Ephesians - Commentaries by Andrew Miller

Meditations on the Christian Hope Standing State, Vocation, Welfare an, Christian's Warfare, The

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Eph. 6:10-18.

In thy further Meditations, O my soul, on the Christian's " Vocation" there is yet one department which thou wilt do well duly to consider; namely-" The Christian's Warfare!' Rare qualities are needed in warriors, and great honors are heaped on the victorious: but who praises the coward? Alas, he stands at the head of the dark list of the lost, in Rev. 21:8. " But the fearful"-" The fearful" here means those who are afraid to confess Jesus as Savior and Lord, from the fear of consequences. They are cowards in reference to Christ. This, in God's sight, is a sin of the meanest and blackest character; for such evidently know something of Christ and of His goodness, and yet they are ashamed of His name before men. Therefore, under the ignominious brand of " the fearful," or cowards, they are consigned to their own place in the lake of fire.

But these, being altogether unbelievers, cannot be contrasted with those who are valiant for Christ. It is only with believers that we have to do in meditating on christian warfare. Nevertheless, there are some amongst us who are but little skilled in the use of the shield and sword, and show but little courage in the day of battle. Training is necessary, with a perfect knowledge of the enemy's position, and of our own vantage ground. Therefore we invite-we entreat, all our readers, and especially our youthful christian readers, to study with us the important subject of the Christian's conflict. You are enlisted, you do wear the uniform, you ought to fight; victory is certain, the honors are everlasting; and only think of Him who is your " Leader and Commander." You will have no such opportunity of distinguishing yourselves for Christ in heaven. Lose no time then in waking up to the consciousness that you are soldiers, and that you must learn to fight. There is no discharge in this war, and no truce with the enemy.

But what of thine own experience, O my soul., in this warfare? Knowest thou well the sound of the trumpet that calls thee to battle? Art thou always ready and willing to obey the summons A false humility might lead thee to plead thine own weakness, and a would-be honoring of Christ might lead thee to plead His strength as sufficient without thee; but thou must never plead either the one or the other to get rid of responsibility. And, remember, it is more with the wiles than with the strength of the enemy thou hast to contend. This is an important consideration and one that must never be forgotten. Who can speak of his wiles, his depths, his snares, his stratagems, innumerable? These must not be underrated. We need both the wisdom and strength of the Lord to resist them; and of these the apostle here speaks.

" Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." This is the first sound of the trumpet, we may say: and to what, we inquire, does it call the saints-does it call thee? Certainly not to survey the stronghold of the enemy, or to show thee what thou hast to overcome; but sweetly to turn all thy thoughts to the Lord Himself. Before a word is said about enemies or conflicts, thou art called to survey thy strength in the mighty Lord, as seated at the right hand of God in the heavenlies. This is grace-the grace of the Lord Jesus, and like the ways of the Spirit when acting toward us for Him-" Be strong in the Lord." But this touches a high note of privilege and blessing, as well as of security and strength.. Clearly, this is the first thing to be understood: what are we to understand by the words-" IN THE LORD?"

All through this epistle the apostle speaks of the saints as seated together in heavenly places in Christ. In chapter i. we learn that God raised Him up from the dead, and set Him in the heaven-lies. In chapter ii. we learn that God, in doing this, laid the foundation of our association with Him there. In chapter iii. we are seen as a testimony to principalities and powers, that they might learn by this unity the manifold wisdom of God. In chapter iv. the doctrine of the " one body " is unfolded. In chapters v., vi., practical exhortations are given on the ground of these great truths. Hence the saints are addressed in the passage before us as " in the Lord." This is where they are for themselves in virtue of their union with Him as risen and exalted. It is the common heritage of all that belong to Christ; and their own proper place, according to the counsels of God. But here they are exhorted to use it as a fortification against, the wiles of the enemy. And this we must do if we would be victorious, and fully enjoy our proper christian privileges.

But in what way, thou mayest ask, am I to fortify myself in a heavenly Christ, against the wiles of Satan? How can lie reach me there? It seems difficult to understand the true character of this conflict.

Unless the inquiring Christian knows his position as a member of the body of Christ in the heavenlies, according to the teaching of the epistle to the Ephesians, there will be great difficulty in understanding the true character of this conflict. The portion of scripture before us is evidently addressed to such. It assumes that we have died and are risen again in Christ; that we are sitting in heavenly places, and enjoying our heavenly portion in Him. But Satan and his hosts are also regarded as in heavenly places; so that there must be conflict if we would practically maintain our position there.

It will be seen then that this conflict is not merely the mortifying of the flesh, or contending with the temptations of this world, though these, of course, have to be overcome. Neither is it, as many think, a question as to the state of our souls before God. He who has clothed us with the best robe, killed for us the fatted calf, and fitted us to be guests in His own presence-chamber, has no conflict with us. And there need be no doubts or fears as to the final results of His grace. It is really a question of fighting with wicked spirits, who deceive and reign in darkness. Hence the exhortation, "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places." (See marg.)

We are here reminded of the Lord's directions to Joshua, and of Israel's enemies in the land of Canaan. These were types of the mightier and deadlier foes with which the Christian has to fight. The Canaanites were but enemies of " flesh and blood;" we have to encounter wicked spirits in heavenly places, even principalities and powers. These titles give us some idea of their supremacy over the human mind, at least over those whom they have first blinded. (2 Cor. 4:3, 4.) To resist such enemies as these, we must be armed with the panoply of heaven-" the

whole armor of God." Mere human wisdom and strength are of no avail in this warfare.- But it will assist us greatly to consider, first, and briefly, the character of the wars in Canaan.

THE WARS IN CANAAN UNDER JOSHUA.

The children of Ham were settled in the land when the children of Israel entered it. But God had set it apart for Israel (Deut. 32:8); and the Canaanites must be expelled from the land of promise.

" Arise," said the Lord to Joshua, " go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses." (Josh. 1:1-9.) Up till now, we may say, there had been no fighting.

The wilderness was the scene of temptation-the place of discipline for themselves, not of fighting with others, though occasionally they had to combat foes, as in the case of Amalek. But now that they had crossed the Jordan and received their orders, they must fight for the possession of the land. Every inch of ground would be disputed by the enemy. But they had nothing to fear from the Canaanites: God was with His people, as He said to Joshua, " As captain of the host of the Lord am I now come." He had given them the land, and accurately defined its boundaries, but specified one condition as the only principle of actual possession; " Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses."

It was only on this condition that they could possess the land, though freely given them of God. This is an important principle; note it, and see that thou understand it well. There was no fighting, strictly speaking, until they crossed the Jordan; after that, the sword was to be drawn, and ought never to have been sheathed while there was a Canaanite in the land. They had only to trust in God and be guided by His word, and victory would follow them at every step. " There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life." This was God's sure word of promise to Joshua their leader. What an honor to be thus led, and led only to triumph-to plant the foot of victory on the neck of every foe. They were never to be left, never to be forsaken; His presence in power would always be with them, and His word would be a sure guide to them. Only they were to be very strong, very courageous, and observe to do all things according to the word of the Lord. But-alas, alas, we know what happened. They failed-they sadly failed. They followed not the God of Israel, though He was in their midst as a man of war. They never took

possession of all the land which God had given to them. Nevertheless, the word of the Lord abideth sure. The day will come when in virtue of the death of their own Messiah, every man shall stand in his own lot, according to the boundaries assigned by God Himself. But now for

THE APPLICATION OF THESE TYPES.

Like Israel of old, the Christian, we may say, enters his heavenly Canaan without striking a blow. Crossing the Red Sea makes him a pilgrim and a stranger-brings him into the great scene of temptation; crossing the Jordan makes him a warrior-brings him into the scene of conflict. Thus we read in Ephesians, the great antitype of the book of Joshua; " But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, bath quickened us together with Christ, and bath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Here then we are clearly taught what God has done for us, not what we have to do for ourselves. In His " rich" mercy and " great " love, He has brought us out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, the wilderness, the Jordan, and landed us in our heavenly Canaan. But we are not raised up to these heavenly places merely to enjoy our rich privileges there; we have enemies to fight, like the people of Israel under Joshua.

It is not so difficult to understand the character of the fighting under Joshua; but what, may I ask, is the character, influence, or mode of action, of these wicked spirits? Stratagem, cunning, and lies, are their most successful weapons. They will challenge thy title, question thy fitness, and in every way dispute thy present possession of the heavenlies. Thou must know thy ground well, at every point, in order to maintain it. And to this end thou must be guided entirely by the word of God, apart from feelings-thou must know what it is to be in heaven as a matter of faith, while still on earth as a matter of fact. Thou must also understand the blessed truth of being in the presence of God in all the acceptancy of Christ, though still here in the midst of difficulties, failures, and infirmities. In short, thou must maintain, in the face of every foe, thy present title to heaven, thy fitness to be there, and thy large possessions as an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. 1 John 4:17; Rom. 8:7.

One of their most successful wiles is, to insinuate, or boldly to affirm, as the case may be, that Christians cannot enter or enjoy heaven till after they die-that their deliverance is not complete. This is one of the most subtle snares of the enemy, and by this lie thousands are deceived. He insinuates that our deliverance is not complete, either as to the law, the flesh, or the world. Hence the bondage of many. But to those who know the

truth as to their position in a risen Christ, it is a barefaced falsehood. Does not God say in His word, that we are now seated in the heavenly places in Christ; that we may now enjoy the good things of heaven as the fruit of our own country; just as the children of Israel began to eat of the old corn of the land of Canaan when the wilderness manna ceased? But, No, says the adversary, however sure you may think yourselves of heaven, you cannot be there until you die; crossing the Jordan means the act of death. Hence the falsehood of Satan has become the belief of many Christians. " We believe we shall go to heaven when we die," is the doctrine of nearly all Christendom. Comparatively few would say, " We are there already, in Christ, and who shall separate us?" Not, observe, " We hope to join Christ in heaven when we die"-though that also is true-but being joined to the Lord now, we are there already, as one with Him; hence the challenge of faith is, " Who shall separate us?" Unless the Christian is master of his position, Satan will beguile him to settle down in his lie. When we die and go to heaven our fighting days are done. We shall need no armor there, thank the Lord. The soul rests in the paradise of God, and the body sleeps in Jesus until the morning of the first resurrection.

CHRIST RISEN, THE MEASURE OF OUR DELIVERANCE.

And now, my soul, may I ask, What knowest thou for thyself of these blessed truths? Knowest thou what true christian ground is, as to thy standing in the presence of God? Faith answers, Surely the deliverance which Christ has wrought out for us is perfect. All depends on the completeness of His work. Christ risen from the dead is the measure of our deliverance: and being made the righteousness of God in Him, our title is clear to be in the same glory with Him. But as the enemy bears me such a grudge, because I am so much better off than he is, he tries

his utmost to weaken my hold of the truth, to interrupt my fellowship with Christ, to hinder my enjoyment of His love, and to dim my apprehension of His glory. On the other hand, he will try hard to ensnare with present things, lawful and unlawful. These are some of the things that we have to war against. But the easiest way to victory is to hold fast the truth and walk in the light as God is in the light.

Good, and true, my soul. But in what way is " Christ risen the measure of our deliverance?" It is a matter of faith, and perfectly plain to those that believe. We were dead in sin, Christ died for sin; and we can now say, we have died with Him, or, died in His death. But God quickened us together, raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. And now, being associated with Him in life, united to Him by the Holy Ghost, we are entitled, as a matter of faith, to regard the flesh as done with before God, as if our old nature had been nailed to the cross, and brought to its end there, and we received our new nature in resurrection. This is what St. Paul says in writing to the Galatians: " They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." He does not say " they are to crucify it," as if it were something to do, or something going on: but " they have done it." And it is done in the case of every one who receives a crucified Christ. Therefore it is all true to faith and in God's sight. The raising up of the twelve stones out of the bed of the river Jordan, where the feet of the priests stood, and setting them up at the camp in Gilgal, is a striking type of our being raised up with Christ, and seated in heavenly places in Him.

But all who understand the meaning of the Red Sea and the Jordan will have no difficulty on this point. The former shadows forth deliverance from the slavery of sin and Satan, the justification of God's people, and the judgment of their enemies. These blessings flow from the death and resurrection of Christ for us. But this brings the people into the wilderness, the place of sojourn; the land lies before them. The latter is a very different type." There is no rod of judgment lifted up over the waters, as at the Red Sea. When the feet of the priests that carried the ark of the covenant approached the Jordan, the overflowing waters fell back, and the children of Israel passed clean over. They now leave the wilderness, and enter Canaan; the manna ceases, and they eat of the fruit of the land. This shadows forth the blessed Lord going first down into the waters of death, and bringing us into the heavenly places. Clearly, then, the Red Sea represents Christ as dead and risen for us; the Jordan, as our death and resurrection with Rim; or, as one has forcibly said, " The grand point of the Red Sea is what Christ brings us out of, and that of the Jordan is what Christ brings us into." Bless the Lord, O my soul, thy deliverance is complete! the world, sin, Satan, death, and judgment are behind thee.

And now, having explained the allusion to the wars in Canaan, the course is clear. Buckle on thine armor, brace it tightly; put to the sword every wrong thought, feeling, desire, motive, or object, by which Satan might gain an advantage over thee. All spiritual blessings in heavenly places are thine; see that thou maintain thy possession of them in present enjoyment. And at the same time see that thou maintain a holy and consistent testimony here on the earth.

" Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." Here the apostle repeats the exhortation of verse 11. His own mind is deeply impressed with the frightful array of our foes. He reviews them, and describes their position and character in verse 12. Thereupon he sounds a second alarm in verse 13. " Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God." No part must be left unguarded. The enemy knows how to take advantage of the smallest opening.

The next thing to which the apostle calls attention is, the character of the period during which this conflict lasts. He calls it

" THE EVIL DAY."

Some take this " day" to comprehend the whole period of the believer's life, or more especially his seasons of trial and suffering; but in this view we lose sight of Christ. There are others who think it refers to the entire period since Christ was crucified. The absence of Christ from the earth, the presence of Satan as the " prince of this world," and the manifestations of his power, as permitted by God, constitute " the evil day." Christ was the light of the world while He was in it, but He was rejected and crucified, and He returned to His Father. Since then this world has been again in darkness and governed by demons. Though of course God is supreme, and overrules all for His own glory and His people's good. Satan is the god whom this world worships, and the prince whom it follows. How solemn! how awful the thought! What a dreadful place this world must be! Surely we should all care less for it than we do, were this terrible fact believed. See verse 12.

God dwells in the light. How different! how blessed the thought! And His children are privileged to dwell in the light with Him; the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, having cleansed them from all sin, they have been made whiter than snow, and fitted to dwell in the light of heaven. But they have a mission on earth. They are God's light-bearers to the benighted people of this world. " Among whom," says the apostle, " ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life." (Phil. 2:15, 16.) Hence the struggle-the conflict between light and darkness -between the children of God, and the rebellious principalities and powers who rule over the darkness of this world. And hence, we may add, " the evil day." The enemy hates the light as the thief the watchman's lamp. He will do his utmost to harass and annoy the children of light. He will seek to mislead them in their path, to darken the light that is in them, by insinuating wrong views and wrong applications of the truth; and he will seek by every means to make them falsify their position, both in the heavenlies and on the earth.

This is the enemy, and these are the kind of attacks which the Christian has to meet and contend with. He has to withstand them, to resist them at every point; and having done all to stand. Having done all that a soldier can do, and however complete the victory he may have gained, yet still he must stand-the war is not over. We must maintain our ground whether in peace or in war, and be found standing, after the last battle has been fought and the last victory won.

But in what, may I ask, has the believer strength to oppose the forces of the enemy? There is but one answer to this question. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit, who abides with the Lord's people during the entire period of the Lord's absence; and, consequently, during the entire period of " the evil day;" so that He who is for us is greater far than all that be against us. Bless the Lord! What comfort, what encouragement, what strengthening of the hands to war, what certainty of victory, what security against defeat! This was thy care and love for us, O most blessed Lord! True to thy word of sweetest consolation to the disciples; " I will not leave you comfortless "-as orphans in the world-" I will come to you. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not [not being incarnate], neither knoweth him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

Knowest thou, my soul, what a good day that will be for this poor world when the Lord returns? Then it will be the presence of Christ as reigning over the whole earth, and Satan shut up in the bottomless pit. This will make all the difference. The absence of Christ now and the

presence of Satan make " the evil day;" but the absence of Satan from the earth then and the presence of Christ will make "the good day "-the bright millennial day, when the whole earth will be filled with His glory. Observest thou that He says, "I will come unto you?" This may have had a certain fulfillment in the coming down of the Holy Ghost, but it can only have its complete fulfillment in the coming of the Lord Himself: as He says plainly in the same chapter, " I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also." Nothing can be plainer-nothing sweeter than these words; and sweeter still the thought, He is not speaking here of glory, which will be universal, but of home, which will be special, and of the love which will characterize it forever.

Oh, shorten then, in thy mercy, most gracious Lord, " the evil day." It is a day of abounding iniquity, of increasing infidelity, of wars and rumors of wars. And a day, thou knowest, of difficulty, sorrow, and suffering to many of thy people. The whole creation awaits thy coming. " For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." Oh, then, hasten that day of glory-that long-promised holiday- of peace and plenty-of rest and rejoicing throughout the whole earth. Then the nations " shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Isa. 2:4.

" Come, blessed Lord! bid every shore And answering island singThe praises of thy royal name,And own thee as their kingCome, come, with all thy quickening power, With one awakening smile,And bid the serpent's trail no moreThy beauteous realms defile."

But to return to our text. We will now examine the different pieces of the armor of God, that we may know their uses and how to apply them; and first of all we are to have

THE LOINS GIRT ABOUT WITH TRUTH.

What are we to understand by the loins, the girding, and the truth, may I ask? These three things would naturally open a wide field for meditation, but as we have dwelt at some length on the nature of the conflict, we must be brief on the several pieces of the armor.

1. The loins represent the chief seat of strength when duly girded. (Job 31:20; 40:16.) Peter

applies this figuratively to the inner man when he says, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind." Thereby signifying, that the thoughts, desires, and affections, are the springs of action-the motive power of the soul; and therefore must be kept from exposure to the enemy by indulging our own will. We are only strong when kept from wandering beyond the limits of the girdle. This is of first importance to the christian warrior. The enemy has no hold on a heart thus encircled with the truth of God.

2. Girding is the application of truth to the soul-the intimate dealing of the word with the will-the movements of the heart. This is arming for conflict in a most practical and effectual way; but it must be done in the presence of God before we meet the enemy. The soldier's girdle fastens his other pieces of armor more closely to him, whereby lie is able to march and strong to fight. " Thou hast girded me with strength," says the psalmist, " unto the battle." (Psa. 18:39.) There is also an allusion to the custom of the oriental nations, who gird their long loose garments about their loins that they may not hinder them in their traveling or working. Elijah girded up his loins, and ran after Ahab. (1 Kings 18:46.) It is the bracing up of the affections-the whole inner man-for Christ and for the things of Christ. When the heart cleaves to the Lord, as the garments cleave to the loins under the tight belt of the girdle, the enemy cannot reach the gates of the soul.

3. The truth is a comprehensive term; but here the Spirit may refer to a line or character of truth which would be our best safe-guard against the attacks of the enemy-truth suited to the position we are called to occupy. " Having your loins girt about with truth." The soul is thus to be garrisoned with the truth. There must be no access to or egress from the citadel of the soul, unless searched by the truth. It applies to everything-to both the inner and outer man. But the chief province of truth, when used of the Spirit, is to act upon the conscience and bring it into the presence of God, where our most intimate thoughts, feelings, desires, motives, and affections, may be fairly and fully judged. " For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Heb. 4:12.

Here, pause for a moment, my soul, and wonder; and well thou mayest. Mark and meditate on the depths, fullness, and penetrating power of the word of God. What a volume of truth we have in these seven words, " Having your loins girt about with truth." All that is needed for the government and defense of our inward thoughts and outward ways is folded up in these few words.

By taking heed thereunto, thou wouldst be fortified in the first movements of thy soul against the wiles of the enemy. There would be nothing to answer to his suggestions. By this piece of armor, spiritually understood, the soul is maintained in communion with God, and the enemy kept at a safe distance. Thus it was with the blessed Lord -thus it may be with thee, my soul. He is the warrior's example. " It is written," was thy strong tower, most gracious Lord. It was not in reasoning with the enemy that thou didst vanquish him; but in the perfect application of the word to thyself, and to the circumstances around thee.

As the Second Man, the Lord moved and acted according to the written word. " Preserve me, O God; for in thee do I put my trust," was the around He took and the ground He maintained as a servant, though He was a Son. He never acted on His own will. He was girt about with truth. He waited on God. If no word came, He waited still. He would do nothing without the word of God. " It is written," must precede everything. This is safe ground for thee, my soul, and this only is safe ground-" It is written." Forget it not, I pray thee: it would keep thy heart in communion with God, in the midst of all circumstances; but especially in conflict keep it before thee: engrave it on thy shield, inscribe it on thy banner, and let it be thy watchword to discern between friends and foes.

Pole-star on life's tempestuous deep;Beacon when doubts surround;Compass, by which our course we keep;Our plummet-line to sound.Our shield and buckler in the fight;In victory's hour the palm;Comfort in grief; in weakness, might;In sickness, Gilead's balm.

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

The second piece of armor commended to the christian soldier is the breastplate, and the metal it is to be made of is righteousness-practical righteousness, blameless conduct, a holy walk with God. This gives courage in the day of battle. It would matter little what else the christian warrior possessed if he was without his breastplate. The most vital part would be exposed to the enemy's

fire. Besides, being a center piece, it gives unity

to the whole. If a man's conscience reproaches him, and if he knows that the world would reproach him if it knew all, how can he hold up his head and face the enemy boldly? He is thinking about himself, fearing detection and exposure. His breastplate is gone, he fears the blow may fall on the unprotected part. " The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright. The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry; but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." Psa. 11:7; 34:15, 16.

When the thoughts and affections are governed and kept in order by the truth, there will be a good conscience-a holy and a righteous walk with God and before men. This association of ideas seems beautifully united in Eph. 4:24: " And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness;" or, the " righteousness and holiness of truth." The truth produces both. Hence the beauty of the divine order. First, the heart; second, the conduct. Righteousness is the due attention to what we owe relatively to God and man. As says the apostle, " And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men." (Acts 24:16.) This is practical righteousness—a righteousness which gave the apostle amazing courage, holy boldness, when he stood up before his enemies. Holiness is rather that which repels evil-instinctively repelling that which is contrary to God. Thus the happy combination of the " righteousness and holiness of truth" forms the sterling metal of the Christian's breastplate.

And now, see that thou well understandest this important truth, O my soul. To lose a good conscience is to be robbed of thy strength in the day of conflict. Only he who has a good conscience can be bold and fearless when called to go forth and face the enemy. But need I remind thee, before closing our meditations on the breastplate, that the righteousness we have been speaking about is quite distinct from the righteousness of God, in which we stand accepted in Christ Jesus? He is our righteousness, complete and unchangeable in the presence of God; but not in the character of a breastplate. All conflict is over there. But while here we need practical righteousness for successful conflict with our adversary the devil. Nevertheless, the righteousness of God which we are made in Christ Jesus is the foundation of the other. Without the knowledge of this we should be feeble warriors, and an easy prey to Satan's wiles. He who made our peace and finished our righteousness is now in the presence of God for us. Blessed Lord, maintain us while down here in practical righteousness, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." See 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:9; Rom. 3:21, 22; 10:3, 4.

THE GOSPEL OF PEACE.

We now come to the third piece of armor in the Christian's panoply. " And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace." This part of the armor distinctly refers to the Christian's walk. He is to go forth in peace-shod with peace; and yet he is a man of war, and clad in armor from head to foot. The helmet covers his head in the day of battle, and the shoes his feet. And these he is to wear so long as he keeps the field against the enemy.

But in what way, may I ask, is the christian soldier to be a peace-maker? There seems in this a great contradiction. Admitted, my soul, but the contradiction is only in appearance. The most gentle Christian must be a stern warrior. And more, would I say, in proportion to his power as a peace-maker, will be his power in conflict with the adversary. Here is a point in the divine science of Christianity, worthy of thy most patient study. But now, remember the order, the secret is this:

When truth governs the heart, the conscience is good. We are bright and happy in ourselves, and peaceful in our way with others. There is integrity of heart to begin with, truth in the inward parts, consistency in our conduct, and seeking the happiness of others. The salvation of the lost, the leading of such to know Him who made peace by the blood of the cross, and the happiness of the saved, become the grand object of the peacemaker. Over such an one the enemy can gain no victory. He is unassailable. There is no point exposed. He maintains his ground. But, on the other hand, when there is carelessness as to the saving peace of the sinner, and laxity in our own christian ways, the conscience becomes bad, we are unhappy, we get into trouble, we trouble others; we are exposed to the attacks of Satan, he wounds in many places, we cannot hold up our head.

In such a case, the heart is not governed by truth. The belt, as it were, is unbuckled-the garments are allowed to fly loose. Where are the thoughts now-especially the affections? the painful results of such a course spread far and wide. Persons, families, the Church of God, are troubled. The seeds of discord grow apace, and many chief friends are separated. Satan, thou wilt perceive, has gained a great victory. But stay a moment, I pray thee. Tell me, what was the beginning of all this trouble-this shameful defeat? Just this, my soul, and mark it well; God begins with the heart, and so should we. We are to wear a girdle of truth. This is the first thing. Departure from the truth of God as our only guide exposes the mind to its own resources, or rather, to the suggestions of Satan.

Alas, we have gone out of the way. Then come excuses, explanations, and exaggerations. Practically the girdle has dropped from the soldier's loins, his breastplate is lost, and in place of being shod with peace, he is shod with dissension. One Christian out of communion with the Lord may prove a root of bitterness to many. Unhappy in himself, and vexed with himself, he is soon angry with others. Whereas, when the Christian is in communion, he is at peace with God, and filled with the peace of God, and goes out in the sweet peace of the gospel to others-to both saints and sinners.

And now, understandest thou, my soul, how the Christian is both a man of peace and a man of war? Yes, not only so, but I see clearly, that unless he be a man of peace he cannot be a man of war. And hast thou also noticed that there is a special honor and blessing attached to the manifestation of this christian grace'? Has not the. Lord Himself said, " Blessed are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God?" But why? Because He is the God of peace-the great Peace-maker; and they are like Him. He gave His Son to make peace. There is nothing on which His heart is more set. Peace, my son, was the language of the father's kiss to the prodigal-the first utterance of his heart. Nothing more manifests our relation to God as His children than peace-making. " Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God."

The expression, " your feet, shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," is extremely beautiful. It gives the idea of the Christian carrying peace into every scene which He enters. What a mission-Peace! What a title-Children of God! The reconciliation of the sinner to God, and the blessings of peace to the saints, are the objects of his heavenly mission. (John 20) Should he enter a scene which has been one of trouble, he will find out the way, if possible, to make it one of peace. But should he fail, he can look to God and patiently wait on Him. His character and mission are Peace.

THE SHIELD OF FAITH.

Another piece, and another kind of armor, is now introduced -the shield of faith. It is for defensive warfare. It defends the soul from the assaults of the enemy. The first three parts, as we have seen, relate to the spiritual condition of the Christian's own soul, and to his walk. But a piece of defensive armor is needed to cover these. Each of them is constantly the aim of Satan's attacks: hence the need of the shield, that his venomous efforts may be ineffectual. "Above all," or, over all; or, added to all the rest, " taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

We have here two things for our meditation.

The exhortation; " above all, taking the shield of faith."

The argument pressing it; " wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."

What then are we to understand by the shield of faith? Faith in God as unchangeable in His grace and love- a confidence in Him, answering to what He is to us in Christ Jesus. It is the full assurance of the heart in the love of God, according to the revelation which He has given of Himself. God for us, should be emblazoned on the christian shield. This is more than the faith, observe, that simply receives God's testimony concerning Christ for salvation; though founded on that, of course. It is a deep and blessed work of God's Spirit in the soul, whereby the blessed consciousness that He is for us, and that His favor is unchangeable, is maintained in the heart. This is the invulnerable shield of faith: it covers the whole man, it is over all. While this shield is raised, no arrow of Satan can possibly reach us. They all fall pointless to the ground. What a mercy, O my soul! What a 'provision of grace, to be shielded from the poisoned shafts of the foe! How dreadful to be stung in the heart, in the conscience, in the ways, by the fiend of hell! Blessed Lord! impress our souls with the importance of these words, " Above all." " Above all, taking the shield of faith." Does the apostle elevate this grace " above all" the other graces as well as " over all" the others? Enough, however, to mark its unspeakable importance. Still meditate, O my soul, on the character and uses of thy shield, and take a still wider view of what the Spirit has taught us.

How blessed to find that God is often called in scripture the Shield of His people. " Fear not," said God to Abram, " I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." (Gen. 15:1.) " For thou, Lord," says the psalmist, " wilt bless the righteous; with favor wilt thou compass him as with a shield." (Psa. 5:12.) The living God is His people's shield. What rest, what security this gives! Behind His ample shield we have nothing to fear.

2. We now turn, for a moment, to the second thing: Wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." The enemy's first and dreadful aim will be to weaken in our hearts this unquestioning confidence in God, to edge in by some means unbelieving thoughts, to insinuate that God is not all love, all goodness. These are his fiery darts, darts of unbelief. Especially when there has been failure; when the heart, by some means, has been turned away from God, will he drive the soul to despair if he can. He will press upon the fallen one the terrible thought that God is against him, that God has abandoned him, that there is no hope. Hence the Lord's prayer for Peter that his faith might not fail him, that he might not be tempted, in consequence of his great sin, to unbelieving thoughts of God. There is no suffering so great as the agony of despair. Those who have witnessed it in others will never forget it. What must it be to pass through it! It partakes of the torments of hell-the forsaken place -the place where hope never enters. Nothing but the shield of faith can quench the fiery darts of unbelief.

The efforts of Satan to seduce, to act upon the desires of the flesh and of the mind, are entirely different to his fiery darts. There is pleasure of a certain kind in gratifying these desires. But there is no pleasure of any kind in yielding to unbelieving thoughts of God. Despair, more or less, is the result. At the same time, his seductions, if yielded to, expose the soul to his further and hotter attacks. If we have opened the door to him in gratifying an evil desire, one may have to suffer terribly from his fiery attacks before we are restored to the confidence and peace of God. But pray, tell me, how these dreadful darts may be detected and avoided. They are truly awful to think of. Yes, indeed, my soul, they are truly awful. They are called fiery darts, because they are like a consuming fire in the soul; at least if they bring the soul to the point of despair. His great object is to darken the light of God in the soul and hide from it His love and favor. But few cases reach this point, thank God, where accomplished redemption is known. But here, prevention is better than cure; let us see how these inroads of the enemy may be prevented.

The most effectual way is being at home and happy in the presence of God. The personal knowledge of pardon and acceptance in the Beloved-of being complete in Christ, silences doubts, dispels fears, and quenches the fiery darts of the wicked. But the grand sheet-anchor of the soul is the knowledge of God's unchangeable love as He has made Himself known to us in Christ. We may, alas, for a time, become indifferent, careless, lukewarm-turn aside, fall away; but the door is always left open for our return, and no change can take place either in God's heart, or in His counsels towards us. The heart, in the calm assurance of His love, can say, I change, you change, all change; but He changes not. Circumstances change, friends change, everything around may seem changing; but there is no change in Him. Oh! what a hold this gives the soul of the living God! What peace, what joy, what repose, what happiness, and what irresistible power against the enemy! His arrows cannot reach us here. We are behind the shield of faith. Under the painful sense of failure, the heart is broken by the assurance that His love is the same, and cannot change toward us, though chastening may be necessary. But in place of doubts, or dark despair under His chastening hand, there will be the bowings and the meltings of worship.

THE HELMET OF SALVATION.

The helmet of salvation and the shield of faith are intimately connected, though perfectly distinct. The latter is confidence in what God is; the former in what He has done. The shield conveys the idea of a more general confidence in God Himself, the helmet of a more special personal assurance in the deliverance He has wrought for us in Christ Jesus. Thus, as we have seen, the one is over all, the other crowns all. Our defensive armor is complete. We can hold up our heads with holy boldness in the day of battle; we can meet the strongest enemy, or all the hosts of hell, with invincible courage; we have put on " the whole armor of God," we are covered with the strength and the salvation of God. Bless the Lord! " Complete in him, who is the head of all principality and power." What enemy can harm us, what enemy can reach us there? In the light as God is in the light, the rulers of this world's darkness will never venture there. We are raised in Him even above the angels that never sinned. Wonderful, blessed, glorious truth! May we use it for His glory, the blessing of our souls, and the defeat of our enemies!

But hast thou well considered, my soul, that our "helmet " is a known salvation? More, much more, than merely hoping to be saved at last. The enemy would soon cast down such a helmet from thy head. Well, but is it not scriptural to hope for salvation? What does the apostle

mean when he says, "And for an helmet the hope of salvation?" Surely nothing can be plainer than that. True, but the apostle is speaking in 1 Thess. 5 of the hope of the Lord's coming; not of our forgiveness and acceptance. In this connection it includes glory, for which, of course, we hope or wait. Some think that whenever and wherever the word " salvation " is used, it must mean the salvation of the soul from sin and hell.

This is a great mistake, and it has been the means of perplexing many, and leading many into false doctrine. The passage referred to is extremely beautiful. " But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet the hope of salvation." Those here addressed are the children of light and of the day-children that are walking in communion with God in "faith and love," and with the bright, farseeing eye of " hope," fixed more especially on Christ, who is coming to take us up to be with Himself in glory. This is the true and proper hope of the Christian-of the Church-the hope of her Lord's coming. We have now everything but glory. We are still in the natural body, therefore we hope, we wait for the glorious body; but not uncertainly, thank the Lord: no, " we rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Rom. 5:2; Phil. 3:21.

But there is another passage which teaches, as many say, that a known salvation is impossible in this world-that we must wait till we come to the judgment seat before we can know for certain how it will go with us. It is this, " Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Now it is said, we may work well for a while, but sadly fail in the end and come short at last.

As in the other passage, the mistake arises from not seeing the meaning of the word " salvation." To see its application the connection must be considered. Both in this verse and throughout the epistle " salvation " is regarded as a future thing. Paul himself says, " Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect." This, of course, he could not be until he was with Christ in glory. Clearly then our final deliverance from conflict of every kind is implied in the word salvation " as here used. Hence Christ is spoken of as a " Savior " in the same chapter, when He comes to transform our vile bodies. " For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Here it is not merely a question of the salvation of the soul from sin, but of the body from humiliation. The mistake arises from supposing that " salvation " has only one meaning in the New Testament. Those who think so must often feel in a difficulty. For example, in Rom. 13 we read, " For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." How is this to be explained? Simply by the context. There is no difficulty. We find it spoken of in connection with "the day;" but the day had not arrived-the day of glory. But it was coming nearer and nearer every day. Hence the heart is cheered and encouraged in conflict by the Spirit's word which follows: " The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us- put on the armor of light.

What then, thou mayest still ask, is the real meaning of these words, " Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Carefully look for a moment, my soul, at what goes before, and what follows after these words. Then thou wilt find the key to the passage. Paul has left the saints at Philippi; God is with them. Not that God was absent when Paul was present, that is not the question. God never leaves nor forsakes His people. But when a father is present and doing everything for his children, they are disposed to lean on him; when he is away from them, they must think and work for themselves. Thus it was, so far, with the Philippians. " Wherefore," he says, " my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." The apostle who had labored among them was now far away, a prisoner at Rome. He was no longer present to help them with his counsel and spiritual energy. They were now cast more immediately on God Himself. Hence he says, " For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Therefore, they ought to work all the more earnestly, even with " fear and trembling," seeing God was working in them. He exhorts them to " fear and tremble," not lest they should fall and be lost, but lest they should dishonor God by any want of zeal, diligence, earnestness, or faithfulness, in the day of trial.

All hinges then, thou wilt now see, on these two things; the absence of the apostle; the presence of God. They had now to meet the wiles of the enemy without the aid of Paul's presence; but God was engaged for them, and acting in them; therefore their loss was turned into great gain. They were thrown entirely upon God for all needed help, counsel, and guidance. Nothing can be more encouraging than this passage when rightly understood. In place of perplexing and weakening the believer, it nerves him for service and warfare. What a thought, when we find ourselves engaged in such a conflict, to know that God Himself is with us and engaged for us! At the same time we must not forget that there is a deep and solemn warning in the apostle's words. As if he had said, You have many difficulties and dangers to meet and overcome in your path through the wilderness. The conflict is a serious one: you have the efforts of a mighty, subtle, and active foe to war against; and I am no longer with you to help with my counsel, to exhort and stir you up by my example; so that you must be more prayerful, more watchful, more circumspect, more personally dependent on the resources of God Himself. " For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Thus were they crowned, and so should every warrior be crowned, in the day of battle, with a known and an enjoyed salvation.

The apostle is our noble example in all this, as well as our wise counselor. It was this helmet of salvation that gave him, when a prisoner and in chains, such boldness and energy in the midst of his enemies. Undaunted by the power of the world that was arrayed before him, he lifted up his head in the conscious enjoyment of his relationship to God, and of his resources in Him; and earnestly wished his judges and his audience were as happy as himself. " I would to God," said Paul to Agrippa, " that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." (Acts 26:29.) He was not thinking about himself, he. had nothing to fear for himself; no blow from the enemy could deprive him of his helmet, it was secured by the cross and the glory of Jesus; and brightly it shone before all. This present, known salvation set him free to think about others, care for the good of others, and appeal to the hearts of others, in words of burning eloquence. Thus may we war and fight, with salvation as our helmet, through the power of an ungrieved Holy Spirit.

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT.

The sword is the symbol of aggressive warfare. The first three parts of the armor protect us as

to our own state; the second two are defensive, the sixth is aggressive. We have but one weapon to use against the enemy-the word of God. But if we know how to handle it, or, what is equally important, how to draw it, no enemy can resist it. Any one may draw the carnal sword, though any one may not be able to strike with it. But not so the sword of the Spirit. We can only draw it aright when guided by the Holy Spirit. It is the sword of the Spirit. That is, we must be walking in communion with God, and in the ungrieved power of the Holy Spirit, to use it either offensively or defensively. Thus the right passage will be suggested to the mind and applied with divine power. Mere human intelligence and human capacity are of no avail in this warfare. The word of God is our only but all-sufficient weapon. It baffles the power of Satan, it detects

his wiles, it disables every adversary, it silences the voice of self, it brings light into the scene of conflict, and discovers the dark deceptions of the foe.

But it may be well for thee, my soul, to turn aside for a little and meditate on the Lord's use of the word when in conversation with the Jews and when in conflict with Satan in the wilderness. The former he so answered from scripture that no man durst ask him any more questions; the latter he vanquished with all his hosts and spoiled him of his goods. Oh! for divine skill to use, after the manner of our Lord, the word of God-the Spirit's sword! Lord, help us to quote the right passage and at the right time; and so to maintain our position according to the word, that the enemy may gain no advantage over us!

But the sword of the Spirit is only used actively in our spiritual warfare. Christianity is essentially aggressive in its character. It judges all that is opposed to its pure and heavenly doctrines. It wages war with the mighty empire of unbelief in its ten thousand forms. The gospel is to be preached to every creature under heaven and this side of hell. It openly attacks carelessness, worldliness, formality, infidelity, superstition, error, and vice of every kind. It assails no political body, state, or kingdom; but it storms the citadel of individual hearts and consciences, and seeks to win souls one by one to the Captain of our salvation, Christ Jesus the Lord.

When the empire of Satan is thus invaded and threatened, we may rest assured that he will leave no stratagem untried, no force unused, to hinder our progress, and to quench the light of our testimony. Hence the continual, the unending, the unmitigated warfare. But our weapons are spiritual, our victories are peace; the sharp sword of the Spirit piercing the conscience, subdues the heart, and brings the conquered soul in triumph to the feet of Jesus.

PRAYER IN THE SPIRIT.

We have now had before us the several parts of the armor of God-the panoply of heaven-that which refers to our state both inwardly and outwardly-self-judgment, governed affections, practical godliness, confidence in God, a peaceful and peace-making walk, joy in salvation, the active energy of the Spirit, both in the sword and girdle, by the word. But behind all these there is a hidden spring of power, which gives connection and strength to the whole armor, and without which all would be of no avail. It is dependence on God: a dependence which expresses itself in prayer. " Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

The strength and blessedness of this position cannot be over-estimated. In all thy meditations, O my soul, there is no point more worthy of thy closest, deepest study. It places the soul in connection with God, and in dependence on Him. Thus, remember, all thy battles are to be fought, and all thy battles will be victories. Observe for a moment the structure of this remarkable verse. It is, " Praying always "-on all occasions-habitual and complete dependence. And, " in the Spirit "- in the power of the Holy Spirit-in communion. " And watching thereunto with all

perseverance," active, vigilant. " And supplication for all saints"-earnestness, interest in others, affection which turns everything into prayer. This is the soul's strong tower—every soul's strong tower. All have not gifts for public ministry-for fighting in the front lines; but all have the privilege of thus drawing near to God, and abiding there.

The spirit of prayer in the christian warfare is like wisdom in the human mind-like gravitation in the material world. It combines, it keeps the different pieces of armor in their respective places, and maintains a mutual dependence the one upon the other. And remember this, my soul, and remember it always, whether in peace or in war. Nothing will keep thee more in the light than

praying always "—nothing will give thee a deeper sense of thine own weakness—nothing brings thee more into communion with the strength and favor of God, and nothing the enemy dreads more.

Be watchful and diligent then, O my soul, in the use of this weapon. See and avoid everything that would make thee unspiritual-that would lead thee away from God, or interrupt thy communion with Him. Thy strength lies in communion. May the spirit of entire dependence on God characterize thee as a child in the family, a member in the body, and a servant in the kingdom.

" For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." We are now come in our meditations to the apostle's second prayer. The object and character of this prayer are very different to the first, though their moral connection is easily seen. Christ is the center of„both, and the Christian is associated with Him as such. The first refers to the kingdom of Christ and our association with Him in the dominion and glory. The second, to the house of many mansions, where we are loved of the Father even as Christ Himself is loved. We are thus, O wondrous thought! one with Him as the exalted Man, in love and glory-in all the intimacies of the family, and in all the outward glories of the kingdom.

But tell me, O my soul, how far hast thou entered into these blessed realities? Hast thou the enjoyment of them now? The special work of the Holy Spirit that dwells within thee is to take of the things of Christ and show them unto thee.

Grieve Him not, I pray thee. Unbelief in thy heart, or worldliness in thy life, would hinder His gracious operations. He is both the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Truth. Whatever is not according to truth and holiness in us must grieve Him. This is the main reason, let me assure thee, why so many have such a dim apprehension of Christ, and such a feeble grasp of heavenly truth. The Holy Spirit, who only can reveal Christ and His work to the soul, is grieved. Yes, grieved and hindered in His gracious operations by many things, but especially by our unbelief as to His dwelling in us and abiding with us. Many Christians-if we may judge from what they say-are more occupied with the law than with the Holy Spirit: this is a serious mistake and greatly hinders their souls' prosperity. No soul thus occupied can ever be in a state of happy liberty. The law genders to bondage. It was given to govern human nature; the Holy Spirit is given to govern our divine nature. Faith knows that the old

nature is dead, and that the law cannot apply to that which it has killed. " Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." (Rom. 6:6.) Hence we are warned and exhorted not to grieve the Holy Ghost whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. " Know ye not," says the apostle, " that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you?" But alas, alas, the religion of many is much the same as in Old Testament times-it is the law and human nature, in place of the Holy Ghost and eternal life in a risen Christ. Not that Christ is left out, or His cross either; but there is such a mixture of law and grace-of the old creation and the new, that the Holy Spirit is grieved, and sad confusion the result. Hence the many doubts and fears in place of conscious, happy association with Christ risen, exalted, and glorified.

But in what sense, many inquire, can it be said that we are associated with Christ while here in the world? As, for example, it is said, that we are seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Does not this refer to the future when we shall be actually with Christ in heaven, or to the purpose of God's everlasting love? No, my friend, it refers to the present, and neither to the decrees of God nor to the future. The apostle is speaking of those who were quickened by the Spirit, through faith in Christ. True, by and by we shall be with Christ in heaven; now we are said to be in Him. It is equally true that the love of God is from everlasting to everlasting; but our relationship to Him as His children begins with faith. " For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:26.) Until we had faith in Christ, and were quickened by the Holy Spirit, we were " by nature the children of wrath, even as others." But let me endeavor to explain your difficulty. And here scripture must be our only guide, and the only ground of our faith, even though we may not fully understand it. Association with Christ is the great truth of Christianity, and worthy of our most patient meditation.

In Eph. 2 we find it stated in plainest terms, that when we were dead in sins God quickened us together with Christ. We must begin, in our meditations on this subject, in the region of death. We start from the tomb-we land in glory. God quickens out of the grave. We were dead in our trespasses and sins. That is, we were without spiritual life. Mark this carefully, we were without the least movement of spiritual life. " We were dead in sins." But when we were thus dead in sins, the blessed Lord lay dead for sins. At that solemn moment all were dead. The first Adam dead in sin, the last Adam dead for sin. Not a breath stirred to disturb the deep silence of death. It was as if the vessel had sunk and the waves closed over it. But now, when man could contribute nothing towards the great work, God enters the scene; but He enters it as the God of resurrection. He only can plant the pulse of life in a dead soul. " But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, bath quickened us together with Christ." But to know our blessing we must see it in Christ, so we turn to Him, and Meditate on what He is in God's sight.

He died for us-forever blessed be His name! The Holy One, the spotless Lamb of God, died for us. The awful question of sin which stood against us, He answered on the cross and settled forever. God was thus glorified and the way opened for Him to show His love to us according to all that was in His heart. But He who had gone down under death as the judgment of God on our sins, was raised up again, and we were raised with Him. Here God alone as the great workman fills the scene. He is free to act, and acts towards the objects of His love in richest grace. He works, not only to meet their wants, but to glorify His own name. Sin has been blotted out by the shed blood of His dear Son, all His past ways have been vindicated, and His name glorified. His rich mercy and His great love characterize the great work. Christ is brought forth from under the power of death, and we are brought forth with Him. " But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ." Thus we are associated with the risen Christ by the quickening power of God, in the most real, intimate, and blessed way. We have life in union with Him who is before God as His supreme delight, and we are associated with Him in all the blessed realities of His life. And what more, tell me, can be said or thought of? This is the great truth of Christianity—Christ's own life is ours. The place and privileges that belong to this life, as now seen in Christ before God, are ours. Hence it is said that we are not only quickened together-raised up together, but seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

But this most marvelous and blessed truth is also one of great practical power. It is the true ground of peace. Our sins must be all forgiven before we can be thus one with Christ. All that belonged to the old man was judged on the cross, and put away forever. Blessed be His name! And now we are brought into the presence of God without our sins, and in the condition of divine righteousness. Christ is thus our righteousness as well as our life. In a word, He is our full salvation. " By grace ye are saved." Salvation, according to this epistle, is a present reality. We are as really saved now as ever we can be. " By grace ye are saved." Though salvation is spoken of in some of the other epistles as future, it is not less certain, but viewed as the end of our journey, when we shall stand before Christ in glory; when all the trials, difficulties, and dangers of the way shall be left behind.

This, then, dear friend, is my rather lengthy answer to your question, but it needed some explanation. It is what we have called the Christian's standing, or his association with Christ risen, in the full value of eternal life and divine righteousness. In virtue of this union it can be said of him in truth, even while he is here in this world, that he is seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

The theology of some, I know, would bring a dark cloud over this bright scene, by saying, that the Christian may lose his eternal life. But what does scripture say? Plainly that we are one with Christ from the moment that we are quickened through faith in Him; and that His life is ours, not on the ground of our goodness, but His grace; adored be His name! From the time that we believe, we have eternal life, right on, without the possibility of a break, throughout the endless ages of eternity. God has said it-God has formed the union-it is in resurrection, where no enemy can ever come-the death of Christ has closed the door on every foe, even as the Lord shut Noah and his family inside the ark. Quickening, raising, sitting, are immediately followed by a statement of the very motive and purpose of God in our blessing. " That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Here, faith can breathe freely, rest quietly, wait patiently, and without the smallest misgiving. Faith never asks for more than the word of God. Though, alas, in many things we fail and come short, yet He is faithful. The life which He gives is like Himself -Eternal: " His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus " is also like Himself-Eternal: here called, " the ages to come." See the entire chain of grace, verses 4-10.

Think, O think, my soul, on what grace has brought thee into-on what grace does for every one who believes in Christ Jesus. Quickened, raised, seated, in happy association with the blessed Lord; and the bright, bright opening of the rolling ages of a happy eternity before thee, with the unknown extent of the glory of God, which shall forever surround thy Well-beloved, and all who are associated with Him in the power of His endless life.

0 that God's richest blessing may rest on every soul that glances over these pages. Dear reader

-my heart goes out to thee-Art thou saved? Is this eternal life thine? O what a prize to win, but, alas, what a prize to lose It can only be won by faith in Christ. Bow, I pray thee, at His blessed feet-listen to His voice-hear that sweet-

est of all gospel notes-Come! come unto me! Melting words! They come from a heart that only loves from lips that drop the sweetest accents of grace. O listen 'and obey-may they melt thy heart. How awful it would be for thee to hear at last from those lips, words of burning wrath. But God forbid! Hear now-believe now, and turn to Him now in unquestioning confidence. All is plain and simple, only give heed to the one thing needful. To hear the voice of Christ is to be one of His sheep. And this is what

He says about every sheep of His without exception: " I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John 10:28, 29.) Better far, my dear reader, to be in the hand of Christ than in the hand of Satan. May the Lord enable thee to decide at once for Christ, and to give thy whole heart to Him, and to faithfully serve and follow Him. Blessed Lord! He alone is worthy.

" Oh, dearest Savior! take my heart:Where can such sweetness beAs I have tasted in thy love,As I have found in thee?Let every fervor of my soul,By thy sweet sacrifice,Forever be at thy control,And but to serve thee rise."

The apostle, as we have said, addresses himself, in the third chapter, to " the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;" as in the first, to " the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." The different titles indicate different lines of truth and blessing. In the first prayer, it is the Christian in Christ; in the second, it is Christ in the Christian. Hence it is that the apostle prays in the first chapter that the saints may have a true apprehension of their standing in Christ as risen and glorified; 'and in the third, that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith-that they might be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man. This is evidently practical. The one we have called christian standing; the other, christian state.. Would to God that the latter were a fair reflection of the former-that our practical ways truly answered to our place in Christ before the face of God our Father.

" For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." The familiar titles of " Father," and " family," awaken thoughts of home and affection. The glory of the Person of Christ rose up before us in meditating on the first prayer; but here it is love, rather than glory that surrounds Him, and surrounds us as one with Him. But, wondrous to the eye as that glory will be, sweeter to the heart will be the Father's love.

Doubtless there are many glories which belong to Christ as the Son of the Father which no creature can share. Infinite must the distance necessarily be between the Creator and the creature-between Jesus as God, and the highest angel that bows before His throne. But we speak of Him here as man, and of the place which is due to Him as such.

God having fully judged sin in the Person of Christ on the cross, and put it away forever, we are brought into His presence in the dignity of " the sons of God," and loved with a perfect love.

As John says, " Beloved, now are we the sons of God "-" And if children," as Paul says, " then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." (1 John 3:2; Rom. 8:17.) Here dwell for a little, O my soul. Let thy thoughts be fully engaged. Never did more wondrous or more blessed truth engage thy meditations. Can it be, that God's many sons are loved even as His own beloved Son? Yes, Christ Himself has said it, and that is enough, more than wonderful though it be. When He speaks about the coming glory in John 17 He says, " The glory which thou gavest me I have given them;" this, observe, is His given glory as the Son of man; not His higher glory as the Son of God. We must ever keep in view in all our meditations His own proper personal glories. But why does He give to the saints His glory as Son of man? " That the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." Nothing can be plainer, nothing can be more definite than this.

Here concentrate all thy thoughts, O my soul. Words of deeper, richer, fuller, better blessing to thee, never dropped even from the lips of Jesus. God only can love where all is unlovable. The spring of His love is in Himself, not in its object. This thou canst not understand, yet it is the fountain of all thy blessing. Thou mightest be able to form some idea of divine wisdom, or power, or righteousness, or rather, how God can exercise these attributes; but who can understand that He loves the saints as He loves His Son? In virtue of the work of Christ, we might understand something of Him giving us the place in heaven that belongs to Christ, but to love us as He loves Him, is incomprehensible.

Love is the spring of action, therefore love is a better thing than action. Love delights to serve, but love is better than service. There might be action and service without love, but there could not be love without both. God loved the world and gave His Son. Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it. Had there been no love, there could have been no cross, no crown, no glory. But love secures all, and all forever. Glory may fade, or pass away as in Israel of old, but love-never. (1 Cor. 13) Even towards the ancient people, God's love is the same; and just because His love and counsels are unchangeable, the glory will yet be restored, and shine a thousandfold brighter than ever. " Love never faileth." Grant, Lord, in thy mercy, that this thy love may be the light of our eyes and the strength of our hearts-that every word of thy mouth, and every dispensation of thy providence, may be seen in the light of it. Oh! what will it be, blessed Lord, to dwell in thy love and with thyself forever! Hasten, O hasten, the ingathering of souls, and the dawn of that happy day, for thine own name's sake!

" Brethren, look up! and view the home,The blessed home prepared in heaven,Though here with faltering steps we roam,What sweet assurance there is given. The Lamb is there upon the throne,The rainbow arch of love is o'er Him, And He will ne'er forget His own,Who bow with lowly hearts before HimBrethren, look up! and now rejoice,Though sorrow's clouds our path bedim. The trusting heart and joyful voiceAlone can sing heaven's choral hymn; The opened heavens e'en now revealThe glories of our radiant home-Oh brethren! join the glad appeal-' The Spirit and the bride say, Come! ' "

But may I indulge the thought, a timid soul inquires, that now, at this present time, the Father loves me, a poor, weak believer, as He loves His own beloved Son? Surely thou mayest when He says it. His object in making known His love to us is that we may believe it and enjoy it in this world. To doubt it would be to dishonor Him and injure our own souls. The manifestations of His love may vary, nay, must vary, according to our subjection to Christ and obedience to Him. (John 14:23.) But the love itself can never change. " God is love." Acquaint thyself with the blessed course of His love, as drawn by the apostle in 1 John 4:8-18. True, the millennium will be the outward display of it, but the cross is

the deeper expression of it. And God's love never can be sweeter to the heart than now. Even amidst the higher glories, love will be the better thing, so what must it be now amidst the sorrows and sufferings of this present time? Let His love then, O my soul, be thy refuge in every time of trouble. Nothing will so shield thee from the attacks of the enemy-nothing will so strengthen thy confidence-nothing will so increase thy

devotedness-nothing will so fill thee with peace and keep thee humble. The higher the truth we receive, the deeper it humbles us in the presence of God. It was when Paul was unfolding the great mystery-the Church, that he speaks of himself as " less than the least of all saints." Ver. 8.

That the deep sense of the Father's love to His children might be wrought in their hearts, the apostle thus prays: " For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." The title " Father of the Lord Jesus Christ" is that relationship which brings out the love of the Father's heart, and ranges around His Son as a center, every order of beings, both in the heavens and the earth. The title " God of our Lord Jesus Christ" brings out the glory-the given glory of the exalted Son of man; and, enough for the heart to know, He shares both with us. Loved as He is loved, and in the same glory with Him; and that not only during the first, or millennial age, but throughout the ages to come"-forever and forever! What a future! What an eternity! What is time or earth to thee, my soul, in view of eternal love and glory?

" Every family," is said to be a better translation than " whole family." There will be many families both in the millennial heavens and on the millennial earth. Under the name of Jehovah, the Jews only were named or included. As it is written, " You only have I known of all the families of the earth." (Amos 3:2.) But we have in the apostle's prayer the contrast to this. Under the name of Father-" Father of the Lord Jesus Christ every family in heaven and earth is named." We read of principalities, powers, angels, Jews, Gentiles, and the Church of God. But " every family" necessarily comes into view under the name of Father. When God delivered His ancient people out of the land of Egypt, it was under the title of Jehovah, His covenant name. He was not the God of any other nation in the same sense. But when the highly favored people had sadly failed, and when He chose to place the crown of universal dominion on the head of a Gentile king, He makes Himself known as " the God of heaven." (Dan. 2:37.) Now He speaks from heaven, not as in covenant relationship with a people on earth. But when He brings forth His Son, the " heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds," He takes the title Father, and under this name He takes in the wide circle of creation-of " every family"-both in the heavens and the earth. The blessing is no longer limited to the favored Jew or to the honored Gentile, but it is extended to every class of beings which He has made. The Father's Son, center of all His ways, Creator and Redeemer-He is worthy -worthy that every knee should bow to Him-worthy of universal glory!

" Kings shall fall down before Him,And gold and incense bring;All nations shall adore Him,His praise all people sing.Outstretched His wide dominionO'er river, sea, and shore;Far as the eagle's pinion,Or dove's light wing can soar."

But, pray, may I ask, what place will the Church have in these wide scenes of encircling glories? No question, personal and important though it be, is more easily answered. She will be in association with Christ before God, as the bride the Lamb's wife. Need more be said? Can more be said? Every family, or circle, will have its own special, distinctive glory, and the joy and glory of each one will be the common joy and glory of all; but the bride will have a place of nearness

and intimacy which none others can share. Now, the Church is spoken of as the body of Christ, which is the figure of her oneness in life with Him. " We are members of his body." Nothing can be so vitally connected with the head as the members of the body. " He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit." Every true Christian is thus inseparably connected with Christ; and by the Holy Ghost's presence on the earth, all Christians are formed into one body. " There is one body and one Spirit." This is the all-important truth for the present time. We cannot be in the current of God's thoughts unless we are endeavoring to carry it out practically. " Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." This is like the one -the chief exhortation for the Church. Eph. 4:3, 4.

In 1 Cor. 10; 11 the same important truth as to the unity of the body is also taught. " The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." These verses leave no doubt as to what the Church is-one body. Chapter 11. is equally plain as to what the Church does: " This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." What we are and what we do, are here plainly taught. May we readily bow to the truth, and willingly obey it.

By and by, in heaven, when the body of Christ is complete, the Church will be known more especially as the bride, the Lamb's wife. Of course, both terms, body and bride, are figures, but they point out two most blessed relationships-oneness in life, and oneness in affection. As the wife ranks with the husband, so will the Church rank with Christ forever and ever. Bride is a temporary title; wife is a permanent one. But throughout the endless ages of eternity the wife will retain the bloom and beauty of her nuptial day. No sign of Rae shall ever be seen on the fair bride of the Lamb. " Not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Oh! wondrous, wondrous truth! Oh! blessed, blessed hope! " The Spirit and the bride say, Come.... Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus." Rev. 22

" Bride of the Lamb, rejoice! rejoice!Thy midnight watch is past;True to His promise, lo! 'tis He!The Savior comes at last.For thee, His royal bride-for thee, His brightest glories shine;And, happier still-His changeless heart, With all its love is thine."

But here, before passing on to the next verse, pause a moment, O my soul, and drop a word-a tear, for those who are now rejecting Christ. Oh! what a day of disappointment and sorrow, to all such, will the day of His coming be! To those who now believe in Jesus, it will be a day of light and unmingled blessedness; but to those who now reject Him, it will be a day of darkness and everlasting despair. The awful sentence, " depart from me," like Ezekiel's roll, will be " full of mourning, lamentation, and woe." Oh! thoughtless, careless, worldly one, be warned now. Be turned in thy heart to Jesus now. To come to Jesus now, is not only to escape the lake of fire-is not only to be admitted into heaven, but it is to be a sharer of the nuptial glories of the Lamb, and to enjoy the intimacies of His love forever.

The same day and hour that the soul draws near to Jesus by faith, it is graciously met by God with eternal life. Full, immediate salvation is God's blessed answer to our faith in His Son. Love delights to bless; but what so sensitive of neglect? How indignant must injured love be on that solemn day of final reckoning! With what sore judgment it will visit those who have despised its offers of pardon and salvation! Eternal condemnation must be the awful sentence of God on every soul that despises Jesus. There is not the shadow of a line of middle ground. He who is not justified by faith must be condemned for unbelief; and condemned forever. Oh! how one's soul is thrilled with these words as the pen writes them down! Eternal condemnation! What an enemy to grapple with, but how helpless the soul! The very sound of thy name, O thou unpitying, undying foe, is terrible! But, pray, where dwellest thou? In the regions of dark despair. And what doest thou? I cut off all hope and shut up the soul to self-reproach. How dreadful thou art! But tell me, what is the number of thy years? My years are without number. I know

nothing, as men count, of beginning and ending. I am an eternal NOW. When millions and millions of years are pastas men now reckon, I shall be just the same. Countless millions have no effect on me. Eternal means eternal.

Hearest thou this, O my fellow sinner? Be entreated-be persuaded-think on these things now. Why play the fool, and fall into the fearful, the unrelenting grasp of eternal condemnation? Why prefer a moment's present gratification, to eternal happiness? " The devils," it is said, "believe and tremble." Is thy heart harder than theirs? Canst thou hear of these things and not tremble? Canst thou believe them with thy natural heart and not tremble? This is to be more insensible than Satan. How dreadful! Esau sold the land of Canaan for a mess of pottage; wilt thou sell heaven for less? Judas sold the Savior for thirty pieces of silver; and for what art thou now selling O, Christ, heaven, and all? Say, for what? The hope-the barest hope of a worldly pleasure-and be that pleasure in whatever form it may, it will never realize thy hope. The pleasure of the worldling has a rapid wing, and soon passes away, but a sting remains. Thou canst not give wings to it. For a vanity-for a nothing, thou art setting aside all that is good both for time and eternity, and thereby exposing thy precious, immortal soul to eternal condemnation. Be wise, O be wise! Pause, think: let not Satan have thee. There is One that loves thee and seeks thy real good; and, comparatively speaking, only one; and wilt thou not think of thy only Friend? He died for thee. Hast thou ever sought an opportunity to thank Him for it? Thy conscience says, No-never. Is this thy love to thy Friend-thy only Friend? Come to Him now. His love still lingers-He waits for thee. And His way is, to ask no questions, but to bless every new comer according to the love of His own heart. He will not put thee to shame with perplexing questions, but He will allow thee to hide thy guilty blushes in His own bosom. Were He only to inquire, " Why hast thou been so long in thinking of me?" shame and confusion would cover thy face; but such a thing He never does. He will rebuke Satan, who is at thy right hand ready to resist thee. But to a poor guilty one, like Joshua in Zech. 3 it is grace without rebuke. He stands up for the sinner that has fled to Him in the face of every foe. The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? The enemy is rebuked, but the penitent is cleansed, clothed, and crowned, and thus brought into the presence of God, to go no more out. And did He not vindicate the poor woman at His feet in the house of Simon? " I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she bath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss; but this woman since the time 1 came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven." How beautifully He stands up for her, and that in the very face of the nation's pride and self-righteousness! and mark too, how He fills her heart with a plenary pardon, a present salvation, and perfect peace. Luke 7

As thou art a man, O my fellow sinner, come to Jesus. Be encouraged. Come now. Thou seest the manner of thy reception. Thou knowest what He will say to thee. Read carefully, I pray thee, these two portions, and there learn the Lord's ways in grace with every poor, guilty soul that comes to Him. Thou halt but to let go thy hold of the world, or rather get away from the world's hold of thee. Think of Jesus. Learn to know Him. He will fill every aching void, and satisfy thy heart

forever. It is impossible to know Him without the heart being filled with joy, whatever the circumstances may be. " Acquaint thyself with him and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee." Job 22:21.

" Haste thee on from grace to glory,Armed by faith and winged by prayer,Heaven's eternal day's before thee,God's right hand shall guide thee there;Soon shall close thine earthly mission,Soon shall pass thy pilgrim days,Hope shall change to glad fruition,Faith to sight, and prayer to praise."

We now return to the apostle's prayer. He has before his mind, not the rejecter of Christ, but those who now believe, and who will have a place of peculiar nearness to Him in the coming glory. He prays,

" That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." This is all entirely different line of truth from his prayer in the first chapter. There, it is a question of standing; here, it is of state. There, he prays that the saints might know more fully their place before God in Christ, and all the privileges of that position; here it is a question of practical power by the Holy Spirit-of being " strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."

Love is the Christian's strength; or, Christ dwelling in the heart by faith. This is his strength. The trials of the wilderness now, and the boundless glories of the future day, can only be calmly contemplated or endured in the strength of His love. It is the power of inward affections that strengthens for outward circumstances. When the object of affection dwells in the heart-yes, really dwells there-what would that heart shrink from to gain its object? To one, naturally, the most timid and delicate, love gives new courage, new strength, new resolution, a new character. Nothing is seen but the one object who is far away. The broad tempestuous sea-the ship's rough crew -the inhospitable foreign shore, presents no difficulties. All who are known and loved and dear to the heart by the tenderest ties of kindred and friendship are freely given up, and it may be given up forever, for the one object who dwells in the heart, in truest, tenderest love. We mention not the possibility of all this valor of love being disappointed, it would be too heartless to think of; but there is only One whose love commands unquestioning confidence. And this is the One that the apostle so earnestly desires may dwell in our hearts.

What wondrous, blessed truth this is, O my soul! Hast thou well thought it over? It is one of the sweetest thoughts of His love. What is it, pray? It is this, as I understand it: When associated with Him as the center or a glory which has no circumference, what could sustain thy heart? What could strengthen thee as His many glories are displayed before thy wondering eyes? Nothing but His love. And this is the great truth here revealed to our hearts: " That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." It is enough, O my soul: He who fills the vast universe with His glory, fills thy heart with His love.

But still higher thoughts of His love are revealed in what the apostle further desires for the saints.

" That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passed' knowledge."

Herein, O my soul, is a wonderful thing. It falls with the effect of surprise on the mind. It fills the soul with wonder and adoration. But if thou wouldst understand it, thou must dwell upon it with thine eye upwards to Himself. The question is this: What is to enable thee to comprehend that which is measureless? True, it is a paradox; but the answer is, The love of Christ. It is not what may be called knowledge merely, or, intelligence, generally, or great capacity of mind; but being rooted and grounded in the love of Christ. Surely a more blessed thing has never occupied thy thoughts. Linger then in thy meditations over this remarkable truth. Being rooted and grounded in love, mark, is thy intelligence

and power in the things of Christ. What a thought! Is it new to thee? See and master it, make it thine own. It is thy wisdom and strength for time and eternity.

Yes! the sweetest thing that ever was, or is, or can be, is that which gives strength to thy heart for the contemplation of His glory. It is thy fitness for association with Himself, both now and forever. But mark another thing, and a blessed thing too. This is the portion of all the. saints. Christ is the Center of all the counsels, the ways, and the glory of God; and as the saints are associated with Him, they will form the first or innermost circle of the many concentric circles of His universal glory. Thus strengthened in His love, all the saints will then "be able to comprehend " that which the apostle now leaves in its undefined glory-the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, but he does not say of what. He leaves the sentence unfinished.

Many have thought that the apostle is here speaking of the breadth, length, depth, and height of the love of Christ; and it is often so quoted. But we think this is a mistake. The apostle does speak of the love of Christ passing knowledge, but we believe that to be an additional thought. By reading the whole passage closely, it appears quite evident that he introduces a fresh subject, or at least a new thought, in the beginning of verse

19: " AND to know the love of Christ." At the same time, it is blessedly true, that the love of Christ is without limits-it passeth knowledge. The apostle is lost, as it were, amidst the grandeur and the glory of the scenes, into which the Holy Ghost is leading him.

Some who have studied this passage long and closely, have suggested that the "mystery " is before the mind of the Spirit in verse 18. The mystery, or the Church, is the grand theme of the epistle. It includes Christ in His heavenly and earthly glory, and the Church associated with Him. She will then be, as His associate, high above all others-above every family in heaven and earth. That which God kept a secret so long in His own mind, may still be left in part so. And there we happily leave it. Who could define the glory that is due unto the Son—the Son whom the Father delights to honor? But that which is the foundation of the mystery, as well as its joy and glory, has been fully revealed. " And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." We can never know His love perfectly, but we shall know it more and more. It has been fully revealed, and yet it must remain forever unrevealed. The apostle is dealing with infinitudes, which, to us now, are divine paradoxes. It is of His love he speaks. That precious love is the spring of all blessing. It fills all, " all saints "characterizes all-strengthens all—perfects all.

The sons of God, as morning stars, shall shine forever, to the delight of His eye and His heart, in the eternal heavens of His love and glory. They will be the unfading luster of His throne-the immediate companions of His joys, and the perfect delight of His heart.

" Thy glory, Lord, is mine-the lightThat beams upon Thy lustrous brow;For changed into its image brightI yet shall be, as Thou art now!Thy rich inheritance is mine;Joint heir with Thee of worlds above,Lord, in Thy kingdom I shall shine,And reign with Thee in endless love.Thy fullness, Lord, is mine-for oh!That fullness is a fount as freeAs it is inexhaustible!Jehovah's boundless gift to me!My Christ! O sing, ye heaven of heavens!Let every angel lift his voice;Sound with ten thousand harps His praise;With me, ye heavenly host, rejoice!With tears, with songs, with holy psalms,With daily love, with odors sweet,With broken heart. with outstretched arms,I'll pour my praises at thy feet."

It is one of the most plausible snares of Satan, to keep us occupied with the good we receive from the work of Christ, in place of being occupied with Christ Himself, and with His delight and interest in us. We enter too little into the divine side of redemption. Hence the great absence of joy and strength. Of Israel His earthly people it was said, " If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it to us: a land which floweth with milk and honey." (Num. 14:8.) Faith could see that all their blessing rested, not on what they were, but on the Lord delighting in them: and this will yet be fully manifested, both in the heavenly and earthly people. We have the same thought in Prov. 8:31: " And my delights were with the sons of men." He rests in love and so should we.

There is still another remarkable word in verse 19, " That ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." Again we are launched on a sea without a shore, but it is a sea of love. More than this the apostle could not ask-further than this He could not go. The Church is Christ's fullness" the fullness of him that filleth all in all." And He who fills all things, fills our hearts with the fullness of God. " There is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and IN You all." Again, " In that day [the Spirit's day] ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." (John 14:20.) It is only by the power of an ungrieved Spirit that we enter practically into these great and blessed truths. If the world or the flesh be allowed, the Spirit is grieved, our minds are darkened, and we become confused, so that nothing is seen in its absolute, distinctive character. We must ever remember, that it is not by dint of study or learning that Christ is known or His truths seen; but by the light and teaching of the Holy Spirit. Hence the importance of the condition of the heart and the practical ways. This is the main object of the apostle's prayer in this chapter. It is for the saints now that he prays- that their affections and all their practical ways may answer to their position in Christ as risen and glorified. Now we have an entrance into these things by faith, through the power of the Holy Ghost. By and by we shall be with Him, and like Him, and know even as we are known. But till then, our one desire should be, that we might grow up into Him in all things who is the Head, even Christ. The apostle now closes with a doxology of great fullness and beauty.

" Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." The great thought, in the first prayer, is the power that wrought for us. Here, it is the power that works in us. There, it was a power that wrought in Christ and raised Him from the dead, and which wrought in us and raised us up with Him. Here, it is the same power, but now it is put forth in a practical way: " According to the power that worketh in us." It is also said in the second chapter, that we are " an habitation of God through the Spirit." He would have us to enter now, by the power of the Spirit, into the blessed revelations of the love of Christ and the fullness of God.

Let this further and higher truth, then, greatly encourage thee, O my soul. What mayest thou not count upon, seeing the power of God works in thee?—How wonderful, that such an energy should be at work in such poor, weak, good-for-nothing ones! But do I really believe it? I admit it, but do I believe it? or do I count upon it? Should I be so soon cast down? would a little thing so soon discourage me? should I be so subject to the power of circumstances? should I have so little faith, if I really believed that the power of God works in me? or, on the other hand, should I enter so little into my Savior's love, and the fullness of my God and Father? Ah no! there is nothing I forget so much, or know so little about, as the power that worketh in me: O wondrous, marvelous, blessed word! "According to the power that worketh in us." And yet well we know, and surely believe, that Thou art " able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." Lord, give us to know more of this power, that we may think less of difficulties-less of ourselves-less of circumstances, and more of thee, and of thy power which worketh in us.

Dependence, we own, is our truest position-our highest service-our richest blessing, while here below. And prayer is its very life-breath. But though everything is now characterized by feebleness and failure, the day is coming when God will be fully glorified in the Church. Blessed, happy thought! Christ, and the Church which is His body, shall be the blessed center of the manifestation of God. Himself, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, in all His glory. What a place this gives the Church: and what a place forever! " Throughout' all ages, world without end." O what a privilege-what an honor-to be the dwelling place of God forever! What separation from the world-what lifting above it-what strength for service-what nearness in worship, should the knowledge of this truth give! Blessed ' prospect-blessed future! for the Church of God, the bride of the' Lamb. " 4 UNTO HIM BE GLORY IN THE CHURCH BY CHRIST JESUS THROUGHOUT ALL AGES, WORLD WITHOUT END. AMEN."

Having thus followed the Church, in happy association with Christ, into the future ages of her unmingled blessedness, we would now close our meditations on this blessed theme by taking a glance at her position just before she goes up to meet her coming Lord. This we see in Rev. 22 " And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is a thirst. come. And whosoever will, let him

take the water of life freely."

" whosoever will." O

Thus it is with the Church as she is presented to us in Rev. 22 She is, as it were, appealing to the Lord, and appealing to souls. Love fills her heart. And thus may it be with us individually, while here in the midst of Christless sinners. There is no motive to evangelization like the thought of His coming. O that our hearts may never cease to burn with desire for the salvation of lost souls! The time is short. The coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Great changes are taking place everywhere, both in the Church and in the world; and many are wondering what they will all lead to.

Thou hast only to look around thee, O my soul, and thou wilt see everything moving rapidly. The slumber of eighteen christian centuries is broken. The" nineteenth is the century of invention and of the display of man's power and glory. Only think, that which is discussed to-night in the senate house in New York, will be read the following day in London by tens of thousands. With rapid strides the world is rising to its manhood. Old age and decrepitude, we believe, will as rapidly follow. The climax will soon be reached, not only in pride and worldly glory, but in the daring wickedness of the man of sin., This is what Satan has in view, and what man's energy in the present day is hastening on; but the enemy's one aim is to keep the eye from Christ. The first glimpse of a risen Savior, by faith, in the light of the Holy Spirit, dims all the world's glory. A risen Christ is the divine witness that the whole world is under the sentence of God's judgment, which may at any moment be executed. Hence the exaltation of man is Satan's object, and everything is now moving in that direction with telegraphic speed.

Now turn thine eye for a moment to ecclesiastical movements. The professing church as well as the world has been aroused from the sleep of ages. We forget not the great work of God's Spirit in the sixteenth century: but that in the nineteenth is very different in its character. Then, it became more a question of human governments and religious systems; now, it is more of the Church of God and the conversion of souls. The ten virgins are all awake, the foolish as well as the wise. The midnight cry has gone forth; but, the Lord be praised, as the cry, " Behold the Bridegroom cometh," waxes louder and louder, the cry to prepare for His coming has increased in proportion. Thousands of evangelists have been raised up to proclaim the gospel of the grace of. God; and millions who have been startled, as it were, from their long undisturbed repose, are waking up and wondering what all this mighty movement of " lay preachers" can mean.

Long neglected, out—of- the—way places are visited by the evangelists, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them. Individual responsibility carries the glad tidings where official status cannot-dare not, and the good work goes on.

The Spirit of God, as the quickener of dead souls, is active too, in connection with the gospel. This is matter of unfeigned joy. He is gathering many souls to Christ, especially within the last ten years. Christendom is unlike what it was before 1858. The bands of office are now found to be a hindrance. The energy of the Spirit in the " lay-preacher " hesitates not to cross the marches. All parishes are alike to the preacher. Souls 'are his object; not boundary lines, or the worn-out routine of particular forms. The field is the world. The Lord has given it to him. " Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," is his high commission. " Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it," is his divine privilege. The highways and hedge rows, the streets and the lanes of the city, and the supposed sacred enclosures, are all thrown open to him. Moral compulsion is to be used; his orders are, " Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." It is the Master who carries the key. " These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth." Blessed is that servant who follows Him who has the key, the symbol of authority and power.

Thus everything, as we have said, is moving rapidly, and changes as rapidly as it moves. In the world, notwithstanding its boasted progress, things are really going backwards. The ancient bulwarks of society are breaking up, as if the feebleness of age were accompanying the achievements of manhood. Power is passing into other hands, and hands that will use it. The word of God is being treated with indifference-the sign and forerunner, we believe, of a nation's decline. Man's will, man's reason, man's self, are supreme, and will have their brief display in ten thousand ways, before the appearing in glory of the Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints. Even now, what " distress of nations, with perplexity: the sea and the waves roaring." The lawless, rebellious despisers of governments are like the tumultuous sea which cannot be bridled or governed by man. Hence we already see the most plain indications of the Lord's own words being in part fulfilled. "Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory." (Luke 21:25-27.) Such, alas, is the present state of the world. The rulers are perplexed, the people are uneasy; this is daily becoming more and more manifest. At the same time there is seeming progress; but it is a vain show. However, we can only look at things in the light of God's word.

We now return to our meditations on the Church, which lies more in our line of things. We have seen her amidst the thickening gloom, in her most beautiful character. Here she is truly heavenly in her affections, yet most devoted to the spiritual and eternal welfare of those around her. " The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. [The young convert is here exhorted to join in the cry, Come.] And let him that is athirst come [come to the Savior]: and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." This, we need hardly say, is not the position of the professing church at large; but of those who are bearing testimony to the coming of the Lord, and to where the living waters are to be found. This is the most lovely attitude in which we see the bride of the Lamb, as the Church, on the earth. The desire for souls to come to Christ keeps pace with the desire for the Lord to come as the Bridegroom of His Church. This is both beautiful and blessed. Lord, increase this twofold desire. It is clearly the teaching of the Spirit. " The Spirit and the bride say, Come." It is no peculiar view of any

particular denomination, but the teaching of the Spirit of God. It is the bride that speaks, but she is moved and energized by the Spirit. And what must be the state of a preacher's heart, if it is not moved to intense earnestness, even to agony, by the near prospect of the Lord's corning?

But what, may I ask, would become of those who are now listening to the gospel, were the Lord to come before this service closes, if they had not believed it? The answer is unspeakably solemn. So far as scripture informs us, their case would be hopeless. Of course this remark would not apply to persons who are too young to be responsible, or to those who have never heard the gospel: but where the gospel has been plainly preached, and deliberately refused, what must the consequence be? " How. shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Escape, in such a case, seems impossible. Look again at 2 Thess. 1: "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: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." This passage seems to take in as objects of judgment, two classes. Those that know not God, and those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. " The first class may embrace Jews and others, who profess to believe in God, but not in Christ and His gospel. The latter, evidently, are gospel hearers, but not true believers. We cannot see from scripture that there is the smallest hope for such, were the Lord to come. But the second chapter is stronger still on this awfully solemn point, and seems to shut out all hope. Indeed we feel it is too awful and solemn to be transferred to a human page.

How seldom, alas, this soul stirring truth is thought of either by preacher or hearer! But when it has its right place in the heart, it will move to earnestness as none other can-it will agonize the whole soul of the preacher. Who could be occupied with themselves in any way, or even with the details of truth, under such a thought and feeling? How small a place the mere style of address would have in our minds, if we really believed that five out of every ten that we preach to, are in danger of eternal woe!' Scripture never exaggerates. Even of those who take the place of virgins, five out of ten come too late and perish in their sins. They had lamps in their hands, but no grace in their hearts. Lord, grant that thy servants may think-think only-on the state of those before them, and of the awful consequences of thy coming to such.

But one thing is comforting-most comforting, O my soul. It is this-thou mayest safely reckon, that as the testimony to the coming of the Lord spreads on all hands, so will the testimony to the grace of God in the gospel. May the Lord greatly increase this twofold testimony in these last and closing days! And 0, that all whose high privilege it is to bear it, may be faithful, earnest, and devoted, according to the all-commanding importance of the coming of the Lord, and the salvation of those for whom His long-suffering still patiently lingers! May we maintain the beautiful and blessed attitude of the bride before us. " THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY COME. AND LET HIM THAT HEARETH SAY, COME. AND LET HIM THAT IS ATHIRST COME. AND WHOSOEVER WILL, LET HIM TAKE THE WATER OF LIFE FREELY."

Meditations on the Christian Hope Standing State, Vocation, Welfare an, Christian's Standing, The

THERE are two things with which every believer in Christ Jesus should be well acquainted; they are of the utmost importance to us, individually. We refer to what may be called, the Christian's standing and state: his standing before God in Christ; and the state, practically, which answers to that high and holy standing.

What theme can be more uplifting and strengthening to the soul that knows the Savior? Let it be thine, O my soul, for a little while-yea, forever. Meditate, I beseech thee, on this soul-elevating theme! Depend, in all simplicity, on the presence of the Holy Ghost, who only can reveal the person and position of Christ, and make good to thee, experimentally, thy place in Him. " Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. 5:1, 2.) Already, by faith, we possess and enjoy, in Christ, everything but glory. This is plain from the passage before us. Being justified—having peace -standing in grace-waiting for glory. We only wait for glory -" the glory of God." And even with that we are now linked in the most blessed way, having Christ in the heart, the hope of glory. " To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." Col. 1:27.

The Person, work, and position of Christ, necessarily become, with such a theme, the blessed objects of the soul's happy meditations. His humiliation and glory, as the beloved Son of the Father, fill the whole vision of the soul. Fellowship with the Father and the Son is enjoyed. Love is created in the heart, by the contemplation of His love. In meditating on the Christian's standing and state, Christ Himself must be the center of our thoughts and of our worshipful adorations; the heart must overflow, through nearness to Him, in grateful praise. As we stand in Him, we must know His standing in order to know our own; and as we are loved in Him, we must know the Father's love to the Son, before we can know His love to us. And surely, in the proportion that we enter into these blessed subjects, and are thus occupied with Christ, our state here below will be the reflection of our standing in Him above.

The two prayers of the apostle in his Epistle to the Ephesians most fully, and in order, bring before us the subject of our present meditations. Follow then, I pray thee, my soul, this divine order. And grant, O Lord, that I may see., in thy light, the wondrous depths and heights of thy path and glory, as the once suffering but now exalted Man: and that I may also taste the sweetness of thy love, and know the inward power of the Holy Spirit. Oh! that these fervent breathings of thy servant-so long uttered-so often read, but, alas, so little heeded-may yet be fully answered in my experience, and also in the happy experience of all who may read these meditations!

Mark then, my soul, that the apostle in chapter i. 15-23, prays that the saints might know their place, or standing, in the risen and glorified Man, Christ Jesus-that they might have a deep and real apprehension of their place before God in Him, as exalted above all principalities and powers. Consistent with this truth, the saints are exhorted in the last chapter of this Epistle, to maintain their standing against every foe. " Stand therefore," says the apostle; he does not say advance: there is no higher or better place to reach. Hence the word is, " stand therefore.... and having done all, to stand." In chapter iii. 14-21 he again prays that they might know, and be in that state of soul which answers to this standing. Hence, he says nothing in the second prayer about being exalted and glorified, but rather, that they might be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man-that Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, and that they might be rooted and grounded in love. The latter is at clearly state as the former is standing.

Secured in Christ, their Head on high, The saints below may boldly cry-Praise to our God, Amen!

To God in Christ all praise be given-. For evermore, on earth, in heaven. Amen! Amen! Amen!

Observe further, in thy meditations, and carefully note, as of all importance, that these two prayers are founded on the two great relationships in which God stands to Christ, and, consequently, to us in Him. This is the key to the better understanding, not only of the two prayers, but of the whole epistle. The apostle commences with this twofold relationship, and has it in his mind all through the epistle: " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." He is our God and Father in Him. Immediately after our Lord arose from the dead, He made known this great truth. It is based on accomplished redemption. " Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father; and to my God and your God." (John 20:17.)

Blessed fruit of the Savior's death and resurrection!

The first prayer is addressed to " the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." The second, to " the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." And we find that the main thought in each prayer answers perfectly to these titles. Power and glory, as displayed in the risen Man, characterize the first. Relationship and love characterize the second. The Father loves the Son, and as Son He has His own place without being exalted. It is as man, once humbled for our sins, and having glorified God in putting them away, that He is exalted, and we in Him. Love and glory are the happy themes of the truth now before us. Love to the Son-glory to the Man-and we, loved and glorified in Him, and as He is. Blessed truth! Precious to our souls! What grace! what love! what glory! Can anything but praise be heard throughout eternity?

But the fullness of these wondrous truths will be better seen as we meditate on the different parts and petitions of the two prayers.

Verses 15, 16, " Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." How much to say of an assembly of saints-of whom could the apostle say as much now? But Christ had His right place in their hearts, and the saints, as a consequence, had theirs. These two things go together. Faith in Christ-love to the saints. The one is the fruit of the other. The saints will have a very small place in our hearts if Christ has not His own place there. Viewed in this light, " Love unto all the saints," becomes a true test it our nearness to Christ, by faith. Merely to love those that suit us-whose disposition and ways are agreeable to us, would not answer to the description here given of the Ephesians. Not that we could love all Christians alike, that would be impossible; but we are to love all as the children of God, and for what we see of Christ in them. We must look at them from His point of view, not our own. True, we may have our special friends amongst the saints of God, and it may be profitable to have such; but we must be careful in manifesting our special affection for some, lest we should wound or discourage others. Largeness of heart and true affection should be cultivated for the whole family of God.

But knowest thou, O my soul, the secret of reaching and maintaining this Christ-like condition -" Love unto all the saints"-not unto some, observe, but unto all the saints? There is only one way, we believe, of manifesting this rare feature of our practical Christianity. Know, then, that we must ourselves be living sufficiently near the Lord to see the saints in His light, and learn His thoughts about them. This, and this alone, rest assured, will lift thee above all that may be unlovely in the saints; and from being occupied with self, which always hinders our love to others. Outside of God's presence we are selfish. It is only when in His presence that we lose our selfishness. " If we walk in the light as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." (1. John 1:7.) God must have the first place, if we are to love one another as His children.

Take an example: The great apostle of the Gentiles was imprisoned at Rome. Everything in his circumstances was calculated to depress and weigh him down. But they did not, they could not. And yet what position could be more trying? Out off from his friends-from visiting the churches-from the work of the gospel-in old age-in want. And more, trial from a very different quarter came upon him. many, taking advantage of his imprisonment, became very prominent in the work of the gospel, though in a wrong spirit; " supposing," as he says, " to add affliction to my bonds." But for his unselfish, large, loving heart, this must have been a great grief to him. But the glory of Christ, and the conversion of souls, were dearer to the apostle than his personal liberty, and his share in the work; therefore, as one far above their influence, he could say, " What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretense, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." " Many who"-as one has beautifully said, " in the presence of his power and his gifts, were necessarily powerless and insignificant persons-could make themselves of some importance when, in the unsearchable but perfect ways of God, this mighty instrument of His grace was set aside; they could hope to shine and at-, tract attention when the rays of this resplendent light were intercepted by the walls of a prison. Jealous, but hidden when lie was present, they availed themselves of his absence to bestir themselves-whether false brethren or jealous Christians, they sought in his absence to impair his authority in the Church, and his happiness. They only added to both. God was with His servant; and, instead of the self-seeking, which instigated these sorry preachers of the truth, there was found in Paul a pure desire for the proclamation of the good news of Christ, the whole value of which he deeply felt, and which he desired above all, be it in what way it might."

In writing to his beloved Philippians from the prison at Rome, his heart overflows with joy and love, in spite of everything. His joy in God abounds, and his love to the saints. The children are loved for the Father's sake, and when this is the case, all are loved. " I thank my God," he says, " upon every remembrance of you. Always in every prayer of mine for you all, making request with joy." A stream of love flowed from that dreary dungeon to the refreshing of the churches -of all the saints; and which has been flowing ever since, to the refreshing of the saints in all ages. Instead of being cast down or terrified by his enemies, he nobly rose above them all, and had his eye and his heart more effectually turned to Christ, and to his saints, than ever. What but conscious nearness to the Lord could give such holy victory? The enemy might be permitted to take his liberty from him, and to cast him amongst common criminals; but he could not take his Christ from him, or his love to the saints. Noble example! Blessed lesson for our souls! May we seek to learn it, and faithfully to follow it!

Verse 17. " That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." The connection between teaching and praying is most intimate and beautiful. We naturally turn from teaching or preaching to prayer. L is God's way of relieving the heart. But for the relief which is found in prayer, the heart would soon sink beneath the solemn responsibility of ministering in the weighty matters of the soul. Eternal things may be seen in such a light, and realized in such power, from earnestly pressing their importance upon others, that a weight the most solemn and depressing may be left on the mind. Hence the need of a burden-bearer.

If we attach Eternity to the destinies of our hearers, we invest them with an interest, an importance, and a magnitude, which are altogether overwhelming. Compared with Eternity, everything which can be reckoned by time dwindles into utter insignificancy. How, where, can relief from the pressure of such thoughts be found? Only in prayer. The testimony, the souls, the eternal results, and the conscious shortcomings too, must all be cast upon God.

To this divine refuge-this place of repose and strength-the great apostle now turns. For the moment he takes the place of intercessor. And now, mark, I pray thee, my soul-carefully mark -the character of this divinely inspired prayer. Thou hast here the apostle before thee, both as a teacher and as an intercessor. Blessed example! -it is worthy of thy closest study. And first, observe the perfect harmony there is between his prayer and the truths he had just been teaching. He says nothing in his prayer about the forgiveness of sins, or that they might receive the Holy Spirit. What is this? thou mayest inquire. The answer is, that the tone of his prayer is not below the tone of his teaching. Some seem to pull down in their prayers what they have confessedly been building up in their teaching. Not so the apostle. He is perfectly consistent. He seeks to bind up more closely in prayer what he has built up as a teacher.

The difference, we are ready to admit, between the tone of the teaching and the prayers, to which we have referred, may flow from a sense of unworthiness on the mind of him who is ministering in the things of God. And this, in its own place, is to be admired; but, nevertheless, we may falsify the word of God, and contradict our own statements, by praying according to our feelings, or a supposed becoming humility. Intelligence in the word is to be looked for; it is our only safe guide, and the medium of the Holy Spirit's action. At the same time, the prayer may be a truer index of the state of the heart in the presence of God, than the doctrines which have been advanced. The Lord knows. O my soul, judge thyself!- solemnly, constantly, judge thyself! And may He enable all His servants so to judge themselves, that they may be true and real before Him and before the congregation. We now turn to the lesson taught us by the apostle.

Having addressed the saints at Ephesus as the children of God, and as blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, he could not consistently pray that they might know that God loves them, and that they were forgiven. He had taught them these blessed truths in the plainest and fullest manner. He had assured the Ephesians, and through the same epistle he assures all Christians, that they are the children of God, according to the good pleasure of His will-that they are before Him as the very delight of His heart-that they are pardoned and accepted in the Beloved-that the Holy Spirit dwells in them, both as a seal of their present salvation, and as an earnest of their future glory. These blessed truths are not only revealed to faith, but they are sealed home to the Christian's heart, through the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. " In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with [not by, observe, but with] that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." In beautiful harmony with these and other great truths which he had taught the saints, he prays that God may give them the spirit of wisdom to understand these marvelous revelations of His grace, and that they might rise, in faith, to the height of His thoughts and counsels about them. This is the burden of his prayer.

But are Christians, let me ask, not to confess their sins and shortcomings to God their Father? Most assuredly: that is just what they need to do constantly. And they cannot walk with God unless they do; but they should never lower, by unscriptural expressions, the ground of their standing in His presence. Our standing in the presence of God is in virtue of the work of Christ, and according to the riches of God's grace; and, as these can never fail, we can never lose the place they give. Besides, it is " to the praise of the glory of his grace " that we are there. But, though we may be deeply conscious of failure as Christians, we should never take the ground of poor, unpardoned sinners before God. This would be to deny our calling, and to bring darkness, confusion, and weakness into our souls. God says we are before Him as His children, pardoned and accepted in the Beloved. We are no longer on the ground of sinners before God, but as children before the Father. In conversion the ground is changed. When born of God, we cease to be on the ground of sinners before Him, and are ever after on the ground of children in the family. True, we do not cease to be sinners, in the sense that we sin daily and hourly in thought, word, and deed. The thought of foolishness is sin; and who is not troubled with foolish thoughts? But we are to confess our faults as children before the Father, and not as sinners before God. In faithfulness to God and His word, we ought to maintain the ground on which He has set us. Not, of course, that the sin of the child is any the less, but, on the contrary, more grievous, for it is against more light, love, and grace. And, rest assured, the better we understand our calling in Christ, the deeper will be our humiliation on account of failure, and the more unreserved our confession of it. True holiness should characterize the children of God. As it is written, " Be ye holy; for I am holy." Or, in other words, the Christian's state should always answer to his standing. When it is not so, there is too good reason for humiliation and confession.

The question, you will see, is not that the Christian is any better in himself than he ever was, but that his position is changed. His standing before God is no longer in the first Adam, but in the last Adam-the risen Christ. And he is expected to walk even as Christ walked. " He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked." Indeed, the scriptures speak of the Christian as if it were just possible for him to sin. "If," the Apostle John says, " IF any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." The possibility of sinning is barely admitted. Such is the dignified manner of scripture, when speaking of the children of God: though, when speaking of our old nature, it affirms there is no good thing in it. And it is worthy of notice that he does not say, " If any man repent and pray for pardon be will be forgiven;" but, " If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father." Nevertheless, we ought to repent, and repent deeply, when conscious of failure. But, in the meantime, Christ sees to our interests in heaven, and the Holy Ghost sees to our interests on earth, so that we are well cared for: adored be the goodness of our God! What a mercy that we are in Christ's hands!

How often we may sin and never be conscious of it; but Christ sees it at once, and meets the need in virtue of His blood, so that the sin never reaches the throne of God. All praise be to His blessed name! The work of Christ has set us as children in the Father's presence, and fitted us to be there; and the advocacy of Christ maintains us holy, and without blame, before Him in love. The Lord give us to be in the intelligence of scripture, both in teaching, preaching, and praying; and may we stand firm on the great truth, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.

GREAT ADVOCATE, Almighty Friend,On Thee do all our hopes depend;Our cause can never, never fail,For Thou dost plead, and must prevail.In every dark distressing hour,When sin and Satan join their power,Let this blest truth repel each dart,That Thou dost bear us on Thy heart.

The apostle refers in his first prayer to " the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory." The mighty power of God, as displayed in the exaltation of Christ, and of the Christian in Him, is the prominent thought 'in this prayer, but not the only one. The thought suggested by the expression, " Father of glory," is sweet to the heart of the child. While we connect the idea of power with the title, " God," affection is inseparably associated with the title, " Father." This is most precious to the heart-it sweetens everything. While meditating in wonder and delight on the bright scene of glory which is before us, the happy thought crosses the mind, My Father's love is the spring of all that glory-the fountain of all that perfect blessedness. He is " the Father of glory."

Great indeed and wonderful is the effect of God's power as here seen by the eye of faith. It is called, " the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." But who can speak of the happy combination of love and glory? Yet, surely, even the

brightest glory is but the outward manifestation of love. Nevertheless, they go well together-we would not have them separated; and thank God, they never will be: but all Will allow that love is the deeper, closer thing. Both will be seen in the millennium. Then the heavens will not be so high above the earth as they now are. They will be, as it were, together. Jacob in vision saw them united as by a ladder, and the many glories encircling the Messiah were seen from earth's point of view. Then the Church will be seen in company with Christ, according to His own word in John 17 " And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me."

Here all is plain as to the future. The glory which the Father gives the Son, the Son gives to us, that the world may know that the Father sent the Son, and that He loves us, as He loves the Son. When the world sees us in the same glory with Christ, it will then know that we are loved with the same love. Wondrous, blessed truth! The soul can only bow in worship, while meditating on the grace that shines in these bright scenes of love and glory. " But what will it be to be there!" True, my soul, but what of the Father's house? Ah! that is the inner circle, the home of love. What is enjoyed there the world can never know. It will see the glory outside the house; but it can never gaze on the family scenes inside. Is this thy place, O my soul? It is the children's place, I answer, and we are all the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. His word can never be broken. All who are the children of God now, will be in the children's home then.

O LORD! my pilgrim spirit longsTo sing the everlasting songsOf GLORY, LOVE, and power;When heaven and earth and all things yield,My Savior will be still my shield,For He has to my soul revealedHimself my strength and tower.

Who-O who could rest without the full assurance of an eternity of love and glory? Pray, dear reader, is this thy blessed hope? It is, surely, worthy of all thy thought-all thy attention-all thy determination; and all sacrifice too, even unto life itself, rather than lose that home of love-that eternal glory. One word settles all, " The Father loved' the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son bath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." (John 3:35, 36.) May the Lord grant unto thee, and unto all who read these pages, His own richest and everlasting blessing, and may we all meet at last in that eternally happy home.

Now believe!

Verses 18, 19. " The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory I his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe." God is the source of all blessing. This is the first thought suggested in reading these verses. He is here seen as the author-the source of it all I Blessed, precious thought for the heart! Hence it is said to be His calling -His inheritance-His power. At the same time, the blessing is presented as in Christ, and with Christ, though flowing from God as its source.

When the apostle speaks of the gospel in the commencement of his Epistle to the Romans, he characterizes it as the " Gospel of God, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." There we have God as the source, and Christ as the subject of the gospel. Here, it is the bright display of His grace and love in heavenly places, to those who have been gathered to Himself by the gospel. Of course, Christ risen is the bright display to faith of all blessing. But whether it be grace and love to sinners on the earth, or to saints in heaven, the source is the same. The preaching of the gospel—the effectual call-the future glory, and the power which accompanies the truth, and gives a foretaste of the glory, are all of God. Wondrous, marvelous truth, when we think of what we are! But there is no heart in the universe that has been so revealed to us as the heart of God. He gave His Son to die for us. And who ever lay so deep in that heart as the Well-Beloved? Its depths have been revealed. Oh! blessed, full, eternal, unfailing spring of all blessedness, both in time and in eternity! How the renewed soul loves to linger at the fountain! Here linger-here dwell—O my soul! It is thy place of joy and strength-thy highest privilege-thy home forever. Thou art born of God-born from above. A man's native place is where he was born.

What can be sweeter or more strengthening to the heart than to fall back upon the thoughts and counsels of God, as the foundation of all our blessing? This ground can never, never change. Before this world was made, our redemption was planned. It was no afterthought of the divine mind. And now, in the risen Christ, and the children of God raised up in Him, is the perfect answer to the eternal counsels of love. " In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Ver. 7.

But here, note also, my soul, that the fountain is not only the place of sweetest delight to thyself, but of the richest blessing to others. When truly connected with the source, we become the channel of living water to others. It is said of Moses, when he fled from the face of Pharaoh to the land of Midian, that " he sat down by a well." Beautiful illustration of the Christian's privileged place! He was thus in the right position to help the daughters of Reuel to water the flock. "Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock. And when they came to Reuel their father, he said, How is it that ye are come so soon to-day? And they said, An Egyptian delivered us out of the hand of the shepherds, and also drew water enough for us, and watered the flock." Ex. 2

It is perfectly clear that we must be near to the well of life ourselves, if we would become the channel of living water to others. What a privilege to be enabled to roll away the stone from the well's mouth and water the Lord's flock when it is gathered together-to be so under the guidance of the Holy Spirit as to minister the truth in due season. Blessed Lord, keep thy servants near to thyself, that they may refresh thy gathered saints with the pure, living waters of the sanctuary!

Jesus! thou art the fountain,The deep, sweet well of love!The streams on earth I've tasted,More deep Ill drink above;There to an ocean fullness,His mercy doth expand,And glory-glory dwellethIn Immanuel's land.

Turn now for a little while, my soul, and meditate on the great truth of thy christian calling. " The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling." Nothing can be of greater importance to thee than the character of God's call. To what, in the greatness of His love, has He called thee-to what has He called every Christian? This is the question. Is it to the hope of salvation, with a measure of uncertainty or insecurity hanging over it? Most assuredly not. In chapter ii. of this epistle it is said, " By grace are ye saved through faith.'.' Salvation is here viewed as a present thing-as an accomplished reality to the soul. The hope of His calling is what we are called to in Christ Jesus, as the children of God.

Christ risen from among the dead, triumphant over all enemies, and exalted to all honor at God's right hand in heaven, is the expression of that which we are called to enjoy by faith now, and which we shall fully enjoy with Christ in heaven forever. Were the heavens over our head to be opened, and could we see the Man Christ Jesus there; we should then see the Christian's place, privilege, and standing in the presence of God.

Grace begun shall end in glory;Jesus, He the victory won;IN HIS OWN TRIUMPHANT STORYIS THE RECORD OF OUR OWN.

The apostle, in this part of his prayer, refers, we doubt not, to what he had written in the early part of the chapter: " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who bath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. According as he bath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of his will." (Ver. 3-5.) Here all is grace-grace flowing from perfect love, and for the divine glory. But God is seen alone as the Blesser. The spring and power of all the blessing here revealed are in His own heart. It takes its character from Himself. But Christ is seen as the foundation of it all. It is in Him that we are blessed. He died for us, adored be His name! and washed us from our sins in His own blood; and thus presents us to God and His Father, in the full efficacy of His work, and in the acceptancy of His Person. This is the foundation on which all blessing, both to the individual and to the Church-both for time and for eternity, securely rests. " The gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

The heart of the apostle is so full of this great subject, that he breaks forth at once, without any preface, in the highest strains of praise and worship. " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who bath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." All our blessings flow from the twofold relationship hero introduced-God and Father. In the first message sent to the disciples by the blessed Lord, after He arose from the dead, He announces this blessed truth: " Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." Christ Himself is the perfect man before God, and He is a Son with the Father. We are one with Him in both these relationships.

Redemption is the basis of relationship. Christ had so blotted out our sins and glorified God in His death, that the way was perfectly clear in resurrection, to introduce His disciples into the place of sons-into the same place as Himself.

Oh! wondrous truth! Oh! marvelous place of blessing! But, listen, O my soul, it is to the knowledge of this-the faith of this-the enjoyment of this-the practical manifestation of this, that thou art called of God. Explain it not away, I pray thee, think not that it is a mere feeling, but receive it as God's truth, as a present reality. It rests on the solid foundation of the death and resurrection of Christ. " God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Gal. 4-6.) Here again we see God as the great source of our blessing. The Son comes from God -the Spirit comes from God. God sent forth His Son-He sent forth the Spirit. We are not here said to be made sons by the Spirit, but because we are sons in Christ He sends forth the Spirit to dwell in us. Hence we have not only the place of sons, but the consciousness of sonship, by the Holy Ghost.

The unscriptural notion of many is, that the blessings of divine relationship can never be really known or enjoyed while we are in this world: whereas, in the First Epistle of John, the babes are addressed as knowing the forgiveness of their sins, and the Father. But what can be more true or real to the soul than the words of the risen Lord:

" Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend. unto my Father and your Father; to my God and your God?" The apostle repeats the same truth, and connects with it the very highest character of blessing which is ours in Christ: " Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who bath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."

Is thy faith, then, O my soul, up to this revelation? These are the lofty heights on which thou art called to walk, in the intelligence and power of the Holy Ghost. Doubt not, fear not; God has called thee to this. It is the safest path-the path of faith. David rose in faith to the height of God's thoughts and counsels as to Israel, when he vanquished Goliath in the valley of Elah. Men of lower faith stood fearing and trembling before the boastful giant, and no doubt thought David very presumptuous. But God was honored by the faith of David, and God honored David. And so it must ever be. True faith can rest in nothing short of the whole counsel of God. Art thou prepared then, O my soul, to ascend these spiritual heights, and, like Israel of old, plant the sole of thy foot on thine own possessions in the heavenly places? Christ is there, my soul; be of good courage-thy standing is in Him. Thou art as safe as He is-thy security is His. The measure of His blessing is thine. We are "blessed with all spiritual blessings," not one is lacking; and they are of the highest order: they are not temporal, as was the case with the Jews. It is in the most exalted capacity of the renewed man that we enjoy these blessings, and they are adapted to that capacity, they are spiritual. They are also in the highest sphere: it is not in Canaan or Immanuel's land; these blessings are granted us in the heavenly places; they are granted us in the most excellent way, one which leaves no room for comparison, it is " in Christ." This is the children's blessing, all praise to our God and Father. It is individual: the Church's blessing is spoken of afterward. Every child of God, without exception, is blessed according to that which is due to Christ. The measure of our blessing is the measure of God's value for Christ. It is enough, O my soul. It is the largest and highest blessing revealed. We are blessed in the best place-the best company, and with the best of blessings. Here rest a little in thy meditations -dwell on these three things-the measure is that which can never be measured.

We worship thee, FATHER and God!

What rich unfathomable grace,

On us, O Christ, in thee's bestowed!

Children of wrath-our nature's place-

Ransomed with blood, made ONE WITH THEE,

What lengths, breadths, heights, and depths appear!

Eternity, infinity,

Alone of grace the limits are!

" According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." This fourth verse sets before us the blessings of God's call as connected with the divine nature. The fifth, as connected with relationship. These are the two heads of blessing-nature and relationship. They are according to God, as God; and according to the Father, as the Father.

The fourth verse refers to the first. God could not have it otherwise. If we are to be brought into His presence in heaven, we must be there like Himself. Nothing less could satisfy God. He is holy, blameless, and love; and He has chosen us in Christ to be like Himself as to these moral qualities. As Father (ver. 5), He has predestinated us to the blessed intimacies and privileges of a positive relationship. Both characters of blessing, nature and sonship, are united in every Christian; blessed be the God of all grace! But, for the present moment, O my soul, dwell a little on the first. It claims thy closest study. Wouldst thou be without a perfect acquaintance with that which God has chosen thee to be? Thy new nature is thyself, the old one will soon drop off. Thy divine nature is thy capacity for the enjoyment of heaven, and all that is to be found there. Now, in the capacities of this nature, we joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and have fellowship with the Father and the Son by the Holy Ghost. Better than this, we may truly say, can never be found, even in heaven itself; but we shall know it better and enjoy it more when all hindrances are removed.

It is God Himself that has chosen us in Christ to be holy and without blame before Him in love. The thought—the choice—the love, are His own. His be all the praise and glory. Man had no voice in this matter. It was before the foundation of the world. All is according to God, and worthy of Himself. It is the necessity of His nature and character, to have those that are near Him, like Himself. It must be so. The principle is universal. The man of letters chooses for his companions literary men; and we all choose to have with us and around us those that are suitable to our nature and ways. God acts upon this principle in the fourth verse. He is holy and blameless and love, and those that are to be with Him forever must be suitable to Him. But on the other hand, it is equally the necessity of His being to exclude all evil from His presence. Far, far from the God of holiness must all evil be removed. Solemn thought, when we think of many around us. But the day will come, when not only the evil doer, but all evil, shall be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8); all must be banished from the presence of God. He could not suffer the least stain of sin in the most distant part of His dominions, far less on those who are near Him. The following lines are sweet to the renewed mind:

" All taint of sin shall be removed,All evil done away;And I shall dwell with God's beloved,Through God's eternal day."

Oh! that the unbelieving, unpardoned, uncleansed sinner would think of this now. Then, it will be too late. Now the fountain is open for sin and for uncleanness, and whosoever will may come and wash and be clean. " I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." Hear, hear, O sinner, hear these gracious words! They are placed by the very side of that awful verse about the lake of fire. God has thus placed, as it were, side by side, the fountain of living waters, and the lake of fire. And mark, He says, " I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely." It is all of grace, rich, free grace. But those who despise the open fountain of living waters must be cast, with all their evil, into the lake of fire. Awful, solemn warning! Oh! what shall I say unto thee, my fellow sinner? Do stoop, I beseech thee, and drink, and live forever. The waters are free-free to the poorest-free to the vilest-free to all-free to thee: Think of the difference between the lake of fire and the fountain of living waters. Carefully read Rev. 21:6, 8.

The thought of banishment from God in the forsaken place is awful-it is overwhelming. To be banished from God and Christ, from all the good and the holy, from all the pure and the happy; and to be doomed to dwell with all evil, and with all evil doers, and that forever, is more than we can bear to think of now. Oh! that word-that terrible word, "forsaken." Who can bear to be forsaken? It brought from the heart of the lowly Jesus that mournful and pathetic cry, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In richest love and grace, He took that place for us, that we might never have to take it for ourselves; but sin, unrepented of and unpardoned, must take the sinner there. How awful the thought! To be forsaken of God and all His goodness-forsaken of Jesus and His bleeding love-forsaken of the Holy Spirit and all His strivings-forsaken of all that can sympathize and love; the poor, desolate, friendless soul must sink into utter despair. May all, whose hearts assure them that they are not prepared for the presence of God, cease from rest until they are. May they never rest until they come to Jesus, and find rest in Him. Matchless is the love that says, " Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." It is His blood, and His blood alone, that cleanseth us from all sin. But to all who trust in Him He plainly says, “He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." Once washed in the blood of Jesus, we are clean, "clean every whit," and that forever. The blood can never lose its power; only the daily defilements need to be washed away, as with the basin and towel. See John 13.

We now return to our beautiful fourth verse. We have only left " the ninety and nine" for a little, to look after a lost one in the desert. May the Good Shepherd lay him on His shoulder!

God is light, and God is love; and we are called to be like Him; and to enjoy Him as such. This is God's calling; but we are the called-chosen in Christ, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. This is the description of God's own character, though it is here given as the character of His children. Surely this is grace in its highest form. It breathes a well-pleased and delighting love. Do think of this, O my soul. Hurry not over the wondrous thought. This is it: when God would tell us what He is Himself, He describes what His children are-a son is of the same nature as his father. " God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." True, He is Love; but Be is also Light; and He dwells in the pure unsullied light of His own absolute Deity. And there He has called us and fitted us to be, in the fitness and acceptance of the risen and exalted Man. This is what God Himself has made us in Christ; forever blessed be His name!

But, pray tell me this: How can Christians be in the presence of God as holy, blameless, and love, seeing there is so much in us that is the opposite of all this? This is a point of much importance, and of great practical difficulty with many souls. But the answer is, The apostle is speaking of what we are in Christ; not of what we are, or have been, in ourselves. Our old nature is not referred to here-it is passed by unnoticed. Of course the old nature is in us, and no better than it ever was, and we must take care and not let it show itself. But we are chosen and called in Christ-He is our life; and we are, before God, in the Beloved One. This is the explanation, and in this the heart finds rest-Christ is holy in His character-blameless in His ways-love in His nature. And we are in God's sight as He is. If God is to find pleasure in His children, they must be like Himself. Christ is the object of God's unqualified delight, and so shall we be by and by. This is the hope of His calling. Oh! deep, divine, ineffable, unutterable, unfailing spring of happiness now-of unmingled blessedness hereafter! " We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall, see him as he is." Therefore God has chosen us in Christ, " that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." We are brought thus into His presence and His love is satisfied. Oh! most wondrous, precious truth! All is done, Christ is risen and glorified. " In thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." It is only there that perfect blessedness can be found. With what a hope the calling of God fills the heart! His name alone have all the praise.

But this is only the bright side of the answer to the question. The state or practical ways of the saints is not always a true reflection of their standing and privileges in Christ. We come far short of what becomes the children of God in many things. How feebly we answer to His love; and how many things we allow that are contrary to Him. Whence come pride, vanity, and worldliness? we may ask. Certainly not from the divine nature. These, and all other evil things, flow not from our new, but from our old nature. Although our standing is in Christ, the flesh is in us, and ought to be mortified. In it there is no good thing. How often we have reason to be ashamed and humbled on account of our many faults. But ere long we shall have done with the flesh entirely, and be perfectly holy and without blame before God in love. He has chosen us to this end, and will in due time accomplish it. This is our sure hope. But in the meantime, may we seek to suppress our old nature and watch against all its tendencies. We know that we are in Christ now, and have His life in us, notwithstanding all our failures. May we have grace to feed on Him day by day and hour by hour that we may be strengthened to do His will.

" Though our nature's fall in Adam

Seemed to shut us out from God,

Thus it was His counsel brought us

Nearer still through Jesu's blood;

For in Him we found redemption,

Grace and glory in the Son,

0 the height and depth of mercy!

' Christ and we through grace are one.' ''

Hast thou well considered, O my soul, the blessing of a holy and loving nature? Who can understand the blessedness of it now? What, O what, must the change be, compared with our present unholy, unloving nature! Here pause a moment, I pray thee, and meditate on this great truth. Only think on what must be our happiness, when we shall be like Christ-when we never more can have a thought, a feeling, a desire, contrary to God; far less shall there ever be a look, a word, an action, unworthy of His holy presence. And thus will it be forever! Oh! wondrous thought! Oh! perfect blessedness 1 And no fear of a change, or of an end, shall ever cross the mind.

In one sense, this shall be thy heaven; for what were all the blessings that God can give, had we not a nature to enjoy them? But to have a nature which is the perfect answer to what God Himself is, must give a capacity for the highest and purest enjoyments of heaven. And once more remember, that this is thy nature for eternity. When the soul of the penitent thief ascended from the cross on Calvary to the paradise of God, he left behind him all that he was in himself, and ascended in all the blessedness of Christ. Not one atom of the old nature shall ever cross the threshold of heaven. Glorious deliverance! Having eternal life-a divine nature, through faith in the dying Savior, and thus made the righteousness of God in Him, he had both title and capacity to enjoy his new inheritance. The bloom, the beauty, the fragrance, the rest, the joys of paradise, shall all be relished by the children of God, and relished as those only can who have reached their eternal home and now breathe their native air.

But in the high calling of God there is more than nature, there is relationship. If we would well understand " what is the hope of his calling," we must know our relationship in Christ as well as our nature. We might have had a holy, blameless, and loving nature, and been only servants. The highest angels rise no higher. They are servants waiting on God to do His pleasure. But those whom God has called—called by His grace-called from the place of distance to the place of nearness-called from the lowest state to the highest, are sons, not servants. " Wherefore," saith the apostle, writing to the Galatians, " thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." And the closing testimony of scripture is, " He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son." The son inherits the large possessions of the Father. This blessed truth is the second part of the Christian's calling.

" Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." (Verse 5.) The Jews of old were called "the people of God "-Christians are called " the children of God." Doubtless Old Testament saints were born again, and in that sense they were children of God; but they are spoken of as His people, not as His children. In the same sense, they had eternal life; but they are not spoken of as having, or knowing that they had, eternal life. The revelation of these great privileges and blessings was reserved until Christ came. And it was not until redemption was finished, and Christ risen from the dead, that He calls the disciples His brethren. Then, for the first time, He says, " Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." Now they are introduced into the place of sons, according to the position and perfectness of the risen Christ. Christ is a Son-we are sons. True, most true, Christ is the eternal Son of the Father, and none can share that higher glory with Him; but as the risen Son of God, exalted and glorified, we are one with Him; and that according to the work of the cross, and the good pleasure of the Father's will.

In all ages God blessed His people according to the revelation which He gave of Himself, as the object of their faith. See Heb. 11 He made Himself known to Abraham, for example, as the ALMIGHTY; and blessed him as the depositary of promise. Called of God he leaves his own people and country, though he knew not whither he was going. He believes God and obeys. Having nothing but the promise, he was a stranger in a strange land. But his strangership was his gain. It brought him, in spirit, nearer to God Himself. It led him to desire a better country. He had no wish to go back to his own. God, known as the Almighty, was his trust, his shield, his reward. In the presence of the king of Sodom, though a stranger in a strange land, he confessed and honored the Lord as " the most high God the possessor of heaven and earth." He refused to be enriched by the world. He was content to wait upon God, to whom both heaven and earth belonged. Enough for the heart of faith that God knows the need, and how and when to meet it. The God of promise was the object of his faith. He had nothing else; for God gave him none inheritance in the land, " no, not so much as to set his foot on; yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child." (Acts 7) It was thus that he honored God as a stranger and a pilgrim, and God is not ashamed to be called Abraham's God. What a testimony! Of whom, we may ask, could God now say so much? Abraham was a pilgrim and a stranger on the ground of promise: we, on the higher ground of oneness with a Christ rejected on earth, and accepted in heaven. Even now our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the Savior. Of " the fathers" the Spirit of truth bears this blessed testimony in Heb. 11 " But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city."

Israel, the natural seed of Abraham, was in covenant relationship with God, as JEHOVAH. All temporal blessings in a pleasant land-the choicest of earth's treasures, are their proper blessing. Through their rebellion they have been dispersed under His chastening hand; but they are His chosen people, and will yet be abundantly blessed, and peaceably settled in the land of promise. But the Christian's blessing goes far beyond a promise, or a goodly land. And he knows God, not only as the Almighty and as Jehovah, but as Father. "I will be," He says, " a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. 6:18.) We now return to the verse under meditation.

" Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Here the soul finds perfect rest, the measure of its blessing is full. Promises were the stronghold of the Jew; the Christian rests in accomplished redemption. Nothing more can be added to this blessing-nothing more can be desired. More may be revealed to him, and all shall yet be better understood; but these words, " TO HIMSELF," are enough. Not only has He chosen us to be like Himself, but near Himself. Surely it is the expression of the most tender-the most marvelous -the most delighting love. Here are two words, O my soul, for thy long and deep meditation. Never hast thou met with two words more fitted to calm down every rising fear, and hush to eternal rest all anxieties as to the future. Couldst thou ever distrust the love that chooses to have thee near as Christ Himself is near? Can the Father ever have Christ too near His heart? Can He ever have thee too near His heart? Faith must answer; but the word is plain, " children by Jesus Christ to himself." What can be plainer? What can be truer? What can be nearer to thy heart? It is God's call to thee-to every Christian-even the least. He could not do more for His children: He will not do less. It is marvelous in our eyes.

Called to be like Him-called to be near Him; and this, mark, is " according to the good pleasure of his will." The children's place and portion will be the display, throughout eternity, of the peculiar pleasure of the Father. Now it is revealed to faith, and as true as it will be then.

The sixth verse gives unity and strength to this twofold aspect of the Christian's calling: " To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he bath made us accepted in the beloved." This verse sums up the fullness of divine favor to the children, in their effectual calling. We are said to be blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ -to be chosen in Christ-to be children by Jesus Christ; but we are accepted in the Beloved. Here the word is changed to "Beloved." It means that we are accepted in the highest object of God's affection. Christ is the Well-beloved of God's heart; He could show favor to none as to Him; and yet the word is plain: we are accepted, loved, and blessed in Him—in the Beloved. Higher than this, royal favor itself cannot raise us; the heart can only bow and worship and adore in the presence of such love, and in the assurance that it can never change.

Ah! 'tis too vast a story for me to dare essay!

He, source of endless glory-I, but of yesterday.

Yet, since I call Him Father and know His boundless grace,

I tremble not, but rather delight His way to trace.

How little we think, when the heart of a poor good-for-nothing sinner is touched by the word of the gospel, that such love is at work-that such treasures are thrown open to his faith. But so it is. When God calls, He calls sinners, sinners lost and ruined in their sins. But He calls them to be like Himself in nature, and near to Himself in relationship.

Dear reader, before passing on to the subject of the inheritance, I must have a word with thee. Thou art as a weight on my heart. Hast thou listened-hast thou yielded to the call of God-to the call of the gospel? Now is the time: tomorrow may be too late. And what a loss thine would be! To believe in Christ-to own and trust Him, is to yield thyself to God's call. To love and follow Christ here, where He was rejected, is the clearest proof that thou art called of God. The heights and depths, the lengths and breadths, of God's love to thee are in Christ. To receive Him, is to receive all; to reject Him, is to reject all. What a prize, 0, my fellow sinner, to lose or win! Think of the noble prize won by that poor woman at the feet of Jesus in the house of Simon-pardon, salvation, and peace. Grace is free-free to all-free to thee. " Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." We win the prize of eternal life, and all that belongs to it, by accepting it as God's free gift. He who glorified God by putting away sin on the cross, is now saying to thee, " Him that cometh to me, I will in nowise cast out "-on no account-on no consideration, cast out or reject. Hast thou come then, O my fellow sinner? Come! O come! I beseech thee Come in the faith of His own words. Let thine eye be up to Christ Himself, and let the invitation which He has given thee be in thine heart; and so coming to Him thou art saved. Saved-what a word!- saved! a soul saved-yes, thy soul saved! Saved from sin-saved from death-the death that never dies-saved from the lake of fire -the fire that shall never be quenched-saved from an eternity of misery-saved to an eternity of blessedness-saved to share the honors and glories, the dignities and privileges of God's beloved Son. O may thy heart bow to Christ, and thy tongue confess His name before this paper drops from thy hand!

I want an even, strong desire,

I want a calm, a fervent zeal,

To pull poor souls out of the fire,

To snatch them from the verge of hell,

And turn them to a pardoning God,

And quench the brands in Jesu's blood.

Enlarge, inflame, and fill my heart

With boundless charity divine!

So shall I all my strength exert,

And love them with a zeal like thine.

And lead them to thy open side,

The sheep for whom the Shepherd died.

Verse 18. "And what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." This is the second part of the apostle's prayer. The first is, that Christians may understand the nature of their calling; the second, that they may understand the glory of their inheritance; and the third, that they may understand the power which puts them in possession of all that grace has given.

We have been dwelling a little, in our meditations, on the first part. There we learn God's wondrous grace to His children. Their dignity and blessedness is beyond all thought. It is overwhelming. Their birth is heavenly; their nature, holy and loving; their relationship, sons; their privilege, one with Christ. His position as the risen Man is their position; His standing is their standing. They rank with Christ; and their eternal life gives them the capacity to enjoy what He enjoys. And surely nothing more, nothing better than this can ever be conceived.

And now, O my soul, let thy thoughts dwell for a little on the inheritance-the inheritance of God's children. And thou wilt surely find that the inheritance is perfectly suited to the nature and position of the children. And forget not in thy meditations, that this inheritance is thine own: so shall thy thoughts be mingled with praise and thanksgiving. It is the Father's will for the children. Hence it is called " the mystery of his will"-the will that was kept a secret, or un-revealed, until the days of the apostle. Christ is before Him, and all is suited to His position, and we are joint-heirs with Him. Oh!.what a future! -a future of the purest happiness and glory. But the children's chief blessedness will be their nearness to God Himself-the blessedness of His own presence. The inheritance is another thing, and will embrace created things-all created things " both which are in heaven, and which are on earth." The center place will be theirs, because it is Christ's. And is this to be thy future-thy happy future, O my soul? Above thee-near thee-with thee-in thy Father's presence-in thy Father's house! And also, outside thy Father's house-around that house—what? The vast universe-from the lowly tomb of Joseph where the Lord once lay, to the throne of God where He now sits-shall -be filled with His glory. What a spectacle for men and angels! The once despised Nazarene-His once despised followers, together, glorified together, in the center of the glory. Till then, O my soul, seek to walk as becomes a child and heir of God.

Henceforth let each beloved child

With quickened step proceed,

To walk with garments undefiled

Where'er thine eye may lead.

O largely give, 'tis all thine own,

The Spirit's goodly fruit:

Praise, issuing forth in life, alone

Our loving Lord can suit.

The expression, " His inheritance in the saints," is peculiar. It is God's inheritance, and yet it is the saints'. They will personally possess it; and, jointly with Christ, it will be under their dominion. It is similar to the expression, " the hope of his calling." It is God's calling, but we are the called. Both are characterized as God's; the former according to His grace, the latter according to His glory. It is this peculiarity which gives to each such excellency and blessedness. We have something very similar in the Old Testament. The land of Canaan was God's inheritance in Israel. He gave it to Abraham and to his seed for an everlasting possession. But under the law it could not be sold, for God claimed it as His. " The land shall not be sold forever: for the land is mine." It is also called, " Immanuel's land." (Lev. 25:23; Isa. 8:8.) In place- of Jehovah taking possession of the land by a direct act of His power, He takes possession in the persons of His people, so that it is His inheritance in His people. Surely this is beautiful and blessed. It is God acting in sweetest fellowship with His beloved people. Oh! that they could have seen and valued His love and care!

But when the better and brighter day comes, He will take possession, not of the land of Canaan merely, but of the entire universe: and that by the saints personally-the joint-heirs with Christ. But this grand theme is only referred to in the apostle's prayer; the counsels of God respecting it are revealed in the middle of our chapter: " That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." Nothing can be plainer, we think, than these words; but in passing from the subject of the calling, to that of the inheritance, the apostle touches upon a subject which is absolutely necessary to be known, before a soul can peacefully contemplate the coming of the Lord-the breaking up of everything here, and the future glory of the saints. And as some of our readers may not be in that state of settled repose, we will refer to the subject for a few moments.

" In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Verse 7.) In the second chapter, man's condition under sin is fully stated. Here it is merely alluded to in passing. But there the judgment of God is plainly given. Man is dead-dead in trespasses and sins. He is not merely sick, as some would fain believe; no, he is dead-morally and spiritually dead. Nothing can be lower than this. There are degrees in evil, but there are no degrees in death. And as to his present life, he is the willing slave of Satan. This is where the gospel found the Ephesians-where it found us-where it finds all. High as the Ephesians were raised in blessing, they were all raised from this low estate. Need we wonder then at these words, " The riches of his grace?" Our deep, deep poverty is met by the riches of His grace. When speaking of saints, the Spirit uses the word, " Glory of His grace;" but when speaking of poor sinners, the word is changed to "Riches of His grace." He is glorious in grace-He is rich in grace. What love what compassion we see in this! The heart is drawn to Him who thinks of us in our misery, and blesses us according to the riches of His own boundless grace. Far as our sin has abounded, grace much more abounds. But now for the details.

1. We needed redemption, and we have it-have it now as to our souls. " The redemption of the purchased possession" spoken of in verse 14, and the redemption of the body, we must wait for until Christ comes. But the redemption of the soul, which is by far the most important thing to us, is fully and perfectly accomplished now. It never can be more so. This is the redemption referred to in verse 7: " In whom we have redemption through his blood." Not may, or will, but we have it now. All is found in Christ, adored be His name! " In whom"-it is in Him that we see our standing in the presence of God; and it is in Him that we find the redemption, which fits us for it and sets us in it.

" Salvation in that name is found,Cure for my grief and care;A healing balm for every wound,ALL, ALL I WANT IS THERE."

We needed forgiveness, and we have it-have it now. We can never have it more fully. The blood of Christ is the ground of our forgiveness, and the riches of God's grace the standard. Mark the things here placed in contrast;-The sinner's slavery, and eternal redemption. The sinner's poverty, and God's riches. The sinner's sins, and the blood of Christ. Conditional forgiveness would be law, not grace. Partial forgiveness would reflect no glory on the blood of Jesus; but full, unconditional forgiveness proves God's estimate of the blood, and shows that all blessing depends exclusively upon its value. We are forgiven then, according to the value of the blood of Christ, and according to the riches of divine grace. What more, we may ask, can be done?-what more can be needed? God has given His Son, His blood has been shed. More than this, God Himself cannot do, to blot out sin. What an unspeakable comfort-what a solid ground of peace and rest for our souls. His name alone have all the praise!

3. We needed redemption and forgiveness, not according to our thoughts and feelings, but according to God's thoughts and counsels, and we have them-have them now; and have both in connection with the Person of Christ. This is everything! We have redemption and forgiveness in Him. God is glorified, the riches of His grace are displayed, and our cup of blessing overflows.

Kind hearts are here, yet would the tenderest one

Have limits to its mercy-GOD has none.

And man's forgiveness may be true and sweet,

And yet he stoops to give it: more complete

Is love that lays forgiveness at thy feet

And pleads with thee to raise it; only heaven

Means crowned, not vanquished, when it says "FORGIVEN."

But some will say, " How is it then that I still feel sin working in my heart, if I am so fully forgiven-so richly blessed?" True, sin still remains in the heart. But has. God anywhere said that He has put away sin from the believer's heart? I am sure He has not. What then? He put it away on the cross; He has not put it away from your heart. But just because it was put away on the cross, He has forgiven you, and all who believe in Jesus. Therefore God rests on the completed work of the cross, and that is where you should rest. There is no other ground of rest for a guilty soul in the universe; but faith in the cross, however weak, draws down God's deepest compassion, and the boundless riches of His grace. But, on the other hand, all confidence, however strong, that is not founded on the cross, is without God's approval, and must come to nothing. Be content

then to know that God dealt with thy sins in the Person of thy Substitute on the cross, and put them away by the shedding of His precious blood. The whole question of sin as to every believer is settled and sealed in the blood of God's dear Son.

But again, the uneasy soul will say, " I am sure I sin daily, and if I live till to-morrow I shall be sinning again,]et me watch against it as I may: what am I to think about these sins?" Think of them, O believer, humiliating as they are, as having been judged by God in the Person of His Son on the cross. " His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." (1 Peter 2:24.) This will work in thy soul a deeper sense of His love, and of the hatefulness of sin, than anything else can. All true, honest self judgment of sin is founded on the assurance that it was divinely judged on the cross. When thou hast no doubt that God judged and put away these very sins on the cross, then thou canst judge them thoroughly in His holy presence. Self judgment must go on as long as we are in this world, for sin will exist as long as we are here. But the divine judgment of sin was executed once, and finished. " It is finished," should give perfect rest as to the divine judgment of sin..

If then, O believer, thou wouldst be truly happy in the presence of God, then thou must well understand these two things-self judgment, and the divine judgment of sin and sins on the cross. And

rest assured that this is needful, before thou canst happily or profitably study the scriptures as to the coming of the Lord, or His millennial glory. It is never a healthy sign for a soul to be inquiring about prophecy that has not settled peace with God. Thus it is that the apostle would have this question fairly before the Ephesians, ere he opens up to them the mysteries of God's will as to the coming glory. How can we calmly and profitably enter into the counsels of God as to the future, if we are not perfectly free from anxiety as to our own salvation?

May we be enabled by His grace to rest where He rests; and to see that it was on the cross that He put away sin, and not from our hearts; and, farther, may there be the fullest self judgment of all our faults and failures, not only because of the loathsomeness of sin in itself, but because God has judged them all once and forever in the cross of His beloved Son.

The whole question of sin, both as to the soul of the believer and the claims of God, being thus settled, the apostle is free to unfold the counsels of God concerning His Son. The saints are now in a fit condition to hear and enter into the truth. The one grand object of these counsels is the honor and glory of His beloved Son. He bath purposed to glorify Him in the very scenes of His former humiliation. In due time it shall be brought to pass, and that in a way worthy of the Father's love. Amen! so let it be, exclaim all heaven and the hearts of all the faithful. Thou, Lord Jesus-thou art worthy!

At the same time, O my soul, bear in mind, that as the Church is one with Christ, she will be glorified together with Him. True, most true-scripture affirms it-we must maintain it. So we read in this very epistle: "This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." Christ by Himself is not the mystery, neither is the Church by herself; but Christ and the Church together.. She will share the honor and glory along with Christ, not because of anything which she has done, but because she belongs to Him. This explains everything as to her privileges and blessings-she belongs to Him.

Blessed Lord! what love! Who would not seek to form a part of thy Church-thy bride? Many, alas! are setting at naught these eternal honors,, for the passing trifles of a moment. Deliver such, O Lord, in thy mercy, from the blinding power of Satan, and truly bring them to thyself. May they now hear thy voice and follow thee. The door still stands wide open, blessed be thy name -the door that leads to thy home, thy heart, thy

bridal glories!

The word " mystery," let the reader understand, affords no excuse for ignorance on this subject.

In scripture, the word does not mean something that we cannot understand, or that is even difficult to understand, but something that has not been revealed before-something that God kept secret in His own mind until He was pleased to reveal it. A good deal is said, for example, in the Old Testament about the millennium, and about the blessings of Israel in a land flowing with milk and honey; but nothing is said about the position of the Church as one with Christ in heavenly places during that period. Neither is there anything said in the Old Testament about the Church's present position in suffering and rejection, or her future position as reigning and glorified with Christ. It was a secret-a hidden mystery, • until the days of the apostle Paul; but when revealed, it is plain enough. But there is more, much more, in the mystery revealed to the apostle.

God has not only made known to us the secret of His heart concerning the Church, but also, we may say, that which lay deepest in His heart-even the glory of His dear Son. He has thus committed to our trust that which lay long a secret in His own mind. Surely this is treating us as friends. This, O most gracious God, is like thy love, but most unlike what we deserve. The grace and the glory are thine alone.

This then is the mystery of His will-His good pleasure concerning Christ and the Church, which He hath purposed in Himself: " That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance." Clearly then, it is God's purpose to unite all things in heaven and on earth, under Christ as Head. All things will be under His hand and dominion; the heavens and the earth, which are now so far apart, will be united together as by Jacob's ladder; or, according to our Lord's own words to Nathanael, " Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man." The heavens and the earth will form one united scene of glory under the headship of Christ, during the millennium.

But here pause for a moment, my soul, and inquire how this vast scene of universal glory can be the inheritance of the saints. This is well, the inheritance of the saints is our present theme, still it is well to understand the whole counsel of God: it gives breadth of truth to the soul. Observe, then, that it is as " the Son of man" that Christ is thus glorified. It is as such. that we are associated with Him in the glory: " In whom we have also obtained an inheritance." Nothing can be plainer than this. And this will be the peculiar glory of the millennium. All things are put under His authority as man. And the Church, as now risen in Him, will then be associated with Him in the glory. Dwell on this wondrous truth for a moment, O my soul. Think where humanity has

been carried to in the Person of Christ, and in what state it will appear on that day of full millennial glory! What a thought 1-the vast boundless scene of heavenly and earthly glory under the headship of man. As man-as the Second Man-the Last Adam, He unites all things under His own hand, in peace, glory, and blessing. Then the Church will be seen, known, and acknowledged, as the second Eve of the heavenly man, the Last Adam. As the risen man He is heir of all things, and we are joint-heirs with Him. This is the inheritance of the saints; or, " the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints." The heavens and the earth, thus filled with glory, belong to God; but He holds them in His heavenly saints. At the close of the millennium, when Christ shall have put down all rule and all authority and power, He shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all. But still there is a sense in which we shall reign forever" reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 15:21-28; Rom. 5:17.

Before passing on to the third part of the apostle's prayer-" The exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe;" we will look at an expression in verse 10, which is of immense importance in the economical ways of God, and closely connected with our present subject-" The dispensation of the fullness of times." The word " dispensation," or rather " administration," refers to the time when all things will be under the administration of Christ. This will be the millennium. Now Satan is permitted to reign as the god and prince of this world. Then he will be shut up in the bottomless pit. (Rev. 20:1-3.) Christ reigning as the Prince of peace, and Satan bound in the bottomless pit, must produce a mighty change in the world. Then will be earth's jubilee. But she can hold no jubilee till then. Satan must be entirely off the scene, and Christ must take the reins of government into His own hands, before this earth's inhabitants can enjoy peace and quietness. But the promise is sure. " Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places." (Isa. 32) This will be the state of things on the earth; and of the heavenly saints it is said, "And they shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years." (Rev. 20:4.) The millennium, or administration of Christ, comes in between the rapture of the saints and the eternal state. No change on earth for the better need be looked for until after the Church is gone, and the scene swept of its corrupters, and the reign of Christ fairly begun. But what a comfort for our hearts to know, that He may come at. any moment, and take us out of it all, and up to be with Himself in the house of many mansions. He puts no event, no circumstance, not even a moment of time, between our hearts and His coming for us. We are not looking for a second advent merely, but for the Son from heaven: these were His last words, " He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly." Would that they had their own place in our hearts! Then could we say in true affection, " Amen, even so come Lord Jesus."

" A little while"-Come, Savior, come!For thee thy bride has tarried long:

Take thy poor waiting pilgrims home,

To sing the new eternal song,

To see thy glory and to be

In everything conformed to thee."

Some have thought that the expression, " the fullness of times," refers to the present time, and means the same thing as " the fullness of the time." (Gal. 4) This is evidently a mistake. "The fullness of the time," and " the fullness of -times," are widely different in their meaning. The one refers to the past, the incarnation; the other to the future, the administration. In Galatians the apostle is speaking of the time appointed in the divine counsels having fully come, when " God sent forth his Son." In Ephesians he speaks of a time yet future, when all times or periods will meet and terminate in the reign of Christ. Many things now running their course must end then, and end forever. Hence it is called " the fullness of times." For example- Creation's long subjection to decay and death will then be brought to an end. " For the earnest expectation of

the creature (or creation) waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." (Horn. viii.) Not, observe, for the manifestation of the Son of God, but the sons of God. He has been manifested; they, not yet. It is when the sons of God are. manifested in the glory, that the groaning creation will be relieved: that will be the signal for its complete deliverance. Its time of bondage runs on till then. " The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now:" and, alas, must continue to groan and travail until Christ, and God's " many sons," appear in glory. But then, O happy day, the whole creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption the winding sheet of death, in which it has been swathed since the days of Adam, shall then be removed-the trail of the serpent shall disappear before the rising beams of the Sun of Righteousness-the wild beasts of the field shall be shorn of their ferocity-the earth shall yield her increase, the wilderness shall rejoice and blossom as the rose-and men shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. Thus shall end the long period of creation's subjection to vanity. Hasten it, in thy good time, O most gracious Lord! Oh, how many voices from the depths of oppression are daily and hourly crying, Come, Lord Jesus, O come quickly!

" Then comes the final kingdom,No bound nor end possessing,When heaven, and earth,Entranced shall lieIn universal blessing;No mourning tongue to sadden,No breath of sin to wither,In earth-on high-Be naught but joy,And blissful peace forever."

But, as it would be out of place here to enlarge on the many times or periods, which are now running their sorrowful course, we will merely name some of them, and leave them for the reader's own meditation.

The time of God's long-suffering with evil, which still goes on, will end at the appearing of Christ; and so will the time of Israel's judicial blindness-the time of Gentile dominion-the time of universal misrule—the time of the enemy's power to deceive-the time of the Church's weakness and suffering-the time of Christ's sitting at the right hand of God. These times, and more that might be named, are limited in their duration -limited to the time of the Lord's coming-" The times of restitution (or restoring) of all things."

The times of evil, of distress, of sorrow, and of open wickedness, will end, run out-cease to be, in " the dispensation of the fullness of times." Christ will then take up that which has failed in the hands of men from Adam downwards, and reign as the Lord's Anointed for a thousand years. All things will be put under Him as Head. The Church, His bride, will then be with Him, as the joint-heir of the inheritance of glory. Then God will be perfectly glorified in the world's government-His will done on earth as it is in heaven, and all His ways completely vindicated.

"Head of the Church, thy body,Jesus, our great salvation!Sweet to thy saints It is to thinkOf all thine exaltation!All power to thee's committed,All power in earth, and heaven;To thee a nameAbove all fame,Above all glory's given."

Having thus briefly glanced at the inheritance of the saints, or the plaCe of the Church as one with Christ in the coming glory, we now turn in our Meditations to dwell for a little on the third part of the apostle's prayer-the power which puts us in possession of the inheritance.

Verses 19, 20. " And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." We speak of the cross of Christ as the strongest expression of love: and of His resurrection as the brightest display of power. Love alone, we may say, is seen in the cross. There He submitted to suffering and death for our sakes and His Father's glory. It was not the display of wisdom, though doubtless it was the wisdom of God. To the wise of this world the cross is foolishness, and to the self-righteous it is a stumbling-block. Neither was it the display of power-" He was crucified through weakness"—but it was the manifestation of love. If to the worldly-wise it is the display of weakness and foolishness, to admiring faith it is the highest expression of the endurance of love. All must own this. If they cannot see wisdom or power in the cross, they can see love enduring, and enduring willingly for its object. When love can do nothing else, it can endure. Such is its nature. It may be called weak and foolish by those who know nothing of its reality or power, but it bears all. It loves on-loves on. Many waters cannot quench it, the floods cannot drown it. It will master every circumstance, and still love on; for such love hopeth all things, as well as endureth all things.

But in the full sense of the word this could be true only of divine love-of the Savior's perfect love. And of His love can we say-it never faileth. The truest and strongest of earthly loves must fail, but He ever lives and changeth not. Now we know, blessed be His name, what His love is. We need no sign save the sign of the cross. No other sign can even now be given. All doubting hearts must be referred to the cross. It is the highest and strongest expression of His love. Even from the sunniest heights of heaven our love must ever look back to the cross, and be nourished by His, as seen and know there. The cross will be owned forever as heaven's moral center, and the foundation of all its glory and blessedness. It was there that the depths and power of His love were revealed, and yet, we may say, unrevealed. It is in the day of adversity that the true character and the full strength of love are known. What a day of adversity was His! All refuge failed Him, comforters there were none. What grief, what sorrow, what forsaking, were His! But He resisted not-He endured-" Who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Heb. 12:2.

But, sweet as the love of the cross is, and needful for the heart of both God and man, it is not power: that we have in resurrection-there it is triumphant. Weakness is seen no more forever. Redemption is accomplished; and the might of God's power is put forth in raising up Christ from the dead, and setting Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places. But here, my soul, let me remind thee, that it is faith only, that can pass through these wondrous scenes. They embrace the depths of the grave and the heights of the throne. Many stop short at the threshold, because, as they say, " We cannot realize these truths." But how can the mansion be seen if we stop at the gate? It is not a question of realizing, but of believing. Faith follows the truth. It passes through the portals, and descends to the depths, or, as truth leads, it ascends the highest heights. The empty tomb and the occupied throne are alike easy of access to faith. Realizing has no place here, save as the effect of faith. We must believe the truth before we can feel it: we must walk over our estate before we can know it. If we really want to know the nature of the soil and the capabilities of each field, we must walk over them. So it was of old in type. " Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses." (Josh. 1:3.) Art thou prepared, then, to believe the wonderful truth before us, understanding or not understanding it, realizing or not realizing it? This is the question. We pay but a poor compliment to the word of God when we fail to receive it because we do not understand it or realize it.

But, pray, what is the special truth that demands such absolute faith? It is simply this: that the same mighty power of God which wrought in Christ when He raised Him from among the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in heaven, above every name that is named, has already wrought in us, and raised us to have part in the same position and glory. Observe what the word says, " And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ." Personally it has been

manifested in Him, but the same power has wrought in us who believe. It is not said that the exceeding greatness of His power was towards Christ only, but " to us-ward who believe."

But, in what way can this be true? thou mayest inquire, seeing we are so weak, and so easily overcome with difficulties. Did we more firmly believe God's word we should make Jess of difficulties. A great many would he carrying their beds who are clinging to them. We fail to own and honor the power with which we are associated. The Man Christ Jesus is on the throne, and we, being in Christ, are associated with the throne that rules over all. Many, alas! fail in their testimony for Christ through fear of the way. The heart of the Apostle Paul was not only fixed on Christ Himself in heaven, but it was fixed on His ways on earth. He loved to trace His every footstep, whether in the depths, or in the

heights. There is a striking resemblance in this respect between the Eighty-fourth Psalm, and the Third of Philippians. " Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, in whose heart are the ways of them." The Lord give us to know more of this strength in us, that we may be true witnesses for Him. But now for the answer:-

The same power that wrought in Christ and raised Him from the dead, has also wrought in us, and raised us from a state of death in trespasses and sins-it has delivered us clean out of the hands of Satan, and placed us as redeemed ones in the presence of God with every enemy beneath our feet. The second chapter is the explanation and development of this great truth. The very same power has wrought in the Christian that has been displayed in Christ. We see it accomplished in Him. We know it will be fully accomplished in us in due time. The power abides with us. " And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Nothing can be plainer to faith than these words-nothing can be more difficult to reason. Christ is faith's object. All truth is connected with Him. We can only gain a knowledge of truth by an ever deepening knowledge of Christ. Blessed Lord, the eye, the heart, the thoughts, must all be fixed on thee, and all our delight must be in thee. Then, learning thy word is easy. We need not that any one teach us. The light shines-the Holy Ghost is our teacher.

Let thine eye then, O my soul, with all the tender sympathies of thy heart, be fixed on Him. Beneath the awful weight of our sins on Calvary, our Jesus died and was laid in the grave. For the moment the enemy prevailed: the Prince of life lay sealed in death. Death reigned over all. The first Adam was dead in sin, the last Adam dead for sin. But the mighty work was done, and the mighty triumph at hand. By the shedding of His precious blood He had rolled away forever the heavy load of our sins, and glorified God about them. Heaven was satisfied, hell was vanquished, and man, through faith in that blood, eternally saved. " The God of peace" -" the Father of glory"-raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places; and He raised us up in Him to the same place of privilege and blessing. The Head and the members were, together. Here God began a new thing-a new creation, of which the risen Man, Christ Jesus, is the head and center. " Old things are passed away: behold, all things are become new: and all things are of God." The world, sin, Satan, death, and the grave, are thus left behind. To faith, they are as far removed from the believer as from Christ Himself. All who love that blessed name are in Him and where He is.. God hath exalted Him, " far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world [or, age], but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all."

Clearly, then-seeing every believer is in Christ, and every enemy is beneath His feet-every enemy is beneath the believer's feet. And this is nothing more than faith looks for and reckons upon. One word explains to the heart that loves Jesus this wondrous mystery-Christ is worthy! He who glorified God on earth is worthy to be glorified by God in heaven. And any poor sinner that glorifies Christ on earth, God will glorify with Him in heaven.

This is the will of God-Honor my Son. Know Himself, esteem Himself, love Himself, trust Himself, think of Himself, commune with Himself, see Himself in the blood which He shed-in His lowly path of rejection and suffering; see Himself in all His invitations and promises. Ever look for Himself; know nothing apart from Him. Love is personal. A little bit, or a great deal of religiousness, is worth nothing. Most people have plenty of religion, but how few are more at home with Christ than with anyone else in the universe. Many are more at home in speaking of a kind Providence than of the heart of Christ, though the one lies been fully revealed, and the other is wrapped in mystery. How long, O Lord, shall it thus be? Would that the Holy Spirit were less grieved by our worldliness, that He might be free to reveal to our souls more of thy glory, that our hearts might be ravished with thy beauty!

Know then, in conclusion, O my soul, and bear this in mind, that it is as man that Christ is exalted and glorified. As God, we know, He could be neither-the glory of God changes not. But being God He could descend. He became a man and died; and as man He is exalted to all honor at God's right hand in heaven. The Church is united with Him there. He is the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. It is not said, observe, that He is Head over the Church; but, " Head over all things to the Church." She is one with Him who is supreme over all. His members, His fullness, His completeness, His glory as the Man Christ Jesus. As it was with the first man, Adam, and his beloved Eve: so shall it be with the Second Man, the Last Adam, and the Church, His beloved Eve. Though the dominion was given directly to Adam, Eve shared it with him, according to the good pleasure of God. Christ alone is personally worthy; and God has set Him as Head over all things, and united the Church with Him as His body and His bride.

Wondrous, marvelous, blessed place and portion for the Church! But God will have it so.

It has been in His mind from all eternity. He pictured. it to Himself in the first pair before sin entered. It is no afterthought. Christ speaks to His Father in John 17 about the long looked for day, when He would share all His glory as the risen Man with those He bad given Him. " And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou East sent me, and Last loved them as thou hast loved me."

Before closing this paper, and our Meditations on the apostle's first prayer, may I ask my dear reader, if he is one of this happy company? Art thou a believer in Christ Jesus? Is He precious to thy heart? Couldst thou not live without Him even in this world? Is He necessary to thy daily peace and happiness? Is everything worthless to thee that has not His stamp upon it? And is everything empty to thee which He does not fill? A Christian is united to Christ now, and one with Him. His sins are all forgiven, he has eternal life, and is accepted in the Beloved. The Holy Spirit dwells within him as the spirit of adoption, and communicates to his soul a fuller knowledge of Christ and His finished work. Thus he is enabled to live above the world, though diligently attending to his duties in it. The Lord looks for separation from the world in all who are associated by faith with Him in heaven. This is true Christianity, and fills the soul with heavenly peace and joy. Is it thine, O my dear reader? Think not that the picture is drawn too high; it is within the plain statements of scripture; and we have no other standard. Nothing less will suit

God, and nothing less will serve thy soul. True, Christ may be possessed and not enjoyed; pardon may be possessed and not enjoyed; and so may other blessings of Christianity; but the heart of a true believer, even amidst all its darkness and unbelief, will turn instinctively to Christ Himself, under a sense of need, and cleave to Him alone. This is the surest evidence of the work of God's Spirit in the soul. Doubts and fears are lamentable, and dishonoring to Christ; but the grace of God will outlive them all. Is this then, my friend, more like the picture of thy state? Or!-What?-no Christ at all? God forbid! This would be awful indeed! It is bad enough to see Christ only through the errors and darkness of man's theology, but to have no interest in Christ at all, is to be forlorn and desolate beyond all conception. No language could picture this state-no figures could sum up its misery. It is to be Christless and Godless; a hapless wreck on the shores of the lake of fire.

Dost thou own to this state? Is it really thine? Be honest about it-if so, confess it. And think not that a little human religion can meet thy need.

The work of Christ alone can meet it. He died on Calvary for sinners the chief. Blessed be His name. All praise be to Him. But, oh! do thou believe it; and be thankful for it. Love the Lord that died for thee on Calvary. Surely He deserves thy love, and the deepest devotion of thy heart. A seat, a throne, beside Himself, is ready for thee, if thou but truly turn to Him. What grace-what love! To die for us on the cross; and share His throne and glory with us forever! But, oh! what must hell be to those who reject such love and glory! The very remembrance of a Christ rejected, and a salvation despised, in that place of hopeless woe, must be the worm that never dies and the fire that shall never be quenched.

" The tick of the clock of hell," as one has said, sounds, ever-never; ever-never; everlasting woe-never-ending misery." How awful-how overwhelming the thought! Imagine its dreary, monotonous sound falling on the wearied ear of lost souls. As they lie in dark despair, its pendulum swinging from side to side and muttering unceasingly the doleful, heart-sinking sound, " ever-never; ever-never." It must be like a mockery of their agonies which is too dreadful to think of.

Once more, my friend, look at the bright side. Jesus died for lost sinners. God gave His Son for lost sinners. The Holy Ghost pleads with lost sinners. Resist not His pleadings, I pray thee: despise not the grace of God, I pray thee: despise not the blood of Jesus, I pray thee: there is pardon for thy sins nowhere else. But hear, O hear, the blessed truth, " The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Have faith in that precious blood, and thy sins, however many, shall, the same moment, be forgiven. " Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Bow at His blessed feet-confess thy sins, and receive from His own lips of grace, a plenary pardon, salvation, and peace. Read carefully Luke 7:36-50.

" ETERNITY.-Count the gold and silver blossomsSpring has scattered o'er the lea;Count the softly-sounding ripplesSparkling on the summer sea;Count the lightly flickering shadowsIn the autumn forest glade;Count pale nature's scattered tear-dropsIcy gems by winter made;Count the tiny blades that glistenEarly in the morning dew;Count the desert sand that stretchesUnder noon-tide's dome of blue;Count the notes that wood-birds warbleIn the evening's fading light;Count the stars that gleam and twinkleO'er the firmament by night*****When thy counting all is done-Scarce ETERNITY's begun.Reader! pause! where wilt thou be-During thine ETERNITY?

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