John - Commentaries by Hugh Henry Snell

Peace and Communion, Manna and the Old Corn

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This is that bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever (John 6:58).

And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes and parched corn in the selfsame day. And the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year (Josh. 5:11, 12).

We are in a world that yields nothing for our souls, absolutely nothing; and all, who are taught of God, prove this. Surrounded as we are surely with abundant providential blessings, and many social and national mercies, yet as to our souls it is

a dry and thirsty land, where no water is {Psa. 63:1}.

Such it was to our Lord, and such it is to us. We have, however, resources in God. He is to us the Fountain of living waters in and through Christ, in whom we have redemption through His blood, and in whom we are blessed in the heavenlies with all spiritual blessings. Our never-failing springs then are in Christ, who is our wine to cheer, our bread to stay, our living water to refresh, our sufficiency and strength; a free and exhaustless supply to faith, as He said,

If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink {John 7:37}.

Thus we walk by faith, not by sight; for though by grace we are brought into such nearness and acceptance in Christ, we are, however, set in constant and entire dependence on Him, whom having not seen we love. It is the sense of this that enables us to glory in the Lord. It has always been the lesson God would have His people learn; hence, if the psalmist exclaim,

All my springs are in thee (Psa. 87:7),

we find one apostle writing,

Our sufficiency is of God (2 Cor. 3:5),

while another says,

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning (James 1:17).

Again, if we take our place in company with Jesus, we hear Him instructing His cleansed ones to cling to Him in order to bear fruit;

for without Me,

said He,

ye can do nothing (John 15:3-5).

In this way, we can easily understand why the apostle characterized the servants of Christ as

having nothing, and yet possessing all things (2 Cor. 6:10).

In looking over the history of the children of Israel, we notice, not only that they were a redeemed people, and frequently reminded by the prophets that Jehovah had brought them out of Egypt with a high hand, but that they were constantly to have the sense of it kept up by observing the passover. They kept the passover in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the land of Canaan. Again, it is plainly set forth, that wherever they might be, or in whatever circumstances, God made Himself known to them as taking the care of their sustainment, because He had redeemed them. He was their Sustainer as well as their Redeemer.

If they were under the safety of the sprinkled blood, He gave them to eat the flesh of the lamb roast with fire, especially the head, the legs, and purtenance. Not only does this read to us typically the comforting lesson, that we are safe for eternity in virtue of the precious blood of the Lamb of God, but also that during this night of watching, and time of need, He who died for us is our strength, and that we should have communion with Him as to His mind, His walk, and affections. Again, when redeemed out of Egypt, and brought through the Red Sea — place of death and judgment — on new ground, they soon found themselves in a barren wilderness, removed from all visible means of subsistence, and therefore entirely dependent upon God. But this gave occasion for Him who chose them, and redeemed them, to prove His power and goodness in caring for them. Day by day, according to His word, He sent manna down from heaven for their support. We read that

the children of Israel did eat manna forty years, until they came to a land inhabited: they did eat manna, until they came unto the borders of the land of Canaan (Ex. 16:35).

When, however, they set foot on the promised land flowing with milk and honey, (which sets forth our present position in Christ in heavenly places), they were still dependent on God, though, instead of manna, their food was

the old corn of the land.

We are told that

the manna ceased on the morrow after they had eaten of the old corn of the land; neither had the children of Israel manna any more; but they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year (Josh. 5:11, 12).

While we may gather from these facts in their typical import, that every believer is set in the position of dependence on God, and that He is the Sustainer of our souls, yet it makes a vast difference, to our state of heart whether our habit is to think only of Christ as the Lamb who shed His blood for many, or as the manna — the One who came down from heaven, or as the old corn of the land — the One who ascended up to where He was before.

Those who are thinking only of Jesus as crucified, limiting their thoughts mostly to what He did upon the tree — blessed and most precious as it is thus to remember Him — may be often reminded of the manifestation of divine love, sins borne and suffered for, and peace made, thus assuring them of safety, and of being objects of divine grace; but such do not know deliverance from the world or from themselves, nor what it is to stand in liberty and joy in the presence of God. No doubt all our blessings are founded on the work of the cross, but Jesus is not there now. There was no singing in Egypt.

There are some, however, whose apprehensions of divine grace, and of the work of Christ, are beyond this. They know that Jesus who was crucified is risen, and that they are associated with Him whom the world rejected, and whom God raised from among the dead; they know too that they have life in Him who is out of death, and has triumphed over death and Satan. Such souls apprehend that they are rescued from this present evil world, and not of it, though they find themselves in a wilderness of need and dissatisfaction, and that they are going on to their inheritance. But such mostly think of God’s blessings coming down upon them in the wilderness, and, it may be, regard earthly prosperity as a mark of divine favor. They are dependent, like the Israelites, on periodical ministrations from heaven, and are satisfied to gather up now and then a little food. The one thought of a soul not delivered from the world — still in Egypt — is his safety from coming wrath. The one thought of a wilderness Christian is having God’s blessing poured down upon him day by day; he looks for the manna. Both thoughts very important in their place; but in neither of these states of soul is the conscience at liberty, or the heart at rest. Sometimes singing, and at other times repining, wilderness Christians know that they have been sheltered by the blood of the Lamb, and brought out of Egypt with a high hand, through the sea of death and judgment, and they have seen all their fleshly enemies dead upon the seashore; but, with all, their thoughts are limited to God’s blessing poured out upon them down here. Very blessed surely it is to realize God’s delight in blessing us here; but to know what it is to have to do with the ever-living, ever-loving Son of God Himself, as in Him who is in the glory, is another thing.

Blessed as it is to contemplate the faithful care of God day by day in providing for His people in a barren desert, it is sweeter still to know that “the manna” set forth Jesus; for He said,

I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever. . . . This is that bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever (John 6:51-58).

Blessed as it is to think of Jesus as the One who came down, and gave His flesh for the life of the world in such matchless grace, yet the difference is most striking, as to our apprehension and enjoyment, whether we only think of Him as He was down here, or as He is up there. What the believer wants now day by day is the sustaining power and blessing of having to do with a living Person up there — the Man in the glory. And no doubt the great cause of weakness and failure in believers is not that they do not sometimes remember the work of the cross, or that they forget that Jesus came down from heaven; but because they do not draw from, lean on, and abide in a living, faithful Christ in the glory, in constant dependence, obedience, and confidence. We need His continual upholding care and blessing. Apart from Him, we are helpless. We can most truly say —

“As weaker than a bruised reed, I cannot do without Thee;I want Thee here each hour of need, Shall want Thee, too, in glory.”

It is when the believer enters by faith upon the new- creation blessings God has given us in Christ in heavenly places — the true Canaan — that he knows Christ Himself there as his Soul-sustainer —

the old corn of the land {Josh. 5:11}.

The

Corn of wheat {John 12:24},

which fell into the ground and died, is alive again, and in the glory. He then finds that it is not merely the work of Christ on the cross for us, nor the blessing poured out upon us on our pilgrimage which should occupy us, important as they are, but a full Christ up there, a living Person in the glory, even Christ Himself, who finished the work, and through whom all our blessings have come. It is Jesus glorified who is

the old corn of the land,

to whom we are now to look as the commanding and absorbing Object of our hearts. It is not merely promises, nor even privileges, but liberty to approach God with boldness, because He is there in whom we are for ever blessed, whose blood ever speaks there for us. Oh the unspeakable blessedness of feeding on Christ as

the old corn of the land

— on Him, who is our life, righteousness, peace, and hope, and yet the One in whom are all our present and eternal springs and resources. And surely He is enough to fill and satisfy our minds and hearts. Known thus as an Object, He eclipses every other. Beauty then is seen nowhere else. All here is death and corruption apart from that living, incorruptible One. By the word and Spirit, which testify of Him, exercising our souls, we grow in acquaintance with Him, rise superior to old associations, and find ourselves in the circle of such love and dignity, as makes everything here seem poor and dissatisfying. The heart thus taken up with Him loses its relish for passing and fading things, and finds Him a satisfying Object, as He said,

He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst {John 6:35}.

He is enough for us; for not only is He almighty, but His love is perfect, and He is

the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever {Heb. 13:8}.

He is able to sympathize with us; for He can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and His compassions fail not. He ever lives to intercede for us, and always appears for us before the face of God. He is ever active and faithful in managing all our affairs for us up there, as the other Comforter does everything for us, and in us, down here. Well then might an inspired apostle enjoin us to set our minds on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and remind us at the same time that we

are dead,

or, have died with Christ, and that

our life is hid with Christ in God {see Col. 3:3}.

We find that “the lamb” was eaten, the “manna” was eaten, the “old corn of the land” was eaten. What is the instruction to us in this? Is it not that as those were all types of Christ, that we should feed by faith upon Him? Not merely think of Him, read about Him, hear about Him, or speak of Him, but receive God’s revelation of Him into our hearts, for our sustainment and joy. They did not merely think of the flesh of the lamb, or look at it, or the manna, and the old corn, but they ate it — they felt they needed it, they partook of it, and thus received strength for walk and service. And so now. We may read a chapter in the Bible, or hear an orthodox discourse, and yet it may be sadly true of us, as it has been said of others,

The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard {Heb. 4:2}.

No doubt it is by the written word of God that we have any knowledge of Christ; and the Holy Ghost, the Glorifier and Testifier of Christ, is Here to guide us into all truth, and to take of the things of Christ and shew unto us. So that, by the Spirit, through the Scriptures, the deep and wondrous glories of the Person, work, relationships, offices, moral excellences, and fullness of Christ are brought to us, and our souls are strengthened by feeding on Him. It is the needful daily employ for every child of God. When Jesus said to Mary {rather, Martha},

One thing is needful {Luke 10:42},

it was the habit of sitting at His feet, and hearkening to His word to which He alluded. This was Mary’s source of spiritual power. It was the good part which she chose. She was enabled to go forth from such a place of blessing, and let love have its own ready outflow, in breaking the costly alabaster box of very precious ointment, and pouring it upon Him, who was the conscious spring of all her blessing. Had Martha learned the same lesson, what failure and distress she would have been spared!

Feeding on Christ then is communion. It is an unfeignedly dependent one having to do with Him, leaning upon Him, drawing from Him, as He is set forth in the Scriptures, and revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. When God’s own testimony of Him is thus received into our hearts by faith, He is the food and strength of our souls. The more we feed on Him, the more we desire Him. If we are going out after the gratification of fleshly desires, we shall lose our relish for the sincere milk of the word. Fleshly lusts war against the soul. Where personal intercourse and communion with Christ are not practiced, there must be weakness and failure, even in those who have spiritual life. It is, therefore, of all importance for us, who have no visible sustaining power; such as “the lamb,” “the manna,” or “the old corn,” that we hold tenaciously, that for spiritual health and activity our joy and strength are found wholly in personal occupation with Christ Himself. Dead, cold, formal exercises are short of this, and to be dreaded. Sitting at the feet of Jesus, and hearkening to His word, are as “needful” as ever; and this the most spiritual and advanced Christians know best, and practice most. May we be kept abiding in Him.

The children of Israel fed on “the lamb” during the night, on “the manna” in the wilderness early in the morning, but on “the old corn” of the land at every time of need; and these points read instructive lessons to us. The passover feast was the remembrance of the lamb slain, by whose blood they had obtained safety. It was eaten

roast with fire {Ex. 12:8, 9},

which typically sets forth the suffering of death, which the Lamb of God endured for us. In “the manna,” we have the One who came down from heaven

the bread of God {John 6:33}, the bread of life {John 6:35}.

He said,

The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world (John 6:51).

The manna was a small thing to man’s eye, like hoar frost, and was to be gathered {Ex. 16:14, 17}

before the sun rose, which would melt it; forcibly reminding us that the time for feeding on Christ is before the things of this old creation, however pure and necessary, have their effect upon us. The things of God should have their first claim on us. When Christ has the first place in our hearts, He will have every place. To begin the day in His strength is the secret of going through it well.

Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee {Psa. 84:5}.

It is a good thing to see the face of the Lord Jesus by faith before we see another face; we thus have power, from intercourse with Him, before we practically enter upon the day’s duties. What a precious secret of blessing this is! How different when we make the things of this life, however important, the first concern of the day, instead of Him, who said,

Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:33).

The way the first part of the morning engages us, often tells the real state of our souls. If we are minding earthly things, they will assume increasing importance and gravity with us; but, if our minds are set on things above, the things of Christ, and His claims, will be the unerring standard of the value of everything. Feeding on Christ is a daily business, for

the inward man is renewed day by day {2 Cor. 4:16}.

The manna, too, was to be gathered fresh every morning; if it were kept, it would breed worms and stink. It is the habit of dependence and communion with the Lord, daily drawing directly from Himself, and not trying to live upon past experiences and gifts, however rich and abundant. Oh, the unspeakable blessedness of personally feeding on Him!

As we have noticed,

the old corn of the land

might be eaten at any time. It was unknown till they possessed the land. It was unlimited as to supply. It sets forth to us a full Christ, risen and ascended. We see Him in heavenly places—the land. We enter the holiest of all by the blood of Jesus, and know Him there, as

Head of the body, the church {Col. 1:18},

Head of all principality and power {Col. 2:10},

the glorified Man, in whom

dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily {Col. 2:9}.

Thus knowing this blessed One in the glory, we have a full and never-failing supply of strength and blessing in Him, who is our righteousness and strength. We are accepted, blessed, complete, and seated in Him in heavenly places. We are therefore enjoined to abide in Him, to walk in Him, to be rooted and built up in Him. Wondrous place of blessing! Unspeakable privilege! Perfect acceptance, and nearness to God, in whom we have all spiritual blessings in heavenly places! May we go forward in the walk of faith as those who know that without Him we can do nothing, but as knowing also that we have strength for all things in Him that gives us power. (Phil. 4:13).

Another point to notice is, that if Christ risen and glorified be looked to as the source of all sustainment, we cannot forget He was the One who came down from heaven, and died for us on the cross. We shall know Him in the glory as the Lamb as it had been slain. Hence we find that they not only ate of the

old corn

when in the land the day after keeping

the passover (Josh. 5:11),

but that

the manna (Josh. 5:12)

ceased the day after they had eaten of the old corn. Here we see “the passover,” “the manna,” and “old corn” clustered together. We are told also that they did eat of

the old corn . . . unleavened cakes, and parched corn (Josh. 5:11);

the cakes and parched corn forcibly setting forth the sufferings of Him who has been bruised for our blessing, and has been cut off under the fire of divine judgment for us. (Josh. 5:10-12) Thus let it be carefully noted that if we are really occupied with Christ ascended into heaven, we shall never forget how He came there, and what He did for us upon the tree. The reverse, however, does not hold good; that is, souls may dwell frequently upon His sufferings and death upon the cross, and have little sense of personal intercourse with Him, and what He is for us and to us now on the throne. In fact some would teach us that the true place of a Christian is to be “always at the foot of the cross.” Such know Christ as a Redeemer, but not as their ever living Sustainer; and this may account for much of the weakness among so many of God’s children. Now while the death of Christ can never be forgotten, for it is the great manifestation of divine love, and all our present and eternal blessings are founded on it, still we know that He is not now on the cross, nor in the sepulcher, but at the right hand of the Majesty on high. We delight to remember Him. The passover was celebrated in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in the land, and we are to shew, or announce, His death till He come; and always bear about in our body the dying of Jesus. But, while we thus remember Him where He was, we now see Him by faith where He is. Christ glorified is the Object of faith —

We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour (Heb. 2:9).

Having to do with Him there, we have power to walk as He also walked here.

We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18).

May we know day by day the precious reality of present sustainment and blessing, by feeding on Him who is now seated on the right hand of God, and who is soon coming to take us unto Himself!

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 2 (1854), Divine Delight in Grace.

“In the mean while His disciples prayed Him, saying, Master, eat. But He acid unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of.
—John 4:31, 32

MANY witnesses we have to the delight which God takes in the exercise of grace, in the work of Christ for sinners, in the provision He Himself has made for the bringing home of His banished ones. The whole of Luke 15 declares this; and this delight of God in the saving of poor sinners gets another fine reflection in the experience of Christ in John 4:31, 32.

A sinner had just been converted, and her spirit filled with liberty and joy.

The disciples, who had left their Master to buy some food, rejoin Him just at the moment, and spread the table for Him. But He tells them that He needs it not. He has been already at a feast; though wearied, hungry, and athirst, He has been rested and refreshed.

But how? Since they had left Him He had been toiling diligently, and had only seen water without tasting it. All this might well have made Him more weary and more athirst. But still He was refreshed, and needed not the table which they had spread for Him. A sinner had been saved and made happy: this had given Him a feast in a desert. The very style in which He answers the disciples, its fervor and energy, bespeak the joy of that moment to Him, and what His soul had known.

What an expression of the divine delight in the grace that saves a sinner is this! The sinner had known her joy—but it was not to be compared with the joy the Saviour had known. To speak in Levitical language, the fat was still the food of the altar. In her new-found joy the woman forgets her waterpot; in His, Jesus forgets His thirst. Sacred, happy witness of a precious secret of the divine bosom.

And joy, let me add, begets generosity and largeness of heart. When we are happy we are open-handed. Joy is the parent of great and noble sentiments of soul. And thus is it also with Christ here; not that, but at all times, as I need not say, every sentiment of His soul was infinitely perfect. But these verses give us an expression of what I observed, that joy begets generosity. The mind of Christ, having conceived this joy which we have noticed, is borne onward in a strain of beautiful generosity, “One soweth and another reapeth,” He says to the wondering disciples. It was the mind of David after the capture of Ziklag. David was then so full of joy that he decreed, “As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his be that tarrieth by the stuff.” The joy of the spoil of the Amalekites so enlarged the heart of David, that there came forth this great ordinance, and he made it a statute in Israel (1 Sam. 30). And so, to speak as a man, the mind of the Son of God in this passage.

What, I ask, does all this tell us poor sinners, but the deep interest which our salvation has in the bosom of God? The Son came forth from that bosom to reveal it to us; and, in the words of a hymn, we say,

“Tis His great delight to bless us.

That song we may sing, tuning our instruments for such music, at this fine and fervent scripture.

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 3 (1855), Leaving the Waterpot

JOHN 4:28

IN the story of the woman of Samaria, we see not only the grace of God in Christ to a sinner dead in sins, but also a sample of the blessed results of personal communion with the Lord. Nothing compensates the Christian for the lack of this— “without Me,” said Jesus, “ye can do nothing.” Outward service has its proper and healthful time and sphere of exercise, and the neglect of such service would be disobedience to the word of God; but, however spiritually conducted, it cannot make up for a deficiency of personal communion with the Lord. The former should result from the latter.

It is when we feel ourselves alone with Him that we are in a position to receive instruction, correction, and comfort of a peculiarly personal character; and the self-judging process that He leads to (v. 16), not only humbles, but prepares us to appreciate the wisdom, power, and grace of God with heartfelt gratitude, while we derive consolation therefrom. It is then, especially, that He leads us to review our past history, and to learn experimentally the deep necessity for, as well the true reality of, the superabounding grace of God.

The natural heart is selfish and covetous; “earthly things” concentrate its desires, and “the world” is the boundary of its hopes; but when, by divine grace, we are brought to feel and own our present position as debtors, and to know that the Creditor frankly forgives us, seeing we have nothing to pay—when, by faith, we see that the Son of God has opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers, and that we are “called to the marriage supper of the Lamb” —then our expectations and our hopes take another direction, and we “desire a better country, that is an heavenly.” But even after this, if the eye grow dim to the deep and eternal realities of our Father’s kingdom, the mind will, more or less, return to its naturally accustomed occupation. It is only when unfading and eternal beauty shines upon our sods, as beheld in the glorious Person of the Son of God, that changeful and perishable objects and pursuits are weighed in the true balance and “found wanting,” so that we can take joyfully the spoiling of our goods, knowing that we “have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.”

It is this principle that strikes me to be so prominently set forth in the inspired account of the Samaritan woman. Before Christ revealed HIMSELF to her, her religion was purely traditional, her heart was untouched, her conversation therefore rose no higher than remarks on the religious topics of the day. Perceiving that Jesus was “a prophet,” she would fain hide her sinful course and disturbed conscience behind the mountain-worship of her fathers. She felt not “the love of God,” because she knew not “the Gift of God;” therefore talk, and not self-denying devotedness to Jesus, was the chief element of her religion. She was ignorant of the fact that “the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.” And it may be here remarked, that a knowledge of true principles, or a correct acquaintance with the letter of Scripture, may fit a person for conversation or argument on religious questions, but give him no power to “deny ungodliness and worldly lust;” but let “the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ,” be seen; let “God manifest in the flesh” be believingly looked unto; let the slain Lamb of God be beheld by a convicted sinner, and then, what a mighty soul-constraining power is put into exercise! What truth and love become manifested!

It was only when the woman of Samaria beheld the Messiah in the person of Him who had told her all things that ever she did, that she “left her waterpot,” and went into the city to bear testimony to the exceeding riches of His grace. And with what ease, and, if I may so speak, how naturally she walked according to the new and heavenly principles implanted in her soul! Her personal acquaintance with the Messiah had translated her thoughts and heart from earth to heaven. Her conversation was no longer about “our father Jacob, who gave us the well,” nor the fathers’ worship in the mountain, but it was concerning “THE CHRIST:” —the grace of Christ, “He told me,” a sinful woman—the power and wisdom of Christ, “He told me all that ever I did;” so that having been alone in His presence, she could speak what she knew, and testify what she had seen— “Is not this the Christ?” And this is not all, she desires that others should participate in the joy and peace which she had, she therefore entreats them to “come” and “see” the Christ. The rest and peace of her soul was CHRIST, and Christ only; the tradition of the fathers, which had so beclouded her mind, vanished when she saw the Christ; her testimony, therefore, was to “Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” She had been with Jesus, and had learned of Him. Who now so lovely, so attractive, so worthy, so all-sufficient, so soul-satisfying to her as Jesus! Had she not heard His word, and in the secret of the Divine presence become experimentally acquainted with the “Gift of God,” and who He was that said unto her, “Give Me to drink?” Was not the water that He gave her a well springing up in her into everlasting life? Had He not unfolded to her the very secrets of her heart? Had she not tasted that the Lord was gracious? Then, could she be indifferent to His honor? Could she look on Christ-less, perishing souls, and be silent? Could she delay openly to extol and magnify Him who had so condescendingly commended His love toward her? Are not her neighbors going downward to destruction, because they know not “the Gift of God?” What claim then can the “waterpot” have, however necessary in its place, comparable to the love of Jesus and the needy condition of immortal souls? “The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a Man which told me all things that ever I did: Is not this the Christ?”

And surely, beloved, our danger in the present day is not so much in the neglect of attention to things necessary for the present life, as in allowing needful occupations and lawful employments to have the priority in our minds and ways. The Spirit of God teaches us not to be indifferent to, or negligent of, these things—He commands us to “maintain good works for necessary uses;” but the Lord Himself, and all that in which His glory is involved, must be the first consideration with us. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” The Lord is stronger than we, let us not provoke Him to jealousy. He is “the Father of spirits,” the Searcher of hearth, and judgeth without respect of persons. God is not mocked. “My people would not hearken to My voice; and Israel would none of Me,” was His affecting complaint (Ps. 81:11); but let not those expect to realize the light of His countenance who make the honour of Christ, the welfare of His Church, and the testimony of His gospel, matters of secondary importance. Brethren, let us deal solemnly with ourselves on these points. Is “Christ” or the “Waterpot” the “first” object of our search? Paul wept over many in his day, because they were minding earthly things; he called them “enemies of the cross of Christ” (Phil. 3:18, 19); although, on another occasion, he had to reprove some for idleness, and lack of those industrious habits, which become the gospel of Christ (2 Thess. 3:10-12). It is happy so to walk in the fear of the Lord, that in the needful details of life we may “adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour,” and that our habit of mind may be to “do all for the glory of God.” It is only in this way we can “use this world as not abusing it;” and we can only do this when the heart is filled with the constraining love of Christ, from personal communion with Him. When He is truly felt to be our treasure, our heart cannot but be most deeply interested in all that which concerns Him. It was so with the Samaritan woman, as we have seen; and we may add, how reproving, as well as instructive, this narrative is! How wonderful the wisdom of our God in prescribing for us, in this history, a remedy so effectual for soul-sickness and lukewarmness! Is it not because we have so little personal acquaintance with Christ Himself, that earthly things have such power over us, and that we so fail is testimony to the grace of God? The unconverted have no power to forsake perishing things, they are not acquainted with any higher claim on their affections than that of “earthly things;” they know nothing about “a better and an enduring substance;” their motto is, “Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;” but those who have known “the Gift of God,” and learnt with joy to “draw water out of the wells of salvation,” can well afford to leave the “waterpot,” and commit their earthly care to Him who is their newfound source of refreshment and strength. We find that when Andrew had beheld the Lamb of God, and abode with Him, he was anxious for the souls of others, and so powerfully testified of the Christ whom he himself had become personally acquainted with, that he brought his own brother Simon to Jesus (John 1:35, 42). Nor was the simple, earnest testimony of the woman of Samaria less successful, for we are told that many believed on Jesus because of her saying which she testified, “He told me all things that ever I did.”

Do not such Scriptures as these, dear brethren, blessedly illustrate to our souls that precious truth, “We love Him because He first loved us?” May we be afresh stirred up to cleave unto the Lord with full purpose of heart!

The Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, The: No. 5

We are familiar with the truth, that every believer on the Son of God has eternal life. It is a totally new life. By the actings of the word and Spirit on his heart and conscience, he has looked to the Son of man who was lifted up—the only-begotten Son whom God gave—and he has eternal life. He has life in the Spirit. It is not an improvement of the old nature, but a new nature; for " that which is born of the flesh, is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit;" but, because the believer is born of God, and therefore God's child, the Holy Spirit is sent into his heart to abide with him forever. Thus the believer is born of the Spirit first, and then indwelt by the Spirit; and it is important to distinguish between these two actings of the Holy Spirit.

It is because the child of God has the Spirit that he is enjoined to "walk in the Spirit," for then he will " not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." (John 3:5-16; Gal. 4:6; 5:16.) We have, then, another power in us and for us, which is entirely opposed to the flesh, and, walking in this power, fleshly lusts will not come out; but this scripture clearly shows that, though the believer is born again, he still has the flesh in him, and in its very nature it is opposed as much as ever to God.

Hence we read, "the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye should not do the things which ye desire." We have, then, as we have said, a new nature and a new power—the Holy Spirit—to walk in that path which is pleasing to God; when this is the case the Lord will occupy our hearts, we shall be seeking to act for His glory, we shall think of His interests, and the written word will instruct us. It is a path which is entirely beyond the wisdom of the natural man, because prompted and marked out by the Spirit of God. If one speaks of being 66 in the Spirit on the Lord's day," we understand that his thoughts and affections were flowing on in the current of the Spirit; and when we are enjoined to " walk in the Spirit," it calls upon us to hearken to the word of God, and obey it in all things, and at all costs. In this holy atmosphere fleshly lusts cannot intrude.

The child of God, then, is to give himself up to the leading of Another. It is characteristic of him that he does so; for " as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. 8:14.) A blind man is glad of someone who can see to take him by the hand, and lead him; for he is afraid to take a step, unless he is conscious that a competent person is guiding him. Another person, sensible of his thorough ignorance, looks out for someone to teach him, like the eunuch, to whom Philip said, " Understandest thou what thou readest?" He replied, a How can I, unless someone should guide me "? And so a Christian, who is sensible of his own helplessness and ignorance, looks for some One to lead and teach him, and for these things, among many others, the Holy Spirit has been given unto him. And one thing we may be sure of is, that He ministers Christ to our souls, and never leads us into a path of legality or fleshly confidence; for " if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under law." (Gal. 5:18.) It is both interesting and profitable to notice that it was to the Galatian believers, who had slipped away from the doctrines of grace, that an apostle was inspired to write so much about the actings of the Holy Spirit.

Here it may be well for the christian reader to pause, and ask the question, What do I know in my own soul about these things? Being conscious of the gift of the Holy Spirit, by whom the love of God has been shed abroad in my heart, do I know what it is to yield myself up to His leading and teaching, and to walk in that path which is according to His mind? We do well to see how much we have accepted of these marvelous teachings of scripture about the operations of the Spirit of God, and how far we have learned, by personal exercise in God's presence, their reality and power.

Few things can be more opposed to each other than "the fruit of the Spirit'' and "the works of the flesh." The former are like the excellencies of Christ—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance. A precious cluster of fruit. All were found perfect, and each in its season, in the Lord Jesus. Some of the works of the flesh are loathsome, others quiet in their activities, and even esteemed by some, such as emulations, and reveling, and such like. Others have a religious, or superstitious character, such as idolatry and witchcraft. Still, they are all so evil in God's sight, that "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." (Gal. 5:19-23.)

"The comfort of the Holy Spirit" is most precious. The troubled and cast-down child of God has often known it in a very especial manner. The consciousness we have in passing through a scene where Jesus had " not where to lay his head," and was hated without a cause—a scene which yields nothing for our souls, and where everything is against us—of One pointing us to the glorified Son of man, bringing His sweet words, finished work, triumphant resurrection, and session at the right hand of God, to our souls, is very precious. To find, too, the same Spirit bringing home to our hearts, as we need, the various offices in which He is constantly occupied for us in heaven, as Shepherd, Overseer, Priest, Advocate, and Washer of our feet, is comforting indeed. And more than these things, He takes of the things of the Father and the Son, their intercourse about us, the Father giving us to the Son, and the Son so owning us as His as to lay down His life for us, and so keeping us, that we can never perish, and such like truths, are precious indeed.

" The communion of the Holy Spirit" is also most blessed, for not only does He give us to know our relationship with the Father and the Son, (wonderful to think of!) but He enables us to enjoy this precious fellowship.

We are more familiar with "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ," and with "the love of God," than with the precious reality of "the communion of the Holy Spirit." Why is this? Because we try to satisfy ourselves with as low a standard of Christianity as we can, provided evil do not break out in some open dishonor to the Lord. "The communion of the Holy Spirit" is a secret known only to the heart that enjoys it. Its effects, no doubt, are seen by others, but the sweet privilege itself is better tasted than described. " Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ," saints of old were wont to say. They knew no other standard of Christianity than having thoughts, delights, and rest in common with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Marvelous blessedness! But how could the Holy Spirit who dwelleth in us give us a lower standard, or minister anything Jess in quality to those who are children of God? Impossible. In this way, we can, by the truth and Spirit, enter into the Father's counsels, ways, delight, and rest in His well-beloved Son, and in the Father's love and care of all His saints. We can also enter into the Son's love to the Father, and His love and care for every member of His body, and into the various offices which He sustains on our behalf. Surely we could not have anything higher, and the heart may well ask, Will there ever be anything beyond this? Here, compassed with infirmity, our measure may be very small, but it is the same communion of the Holy Spirit which we shall throughout eternity enjoy. In our next we hope to consider what scripture teaches concerning the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the church. . H. S.

Death of the Cross, Death of the Cross: No. 5

"So must the Son of Man be lifted up."—John 3:14

In our former meditations on the death of the cross, we have seen that the believer is viewed by God as "dead with Christ"—dead to sin, crucified to the world, and dead to the law. The law is not dead, but, in the death of Christ, his Substitute, he is dead to it. He is thus, by the death of Christ, judicially cleared from the guilt of sin and set free from the dominion of sin. In Christ risen, therefore, he is said to be not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, not of the world even as Christ was not of the world, and not under law, but under grace. The deliverance thus wrought for us through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ is perfect and effectual, not only as to removing the burden of our sins, and therefore of guilt; but in rescuing us from this present evil age, and delivering us from the plague of an evil nature whose activities are always contrary to God. Precious deliverance!

It is, however, a point never to be overlooked when contemplating the death of the cross, that there sin is seen in all its exceeding sinfulness. In Eden we see something of the dreadful character of sin, or disobedience, not only in the consequences there enumerated, but in the holiness of God requiring that the man should be driven out of the garden, and not allowed to return. " So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden, cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the way of the tree of life." (Gen. 3:14-21.) Again, when six thousand years have well-nigh passed, and the working of sin, and the accumulation of experience, both in Satan and sinners during this long period, have grown into such colossal proportions, so that graveyards, lunatic asylums, hospitals, houses of correction, prisons, are increasingly called for to keep things outwardly bearable, we become almost lost in the immensity of the ravages and growth of sin. And further, if for a moment we take our stand as it were on the margin of the lake of fire, which is the second death, and think of the end of sinners, and of all such as have rejected the Savior, and consider the eternal fulfillment of the words of divine testimony concerning those who will be there, we are led again to say, What a dreadful thing sin is! For " the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with

fire and brimstone: which is the second death." (Rev. 21:8.)

But it is in the Savior's groans, and agonies, forsaking, and blood-shedding in the death of the cross, we see what the exceeding sinfulness of sin really is. No creature could satisfy God's holy requirements concerning it. Neither Michael, nor Gabriel, nor all the shining myriads of angelic hosts around the throne of heaven could make propitiation for the sins of the people. Were the vast universe which was brought into existence by the word of God laid aside, all could not clear man of one sin. Could it be that all of Adam's posterity could give themselves up to weeping and sorrow, still, as before God, it would be true that " All for sin could not atone But the blood of Christ alone."

No one but the only-begotten Son of God could make atonement for sin. For that, as He said, the Son of man must be lifted up, for He only could accomplish the work and so glorify God. Being man, perfect man, He only could be a fit substitute for man. Being sinless, He could be a fit sacrifice for the sinful; and being a divine Person as well as man, He was competent to meet all the just requirements of God, and satisfy God's righteousness and holiness about sin. If then man sinned, man also suffered for sins, and is the propitiation for sins. If by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. If man was driven out of the garden because of sin, the man Christ Jesus rose from the dead, and entered into heaven itself by His own blood. Who but Jesus, Son of the living God, could do this? How dreadful then sin must be, when we think that it needed One of eternal capacities, and almighty powers, as well as perfect man, to put it out of God's sight. Though thousands of bulls and goats had been offered as sacrifices for sin, God had no pleasure in them; they served to typify the great sacrifice for sin which was coming, but could not righteously remove sin from the eye of God, " for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."

It was in love to us, and for the glory of God, that He spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all. Being delivered for our offenses, we see in the death of the cross what the just judgment of sin is; that sin calls for nothing less than being forsaken, or abandoned by God. Hence we find that though Jesus was perfect in obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, yet He there cried out, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" The holiness of God, and the demands of righteous judgment of sin could be satisfied with nothing less, therefore it is added, " But thou art holy, thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel." (Psalm 22:1-3.) No person but God's own Son was competent to be a propitiation for sins, and nothing less than the death of the cross could justly put it away from the eye of God. Out of all this we know He rose triumphant. What a dreadful thing sin is!

How then can those escape being cast out from the presence of God into outer darkness, who refuse this great salvation, and die in their sins? How can they ever atone? In an eternity of unending hopelessness, and boundless remorse, into which no ray of hope can ever come, what can exceed this unchanging misery? A guilty conscience ever accusing, the power of an offended God abiding on them, the darkness of banishment from happiness and light ever continuing, the torment of the remembrance of opportunities of having salvation presented to them in the gospel rejected by such as cherished the love and pleasures of sin, how unutterably painful; but how all the misery of the lost fails to give us an idea of the unfathomable pain and sorrow of " the death of the cross"! How endearing does the revelation of God's thoughts of that marvelous work make the Savior to the hearts of those who believe in His name! What comfort of love flows into our souls when thus contemplating Him who was so willingly made sin for us! How small the greatest events of history look, when compared with the eternally-blessed work of "the death of the cross." If God had so to bruise and put to grief His own Son to atone for our sins, how can the sinner and ungodly escape the everlasting wrath of a holy and offended God? Happy those who now so know the reality of "the death of the cross" as to enable them to say

Streams of Refreshing From the Fountain of Life, New Birth, The

Ye must be born again (John 3:7).

In our Lord’s discourse with Nicodemus, we see how wisely, faithfully, and graciously He met a professedly religious man. The Lord’s mode of dealing with this Pharisee was different from His way with the woman of Samaria. The latter was a notoriously sinful woman, unconscious of her guilty state; the blessed Lord therefore brought her at once to a sense of her ignorance and foul course, by saying,

Go, call thy husband, and come hither (John 4:16).

But the former case was that of an outwardly blameless man blinded by false religion; the first thing, therefore the Lord did with him was to cut down his religion, root and branch, and then show him that he was a perishing sinner needing mercy, and, like a bitten Israelite, could only live by looking to God’s remedy. The religion of this man of the Pharisees, I say, was false, though not altogether so; for Satan’s deadliest snares are composed of a mixture of truth and error. It was so with the woman in the garden, and also with the Pharisees, and it is common also in the present day. Nicodemus believed in God, assented to the veracity of the Scriptures, held the existence of both angels and spirits, and the resurrection of the body. These points were according to truth; but the grand foundation-truth of the gospel — redemption by blood— was thought nothing of; this was the fatal error. The measure of truth, little as it was, held by a man of such dignity and education, only tended to keep his mind in darkness, and enable him more successfully to spread his false religion among those who came in his way; whereas, a person wallowing in pollution and transgression, without any religious profession, would have no such temptation; hence our Lord said of some,

Publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you (Matt. 21:31).

The erroneous character of this man’s religion was soon exposed by our blessed Lord, for He knew what was in man. The religion of this

man of the Pharisees (John 3:1)

was not spiritual. He knew nothing of the new birth. This is fatal ignorance. He passed over man’s fall in Adam, and his being now dead in trespasses and sins; he saw no necessity for repentance, or the new birth, and yet took his place as a religious man, offering service in the name of God as if he were holy instead of being polluted; considering himself a creditable member of a popular religious sect, and considered worthy of dignity and esteem as such by others. But it was carnal religion, which, we are told, cannot please God; and as man in the flesh cannot rise above his own level, it was necessarily connected with walking and acting to be seen of men, instead of as in the sight of God —

Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God (Luke 16:15).

But Nicodemus had heard of Jesus, and desired some intercourse with Him. How, then, could it be accomplished? How could this honored

Master of Israel (John 3:10),

this

ruler of the Jews (John 3:1),

have an interview with the despised Nazarene? What would the people say? Nicodemus, however, was not at rest, for he believed that Jesus was

a teacher come from God (John 3:2),

and see Him he must. He therefore came to Jesus by night; for in this way he could satisfy his conscience without displeasing men, or exposing himself to their scorn and persecution. Such is man. Such was the spirit in which this

man of the Pharisees (John 3:1)

approached the Lord of glory. His thought was about Jesus being a teacher. He might have imagined it would be beneficial to him professionally to listen to His instruction. Though he was constantly occupied with the letter of Scripture, and the religious duties of the synagogue, it does not appear to have once entered his mind that he was a sinner, and needed a Savior. Now pause, and mark the way of Christ with this man. Did He say, You come to me in such an unworthy way, I cannot grant you an audience? Did He say, Cast away this and that first, and then I'll speak to you? Did He say, Get better first, and then I'll receive you? Oh, no. The loving Savior in this, as in every other instance, fulfilled His own blessed word,

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out (John 6:37).

How full of encouragement this is, and how blessedly it unfolds to us the graciousness of the Lord Jesus! Nicodemus did not see that he was

condemned already (John 3:18),

and exposed to the wrath of God. Alas, alas! a

Master of Israel,

a teacher of others, and not concerned about his own salvation. Religion not true, a religion of dead works, the religion of the fathers, the religion of the people, the rites and customs of synagogue duties, with their attendant honors and official trappings, was the powerful current which was hurling this

ruler of the Jews,

and others, downward at a fearfully rapid course, and that, too, without any idea of God's way of salvation. How very solemn! But is it not the same now? What is the real condition of thousands around us? Is it that they deny the existence of Almighty God? Do they contend that He should not be worshipped? Do they set aside ecclesiastical office? Do they dispute the veracity of the Holy Scriptures? Certainly not. But if you ask them if they have experienced the new birth, you will find that some will hang down their heads in confusion; others will judge you a ranter, or a wild fanatic; while others will try to shelter themselves behind some delusive sacramental form, and deny altogether the truth of the new birth by the word of truth, and the sovereign power of the Holy Ghost. But some, perhaps, may say, Is it not very uncharitable to conclude, that all who have not experienced the new birth are hastening on the broad road to eternal destruction? May there not be something good and hopeful in them without this? We unhesitatingly reply, No; because the Lord Jesus said,

Except a man be BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT SEE the kingdom of God (John 3:3).

Oh that the Holy Spirit might so work in the hearts of thousands of professors around us, that they might know the folly and unprofitableness of that religion which does not begin with being

born again!

The first word of our text shows us how pointed and personal our Lord was in His ministry —

YE must be born again (John 3:7).

This tells out His faithful love. He did not propound dry doctrines, or get up eloquent addresses, to please the itching ears of His audience. No. He was the Faithful Witness, and He came not to destroy, but to save. He knew the worth of the soul, and salvation had its paramount claim in His mind. His loving heart would bear with the unworthy manner in which He was approached, and set salvation before His hearers in the plainest and most pointed way. To the cavilling Jews in the synagogue His word was,

Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you (John 6:53).

On another occasion He said,

Ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am, ye shall die in your sins (John 8:23, 24).

Again we see Him standing in the midst of a crowd, and saying,

Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish (Luke 13:3, 5).

To the careless Samaritan He said,

If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith unto thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water (John 4:10).

He said to the seeking blind man,

What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee? (Luke 18:41).

And when he replied,

Lord, that I may receive my sight (Luke 18:41),

Jesus said unto him,

Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee (Luke 18:42).

And so in the text before us, our Lord did not set before Nicodemus some profound points of theology for his consideration, as the ruler perhaps expected; neither was it a display of eloquence, such as a learned man might have appreciated; neither did He set truth in a general way before him. No; He came at once to the point, and said,

YE must be born again (John 3:7)!

Oh that searching word, YE! This is Divine ministry; this is the way of the perfect preacher; and this is the style that should be imitated in the present day. It is when the Holy Ghost powerfully and personally applies the truth, so as to say to the conscience,

Thou art the man (2 Sam. 12:7),

that decided good may be expected. Persons may read the Bible, and think it is all about others; they may hear the gospel, and say that the preacher was very faithful to some present; but it is when a person feels that the truth read or heard affects himself, that we may expect blessed results. “Oh, yes,” said a learned gentleman, after reading the epistle to the Romans, “I see this doctrine in the Bible.” “But do you feel it in your heart?” replied his friend. That question led him to consider, and make the truth of such personal application as to be the means of his conversion. Fellow- Christians! we should be pointed and personal, as well as deeply affectionate, in putting the gospel before persons, both publicly and privately. Clear doctrines are not enough. We should remember our Master’s oft-repeated word, YE! People do not think we are in earnest and sincere, if we only make general statements. I was much struck the other day in reading an account of a young man. A faithful servant of Christ said to him, “Do you know that you are going on to perdition?” “No!” said he, “neither do I think your people believe it either. My mother is one of your congregation, and I am sure she loves me dearly; and if she believed it, I am persuaded she would have told me of it. My sister also goes there; she loves me very much; and I am sure, if she believed it, she would throw her arms round my neck, and say, Don’t, oh, don’t go to perdition!”

We may next notice how decidedly the Lord insisted on the necessity of the new birth —

Ye MUST be born again (John 3:7).

Not you may, but you must; not, you should desire it merely, but you must. Yes, without the new birth, you must be for ever in darkness –

you cannot see the kingdom of God (see John 3:3);

without the new birth, you must be shut out for ever from the presence of God —

you cannot enter into the kingdom of God (see John 3:5).

How plain! how decisive! How essential to be

born of the Spirit (John 3:6)!

This secret of the new birth the learned Pharisee was entirely ignorant of, and vainly tried to argue the impossibility of a second birth; but it only drew from the loving, faithful heart of Jesus a thrice-repeated testimony to the absolute necessity of it, and the explanation that the new birth was from above and spiritual. This positive declaration at once cut at the root of the Pharisee’s religion, and razed to the ground all his cherished confidence and expectation; for it pronounced a verdict on the best man in the flesh, as being so apostate and corrupt as to be unfit for the presence of God. But while it exposed man’s total inability to fit himself for the kingdom of God, it referred to the power and goodness of God in quickening the dead in trespasses and sins. The doctrine our Lord here propounds is of the highest importance; for men may be moral, amiable, benevolent, outwardly religious, and the like, yet they must be born again. They may be high even in ecclesiastical office, far advanced in theological education, yet they must be born again. Man’s thought of religion is, that he must gradually improve, and perhaps be ultimately good enough to be saved. God’s religion is, first to have life, and then rejoice in an assured hope of glory. Man’s thought is to work for life; God’s way is to work from life. Man proposes to himself eternal life at the end; God presents it to the true believer at the very beginning. Man’s wisdom consists in the reformation and improvement of the flesh, with persevering efforts to pile up a quantity of supposed creature-merit and self-righteousness; the Lord Jesus knocks it all down with that uncompromising sentence,

Ye MUST be born again.

But what are we to understand by the new birth?

Ye must be BORN AGAIN.

Certainly it is not an alteration of the old fleshly nature into that which is spiritual; for our Lord in the previous verse clearly shows the distinction between the two natures and the two births:

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3:6).

The apostles too, in their writings, continually keep up this distinction of the two natures, not only as a matter of doctrine, but also of experience and practice. The believer is spoken of as made a partaker of the Divine nature, and as having the Spirit of Christ in him; his experience is referred to as necessarily one of conflict, because of the opposite workings of the two natures — flesh and Spirit:

The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would (Gal. 5:17).

While in reference to practice, he is exhorted to

walk in the Spirit,

and

not fulfil the lusts of the flesh (Gal. 5:16);

to

put off . . . the old man which is corrupt, . . . and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Eph. 4:22-24).

This is a subject of immense importance; for if a really exercised soul imagines that being born again is a conversion of the old Adam, sinful nature into that which is holy, he cannot have perfect peace; for he must find that his experience does not correspond with the idea. Hence many a quickened soul thinks he cannot be a Christian, because he finds, with a principle of delight in the law of God, that there is another principle working in him which is contrary to holiness; while the truth is, he would not be

born again,

if he had no experience of this inward conflict. His conscience must find peace alone through the blood of the cross. Instead of Paul saying that he felt sin was rooted out of him, he says,

Sin dwelleth in me (see Rom. 7:17);

though instead of obeying it, he by the Spirit mortified the deeds of the body, he kept his body under and brought it into subjection. He regarded his (the)

old man (Rom. 6:6)

as an enemy, and kept it under; and exhorted saints not to fulfil the lusts of the flesh, but to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. Being

born again

clearly, then, is not a conversion of

the flesh

into

the Spirit.

Neither does the new birth consist in mere outward reformations and moral amendments; for

a corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit (see Matt. 7:18).

Let the immoral become moral, the licentious chaste, or the drunkard sober, still, before God, he is only

born of the flesh (John 3:6).

You may trim neatly, or cut off the branches of a thorn tree, and make its appearance more agreeable to the eye, still it is a thorn, and cannot bear grapes. The new birth, then, is something very different from outward reformation. Neither are persons born again by sacramental rites. It is easy to say it is so, but it is a fearful delusion. It is true that our Lord spoke of being born of water, but it was of water and of the Spirit:

Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God (John 3:5).

By water our Lord, doubtless, referred to the word of grace, that

living water

which God dispenses to thirsty souls, as presented in the story of the woman of Samaria (John 4:10-14). We read also in the first epistle of Peter of being

born again (1 Pet. 1:23)

by the word.

The new birth is a spiritual work,

so is every one that is born of the Spirit (John 3:8).

We feel His operations in our hearts, but we can tell nothing of His coming or going: It is a heavenly work; we are born from above [margin]. It is not man's work, but the work of God; we are

born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of men, but of God (see John 1:13).

It is a new life, so that those who are partakers of it are new creatures:

If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17).

It is done once and for ever; we are

born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Pet. 1:23).

This new creation, then, is clearly the work of God the Holy Ghost by the word:

We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, &c. (Eph. 2:10)

Nicodemus might well be astounded at our Lord's decisive preaching, and exclaim,

How can these things be? (John 3:9).

which at once opened the door for our Lord to present to him the wondrous story bf the cross. Having broken down the ruler's religion by the doctrine of the new birth, Jesus now presents to him the glorious salvation of the God of all grace, and shows him that the only place a man can truthfully take is that of a perishing sinner, and a receiver of life from Him. This is the way in which sinners are born again. Man is a fallen creature; he has been driven out from the presence of God, and is

dead in sins (Eph. 2:5).

Jesus is the fountain of life, and the cross is the fountain opened; there the water of life flows freely. Christ crucified is the smitten Rock, whence streams of living water flow abundantly to the needy and undone; and there the Spirit brings perishing, thirsty souls, to look and live; to drink and live for ever. Wherever else they drink they thirst again, but whoso drinketh of the water that Jesus gives shall never thirst, but it shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. Yes, Jesus crucified, risen, and glorified, is everlasting consolation, a never-failing, soul-satisfying portion. There is no possibility of being born again, apart from Christ crucified and risen. There the river of life flows. There it is written,

Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

Such, thus believing on the Lord Jesus for salvation, have received Him whom God hath sent, and have passed from death unto life.

An intelligent Israelite ought to have known something about the new birth. The plain statement of Ezekiel,

I will give them a new heart (see Ezek. 11:19),

should have been enough to have taught the ruler this, while the prophet's vision of the resurrection of the dry bones should have shown him that God is the Quickener of the dead. Our Lord, therefore, exposes still further the ignorance of this

man of the Pharisees (John 3:1)

by the question,

Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? (John 3:10)

The ruler's question, however,

How can these things be? (John 3:9)

was speedily responded to; and the difficulty, of how a man is born again, was very simply and beautifully told out by our Lord. He refers the enquirer to His own Scriptures; the Book of Numbers is selected, and the well-known tale of the serpent of brass is brought forth as the key to unlock the mystery of the new birth. The Pharisee's conscience is brought at once to the fountain of living water; the bitten, dying Israelites are depicted as receiving life through looking at the serpent of brass lifted up; and there Nicodemus might learn that, with all his Pharisaic religion and theological science, he is still dead in sins, and, like the bitten Israelite, must perish, unless he look simply to the Son of man lifted up on Calvary's cross. By looking only to the brazen serpent, the dying Israelite lived; and so now, dead and ruined sinners receive life eternal only by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It was life, eternal life, that Christ presented to the sinful Pharisee, as the free gift of God to

every one (John 6:40),

any one (see John 7:37, 10:9), whosoever (John 3:15, 16)

believeth on the Son of God.

In this beautiful discourse with Nicodemus, our Lord showed also how competent He was for this great work of giving new life to the dead in sins, and also of the amazing power and virtue of the work of the cross, by telling him that He was Son of God as well as Son of man — God and man in one person — in heaven and yet on earth.

No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, &c.(John 3:13-17).

The Lord also most plainly showed the freeness of the grace of God, that is, the willingness of His heart to receive all, and cast out none that come to Him, by twice saying,

Whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.

The doctrine of the new birth is therefore taught by our Lord in connection with the cross. A new birth is inseparable from new life; that new life is here defined to be not temporal, but eternal, and as flowing only to us from God, through the death of Christ, and that to every one that believeth. Therefore our Lord told Nicodemus, that to be born again of water and of the Spirit, he must take the place of a ruined, perishing sinner before the Son of God, who was crucified, and thus he would receive eternal life, and stand no longer as one condemned, but as having pardon and acceptance with God. This, indeed, is being born of God. The Holy Spirit always directs the soul to the person and work of Christ. The Holy Ghost does not say, Look at me for salvation, look to my operations for peace, look to my gifts for assurance. Oh, no! He is the Glorifier of Christ, therefore He saith, Look to Jesus lifted up, look to the Lamb slain, the Savior of sinners; believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved; and if we be led of the Spirit, we shall surely testify of Christ. Were I merely to preach, Ye must be born again, it would be no message of glad tidings, no balm for the weary and heavy laden, no comfort for the anxious enquirer; but when we connect with the doctrine of the new birth the blessed truth, that Christ crucified is an ocean of boundless love, an overflowing fountain of living water, a well of everlasting life to every sinner that believes, we announce good tidings of great joy.

My reader, what think YOU of Christ? Has your thirsty soul drank the living water of His salvation? or are you perishing with hunger while there is bread enough and to spare in the Father’s house? The fashion, pleasure, and honor of this present evil world are rapidly passing away. The summons of the God of all flesh may soon call you into His presence. Your own conscience admonishes you that you are a sinner. Experience has long ago convinced you that you are hastening to the chamber of death. You have often tried earth’s best refreshments, and as often proved that he that drinketh of this water shall thirst again. You have avoided the foul habits of the licentious; you have shunned the companionship of the riotous; you have declined to walk with scoffers; you refuse the assumptious vanity of rationalists; you have withdrawn from Socinian blasphemy, and the infidelity of popery; but have you been born again? or, in other words, have you, as a guilty, undone sinner, been brought into God’s presence, and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation? If not, dear reader, let me affectionately say to you, that you are dead in sins, and what you want is life — eternal life! Sacraments and ordinances of any kind cannot give you life. Separation from immoralities cannot give you life. Withdrawing from the foulest forms of blasphemy and delusion still leaves you without life. Enlisting yourself among the ranks of your most religious neighbours cannot give you life. The strictest outward propriety cannot give you life. Neither can church office, ecclesiastical honors, or theological knowledge, as we have seen in Nicodemus, give you life. God only can give you life, and that life — eternal life — is in His Son Jesus Christ. Beware, then, lest you die without Christ; for

he that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36).

The Evangelist: Volume 4 (1870), "Condemned Already" or "Not Condemned"

“He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."—JOHN 3:18.

PLAINNESS and decision characterized the Savior's ministry. Perfect simplicity, and unmistakable clearness marked His discourses, while they were most profound in the depth of wisdom and truth which they set forth. Though His language was often so personal, pointed, and brought home to the souls of those whom He addressed, yet no one could excuse himself on the ground of its not being intelligible. He was indeed the Faithful Witness, faithful to God and faithful to men. He had just before said to Nicodemus, "Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again;" and when this man of the Pharisees enquired "How can these things be?" in reply, the Lord presented to him the divinely-written narrative of the serpent of brass which Moses lifted up, as the immediate cause of life to bitten, dying Israelites, and applied it as typical of His own work on the cross, by adding, "even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And to skew that God Himself is the source of all this He added, "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." Nothing can be clearer than that God looks at each person now as either" condemned already," or as" not condemned." It is therefore of vital importance that the reader should enquire, as in God's presence, to which of these two classes he at this moment belongs.

Let it be remembered, that God's dealing with men now is not on the principle of probation. Man has been put to the test, both "without law" and "under law," and has proved himself to be utterly and incurably bad. "Without law," man became a god-maker, and creature-worshipper—"he worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator;" and "under law," he became an idolater; and at last the murderer of the Holy Son of God, whom he hated, without a cause. God has therefore now concluded all under sin, under both its guilt and power, condemned already, only awaiting the executioner to carry out the awful sentence. The last thing that could be done for man was God's sending His own Son. But they said, "This is the heir, come let us kill Him, and let us seize on His inheritance. And they caught Him, and cast Him out of the vineyard, and slew Him." The next thing, therefore, must be a certain, fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, that shall devour the adversaries. No marvel then that it is written, "He that believeth not is condemned already."'

Meanwhile, however, before the coming wrath, God is longsuffering, preaching peace and bringing salvation to the vilest of sinners, because the claims of His infinitely holy and righteous throne have been met by the -atoning work of Jesus. That sacrifice was so satisfying to God, and so infinitely meritorious in His sight, that He can righteously and justly save to the uttermost all who come unto Him by Christ. God is therefore now publishing this full deliverance from all condemnation and coming wrath, to every one who believes. The present is therefore a moment of eternal importance, a time of securing eternal life, or of madly rushing on to eternal destruction. It is then a simple question with souls of having received Christ as their Savior whom God has sent, or not. God now speaks to men lovingly, faithfully, beseechingly, about being reconciled to Him by the death of His Son. We now know God as in and through Christ. Hence it is life eternal to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent. And so sufficient is the sacrifice of Jesus to meet all the requirements of divine justice and holiness, and

to meet also the need of the sinner, that God can now say, through His servants, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man (the Lord Jesus) is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." (Acts 13:38, 39.) The believer then is at this time so completely delivered from condemnation and coming wrath as to be "justified from all things." Precious consolation; all of God, and all through Christ. Believers are justified persons. The whole question of sin, and its connection with judgment and wrath having been so met for them by Christ in the death of the cross, that "There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." How can there be, if God has already judged everything that could be judged both as to our nature and ways, in the person of His beloved Son? God therefore speaks of us as "justified from all things," and being now justified by the blood of Christ. (Rom. 5:9.)

If then men neglect this great salvation, come not to the Lord Jesus for salvation, receive Him not as theme Savior whom God hath sent; if persons are hesitating to believe on Him for salvation, no marvel that it is said, "He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God." How could it be otherwise?

Dear reader, have you believed to the saving of your soul? Why not? Do you not see from this Scripture that your only way of escape from coming' wrath is to believe on Him whom God hath sent? Take refuge then at once in the open arms of this sinner-loving Savior! Trust only in Him! Rest in God's word about Christ; Build on no other foundation than this Rock of Ages! Oh! flee to Him, for there is salvation in no other! Do, dear reader, hearken to Him who said "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." O yes! only trust Him! Come now, come as you are, in all your rags of sin and filth, not waiting another moment, not thinking of doing anything, or altering, or improving, or reforming first; oh no, but just as you are, come to that blessed Jesus who died for sinners, who is now in heaven at God's right hand, and He will give you rest—present and eternal rest.

Look then, dear reader, to Him, and believe on Him, whose loving heart still delights to save the lost, and who still says, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out."

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 4 (1856), Peace and Service.

John 20:10-21.

THE last public act of Christ was on the Cross. The world has never seen Him since He rose from the dead. But though the world may say, "The Lord seeth us not," "Who is lord over us?" Jesus has not finished with the world. He will come again. This will be His next public act "Behold, He cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." (Rev. 1:7.) The last universal cry of the world, in reference to Christ, was, "Away with Him! Crucify Him!" The next general exclamation will be, "Rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." (Rev. 6:16.) When Jesus is revealed from heaven in flaming fire, all enemies must be put under His feet; all those who have not obeyed the gospel, will be punished with everlasting destruction. When Jesus died upon the cross, the meek and lowly Lamb put away sin; but when the world again beholds Him, it will be said, "The great day of the wrath of the Lamb is come; and who shall be able to stand?"

It is between these two public acts of Jesus, that the gospel of peace is now preached. Accordingly, we find the Lord, after His resurrection from the dead, ministering the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of peace to His own disciples, and commanding them to go forth and preach it to others. So full of grace is this blessed gospel, that it was to be published first at Jerusalem; the very murderers of Christ were first to hear that Christ had so made peace, that God was now able and willing to forgive the vilest sinner through the atoning efficacy of the death of Jesus. This is grace. How marvelously condescending is the grace God! it comes down to us when sinners, and without strength. How abundant in mercy! it proclaims pardon and peace to the most unworthy. How full! it brings salvation. How free! whosoever believeth in Jesus shall not perish, but have everlasting life. It brings all that the heavy-laden sinner needs, and far more than he can ask or think. It is peace by Jesus Christ.

As I have said, we see this grace in the ministry of Christ to His disciples, after He rose from the dead. They had forsaken Him when He was in the deepest distress, they were full of fear, ignorance, and unbelief, and were shut in for fear of the Jews. But the gracious Lord appears in their midst with the wonderful salutation of "PEACE." This is what they needed though they had not merited it, and the Lord of peace can give freely to the poor and needy. Their necessity is met by His compassion. The fountain overflows, and the thirsty drink. He said, "Peace be unto you. And when He had so said, He showed unto them His hands and His side." (John 20:19, 20.)

We may here notice, that peace with God is based, first, upon the word of God: "He saith unto them;" and, secondly, on the work of Christ: "He showed unto them His hands and His side." No soul has deliverance from the guilt of sin, but by the word of God. The burdened heart always wants God's authority. The convicted conscience knows its account of sin is with God, and will be satisfied with nothing less than His discharge. All the opinions of men, even the best of men, cannot come in between God and the soul to relieve the burden of sin. "Let God be true, and every man a liar," is the language of the heart that feels the searching light and holiness of God. The word that Christ spoke to His poor, timid, wayward disciples, was "Peace be unto you." So now, God, by His word and Spirit, declares that every believer in Jesus has forgiveness of sins; that, by Christ, he is justified from all things; so that the feeble-minded believer need not have another fear or trouble about his sins, for the word of God assures him that they are all forgiven.

But when there is an ear thus to hear the word of God, and to receive the law from His mouth, the soul will be led onward with wisdom and spiritual understanding in the knowledge of Christ; and thus have Divine intelligence as to how and why he has been brought into this blessed standing of peace with God. As Christ showed unto His disciples His hands and His side, so God reveals to us by His Spirit, that the same Jesus, which was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, is alive again for evermore, having borne and put away all our sins, and overcome death and Satan; and that Christ risen from the dead, the Conqueror of all our enemies, is the Object of faith as well as the sole Source of peace. The blessed Lord did not direct them to look at their ways, or frames, or attainments, for peace; but He directed them to Himself; He expounded to them the Scriptures concerning Himself; He showed them His hands and His side; He drew their minds away from themselves and their cares, and presented His own wounded aide; He commended to them the fact that His own heart's blood had been shed, that He had poured out His soul unto death to save sinners, that by His stripes they are healed, that He Himself being the fountain

open for sin and uncleanness, He could take away all their fears, even as He had put away all their sins.

This is very blessed. It is most truly the way of faith, which always gives glory to God. There is an Object for the heart's affections, connected with such unchanging and eternal blessing, as may well engage its utmost capacities. And the Lord would have it be so, for He ministers this vast blessing with the most fervent and repeated personal assurance. He twice says, "Peace be unto you." This is very important, for many true believers in Jesus, not seeing the freeness of the grace of God, are greatly troubled on this point; they say that they see clearly that others are forgiven, but the question with them is, Am I forgiven? Am I accepted? Is all this eternal glory for me? But when the blessed Comforter enables them to grasp the free grace that God so repeatedly proclaims for the strong consolation of His people, in the exceeding great and precious promises of His word, they exchange their doubts and fears for quietness and assurance. "By Christ, all that believe are justified from all things." "Whosoever believeth in Him shall have remission of sins." Christ proclaims peace to every soul that comes to Him. He saves to the uttermost, "them that come unto God by Him." It is terrible unbelief for a soul that has taken refuge in the sacrifice of Christ—that comes to God by Him—to hesitate to say, I am forgiven, I am justified; and it should be confessed to God as sin. It arises either from the soul being clouded through careless walk, or from not looking simply to Christ, and reading the deep lessons of Divine love in the Lord's death; for

Looking unto Jesus, remembering His death for us when we were sinners, is the only way to be happy. The Comforter ministers Christ, for Christ is the Fullness of comfort. It is vain to look for it elsewhere; but His springs of consolation never dry. The disciples were full of fear before they saw the Peacemaker, and heard the word of peace from His mouth "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord." The Apostle speaks of Moses seeing Him who is invisible, and says, "We see Jesus." This is, of course, by faith. All who are taught of God know something of it. Some struggle hard to be happy in self, in circumstances, service, &c. It is the natural element of fallen man, but saints prove bitterly that it is like building upon the sand. It is impossible we can be happy without seeing Jesus, the Lord of heaven and earth, and knowing that all His fullness is ours. Jesus wished His disciples to be happy, and He knew that this could only be, by looking to Himself, so He showed them His hands and His side, and it was this that made them glad. Like the prophet, each one of them was ready to sing, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels." (Is. 61:10.) O how happy and joyful should we be, could we only, with the eye of faith, look more steadily at the fullness of Divine love and peace, in the death and triumph or Christ!

But further. Believers are servants, because they are sons; being friends, through the reconciling power of the death of Jesus, they may know the deep things of God; being cleansed by His blood, the Holy Spirit comes down and dwells in their hearts; being happy in God's presence, they may now, in the liberty of children, serve. This is the Divine order. Men think that they must serve, in order to have peace, but the thought is from the father of lies, and cannot be too strongly repudiated. "Then said Jesus unto them again, Peace be unto you; as My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." The order of service here is, that it follows peace; the character of service is obedience. Many plead for no higher standard of action than usefulness, but that was not the principle that guided the heart of Jesus. It is impossible to be really faithful to God, without being useful to others, but the reverse does not, hold good. There is often much self-will, and pride, in carrying out useful objects. "To obey is better than sacrifice," is God's principle, and Jesus is the perfect example of it. He came not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him; and, in like manner, Jesus sends us to do His will in an evil world, in the blessed consciousness, that, however rugged our path may be, we have peace in Him, and should cheerfully suffer for His sake, who so willingly laid down His life for us.

Occupied With the Lord Himself: Addendum, Addendum: Occupied With the Lord Himself

John 20:19-23

Allusion has been made to the great importance of our having clear knowledge of what the Lord's mind is concerning us in these closing days; and I have read this Scripture, in connection with the latter part of the epistle to the assembly in Laodicea, which has already been brought before us, to call attention to the fact that during the whole period of the Lord's absence, His own ministry is characterized by the presentation of Himself. We see here that Christ began His ministry to His disciples after His resurrection by presenting Himself, and we know also that he opened to them the Scriptures concerning Himself; and in His last address, which was to the Laodiceans, He knocks and calls to any faithful one to open the door to Himself, for He wants to feast with any who will open the door to Him. During the whole of the time of His absence we know that the Holy Ghost is here to testify of Christ to our souls, to take of His things and show unto us. So one thing is perfectly certain that it is the Lord's mind that our hearts should be occupied with Himself.

A precious thought here for our souls is that the Lord looks after us, cares for us, and seeks to make us happy in Himself. It is not our looking up to Him, important and blessed as it is, but He opens His heart to us, and would have us know what His thoughts about us are, and that we are constant objects of His active ministry while He is in heaven and we are still in the world. We must not forget that there is such a thing as being interested in truth without being taken up with Christ, who is the truth; but it is assuredly His will that we should "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Through these precious Scriptures we are able to look a little into our Lord's heart. It was only a short time before this precious scene we have just read that he had died upon the cross. Men hated Him without a cause. They perseveringly cried out "Away with Him," "Crucify Him," so that when He was taken down from the cross, and laid in a sepulcher, the world seemed to have got rid of Him, and all appeared to be over. Not so, however, for He rose from among the dead. He came out of the sepulcher in the power of resurrection. He was on new ground, outside the world, the other side of death. Now, what does Christ do? Whose company does He seek? Who on earth are the objects of His solicitude? Who? His heart turns to the few poor disciples He had left behind. He seeks not the rich, the noble, nor the mighty; but be seeks out the timid, faltering disciples. They were the objects of His affection and care. He found them sad and terrified, or shut into a room for fear of the Jews, yet He did not leave them until they were full of joy and gladness; and the way He effected it was by revealing Himself, and expounding unto to them the Scriptures concerning Himself.

The blessed Lord having found His distressed disciples, first of all establishes them on the true ground of peace—His own accomplished work on the cross — He said,

peace be unto you; and when He had so said He shewed unto them His hands and His side.

We have here the assurance of peace based upon His own work on the cross, as His hands and side show, and brought to us by His own infallible word, “Peace be unto you.” Having Himself made peace, He does not tell them to look at themselves, their feelings, or doings, but at Himself — “His hands and His side" — and to rest on His word, “Peace be unto you.”

Thus they were drawn away from themselves, their fears, and their circumstances, to Himself — the One who had loved them and given Himself for them. And while they were thus contemplating Him, and all the wondrous love He had manifested toward them in having suffered for their sins, the Just for the unjust, while they gazed upon Him as the mighty Conqueror of death and Satan, in rising from among the dead, while they were thus engaged with Him what was the result ? We are told,

Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.

They were made very happy in Him. Thus, while we see that the work of Christ is the ground of peace, We also learn that the person of Christ is the true source of joy.

Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord.

This is a precious secret for our hearts. Some of the Lord’s people imagine that they cannot be “glad” as long as they are in circumstances of sorrow, but this is not true. The Lord did not alter the circumstances of those disciples who were “shut in for fear of the Jews;” but He showed them Himself, and this raised them above their circumstances, so that. they were “glad when they saw the Lord.” Again, in the first chapter of Peter’s first epistle, you see saints in great trial, and through persecution scattered abroad, homeless, and it may be houseless, friendless, and in other sorrowful experiences, but looking to Him whom having not seen they loved, they “rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory,” without any part of their sorrowful circumstances having been altered.

Well, indeed, it is to be so taken up with the Lord Himself as shall enable us to “Rejoice in the Lord always!”

Then, observe, when these disciples were thus established by our blessed Lord on the true ground of peace, and made happy in Himself' He then sends them out into service

As the Father, has sent me, even so send I you.

Thus we see that every believer has a mission. The Lord keeps us here for His service. He gives us each our work If any believer wants to know what his line of service is, he can only have it from the Lord Himself. Thus happy in the Lord, he goes forth as sent by the Lard. In this way, true service connects us with the Lord Himself, and we prove that His yoke is easy and His burden light.

Then we are told that Christ

breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.

The Lord being now alive again from the dead, in resurrection life and power, communicated to His disciples what could not have been given before, risen life — life in the Spirit, — by breathing on {into} them. I need not say this is not the coming of the Holy Ghost, the other Comforter, because after this they were told by our Lord, in the first of Acts, that they should be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

There is another point of great interest in this Scripture, it is Christ assuring His disciples (not apostles) that He will be so with us here, that,

Whosesoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whosesoever sins ye retain they are retained.

The Lord said something like it in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew. Speaking of church discipline, He said,

If he neglect to hear the assembly, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven . . . For wheresoever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them {Matt. 18:18, 20}

Now what seems so sweet in these statements is that the blessed Lord so identifies Himself with us in our service to His name, that He will confirm and put His seal on acts of discipline; and in this way so binding or loosing, remitting or retaining sins, as to ratify in heaven what we, as gathered in {gartered together unto} His name and by the power of His Spirit, may do on earth for His name’s sake. It is very solemn, but it surely brings the Lord in His great love very near to us, and in matters often very sorrowful to our hearts. I need not say there is no idea here of priestly absolution, nor of any absolution as to justification and eternal life.

The more we know of the Lord Himself, and His love and care for His own, the more will He become the satisfying object of our hearts. And this true enjoyment of Christ, who is the holy and the true, can alone keep us, I believe, from drifting into Laodicea. We are enjoined elsewhere to look away from other objects unto Jesus, to consider Him, to abide in Him, for surely Christ Himself is the true object of faith. To the most failing He knocks, and faith opens the door to Him; and observe, Christ takes the initiative, and desires our fellowship. He says,

I will come into him and sup with him, and he with Me.

Blessed be His name, this is His desire toward us even in the worst state of things ecclesiastically. What love, yea, what patient, matchless grace !

Is it not clear, then, beloved brethren, that it is our Lord’s mind that however failing be the state of things spiritually round about us, that we should be individually taken up with the Lord Himself, and be learning increasingly of Him? And is it not also clear, that, however important other matters may appear to be, we cannot be according to His mind if we not living by faith upon the Lord , and drawing our help and blessing from Him? We may be assured that nothing will make up for lack of personal intercourse with Christ. May our hearts, then, be more and more entering into His perfections and love which not only save us from ten thousand snares, but keep us happy under the most trying circumstances, and make the Lord’s coming our bright and blessed hope!

The Bible Herald, 1877, pp. 101-106.

The Evangelist: Volume 4 (1870), "It Is Finished."

JOHN 19:30

OH! the blessedness of knowing that a full, free, perfect and everlasting salvation is mine! mine now! mine by God's appointment! for the shed blood of Christ is to every one free. (See 2 Cor. 5:15; 2 Peter 3:9.) The poorer the wretch the welcomer he! Its power is almighty—its virtue divine, to cleanse souls completely though filthy as mine.

“But now in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:13.)

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 5 (1857), Christ's Cup and Our Cup.

“The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” John 18:11

THIS was a deeply solemn moment. We have here precious lessons of Divine grace set before us. We can only look on, and worship. Jesus was drawing very near the cross. The great testimony of all the prophets was about to be accomplished. The Son of the Highest was about to enter into the lowest depths of humiliation. An eternal victory was to be achieved, and captivity itself led captive. The gate of heaven was to be thrown open by the bleeding hands of the Son of God. The Lord of Glory was drawing near to the shameful tree; and to show His disciples how willing He was thus to lay down His life, He said, “The cup which my Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?

We are reminded here of the Father’s love. The Father gave us to Christ, and chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world. The Father sent forth His Son to redeem His people. The Father gave commandment to Jesus what He should say, and what He should speak. The Father was always with Him; and now the Father presents to Him the bitter cup to drink, that we might not drink it, but be brought into blessed and unchanging nearness to Himself. Well might the apostle John exclaim, “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.” (1 John 3:1.) We had no claim whatever upon God. We were by nature dead in sins, whilst practically we were only sinners and ungodly: but the Father’s eternal purpose of blessing us in Christ must be carried out, and though it could only be accomplished by the blood-shedding of His beloved Son, yet He spared not even Him. He gave Him the cup of woe to drink. He laid upon Him our iniquities, and bruised Him; and

The Lord Jesus must have felt that the eternal welfare of unnumbered multitudes was connected with His drinking that cup, as well as the glory of the Father of mercies; and however deep and bitter the cup might be, the intensity of Christ’s love knew no reluctance— “Shall I not drink it?” What breadths, and lengths, and depths, and heights of love are here! What unsearchable riches! What abounding grace When He knew that the time was near that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.

Long had He anticipated the drinking of that dreadful draught, and now the moment was at hand. “He had repeatedly said to His disciples, “The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the chief priests, and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day;” and though He “knew all things that should come upon Him,” He willingly went forth. “The cup which my Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?”

But what was the cup? Who can tell but He who mixed and drank it? What angel or seraphim can tell the contents, or measure the depths of that cup? No mortal mind can grasp its infinite realities. The most spiritual of us know but little about it. There is, however, much instruction in the Scriptures on the subject; and sure we are that it was connected with deepest and unutterable anguish and sorrow to Him who drank it, and called forth from His pure and holy soul such bitter cries as, “My God, my God, why Nast thou forsaken Me!” “I sink in deep mire where there is no standing. I am come into deep waters where the floods overflow Me. I am weary of My crying, My throat is dried; Mine eyes fail while I wait for My God.... Thou hast known My reproach, and My shame, and My dishonor; Mine adversaries are all before Thee. Reproach hath broken My heart, and I am full of heaviness.... They gave Me also gall for My meat, and, in My thirst, they gave Me vinegar to drink.” (Psa. 69) “Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts: all Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over Me.” (Psa. 42) “My soul is full of troubles, and My life draweth nigh unto the grave.... Thou hast laid Me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps.... I am shut up, I cannot come forth.... Thy fierce wrath goeth over Me, and Thy terrors have cut Me off.” (Psa. 88)

Our consciences acknowledge that our sins caused that cup to be mixed and drank, while we recognize in Him our Surety, and Substitute; One standing in our room and stead, One made sin and a curse for us, One bearing our sins, and suffering all the wrath and judgment they merited at the holy hands of Divine justice. Neither man nor angel could drink that cup. None but Jesus. One who was equal with God could alone satisfy Divine justice. For this cause it was that Jesus exchanged His Father’s bosom for this unparalleled scene of sorrow, that He might be the Daysman to lay His hand both upon the just God and the unjust sinner, and by the willing sacrifice of Himself, thus open the kingdom of heaven to all believers. What love!

Though Jesus had been long anticipating the drinking of this cup, it appears that Gethsemane was the place where it was presented to Him; for there we hear Him saying in the sore amazement of His spirit, “Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done,” and so terrible was the anguish at this moment, that “His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” But it is clear that the cup was not drunk then, however much the depths of sorrow and pain connected with it might have been anticipated, for it was after this we find that Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest’s servant, when our Lord commanded him to put it again into its sheath, adding, “The cup which my Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?”

But the cup has been drunk even to the dregs. The spotless Sufferer drained it to the last drop, saying, “It is finished.” That bitter cup which would have been to us an eternity of unmitigated woe He freely drank. The sword of justice which so long cried for vengeance for our sins was sheathed in His own heart. Our unnumbered transgressions were laid upon Him; He answered for all our sins; the cup of fierce and righteous

anger that they justly merited Jesus drank, thus accomplishing our eternal redemption, setting us free from all condemnation, that we might receive the adoption of sons.

We also have a cup to drink; but there is not one ingredient of wrath in it. It overflows with love, peace, salvation, and victory. “Jesus took the cup; and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank of it; and He said unto them, This is My blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many.” (Mark 14:23, 24.) This is the cup Jesus has left us to drink, the cup of blessing which we bless indeed, which we never could have tasted had not Jesus drank that cup which the Father gave Him. He drank the bitter, and has left us only sweets. He tasted death, that we might live forever. He endured the wrath and curse connected with the cross, that we might have all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. It is because of this that we have passed from death unto life, that we are made nigh to God, that there is now no condemnation, that we have the Holy Spirit, and that blessing has been, is, and will, and must be our portion. Surely we can say, “I have a goodly heritage.” Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His holy name.”

May we, beloved, often take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord, remembering Him who said, “The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?”

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 2 (1854), John 16:1, 2, 3.

IN these words of our Lord the connection is seen between ignorance of the Father and the Son, and the spirit that rejects disciples of Jesus.

In the Epistle of John the contrast to this evil spirit is seen in the connection between the fellowship there is with the Father and His Son, and the love there exists to those who are the Lord’s.

In the Lord’s teaching when on earth, as generally through the Word, the instruction given by contrast is constantly seen. Thus, in the sermon on the Mount, “It is written in the law, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say unto you that ye resist not evil.” The difference between the law and the dispensation of grace in which we stand, is set forth in the contrast between Mount Sinai, and the appearing of Jesus Christ when He came— “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world.” To Mount Sinai none could approach—there was “lightning and tempest.” To Christ Jesus, who came as a babe in Bethlehem, whoever cometh shall in no wise be cast out.

It is written concerning the Lord Jesus in the first chapter of John— “The world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not:” again, “in Him was Life, the Life was the Light of men:” and again, “the darkness comprehended Him not.”

Part of this darkness to which Christ the True Light was opposed is described in Matthew 23—it was not that which was dark in the eyes of men, it was beautiful outside. Neither was it professed ignorance; but in connection with this which was dark before God, there was the profession of knowledge— “Now ye say, we see, therefore your sin remaineth.”

It is further witnessed of Christ in John 1 as in contrast with the law, that “the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is the grand characteristic of this dispensation. “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.”

The constant enmity of Satan, and the expression of darkness around, was in the opposing the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The law had made po provision—it proved, it exposed, it condemned the sinner. Jesus, the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, He provides, He atones, He pardons.

When He was accused of eating and drinking with publicans and shiners, His answer was, “Wisdom is justified of all her children.” “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

When in the Pharisee’s house, the liberty of the pop; woman who washed the Lord’s feet with her tears was rebuked, — “This man, if He were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him, for she is a sinner.” In reply, He sets forth the mission of His grace and forgiveness, as the ground of His acceptance of this poor woman in all her love, — “A certain man had two creditors, one owed him five hundred pence and the other fifty, and when they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both.” This left no room for boasting, but where there was the deep sense of pardoning love, there was the bright expression of love to Jesus; but the Pharisee found fault.

Thus it was constantly as light from God—a heavenly light shining in a dark place, that Jesus walked in this world—the fullness of grace and truth. There was in those who could not bow to this expression of grace the final casting out of the Son of God. On this ground, (the hatred manifested in the world to Him who came forth from the Father,) the Lord Jesus forewarns His disciples, that as the Father sent Him into the world, even so He also sent them in the world; and that, as they would be His witnesses, they would, as He did, meet rejection from the world in its ignorance of the Father and of Him. “If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you.”

Now is the question of offenses raised. The word is, “These things have I spoken unto you that ye should not be offended.”

When the Lord had forewarned His disciples, as recorded in John 13 and Matthew 26, Peter had said, “Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended.”

It was for no offense of the poor blind man which was healed, that he was cast out by the Pharisees— he did not offend. Though they hid cast out one of the Lord’s little ones, the Lord opened His arms to receive him. Woe unto the world because of offenses! Woe unto that man by whom the offense cometh: better for that man that a mill-stone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea, than that he should offend one of the Lord’s little ones.

But there is danger to the disciples in a day of offenses, lest they join in that which offends—it is not being cast out that offends as far as the Lord’s little ones is concerned, but it is standing with that which rejects the testimony of the grace of Christ.

When Peter warmed himself with those who rejected his gracious Master—when he chose ease there, rather than be rejected with his gracious Lord, then he failed.

May the Lord save His people from taking a place which would lead them to reject disciples of Jesus.

May fellowship with the Father, and His Son Jesus Christ, be more and more manifested in the fruits of His Spirit, bringing out love, peace, joy, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, and charity.

The Holy Spirit, Holy Spirit, The: No. 3

We have already briefly glanced at the Godhead, personality, indwelling, and some of the operations of the Holy Spirit. We shall now, as the Lord may enable us, look further into the scripture teaching of the dwelling of this divine Person in the believer, and also in the church on earth.

1. The Holy Spirit in the Believer, as we have seen, follows remission of sins; for though He may, and does, work in sinners to bring them to Jesus, for cleansing by His precious blood, yet, when one is born again, has received remission of sins, he is " clean every whit;" so that, because the vessel is cleansed in God's sight, the Holy Spirit can come, and be in us forever. Thus the believer is "sealed," marked by God as His; and has the "earnest" of the inheritance, the pledge of certainly having that eternal glory to which he is called. The Holy Spirit is therefore given to him until he is actually and bodily brought to God—"the day of redemption of the purchased possession." All of His grace, and therefore all will "be to the praise of his glory." (Eph. 1:13, 14.) By the same Spirit, too, he is " anointed," set apart and qualified for the service of God; and, as in the type of the consecration of the priests, the anointing with oil followed the sprinkling of the blood, so (as we have noticed before), in Acts 10, the gift of the Holy Spirit immediately followed remission of sins, and we know that "without shedding of blood there is no remission." It is then a point of all importance, that we should clearly understand that one aspect of the gift of the Holy Spirit is, that He is God's witness to the sin-cleansing virtues of the blood of Jesus. He is also God's gift to them that obey Him, God's seal to the eternal efficacy of the one offering which was once offered by His own Son, God's anointing for His service.

So clearly is His indwelling in the believer taught in scripture, that on one occasion the saints were asked, " Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God?" Had they realized this, they would not have used their bodies for unholy purposes. It is our persons that Christ redeemed; so that, though, as to our souls, "we have redemption" in Christ, and through His blood, we look for the Savior, who shall change our vile bodies; and we are told that our mortal bodies will yet be quickened by His Spirit which dwelleth in us. Not only is this truth eminently sanctifying, but also full of comfort, when thinking of our bodies of humiliation. The Holy Spirit, then, who, as to our souls, has already brought to us eternal life in Christ—" the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus"—has also taken up His abode in our bodies. Again, we find our hearts are spoken of as to where the Spirit has come to dwell in God's children. " Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father." (Gal. 4:6.) We might have thought, unless the word had been so very explicit, that the Spirit would have dwelt in the new nature. Not so; He forms the new nature, so that we are born again by the incorruptible seed, the word of God, and thus brought to the Son of God, who was crucified for sinners, that we might have eternal life in believing on Him, and thus be newly created in Christ Jesus; but, this being so, He comes and dwells in our " hearts," our " bodies," and strengthens the new nature, for the Holy Spirit is the power for all communion^ service, and testimony. The apostle therefore prays that we may " be strengthened with might by his Spirit in " the inner man," and that we might be filled " with all joy and peace in believing," and " abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit," (Eph. 3:16; Rom. 15:13.) How wonderful, then, is God's own testimony to the eternal efficacy of the one offering of the body of Christ, and how blessed the thought that this other Comforter is to abide with us forever!

Among His many blessed operations in us, we may notice that He is "the Spirit of adoption," so that we may have the feelings and activities within us of those who have been brought into the endearing relationship of children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus. He thus bears witness with our spirit (or, new nature, if we may so speak) that we are the children of God; and He also cries within us, " Abba, Father." " Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.'' It is by the gift of the Spirit we know our relationship, and the blessed liberty of it, with the Father. " Beloved, now are we the children of God." We have not, then, received a servile spirit, giving us dread and a slavish fear, which hath torment; but the spirit of adoption which produces filial reverence and fear lest we grieve and dishonor Him; and a childlike confidence in Him who has, in such grace, brought us so near, so very near, to Himself in Christ, and through His precious blood. Neither have we received the spirit of the world, that we should be more successful worldlings, or be able to fight with their weapons, and excel in their doings. Far from it; it is God's Spirit, that we might have intelligence and power to act according to God—to be imitators of God as dear children. " Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God."

Nor have we received the spirit of fear, to crush us under a sense of our own weakness and many infirmities, to cast us inward on our own barrenness and poverty, and thus fill us with fearful apprehensions and gloom. No, these things are not the fruit of the Spirit in us. Though He reproves sin, and at times may deal with us so as to bring us before God in humiliation and self-judgment, yet He points us to a triumphant Christ, a glorified Man, a coming Savior, Lord of all, as the One in whom all our resources are. Thus He draws out our hearts after Christ and His interests. He bids us to consider Him, lest we grow weary and faint, and to look off unto Him, lest we fail to run with patience the race that is set before us. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (2 Tim. 1:7.) Is it not, then, clearly set forth that those who are taught and guided by the Holy Spirit will not have a servile state of heart, a spirit of bondage and dread? Neither will they be worldly-minded, nor will they be timid and fearful; but, while serving the Lord with all humility of mind, they will be of good courage, loving in their ways, obedient to the Fathers will, intelligent as to His mind, sound in doctrine, and will manifest a divine power with their service and testimony.

It is by the Holy Spirit having come, consequent upon the accomplished work of Jesus, that the deep things of God are now "revealed." Prophets had not the knowledge of these things, and they knew they had not; for we find one saying, "Bye hath not seen, neither ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him;" but an apostle could add the precious truth, " but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.....The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." So utterly dark is man naturally as to divine things, that nothing less than the revelation and power of

the Spirit of God can enable him to receive them. " The natural man (educated, uneducated, moral or profane) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Nor are we competent to make the things of God known to others but by the Holy Spirit. "Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual," or communicating spiritual things by spiritual means. If, then, we can neither know, receive, nor communicate spiritual things but by the Holy Spirit, it is also equally clear that the Holy Spirit is given to us to fill us with such intelligence that "we might know the things which are freely given to us of God," be able to receive them, and give them out to others. (1 Cor. 2) Were these statements of scripture received into our hearts in simple faith, how entirely and habitually we should be cast upon the power and operations of the Holy Spirit!

Bible Herald: 1877, Security, Communion, and Confidence

Notes of an Address on John 13:1-23.

It is a fact with which many are familiar, that the account of our Lord’s washing His disciples’ feet, and the four following chapters, are found in the gospel by John, and in no other portion of the Holy Scriptures. The time was exceedingly and peculiarly solemn. The blessed Lord had ere this openly taken His farewell of Jewish things. The beautiful temple was soon to be a heap of ruins— “not one stone left upon another;” and a new order of things of a spiritual and heavenly character was to be brought in. Hence the washing of the disciples’ feet, the disclosure to His own of the Father’s house, the promise of the descent and abiding of the Holy Ghost the other Comforter, and His marvelous operations, as also the blessed hope of our Lord’s coming to receive us unto Himself, now have their place. It can easily be perceived how fundamentally important such instruction is to us, but how entirely foreign to Jewish ideas! We do not find here the declaration of the mystery of the church, the body of Christ, because, according to the counsels of God, it was reserved for a subsequent revelation; yet these chapters clearly announce lines of deeply precious instruction suitable to us during the whole period of our Lord’s rejection until He come again.

These chapters, therefore, contain lessons of richest worth, which could not have been brought out while the Lord was presenting Himself as the Messiah to the nation of Israel; but, having been rejected, He could only leave them in desolation, darkness, and unbelief, until they shall say, “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord” (Matt. 23:38, 39). The time, therefore, was now come for setting forth great and precious doctrines for us, in this kind of transition period, between the giving up of the Jewish nation, and the calling and formation of the Church of God.

In the verses which we have just read, there are three points of instruction to which I would direct attention—the believer’s security, communion with the Lord, and confidence of faith. This is the order in which these subjects are here presented, and no doubt it is divine. For until the believer is established as to his everlasting security in Christ, how can he enjoy communion with the Lord? And if not walking with the Lord, can he expect to have confidence in the Lord when adversity comes?

1. As to the question of THE BELIEVER’S SECURITY, several remarkable points are clustered together in the beginning of the chapter. In the first verse we read, “Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end.” Love, divine love, is certainly the source of all our blessings. Our everlasting security, therefore, flows from divine love. It is His love to us which is first, for “we love Him, because He first loved us.” It is His love, not ours, which is the spring— “Not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.” This love then has been manifested in all its fullness, perfectness, and suitability— “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him.” (1 John 4:9,10,19). Most souls when anxious and awakened to a sense of their obligations to God as His creatures, think that all their blessings are based on their love to God. They therefore try, and try again, most sincerely, to love God; when, after a constant sense of failure and sin, they learn the precious truth that God’s love in the gift of His Son is the source of peace and salvation, and not their love to God. They say, “I am trying to love God,” but until they know how marvelously God’s love has come out to us, while we were yet sinners, they never get peace. All believers in the Lord Jesus, therefore, can say, “We have known and believed the love which God hath to us.” This love, too, is unchanging, for “whom He loved when He was in the world He loved them unto the end;” that is, He loved them through all their failings, mistakes, and ignorance.

It is divine love, the love of God to us in Christ in all its fullness, perfectness, and unchangeableness, which is then the spring of our eternal salvation, and therefore imparts to us the first sense of our everlasting security. And let us ever remember that it is not God’s providential kindness to us in our circumstances, gracious as He may be in these things, but it is His love to us in the gift of His only-begotten Son that tells us of His infinite grace. “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting live” (John 3:16). There can, therefore, be no peace, no sense of security, where the spring of our eternal blessings is not known as flowing to us in the gift of Christ; and until that is the case, souls, if truly awakened and earnest, will be looking to their own love to God, their feelings, their doings, the performance of their promised resolutions, and the like, which only increases their misery, and can never impart rest and peace. Happy those who can so perceive the love of God in the person and work of Christ, and its suitability to us, as to enable them to realize in their own souls the preciousness of the truth, “Perfect love casteth out fear”!

Then we have brought before us that which sets forth the death of Christ— “the supper,” (v. 2); for nothing less than the death and blood-shedding of the Son of God could meet our need, or satisfy the claims of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. Nothing less than the unsparing condemnation of our sins could satisfy divine justice, and nothing less than our having everlasting life and salvation could satisfy divine love. The death of Christ, then, was absolutely necessary, and is the alone ground of peace and everlasting security. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but, if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24). Precious love, that could thus manifest itself in cleansing and saving us, and bringing eternal glory to God! By the death of Christ, the question of our sins is forever settled, according to the strictest claims of justice and truth as well as love. We are told that “He bare our sins in His own body on the tree,” that “He suffered for sins,” “died for our sins,” “shed His blood for many for remission of sins;” that “He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities... and with His stripes we are healed.” We have thus in the death of Christ an immoveable ground of peace, and that which purges the conscience, because of remission of sins, on the ground of sins having been judged by God in unsparing wrath in the person of His beloved Son, who was “made sin” and “made a curse” for us on the tree. If the love of God is the source of all our blessings, the death of Christ is the foundation of our everlasting peace and security, for “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

Here we see the demands of holiness vindicated, the claims of righteousness met, justice satisfied, love manifested, sins judged, the sinner that believes saved, and God glorified. God, who condemned sin, now justifies the sinner on the principle of faith. “Jesus knowing that His hour was come that He should depart out of this world unto the Father,” and “the Supper” tell us of His death. It is the death of Christ then that has justly answered for us every charge of sin and guilt, and which sets our conscience at rest before God; for if the question be asked, Who is he that condemneth? the answer is, It is Christ that died, and it is God which justifieth. Thus we sing:

But more than this. The Lord is in spirit at this moment on the other side of death. The language is very remarkable— “Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He was come from God, and went to God.” Here we have the Lord presented to us in spirit on resurrection and ascension ground, “knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands.” We need a Saviour who could bring us to God—bring many sons to glory; a Saviour therefore who should not only save us from our sins, but be the Conqueror of satan, and rise victoriously over death and the grave. This Christ did when He rose from among the dead; for, through death, He annulled him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and thus set free those who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage. In the resurrection of Christ, we see not only God’s testimony to the finished work of Jesus on the cross, but we also see satan, who had the power of death, completely triumphed over, and a new and living way made for us into the presence of God. And further, being now in the place of power at the right hand of God, we have life, righteousness, and acceptance in Him. Thus, if a doubt arises as to our having eternal life, it is met by the scripture that “God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” If it be a question of righteousness, we are told, “God hath made Christ to be unto us righteousness.” If an inquiry as to our acceptance is raised, we are told that we are “accepted in the Beloved;” that is, are before God in all the acceptability of Christ himself. If nearness to God be considered, we are thus as near to God as Christ is, and this always, for “in Christ Jesus ye who sometime were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ.” Thus the believer, who was dead in sins, has been made alive, raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ, in whom the Father hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings. So that not a question remains unanswered as to our everlasting security and blessing.

(To be continued.)

Bible Treasury: Volume 11, Jesus the Shepherd: John 10:1-80

Jesus was the light of the world, but men knew Him nut. They perceived not the light, for they were born spiritually blind. By nature they were incapable of discerning Him, whose glory was “as of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” Even the Jews, with all their privileges, did not receive Him. Still He was the light, the true light, and there was no other. What men needed was to have their eyes opened. This Jesus was able to do, even for those born blind, as the miracle in the previous chapter sets forth. The Pharisees, being offended at such grace and power, only showed by it how blind they were; but the one who could now see Him who was the light of the world boldly and perseveringly testified of Christ to them. He was blessedly conscious that his eyes had been opened, and he soon perceived in Jesus the glory of the Son of God. His parents were called as witnesses, who, as fares facts were concerned, simply confirmed his testimony; and every inquiry from the man himself only brought out firm and truthful witness of the power and grace of Christ. All this so drew forth the enmity of their hearts, that they cast him out of the synagogue. Jesus, however, soon found the one who had been cast out for His sake, and brought him into personal acquaintance and intercourse with Himself. The Shepherd knew the sheep, and this loved one knew the Shepherd's voice and would not follow a stranger; they were together now, outside the powerless forms of human religiousness and tradition. The faithful one in Israel was thus outside the camp but with Christ, and there he learned, to his heart's joy, precious instruction as to the person of Christ, and knew that He who had opened his eyes was the Sent One of God.

The Lord of glory had, in the Pharisees' judgment, encroached on the sacred rites of their religion by opening the eyes of the blind on the sabbath-day. They would rather the man had remained blind than such a miracle had been wrought on that day; for take away the observance of days from religions formalists, what have they left? Besides, this act of Christ on the sabbath-day, to their minds, made little of them and of what they taught. So blind were they, that, though boasting of themselves as being Moses' disciples, they could not discern the glory of Him of whom Moses wrote; and such enmity to the Lord did they manifest, with all their religiousness, that one of their rules was that, “if any one confessed him to be the Christ, he should be excommunicated from the synagogue.” (Chap. ix. 22.) Thus their religion excluded Christ (alas I how solemn) and consequently all who took sides with Christ. On this account they cast him out, where the Lord met with him, revealed Himself to him, and drew forth his heart in worship outside the Jewish fold. The Jews were thus left in darkness, and what darkness, which had excluded the light of the world! How very solemn this is! And yet we cannot fail to trace the analogy between the last days of Israel's history and the last phase of the church on earth, which is content to go on with self-gratulations at its own imaginary religions progress; while it has virtually put Christ outside, but where He presents Himself as waiting to give His companionship and blessing to any individual who will open the door to Him. (Rev. 3:17-20.)

The Jews had not heeded the Shepherd's voice. They saw no beauty in Him. But Jesus is at home with the cast-out one, who delights in his new-found Savior and Friend; and the one who had been unwavering and truthful in his witness to the Pharisees now cleaves to the Son of God in the spirit of an earnest worshipper.

All this brought from the lips of Jesus the conscience-searching words which follow, as well as His own blessed testimony to the characteristics of the good Shepherd, looked at both in contrast with false professors, as welt as what He is intrinsically in, Himself. Deeply moved as the Lord must have been by the circumstances of this scene, He could not forbear saying, “For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see, and that they which see might be made blind.” (Chap. ix. 39.) True, the Lord had not come to judge the world, but to save; but being “the light of the world,” it could not but make manifest the moral qualities of those around Him. Thus the one who was born blind receives sight—the one who saw not sees; and that those who thought they saw (like Nicodemus, for instance, when he came to Jesus by night) might be convicted of their own natural and religious blindness—thus those who saw would be made blind. No doubt the Lord alluded to the Pharisees in this latter class; and it seemed to arouse them, for when they heard these words, “they said unto him, Are we blind also?” To which He replied, “If ye were blind, ye should have no sin;” that is, if they took their true position before God as utterly helpless and needy, He would make the sin-forgiving Savior blessedly known to their souls; but taking the ground of their own competency to judge and teach divine things, it was the most positive proof of their being still in their sins— “but now ye say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth.” (Chap. ix. 41.) The fact is the light of the world was there, and they preferred their own darkness rather than have the light of life.

But the Lord does not stop there. He goes on to expose the hollow pretensions of the professed shepherds of Israel. Self-appointed, and having obtained their official position by their own efforts of climbing up some other way, they morally were only thieves and robbers. The voice of such was therefore strange—to the sheep, as we have just seen in the one who had proved the Savior's love. These were some of the features of those who professed to be shepherds of Israel.

The true Shepherd, of whom Moses and the prophets had spoken—the One whom God had sent—we may observe in the first place, entered into the sheepfold by the door. He brought all the credentials of the Shepherd and Stone of Israel. (Gen. 49:24.) The woman's Seed, the Seed of Abraham and of David born in Bethlehem, the virgin's Son, the Child born, and Son given, meek and lowly and yet called Immanuel, He was joyfully received by Jehovah's faithful remnant, such as Simeon and Anna, who were waiting for redemption in Israel. Bringing also afterward, as He did, the qualities of the true Messiah, according to the testimony of prophets, He was manifested as Jehovah's Shepherd, the true Shepherd of the sheep, to whom the porter opened, and He entered in by the door. (Chap. 10:1, 2.)

Secondly, He called His own sheep by name, whether His true apostles or teachers, men, women or children, they were called individually by Him. Those therefore who were of faith, true to God and cast out by false shepherds, became objects of His care and companionship. His way with the man to whom He had given sight in the previous chapter is a sample of this. He addressed him personally, saying, “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?"

Thirdly, He led them out, as we learn from the end of verse 3. He did not bless them, or save them, and lead them back to the Jewish fold; on the contrary, He led them, and blessed them, outside of its national religiousness, which shows that the Jewish nation was in an incurably bad state, not only corrupt and leprous but so dark as to be unable to discover “the light of the world,” when he so brightly shone upon them. It was therefore not a question of mending the old garment, or of healing a corrupt nation, notwithstanding its rigid attention to outward observances, for it was so full of rottenness and death, as to compel the Good Shepherd to lead His own outside in companionship with Himself, the rejected One. An important principle to notice, that, when God's people corporately depart from Himself as the source of all their blessing, and from His word as their sole authority, the place of a faithful one is to be outside with Christ. This was His way of leading, and it is still His will that we should “go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.” (Heb. 13:13.)

Fourthly, He goes before His sheep. He does not drive them before Him, but He draws them after Him by going before them. Christ was, and still is, despised and rejected of men, and the path of the sheep is to be with Him. If He were cast out of the synagogue, those who confessed Him were cast out also; but the sheep—the faithful in Israel—knew His voice, followed Thin, and refused the voice of strangers.

All this the Pharisees heard, but could not understand. If John 6; 7 showed the formal and dead state of the nation in professing to celebrate the feasts of Passover and Tabernacles, while rejecting the true bread from heaven, and the living Fountain of all joy and blessing, chapter ix. shows at least the blind and degraded condition of the professed shepherds and guides of the people.

But the Lord proceeds, fifthly, and now speaks of Himself as the door of the sheep, that is, that He alone is the way of admission into God's favor and blessing. Many teachers and guides had been in Israel before Him, and, however popular and esteemed among the people they might have been, the solemn fact is, that “the sheep did not hear them.” (Vers. 7, 8.) But now He is the door, and open wide, so that any one may enter in and be saved—thus enter into God's presence by faith in Him, and know intercourse with Him, and come out into His service and find blessing and refreshment— “go in and out, and find pasture.” (Ver. 9.) Thus Jesus not only entered by the door, but is the door of the sheep, the door for any man to enter in and be saved.

The way is thus cleared for now entering more fully on the characteristics of the Good Shepherd; and this the Lord sets before us by contrasting Him with the thief and the hireling, as also by plainly declaring his own moral excellences and ways.

As to the thief, he came to steal, to kill, and to destroy. His object was to benefit himself, and that by covetous and dishonest means, and by inflicting suffering and loss on the sheep; whereas the Good Shepherd. came to save, to give life, and that more abundantly: all through the priceless cost of laying down His own life for the sheep.

The hireling also serves for wages, but has no real love for the sheep, no concern for their welfare, and only thinks of his own gain, so that in time of danger, when he sees the wolf coming, having no claims higher than self-interest, he runs away, leaving the sheep in the enemy's cruel hands; and though he cannot devour the lambs and sheep of Christ, yet he can and will scatter them. On the contrary, Jehovah's Shepherd knows His sheep, loves them, died for them, to redeem them to God, rescue them forever from death and Satan, and have them with Himself in everlasting glory and blessing.

The Good Shepherd then knows His sheep, and they know Him; He calls them, and they hear His voice. He goes before, and leads them, and they follow Him. He is the door by which they entered in and are saved. He delivered them from the wrath to come by His death on the cross. He gives them eternal life—risen life now in Himself. He keeps them so secure, that they can never perish, nor be plucked out of His hand or His Father's hand. Wondrous grate! How widely all these ways of divine love stand in contrast with the thoughts of men! No marvel that the Savior should have said, “All that ever came before me were thieves and robbers."

The Lord, as we have seen, met with a solitary “sheep” here and there, and He led such out from the Jewish “sheepfold;” but He said He had other sheep not of that fold (evidently referring to those to be called out from among the Gentiles), which He intended to bring by bearing His voice, and then there would be one flock (not “fold,” it is a different word in the original), and one Shepherd. (Ver. 16.) This no doubt the Lord is doing now by His gospel, so that before Him His sheep are not now looked at as in folds here and there, but as “one flock,” all under the guardian care and blessing of “one shepherd.” All Jewish believers, and all Gentile believers, at this time are brought into the same character of association and blessing, born of, taught by, and indwelt by the same Spirit, forming one flock—God's assembly. Hence Paul, in addressing the elders of the assembly at Ephesus, says, “Take heed to yourselves, and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to shepherd the assembly of God.... For I know that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock.” (Acts 20:28, 29.) Peter also, exhorting elders, says, “Shepherd [or feed] the flock of God which is among you. being ensamples to the flock.” (1 Peter 5:2.)

Having thus glanced at some of the moral glories of Jesus the Shepherd, we may now look a little at what scripture teaches us of the official glories of this Good and Great and Chief Shepherd of the sheep. As we have noticed, it was “the good Shepherd's” part to lay down His life for

the sheep. Nothing less could express His love, nothing less supply our need, nothing less meet the claims of divine righteousness; and so infinitely acceptable was this wondrous act to the Father that He said, “Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.” (Ver. 17.) What goodness and mercy, while we were sinners, helpless and lost, that Christ died for us and brought eternal glory to God! Wondrous glory, which will shed its unfading luster on the new heavens and new earth throughout all eternity!

He is also spoken of as “the great Shepherd of the sheep,” in being raised from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant; in which not only the value of His one offering in perfecting forever them that are sanctified was publicly declared, but He triumphed over death and Satan. And in Him who is raised from the dead God has given us life—risen life—life more abundantly than could have been given to man before.

But in the One who has ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God, His glorious office of Shepherd is still active on our behalf. Now He is known as the “Chief Shepherd,” because He has many under-shepherds, to whom He has given grace and qualification to shepherd the flock, to feed and tend them during His absence. He is the “Chief Shepherd,” and Peter, who was an under-shepherd, speaks of Him as “the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls."

It is He who sought us when, like sheep gone astray, we wandered in willfulness and pride over the dark mountains of sin and folly, and, having found us, exercised His own matchless grace and power in securing us forever for Himself. He went after us when we were lost, and having found us, laid us upon His shoulders, and took us home rejoicing. The Shepherd rejoiced, and the Father rejoiced, because the lost one had been received safe and sound, for “there is joy in heaven, in the presence of the angels of God, over one sinner that repenteth;” but when by-and-by He presents us before the presence of His glory, it will be with exceeding joy. The sheep, then, are the objects of the Shepherd's care. He feeds our souls. By His Spirit and word of truth, either with or without other instrumentality, He does comfort and bless us. He has given gifts, having sent down the Holy Ghost, for the blessing and edification of His people. Real care for His flock is the special proof of love to the Lord Him self, as He said to Peter, when he confessed his love and attachment to Him, “Feed my lambs!” “Shepherd my sheep!” “Feed my sheep!” Not one of the flock is overlooked by the “Chief Shepherd;” every circumstance and peculiarity of each is duly regarded by Him. The weak are supported and encouraged; the little ones kept near His heart; all fed and guarded by the all-seeing and unchangeably loving Shepherd. As the prophet said, “He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.” (Isa. 40:11.)

We are admonished to beware lest any man rob us; but looking to the “Chief Shepherd,” and owning thankfully the under-shepherds of His giving, and the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, content to be guided by Him, we shall be assuredly led into green pastures beside the still waters, and find rest and blessing there. He restores our souls, and renews our strength, for “he giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength.” He will never fail nor forsake us; He leads in paths of righteousness for His name's sake, though it may be in the midst of paths of judgment; and all through the valley of the shadow of death we have nothing to fear: His rod and staff will comfort us. He knows how to feed and cheer us, and bless us with an overflowing cup in the presence of our enemies; and, as He is faithful and true, looking to Him our Shepherd, we may well sing, “I shall not want,” but “goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of Jehovah forever.” it surely then becomes us to go onward, rejoicing in Him, whose love to us knows neither measure nor end.

And if it be said of David that “he fed the people according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them according to the skilfulness of his hands,” how fully and perfectly it can be so said of David's Lord, who, though now in the glory, takes account of every hair of our heads, and is never unmindful of the smallest need of any sheep of His pasture! How sweet to think of the unwearied activities of this tender and gracious Shepherd, so patient with us, so forbearing, so pitiful and wise! Happy indeed are those who are subject to His guidance and instruction; for such not only grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but they learn that wisdom's “ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace.” Precious Shepherd! ever mindful of Thy poor sheep.

H. H. S.

Streams of Refreshing From the Fountain of Life, Who Are Christ's Sheep?

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand (John 10:27, 28).

There were religious people all around, but were they Christ’s sheep? This was the all-important question. There was

the hireling (John 10:13)

too, and

the thief (John 10:10), the stranger (John 10:5)

and

the wolf (John 10:12);

but oh, how different from the Good Shepherd! We cannot forget that there are still many sheep round about us who are very dear to the heart of Jesus. He calls them

His own sheep (John 10:3).

They belong to Him. He loved them, and gave Himself for them. He said,

The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep (John 10:11).

What amazing love!

One characteristic of Christ's sheep is, that they hear His voice. No matter who may be the instrument, the question with them is, Is it Christ's voice? What is He saying? This is one mark of the sheep of Christ from first to last.

They know not the voice of strangers (John 10:5),

but the Shepherd's voice they well know. It is Jesus they love to hear. When Paul went to Thessalonica, they received his testimony because it was God's truth. They were not taken up with the servant, but with the message that he brought. They owned it to be God's testimony. In it they heard the voice of the Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for the sheep. They did not receive the testimony as Paul's opinions; for it came to them,

not . . . in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance (1 Thess. 1:5);

they therefore

turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:9).

When Paul went to the polished citizens of Corinth, he purposely sought to preach in simple language; and though he was a learned man, he laid aside eloquent and enticing words of man's wisdom, lest the people should hear only Paul's voice, and not receive God's testimony, and thus their faith stand in the wisdom of men instead of the power of God. Thus they heard and received God's truth about the Lord Jesus; they heard the voice of Jesus the Good Shepherd through Paul.

The question is, What is the Lord Jesus, who is seated on the right hand of God in the heavens, saying now? If He were now to speak in an audible voice, would it not be,

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life (John 5:24)?

Surely this is His testimony. See, then, that you refuse not His voice who speaketh from heaven. The believer looks up to heaven, beholds the face of Jesus by faith, hearkens to His word, and receives His testimony. Christ's sheep hear His voice. Many know the way of salvation, but have not received Christ as their Savior. They do not hear His voice in the gospel.

Ye believe not,

said Jesus,

because ye are not of my sheep (John 10:26).

Christ knows His sheep. True it is that He knows all things; but He peculiarly knows His own. The acquaintance is mutual. They know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, and He knows them.

He knoweth them that trust in Him (Nah. 1:7).

Many a professor will come in that day, saying,

Have we not prophesied in thy name? . . . and in thy name done many wonderful works? (Matt. 7:22)

but Jesus will say unto them,

I never knew you: depart from me (Matt. 7:22).

They never had any acquaintance with Christ — had no personal dealing with Him. Have you, dear friends, known this personal intimacy with Jesus? Have you known what it is to be reconciled to God through the death of His Son? Those who know Christ, however feebly, do not hesitate to cast themselves into His open arms, and such always prove Him to be a Friend that loveth at all times, a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Another feature in Christ's sheep is, that having heard His voice, and being assured that Christ knows them, it leads to practical action — they follow Christ. This is not following rules, creeds, ordinances, however true in themselves they may be, but Christ. It is not following men, however godly they may be, further than they are following Christ. This Satan hates, and tries to hinder. He would sometimes use even Christian people, who may be in a bad state of soul, to hinder others from wholly following the Lord. He has left us an example that we should follow His steps. We are kept here for no other object than to follow Christ; not to follow our own inclinations, nor to follow other saints, but to follow Christ. This marks Christ's sheep. Jesus said,

They follow me (John 10:27).

Do we know what this is? Are we searching the Scriptures to find out His steps, that we may follow Him? Are we, through honor and dishonor, seeking only to please Him? Are we aiming to be

meek and lowly in heart (Matt. 11:29)

as He was? to take His yoke upon us, and learn of Him? We are told that Christ's sheep are thus exercised; they follow Christ. It does not say they ought to do so, but that they do follow Christ. This shows them to be Christ's sheep.

Now, mark the security of Christ's sheep.

1st. They have everlasting life.

I give unto them eternal life (John 10:28).

This is His gift. It is in no way earned or deserved. No.

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 6:23).

Eternal life, then, comes to us in the way of gift. Christ does not give less. It is not life for a day or a year, but for ever — eternal life. Your life is hid with Christ in God. Christ is our life. Christ is the Giver, the sinner the receiver. My dear reader, have you really received this gift of God? Have you eternal life? I trust you will not rest for a moment, till you are certain that you have eternal life. Oh, you must have eternal life, or you will be in everlasting burnings!

He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him (John 3:36).

2nd.

They shall never perish (John 10:28).

What perfect rest and peace this gives the soul; for He is faithful that promised; He cannot deny Himself. David's fear and distress were not a little that he would one day perish by the hand of Saul; but the true believer need have no misgiving as to the eternal future. He who is almighty in power and perfect in love says,

They shall never perish.

Observe, it is absolute and unconditional —

They shall never perish.

Dear trembling believer, you cannot be lost. You are in Christ. You have eternal life, and Christ declares you

shall never perish.

He died for you. His blood cleanseth from all sin.

Your life is hid with Christ in God (Col. 3:3).

What more can you need to give you perfect rest of soul?

3rd.

"Not all that earth or hell can say, Shall turn His heart of love away."

When He said,

Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out (John 6:37),

it implied three things: —

lst. I will receive.

2nd. I will hold him fast; and

3rd. I will never give him up —

in no wise cast out.

So here He says,

None shall pluck them out of my hand.

What perfect security this gives! Surely it is a threefold cord, that can never be broken.

1st. The present possession of

eternal life.

2nd. The promise of the faithful and Good Shepherd —

They shall never perish.

3rd. Christ's own almighty hand keeping firmly in its grasp —

None shall pluck them out of my hand.

All dear children of God do not enter into the joy of these precious realities. They read men's books, and embrace men's opinions, instead of going only to the Scriptures for God's mind, and resting on His precious words about Jesus, which can never pass away.

Neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand (John 10:28).

The word man is in italics. It shows us that no power shall be able to separate us from Christ's keeping.

Streams of Refreshing From the Fountain of Life, Christ the Door

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved (John 10:9).

The occasion on which our blessed Lord brought out this wonderful truth was that of opening the eyes of one who had been born blind, as recorded in the preceding chapter, where we find he was cast out of the synagogue because of his confession of Christ. This was a great offence, and still nothing is more offensive to proud man than a true and hearty confession of the Lord Jesus. The apostle's word is not less true now than it was then, that

all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (2 Tim. 3:12).

The Lord had met the man who had been cast out, and blessedly revealed Himself to him. Then the Lord turned the conversation to that of spiritual blindness, so that some of the Pharisees, deeply roused by what they had heard, asked Him,

Are we blind also? (John 9:40)

For Jesus had said,

For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind (John 9:39).

A very important testimony; for if a man takes the place of being blind, God is able to make him see; but if he says, I see, and have always been able to discern the things of God, he will have to learn, sooner or later, that he is and always has been blind.

The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God

. . . neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned (1 Cor. 2:14).

This searching testimony of our Lord, as I have observed, so sorely touched the Pharisees, that they said,

Are we blind also?

They felt, doubtless, that they had all the learning of the day, and were the most intelligent people as to Scripture knowledge. Is it possible, then, that such as they could be blind? What was our Lord's reply?

Jesus said unto them, If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth (John 9:41).

That is, if they had really known their dark condition, and taken the place of being spiritually blind before God, they would have known God's grace and power to forgive their sins; but saying

We see

implied self-complacency, and the absence of felt need; and it is the sick who need the physician. There must be a sense of blindness for any to desire their eyes to be opened; a sense of guilt to lead any one to desire forgiveness.

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God (John 3:3).

The Lord is still speaking to the Pharisees in the tenth chapter. They not only professed to see, but to guide and shepherd God's sheep. The question is, How came they thus in the place of shepherds? Had they a Divine or human qualification? Had they gone in by the door? for if they had climbed up some other way, they were only thieves and robbers. A very solemn, searching announcement. The true Shepherd enters by the door; the porter opens to Him; the sheep hear His voice; they are His own sheep, and He leadeth them out. Yes, He leads them out from former ways and associations; outside everything that dishonors God — outside the path of sight, because into the path of faith and love.

The blessed Lord, the true and good Shepherd, declares that He is the door, the only way of access to God, the ONLY door, for any who desire salvation. He said,

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved (John 10:9).

Thus we see that Jesus not only sought to convict these Pharisees of their blindness and falseness, but throws wide open the door to any who had a desire to enter in. There was not a soul who heard Christ's ministry that could go away and say, "There is no salvation for me"; for Jesus said,

By me if any man

— no matter who he is —

if any man enter in, he shall be saved.

How simple this is! A door is not a long, dreary passage. A person only takes a single step to enter a door. My unconverted readers, you are outside the door. It is simply entering into God's presence through Jesus Christ His Son, who was crucified for sinners, but is now at God's right hand, and you are saved, and saved for ever. It is

by ME,

said Jesus, not by feelings, nor by experiences, nor by good resolutions, nor even by good works, but by Christ.

By ME if any man enter in, he shall be saved.

Oh the blessedness of having the Lord's authority for the assertion, that those of us who have entered into God's presence by Christ are saved! Can anything be more simple? I remember hearing of a poor sick woman, who was told by some ladies who visited her, that Jesus was the door into God's presence, and that there was no other way, and that all who entered in by Him were saved. She replied, "May I enter in in that way?" She was told, "Yes." "Then why not now?" said she; and, turning on her side, she simply looked up toward heaven, and taking God at His word, entered in by Jesus, and was filled with joy and peace.

Mark again, I say, the simplicity and the preciousness of the words,

By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved (John 10:9).

It is no use saying you are too great a sinner, too old, too young, or anything else; it is,

if any man.

God is no respecter of persons. All have sinned. Every man is guilty before God. He that believeth not is condemned already. Now it is true that, if any man enter in by Christ, he will be saved; but in a little while it will be said,

If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed when the Lord cometh (see 1 Cor. 16:22, Anathema Maranatha = Accursed — the Lord cometh, JND note).

Now,

WHOSOEVER believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16);

but by and by, WHOSOEVER is not found written in the Book of Life will be cast into the lake of fire.

Have you known, dear reader, what it is to receive this great salvation? Have you entered in by the door? Do you know what it is to find yourself in God's presence, through the death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ? A believer is one who has accepted Christ for his Savior, who has entered in through the door. A person may know that Christ is the door, and yet have never entered in. This is the difference between knowledge and faith. Faith takes Christ simply at His word, and enters in.

By me if any man enter in, he shall be saved (John 10:9).

This is the testimony of Jesus. Is there any room for doubt or fear, when you know that you have entered in by Christ? Surely He delights to save. He casts out none that come to Him. Resting on His word, we have perfect peace; we find ourselves at rest in God's presence.

The posture that Jesus now takes toward a guilty world is that of Savior, but in a little while it will be that of Judge. How, then, can any escape who neglect this great salvation? He will judge both the living and the dead; but now He is calling, in richest love and mercy, to sinners to enter in and be saved. His arms are still thrown wide open. His almighty power is still snatching brands from the burning. He yet calls in tenderest love,

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest (Matt. 11:28).

All He asks of you is to

Come.

He wants nothing more of you than to submit to be wholly saved by Him; to

enter in

on the ground of an already accomplished redemption; to

refuse not Him that speaketh (Heb. 12:25),

but to rest in His finished work. Can you, will you, any longer, then, be taken up with the unsatisfying pleasures of sin; and by your own hand of unbelief close this only door of escape from the wrath to come?

Thank God, the door is still wide open, and Christ saves to the uttermost all them that come unto God by Him; but soon the door will be shut. Many will knock then, but the door is closed upon them for ever. Many will be in earnest about their eternal welfare then, but it will be too late. In their anxiety for a mess of pottage, they counted eternal blessings unworthy of their interest; but now they feel themselves close on the precipice of outer darkness and despair, their distress is awakened, and never to be relieved; they knock, and call, and shriek,

Lord, Lord, open unto us.

But the reply from within,

I know you not (Luke 13:25),

will for ever plunge them into the despondency of an eternal gloom. Oh, once more, think of those sweet words of Jesus,

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved (John 10:9)!

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