towards His saints is seen in the bringing them to be like Christ Himself. The sovereign grace of God puts the saint into the same place as Christ, that we may have the same kind of fellowship with the Father that Christ had. So in John 14 the Lord says, " My peace I give unto you "-that is, the peace He had with His Father-" not as the world giveth give I unto you."

The world has the character of a benefactor; and that it sometimes gives generously I do not deny. But then it is by helping a man as he is, out of the resources which it has, which may be all very well; yet, while helping him, it is only taking care of itself. But it is evidently a different thing here; for Christ takes us clean out of our condition, putting us into the same relationship with the Father as Himself. The world cannot give in this way. There is no guarding anything for self in Christ's un-jealous love, but in us there is. Therefore He could say, " Not as the world giveth give I unto you." His delight was to show that the Father loved them as He loved Him. " The glory thou hast given me I have given them, that the world may know that thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." Jesus not only loves them Himself, but He will have it known by the world that they are loved by the Father as He Himself is loved. Can there be anything more disinterested than this (although the word " disinterested " fails to give the full meaning)? Still all this is guarded, for Christ ever keeps His place as the eternal Son of God. At the mount of transfiguration, the moment there is the question of putting Moses and Elias on an equality with Jesus, they both disappear, for when Peter said, Let us make three tabernacles, one for Moses and one for Elias, as well as one for the Lord, while he thus spake there came a cloud and overshadowed them, and instantly the glorified men vanished. " And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him." It is not said " hear them," but " hear him." " And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone."

If Christ, in His wondrous grace, reveals Moses and Elias as His companions and associates in the glory, the moment Peter, in his foolishness, gives utterance to the thought that would place them on an equality with Christ, they must both vanish from the scene. It does not say, as the Father loved them, but as " he has loved me " (as a man). For however Christ may bring us unto the same place with Himself, He abides the object of homage and honor, even as the Father. If we elevate ourselves to an equality with Christ, immediately we set ourselves above Him. And it is ever the case thus with flesh. But the more a saint enters into his elevation, as being brought by grace into the same place with Christ, the more he adores Christ as God over all, blessed for evermore. This is ever to be borne in mind.

The thought in verse 17, " as he is, so are we in this world," is that the saints are in the same place as Christ. If I have righteousness, it is a divine righteousness: " We are made the righteousness of God in him." If I have life, it is a divine eternal life: " when Christ who is our life shall appear." If I have glory, it is the same glory: " the glory thou hast given me, I have given them." If we have an inheritance,_ we are " joint-heirs with Christ "; if love, it is the same love wherewith the Father loved Christ: " Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me."

The love is the most difficult thing for us to enter into, but the Lord would have our hearts enjoying it. All that we have in Christ is brought out in this passage, in the general expression, " as he is, so are we." It is the thought and purpose of God's grace to bless us not only by Christ, but with Christ. Christ could not be satisfied unless it was so, we being the fruit and travail of His soul: " Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me ": again, " I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." The Father's love is seen in giving His Son for us, and the Son's love in His giving Himself for us, and thus bringing us into His perfect place.

Some Christians do not give this verse 17 all its power; they refer it simply to our position before God respecting the day of judgment. Whatever judgment may come, the saint has nothing to do with it, for where there is a question about judgment there can be no boldness. There is nothing more comforting than the perfect confidence of having God as my Father. I cannot get the affections in full play if I think God is going to judge me; but I have the Spirit of adoption, and if I sin or do wrong, I run to my Father directly, because I know my Father is not going to judge me for it; for God is my Father, and will not judge (save as a Father, now for my correction, by the way). Therefore boldness is needed for the exercise of the spiritual affections in me; and we ought to remember this, for Christians often shrink from it; but it is evident that, if I am hesitating whether God is going to bless me or to judge me, I cannot love Him.

Then observe another thing-there is a great difference between spiritual desires and spiritual affections, although they both have the same root. The spiritual desires, if the relationship which would meet them be not known, only produce sorrow. Take an orphan, for instance, in a family where the parent's love to the children is witnessed every day, the sorrowful experience would be, O, that I too had a father! The child who has its parent has the same desires; the relationship existing of parent and child, it knows the joy and gladness which flows from such relationship. So also that we may have joy and gladness as the children of God, we must have the consciousness of the relationship in which we stand to God. It is not merely that we have a divine nature which gives us spiritual desires, but we must also have the consciousness of the relationship into which we are brought by the power of what Christ has done. It is clear there never could be a question between Christ and His Father as to the daily and hourly enjoyment of the consciousness of His Father's love: " This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." So also He says, " My peace I give unto you." Again he says, " that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves." The Father's delight was in Christ, and He knew it in the daily enjoyment of it. And now, " as he is, so are we in this world."

While Christ lays the ground of our relationship by being the propitiation for our sins and the source of our life, yet it is not by Christ's righteousness that I get " boldness." I must be righteous, of course; I cannot have boldness without it; but besides this there is another character God has towards me-that of a Father-and I have another character towards God, as a child. I have not only righteousness, but I am a son. And here I should notice the defectiveness of some of our hymns which call Christ our brother. We never find in Scripture that Christ is called our Elder Brother. In the fullness of His grace He is not ashamed to own and call us His brethren. My father is a man, but I do not call him a man; it would show a want of filial reverence in me if I did. In nothing is the power of the Spirit of God more shown in the child of God than the suitableness of his expressions and feelings towards God. If we are really enjoying our place of infinite privilege, the Source and Giver of our privilege will maintain His own proper place in our hearts.

When we are in the mount of God, it always humbles; although when a saint gets down again, he may be proud of having been there: he is never so when there. Paul was not puffed up when he was caught up into the third heavens; but after he had been there, he needed the thorn in the flesh to keep him humble.

" As he is, so are we in this world," not only in the same standing as to acceptance with God in Christ, but we are brought by the communication of His life into the same relationship as Himself. While in the beginning of the epistle the foundation is laid deep and wide in the blood which cleanses fully, still the grand subject of the epistle is the place into which we are brought. " Herein is love with us made perfect." If my heart has seized the truth that God as a Father is acting in grace towards me, there is no place for fear. If I have fear I fly to Him, instead of being afraid of Him. If I sin, I fly to Him to pardon it. I could not in my sin fly to my judge, but I have confidence in my Father's love, and I fly to Him because " perfect love casteth out fear." The proof of God's love is that He has given His Son; the perfection of it is, that we are as He is; and fear is cast out even in view of judgment. But if we ask how this came to pass, the answer is, " We love him because he first loved us " (v. 19). There we are brought back to the simplest principles: we love God because He first loved us. We did not come to God because of His loveliness; " we love him because he first loved us." We do not come in by loving God (this we do after), but we come in as sinners, as debtors to His grace; and then, having come in, so finding God to be what He is-love meeting us in our every need-then we love Him.

Verse 20. Here is a check upon man's deceitful heart: if a man does not love his brother, he cannot love God. Wherever the divine nature is, it is attractive to one born of God.

Verse 21. We have another important principle in this verse: whatever the energy of the divine life in me, it always will have the character of obedience. While there was in Christ the devotedness of love, there was also obedience. We are to love the brethren as being led by the energy of the Spirit, but I am to love them in the path of holy obedience. There is nothing so humble as obedience, and love never takes us out of the place of obedience. The Lord Jesus said, " As the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." When Lazarus was sick, and they sent to Jesus, He abode two days in the same place where He was, because He had no word from His Father; and so, if I have any little service to do for my brother, it must be as in the path of obedience to the word of God. This is what Satan tried to get the Lord out of in the wilderness. Oh, says Satan, have your own will, if it is only in ever so little a bit, by making these stones into bread, now you are hungry. No, the Lord says, it is written, " Man shall not live by bread alone, but," etc. Here we get a countercheck even to the workings of the divine nature, for if it is not a command, it is not of God, and we are here to obey.

Chapter 5.

Verse 1. " Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ." Here we get the link between God and the family. When any one is born of God, he is my brother. If the question is asked, Who is my brother? How am I to know my brother? Every one that is born of God is my brother. I may have to sorrow over him sometimes, but still he is my brother, because I am related to him by the same divine nature. It is of great importance to remember this in the present day, because, when the Holy Ghost really acts, there will be a constant tendency to follow different courses. There has been an awakening from the dead mass around by the power of the Spirit. There are glimmerings of light: mere stones would be motionless, but there is life; therefore the moving power would lead in different directions, because of what we are. If we were all subject to the Spirit of God, we should all go one way. There is another thing also to be observed-we are not at the beginning of Christianity, but at the dark end, and escaping as it were by different roads. The very fact of the operation of the Spirit would be to produce perfect unity if we were subject, but we are not so.

The remedy for this is for the heart to be in close fellowship with Christ; and in proportion as this is the case, will love for all saints be there. To the same extent as Christ is valued will the saint be valued. In proportion as Christ's thoughts about His saints are known to me, will all saints be in my thoughts. I do not know Christ's love aright if one saint is left out; as it is said in Eph. 3:18, " Ye... may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the height, and depth, and breadth, and length, and to_ know the love of Christ." Only can I enter into this in any measure when I embrace all saints. If I should leave one out, I leave out part of Christ's heart. In Colossians we have " your love to all saints "; and in that epistle we have the fullness of the Head; in Ephesians, the fullness of the body. God's grace working in me makes every one born of God the object of my affections. I cannot go every way at once, and a real difficulty arises how to walk in fidelity to Christ, and in love to the brethren, so as not to let the affections get into a loose and general way. I cannot be loving God without loving all the children of God. " By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments " (v. 2). Now men would say that is reasoning in a circle, but there is in it a deeply practical check against the evil of my own heart. If I love the Father, I shall love the children for the Father's sake, and not lead them into wrong paths, because this would displease and grieve the Father. If I should lead them into anything wrong, I should prove that I do not love them for the Father's sake, but for my own pleasure and comfort. If you truly love them, you at the same time love God and keep His commandments. If I knew that a member of Christ's body is going wrong, does this make me cease to love him? No; but because he is going wrong my soul is more deeply in affection, going out after him, as being one with Christ. To be able to love the brethren faithfully we must keep close to Christ.

Again, we have another counter-check: if one comes to me with a vast amount of truth without holiness, or if there be a great show of holiness and truth be absent, neither is of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth. Satan never touches that which is born of God; he cannot touch it.

Worldliness is a terrible hindrance to the saint. The world is opposed to the Father, as the flesh opposes the Spirit, and the devil opposes Christ.

The difficulty lies in not maintaining nearness to Christ, which the world would come in and hinder. Then I am open to all sorts of error, for I shall not like the trouble to be right if I am not near Christ. It is very troublesome and disagreeable sometimes to have to do with saints: one will not give up this thing, and another that; and if we are at a distance from Christ, we shall be ready to give them up, and shall not take the pains to get them right when they are wrong. So Moses said, when in a wrong spirit, " Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom? "

So Paul says, " My little children, for whom I travail in birth," etc. You have got off the right ground, and I must have you, as it were, born again. I am travailing over again for you, that you may be right, because you belong to Christ. When Paul looked at them in confusion, as they were, away from Christ, he could only say, " I stand in doubt of you "; but when he looks at them as in Christ, he can say, " I have confidence

in you through the Lord."

Faith not only sees Christ in the glory, but sees also the connection between the glory of Christ and the saints, and it is that which enables one to get on. So Moses said of Israel, not only God was their God, but they are " thy people." The real hindrance is the world. See Gehazi in the king's court: his heart had drawn in the spirit of the world, and he was able to entertain the world with the mighty actings of the Spirit. The world will be entertained, and it will be entertained with religion if it cannot get anything else. All that I know of the world's path, spirit, affections, and conduct is, that it has crucified my Lord; not in its affections and lusts merely, but by wicked hands it has crucified my Master. Suppose it was but yesterday that you had seen Pontius Pilate the governor, the chief priests and elders, putting Christ to death, would you feel happy to-day in holding communion with them? The stain of Christ's blood is as fresh in God's sight as if it had been done but yesterday; the time which has elapsed since makes no difference in its moral guilt.

The question then is, Am I to get under the power of this world, or am I to overcome it (in my heart I mean)? When Christ was down here, in all the beauty and attractive grace in which God the Father could delight, there was not found in the world one thought or sentiment of common interest or feeling drawing them to Him. The world in all its classes- rulers, priests, Pharisees, and the multitude-have all been associated in hanging the Son of God upon a gibbet. Such is the world's heart. If I have seen the glory of Christ's Person, and see that He is the very Son of God who came down and was turned out by the world, can I be happy with it? The link between the natural thoughts and affections and the world exists in every heart, so that in all kinds of things, even in walking through the streets, I constantly find that which attracts me eye, and my eye affects my heart.

Nothing will overcome the world in my heart but the deep consciousness of how it has treated Christ. Take my children, for instance: do I want them to get on well in the world? must I have good places for them in it? Nothing but knowing the place Christ had in it will overcome the world in my heart. There is no possibility of getting on with God unless the world is given up, and the heart is satisfied with Christ. Christ must be everything. Look at Abraham's history: he sojourned in a strange country where he had not a place so much as to set his foot on. So we are not of the world; and this is the test of our affections, for as we are not at once taken out of the evil, we must have our hearts exercised to godliness. It is very easy to overcome the world when the love of Christ has made it distasteful. Satan is the god of this world. Perhaps you will say, That is true of the heathen world. Yes, but it is not true of the heathen world only. Although it was not till after the rejection of Christ that it was brought out, it was true before. God had spoken by His servants and prophets, and the world had beaten one, and stoned another, and killed another; then He said, I will send my beloved Son: it may be they will reverence Him when they see Him. But Him they crucified, thus proving that Satan was the master cf man. So the Lord said, " O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee." You will not have spiritual discernment or power of motive unless the heart be kept near to Christ. I shall not want the world if Christ is in my heart. If my delight is in that in which God delights, that is, in Christ, then I can overcome. Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God the Father.

What! must I do everything to Christ? Oh, that very question proves a heart away from Christ, showing it bondage for you to do all to the glory of God. It is not that we are to scorn the world in the least, for God's grace is for every poor sinner that will receive it. It is the spirit of the world in my own heart which I have to overcome-that which my heart is in danger of being led by.

The three points we have looked to, then, have been-first, perfect love with us. There is not merely the manifestation of God's love to the saint, but association with Christ's life, putting us into relationship with God. Secondly, love to every saint; but we are to love them as God's children, and keep ourselves in the exercise of love to God and keeping His commandments. Thirdly, we are to overcome the world. The heart, resting on, looking to, eating, feeding on, Christ, gets the consciousness of what the world is, and it overcomes. The Lord keep us in humble dependence on Himself. His grace is sufficient for us; His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Expository 7, 1 John 5:6-21: The Three Who Are Witnessing

1 John 5:6-21

In the preceding verses the question between God and the world is brought to an issue; for the Son of God having been seen in the world, and in the world and by the world crucified -thus putting the world to the test-God could do nothing in the world in the hope of finding good in it, after it had crucified His Son. Jesus had to say, " O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee." Having hung God's Son on the cross, it is plain that this act cut the world off from all possible association with God, and thus the world has become a thing to be overcome by the saint, as the apostle says (v. 5), " Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? " But he then adds, " This is he that came by water and blood."

That is, he now presents the character and value of the cross, " He came by water and blood" The water and the blood are as a witness on God's part, or the testimony that God gives; for it should be observed that the words, " witness," " record," and " testimony," are all the same word in the original.

You may remark here, that " This is the witness, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." This is the thing witnessed. This is the record (or testimony) that God has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. It is not in the first Adam, but in His Son; not in man, nor by his works, nor by any means whatever, but it is God's gift. " He hath given," and though we possess the life, it is not properly and intrinsically in us, but IN His SON. When we are quickened, the life is not looked at as in us; for Christ says, " Because I live, ye shall live also." It is therefore immutable. If Christ's life, indeed, can in any way be annulled or set aside, then can the life in us be so likewise, and not otherwise. If Christ can die, so can we; but if death has no more dominion over Him, no more has it over us. And this it is that gives the amazing value and most blessed character of this life, namely, that its spring and source is in Christ. It is given to the Son to have life in Himself; John 5:26. And thus He becomes, through grace, our life. For example, my finger has life, my natural life, flowing through it; but the seat of life is not there. My finger may be cut off, though I am not here supposing that a member of Christ can be cut off (which is impossible); but if my finger be cut off, the life still remains in my body, the seat of life not being in my finger. My finger was as much alive as the rest of my body, but the seat of life was not there. The seat of life is in Christ. " Our life is hid with Christ in God." Hence all the character of the life and all the communion flows from the blessed truth-" in his Son." The character of this life is nearness to God. Christ Himself is my life. It is of

the last importance for the strength and comfort of our souls, and for all blessed delight in God, clearly to understand what our life is; for our thoughts on regeneration are necessarily altogether imperfect until we apprehend that it is a real life which we have, a life associating us with God's Son, a life not possessed before, and in virtue of which we get communion with the Father, who has given us eternal life-not in us, but " in his Son."

We get brought out in various testimonies what Christ is to us, as in 1 Cor. 6:9-11, where the apostle, speaking of the offscouring of the earth, says, " Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." And so here we get a corresponding testimony brought out in these three witnesses, the water, the blood, and the Spirit.

In John 19:34 it is recorded that " one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there-out blood and water." The blood and the water flowed from a dead Christ. Hence we see how manifestly the link between the natural man and God is broken, and broken forever! For " in that he died, he died unto sin once." All that Christ could have blessed in nature is now entirely and forever gone; and if there is to be any blessing now, it must be in a new nature, and through a dead Christ; as also all connection and association with God. Expiation, purity, life, can alone be had through a dead Christ. It is a dead Christ that must purify me if I am to be purified; for it was from a dead Christ that the water (the symbol of cleansing) flowed. Until the death of Christ, God was dealing with nature, to see (or rather to teach us, for He knew what it was) if any good thing could come out of nature. But the cross proved-God's rejected Son proved-that it was not possible that any good thing could come out of nature. Man is not merely a sinner driven out of paradise, as we know Adam was; but man's state now results not only from his being turned out of God's presence because of sin, but from the will and energy of his evil nature, which has cast God out of His own world.

The cross shows that man's nature is utterly incapable of being acted on by any motive whatever which could set it right. This is very humbling, yet very blessed. Heaven will not do; earth will not do; the law will not do. I have yet one thing in heaven-My beloved Son: I will send Him. It may be they will reverence Him when they see Him. But no. The determination of man's will is to have the world without God. This is what man wants. He will not have God in any sense. Here it is brought to a climax; and the very worst display of Christendom will be just this. If any of you should be seeking pleasure in the world, you know you do not want to find God there; for if you did, it would upset it all. Thus are you saying in spirit, " Let us kill the heir, and the inheritance shall be ours." You may not have lifted up your hand to slay God's Son, but you have turned Him out of your heart. Man's great abilities will be much more developed in the day that is just approaching than they have ever yet been, in trying to make the world go on thoroughly well without God. When was there ever a time when everything was going on so well, as men speak, such unity among nations as now, or such drawing out of resources? The cry is, " Peace, peace," by the energies and working of man's will without God. Man looks for progress in the philosophy, commerce, politics, and comfort of this world, but still there is in his heart a dread of the consequences of the progress of this self-will. Thus is fulfilled the apparent paradox of Scripture, the cry of peace combined with " men's hearts failing them for fear." Now men would say this is a contradiction, but it is not; for while men are building up commerce and arts and. science in the energy of self-will, who is there among them that would undertake to answer for the state of any nation in three years' time, or for even a much shorter period? Man is afraid of the working of self-will in his neighbor, though he likes to exert it in himself. But the Christian has learned that the question as to the world is settled in the rejection of Christ. At that moment it was all over with the world.

The question between God and man is settled as to man himself; for not only is man turned out of paradise, but when God's Son came, they crucified Him, and now grace comes in; and the Christian goes outside the world to get, in God's rejected Son, the life which is to be had in Him alone. This is God's record that He has given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Amidst all this turmoil and trouble where shall I get peace? The moment I see a pierced Christ, I have that which expiates and purifies. All this is not a theory, not a doctrine merely, but a reality; for the moment my conscience begins to work, I find that by nature I am separate from God; that my carnal mind is enmity against God; that it is not only the world that has crucified God's Son, but my sins pierced Him. This is an individual thing, for this is how individual souls are brought into the blessing. When I have real faith in what God's word tells me about my own evil, then the question arises, What am I to do? All that which makes me a mere moral man declares that I could have nothing to do with God; but through a pierced Christ I have three witnesses that I can have to do with God. The highest act of insolence that it was possible for man to do against God brought out the very thing that put guilt away, even the blood and water flowing from Christ's pierced side. Suppose it was but yesterday that I wielded the spear against Jesus, the very act that brought out my enmity brought that which put it away. I cannot estimate sin aright until I see the water and blood flowing out of the pierced side of Christ, putting it away. But then I must be brought to the consciousness that I in spirit was there; my enmity to God did it; my sins pierced Him. It was thus God addressed the Jews, telling them that they had killed the heir; that is, their hearts had consented to it. Those Jews whom Peter addressed, saying, " Ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain," had not actually murdered the Prince of life. They had not held the spear any more than you did; but in the same spirit they refused Christ a place in their hearts; and it is thus God deals with the world. His question with the world is, " What have you done with my Son? " As with Cain, " Where is Abel thy brother? " And the only answer they can give is, " We have slain him."

The moment the Messiah was rejected, that moment all title to the promises was lost to the Jews. All hope of salvation -everything is now gone from them as a people; and now, if they would get blessing, they must come in as sinners, and have their sins put away by the blood that flowed from the pierced side of their Messiah. Now then, as all title on the part of man to anything is gone, God is giving eternal life. God must direct the heart away from itself (except to the sense of its sinfulness) to Christ. Have I estimated my own sin as the murderer of Christ? Well, the blood has put the sin away; for the blood has cleansed the man who held the spear that pierced His side. We are nothing but sin; well, Christ was made sin for us, and through a dead Christ we get the blood as a witness that our sins are all put away; the blood being a witness of the perfect expiation of all sin. Christ " hath put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." Here, however, it is not looking at the part man took in it, but at what Christ came into the world for, and which He accomplished.

There is, however, the water as well as the blood, and what is that? The water cleanses as the blood expiates: " that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word." While the blood expiates, the water cleanses. The water bears witness to the same life-giving power. " Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The Spirit of God is the source of life and the power of the word, and gives life. Practically the word is the instrument, the incorruptible seed; and it is also a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart; and it is that by which God's thoughts are communicated to us. And it is out of the pierced side of Christ that these testimonies of God flow, thus writing death upon every production of nature. For it is not a modifying of the nature which now exists that the cross brings in, but the counting everything outside Christ to be dead, as there is not a thought, lust, or desire about the world

upon which Christ does not write death; and thus it is that we get altogether new affections, "dead unto sin, but alive unto God," through the life in His Son. And the real character of purifying is this writing death upon everything that flows not from a pierced Christ. The water is the purification, but the purification is through a dead Christ. Christ all His life through was the pattern in man of what man ought to be; but our participating in this could only be by the cleansing of His death.

But there is a third thing-we have not only the blood which expiates, and the water which purifies, through which we are dead to sin, but He has obtained for us the Spirit, the presence of the Holy Ghost, as the power of the word. It may, perhaps, be objected, I do not find myself thus dead to sin and purified. But you have a hatred to sin, which is a proof of your having died to it. And " In that Christ died, he died unto sin once, so likewise RECKON ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin "; for God ever treats us according to what He has really given us, treating us as though we had realized it all. So in John, the Lord says, " and whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Now they did know HIM who was truly the way to the Father, yet Thomas objected and said, " We know not the way;" because they had never realized it. The instant I believe in Jesus, I am called on to reckon myself dead. I am never told to die, but I am told to mortify my members that are upon the earth. But I am never told to die. A man under the law will be trying to die with all his might, but he will never succeed. A Christian is dead, and his life is hid with Christ in God, and therefore he mortifies his members which are upon the earth, as living in the power of the life he has in the Son of God.

Observe, he does not speak of our life being on the earth, for that is above with Christ in God; therefore he treats us as dead, but our members which are upon the earth we are to mortify. He never tells us to kill ourselves, but faith takes God's testimony as true, therefore I say I am dead, and because I am dead, I have to mortify my members, being as dead to the earth as Christ was, for I have God telling me that I am dead through believing. This is most practical as to peace of soul, for the moment I believe in Christ, I am delivered from all these things. I am not seeking to die, for I have the secret of power, and count myself dead. There is a practical difficulty as to the water, for how can I say I am washed, if I still find myself to be dirty? But I can say I am dead with Christ, for I shall never succeed in killing myself. The moment that I believe in Christ, all that He has done as a Savior is mine, and God appropriates and applies it to me. I may have failed to realize it, but the treasure is put into my possession.

Some souls often say, I believe all the value and efficacy of Christ's work, but I cannot apply it. And who asks you to do so? It is God who applies it, and He has applied it to you, if you believe in its value and efficacy. The moment we believe in Christ we have the Holy Ghost as bearing witness, " He shall take of mine and show it unto you." Just as the Son came down to do God's will, and then ascended up again into heaven, so, at the Son's ascension, the Holy Ghost came down as a Person on the earth; for the Holy Ghost is always spoken of as being now on earth, and it is this which gives the true and peculiar character of the church of God. And here we get the third witness in the Spirit of truth coming down to earth. The moment I believe, I am sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. All that I can produce of God's good fruits as a Christian is in consequence of being sealed by the Holy Ghost. Redemption being perfectly accomplished, then the Holy Ghost comes down in Person, so that the position of the church on earth is between these two things, the redemption made, and the glory in prospect, as the Holy Ghost comes down between the church's redemption and the church's glory._

The knowledge of being dead with Christ gives me a pure heart as being myself dead to nature, sin, the world, and law. By the blood I get perfect peace and a good conscience; and then the Holy Ghost comes down from God; thus we have perfect peace with God, having God's own witness. Well, then, I have left the whole scene; I have done with nature altogether; my sins are all gone, the blood has put them away, and I am now dead unto sin and alive unto God. The cross, the wounds of Christ, are the door by which I entered, and the presence of the Holy Ghost is the power by which I enjoy the fruits of it. As we have seen, the witnesses of God on the earth are three-the Spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one " for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son."

The heart is constantly looking for God to give it a testimony about itself; but God is giving a testimony about His Son, and not about what we are; if God were to give a testimony about us, it must be about our sin and unbelief of heart. But no; and it is of great importance in this day of infidelity to see that if God gives a testimony, it is about His Son, and what He is to the sinner. If you believe that, you will get peace.

If I am going about to get a standing before God on the ground of my holiness, this would be self-righteousness, and of course I shall not get a witness from God as to that. But if my soul takes its stand with God, on the testimony God has given to His Son, then I get the witness in myself: when I have got this faith, I have got the thing in my own soul. For instance, look at Paul before Agrippa: " I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." He was so thoroughly conscious that the Christ in his soul was the Christ in heaven, and he was so happy in this consciousness, that he wished the whole company were like himself (except the bonds), having Christ, and a well of water springing up within. That which makes heaven to be a heaven to the saint is just this, that he finds the same Christ in heaven that he has in his own soul; and all the subtleties of infidelity cannot touch the soul that possesses Christ thus within. No reasoning of an infidel can shake my confidence if I am happy in Christ; for if a man came to tell me there was no Christ, when my soul was happy in Him, I should not believe him. There may be no intellectual or logical proof on my part, but there will he, to a certain extent, a moral testimony in the happiness of my soul, and the warmth of my affections being centered in Christ. I have often found how much it tells with men of all conditions to assure them that I am perfectly happy in Christ, and quite sure of going to heaven. Are you so? they say; I only wish I could say it. It would not be a proof to an infidel, his merely seeing you were happy; but it comes home to the heart of man, as there is a craving in man's heart that will never be met till he gets Christ there; for man is never happy without Christ, whatever he may say.

" He that believeth not God, hath made him a liar." The sin of men is in making God a liar, when they do not believe the record God has given of His Son; for men do quarrel with you when you tell them you know that you are saved. They say, How can you know that? which is just as much as saying that God is not capable of communicating any blessing to man. It is calling God's wisdom in question, as well as His power, in the testimony of His mercy and grace. This is what I have felt in the great question about the Bible. It is not whether it is the people's right to have the Bible, but it is questioning God's right in giving it. The treason is in keeping away God's message from His servants. It is not merely the servants' right to have the message, but it is God's right in giving it that is called in question, as it is interfering with God's right of communicating His thoughts in His word. Whenever God gives a revelation, man is responsible to receive it. God has given a witness in which He reveals the glory of His Son; and when man calls in question that word, he is disputing with God in the testimony of His grace as to what He is.

Who can explain the riddle of this miserable world without Christ? Go into the alleys and lanes of this vast city, and see the woe and degradation even in this best and most civilized of countries, and learn there what sin does. In the drawing room you may philosophize about it, but it is not in a drawing room that you will learn what the world is. But when you tell me that it was because of all this sin and wretchedness that God's Son came down into this world to put the sin away, then I can understand it; and God gives eternal life, not life for a moment, or a life we can sin away, as Adam's, but eternal life, which is above and beyond sin altogether; being in His Son, and therefore as near to God as can be. " This life is in his Son," who was ever the subject of His Father's delight; for when down here God could not be silent in His expression of joy, " This is my beloved Son."

And God, in giving me eternal life, has also given me a nature and capacity to enjoy Him forever. I am brought into an association with God, a relationship to God, and an enjoyment of God, which the angels know not, although holy in their nature, and exalted. We are thus brought near that we might know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye may be “filled with all the fullness of God."

In what a wondrous place we are set, if we could but be purged, not from gross sins, but from the vanity and earthliness that fills our minds, to enter into all our blessedness, and the association which we have thus with God, the very same which. Christ has! He has borne the wrath of God for our sins, that this full cup of blessing might be given to us. In all this God would have simplicity of heart. A man may talk about many things, but knowledge apart from Christ will never do; but if we possess Christ within, Satan can never touch us; and if he comes, he will find Christ there, who has overcome him. It is a sweet and blessed thing, that any saint, though born but yesterday, has all in Christ that I have. And if one says, But I am such a great sinner, well, the blood has put that away, and settled that question forever.

" And this is the confidence we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us." There is a confidence in God that applies itself to all the details of life through which I may be called to pass. This is the confidence we have in Him: His ear being ever open to us, we have what we ask for, when we ask according to God's will. How wondrous is this, that God's ear is ever open to us, for surely we should not desire to ask for anything contrary to His will! " And if we know that he hears us whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." I am so made to know the love that, if I ask, I shall have. If I am really in earnest to do God's will, to preach the gospel, for instance, and there are hindrances in the way-Satan in the way-I have only to ask, and I have all God's power at my disposal, His ear being open to me. If you know what conflict and difficulty are, what a blessing is this, to have God's ear open to you, and to know, if you are doing God's will, you will always succeed in doing His will.

" There is a sin unto death, I do not say ye shall pray for it." Temporal death is here intended as chastening in the way of God's government. " There is a sin not unto death." And if there be real intercession, God will forgive us; James 5:14, 15. If you ask me what the sin unto death is, it may be any sin; it may be the telling of a lie, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. (Peter does not pray for them.) See also the case of Stephen, when he said, " Lay not this sin to their charge." And in Corinthians, " For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." The horribly confused state of the church causes the government to be kept more in the hands of God and from the saints' incompetence to walk in the power of the Spirit, they are necessarily more thrown on the Lord, whose faithfulness to us will not allow our sins to go unjudged. " He withdraweth not his eye from the righteous."

May we be so walking in the power of holiness, that we may not be struggling with sin under His correcting hand; may we be walking in full communion with His grace! Amen.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Doctrinal 9, Spirit, the Water, and the Blood, The

IN 1 John 5 there seems to be (in the witness that eternal life is in the Son, not in Adam, as heretofore noticed) a double testimony: the water and the blood, which tell of death, the breach with all of the first man, that not till Christ was dead, or otherwise than by death, was there cleansing; the Spirit, witness of life according to the glory of the second Adam. Life is in the Son; but the Son, as man on the cross, as come in the midst of the old thing, has been rejected, and died, and died for atonement and cleansing. But the Son is also glorified man, and as such Head of the new thing in power.

Letters 3, Letter

To the same] The point of the verses [1 John 5:1-4 etc.] is this. Love to God's children is the proof of love to God. Who are they? Whoever believes Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and he who loves Him that begat, loves him that is begotten of Him. Thus if it be love because of the Father, I shall love all the children, for they are all His. Then comes a counter-check: I know that I love God's children, as such, if I love Him—not merely a set of people I like, but His children as such. But my obedience to His commandments is the proof I love Him. Love to God's children as such cannot be, because it is not loving Him, hence clearly not His children, because they are such, for I do not love Him. It is the testimony that love to the brethren, to be really such—chapter 2:9, because they are God's children—cannot be separated from obedience, because that proves I do not love God, consequently not others because they are His.

Notes and Comments 4, Fragments: Being Born of God

There is a distinct development in 1 John 5:18-20. As a general truth such is the characteristic of being born of God—such do not sin, and the wicked one has no hold on them, such being their nature. But further, 'We know that we are of God’—derive our nature from, and so are associated with Him. We affirm something about ourselves. It is not abstract as to a nature, but absolute contrast of nature and position as to ourselves—we are of God, the world is lying in the power of evil. But there is objective knowledge too—we know that the Son of God is come—we know Him that is true, and are in Him, even in His Son, and He is the true God. The contrast in verse 19, following on verse 18, is very absolute. It is not merely one born of God will not sin—a general truth—but the fact that we are of God and know it. The whole world is in

exactly the opposite state—opposite essentially in condition and state. Besides that, we know the great truth of divine history, and we are in God by Him. Redemption, though clearly stated, is not the great subject of John, but life by resurrection—only we find it in resurrection.

Notes and Comments 5, Fragments: 1 John 5:18-19

Note in 1 John 5:18, 19, we have the opposition of the new nature to the whole trinity of evil; whosoever is born of God sinneth not—the will and nature of flesh; he that is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not; and, we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.

Notes and Jottings, 1 John 5:1-13, Lecture on

THE first verses of this chapter have a special character and that is, the testing and searching out what the true love of the brethren is, and then the apostle goes on to the great basis of Christian walk as set out in certain testimony which we shall presently see. As we are aware, in this epistle, the love of the brethren is that which characterizes the Christian. It is one of two things, the other being obedience to Christ's words and commandments-the spirit of obedience and the spirit of love to the brethren. In speaking of loving the brethren, he shows us who these are, they are born of God," and such we love. Dependence on God, obedience, and love are the characteristics of divine love. Variously developed in us they surely are, but we find them all in perfection in Christ. " Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live." There we have dependence. This has a double character. You have a strength that you cannot do without even though you are not dependent; and besides this, there is confidence in the strength provided. The Blessed Lord having made Himself a servant, we find in Him both dependence and obedience; and also love which was in Him the principle of activity. In us, it is mixed with imperfection, but it is the same thing in itself. This epistle treats especially of these two traits, namely, obedience to the commandments and love of the brethren. They manifest divine life in us, and they are always inseparable, because love to the brethren must have, after all, its eye upon God. It was so with Christ in everything. He gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God. He did love us, but it was to God, and God was the object of His service; and therefore, when going to the cross, He says, “That the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do." There we see the principle of love and of obedience. These two are inseparable. So you have those who are dear to Christ, but along with that the path of obedience, or it is not the path of real love. Love that is not obedient is never divine love. I cannot have divine love in my heart and not refer to God. When Christ came as a man, He never went out of the place of obedience. So with us; where they are true, these two things are inseparable, and if they are not true, they are not it at all. Just as a man has a body and a soul, but the moment they are separated, neither is a man.

Then the apostle gives us the mark of the brethren, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God," and he adds, “Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." Love to the brethren is characteristic. I ought to love every poor sinner, but love to the brethren flows from a specific relationship, which shows the value of what Christ loves. It is not here the activity of evangelizing grace, but that which is distinctive in that a certain set of people are loved for the sake of another to whom they are dear, whatever their own individual character may be; and therefore it cannot be outside obedience. “This commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also." Who are they? All God's children, “whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ," etc. Then you get a counter check, and in this way, “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments." It is not loving a certain set of people we may know, but loving the children of God as such, because I keep His commandments; I know I love the brethren because I love God. Both sides are checked in this way, and very important it is. Practically, I may find one is more agreeable than another, and I have more fellowship of heart with one than with another, and so on, and there is nothing wrong in this, if there is more suitability the one to the other; but still I love all, even though the more abundantly I love, the less I be loved, and that is because of the character of the love. The characteristic of God's love is that, in its strength, its purpose, its activity, and its energy, all is dependent upon the love that loves, not upon the object loved. “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." The great, immense, proving, revealing act of the love of God is, that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. There is often a difference of communion between the soul and God, but still the love is characterized by this, that it does not flow from the object loved, but from the heart of Him who loves. With my heart and mind thinking of God and looking to God, whatever belongs to Him is dear to me just because it is of God. “Every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him." If I am extremely attached to a person, I love his children, and not merely because his children are pleasant. But if I love others as God's children, it is proved and shown to be love to them as such, because we are obedient to God Himself; but it is not the love of God to His children if it is not marked by the spirit of obedience. The two things are inseparable. I love the children because they are God's children, and if I love God I keep His commandments. This is just the spirit of the Christian, that Christ being precious to him, love to the brethren and the path of obedience are always before him, and therefore also he is really pleasing himself.

Well, then, he next turns to where difficulties are found. “His commandments are not grievous." To the natural man they are exceedingly grievous, for “the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." The only thought that the flesh has about these commandments is that it must never have anything its own way. Whether child or old man, each one of us likes his own will. Doing my own will is not obedience. But love to God makes His will the motive of my conduct. When we speak of Christ's obedience as the pattern of ours, as to its spring, it is not in that way that the law deals with man. There is a certain character of obedience in all of us which is submission to another's will when we do not like it. You see a child, who wants to run out and play, sit down at his father's bidding to do his lessons; very nice it is to see such obedience, but Christ never obeyed in that way. He never had a will one way, and then gave it up to do His Father's in another way. And the “new man" lives by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. It delights in obedience, and therefore, in the epistle of James, God's will is called the perfect law of liberty, because if I tell my child to run our and play, instead of sitting down to his lessons, it is obedience surely to do so, but it is also what his nature delights to do. The new nature is perfectly obedient, and finds its delight in that it obeys. In Christ, it was, “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." In us, we can trust God enough to wait for God to act; the new nature has not such an idea of its own importance that it sets about to act for itself before it has got a will from God.

In the case of the Lord Jesus, in John 11, they sent to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick," but He abode two days still in the same place without stirring. He had not a word from His Father to move. God was letting Lazarus die that He might show the power of resurrection over death. " Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God." “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God." Presently, nothing will stop Him. “The Jews of late sought to stone thee; and goest thou thither again?” But that was no hindrance. We find the true principle of Christian obedience which makes it a perfect law of liberty (and yet it is obedience) because the new man delights in it. Quite true, of course, that a great deal of breaking down has to come in, because of our actual state; whenever self works, it must be judged and broken down, for the true spring and motive of our conduct must be that God has a will. It is a terrible thing whenever the flesh is not so broken down as to have no will. Flesh does not like that. Flesh will reason, 'Am I never to do anything to please myself, what a God you have got?' Ah! that betrays where the heart is. But it is perfectly natural to the heart, and therefore His commandments are grievous to the flesh. The way obedience is made a delight and a blessing to us is, “His commandments are not grievous, for whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." It is what is in the world that makes it difficult, but “this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." It is subjective, for it is a life in us; but it is also objective, for Christ is its object. That is where the heart of the Christian is set. The new man born of God cannot live on itself, it must have some object. As the apostle says in Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ," there is the end of the old man for faith; " nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." That is what he lived for, and upon, too. And that is what Christian life is, but the way by which it lives is by an object which is not in the world at all, it is Christ.

Then, mark the blessed confidence and the joy which are in it. Is there compulsion? No. " Who loved me, and gave himself for me." The apostle finds the most blessed motive possible-Christ loved me and gave Himself for me. Not only has He redeemed me from sin for glory, but He has won my heart, redeemed me out of self into love to Himself. There I find the motive and spring. Therefore the victory that overcomes the world is faith; not looking upon the things that are seen, but having the sentence of death upon myself, " that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." Power is there. The moment this is the case, the power of present things is gone. I am living (I speak as to the principle of it) by this Christ Himself, who has loved us, shed His blood for us, and given Himself for us. There I get the object that fills my heart with singleness of eye, and takes away every motive that would turn my heart in another direction. True, we have a great deal to learn, and hindrances there are, but this is, in chief, the principle.

We have always to overcome, but when the heart is fixed on Christ, it is not like a victory between two that are fighting, but, as Paul says, " I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung," etc. Well, if it is all dross and dung, it is no such great sacrifice or victory; but that supposes the heart to be filled with Christ, and then it is all easy. The new man is just as much alive when I have eternal life as when I get to heaven. I know it is only gradually that self is detected, lurking in a thousand places in the heart. But a Christian who has gone through the world with Christ wonders how people can be occupied with a kind of conflict which is nevertheless very real to a person in the thick of it. It is true that Satan always tries to hinder the energy of a life he cannot destroy, but the eye of faith rests on an Object that is not the world, but the Son of God. So, " who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? " This blessed truth I have, that He came and won a place for me in heaven, and all the rest is dross and dung.

Now, therefore, ' I press forward,' that is all my life. I am not perfect in it, but that is what I am doing. I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. It is not, you must give up this and you must give up that, simply as a commandment, but it is, ' there is Christ for you '; ' there is the One who is sufficient for my delight, and I give Him, My Son, for your delight, the One who has given Himself for you and saved you.' And there, through grace, our hearts rest in Him. Well, then, He says, you must run on and get this, practically I mean; and therefore it is not, you must give up, but it is deliverance from the things the old man cares for; the power of Christ becomes an object to the new man which the soul runs after undistractedly and undividedly, and thus it is delivered. When the mind is in that state, it is not a sacrifice, but a deliverance.

Having, in this way, put the Christian in his place, the apostle then lays the groundwork for it all. It is well, however, to have this quite clear. Man naturally is a slave, but what is so characteristic of Christianity is that it gives us an object as well as salvation; this the law did not do, it told us what we ought to do as men, but it never gave us an object or life, and it could not give power, because it was weak through the flesh. It tells me to love God, and if I ask, 'Why?'—not a word! Of course, this is only what we ought to do. The law is the perfect rule of what man ought to be (I do not now speak of a Christian), but it does not give me life, or strength, or an object, however useful it is in its place to convict me. It is the measure of responsibility for man, but it is neither the expression nor the power of grace. But the moment grace comes in, it is no longer a question of what I ought to be, but of what God is pleased to do; He has put me like His Son in His own house. This is all grace.

Then He leaves us in the pathway here below in order to have our senses exercised to discern between good and evil. And the Object that He has given us the while, is the One who is sufficient for the Father's heart.

Next, in this chapter, he takes up two things, namely, cleansing and life. " This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth." In the water and blood, I have, not a witness, but a state produced, and then I have the Spirit bearing witness. In the first, it is the needed condition to which the water and blood apply. The witness of the Spirit has a double character, it comes and tells me all that I am by the revelation of Christ. Christ is the truth, and when the Spirit of God bears testimony to the truth, He brings Christ to me and shows thus not only what I am, but also what all men are-haters of God and full of lusts. This is the effect of His testimony. He gives us the fullness of truth, and we shall see how deep this truth really goes as to our state, too, and how that it has no limit. There is one question that comes first, and that is, supposing heaven is revealed and Christ is the object of faith, how can we be fit? We must be made fit to be in the light as God is in the light. The moment the light comes in and the conscience is reached by it, for it is no good otherwise, just as when the daughters of Jerusalem beat their breasts, Christ, turning to them, said, " Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves," for you are all going to be judged.

Very useful is the law to convict, but it is too late, for man, the being to whom it applies, is already lost, and Christ came to save the lost. If a man has lost every farthing, and you give him a rule to show him how to employ his money, 'Why,’ says he, ‘you mock me, I have no money.' Your rule may be useful to convict him of the fact. Now all Christians will say, in terms, that man is lost, and yet they will speak of him as under probation. In one sense the Christian, when under grace, is in probation, but man, as such, has been tested and probation is over. Even one of old could say, " Enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." That is all settled. "By works of law no flesh shall be justified." "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." That does not mean bad works, but such that

are on that principle, for they have not kept the law. But God being fully revealed, the question now is as to whether I can walk in the light as God is in the light; it is not whether I have walked by the law rightly, but am I in a state to stand before Him? And I know I am not. The day of judgment is anticipated in the conscience, and I “cannot answer him one of a thousand." Job owns that God loves righteousness, but “if I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." That is to say, if I fancy I am right, He shall plunge me in the ditch-show me what I am-and I shall come out of it, so that my own clothes shall abhor me; Job 9.

I must, then, be made fit for God according to what He is in nature and holiness. The soul feels that God is perfectly holy, and I am not. That is what we need, and that is what we have found in Christ. He came not by water only. We have the word of God-the revelation-and by it we are begotten, though that is not exactly its character here, true as it is; we are "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created" him, and again, " which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." We have thus the thought of the mind and the perceptions being completely purged by the application of the word; the spirit and principle of the thing applied to the conscience, the affections, and the heart; and the judgment of good and evil formed according to the revelation of what God is in Christ, not according to natural conscience or to the law. Where did the water come from? Out of His dead side. That is to say, that in this respect I see, not cleansing at all, but the absolute death of the old man, and that there must be a new creature. There never has been anything fit for God, in any shape or in any way, in the old man. I may reckon it dead, but it is always and simply in opposition to the Spirit of God. The two are contrary the one to the other. But the blessed word of truth comes to me in the quickening power of God, and it brings this cleansing water to my soul and conscience, and with such a revelation of God in Christ as to make me know what the flesh truly is.

This character of cleansing we find in Ephesians: " Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." "To himself! " And fit for Himself!! The word brings down to us the nature and character, the glory and purity, and the blessedness, too, of the place it comes from. If I may so speak, Christ has in a way humanized it; but man would not have it, and just because it was such, they refused it, and Him too; they spat in His face and crucified Him. So now God comes in, in power and grace, so as not to leave one atom of flesh in His presence; we find many other details besides, but this has taken place, and the moment I see this, I am entitled to say, " I am dead."

The water which cleanses is that which brings the whole truth of God to my soul, and judges all that I am, but at the same time, it is that which, in the power of God's Spirit, puts me in the presence of God, as after God created in righteousness and true holiness. That is the water. There could be no living connection with Christ for man in the flesh; He must be a dead Christ before the water could come out which purifies, so that the purpose of God might be accomplished. Quite true, there was also the bearing of sins, but this is not all; we are cleansed, and our sins have been put away; but we must be set in God's presence according to His own character and intentions in love. It is not all the truth that Christ has met our responsibilities on the cross and that He has died for them. He has cleared me perfectly as regards my responsibility as a man. But what, then, is God to do with me? My being merely cleansed does not tell me what He is going to do with me. Since the world began man has been a guilty sinner, but before the world began the thought and intention of God was to put man in His own glory on the ground of Christ's finished work upon the cross. Not only has He cleansed my guilt, but He has glorified God by the work He has wrought, and this enables me even now to stand in God's presence. " Herein has love been perfected with us that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, that even as he is, we also are in this world," 1 John 4:17.

This is more than merely sin and guilt being put away. I have my conscience perfect, and I delight in holiness itself. It is true that Christ becomes more and more precious to us, as we grow up to Him who is the Head, but we must first know how we can stand before God. Jesus came by water and blood. Not only has He cleansed our hearts, but He has cleansed us for God's eye, and made our consciences perfect. This is what He has done, and therefore His precious blood which cleanseth from all sin has so cleansed us that God cannot see sin on us. God no longer sees what we have wrought, but what He Himself hath wrought. As of old it was said, " He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel." That was at the end of the wilderness journey. Looking back at Massah, Meribah, and Kibroth-hattaavah, we hear their repeated murmurings, and then we see Balsam at the top of the mountain, saying, " He hath not beheld, etc.... Surely there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel: according to this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought! " Why, He has wrought according to His own exigencies in righteousness and holiness!

And so I stand before God according to the perfectness of Christ's work, but I am cleansed according to the claims of God in the light, i.e., according as God is in the light. And then we have these three witnesses, and they agree in one: the Spirit, and the water, and the blood. How do we get the Spirit? Can the Spirit come and help the old man, or take the spiritual part of man and lift it up? No. Christ must first be killed; there must be a total breach with man as he is before we can have the Spirit. It was a work carried out in grace, " for what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." There, then, is the end of the story as regards the flesh. I am not now talking of sins. Having wrought that perfect work, Christ goes up into the presence of God, and the consequence is that the Spirit comes down. And of what is He the witness? Why, that the world will not have God at all, but has utterly rejected Christ, and that therefore the world shall see Him no more. " He will reprove the world... of righteousness, because I go to my Father." This being so, Christ is now sitting at the right hand of God, and the Spirit of God has come down, the witness that the world shall see Christ no more, and that those who believe belong to Him in heaven. There can, therefore, be no longer any bond between the world, as the world, and God. Having taken His place in heaven as Man in glory, Christ sends down the Holy Ghost that I may know my separation from the world, which is crucified to me and I to it, and also that I may know my place up there in Him. Spirit, water, and blood agree thus in witnessing that man is unclean and away from God.

But where do I learn the condemnation of man? In Christ's bearing the judgment. Where does the cleansing come? In Christ's dying for me. Where is the judgment of sin in the flesh? In Christ being made sin. On the other hand, Christ has given me title to a place before God according to what He has done; He gives the Holy Ghost who takes of the things of heaven and shows them to me and presents to me this blessed Object, Christ, so that I follow hard after Him. These three agree in testimony. While we are waiting for God's Son from heaven, the Holy Ghost comes, as the result of Christ's perfect work, and tells us that we are fit for a place with Christ in heaven, that we are of God, and that Christ is righteousness of God to us. This place in heaven He has won for us. " Ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." These three witnesses agree in testimony as to what the flesh is, and also to the perfect work which has been wrought, and which cleanses, redeems, justifies, and unites us to Christ. Founded upon this work that Christ has wrought, we know that we have a place there

where He is. This place is of sovereign grace, surely, and in virtue of the work by which God Himself has been glorified.

One word more. " He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself." If I do believe, I have the blessed consciousness of all this, I have the power of the thing in myself; as to the certainty of the ground of it, I have the witness in myself. But a person says, ' Oh, you cannot prove that.' I reply, ' I have it.' Suppose someone comes to prove to me that I do not live, I do not try to prove that I live, I do live. He who does not receive the witness makes God a liar. " Record," " witness," '-' testimony," are all one word in the original. We have been speaking of cleansing, and of the witness to it. I have the cleansing by water and blood, and I have the Spirit's witness, but that which I know I have is nothing less than Christ. God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. Christ has life in Himself, and He that hath the Son hath life. It is not that he has Adam or a mended Adam, but he has a totally new thing. I have now Christ Himself as the life in which I live. It is never said that this life is in the Christian, though he has it, for he that bath the Son hath life, and it is nothing less than that which Christ is. It is Christ. I have cleansing, righteousness, and the Spirit as the seal of it all, the testimony is there; it is by these testimonies that I know I have Christ, and this is eternal life. The world has not got life; responsible they are to believe the testimony, but they have not life. And therefore one cannot expect them to understand the convictions of a Christian. One may try to show them the folly of their reasonings about the truth and the record, if one is clever enough to do it, and if you are not, they will baffle you. But the Christian has met God in Christ, and Christ is his life. I know it apart from reasoning. And now He dwells in me. When the believer has it, he has the witness in himself, and he dare not think anything else but that the perfectness of that blood-shedding has cleansed him from all sin. As to faith, we have done with the old man, sin, and the world. Our only place is in Christ, and we are therefore just waiting till He comes to receive us up into the glory, that where He is, there we may be also.

How far can our hearts go with this blessed truth, when He says that we have the witness in ourselves? Have our souls found deliverance from the world in the consciousness of our place before God in light, according to God's own work and God's own light? " Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." We are of God. And Christ is the righteousness of God to us, and there we are. The Lord give us to apprehend more distinctly what Christ came to do, and also the consciousness of His way of doing it-testifying what man was without this-without God and hating God—but testifying also to this by loving us, and by giving Himself for us!

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