2 Kings - Commentaries by Unknown Author

Christian Friend: Volume 12, 2 Kings 8:4-6

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It seems to me that Gehazi stands here in a grievous position. Smitten by the hand of God, because his heart clung to earth, even in the presence of Jehovah's mighty and long-suffering testimony, he is now a parasite in the king's court, relating the wonderful things in which he no longer took part. This poor world grows weary enough of itself to lead it to take some pleasure in hearing anything spoken of that has reality and power. Provided that it does not reach the conscience, they will listen to it for their amusement, taking credit to themselves perhaps for an enlarged and a liberal mind, which is not enslaved by that which they can yet recognize philosophically in its place. But that is a sad position, which makes it evident that formerly we were connected with a testimony, whilst now we only relate its marvels at court. Nevertheless, God makes use of it; and it does not follow that there was no truth in Gehazi. But to rise in the world, and entertain the world with the mighty works of God, is to fall very deeply

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Christian Truth: Volume 31, Opened Eyes

"LORD, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see" (2 Kings 6:17).

"The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them." Pro. 20:12. It is as much the work of God to open the one as the other. When, as the anointed of Jehovah, the Lord Jesus entered upon His blessed service to man, we read in Luke 4:18 that one of His works of goodness and grace was to open the eyes of the blind. His words in John 9:39-41 make it quite clear that physical blindness was not the only thing contemplated in that wondrous service, nor indeed the main thing, for He came into this world "that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made

blind."

The beautiful incident recorded in 2 Kings 6, from which we quote the short direct prayer that

stands at the head of this paper, has a most important lesson for us who are children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. How often do we feel ready to say like the servant of the man of God, "Alas, my master! how shall we do?"

The king of Syria had wondered how his plans should so frequently become known to the king of Israel with whom he was at war, but it was the work of no treacherous spy. One of his own servants let out the secret of "the prophet that is in Israel," that "telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber."

The Syrian king's next move, therefore, is to take the prophet, and accordingly he attempts to cut off all escape by surrounding the prophet's house with his army. What a sight met the astonished gaze of Elisha's servant on that early morning as he found the prophet's house compassed on all sides by the great host of Syrian horses and chariots! What could two defenseless men do in the face of such a mighty company? Yet Elisha answers with perfect calmness, "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." And he prays not for deliverance, for that, with the opened eyes of faith, he already saw was amply provided; but that the eyes of his servant might be opened to see what God could do for those that trust in Him (Psa. 31:19, 20).

How often we find these words, "Fear not," on the lips of our blessed Master and Lord in the days of His sojourn here on earth. With them He heals the grief of Jairus when he thought death had closed the door of hope as to the life of his beloved daughter (Luke 8:50); and with the same words He comforts the hearts of His disciples in view of apparent loss in this world through following Him (Luke 12:32). And again, "Fear not" is upon His lips when He lays His right hand of power upon the prostrate Apostle John in lonely Patmos, who, overcome by the awful majesty of His appearance, "fell at His feet as dead."

In each case too there is the same call for the faith that brings in God and His unfailing resources.

Elisha has no concern for himself, no fear of the Syrian hosts. It is delightful to think of that short prayer uttered in such simple faith: "LORD, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see." And how immediate the answer—"And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw."

Saw what? A very early forecast of the truth of the word repeated, or rather reproduced, in Rom. 8:31: "If God be for us, who can be against us."

But again Elisha prays, and this time it is a very great contrast. "Smite this people... with blindness," which is also immediately answered. But it is not for judgment on his enemies that he prays thus; the prophet leads them to Samaria, and then once more the prayer is uttered, "Loin, open the eyes of these men, that they may see"; and with what consternation must the Syrians have found themselves "in the midst of Samaria."

But no thought of revenge or punishment is in the prophet's mind. To the question of the king of Israel, "Shall I smite?" comes the wonderful answer, "Thou shalt not smite... set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master." What a lesson for us,

dear fellow-Christian, as to the power of grace! "So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel." What conquest could have

effected such a result as that?

There are two spheres in which we may get a salutary lesson from these striking incidents—-one as to our individual path and prospects, and the other as to the Church's need and state today. How often for ourselves in our family cares, business experiences, everyday trials and infirmities, we need to have our eyes opened as to who is for us, to remind ourselves of that love "that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all," and consequently, "How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32). Yet in times of pressure and loneliness. have we not to watch against the inclination to say. -Alas.... how shall we do?"

But this is even more felt perhaps when we are exercised as to the state of the Lord's people, the condition of Christian testimony generally, and the many signs of rapidly approaching apostasy.

Here we may well learn something from Balaam's history. Hired by Balak to curse Israel, he is powerless to do so, notwithstanding his own will and love of gain; and we find he repeats again and again, that he speaks as the man "who had his eyes shut, but now opened" (Numb. 24:3; margin).

Can we think what he would have said had his eyes not been opened? But what a commentary all he says is on the words of the prophet Elisha: "Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them." From the top of the rocks Balaam is made to bear an unwilling testimony to God's view of His earthly people, Israel. They are to Him a called, justified, and glory-destined people.

And, dear fellow-Christian, have we not an equal call to rise up to the thoughts of God about His people today? Think what they are to the heart of Him who "loved the church, and gave Himself for it," and waits expectantly for the moment when He shall "present it to Himself."

The Gospel Messenger: Volume 19, Lepers' Consultations, and What Came of Them., The

IN the course of the history of the ten tribes of Israel, Samaria, their capital city, was besieged by Benhadad, king of Syria, and reduced to the greatest extremity through famine (2 Rings 6:24). The king, though he clothed himself with sackcloth within upon his flesh, as a sign of repentance and humbling before God, being severely tested by the awful distress, manifested the deep-seated enmity of his heart against God, by seeking to take the life of Elisha the prophet, His servant.

Notwithstanding this further desperate wickedness of the king, the Lord, great in mercy, sent him a message of pure grace through His servant, who said, “Hear ye the word of the Lord, Tomorrow, about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria” (7:1). But it was accompanied with a threat of death for a lord, on whose hand the king leaned, who dared to break in with an “if,” thus openly questioning the Lord’s gracious message.

Now, at the entering in of the gate of the city sat four leprous men (7:3). In addition to all the horrors of the siege and famine, these poor wretches were suffering from an incurable disease, and in consequence were separated from the rest of their fellows.

How strikingly all this shadows forth man’s condition today! He is in a world surrounded with the whole power of Satan and his hosts, suffering from a grievous famine of all that will really satisfy his soul. He is clothed on his flesh with a profession of religion, but his heart is as full of enmity against God, and His Son, the true Prophet, as in the day when the Jewish mob cried, “Away with him, away with him; crucify him, crucify him.” Moreover, man is an alien, suffering from the awful and incurable malady of sin, —he is a moral leper.

But the four leprous men, in the depth of their misery, began to think. It is a great thing to begin to think, to weigh and consider our state. The lepers were brought to it, and it led to very good results. See them sitting day by day at Samaria’s gate, the picture of misery and hopelessness, with nothing but death staring them in the face. At last their lips give expression to their inmost thoughts, and they say one to another, “Why sit we here until we die? If we say, We will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill as, we shall but die” (7:3, 4).

It was a question of choosing one of three things. Firstly, should they go into the city? There was nothing but famine there. That would be certain death. Secondly, should they remain where they were? In the event of an assault by the Syrians, there was no place more exposed than the gate. And meanwhile they were without food. It was certain death there also. Thirdly, if they were to go into the camp of the enemy, what then? Well, that seemed at first sight almost as desperate as the other two; but there was just one ray of hope. They were poor lepers, non-combatants. There might be a spark of pity in the hearts of their relentless foes. They might save them alive. At any rate, they might as well be killed by the foe in the camp as die of famine in the city or perish at the gate. It was the best plan of the three. The lepers in their first consultation came to the decision that they would face the difficulty at all costs. They rose up in the twilight to go into the camp of the Syrians.

Dear reader, have you ever sat down to think? Have you ever weighed and considered with others your real state before God? Have you realized the extremity in which you are as a poor lost sinner? If you turn back to, or go on with the world, you will share the world’s doom. Judgment rests upon it. If you still remain in indifference as to your state and what will become of you, you will perish. You are exposed to the wages of sin, death, “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). But if you, face the difficulty, instead of reaping the fruits of the fall and your guilt, you will surely reap salvation, life out of and beyond death, and all the rich blessings of the gospel. How? Let us see.

The lepers rose up to go into the enemy’s camp, and what did they find? Approaching tremblingly, not knowing what the result of their venture might be, to their immense surprise, not a foe was there! NOT ONE. And why? Because the Lord had been there before them. He had been in the camp of the enemy, and with His mighty arm He had wrought the victory. He had caused the foe to hear the noise of a great host, and filled with fright, they ran for their lives, leaving their tents, their horses, their asses, and most of their wealth and belongings as they were. Hence the poor lepers, instead of famine found plenty, instead of death life, instead of poverty wealth. The Lord had spoiled the foe,

and di the spoil was there for the taking.

And so also, poor trembling sinner, if only you are decided; if only you face the momentous question of your salvation, you will find that Jesus, God's Son, has been into the camp of the foe and wrought a mighty victory on your behalf. At Calvary He died and glorified God. He rose from the dead, overcame once and forever the whole power of Satan, sin, death, and judgment for every one that believeth. The victory has been won by another for you. And now all you need is offered you freely. Every famished soul may eat and be satisfied, and all the wealth of the gospel—silver, gold, raiment, redemption, righteousness, Christ—all are yours. Instead of perishing with hunger, you may be satisfied; instead of dying in your sin, life in Christ is offered you; instead of misery and poverty, untold wealth is proffered you in the risen Christ.

More than satisfied, the lepers held a second consultation. They said one to another, "We do not well this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace; if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household" (chap.7:9). So they came and called unto the porter of the city. In short, the lepers being saved, became evangelistic. It was impossible to keep such good news to themselves. They feared some mischief, if they did. As another said later, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel" (1 Cor. 9:16). And the moment the lepers told it out, it spread far and wide. First, they made it known to the city porter. He told it to the outside porters of the palace, and, though it was night-time, they told it to the king's house within, and it was very soon communicated to the king himself. And in an incredibly short time the whole city was cognizant of it.

Now the king rose in the night, but he was not prepared to receive the glad tidings without question. Like a good many more today, when they hear the gospel, he had his own thoughts about it. Besides, was he not the king, and he would like to make a little show of his wisdom. Although he had heard the words of the prophet in the name of the Lord, and had had it confirmed by witnesses who were already proving the truth of it, he still doubted. He puts it down to a trick of the enemy (2 Kings 7:12). But one of his servants was wiser than he, and proposed to send five of the horses that remained in the city, and see. The king, tossed to and fro between doubt and hope, consented that two chariot horses should be sent. If the news proved true, good; but if not, he had still a reserve, and could hold out a little longer. He ventured two on the authority of the word of the Lord, but kept back three, in case of eventualities! What a striking picture of the mistrust of God in man's heart!

"And the messengers returned and told the king. (And really it was far better than they expected, for they discovered spoil alt the way to Jordan.) And the people went out and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the Lord"(vs. 16)." And the king appointed the lord, on whose hand he leaned, to have the charge of the gate: and the people trod upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him" (vs. 17).

The grace and the judgment were both equally cure. Tomorrow about this time so much food should be sold at a certain spot, said the prophet. And though every outward circumstance completely militated against it, it came to pass. The man who doubted it, and said "If," was threatened with death. And it came upon him in the most unexpected way. Appointed to a post of honor by the king, so great was the crush of the famished crowd at the gate to obtain food, that he was knocked down, trodden under foot, and died.

Poor famishing sinner, you have not to wait till tomorrow, but today, this moment, now, Christ and salvation are offered you freely, where and as you are. All is without measure and without price. He has gained the mighty victory once for all at Calvary, and He is seated as the accepted Man in the glory of God, a present and everlasting Saviour. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). You need not take a step elsewhere to receive the blessing. And the terms are freely. The moment is now. The place is where you are. "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Believe on Him, and thou shalt be (Acts 16:31). But he that believeth not, will surely, like that poor lord who said "If," come into the judgment of God. "The grace of God, which bringeth salvation unto all men, hath appeared." It is sent to the Gentiles (Acts 28:28), and it is free as the air we breathe. "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10:9). But, on the other hand, it is equally sure, that whosoever believeth not God's testimony concerning His beloved Son, will reap the fruit of his unbelief in the eternal judgment of God.

May His abounding grace lead each reader of these lines first to weigh the question of his salvation, and being saved, the question of making the glad tidings known to all around!

Christian Truth: Volume 33, Little Israelitish Maid, The: Christ Sovereign Remedy

2 Kings 5:2, 3

"The Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife." What a contrast between her and her master! He stands before us as the very personification of worldly greatness, having, as to this world, all that heart could wish, save that he was a leper-God's hand resting upon him, as it were, in judgment. But here was a little maid, torn from her country and her kindred by the rude hand of violence, and carried far from the land of her God and of her fathers to be a captive in a strange land. Could you well conceive of circumstances more distressing? And yet this little maid has carried with her a secret, a treasure, which makes her the channel of blessing to Naaman and his house. She has the secret of God with her.

The Syrian captain, great as he was, could not heal the disease under which he was pining away; nor could all his riches procure him a remedy from others. But here is a little captive maid who knows enough of God, and of His prophet by whom, at that time, he was acting so gloriously in Israel, as to say one day to her mistress, "Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy."

What simple blessed faith was here. She knew the prophet and doubtless the prophet's God, and she unhesitatingly believes not only that he could, but that he would recover her master of his leprosy. And how beautifully her faith finds outflow and expression. It is the spontaneous sighing of her heart, as it were, over her master's helpless, hopeless misery-helpless and hopeless as to anything but that secret of God she had carried in her bosom to this strange land.

"Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria!" What a picture of what the Christian is, or at least ought to be. Of what he is indeed, in one sense; for however little it may be manifested, each saint does carry the secret of God with him. Alas! how little does the consciousness of this fill our hearts and mold our ways. We see sin and misery on every hand, and see it, alas! too often with callous insensibility; and even when our hearts do melt in view of it, how little have we of the faith which brings Jesus into connection with it all. Are our thoughts and hearts so full of him-of Jesus-our prophet, priest, and king-that ever and anon we involuntarily exclaim to one child of sorrow or another, Would God you knew Jesus? Would God you were with Jesus!

Have we, my brethren, the living consciousness from day to day, of possessing in Jesus a remedy for every evil, a medicine for every wound? Poor sinner, if you did but know Him! He is the Healer of every wound, the Remedy for every disease, the Soother of every sorrow, and the Fullness of eternal life and joy. What that you knew Him!

I do not say that He would, at present, heal all your bodily ailments, relieve your temporal circumstances, and bring you into a condition of earthly happiness and prosperity. I could not promise you these things on His behalf. But He has far better things for you than these. When Jesus was here in humiliation, He did heal the bodily maladies of all who came to Him. When John the Baptist sent his disciples to our Lord to ask Him, "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

But what did all this end in? Why the world, wooed, as it were, by these demonstrations of love, wooed by the love of God in sending His Son, and by all these gracious loving acts of His while here,-the world rejected God's only-begotten Son, and completed the proof of its own deep and deadly, and irremediable wickedness, by putting Him to death. What then? The world was given over to judgment. You may start at such a statement; but our Lord Himself, as having come to the hour of His final rejection, says, "Now is the judgment of this world." The world had been on trial until then. Every means had been tried that could act upon the moral nature of man for his recovery, and all had issued in the rejection and crucifixion of the Son of God. The proof of the world's lost condition was now complete; there could be nothing beyond; and hence the verdict is brought in and sentence passed. True, there is a way of escape. Through the precious blood which man's wicked hands have shed there is full remission, and perfect righteousness, and heavenly joys, and everlasting life, for all who believe God's testimony concerning Jesus. But as to all others, sentence is passed, and they lie under condemnation. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; he that believeth not is condemned already." And again, "the wrath of God abideth on him." John 3:36

God is not now acting to make this world the place of blessing. His present object is not to relieve this world of the miseries under which it groans, but to gather sinners out of it by the preaching of the gospel. He will make this earth a paradise of joy by and by, when, by the judgments which attend the second coming of Christ, he has purged the earth of its corrupters and destroyers. Then, in the times of restitution of all things, the curse shall be removed, sighing and sorrow shall cease, and joy and gladness extend from shore to shore. But at present the world lies under sentence, awaiting the hour of its execution, when "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Thess. 1:7, 8

Why is the execution of this sentence delayed? That by the preaching of the gospel the Holy Ghost may draw the hearts of sinners to Jesus, that they may be delivered from this evil world with all the judgments that hang over it: that they may be one with Christ Himself even now, in acceptance and life and hope: and that when He shall appear they may appear with Him in glory. Even here, my brethren, we have an assurance of His love, a knowledge of Himself, and a fellowship with His joy, which sustains, and more than sustains, under all the ills of the present life. How the apostle Paul could challenge everything visible and invisible to rob him of what God's own love in Christ Jesus had bestowed! "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He recounts all that the heart so shrinks from-tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, the sword-and exclaims, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Rom. 8:37-39

To sing a song of triumph such as this is worth immeasurably more than to have one's bodily diseases cured, or one's temporal circumstances improved. Men vainly strive to bring their circumstances to their mind; but he who knows Christ has got in Him a treasure that not only brings the mind contentedly to the circumstances, but lifts the heart above all circumstances, into fellowship with Christ's own joy and blessedness, and into fellowship with the Father's joy in Him. Oh, that you all knew Him! Would that we who do know Him, knew Him more.

Things New and Old: Volume 23, Syrian Leper, The: Wash and Be Clean

Naaman was a mighty man of valor, high in repute with the king of Syria, honorable too, and distinguished as the captain of the king’s host; but “he was a leper.” This is a terrible addition. Looking, however, at leprosy as a type of sin, it may be truly added to the description of any, the most honorable, refined, mighty and prosperous among men in their natural state now—but he is a sinner. Whatever he may think of himself, such is his state before God.

What a dreadful thing sin is! It formed no part of man’s creation, for we are told that God made man upright. (Eccl. 7:29) Sin was introduced at the fall. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin.” (Rom. 5:12.) Man is therefore by nature a sinner. Every one might in truth say, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” (Psalm 2:5.) Our birth-condition being bad, all are necessarily sinners by practice. God says, “all have sinned,” and “there is not one righteous, no not one.” (Rom. 3:10, 23.) Man’s sins come from an evil heart. Again scripture affirms, “Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually.” This, leprosy remarkably illustrates. The disease is in the blood, and is of a deadly character. It is a constitutional malady, and from any exciting cause, breaks out readily to the surface. Moreover, like sin, it is incurable by human means; it is loathsome, and easily spreads. A leper was pronounced to be “utterly unclean,” and was commanded to go outside the camp, and with a covering upon his upper Up to cry, “Unclean! unclean!”

With man sin is irremediable. He may cover up the leprous spots, and wash off some of its unclean accompaniments; but he cannot cleanse a conscience from its guilt, or deliver any from its power. God alone can do that.

Naaman must have felt the loathsomeness and the danger of his state; but God was gracious to him. A little Israelitish maid, his wife's attendant, was the instrument used to give him hope. Through her he heard that there was recovery to be had in the land of Israel. He heard, too, that it was effected by "the prophet that is in Samaria." This report was the first sound of glad tidings of a cure for leprosy which seems to have reached this distressed man; and we can easily imagine how welcome such tidings must have been. Now mark the effects. He did not, as many do, treat the good news as if he heard it not; no, it produced in him great concern. His desire for being cleansed was so urgent, that he seems to have lost no time, nor spared inquiry, to learn more about it. But, like many true-hearted souls now, when desiring salvation from the wrath to come, he set about it in a wrong way. He looked to human aid and interest, instead of coming at once to the man of God. He took letters to the king of Israel from the king of Syria, saying he had sent Naaman to be healed of his leprosy. With this the king of Israel was very indignant. He knew that none but God could heal him. Therefore he "rent his clothes," and replied, "Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy?" (Ver. 7.) How many there are now, who when first awakened to a real sense of their guilt and danger as sinners in the sight of God, fly to men, some form of religion, ministers, priests, and ordinances, instead of coming at once, by faith, to the Lord Jesus Christ, who only can cleanse them from the leprosy of sin!

Afterward, however, Naaman determined to go to the man of God. Like a person of self-importance, he drove with his horses and his chariot to the door of the prophet's house, but only to be terribly disappointed not to see the prophet's face. The suffering leper had not yet learned the lesson that God's great and glorious ways are hid from the wise in their own eyes, but are revealed unto babes. At the door of Elisha's house, however he heard the glad tidings, " Go and wash in Jordan, seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee and thou shalt be clean." What words of comfort for a leprous man! How rich, how free, how wonderful the grace of God to sinners of the Gentiles! But how does the great and honorable man treat these gracious words? Does he hasten at once to Jordan? Not so. He is not broken down enough yet to receive God's truth as a little child; he is not yet content to be blessed and cleansed in God's way. Proud reasoning comes in to hinder and delay the blessing. Why, he thought, must I wash in Jordan? Why not dip in one of our own beautiful rivers, if it be merely a question of "wash and be clean?" "Are not Abana and Pharpar rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel? May I not wash in them and be clean? So he turned away in a great rage." (Ver. 12.) Such are we by nature. Our minds are at such enmity with God, that we prefer anything to simple subjection to God's word, and giving glory to Him. But this cannot be. Beautiful as the rivers of Damascus were, their waters cannot cleanse a leprous man, however many times he may dip in them. It is Jordan only. And why? Because Jordan means the river of judgment. It speaks of that without which there could be no cleansing of the leprosy of sin. Unless sins had been judged, there could be no remission. It is blessedly true then that God laid upon Jesus His Son the iniquity of us all; and that He bare our sins in His own body on the tree. He died for our sins. Sins therefore, were judged on the holy Son of God on the cross, for He there suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring "us to God." Had God not judged sins on the cross, there could have been no cleansing, for u without shedding of blood is no remission." But this having been done, it is now due to Christ, and due to every sinner that takes shelter in His blood, and righteous on God's part also, to cleanse such from all sin. "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." What infinite grace and wisdom, and yet all coming to us through righteousness!

Such we judge to be the typical explanation why the waters of Jordan only could cleanse the leper. And it is of all importance to see that sins have been dealt with judicially on the cross—that Jesus was there made sin for us, who believe, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him; that He was there "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities," and that "with his stripes we are healed."

The leper's anger was not a little kindled at this simple way of cleansing, apart from all priestly interference or religious ordinances. He was evidently looking forward to an imposing ceremonial, instead of which he had the words only—a Go and wash in Jordan seven times." What a difficulty to man's proud and unbelieving heart does the very simplicity of the gospel present! Yet a lowly mind, with a divinely-wrought faith, wants nothing more than the word of God on which to repose implicitly. Naaman said, "Behold, I thought he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of Jehovah his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.... so he turned and went away in a great rage." (Vers. 11, 12.)

But with all these workings of pride, ignorance, and unbelief, Naaman is a leper still, needy and helpless as ever. His servants try to assuage his anger. They reason with him on the simplicity of the remedy, they remind him that it is only "Wash and be clean." He too is conscious of the greatness of his danger and the urgency of his need, as also of the probability of never having the opportunity again within his reach. It was a deeply serious moment! The only remedy is now so pressed upon his soul that he lays aside all reasoning, and in simple faith acts on the saying of the man of God. We read, "Then," yes then, and not till then; but "Then," (while the words, "Wash and be clean," were engaging his mind) "went he down, and dipped himself in Jordan seven times, according to the saying of the man of God." (Ver. 14.) A beautiful example of faith, for he acted simply on the authority of the word. He did "according to the saying of the man of God." And now mark the result. The blessing which followed was exactly what Jehovah's prophet had said, for he was not only cleansed, but his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child.

Still looking at the instruction typically, we may observe, first, having taken his place as a loathsome, helpless leper, and bowed himself seven times in the river of judgment (thus owning the just claims of death and judgment over him) he was cleansed. So those now who own the righteous judgment of God for sin in the death of His Son upon the tree, and bow to Him, are cleansed from all sin. Such are assured that their sins have been already judged, that God has forgiven them, and will not remember their sins any more. "To him [Christ] give all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:43.) Perfect cleansing of sins by the blood of Jesus.

Secondly. The leprous man had not only cleansing, but "his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child." This reminds us of the new birth; for everyone who believes on the Son of God hath everlasting life; he is born of water (the word) and of the Spirit. He is a new-born babe. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God." Thus the burdened, sin-stricken soul that has fled to Jesus for salvation, has not only a purged conscience by the blood of Jesus, but he has also a new life in Christ, a new nature, which under the teaching of the Holy Ghost is capable of knowing God, entering into the deep things of God, and of enjoying His presence forever. "What a marvelous change for this loathsome leper! What a deliverance and recovery! Yet all through the sovereignty of divine grace and on the principle of faith. We say sovereign grace, for our Lord informs us, that "there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian." (Luke 4:27.)

But further; we may notice the practical effects of this grace and power of God on this cleansed one. First, he returned to the man of God. He sought his company. This was a new order of things entirely. "He returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and stood before him."

(Ver. 15.) In this, do we not see the principle of love manifested to God's people? And does not true faith always work by love? Can anyone really believe on the Lord Jesus to the saving of his soul, and not love Him? Impossible. Do we not love Him because He first loved us? And does not He who loves Him that begat, love also those who are begotten of Him? Hence we find a sentence in scripture, which has been a comfort to thousands, "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren." Where there is not love to the Lord Jesus and to those whom "He is not ashamed to call his brethren," there is no life—"he that loveth not his brother abideth in death." (1 John 3:14.) "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha"—accursed when the Lord cometh. (1 Cor. 16:22.) In Naaman's case we find that, before all his servants he did not hesitate openly to confess his attachment to the man of God.

Secondly. He gave glory to the God of Israel. This faith always does. We are told that Abraham was "strong in faith, giving glory to God?" The confession of this recovered leper was, "Now I know there is no God in all the earth but in Israel." And so now the believer, by whatever instrumentality he has been brought to Jesus as His Savior, gives all the praise and glory to God.

Thirdly. Naaman now wishes to use his means for the benefit of God's people. He urges Elisha to take a blessing, but the prophet properly refused. Under other circumstances, he gladly accepted the kind hospitality of the Shunamite for himself and his servant; but in this case, he doubtless saw it would appear that the servant would by accepting the present, be according something meritorious to himself, instead of giving all the glory to God.

And now, dear reader, we affectionately inquire. What say you to these things? Are you conscious of being a sinner in the sight of God, both by nature and practice, and that God must judge sin? Do you tremble at the thought of death and judgment being immediately before you? Does it not sometimes occur to your mind that you must either now be cleansed from sin, or forever suffer in your sins? Oh! turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?

Did not Jesus the Son of God die for sinners? Does not His blood cleanse from all sin? Then why go to the lake of fire forever? Why not "Wash and be clean?" Why not now? for the Son of God still delights to save sinners. He calls, He beseeches. He says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" Can you refuse such love? Can you try to conceal your leprous spots, and appear clean before men, when, in the sight of God you are "Utterly unclean?" Hearken then to the Saviors solemn words, If ye "die in your sins, whither I go, ye cannot come!" Think then, dear reader, of the awful possibility of your dying in your sins. Bow at once to the sinner-loving Savior. Fall now, as a leprous sinner, into His open arms. Often have you heard the message of His wondrous grace, and refused to come, but now, yes now, may the language of your inmost soul be, while looking straight to Him in faith— "Myself into Thine arms I cast, Lord save this sinful one at last."

And save He will, for today is the day of salvation. He will receive you, welcome you, and never cast you out. He will wash you in His blood, cleanse away all your guilt, and forgive all your sins. He will give you His Holy Spirit, and then you will manifest that you love Him because He first loved you. You will love the brethren. You will give to Jesus the Lord all the praise and glory of your eternal salvation, and the desire of your soul will be henceforth to live, not unto yourself, but to Him who died and rose again for you.

This exquisite chapter, however, does not close without recording a most solemn warning. Gehazi was the trusted servant of "the man of God." He was accustomed to see his master's ways of faith, and of obedience to the will of God. He had tarried with him at the Shunamite's house, and accompanied him in the miracle of raising her dead son to life. He had also witnessed the mighty power and goodness of God in cleansing the leprous captain according to Elisha's testimony, and had been present when he rightly declined all reward, because the glory was alone due to Jehovah. But, with all this, Gehazi's heart was not right with God. In the blindness of an evil nature, he knew nothing better than the present possession of wealth. Money he would have, though it might only be obtained by deceit and lying. Gehazi loved money, and seeing now the recovered leper in the freshness of first love and liberality, he seized a fitting moment to run after him. By lying he succeeded in obtaining two talents of silver and two changes of garments, and then returned to his master with his accustomed demeanor, as if nothing had happened. He little thought that the eye of God was upon him, and that the power of God was with Elisha. When interrogated, therefore, Gehazi tries lying again. But he is made manifest. God would not have such wickedness hid. He was convicted, and sentenced with the plague of leprosy upon himself and upon his seed forever. After this, Gehazi is only known as amusing the king, by telling him "all the great things that Elisha had done." Such is man. (2 Kings 5:22-27; 8:4.)

Little had Gehazi profited by all his advantages. The same is solemnly true with many now. But the scripture must be fulfilled, that "a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit," "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." With all the restraint of godly influence, and all the advantages of Bible knowledge, man is still at enmity against God, a lover of the pleasures of sin more than of God. The leprosy of sin is in him, and if not cleansed by the blood of Jesus, will cleave unto him forever. In his sins during life, in his sins at death, in his sins at the judgment of the "great white throne," in his sins in the lake of fire forever—shut out forever from the light, and joy, and glory of God and of the Lamb!

Dear reader, which of these two men are you like at this moment? Have you, like Naaman, tasted the joy and blessing of having been perfectly cleansed from the leprosy of sin by the blood of Jesus? Or, is your heart set on money, and seeking to satisfy itself by the accumulation of wealth, or with any other earthly object?

Christian Friend: Volume 13, 2 Kings 4:1-7

The mantle of the ascending Elijah fell upon Elisha, and he received a double portion of his predecessor's spirit. This explains the typical character of his ministry—that it was in resurrection power. It is needful to bear this in, mind in interpreting the beautiful incident brought before us in this scripture. But first of all it is necessary to understand the circumstances of the widow. Her husband—one who feared the Lord—was dead, and he had left his widow so hopelessly in debt that the creditor claimed her two sons as bond men. Who then was the creditor? It was, we judge, the law, which, as it contained no mercy, ever rigorously exacted its penalties and claims. It had therefore brought death in upon the husband (compare Romans 7), and was now seeking to reduce his two sons to bondage. What wonder was it that this poor widow groaned under her intolerable burden, and that she should be constrained to seek for deliverance? To whom then does she have recourse for help and succor? It is to Elisha, type of the risen Christ. He responds immediately, and says, "What shall I do for thee? tell

me,what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not anything in the house, save a pot of oil.” Mark the difference between man’s thought and God’s. The pot of oil was as nothing to the poor widow. She had not anything, “save a pot of oil.” This was everything in the eyes of God, and the question of Elisha was intended to elicit the fact that there was this pot of oil in the house. Now oil is ever in Scripture emblematical of the Holy Spirit; and, as we shall now see, the possession of the Holy Spirit (we say nothing here of the necessary experiences before the goal is reached) is the only way of practical deliverance from the yoke of the law. The widow, up to this point, was ignorant of the value of the only possession to be found in the house; and indeed she was not yet in the condition of soul to use what she really possessed. Elisha therefore said, “Go, borrow the vessels abroad of all thy neighbors, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and thy sons, and shall pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full.” Faith at once was called out into lively exercise. She obeyed the prophet, and she discovered that the supply of oil was illimitable, or rather only limited by the capacity of her empty vessels; for when the vessels were full, she said to her son, “Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, There is not a vessel more. And the oil stayed.” She still was unable to avail herself of her treasure, and hence she went once more to “the man of God: And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest.” She thus discovered that it was the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus that could make her free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2), and also that she must continue to live in the Rower of the same Spirit. (Romans 8:13; Galatians 5:25)

There is another teaching lying more on the surface, and yet of the highest consequence. The widow in her sore distress found, as taught of the Lord, that she was not straitened in God, that there was an abundant outflow from His resources more than equal to all her need, and that faith brought her into living connection with the fountain of all relief and succor. We too thus learn that God is never weary of meeting our need, that our demands (as represented by the empty vessels) can never be too many. Come as often as we may, and with as many vessels as our faith can bring, we also shall find that His fountain of grace and blessing can fill them all. Surely then we may open our mouth wide, that He may fill it.

Present Testimony: Volume 2, 1850, Child of Resurrection, The

Every child of faith in past dispensations, as well as in the present, may be truly termed a child of resurrection. God, whose voice faith hears, and who is Himself its object, is the one "who quickeneth the dead and calleth those things which be not as though they were." (Rom. 4:17.) Of this our father Abraham is the great example. But examples of this abound in the Old Testament; examples, too, similar in circumstances as well as in principle to that of Abraham. Manoah and his wife-Hannah, the wife of Elkanah-and, not to mention others, this godly woman in the history before us, were each of them, examples in their day of the all-quickening power of that God in whom they believed. Their faith might not be strong like that of Abraham; but it had (like his) for its object the power, and for its warrant the word, of "God who quickeneth the dead." And so now, every poor sinner who through grace receives God's testimony to His Son, believes in Him "who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification." (Rom. 4:25.) Yea, and "by Him" (Jesus) all such " do believe in God, that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." (1 Peter 1:21.) Christ risen and glorified, and God who raised and glorified Him, are thus the objects of our faith; yea, and more than that, the very faith which does thus rest on Christ and believe in God who raised Him from the dead, is itself the result of the quickening power of the Holy Ghost. It is "the faith of the operation of God." (Col. 2:12.) Us "hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." (Eph. 2:1.) So that in every sense, and that from the very outset, the child of faith is the child of resurrection.

But the God of resurrection, thus known to faith from the first, has to be known as such all through. Blessings which, when we receive them, are felt to come not from any resources of our own, nay, nor through any natural power we possess, but direct from Him "who quickeneth the dead," when we have enjoyed them for a season, come to be regarded by us as things of course; we fail to realize that the tenure on which we hold them, as well as the ground on which we received them, is the resurrection-power of God. Hence many of those dealings of God with us, by which we are brought to sympathize with Paul when he said, "For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life; but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead who delivered us from so great a death, and cloth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us." (2 Cor. 1:8-10.) Is not this the lesson, brethren beloved, which our God designs that we should learn from all that has occurred? When our souls first drank of the deep joy of fellowship in the Spirit, was it not in direct and conscious dependence on the resurrection-power of God? Was not the flesh, the old man, accounted by us, even as it is accounted of God, crucified with Christ? Was there not, as the fruit of this, the practical denial of all the resources of nature, of self in its fairest forms, as competent in any way to worship or serve God acceptably? And was there not a simplicity of dependence on Him who having given His Son for us, and given us to His Son, had given us besides, as the seal of His love, that Holy Spirit, the Comforter, by whom we were conscious of being vitally united to Christ and made members one of another? Was there not, I ask, a simplicity of reliance on His presence, on His teaching, on His power, as that by which alone there could be wrought in us or amongst us what would glorify our God, or refresh and edify one another? But when he had thus wrought; and we had tasted a joy which many of us had never expected on this side the glory, was there not a transfer (gradual, and so almost imperceptible, but not less certain) of our confidence from Him whose presence gave this joy, to the joy which His presence gave, and to all its varied fruits in the happy worship and living service of those amongst whom He had thus manifested Himself? Did there not creep in a looking upon these things as a matter of course without the continued and deepening recognition of the source from whence they flowed to us poor saved sinners, and of the. Power by which alone they could be maintained and increased amongst us? And why the blighting which has followed? Is it that our God would resume what His royal bounty had freely bestowed? No; " His gifts and calling are without repentance." But He would have us learn that we can no more retain than obtain blessings of ourselves; that we can no more keep out death than we could at first rescue ourselves from its dominion: that it is with God who quickeneth, the dead that we have to do; that it is Him and Him alone we have to trust. Happy for our souls, beloved, if we should be taught this lesson. Bitter and humbling as may be the process, through which our God conducts us, the lesson of resurrection twice learned will more than repay all the sorrow of learning it; and what is of infinitely greater consequence, our God will have all the glory, all the praise. But let us turn to the narrative. There are sweet truths unfolded in it besides this great one, for which, doubtless, it is specially recorded.

To trace the family likeness among God's people is a refreshing and heart-cheering exercise. Nor does it in the least derogate from His glory whose "workmanship" the saint is, to observe in Scripture the marks by which His "workmanship" is distinguished. Works, except they be the

result of faith, the fruit of the Spirit, are worthless, and worse than worthless; but the work of faith and labor of love and patience of hope are precious in God's eyes; and it is for our profit to meditate on the records of such in God's holy word. A lovely specimen of the workmanship of the Spirit is presented to us in the Shunammite, whose faith, with its fruits, trials, and triumphs, forms the subject of the narrative before us.

One fruit of faith much commended in Scripture is that enjoined upon us in such passages as the following; "Given to hospitality." (Rom. 12:13.) "Use hospitality one to another without grudging." (1 Peter 4:9.) "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." (Heb. 13:2.) "I was a stranger, and ye took me in." (Matt. 25:35.) What a beautiful instance of such hospitality is presented to us here. "And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that as oft as he passed by; he turned in thither to eat bread." The lowly husbandman of Abel-Meholah a welcome guest with the "great woman" of Shunem is a lovely illustration of what grace can do. Nor did she know, as it would appear, anything of him when she first "constrained him to eat bread" save the homely garb, the unpretending exterior of the man.

Another fruit of faith much noted in Scripture, is the capacity of discerning and owning "like precious faith" in others. Its very first exercise is discernment- discernment of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. When He was here upon the earth, while He was faith's object, so was He God's great test of where there was faith and where there was not. Where there was not faith, His person and His glory were unknown and unconfessed. Where there was faith it perceived, through the veil of His humiliation, the glory that it enshrined, and confessed Him as the Christ, the Son of God, the Savior of the world. To as many as thus received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God. So now, whosoever is quickened by the Holy Ghost to behold the glory of God in the once marred face of Jesus Christ; in beholding that-receives the assurance of salvation and everlasting life. But the same faith that beholds the glory of God in its fullness there, can discern its transmitted and reflected rays in those of whom it is said, "Ye are the epistle of Christ;" of whom Christ Himself says, "Ye are the light of the world." This capacity of discernment exists, of course, in very various measures as faith is strong or weak. But more or less of it there must be in order to "love as brethren." Plainly, I must discern who are my brethren, or I cannot love them as such. Who could give a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple, if he had not the capacity of discerning the badge of discipleship? Beautiful is the display of this spiritually intuitive discernment of where God had set His mark and put His honor, in the case of this godly Shunammite. She had shown him hospitality as a stranger, "as oft as he passed by afterward, he turned in to eat bread;" but in these repeated interviews she saw enough of him to make her long on other and higher grounds to provide for him more permanent accommodation. " She said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is an holy man of God which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither." The Lord grant us, beloved, to be so in communion with Himself, that wherever His name& truly confessed, and His Spirit dwells, we may be quick to discern and joyful to own His handiwork.

The Shunammite's appreciation of the tastes and habits of her guest, is another lovely trait which the Spirit has been pleased to note in this delineation of her ways. It was Martha's failure, that, while she really and devotedly loved the Lord, she so little appreciated what His glory really was, and the errand on which He had come from heaven to earth, that she thought to please Him by providing for Him a sumptuous feast. To think of entertaining God manifest in the flesh with a feast! Not so Mary, She knew that He had come, not to be ministered to, but to minister; and to give His life a ransom for many. She spread the table and provided the feast that He had really come for the purpose of enjoying, by sitting at His feet, and opening her heart to drink in the words of eternal life from His lips. Like-minded with her was this godly Shunammite. She had Martha's hospitality with Mary's appreciation of her guest; and her guest was but a mortal, a child of God indeed, but still a mortal man. Martha's and Mary's guest was the Lord from heaven. Elisha has a hearty welcome to the hospitalities of the Shunammite; there is even an apartment set aside for his use, where he may turn in and tarry as long as he will. But what a tale does its furniture tell! No provision for the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life. A bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick, are all that it contains. A pilgrim's accommodation skews how entirely the Shunammite had appreciated the pilgrim character of her guest. Would that there were more of this heavenly simplicity amongst us, beloved. Would that our hearts were so in heaven, that we might feel, as to one another, that even our hospitality must be after a heavenly sort; cordial, large-hearted, without grudging, as the Apostle says; but yet, not as though we looked upon each other as in the flesh, or thought we could gratify one another by making provision for its lusts.

"Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have," is the exhortation of the Apostle. How the spirit of it was exemplified by the Shunammite. Elisha instructs Gehazi to say to her, "Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care, what is to be done for thee? Wouldst thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?" God had wrought a great deliverance by Elisha for the king and his allies but a short time before; and thus, for the season, he could doubtless have had of the king whatever he had asked. But the Shunammite wishes for nothing that the king or the captain of the host can give. "I dwell among mine own people," was the reply of her contented spirit. Can we, in any way, so powerfully testify to the world of its vanity, and the emptiness of all its prizes, as by this holy superiority to its attractions and its offers? If anything can tell on the conscience of a 'worldling, it is to see a child of God so conscious of his portion in his Father's love, that he declines, when it is in his power, to accept of a portion here.

But if the prophet of Abel-Meholah, like an Apostle of later days, be destitute of silver and gold; and if the Shunammite cares not for what Elisha's temporary favor with the king might have procured her, he has interest at another court, and she refuses not what the prophet promises on behalf of that " God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth things which be not as though they were." She is childless, and her husband is old; but the prophet assures her that at the set time she shall embrace a son. The promise thus given, God fulfills; and a child direct from His hand, crowns the faith which had already produced such lovely fruits. What that child must have been to the Shunammite. With what inexpressible tenderness must she have nursed him in infancy, and watched the unfolding of his faculties, as from infancy he passed to boyhood, and from that to youth. The mother only that loves the Lord, and nurses and brings up her offspring for Him, can form the least idea, and even hers must be but faith, of what that mother's feelings were; the deep throbbings of her heart, as she looks onward to the future in connection with the prospects of her child; and the calm but deeper joy which must have often pervaded and filled her heart, while encouraged by the occasion and circumstances of his birth, she trusted in God that that future was charged with blessing. But she had to learn the lesson already referred to, as the great moral of the history; and well will it be for us, if God's record of His dealings with her should be used of Him to aid us in learning that lesson too.

"And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers. And he said unto his father, My head, my head! And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother. And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died." What a stroke was this I The child with the birth of which her faith had been crowned, and which she had received, as it were,

direct from God's hand, snatched from her embraces and cold in death! And was this God's reward of the care which He had put into her heart to have for His servant, the prophet? Was it for this that God had made Himself known as the Quickener of the dead, causing the barren to bear, only that when the child was grown, he might be suddenly torn away? No, she has better thoughts of God than this. It is not that she questions His right to resume what His mercy had bestowed. But her faith gathers from the past, what God's meaning and purpose were in dealing with her as He had done, and she is not without hope even now. "But her son is dead." What then? It was from God who quickeneth the dead she had received her son. "But what can she do?" Nay, that is not the question. What can, or rather, what can not God do? That is faith's question, and thus there is no case too extreme for faith, because there is none too extreme for God. Faith knows and trusts. "With God all things are possible."

A brother once wrote me, "Faith rejoices in a dead lift." And so it is. Circumstances which produce utter despondency where there is not faith, are but to faith the occasion for more singly and entirely trusting God. "And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him and went out. And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God and come again." The husband remonstrates. It is neither the new moon nor the Sabbath day; and his faith goes not beyond the ordinary exercises of devotion, if indeed he be a man of faith at all. Faith like his wife's, who does not give up her son though dead, because she knows Him who quickeneth the dead, he seems to have no thought of. But his wife can neither be detained nor turned aside. "It shall be well;" is all the reply she makes, and hastens to the man of God to Carmel.

But here she is to meet with other trials of her faith. If there was any one or anything in danger of being between her soul and God, it was the prophet, the man of God. To own him as the prophet of God was indeed at that time the test of faith in Israel. Singularly had God honored him in fulfilling His promise in God's behalf that this woman should have a son. But it was possible then, as, alas we find it now, for the channel more or less to have the place with the soul which only belongs to the source from whence it is supplied. At all events the Shunammite is to learn that even the man of God of himself can do nothing for her. To all the inquiries of Gehazi she has but one answer "Well:" she is not to be detained by him. "And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet; but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the Lord bath hid it from me and not told me." One word from her reveals the whole, and the prophet at once despatches Gehazi with his master's staff to lay upon the face of the child. Whether the prophet did this under Divine guidance for a lesson to Gehazi as well as to try the Shunammite's faith; or whether, as the case had been hid from him by the Lord, so now he was left to act in his own wisdom and strength without any direct guidance from God, I would not say. It is suggested as an inquiry for the prayerful consideration of brethren in the Lord. In either case the result is plain. The Shunammite can no more be put off with Gehazi and his master's staff than before she could be detained by her husband's expostulations, or Gehazi's inquiries. "And the mother of the child said As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose and followed her." They meet Gehazi returning from his fruitless journey, one of a cloud of witnesses that the forms and circumstances by which the actings of faith may be attended are all nothing apart from faith itself, and the power of the living God on which faith rests. Elisha's staff in Gehazi's hands is as powerless as any other piece of wood. The prophet's staff without the prophet's faith accomplishes nothing: there was neither voice nor hearing: wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, " The child is not awaked." The Lord grant us to lay to heart the serious lesson which these words convey!

What a scene ensues! There had been enough already to make even Elisha feel that it was no ordinary case, and that through it God was dealing with him as well as with the Shunammite. That it should have been hid entirely from him-that Gehazi's journey with the staff (undertaken at the prophet's instance) should have proved entirely unavailing-was enough to awaken the inquiry in the soul of the prophet, whether God would teach him too that the power was not in him, but in God Himself. But even if Elisha had to learn this lesson more deeply than he had as yet learned, it was not that his faith in God might be shaken or weakened, but tried and strengthened. Tried it was; but not shaken. "When Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed." The mother's faith had placed the dead body there. "He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord." Brethren, do you know what it is thus to retire, with some matter that can only be settled between God and you? There are times when the presence of the nearest friend, even the most valued saint, is felt to be an encumbrance. He shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord. The prophet, a dead corpse, and the living God, the Quickener of the dead! "And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and he stretched himself upon the child." So completely does he identify himself with the one for whom he intercedes. It is as though he would tell God that if the child were not restored to life, he could only lie there with him in death. What faith! What holy boldness! Nor is it left without encouragement-" the flesh of the child waxed warm." There were some signs of returning vitality to strengthen the prophet's faith and encourage him to persevere. " Then he returned and walked in the house to and fro; and went up and stretched himself upon him." What is all this the witness of, but of that agony of prayer, that energy of faith, of which, alas! in our day, and in our poor souls, we know so little? " But the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." "The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes." Prayer was heard; faith was crowned; God showed Himself once more to be in very truth the God of resurrection; and when the mother came in to the prophet into the chamber, he said, "Take up thy son." "Then she went in and fell at his feet {her heart too full to utter a single word], and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out."

The Lord grant us, like her, to know nothing, to regard nothing, but Himself-privileged as we are to know Him, the Resurrection and the Life, unknown to saints in any former dispensation, in an intimacy of communion. May we acknowledge indeed, and mourn, the sins which have turned our joy into lamentation; but may neither these, nor anything, be allowed to hide from the view of faith "God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth things which be not as though they were."

Y.

Christian Truth: Volume 6, Law and Grace Exemplified: The Pot of Oil

A widow of one of God's faithful servants, reduced to the greatest straits through poverty, cried to the prophet Elisha. She discloses the exigency of her position. Her husband was dead, her creditor was pressing his claim, and her two sons in consequence were about to be sent into slavery. What should she do? H e r husband's faithfulness when living she recalls to the man of God, but that will not appease the creditor nor mitigate the righteous demands of the law. The claim she admits, its validity was incontestable, the proceedings too of the creditor were

unimpeachable. (Exod. 21:2; Lev. 25:39.) He might have been merciful—that rested with him—but none could challenge his right to exact what was his due, and the law which he put into action knew no pity. Her position was a sad one; she felt it; and turning to the prophet in her distress she confessed by her very action the hopelessness of her meeting the difficulty.

This is an apt illustration of the position in which the remnant of the Jews will find themselves in a future day, with the claims of the law pressing on them, the consciousness that the claims are just adding to their misery, without the power to discharge them and free themselves from the penalty they have incurred. This is a position they will be in, but one in which we have never been placed by God. See Gal. 3:13, 24, Eph. 2:15, and Col. 2:14, where the condition of the Jew as distinct from the Gentile is clearly marked. But though we have never been so placed by God, if we would value aright His grace, we must apprehend the helpless, wretched condition of what it must be to be under law. Hence, while the position of the widow does not correspond to the one we were in as children of Adam, we can get instruction from it as we see how grace worked on her behalf.

The prophet attends to her cry; but before he tells her what to do, he draws out from her the poverty of her condition. To his question as to what she has in the house, she mentions but one article, a pot of oil. Short was the catalog of her possessions-one pot of oil. Well might she cry for help, whose earthly goods could be so easily summed up. Had this pot of oil been of value, would she not have sold it? but it appears to have been an object worthless in the estimation of her creditor, and of no account in her own. He had not seized it; she had not disposed of it. The value both of them set on it is thus clearly manifested. She was to learn what others have learned since her day, that an object of little account in the eyes of the world is just that by which full deliverance may be effected. What use could this pot of oil be to her now? might have been her thought, as both Jews and Gentiles have underrated the value of the Lord's death on the cross. The Jews require a sign, the Greeks sought after wisdom, but the Apostle preached Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, to the Greeks foolishness, but to those saved, whether Jews or Greeks, Christ, God's power and God's wisdom (1 Cor. 1). The judgment of both her creditor and herself as to the value of the article having been elicited, the ground is cleared for God to work.

The prophet bids her to borrow abroad vessels of all her neighbors-empty vessels, and not a few—and then with closed doors on herself and her sons she was to pour out into all of them, and set aside that which was full. To these directions she faithfully adhered. Had she reasoned about them she would probably have not done what he bade her. Who ever heard of vessels filled without the needful liquid to pour into them? But faith does not reason; it counts on God, and is obedient to His Word. With closed doors they went to work. God's dealings with souls are often in secret, for there must be personal and heart work-the effects appear openly afterward. With closed doors then they worked, and found that the word came true. All the vessels were filled with oil. Elisha had not told her how much would flow but she found, as souls do, that the reality surpassed the anticipation. That little pot, previously of small account in her eyes, supplied oil for all the vessels-none remained empty, nor even half filled. She poured into the vessels as her sons brought them to her; she stopped only when they were filled with oil. She could count how many vessels she had borrowed; she learned afterward the value of what she had got. But there was one thing she never knew, and that was how much oil could have flowed out of the pot. She never fathomed the depth of God's resources. She never drained the fountain of her blessings.

The vessels filled with oil- she acted aright and told the prophet to whom she had opened out her grief of the abundant supply she had obtained. Should not all recipients of grace acknowledge to Him, to whom they are indebted for it, what it is He has given them? Elisha, hearing of what she had received, told her what use she was to make of it. "Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt, and live thou and thy children of the rest." The legal claim must be met. That Israel too will find in a future day. The widow could never have met it. She had felt all the pressure of it, and the anticipation of the consequence which must flow from it. She now was to have her deliverance from the burden, not by repudiating it, but by having the debt paid in full. "Pay thy debt," said Elisha. He acknowledged the legal claim. To have acted otherwise would have been to condemn God's Word which sanctioned the creditor's rights. God's Word was upheld, and the widow relieved. The claim was met, the creditor was satisfied, and the sons were free.

But was this all? It was all she had wanted, but would it have sufficed? We can answer, No, it would not. The claim simply met could not insure her against a similar trouble hereafter; nor could it have provided for her everyday wants. Her incapability to keep out of debt remained, as far as she was concerned, unaltered. She had not been able to keep out of trouble. She had no more power to preserve herself from it, if only the debt was discharged. How little souls understand so living a fact! But God knew what she wanted. He gauged the measure of her need; but He estimated too her incapability for the future, so the prophet tells her, "Live thou and thy children of the rest." That by which the debt had been canceled afforded future sustainment for her and her children as well. Here this history closes. It began with the widow in poverty; it ends with the widow in plenty. All was from God, for grace is from Him. She had learned what her condition was, and that she had nothing to give; she finds what it is to receive. The claim was met and she lived on the provision of God's grace. Surely the application is plain. He by whom the debt alone can be canceled, is the One on whom the soul should ever after feed.

Christian Truth: Volume 37, Child of Resurrection, The

A lovely example of the workmanship of the Spirit is presented to us in the Shunammite woman, whose faith with its fruits, trials, and triumphs, is the subject before us. One fruit of faith much commended in Scripture is that enjoined upon us in such passages as the following: "given to hospitality" (Rom. 12:13). "Use hospitality one to another without grudging." 1 Pet. 4:9. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Heb. 13:2. "I was a stranger, and ye took Me in." Matt. 25:35. What a beautiful instance of such hospitality is presented to us here. "And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where was a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And so it was, that, as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread." The lowly husbandman of Abel-Meholah, a welcome guest with the "great woman" of Shunem, is a lovely illustration of what grace can do. Nor did she know, as it would appear, anything of him when she first "constrained him to eat bread," save the homely garb, the unpretentious exterior of the man.

Another fruit of faith much noted in Scripture is the capacity of discerning and owning "like precious faith" in others. Who could give a cup of cold water to a disciple in the name of a disciple if he had not the capacity of discerning the badge of discipleship? Beautiful is the display of this spiritual discernment of where God had set His mark and put His honor in the case of this godly Shunammite. She had shown him hospitality as a stranger, and afterward "as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread," but in these repeated interviews she saw

enough of him to make her long from a deeper motive to provide a more permanent accommodation for him. "She said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God, which passeth by us continually. Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither." The Lord grant us, beloved, to be so in communion with Himself that wherever His name is truly confessed, and His Spirit dwells, we may be quick to discern and joyful to own His handiwork.

The Shunammite's appreciation of the tastes and habits of her guest is another lovely trait which the Spirit has been pleased to note in her ways. It was Martha's failure (Luke 10) that while she truly and devotedly loved the Lord, she little appreciated His glory and the errand on which He had come from heaven to earth; she thought to please Him by providing for Him a sumptuous feast. To think of entertaining God manifest in the flesh with a feast! Not so Mary. She knew that He had come not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. She spread the table and provided the feast that He had really come for the purpose of enjoying, by sitting at His feet and opening her heart to drink in the words of eternal life from His lips. This godly Shunammite shared the same characteristic. She had Martha's hospitality with Mary's appreciation of her guest, and her guest was but mortal, a servant of God indeed, but still a mortal man. Martha and Mary's guest was the Lord from heaven. Elisha enjoyed a hearty welcome at the home of the Shunammite; there was even an apartment set aside for his use, where he might turn in and tarry as long as he would. But what a tale does its furniture tell! There was no provision for the lust of the eye, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life. A bed, a table, a stool, and a candlestick are what it contained. A pilgrim's accommodation showed how entirely the Shunammite had appreciated the pilgrim character of her guest. Would that there were more of this heavenly simplicity among us, beloved. Would that our hearts were so in heaven that we might feel, as to one another, that even our hospitality must be after a godly sort-cordial, large-hearted, without grudging, as the Apostle says-but yet not as though we looked upon each other as in the flesh, or thought we could gratify one another by making provision for its lusts.

"Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have," is the exhortation of the Apostle. How the spirit of it was exemplified by the Shunammite! Elisha instructed Gehazi to say to her, "Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what is to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host?" God had wrought a great deliverance by Elisha for the king and his allies but a short time before, and thus, for the season, he could doubtless have had of the king whatever he asked. But the Shunammite wished for nothing that the king or the captain of the host could give. "I dwell among mine own people," was the reply of her contented spirit. Can we in any way so powerfully testify to the world of its vanity and the emptiness of all it offers? If anything can tell on the conscience of a worldling, it is to see a child of God so conscious of his portion in his Father's love that he declines when it is in his power to accept a portion here.

But if Elisha, like an apostle of later days, was destitute of silver and gold, and if the Shunammite did not care for what his temporary favor with the king might have procured her, it was because he and she had interest in other things, and she did not refuse what the prophet promised on behalf of "God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." She was childless and her husband was old, but the prophet assured her that at the set time she should embrace a son. The promise thus given, God fulfilled it, and a child, direct from his hand, crowned the faith which had already produced such lovely fruits. How the Shunammite must have loved her son. With what inexpressible tenderness she must have nursed him in infancy, and watched the unfoldings of his faculties as from infancy he passed to boyhood, and from that to youth. But she had to learn the lesson that God is the God of resurrection, and it will be well for us if God's record of His dealings with her should be used of Him to help us learn that lesson too.

"And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers. And he said unto his father, My head, my head! And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother. And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died." What a stroke was this! The child whose birth had crowned her faith and whom she had received, as it were, direct from God's hand, had died. Was this God's reward for the care which He had put into her heart to have for His servant, the prophet? Was it for this that God made Himself known as the quickener of the dead, causing the barren to bear, only that when the child was born he might be suddenly torn away? No, she had better thoughts of God than this. It was not that she questioned His right to take what His mercy had bestowed. But her faith gathered from the past what God's meaning and purpose was in dealing with her as He had done, and she was not without hope. But her son was dead. What then? It was from God, who quickens the dead, that she had received her son. What could she do? That was not the question. What rather, could God do? That was faith's question, and thus there was no case too extreme for faith because there is none too extreme for God. Faith knows and trusts. "With God all things are possible."

Circumstances which produce utter despondency where there is not faith, are to faith only the occasion for more singly and entirely trusting God. "And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door upon him, and went out. And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again." The husband remonstrated. It was neither the new moon nor the Sabbath day, and his faith went not beyond the ordinary exercises of devotion, if indeed he were a mat; of faith at all. Faith like his wife's, who did not give up her son though dead, because she knew Him who quickens the dead, he seemed to have no thought of. But his wife could neither be detained nor turned aside. "It shall be well," is all the reply she made, and hastened to the man of God at Carmel.

But here she was to meet with other trials of her faith. If there was anyone or anything in danger of being between her soul and God, it was the prophet, the man of God. To own him as the prophet of God was indeed at that time the test of faith in Israel. God had honored him in fulfilling his promise, on God's behalf, that the woman should have a son. But it was possible then, as it is now, for the channel through which blessing flows to come between the soul and the Source from whence it was supplied. At all events, the Shunammite was to learn that even the man of God could of himself do nothing for her. To all the inquiries of Gehazi she had only one answer-"Well." She was not to be detained by him. "And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul is vexed within her: and the Lord hath hid it from me, and hath not told me." One word from her revealed the whole, and the prophet at once dispatched Gehazi with his master's staff to lay upon the face of the child. Whether the prophet did this under divine guidance for a lesson to Gehazi, as well as to try the Shunammite's faith, or whether, as the matter had been hidden from him by the Lord, he acted in his own wisdom and strength without any direct guidance from God, I would not say. It is suggested as an inquiry for prayerful consideration. In either case the result is plain. The Shunammite could no more be put off with Gehazi and His master's staff than she could be detained by her husband's expostulations or Gehazi's inquiries. "And the mother of the child said, As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her."

They met Gehazi returning from his fruitless journey-one of many examples that the forms and circumstances which are seen when faith is in action are all nothing apart from faith itself and the power of the living God on which faith rests. Elisha's staff in

Gehazi's hands was as powerless as any other piece of wood. The prophet's staff without the prophet's faith accomplished nothing. "There was neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked." The Lord grant us to be exercised by the serious lesson which these words convey.

What a scene follows! Already there had been enough to make even Elisha feel that it was no ordinary case, and that through it God was dealing with him as well as with the Shunammite. Perhaps the fact that Gehazi's journey with the staff (undertaken at the prophet's request) proved entirely futile was enough to awaken the inquiry in the soul of the prophet whether God was not teaching him, as well, that the power was not in him, but in God Himself. But even if Elisha had to learn this lesson more deeply than he had as yet learned, it was not that his faith in God might be shaken or weakened, but tried and strengthened. Tried it was, but not shaken.

"When Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed." The mother's faith had placed the dead body there. "He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the Lord." The prophet, a dead corpse, and the living God, the quickener of the dead! "And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child." So completely did he identify himself with the one for whom he interceded that it was as though he would tell God that if the child were not restored to life he could only lie there with him in death. What faith! What holy boldness!

He is given encouragement. "The flesh of the child waxed warm." There were some signs of returning vitality to strengthen the prophet's faith and encourage him to persevere. "Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him." What is all this the witness of but of that agony of prayer, that energy of faith, of which we know so little? But "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Jas. 5:16. "The child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes." Prayer was heard; faith was crowned. God showed Himself once more to be in very truth the God of resurrection. And when the mother came in to the prophet into the chamber, he said, "Take up thy son. Then she went in, and fell at his feet [her heart too full to utter a single word], and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out."

The Lord grant us, like this Shunammite, to know nothing, to regard nothing but Himself. How privileged we are to know Him, the Resurrection and the Life, unknown to saints in any former dispensation, in the intimacy of communion. May we acknowledge it and confess if the sin of unbelief has robbed us of our joy, but may neither this nor anything else be allowed to hide from the view of faith "God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were."

Christian Truth: Volume 20, Borrow Not a Few: Faith's Warrant

2 Kings 4:3

These words were uttered by the prophet Elisha in the ear of a distressed widow who had come to him with her tale of sorrow. And, assuredly, the words of God's prophet did but express the grace of the prophet's God. He knew well on whose behalf he was speaking—on whose grace he was counting—on whose treasury he was drawing. He did not say, Take care you do not borrow too many. He knew this was impossible. Faith never yet overdrew its account on God's bank. It has "unsearchable riches" to its credit there. Faith never yet brought an empty vessel to God that He had not oil to fill. In the case of this widow, the oil only ceased to flow when there was no longer an empty vessel to receive it. The source was exhaustless; it was faith's promise to keep the channel open. It is the business of faith to "open thy mouth wide." God's part is to "fill it." We cannot expect too largely from God.

Dear Christian reader, let the remembrance of these things have the happy effect of encouraging your heart in the life of faith. Think of these precious words, "Borrow not a few." They come to you direct from your Father's heart of tender love. He wants you to draw largely upon His infinite resources. You cannot possibly expect too much from the hand and heart of Jesus.

Is your poor heart bowed down beneath the weight of sorrow? Has the cold grasp of death seized upon the darling object of your affections? Has a serious blank been made in your heart and your home—a blank which no earthly object can fill? Then, remember, the heart of Jesus is overflowing with tender sympathy. He has felt your sorrow. He counts your sighs, and puts your tears into His bottle. If He were here, He would not chide your grief. He would sit down beside you and mingle His tears with yours. But, you say, He is not here. True, but He is at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, and you can count with certainty on the sympathy of His heart. "Go," then, bereaved and sorrowing one, "borrow thee vessels,... even empty, vessels," in which to receive the abundant consolations which flow from the heart of Christ, whose encouraging word to you is, "Borrow not a few."

It may be, however, that the reader is not yet bowed down under the weight of sorrow. His heart is established in grace; and the beloved circle in which his affections have been wont to play, remains unbroken. But, then, family or commercial cares press upon his spirit. His children are not going on as he would like, or his business prospects are gloomy. If such be my reader's position, he too can learn a sweet and seasonable lesson from Elisha's words. He can go forth and borrow his empty vessels, for there is "oil" enough for him, even "the oil of gladness" for his burdened spirit. To such a one, the word is, "Cast thy burden on the Lord." He will surely sustain. "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." 1 Pet. 5:7. "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Phil. 4:6. Do not carry the burden for another hour. Cast it directly, cast it entirely, upon the One who is as able as He is willing, and as willing as He is able, to sustain it. In a word, "Go, borrow thee vessels,... even empty vessels," i n t o which the copious streams of divine peace may flow for your perplexed and anxious spirit. And, remember the gracious charge, "Borrow not a few."

But these lines may, perhaps, meet the eye of someone whose case has not as yet been exactly met. His exercise does not spring from a bereaved heart, or a spirit perplexed about domestic or commercial affairs. The fact is, the entire scene around has repulsed and disappointed him. And yet, it is not so much the world, for no true Christian would think of expecting anything from it. But, in the very midst of his Christian friends, all his hopes have been blighted. He had looked at those Christians from a distance, and they seemed to present the appearance of

all that was lovely and attractive. Yet, alas! on coming among them, he did not realize his fondly cherished hope; and his heart, once big with expectation, is now furrowed by sore disappointment. This is no uncommon case. There is many a furrowed heart within the precincts of the Church of God. But, blessed be God, the heart's deep furrows are but so many "vessels,... empty vessels," in which to receive the streams of comfort and solace emanating from "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." Heb. 13:8. And the heart that has many furrows is ready furnished with vessels "not a few." God will surely fill those vessels; and then one comes back to be a channel of blessing in the scene which had disappointed him.

In a word, then, whatever be the state or condition of the soul—whether it be a question of sorrow, difficulty, or disappointment—the message from God is one and the same. "Go, borrow thee vessels"-and, mark, it is "empty vessels"-vessels "not a few." What magnificent grace shines in the words "empty" and "not a few"! Our vessels must be empty. God will not pour into a vessel half filled with creature supplies. In every case, the vessel must be absolutely empty, for only then is it fully manifest that the "oil" has come directly from God Himself. The word "empty" shuts out the creature. The words "not a few" leave room for God to come in.

Beloved reader, these are simple truths; but, simple as they are, they stand connected with the grand essential element of the divine life in the soul. Would that they were more deeply engraven on our hearts by the eternal pen of God the Holy Ghost!

Christian Truth: Volume 2, Faith's Warrant: "Borrow Not a Few"

(Read 2 Kings 4:1.7)

These words were uttered by the prophet Elisha in the ear of a distressed widow who had come to him with her tale of sorrow. And assuredly the words of God's prophet did but express the grace of the prophet's God. He knew well on whose behalf he was speaking—on whose grace he was counting—on whose treasury he was drawing. He did not say, "Take care you do not borrow too many." He knew this was impossible. Faith never yet overdrew its account in God's bank. It has "unsearchable riches" to its credit there. Faith never yet brought an empty vessel to God that He had not oil to fill. In the case of this widow, the oil only ceased to flow when there was no longer an empty vessel to receive it. The source was exhaustless; it was faith's promise to keep the channel open. It is the business of faith to "open thy mouth wide"; God's part is to "fill it." We cannot expect too largely from God.

Dear Christian reader, let the remembrance of these things have the happy effect of encouraging your heart in the life of faith. Think of these precious words: "Borrow not a few." They come to you direct from your Father's heart of tender love. He wants you to draw largely upon His infinite resources. You cannot possibly expect too much from the hand and heart of Jesus.

Is your heart disturbed by the sense—the painful and humiliating sense—of indwelling sin? "Go, borrow thee vessels... even empty vessels" in which to receive the rich supplies of grace that flow from a crucified and risen Christ—your Surety—your Advocate—your great High Priest. And bear in mind those divinely liberal words, "Borrow not a few." Jesus has borne all your sins upon the cross, and put them away forever. The eye of God can never see your sins again. He has cast them all behind His back. He has actually reaped a harvest of glory by putting them away. Divine grace has reaped a richer harvest in the midst of a world of sinners than ever it could have reaped amidst the host of unfallen angels. "Go," therefore, "borrow... vessels... empty vessels;... not a few."

Again, is your poor heart bowed down beneath the weight of sorrow? Has the cold grasp of death seized upon the darling object of your affections? Has a serious blank been made in your heart and your home—a blank which no earthly object can fill up? Then remember the heart of Jesus is overflowing with tender sympathy. He has felt your sorrow. He counts your sighs, and puts your tears into His bottle. If He were here He would not chide your grief. He would sit down beside you and mingle His tears with yours. But you say, "He is not here." True, but He is at the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, and you can count with certainty on the sympathy of His heart. "Go," then, bereaved and sorrowing one, "borrow thee vessels,... even empty vessels," in which to receive the abundant consolations which flow from the heart of Christ, whose encouraging word to you is, "Borrow not a few."

It may be, however, that the reader is neither troubled about the question of sin, nor yet bowed down under the weight of sorrow. His heart is established in grace; and the beloved circle in which his affections have been wont to play remains unbroken. But then family or commercial cares press upon his spirit. His children are not going on as he would like, or his business prospects are gloomy. If such be my reader's position, he too can learn a sweet and seasonable lesson from Elisha's words. He can go forth and borrow his empty vessels, for there is "oil" enough for him, even the "oil of gladness" for his burdened spirit. To such a one the word is, "Cast thy burden on the Lord." He will surely sustain. "Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you." "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and

supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God." Do not carry the burden for another hour. Cast it directly, cast it entirely, upon the One who is as able as He is willing, and as willing as He is able, to sustain it. In a word, "Go, borrow thee vessels... empty vessels" into which the copious streams of divine peace may flow for your perplexed and anxious spirit. And remember the gracious charge, "Borrow not a few."

But these lines may, perhaps, meet the eye of someone whose case has not, as yet, been exactly met. His exercise does not spring from a troubled conscience, a bereaved heart, or a spirit perplexed about domestic or commercial affairs. The fact is, the entire scene around has repulsed and disappointed him. And yet not so much the world, for no true Christian would think of expecting aught from it. But in the very midst of his Christian friends, all his hopes have been blighted. He had looked at those Christians from a distance, and they seemed to present the appearance of all that was lovely and attractive—so separated—so heavenly—so loving. Yet alas! on coming among them, he did not realize his fondly cherished hope, and his heart, once big with expectation, is now furrowed by sore disappointment. This is no uncommon case. There is many a furrowed heart within the precincts of the Church of God. But, blessed be God, the heart's deep furrows are but so many "vessels... empty vessels," in which to receive the streams of comfort and solace emanating from "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever"; and the heart that has many furrows is ready furnished with vessels "not a few." God will surely fill those vessels; and then one comes back to he a channel of blessing in the scene which had disappointed him.

In a word then, whatever be the state or condition of the soul—whether it be a question of sin or sorrow, difficulty or disappointment—the message from God is one and the same. "Go, borrow thee vessels"—and mark, it is "empty vessels"—vessels "not a few." What magnificent grace shines in the words "empty" and "not a few"! Our vessels must be empty. God will not pour into a vessel half-filled with creature supplies. In every case the vessel must be absolutely empty; for only then is it fully manifest that the "oil" has come directly from God Himself. The word "empty" shuts out the creature. The words "not a few" leave room for God to come in.

Beloved reader, these are simple truths; but simple as they are, they stand connected with the grand essential element of the divine life in the soul. Would that they were more deeply engraver on our hearts by the eternal pen of God the Holy Ghost!

Correspondence, Correspondence: Elisha a Type of the Holy Ghost; Treasures in the Field

Ques. Is Elisha in 2 Kings 4:38 a type of the Holy Ghost? P. A.

Ans. Elijah and Elisha were prophets of Jehovah, and were used by Him. Miracles done by them, were done by the Holy Ghost, thus witnessing that they were sent of God. Elijah sought to restore Israel to the law, like John the Baptist. Elisha's miracles were like Jesus' miracles of grace, with one exception,-Jesus cursed the fig tree, symbolic of Israel in unbelief rejecting the Christ. Elisha cursed the wicked little boys who mocked God's testimony.

A well-known writer says, "When our prophet took up the mantle of his master, God was all he had; but he found Him enough for all he needed. His need, however, like that of Jesus, was not his own. It was for others he occupied his resources and strength in God. He was rich, but not for himself. Thus-he meets the inconveniences of nature-without a purse he relieves the poor-without a commissariat he feeds armies-the deadly thing he makes harmless-without bread he gives food to a multitude and gathers fragments-without medicine he heals disease-without arms he supplies a nation-though dead he communicates life.

All this tells us of Jesus. For Jesus had nothing, yet made He many rich. He had the worlds of nature and of grace for the needy children of men, and His ways shine in the reflection of His servant Elisha.”

Not all of Jesus, it is true, is seen in Him. Where could we find that? As a suffering witness against the world, Elijah, as I have before said, the rather reflects Him. But in His ways of power and grace, we see Him in Elisha.

Ques. What does "the treasure hid in the field" mean in Matt. 13:38, 44? (Referring to "Young

Christian" Jan. number page 28). P. C.

Ans. The term "Kingdom of heaven" is found in Matthew's gospel only; the other three speak of the

Kingdom of God. It is the rule of heaven on the earth. The Lord Jesus came, but was rejected by both Jews and Gentiles, leaving room for God's great purpose concerning the Church to be fulfilled.

In Matt. 12:46, 50 the Lord announces a new ground of relationship, that sets aside Israel for a time. Then He went out of the house to the seaside, and begins to teach truth that unfolds this new dispensation.

There are seven parables in this chapter 13. The first is the sower, this is preparatory; this kingdom is formed by preaching. The other six are called similitudes of the Kingdom of heaven. It is a Kingdom of mystery, the King is absent, a Kingdom without the King. The next three are external views of it as man can see it.

1st. The tares and the wheat,-the mixture of good and bad.

2nd. The mustard seed becoming a tree,-a great political influence.

3rd. The leaven,-giving its corruptive work.

Then the Lord dismisses the multitude, and goes with His disciples into the house, where He explains the parable of the field, with its judgment at the end, and gives three more parables giving us the view of God's purposes.

1st. It is the treasure hid in the field, found and hid, leading to the One who for the joy of possessing the treasure, sells all that He has, and buys the field. The purposes of God for Israel were from the foundation of the world, and were never hidden. God's purposes for the Church were before the foundation of the world, and were hidden in the counsels of God till the time came to carry out those hidden counsels. Here we get the truth that Christ has bought the field for the treasure that was in it. He bought the whole world, even the infidel that denies Him (2 Peter 2:1).

Twice Israel is called a peculiar treasure (Ex. 19:5, and Psa. 135:4), and God has many other treasures (see concordance).

But this treasure is what is precious to Christ in the world at this present time. All His saints are precious treasure to Him, but it needs another parable to describe the beauty of it, and this is found in the pearl of great price. Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it, before its existence had begun. He found it in the counsels of God, loved it, and gave Himself for it (Eph. 5:25).

Then we have yet another parable of fishermen casting a net, pulling it ashore, gathering the good into vessels, and casting away the bad, as good fishermen do (Verse 48); they are engaged with the good. Angels gather the bad (Verse 49), and that ends the Kingdom of heaven in its present form.

There are a few more parables of the Kingdom of heaven; all are about this present time, and its end (chaps. 20:1; 22:144; 25:1).

Christian Friend: Volume 13, 2 Kings 2:12

“My impression as to the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof is, that faith in Elisha connects the chariots of God with Israel. (Compare Psalms 68:17,18) Hence he calls it the chariot of Israel. He sees prophetically in the angelic power which was taking up the ascending Elijah the deliverance of Israel by the same power. For us it is the power which wrought in the Christ when God raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. Connect, for this power which will finally deliver Israel, Deuteronomy 33: 2; 2 Samuel 22:9-11; then Psalms 68:17 (it is remarkable, Adonai is among them); Habakkuk 3:3-8; Revelation 8:5; Psalms 18:12,13; Psalms 104:3,4, &c.

“I suppose Elisha knew the secret of this power when he picked up the mantle of Elijah—a power not yet displayed fully for Israel, but Elisha was in its secret, (See chapter 6:16,17) Elijah had passed through the waters by a power that rolled them back; the full deliverance will, come because that power has been exercised in the depths through which Jesus has passed. (Psalms 18:14,15) I think there is something analogous to Elisha being in the secret of a power not yet fully exercised in Revelation 5. We are surely in the secret of that chapter. The Lamb in the midst of the throne having overcome to take and open the book. The throne is not yet openly acting, and the rider on the white horse not yet come forth; but I believe we are in this secret, that even now, in all the political actings, and amid the schemes of men, there is the secret acting of the throne, because the Lamb is in the midst of it. The suffering one has overcome, and is there, and the actings of God, even now providentially, are all in connection with Him. As to crisis, it is all future; but if our eyes are open, we know now the secret of the power which will accomplish all.In 2 Kings 13:14 the vessel of this power is just departing, and the words of Joash recognize that Elisha was the vessel of the power of deliverance for Israel. It was a wonderful scene as the window was opened, and the arrow of the Lord’s deliverance sped on its way; but everything breaks down in man’s hand, and there is no faith in the king to use the power.”

T. H. R.

Things New and Old: Volume 23, Grace Meeting and Blessing Helpless Sinners

“And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren. And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him. And he went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the Lord, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day according to the saying of Elisha, which he spake.” (2 Kings 2:19-22.)

That man is a sinner most will admit. Few will deny it. Those who believe there is a God know it is true. Some are accused by conscience, others by comparing themselves with their pious neighbors; and others by scriptural instruction. Open, flagrant sins are, in this country, generally condemned. Morality moreover, is found by experience to be a better thing even for this life than vice; hence, on the ground of expediency, as well as conscience, gross sins are shunned by many. Much is said in scripture about man’s practical sinfulness and rebellion against God, much about his unclean and corrupting ways. The cross of Christ gives us the climax of man’s enmity against God, as well as shows the aboundings of divine grace. There man’s activity in evil was fully manifested.

Perhaps there is scarcely a sin that man is capable of, God has not noted in His holy word; which shows how thoroughly He knew what was in man. As to sins then, in their enormity and foulness, many have no question, for they are often acted round about us; but man’s entire helplessness toward God is a truth which we fear few will admit. The scripture statement that man is “without strength” is at direct variance with many minds, who think themselves both competent to worship and serve God, as well as to exercise a judgment on divine things. It is this truth which this brief record of one of Elisha’s miracles in the name of Jehovah strikingly illustrates.

No doubt the great point in it is the readiness and power of God, in grace, to bring in healing in Israel, where all is death and barrenness. Elijah had been God’s faithful witness to the nation’s terrible departure from God. Both king and people were such transgressors, and the prophet so felt himself alone that he said, “I only am left.” The prophet’s testimony to the people’s departure from God, He confirmed in translating him from earth to heaven. A man now had ascended into heaven, after crossing Jordan, the river of death and judgment. This Elisha saw and knew to be the secret of his power. The first thing, therefore, after this, we find Elisha conscious of, was, that Jericho was the place of barrenness and death; but he knew also that there was power in God to heal, and that when the people took their true place of owning such to be their condition, He would heal. But mark, this is the first action of Jehovah’s faithful servant for the earth’s blessing, after the man had ascended into heaven. The time will come when the people of Israel will say, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.” We know it is also written concerning our Lord’s coming again to this earth, “Unto you that fear my name [a remnant in Israel], shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.” (Mal. 4:2.)

But as we have said, this little incident illustrates the state of man as a helpless sinner, and the way in which God is now in grace bringing in healing and blessing. We have not represented here the gross sins of which man is capable, but his helplessness, his inability to bear fruit, the absence of spiritual life because he is dead in trespasses and in sins. It is solemnly true that” all have sinned,” and that the heart of man “is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked;” but it is equally true that men are “dead in sins,” “without strength” and not bringing forth any fruit to God.

The acknowledgment to the man of God was “The situation is pleasant, but the water is naught, and the ground barren.” (Ver. 19.) The circumstances were agreeable. The sun shed upon it his cheering rays, and showers descended from heaven, fructifying seasons passed in proper succession, but there was no fruit. All who passed by, while noticing the pleasantness of the situation, could not fail to be struck with its perpetual barrenness. The sun’s rays, and the showers from heaven made no difference; it was still said, “the water is naught, and the ground barren.”

And such is man. His circumstances are often pleasant; he is surrounded with kindly influences, providential mercies, and untold comforts and advantages, yet, alas! as to his actings toward God, all is really a blank; there is no life, and consequently no fruit. With all the busy movements of religious activity, men have to learn, if they come under divine teaching, that “the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is

not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, so then they that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Rom. 8:7, 8.) The unconverted man being "without strength," and "dead in sins," lives on earth as "having no hope, and without God in the world." How very solemn! He may be a nominal professor of Christianity, surrounded with exemplary Christians, and exposed to the influence of some of their privileges, yet is he a fruitless professor, like a barren fig-tree. He may even take the place of leading and instructing others, and bolster himself up on his educational accomplishments, yet, because he is not born of God, he has not life, and is but the blind leading the blind, and both falling into the ditch. He may be as diligent and scrupulous as a Pharisee in his endeavors to benefit his fellow creatures, and use every means and appliance within his power to ameliorate their distress, and, withal, be "dead in sins" and bearing no fruit acceptable unto God. There is no life, and therefore no fruit—not as some would have it, a little life, and a little fruit, for, though their circumstances may be pleasant, "the water is naught, and the ground barren."

Many will allow that man is sinful, and that he can do nothing unless assisted by God; as if man had some innate power of holiness which only needed help. But such is far from the truth. It is not help from God, but life which he needs; for "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And as to fruit-bearing, Jesus taught even His own dear and blessed disciples, who had life, that they must abide in Him even as a branch abides in the vine, as their alone source of power and blessing, or they could not bear fruit; for said He, "without me ye can do nothing."

It was not then at Jericho a question of digging or dressing, or of irrigating the land, or, in any sense, improving the old condition of things, but the bringing in of something entirely new. The gospel of the grace of God is not an improvement of the Jews' religion, but a new order of things altogether; for the gospel makes no demands on man in order to be blessed, but brings to him freely everything that he needs. It is not do and live, but live and do. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." Yes, since Jesus rose from among the dead, ascended into heaven, and sent down the Holy Ghost, the glad-tidings of peace made, and redemption accomplished have been declared. The prophet says, "Bring me a new cruse and put salt therein." It was something new, for it was meeting the need in pure grace; and to illustrate it a new cruse must be brought. Whatever salt may teach us, it is clear first, that "salt is good:" secondly, that it has "savor" and can season or preserve; thirdly, it was to be mixed with the sacrifices—"with all thine offerings, thou shalt offer salt." (See Luke 14:34; Lev. 2:13.) Its goodness, savory qualities, and association with all the offerings, clearly tells us of the grace of God to us in Christ Jesus. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:8, 9.) How wonderful that God has thus come out to us in this matchless way of grace, and thus completely and forever saved us; "for a God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8.)

But it is not the knowledge of the letter of scripture, important as it is, but the application to the soul of the grace and savor of Christ that man needs for healing. It is when the Holy Ghost brings Christ who died on the cross to save sinners, in all the sin-cleansing efficacy of His blood, deep down into the heart, that souls have life, realize peace, and are strengthened to bring forth fruit. "How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God." (Heb. 9:14.) And so we read, that Elisha "went forth unto the spring of the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith Jehovah, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more dearth and barren land. So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake." (Vers. 20-22.) Observe here the two things in this illustration which are often presented to us in the scripture for peace and rest of soul: the work of Christ, and the word of God. The salt was applied to the spring, and then it was said, "Thus saith Jehovah, I have healed these waters." The ground of peace is the work of Christ on the cross—His blood— "having made peace by the blood of his cross," and the sole authority for peace, the word of God, and therefore it must be only on the principle of faith. The word of God declares that "Whosoever believeth on him [the Lord Jesus Christ] shall receive remission of sins".... and "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." (Acts 10; Heb. 10:17.) Thus the person who takes his place by faith before God, as a helpless and guilty sinner, looks to Christ as the object of faith, reposes on the blood of Christ as the ground of peace, and rests on the unalterable word of God as the authority for peace; such are cleansed from all sin, are justified from all things, are children of God, and "have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

What saith the reader to these things? Have you taken your true place before God of a guilty, helpless sinner? And have you so reposed on the blood of Christ, as to be assured by the word of God that you are cleansed from all sin, justified from all things? If so, the language of your heart has been, when looking unto Jesus—

Christ now is risen and at the right hand of God? in virtue of what He did on the cross for us; and He has sent down the Holy Ghost, "that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

Things New and Old: Volume 22, Judgment Coming Upon Scoffers

"And he went up from thence unto Bethel: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. And he turned back, and looked on them, and cursed them in the name of the Lord. And there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them. And he went from thence to mount Carmel, and from thence he returned to Samaria."—2 Kings 2:20-25.

Men will not believe God. They despise His goodness, refuse His grace, and scoff at His declarations of the future. Like Pharaoh, they say," Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" Or, if they acknowledge God at all, it is that He is a hard Master, reaping where He has not sown, and demanding from us more than we can possibly render. Such, therefore, dread the future, tremble at the realities of death and judgment, and have no rest for their souls.

Ever since sin came into the world, man's way has been to despise God. An Old Testament prophet's testimony was, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I will work a work in your days, which ye will not believe, though it be told you." This, too, was quoted by an apostle in his preaching of the gospel, nearly seven hundred years afterward. Men in early times so despised God, that they made gods with their own hands, and worshipped them. Afterward they despised Moses' law, and despised the testimony of prophets. The Lord Jesus was despised of men. The gospel, too, was so despised, that on one occasion an apostle exclaimed, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." And now, in reference to the statements of scripture as to the coming of the Lord Jesus from heaven, we are told, "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all

things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Pet. 3:3, 4.) The truth is, that man's unbelief rejects God's word whatever it may say; while faith receives it, and rests upon it, because it is the word of Him who cannot lie.

One truth which stands most intimately in connection with the doctrine of the Lord's coming, and very precious to the believer's heart, is the change and translation of those that are Christ's at His coming. Nothing is more clearly revealed. The change in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, will at once cause mortal bodies to become immortal, and corruptible to put on incorruption; and not only so, but the dead in Christ having been raised incorruptible, and the living who are Christ's changed, they will then be together caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so be forever with the Lord.

Wondrous translation! Let the reader ponder 1 Thess. 4:16, 17. Nothing can be more plainly stated. The language is simple and precise. No doubt can remain on any fair mind, who is subject to the authority of scripture, as to its meaning. There is no trace of judgment in the scene. Not one unbeliever is there. It is Christ descending from heaven, and His saints caught up to meet Him in the air. It is not yet Christ revealed from heaven in flaming fire, or standing on the Mount of Olives,, as He surely will when He comes out of heaven with us, for then there will be no translation. Then every eye shall see Him coming to judge the world in righteousness. Then He will judge first the living, and, after a thousand years' reign, the wicked dead at the great white throne. When Christ comes for us who are His, He will descend from heaven, and we shall be caught up to meet Him in the air, and so be forever with the Lord. This is our blessed and purifying hope. God says so in His word. He has revealed it for our comfort; and the Spirit teaches this, for "The Spirit and the bride say, Come!"

It is this translation of the saints at our Lord's; coming which so many will not believe. They say it cannot be, because the rising of millions of saints all in a moment from earth to heaven is opposed to scientific principles. They loudly exclaim that it is contrary to the laws of gravitation, and cannot be reconciled with the best established principles of philosophy. But such persons forget that God is Almighty! that He can do everything, that Christ Himself, a risen Man, went up to heaven; that His disciples saw Him go up higher and higher, until a cloud received Him out of their sight. They forget also that Stephen saw Him after this standing at the right hand of God; and that Saul was struck down to the earth, and was blind for three days, by a sight of the glorified Jesus in the heavens.

Again, men reason instead of believing God, and say, It is not likely that Christ is coming again, and His people translated, because there is no sign of such an event—nothing to indicate such a serious movement, because things continue as they were. Civilization steadily increases, the spread of knowledge is immense, the gospel taken to every quarter of the globe, wisdom in the management of affairs rapidly progresses. They see nothing to mark such a solemn event, and therefore will not believe. They know not that no sign will be given, no particular alteration in circumstances expected, but that the world will go on with its pursuits of business and pleasure, until the Lord comes. So those who reason from appearances, instead of hearkening to the word of God, only go astray; and this deluding doctrine, with its despising and scoffing ways, we may expect to continue. " For when they shall say peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child, and they shall not escape." How appalling is the despiser's doom! The truth is that it shall be so, for God hath said it, and who can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest thou? "The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." But Enoch was translated. What can men say about that? He was a man of like passions with ourselves. He believed God. He walked with God. He had sons and daughters, and feared and honored God; and he had this testimony, that he pleased God. He knew that men were unbelieving and ungodly, and would be so; and prophesied that the Lord would come and cut them off in judgment, as He certainly will. In due time God took him bodily up to heaven. But what did men think of this? They despised the idea of his having been translated, and went hither and thither to look for him, but, of course, they found him not. We are told he was not found. "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." (Heb. 11:5.) Thus we see that the scoffers and despisers in Enoch's day would not believe that "God had translated him." But, after patience and long-suffering, God's judgment overtook them. "The flood came, and took them all away."

Elijah also was translated. What do the would-be wise philosophers of the nineteenth century say to that? Elijah knew that he would be taken. Fifty sons of the prophets saw him cross the Jordan on dry ground, and Elisha with him. After this, "a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven," and Elisha saw him go up. And what then? Men would not believe that he had been translated; and fifty strong men went over the country for three days, to see if they could find him. They said, "Lest peradventure the Spirit of the Lord hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley." Such was their unbelief. They did not believe that God had really translated him. "They sent therefore fifty men; and they sought three days, but found him not" (Vers. 16, 17.)

Nor was this all. When Elisha, the man of God, came to Bethel, the same despising spirit seems to have been wide-spread there. At Bethel, which name means house of God, it might scarcely have been expected. But so it was. And it is even now among professors of Christianity that there are found those who scoff at the doctrine of the Lord's personal coming, and the translation of the saints to meet Him in the air. It has been held up by some as ridiculous. Parents have indulged in despising these precious truths of scripture, and young children have caught the error; for it is easy to teach a little child to scoff at the truth of God, but it needs the Holy Ghost to teach aright that which is divine. We read that as this aged man of God "was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head." (Ver. 23.) Go up where? Go up where it is said Elijah is gone. Thus they "mocked." Thus the glorious truth of translation to heaven was despised. But the end here, too, was terrible judgment, for when the man of God cursed them in Jehovah's name, "there came forth two she bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them." (Ver. 24.)

And so now. Are there not scoffers, saying, Where is the promise of His coming? Are there not those who mock and despise the Christian's hope of being translated—caught up to meet the Lord in the air? May such take warning ere it be too late! Now repentance and remission of sins are preached in the Savior's name; now He receives, pardons and blesses forever the greatest sinners that come to Him to save them! Still He says, "Him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out." But, oh, unsaved reader, beware lest the Lord Jesus come before you have really believed in Him to the saving of your soul, when you will be forever shut out, instead of being shut in forever with Jesus and His blood-washed saints. Oh, trifling, reasoning, unbelieving reader, beware! "Because there is wrath, beware lest he take thee away with his stroke; then a great ransom cannot deliver thee!" Again, we say, Beware, lest that come upon you which is spoken of in the prophets, "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish!"

Present Testimony: Volume 4, 1852, Apparently Discrepant Passages

(1) 2 Kings 25:8, 9.

In the fifth month, on the SEVENTH day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon), came Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem. And he burnt the house of the Lord, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house he burnt with fire.

(2) Jer. 52:12.

Now in the fifth month, in the TENTH day of the month, which was the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, which served the king of Babylon into Jerusalem, and burned the house of the LORD, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great men, burned he with fire.

Remarks have been made upon the apparent discrepancy of these two passages; the seventh day, in (1), being supposed to be called the tenth in (2); and Syriac and Arabic versions have been quoted on the subject, as also Josephus.

It would seem to me that in the English version there is necessarily no discrepancy; he came unto Jerusalem on the FIFTH day, and into Jerusalem on the tenth, is the statement of the English authorized version. [Oxford, Nov. 23, 1833. Exact reprint, page for page, of the 1611 Bible.]

In (1) the Hebrew reads: ; in (2) it reads: i.e. in (1) comes "to... Jerusalem "; and in (2) comes " into... Jerusalem."

The LXX. render both alike "... ."

So the vulgate has "venit ... in Jerusalem," in both places. So the French "Entra dans" Jerusalem.

And so the German, "kam.... gen" Jerusalem.

I do not doubt that the nicety of the English translation is sustained by the Hebrew, and that the other translations are open to the objection raised.

Young Christian: Volume 37, 1947, Striking Contrast Between a Father and a Son, A

God has given us a history of the lives of two men, both kings of Judah, which stand out in sharp contrast. These two men were father and son, and each reigned in the last days of the kingdom of Judah. The glory of the kingdom had faded from what it was in those bright days during the reign of King Solomon. Failure had come in among the people and also in their kings. Idolatry had been introduced and the nation had departed from God but He was not unmindful of His failing people, so that we read:

“And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by His messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because He had compassion on His people, and on His dwelling place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised His words, and misused His prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against His people, till there was no remedy.” 2 Chronicles 36:15-16.

The picture was indeed dark and dreary for the kingdom of Judah; the ten tribes who had set up their own kingdom had already been carried away by the Assyrians.

Their earlier captivity was the result of the judgment of God for their iniquity, and now the shadow of judgment was hanging over the kingdom that young King Josiah was anointed to reign over. He was but eight years old when his father died and he was placed on the throne. This was indeed a young and tender age at which to begin to reign, and especially so when one considers the character of the day—evil abounding on every hand and the judgment of God about to break over the guilty nation.

This boy-king had also a bad background; his father and his grandfather had been very wicked kings. His grandfather, Manasseh, had been one of the worst. Therefore it is very comforting to find that Josiah reversed the trend, for of him we read:

“And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left.” 2 Kings 22:2.

Next we read that in the eighteenth year of Josiah’s reign, when he was twenty-six years old, he became much interested in the house of the Lord that had fallen into a state of disrepair through neglect and abuse while idolatry flourished. He gave orders to have this building repaired. Now in the process of cleaning and repairing the house of the Lord, a book was found. As we might expect, this “book of the law” had been forgotten and lost during the years of wickedness, but now it came to light when the things of the Lord were sought. The Word of God was the very thing that was needed by this youthful and pious king. The long-lost book was soon to be read before him.

“And Shaphan the scribe showed the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.” Verse 10. Now carefully note the effect of the Word of God on Josiah.

“And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.” Verse 11.

The solemn pronouncements that judgment would come if they turned away from their God and went after other gods had been written many years before. These warnings were “sharper than any two-edged sword” on the heart of Josiah and he rent his clothes. The Word of God had a powerful effect on his soul. How good it is when the Word of God is respected and feared! “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” It is indeed sad when His words are treated lightly and have little power over us. This was not so with King Josiah; he was one of whom it could be said,

“But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My Word.” Isaiah 66:2.

The king then sent messengers to Hulda the prophetess to inquire through her from God concerning the words that had been read before him. God sent this answer:

“Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read: because they have forsaken Me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore My wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched. But to the king of Judah ... thus shall ye say to him ... because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this place ... and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before Me; I also have heard thee, saith the Lord. Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.” 2 Kings 22:16-20.

Thus we see that the road to blessing is through repentance before God. The men of Nineveh proved this to be true and so have thousands from that day to this, but His Word must be believed and feared. If God has spoken, I am to listen diligently to what He has said. Josiah proved that

“There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared. ... For with the Lord there is mercy, and with Him is plenteous redemption.” Psalm 130:4,7.

Sad, sad indeed is the contrast with this godly king’s son, Jehoiakim. He was living in a day still closer to the judgment than Josiah his father. He did not, however, fear the Lord as his father did, nor walk in the same steps; but God, still patient and gracious, sent a special warning to Jehoiakim through His servant Jeremiah. The prophet had Baruch write out in a book all the warnings from God and sent him to read the book to the people. After a time the book, or scroll, reached the guilty king and it was read before him as the “book of the law” had been read before his father some years before. But there was “no fear of God before his eyes,” for we read,

“And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words. Nevertheless Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll; but he would not hear them.” Jeremiah 36:23-25.

Thereupon the Lord sent a further word to him, that the judgment would surely come and that his dead body would be cast out to the heat in the day and the frost at night. Poor vain man! None ever hardened himself against God and prospered. Refusing to hear the Word of God read, or even burning it, would not for one moment hold back the avalanche of judgment; in fact, such action will only hasten the inevitable. Sad, sad it is to see a young man of godly parentage pursue such a willful course to certain destruction. And yet it is not uncommon today to see children of Christian parents deliberately and willfully turn their backs on their fathers’ God. Surely this history furnished us by God should be a solemn warning to all such.

Scripture Queries and Answers, Scripture Queries and Answers: Cleansing in the 12th and 18th Year; Heaven; Strangled and Blood; Deliverance

Q.-2 Kings 22 Chron. 34 How are we to reconcile the cleansing in the 12th year and in the 18th year? H.

A.-Both are true; and both speak of the cleansing which in Josiah's eighteenth year followed the discovery of the book of the law in the house of Jehovah. But 2 Chronicles alone adds the account of his earlier seeking after God ten years before, in the eighth year of his reign and the twelfth beginning to purge.

Q.-1 Chron. 21:6. What explains the apparent discrepancy between this and chap. 27 24?

II.

A.-There is no discrepancy. One text says, that Joab did not count among those that were counted Levi and Benjamin; the other adds the particular, that though he began to number, he finished not, and divine displeasure fell for it upon Israel; and the number was not put in the account of the chronicles of King David. All is harmonious; but the second is a fuller explanation.

Q.-Does Psa. 91:11, quoted by Satan, refer at all to the Lord? or are there not three parties implied in it? W.

A.-The godly one that relies on Jehovah in ver. 2, Who will surely deliver Messiah as in vers. 3-13, and is answered in vers. 14-16 by Jehovah.

Q.-Luke 15:18, 21. Why " heaven "? It is well known that the Chinese identify God and heaven, and worship heaven as a true deity? H.

A.-Heaven being Jehovah's throne, as earth His footstool, we can understand readily how that highest region of divine glory is associated with every thought of purity, love, and worship. But there is no identification with God. On the contrary, after naming heaven as the unsullied seat of His honor, in contrast with this wholly defiled earth of man's will and sin and lusts, the prodigal distinguishes "thee," "Father." Compare 2 Chron. 32:20, Dan. 4:26, Matt. 21:25 and Mark 11:30, 31, Luke 20:4, 5, John 3:27, &c.

Q.-Acts 15:20, 29. Are not " strangled " and " blood " separate prohibitions? and both distinct from " pollutions of idols "? But why is " fornication " joined with things so different? W.

A.-Meyer's view that the phrase, " the pollutions," refers to the four particulars which follow seems to me untenable. The reason on which he argues (the absence of before . . has no force); for is unnecessary any where after , and is a doubtful insertion where some ancient MSS. give it. But there ought to be no question that " blood " means what is drawn out expressly from the animal for culinary use, and thus manifestly distinct from " strangled " where the purpose is to keep in the blood from flowing. Both are forbidden; for God demands that man shall by

abstaining own that life belongs to Him. If any be so self-willed as to plead that they do not see or understand, let them own their ignorance and obey. It is not a Jewish or Mosaic statute only, but for man since Noah and the deluge (Gen. 9:4). " Things offered to idols," though classed here like "fornication," with the other two, as things which the heathen counted indifferent, are forbidden as evils unworthy of Christians (one might add, of men) apart from the law, which the Pharisaic party in the church strove in vain to impose on Gentile believers. But the decrees in no way meant to weaken the immorality of fornication, any more than the insult or indifference to the one true God in eating knowingly of pollutions of idols. The apostles were content here to determine, that none of these things is an open question to Gentile converts, but that, if they abstain from all these necessary things, they will do well.

Q.-Gal. 3:20: what is meant by " the mediator is not of one, but God is one "? D.

A.-It is the principle of the law on the one hand, and of promise on the other; which the apostle contrasts, in order to deliver the Galatians or any other souls from the dangerous error of mingling them together, as unbelief is prone to do. The legal mediator is intended, Moses, not Christ; and that office implies two parties: God demanding right, and sinful man wholly unable to render it. The law therefore cannot but be for sinners a ministry of death and condemnation, as we are told in 2 Cor. 3 It is wholly different with promise; for this rests on the sole and unfailing fidelity of God Who cannot lie. As God is the only party to promise in His sovereign and unconditional grace, all He promises comes to fruition. "God is one"; whereas under law man, being under obligation to perform and failing through sin, all his hopes thus come to nothing. God on the contrary accomplishes all in and by Christ, and hence to faith. And as in Him is the Yea, so through Him also is the Amen (2 Cor. 1).

Q.-Gal. 5:17, 25. Is "deliverance" all? Are we not after that to walk in the Spirit? W.

A.-Assuredly: to question it would be antinomianism, or systematic unholiness. We are called to walk in the Spirit by the faith of Christ, in confidence of His care, in habitual self-judgment, and in obedience of the word.

Q.-Have we any scriptural example for calling days of the week after the heathen usage? E.

A.-The only N. T. change from the Jewish " first of the week " is the Lord's day in Rev. 1:10. There is no example, we may presume, of the Gentile Sunday, Monday, &c. How could there be? " Easter " in Acts 12:4 should be " the Passover."

Food for the Flock: Volume 1, Secret of Power, The

KI 13:14-15{

grave.

Elijah is wearied, as we see, under the juniper tree; so God takes him away, and the mantle' drops on Elisha that he may go on with the testimony. You must take up these two ministries, of death and of resurrection life, if you would ever lay claim to keep the testimony of the Lord.

I think of the jealousy for God of that blessed One on the earth, whilst, as perfect too in the grace that could place Him side by side of the woman by the well; perfect in righteousness, perfect in grace, for " grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." If I think of the testimony of the Lord in His life and death-that perfect testimony which has now come in by the Holy Ghost— such a testimony as that of a Man gone up into the heavens when he had glorified God, and finished the work that was given Him to do—what do I see? I look at the Man passed into the heavens, and I see Him there, "the faithful and true witness" who was never weary.

And then another- thing too; blessed be God! not like Elijah.. He is not gone there alone. What I mark is this, that, now He is ascended, He calls us out in righteous title into the place where He is, and God sends the Spirit down as witness that all is between Him and us as it should be. Let that "nail in a sure place" be that on which everything hangs. If I say é, word about the other nail of which we read hi. Isaiah, I can afford to see it go down, with all that came in with it of the old Adam. Oh! what a thing to say, I know a nail in a sure place, on which God hangs all His own " glory, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons."

Next I say a word about the earth. Oh! the contrast that there must be between the earth and the heavens-that earth that rejected Him! What a world it has been that has cast out the Son of God! It has impoverished itself beyond recovery. It has refused to be loved. God has spent all He could, on trying to recover man to Himself; but the perfection of the love of the Father's heart, and of Christ's, has only brought out the iniquity of the human heart. The cross is the proof that man is irreclaimable; and, if he could' add an insult to what he did then, he will send a message after Him, by the martyred Stephen, saying, " We will not have this man to reign over us." In principle it is always, " Not- this man but Barabbas."

What must men be who could come back to such a world again, with a Barabbas instead of the Christ of God? but that is what has been done!. If I take a glance at what those are who have taken a place with Christ rejected at the right hand of God, I find that I have a new order of men. What are they? " If any man be in Christ he is a new creation." You must look at the work of Christ, and measure it by the glory of God. It is the " Fellow'" of God that I have before me; the One who " thought it not robbery to be equal with God." And if He raised up that Man and seated him at His own right hand, what is the first act of the Father of glory from that place where He sits? I See He sends down the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost comes and rests on that little company at Pentecost to claim them for the Father and the Son; and are they not a new creation?

I do not want to look back to Adam except to ask, What was I? Miserable clay, only fit to display the wisdom of the potter. I say, Look at Christ! and not merely for shelter either; He is that, but I do not want to be sheltered by the glory; I have not a bit of the bad thing left to be sheltered. What are you to do with a bit of flesh? If there were a sin left what are you to do with it? If I look at myself-why everything that is outside Christ, is Adam the sinner. I ask is there a bit of that flesh which you brought into the world with you left? It was my nature, but I have nothing to do with that nature. What power is there in a man to overcome his fallen nature? He is overcome already, He is " sold under sin" by that sinful nature!

But look what God has wrought in the person of Christ on the cross. Is there a sin left? I do not want shelter, but death. The extinguisher is put on the old man judicially by God, and I do not want to look at it; the mischief is where we take it up to have a look. Resurrection does not make us one in life with Christ; it is because we are one with Him in life and righteousness that we are raised up. Do not let any one say, we shall be a new order of men; we are so now.

I get the descending One, the Holy Ghost sent down by the blessed Son of God gone up. The revelation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is necessary for the new testimony; I cannot do without the Father, the Son,-and the Holy Ghost.

What is it that I have further to put off? I have simply to put off the image of the first man; the reproach of Egypt is rolled from us, and away we go, caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and like Him. I do not want shelter, but manifestation in glory. The person who is one with Christ, must be secure enough. I need not dwell on that.

But I have been taken away from what I meant to speak on: of ourselves and the heavens now.

I would say the heavens and the earth are necessary to a new order of beings. He wants the heavens, and it is the place where we worship. Everything has been adapted to what suits the new order of man. Where is the place -in which you worship? " Inside the veil," if you know what that is. There is not a worshipper but is inside the veil. Do not talk of having " happy thoughts!" I want to know what produces them.

Is it being inside the veil, and the right ones supplied?

And we go in, in what relation to God? I go in to learn not about my sins, but to prove what it is to be accepted in the sweet savor of Christ. I am afraid not many of us are abiding there. I only speak of that to make it plain, to any here to whom it may not be so, what the thought is that we have as to worship. I state that you must go to heaven to worship, in the Holiest where God dwells.

Then, when we come back to look at earth again, as surely as ever we get into understanding the true meaning of it all, we shall see that Paul is in his right place in prison. Paul is as exactly in his place below, as the Lord is in His place above. The height reaches, and characterizes, the depth. The height to which you take a thing, is the depth to which it will fall. When Paul wrote his epistles to the Ephesians and the Colossians their scope corresponded precisely to what the Lord Himself was, in the glory above the sun, which He showed him when He opened to him heaven.

Now come back to the second of Kings, to this little pictoral representation of a great thing. I get here, in principle, what we have been saying. Was there virtue wherever Elisha was? It was life out of death. Would you take life out of anything else? Not I! Not if we are true to Christ.

But who is this that quotes Elisha's words to him? “My father, my father!' the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof! " One, Joash, the king of Israel, comes down in faith to Elisha; there was but one man to whom he could go. It is a wonderful thing to get the eye single enough to cling to Christ only, and to no body else. Faith will follow God, look to God, and none else. I will not look at this man's faith; whether driven or drawn, he has come to the right person; and, when I am there, whatever my difficulties may be, I say, It is nothing! provided Elisha be the true prophet of Jehovah, and our Jesus be really the Son of the Father. It is nothing!-If I take my place in the fourteenth of John, I find: " If ye shall ask anything in my name I will do it."

We are brought together. But in prayer the point is, not that you may get an answer; that will come in as a consequence; but, that the power of God may come -out,-and that He may be glorified in the Son. If-We are in the right place, and asking the right thing, the cream of our answer-do not forget it -is that God may be glorified, and the Son in whose name we ask.

I get this man saying, “My father, my father! the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!" And Elisha rises, sick as he was, and Says to him: " Take bow and arrows; and he took unto him bow and arrows. And he said to the king of Israel, put thine hand, upon the bow, and he put his hand upon it; and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands." " All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." He says, I charge myself with the whole thing; I take it out of your hands into mine. He loves to associate Himself with us. There is the secret; there is the power. "Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands."

And what else, does he say? “Shoot: and he shot.” And see what Elisha, pledged himself to. “He said, The arrow of the Lord's deliverance." This is, as I said, “that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Elisha had taken the matter into his own hands. As surely as Elijah said to Baal's worshippers, “If there is a God, call upon your god," so now Elisha looks up and calls upon his God. And to you who know what it is to have His hand upon your hand, the word is, " If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." We shall be sure in our turn to be put to the proof, and, when faith is put to the 'test, as to its measure and quality, the word is then, “according to your faith be it unto you." I get the pattern of the right thing when Elisha's hands are upon his hands, and the opened window.

" He smote thrice and stayed!" Why? That was the measure of his faith. Oh, what a lesson. We are straitened in ourselves; you may know that by the pattern thing here. It is cording to your faith be it unto you."

Let us seek to encourage one another in the Lord. You will be put to the proof by God, but in what a blessed way.. ".Thou shouldest have smitten five of six times." Our faith will never come up to the spring head, but, however short it falls of what it might be, there is no such thing now as the Man who stands for us being " wroth " with us, like Elisha.

What are your expectations in the scene where you are, where everything is to be measured by that Man at the right hand of God? Do we stop at our three times, and think what we have done? or go on to the five or six fillies, and see what- God will do?

In the second of Timothy Paul is instructing his son in the faith by the bow and arrows, just as Elisha was guiding Joash. The apostle had learned his lesson with the Lord alone, and could say: " Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me." He then opens the window, or writes this epistle to Timothy, and bids him to shoot and to smite on the ground, putting his hands upon his son's hands, for God, he says, " hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power." Paul was himself a prisoner in the mouth of the lion; but he says, I go into the mouth of the lion in order that I may know the arrow of the Lord's deliverance in it. So God delivered the faithful servant says