Colossians - Commentaries by James Lampden Harris

Christian Witness Papers, Heavenly-Mindedness

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. Colossians 3:2

One great end with God, in the gospel of his grace, is at once so to bring those who believe into fellowship with himself, that they may be like-minded with him. Until this be the case, there can be no well ordered blessing for any intelligent creature. The misery of man's state is, that he is fulfilling the desires (wills,) of the flesh and of the mind; "that he is alienated in his mind" from God; that his very element is dissociation from God in thought and act. And here is the grace and wisdom of God in the gospel of Christ, that while he meets man in the craving of his own selfishness, his manner of meeting man's selfishness, by the blood of the Lamb, at once brings man near unto Him. It is not mere escape from coming wrath, but immediate reception into the bosom of the Father. It is reconciliation through the blood of the cross; amity restored between those who had been separate; and this mighty power of the cross is the one grand object of the mind of Heaven. Christ crucified, to them that are saved, is the power of God and the wisdom of God; and then is there unison between man on the earth and heaven. Thus he "minds the things above."

There are two ways in which the mind of heaven becomes ascertained to us. The one is, in that which is revealed to us respecting Jesus, as in heaven; and the other as respecting Jesus on the earth. In the first He is represented to us as the one grand subject of thought and theme of praise; in the second, he himself applies the thoughts of heaven to the things of earth. Into both these, it is our blessed privilege to enter. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." "Whom having not seen, ye love, in whom though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." "We are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels; to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect; and to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." It is thus that to faith a door is opened in heaven.

On the other hand, as spiritual, we are called on to judge all things-and ourselves can be judged of by no man. "For who hath known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him? but we have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:15, 16)." "Being now light in the Lord," it is our privilege to walk as children of light; and what is this but the application of the mind of Christ to the circumstances around us, -in other words, to be heavenly-minded. And here is the great importance of the subject; it is not abstraction of mind from the reality of the misery around us into an ideal world; neither is it to become an ascetic, but the ability to associate heaven with the present state of things, through the knowledge of Him who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world.

When God had finished the work of creation, he saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. Then, for man, created in the image and after the likeness of God, it was fitting to mind earthly things, to see the wisdom and goodness of God in the beautiful creation which He had put in subjection unto him. Then the mind of heaven and earth was one, "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." God, Angels, and Men could take complacency in the earth, -it was the expression of God's power, and wisdom, and goodness. Wheresoever man turned to the things around him, they would necessarily be associated in his mind with God. But when man fell under the power of Satan, and subjected the creation to vanity, groaning, and misery, God could no longer be associated in man's mind with the works of creation, except to his own terror and confusion. Everything around him must have been a speaking testimony to his own sin and dissociation from God. He could not look to the earth, and then look with confidence towards God. He saw the withering power of his own evil. He could no longer rejoice in the earth as the work of God's hand, because the constant object presented to his view was the ruin and desolation he had introduced. But God did not immediately interfere in judgment; he left man to the trial of his powers to undo the mischief he had done. But evil increasingly developed itself in man, and through him its baneful influence passed on all around him. "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence." "And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me, for the earth is filled with violence through them, and behold I will destroy them with the earth." When, therefore, the state of the earth grew worse and worse, instead of improving under the management of man, the condition of blessing could be no longer in minding earthly things, but in walking with God as Enoch, prophesying in word of the Lord coming in judgment, or in testifying by act, as Noah, of its speedy approach.

After the flood, the Lord introduces a dispensation of forbearance and longsuffering, pledging himself not to curse the ground any more for man's sake; "for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Again, it is said to Noah, "Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth": but instead of investiture of dominion, as unto Adam, and willing acknowledgment on the part of creation to man as its lord, it now is only "The fear of you, and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth -into your hand are they delivered; every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you, even as the green herb have I given you all things." But there was a reservation, and that reservation a constant testimony to man that his life was forfeited: "But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat." This one injunction placed man as a sinner before God, as one who had lost all title to blessing, and needed to approach God through blood. At the same time God himself interferes in the government of the earth, proving that it was taken out of man's hand into his own, and that he was the God to whom vengeance belonged. "And surely your blood of your lives will /require; at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man." God had not interfered in vengeance against the first murderer, Cain; on the contrary, he had set a mark on him, lest any should slay him, that man might learn, being left to himself, whether he could undo the evil he had introduced. But now God interfered in the ordering of the earth, and earthly things could only be so minded, as to blessing, by man's seeing his own condition, as before God, and God's rule in the earth.

But the presumption of man only increased by God's forbearance; and instead of acknowledging God in the earth, he purposed the vain attempt of subjecting heaven to his rule. When the Lord had scattered them abroad in all the earth, then did he give them up, as it were, as to palpable interference, though "he left not himself without witness among them, in that he did them good, and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons." But they speedily turned aside to lying vanities; and since God had left them to themselves, they made gods for themselves, according to their own minds, and rejoiced in the works of their hands. Now it pleases the Lord to interfere in another way; he calls out an individual from an idolatrous world, and makes special revelation of himself to him. And this communication of himself to Abram by Jehovah, is the introduction of a new principle, even the knowledge of another portion than things present and seen, in having Jehovah for his shield and exceeding great reward. In Abram, therefore, was the introduction of a new principle; he was the one to whom the promises were made; and that which was now to be minded, was not the state of things before the eye, but those things which were presented to faith afar off, leading to the confession, that they were pilgrims and strangers in the earth. Abram knew that a long period of darkness and distress would intervene, before the land, in which he was a stranger, should become the possession of his seed. But when the set time was come, the Lord, faithful to his word, brought them out of Egypt; and, as though he would not hinder the earth's blessing, proposes to the children of Israel to vest that blessing in them, by himself becoming their Lawgiver and their King: "Now, therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then shall ye be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people; for all the earth is mine, and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests and an hole nation." This was the distinguishing blessing -a holy nation, a wise and great nation; because the Lord God was in the midst of it. Here, then, was one nation in the earth, wherein to have minded earthly things would have been to have recognized God. "For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? (Deut. 4:7)." An Israelite would have seen God, not only in the tabernacle service, but in his civil relations, in judicial arrangements, in his household economy -every little circumstance became of importance when sanctioned by "Ye shall" -"for I am the Lord" (Lev. 19). To have minded all these earthly things, would have been to have recognized God.

But the people would have the blessing apart from God, they minded the blessing, but became impatient of having God so near unto them; they liked not the tenure on which they held the blessing, even the acknowledgment that it was a trust to them from God; they said unto Samuel, "Now make us a king to judge us like all the nations." Thus they rejected God; and although he bore with this their sin, and "gave them a king in his anger," and set up one in all plenitude of wisdom and power, yet it was only to show how abortive must be the attempt, in man's hand, at remedying the evil he had introduced into God's creation -it was all vanity. But although Solomon failed in getting blessing from earthly things, God did not give up the earth; he still recognized one people in it, whose happiness depended on their acknowledgment of him in the things around them. But they only rejoiced in the work of their own hands -they would "none of the Lord their God," so he gave them up unto their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels. All his testimony had failed by the mouths of all his Prophets, saying, "Turn unto me, and I will bless you"; till at last He sent his Son, saying, "They will reverence my Son." He came with the power of earthly blessing in his hand, and presented himself to their acceptance, as the seed in whom they and all nations of the earth might be blessed. But he was despised and rejected of them. He was by wicked hands crucified and slain; but heaven received Him, as the only One in whom blessing centered. And now the wide difference between what is the mind of earth and Heaven, is made manifest. There is but one mind in heaven, and that is the acknowledgment of the worth of the Lamb that was slain. "Him hath God exalted"; to him hath Jehovah said, "Sit on my right hand till I make thine enemies thy footstool." The whole intelligence of heaven is occupied in discovering all the glories of the Person and work of the Son. Here, then, is heavenly-mindedness; it can only be the portion of those who are risen with Christ. They are already come in spirit to an innumerable company of angels, and together with them desire to look into the sufferings of Christ, and the glories to follow them. There is one all-absorbing subject -it admits not of a divided mind -the loins of the mind must be girded up. It is a subject, too, which is inexhaustible. He who is a father in Christ is the one who has unlearned all else, in order to know Him that was from the beginning; and has yet to pray, "that I may know him." It is, therefore, by knowing Jesus, that we know the mind of Heaven. There is nothing fanciful or speculative in this; it is not giving the rein to a lively or warm imagination, in order to picture to ourselves what might be the employments of heaven; but it is our ability, through the knowledge of Him who descended first into the lower parts of the earth, and then ascended far above all heavens, to have fellowship with those who are there. The same substantial reality which is presented to us, is also to them the engrossing object, even the Lamb that was slain. It is this which measures the utter distance between the utmost stretch of human intellect, or loftiest flight of man's imagination, and one led by the Spirit, -the subject, is so different. "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?" It is no longer a God felt after, if haply we may find him, but a God made known in ministering unto our necessities. For redemption is God's medium of displaying what he is, even to those who needed not redemption themselves. When the fullness of time came for sending forth his Son, made of a woman, it was not they to whom he came to minister blessing, not they with whom he had associated himself in nature, but another race, whose nature He had not assumed, and whom He had not come to help, who sung the song of praise. The wonderful plan of redemption was first recognized in heaven. -"Glory to God in the highest." This is the great reality: till this, which occupies the mind of heaven, occupies man's mind, he only walketh in a vain show -he disquieteth himself in vain. That which is before him is vanity -the world passeth away and the lust thereof. His only reality is the sin, sorrow, and death he inherits, and which he seeks to forget in the pursuit of happiness from the creature; but the reality with which heaven is conversant, is the triumph of Him who overcame it all, and who says to his disciples, "Be of good cheer, because I have overcome the world." This is the victory they celebrate; not greatness in the world, but triumph over it through suffering from it. "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." How marvelous is this! everything that the heart of man craves, in order to its happiness, all ascribed to him whom men by their wicked hands crucified and slew. Who can enter into the thoughts, who into the joys of heaven, but he that glories in the cross of Christ, and sees the world, through that medium, as lying under the wicked one. Surely to mind earthly things, is to be entirely forgetful of this triumphant song. It is assuming a right to ourselves now to receive power and riches, Sc., and thus to justify man in his crucifixion of the Lord of glory, and in our hearts to say that Jesus was accursed. He was and is worthy to receive all this because He was slain. He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; therefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name Jesus sought not honor of men, and would not receive the glory of the world, but showed forth its real character and opposition to God, not only in renouncing it, but in suffering from it. -He died to it and by it.

How needful, therefore, is unison with the mind of Heaven, in order to ascertain our own proper standing in the world! How do they view all those things which man craves? -power, riches, glory, honor, -they cannot recognize them as in the hands of man, for there they are only turned to evil; they only know them as in the hands of Him that was slain. There we should know them, and live by filth n them, as ours, invested in him for us also, heirs of all His Glory. He has received in order to give; and the glory He has so hardly earned, He wills should be given to those who believe on him.

But while we thus learn the mind of Heaven, and, as taught by the Spirit, are led into unity with it, there is yet another way in which that mind was exhibited, and of this our calling is to be practical followers. While we have seen the strong contrast of the mind of Heaven with the mind of earth, there is another contrast which we are called on to survey, and that is between the beloved Son of God and the world in which He was. It is thus we not only learn the entire alienation of the world from God, but we have the heavenly mind brought before us, in very minute detail, concerning the every-day occurrences of life. It was He who alone could say, "No man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven;" who could show us the thoughts of God concerning the evil in which we are, and point out how those who were made partakers of the heavenly calling, were to walk worthily of it. It is thus that every circumstance becomes an occasion of showing forth heavenly-mindedness. It is easy for us now to see that one use the wisdom of God has made of man's evil, has been to manifest His own blessedness through it. It is in his dealing with evil that the character of God has been made known to us, and not only to us but to Angels. And a further display of God's wisdom is now being manifested unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, by the Church, called to act in the world on the very same principles that he is acting in it. It is this which gives such distinctiveness to Christian morals, which, while they do most fully recognize all that is honest and of good report, at the same time present to us that which is really lovely, because a transcript of God. The new man is created in righteousness and true holiness, but the sphere of its exercise being evil, it must only be in suffering, in endurance. He is "renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him," but that knowledge is to be applied to the circumstances of man, to show that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding"; and that the wisdom which comes from above, is at direct variance with that of man, as applied to like circumstances. Here is the grand distinction," that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. But ye have not so learned Christ, if so be ye have heard him and have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus." Now Jesus indeed is the truth, for all truth centers in him; but here the Apostle is speaking not of doctrine but of Christian conduct, and the real walk of a believer is only to be seen "as the truth is in Jesus." -This is the lesson before us, "Learn of me"; the Master does not order the disciple to do anything but to follow him. And the standard proposed is, "every one that is perfect shall be as his Master." It is therefore in Jesus come into the world, that we find what real heavenly-mindedness is, and at once discover that one so minded, could not take complacency in the state of things around us. We indeed, who are born under the law of sin and death, are made to feel, in our own selves, what misery is; we are of the earth and earthy, and speak of the earthly, but He came from heaven, and spoke that which He had seen and heard; and, acquainted with the pure blessing of heaven, He could not take delight in the things of the world. He that came from above could make the contrast, and became a man of sorrow and acquainted with grief, from the keen perception of the moral desolation and ruin into which man had hurried God's creation. Separate from sinners himself, He could deeply sympathize with the misery of man. He was of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord, and saw man without the fear of God before His eyes. Knowing the blessedness of being in the Father's bosom, He saw man seeking his happiness in the creature -He knew the wrath of God, and that it was coming, and beheld man living as though he were in the sunshine of God's favor. He dwelt in the holiness of God, and saw man dead in trespasses and sins, walking according to the course of this world, according to the Prince of the power of the air. All the realities were brought before him, and he mourned and marveled at man's unbelief, and was grieved at the hardness of their hearts. He saw the full sway of death, and wept at the grave of Lazarus, and yet man had become so familiar with death as to forget that it was the penalty of sin. This is heavenly-mindedness; no complacency in any effort of the flesh, but seeing all its glory fading before the power of death, no rejoicing in what man was rejoicing in -even in the works of his hands, but seeing God in his works, and discovering more real glory in the lily of the field than in all the splendor of Solomon.

This is heavenly-mindedness; it is the ability to rate evil at all its fearful extent, and to know God to the full extent of His blessedness. It is no ideal speculation, no refined mysticism, but the soul apprehending God in Christ, and applying its apprehension of Him to present circumstances. Here is one great value of the incarnation; it is to us the expression of the mind of God on our circumstances. "I," says Jesus, "am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." He did the will of Him that sent Him, and therefore could judge righteous judgment; and it is only as doing that same will that we are in the capacity of exercising right judgment. Our judgment must ever be according to appearances, until we have come to recognize Jesus as God's standard, by which He tries everything. It is in this that we fail so much of heavenly-mindedness. The circumstances before us are the things which present themselves, -we judge them, good or bad, relatively to our convenience or interest; but we fail of getting God's judgment of them, by not bringing Jesus unto them to see the truth as it is in him. It is marvelous how often man is calling that light, which He called darkness, and that good, which He showed to be evil. There is much need to suspect our own judgments, and to see, as in the case of Peter, how man's mind (Matt. 16:23) is exercised erroneously, even in the things of God. This is what the apostle found wanting in the Hebrews. They had not their senses "exercised, by reason of use, to discern both good and evil." Our portion is to have the mind of Christ; and, in virtue of the Holy Spirit, who searcheth all things, even the deep things of God, to ascertain His thoughts, and apply them to circumstances around us.

It is, as quickened together with Christ, and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Him {Eph. 2}, that we are enabled to survey the world, and all that is in it by the light of heaven. "If ye, then, be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God." "Mind the things above, not the things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." It is thus that we learn that the system of things on the earth is the subject of the long-suffering and forbearance of God, who will put off the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, until man's iniquity has again come to the full. We see the Lord Jesus Christ ready to judge the quick and the dead, yet patiently expecting, that the testimony may go forth unto his sacrifice, that none may perish unwarned. How needful for us thus to be heavenly-minded, and to learn our place of separation from the world -to bear with it as God does; not avenge ourselves, but to leave vengeance to him, and to show the same grace towards it that He shows, and to use unremittingly the present opportunity of testimony. Here, truly, is the wonderful glory of the mind of heaven -the power to endure. We know not what manner of spirit we are of, till we enter the full mind of Him, the greatness of whose power is the ability to restrain it. "God hath spoken once -twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God; also unto thee, Lord, belongeth mercy (Psa. 62)." Where, but in God, shall we find power to rid Himself of His adversaries, so restrained by mercy, and He Himself beseeching sinners, the meanwhile, to be reconciled to Him. "Put on, therefore, as the Elect of God holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, humbleness of mind, forbearance and long-suffering," for this is the mind of heaven.

But while we learn that heavenly-mindedness is necessarily sorrow of heart, as to things around, we learn also, that to do God's will on earth, is necessarily suffering. The Son of man, who was in heaven {while on} on earth {John 3:13}, was the just and holy one; He fulfilled all righteousness Himself; but He exercised it not for Himself. To others He was all grace: it was cast into His teeth as a reproach, "this man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them"; and does the Lord vindicate himself from the charge? On the contrary, He takes it as the occasion of showing what the mind of heaven was; that while one sinner would indignantly cast away from His presence another, infinite purity and

holiness was exhibited, as able to receive such and to bless them. This is grace -this is what God had in store to reveal of himself, after that His goodness, and holiness, and righteousness had been made known to no purpose. This is his great glory; here is set forth the infinite contrariety between God and man; man who loves sin puts away from him his fellow-sinner; God's counseled grace, in showing his hatred of sin, brings blessing to the sinner, and brings him near to himself to bless him. It is in this that he abounds towards us in all wisdom and prudence. Here it is that God's thoughts are so far above our thoughts, and His ways far higher than ours; and yet His thoughts and His ways are the rule He prescribes to us. Not only, therefore, in doing God's will are we called on to put on the new man, created in righteousness and true holiness, but to walk in grace towards an evil world -hence necessarily to suffer -he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey {XXX}. God is not judging, he must not judge. God is not taking vengeance, he cannot avenge himself. God is not resisting evil by righteousness exercised in power, he must not resist evil. But beyond this, the blessedness of that grace we do not know, is to be shown forth practically. It was not compulsion on our part that brought the blessing from heaven to man. Even had man urged God to bless him, he never could have thought of the possibility of such a blessing being conferred, as to be so brought unto God's favor, as to be made His sons. God's own grace far exceeded even the exigencies of man" s misery. This is the mind of heaven, and how is it applicable to us? "Whoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." We are called upon to show the vast superiority of grace over selfishness, the only natural principle of man, to do more from love than he would exact from interest. And then follows the perfect love of God, seen in His loving those who loved not Him, as the only standard proposed for our imitation. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." And the same standard is held up to us as walking in connection with brethren: "Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you; be ye therefore followers (imitators) of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor" (Eph. 4:32; 5:1, 2).

But the most remarkable characteristic of the mind of heaven, in reference to the world, is, that God should now forego for a time His right to judge the world. "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." The testimony unto its coming judgment in righteousness, is in order to point sinners now to Him to whom all the prophets bare witness, that "through his name whosoever believeth in him should receive remission of sins." There is now "joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

It is the rule of heaven which is prescribed to us, now we are called on to rejoice in the triumphs of God's grace; but the time is approaching, when the period of God's long-suffering will be spent, and iniquity come to its full, and then the mind of heaven will be differently expressed:-"I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia I salvation, and glory, and honor, and power, unto the Lord our God, for true and righteous are his judgments." Here is the infinite importance, that the tone of our mind should be in unison with that of God; that when He is dealing with a ruined world in grace, we should be like-minded with Him in reference to it, but that when His judgments are made manifest, we should be prepared to praise him for His holiness. This it is into which we are now brought, instead of "being without God in the world," to acknowledge him in it. The world, as evil, is the sphere of God's display of His forbearance, and Jesus, in such a world, asserted not His right, because the assertion of that most have been its judgment. He always took the place of one who receded from that which He might justly have asserted. John had need to be baptized of Him, yet with the full allowance of this, He comes to be baptized of John, that thus in obedience He might fulfill all righteousness. So, again, as the Son, He was not compelled to pay the half-shekel for the Temple service, yet He waived His right. It was thus that He taught us our place, "But I say unto you that ye resist not evil." Here is the grand contrast, the system of the world is the resistance of evil; to this end are all the energies and wisdom of man, whether individually or collectively, directed. The standard assumed is man's convenience: hence much that is evil in God's sight is tolerated and accredited by human legislation, and the very end for which man is brought up in the world, is the assertion of his supposed rights. The believer has not so learned Christ; he knows God's right and title in all justice towards him is condemnation, but God has waived that, and given him the right of a son, of his own free grace, having made him accepted in the Beloved. His place and standing in the same evil world in which the Beloved himself stood, is to follow him; to bring to bear the same mind on it as he exhibited: "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus." "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." That which orders the world in any measure now is vengeance and wrath, -these are the principles of rule in the world as ordered of God. "The powers that be are ordained of God," and the power "beareth the sword in vain, for he is the minister of God, a revenger unto wrath upon him that doeth evil." Here is the most distinct mark between God dwelling in the Church, and God's owning authority in the world. The church is partaker of the heavenly calling, and her place is to show forth in the world the heavenly mind. And where can this be shown more clearly, than in the two simple regulating principles, "The world will love its own," -"Love seeketh not her own." Self-interest is the world's grand maxim, self-denial that of Christ. It is fellowship alone with the heavenly mind that enables us to walk in a straight path. We know, alas! that the consummation of apostasy is the establishment of the world's own principle upon the seeming basis of Christianity. "In the last days perilous times shall come, men shall be lovers of their ownselves." The attempt of the church to act on the world's principle of asserting present power, has ever been to tolerate iniquity and persecute truth; while the attempt of the world to act on anything like Christian principles, has been to give the rein to ungodliness, and strengthen the hands of the wicked. The new piece put to the old garment makes the rent only worse; the new wine put into old bottles causes them to burst, and the wine is spilled. Such has been the result of attempting to apply those blessed principles, which can only be acted out in the church, to the rule of the world. It is only as closely following in the steps of Him, the Son of man in heaven, even while on earth, that we shall walk in the light and not stumble.

As we see that the crisis, to which all are hastening, is the victory of the world over the professing Church, our place is to be followers of Him who could say to us, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." The Lord puts in direct contrast the two things which the world and the Church have both sought to unite, that is, power and grace. "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them, but it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him he your servant, even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many." As He is, so are we in this world; He is the Beloved Son and Heir of all things too; we are dear children, and joint-heirs with Him. Now, as the Father loved the Son, and gave all things unto Him, and He stood in the midst of the world as one who could say, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father," so it was in the recognition of the completeness of his title to all things that he said, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Here, then, is your place -in title, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; but, as children, now only called to manifest the mind of your Father in bearing with, and ministering grace unto a ruined world, and in doing all things without murmurings and disputings.

But there is another way in which we learn the truth as it is in Jesus, in seeing him, the Son, humbled to the place of the servant, and there learning obedience through the things that he suffered. Our calling is unto obedience and suffering. "Elect, according to the foreknowledge of

God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience {1 Peter 1:2}." "To you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." This is our heavenly calling -obedience; and as this is exercised here, it must be obedience in suffering. To obey when the world is ordered by a King reigning in righteousness, would not be to suffer; the work of righteousness would be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness {XXX}; but to obey God, when He is dealing with the world in grace, is necessarily to suffer for righteousness' sake; and therefore are we called upon to "do all things without murmurings and disputings, that we may be the sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, holding forth the word of life." Obedience is the one rule of heaven; and strange must be the disorder, to their apprehensions, of man, a creature, presuming to set up his will against that of God. The will of God is known in heaven as the only blessedness; "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word." Now this was to be shown forth on earth as the only blessedness; and, therefore, he who came from heaven, and had no right to obey in heaven, came to learn obedience by the things which he suffered. This was the great lesson to teach man; this was heavenly-mindedness -obedience to God under any circumstances -"Lo! I come to do thy will, O God." Obedience carried Him unto death; and thus he speaks to his disciples: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal: if any man serve me, let him follow me, and where I am there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honor." And thus it is that heavenly-mindedness is to be shown, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. The obedience of the Son is the great wonder of heaven, as well as the deeply-instructive lesson to those who dwell on earth, "I have glorified thee on earth." All were glorifying God in heaven; but this was his alone to say, because he willingly became the subject in which the Father's name might be glorified; He turned not away His back: He gave His back to the sinkers, and His cheeks to those who plucked off the hair; He hid not His face from shame and spitting; but obedience and confidence went hand in hand -"For the Lord God will help me, therefore shall I not be confounded; therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." And the result of the humiliation of the Son unto obedience shall be, that the mind of earth and heaven become one. "God's will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven." Then shall man say as Jesus said, "I know that his commandment is eternal life."

It is of unspeakable value to us to have the steady light of heaven to guide us through the darkness of this world. The example of Jesus ever bears on His own precept. The precept is general, the example affords the limitation, and it is our wisdom to bring the two together, that we may know how to walk and to please God. "I," says Jesus, "am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness." We have a most remarkable instance of Jesus, as the light, in his early years -an instance of immense value to those who, on the one hand, are called upon to forsake father and mother for Christ's sake, and, on the other, are warned as to disobedience to parents being one of the marks of the apostasy of the latter day, -he could say, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" and then went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them. He recognized God as the only fountain of authority; and when that authority came to bear directly on Him, He would suffer no derived authority to stand in its way. This is the mind of heaven. Power belongeth unto God, and is so to be recognized both in a parent and in a ruler: but they cannot use the power with which God has entrusted them against His own authority. Where that is the point, we must obey God rather than man -obey God, and suffer from man. Obedience to man, in such a case, would be disobedience to God. How many questions would be avoided, how many difficulties solved, had we the mind of Him whose meat it was to do the will of him that sent him! There was in him a single object; and those cases, which are only perplexing because there is self-will in us, were plain unto Him.

It is thus, then, that heavenly-mindedness is to be exercised in the most common things. The children of God are thus called into direct contrast with the world in which they are -in it, but not of it, and showing forth his praises "who hath called them out of darkness into his marvelous light." Almost all the casuistry we are exercising, arises from the supposition that we are still debtors to the flesh, that we must take a lower standard than that into which union with Christ brings us. The word to us is, "Ye are dead." No longer ought we to look on ourselves as united with the first man Adam, otherwise than unto the disowning of the flesh, but with the second Man, the Lord from heaven; and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly {1 Cor. 15: XXX}. It is now to live and walk in the Spirit, now to put on the new man, as being renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him, having thus the earnest of that perfect conformity which awaits them at the resurrection, unto which they are predestinated, even the image of his Son.

And how blessed, amidst the shifting morality of man, to have an unerring judgment; at once to find deliverance from the thousand perplexities and inconsistencies which distract the mind of one seeking to serve God and Mammon. "The flesh profiteth nothing"; all its glory is grass. "I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." This is the righteous judgment of him who, taking his stand with Christ at the right hand of God, views all things from thence. How is the fond delusion vanished, the moment we got to our proper standing, of any expectation of good from man. The vain pursuit is given up, and the only desire is to mortify the members which are on the earth, and to find the blessing that follows: "If ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

The Christian Witness 2:311-328 (1835).

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