Colossians - Commentaries by Edward B. Dennett

Christian Truth: Volume 27, Colossians 1:24

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In the consideration of this remarkable scripture, it should be noted that the word "afflictions" ("afflictions of Christ") is never found elsewhere in connection with our blessed Lord. But it is constantly used of the saints, and indicates the trials, persecutions, tribulations, etc., that come upon them from without in consequence of their confession of Christ, and of fidelity to Him in the midst of an evil world. The point is important, as conclusively showing that these afflictions of Christ are altogether apart from His sufferings on the cross, when making atonement. They are rather the sufferings He endured in His whole pathway of doing the will of God, but viewed here as encountered through His love to the Church. He "loved the church, and gave Himself for it," and this entailed upon Him these afflictions which came upon Him through the instrumentality of man in the hands of Satan.

The Apostle Paul through grace was animated by the same love, however inferior the degree; and he could thus write, "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." 2 Tim. 2:10. He labored and suffered for the same object as his blessed Master. This gives at once the key to our scripture. Here he says, I "rejoice in my sufferings for you," that is, for you Gentiles—sufferings which came upon him peculiarly in connection with his ministry of the truth of the one body, exciting as it did the deadly enmity of the Jews. Inasmuch, therefore, as the Word of God was not completed until the truth of the Church was promulgated, Paul as its minister suffered in an especial manner for Christ's "body's sake, which is the church," and could thus say, since he participated in them, that he filled up that which was behind of the afflictions of Christ. They were Christ's own afflictions; and Paul filled up, so to speak, their measure. In principle, if a servant now suffers in the same way, from the same motive, and for the same object, he would be sharing in, if not filling up, that which is behind of these afflictions of Christ.

Christian Truth: Volume 26, Scripture Note: Colossians 3:2

"Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth." Col. 3:2.

In this scripture the word "affections" scarcely represents the meaning of the original. It refers to the mind and thoughts rather than to the affections. Some examples of its use will make this apparent. When the Lord rebuked Peter, saying, "Get thee behind Me, Satan," He added, "for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men." Mark 8:33. That is, to give two other translations, "thou mindest not," or, "thy mind is not on the things that be of God." So in Phil. 2:5, where we read, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." (See also Phil. 3:15, 16, 19, etc.) It is thus evident that the Apostle's exhortation refers to our minds and thoughts, and the connection of the passage will explain its force. In chapter 2:20 we are seen associated with Christ in His death, whereby we have died out "from the rudiments of the world," and have, as a consequence, only the place of dead men in this world. Through death with Christ, if through grace we have entered into it, we are morally outside of man, religious or otherwise, and man's world. But we are also "risen with Christ," and thereby are introduced into a new scene. We belong, through association with Him in resurrection, to the place where "Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (chap. 3:1). Consequently all our objects and interests are there; our "life is hid with Christ in God." It is on this basis, on the foundation of what is true of us as associated with Christ in death and in resurrection, that the exhortation is given, "Seek those things which are above," etc.; and again, "Have your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." J.N.D. Trans. Our minds therefore should be conversant with the things that belong to that new place into which we have already been introduced. If it be asked, What are these things? the answer is easily given. All the glories of Christ, the various glories of His Person and offices, unfolded as they are by His personal and relative names; all the Father's things, which are also the Son's (John 16:14, 15), the manifold displays of glory connected with the Father's counsels for the exaltation of His beloved Son; and also all the spiritual blessings with which we are already blessed in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3). All these wondrous things are to fill and occupy the minds of Christians; and hence, as in Philippians 3, to "mind earthly things" is to contradict the truth of our profession, as being a practical denial of having died, and having been raised, with Christ. But if Christ possesses our hearts, our "minds" will always be engaged with Him and His things in the place where He is.