Joshua - Commentaries by Henry Forbes Witherby

Christian Truth: Volume 25, Most Sacred Inheritance, The

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{vi 6169;6188}Josh. 13:14, 33

The countries which the children of Israel inherited in Canaan were settled by Jehovah by lot, and distributed by the high priest and the leader of Israel, the heads of the tribes conveying the Lord's directions to the people.

Levi's peculiar portion is first to be considered. "Unto the tribe of Levi He gave none inheritance; the sacrifices of the LORD God of Israel made by fire are their inheritance, as He said unto them." Chap. 13:14. "The LORD God of Israel was their inheritance" (chap. 13:33). Levi was "scattered" in Israel, according to the prophecy of Jacob; but Levi's portion was the most sacred and the most precious of all. Wherever the other tribes dwelt, there was Levi; wherever the devout spirits in Israel worshiped the Lord, there Levi had his inheritance. The Lord—not a position—was Levi's lot. "The LORD God of Israel was their inheritance." And so it is that the happiest and wealthiest Christians are they who find in the Lord Himself their portion. Whether dwelling among the two and a half tribes on the other side Jordan, or among the nine and a half in Canaan, not the special position of the land where their cities were, but Jehovah Himself, and the sacrifices made by fire to Him, were Levi's inheritance. "The breadth, and length, and depth, and height" (Eph. 3:18) are most truly comprehended by those Christians who have most of Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith; by those who, like Levi, have the Lord Himself and the sacrifices as their conscious portion. It is well to fight the giants and to overcome cities; but it is better to sacrifice burnt offerings and to partake of peace offerings, to worship God and to hold communion with Him concerning the Lord Jesus.

Levi's portion, in one sense, could never be assailed, either by the dweller in the land or by the foreign foe; for even in the darkest day of Israel's departure, when the people of God had betaken themselves to caves and holes in the earth for fear of the enemy, Levi could look up to the unclouded heavens and exclaim to Jehovah, Thou art my portion and the lot of my inheritance. Yet in another sense, Levi would be the first to suffer in the day of Israel's adversity, for the sacrifices of Israel were Levi's portion, and these would fail when the foe held Israel captive. And so it is, those nearest to Christ, while they rejoice in a portion that can never be removed, and which never can vary, are the first to feel, in all its acuteness, the spiritual poverty of saints or their affliction by the enemy.

Israel, responsible to maintain their possession in Canaan, might and did utterly fail; the heathen and the idols might and did obtain the mastery over them; but the unchangeable God was Levi's inheritance, and wherever the spirit of worship to Him arose in any of Israel, and sacrifices by fire were offered to Him, there Levi had his inheritance.

With the material blessings of Israel before our eye—their land flowing with milk and honey, and fed with depths springing out of valleys and hills—it is not difficult to discern the peculiar position occupied by Levi. And, spiritually understood, in the Levites' inheritance is seen the believer's most perfect portion; for, while we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ, while we have in Him pleasures bestowed upon us for evermore, we have, beyond all blessings which are conferred upon Us through or in Christ, the Lord Himself. Indeed, believers are brought into the blessings of Christianity that they may delight in Christ. God has saved and brought His people to Himself, for no less an end than that of their being like the Lord and knowing Him as they are known (1 Cor. 13:12). God's grace toward us reaches beyond deliverance from wrath and entrance into life. Therefore, while we contemplate His mercy—the forgiveness of sins, redemption of Christ, death and resurrection with Christ—it is for us to reach forth, in order that we may realize and abide in our nearest and highest portion. "That I may know Him" (Phil. 3:10), is the high aim of the energy of the new life.

When the Lord is seen, by faith, in His excellence, the glory of His light dims everything else. Saul of Tarsus saw His face brighter than the noonday sun, and thenceforth Saul was for heaven. The Lord in the heavens instructed him not only concerning the glory, but opened to him the wonder of His own heart there.

It is well to consider our unchangeable God and our unvarying portion in Him before we dwell on the failure of God's people in general, either to lay firm hold of the conquered portions of the land, or to advance and conquer the portions still unpossessed. Let the Lord Himself fill the heart, and the possessions will be obtained; but where possessions are the object and not the Lord, the soul is dry and unprofitable, and the hard and unprofitable soul soon loses the conscious grip of its possessions.

Christian Truth: Volume 25, Noble Example of the True Inheritor, A

Josh. 14:5-15

It is not without purpose that the divinely inspired historian places on record the bright and brave spirit of the true possessor before detailing the extent and the boundaries of the inheritance of the nine and a half tribes in the land of Canaan. The soul requires fire within, strength and courage in God; and with these, we shall make our own what God has given us.

From the 14th to the end of the 19th chapter of Joshua, we read of the apportioning of Canaan to the nine and a half tribes. The incident of the noble purpose of Caleb to possess Hebron introduces this important history.

These nine and a half tribes had to make their own foothold in their inheritance, though the situation of their possessions was determined by Jehovah Himself. "By lot was their inheritance," but upon themselves, as upon the Christian in spiritual things, depended their foothold of the

possession. Israel had reached that stage in their history in Canaan when they stood where the two ways of slothfulness and of earnest-mess met. At this stage, how many would be Calebs? How many would be true possessors who would arise and pursue the path of earnestness to victory?

"As the LORD commanded... the children of Israel did,... they divided the land" (v. 5); and then it was to Joshua, at the camp of Gilgal—Gilgal with its grand associations of Jehovah-given freedom—that the men of Judah came. Caleb stood up before the leader and all Israel, and, in the burning spirit of the true possessor, put in his claim to the mountains of Hebron, and the great and fenced cities thereof.

Caleb's words must have stirred every faithful soul as, addressing Joshua, he said, "Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea." The Lord was the same unchangeable Lord to Caleb, though forty-five years had gone by, and a new dispensation had arisen for Israel; and Caleb's old associates were dead and gone-buried, because of their unbelief, in the wilderness, for he alone believed in the faithful promise of the Lord. Forty-five years previously, in the dark hour of Israel's rebellion against Jehovah, Caleb had stood firm for his God. When the fainthearted spies urged the people to unbelief, brave Caleb stayed himself upon God, and, regardless of the favor of his old associates, he answered their mean and unbelieving words by "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (Numb. 13:30), while, to the wails and despondency of Israel, his firm heart answered, "If the LORD delight in us, then He will bring us into this land, and give it us; a land which floweth with milk and honey." Numb. 14:8.

The Lord had said of him in that day, "But My servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and bath followed Me fully, him will I bring into the land where into he went; and his seed shall possess it." v. 24. Caleb's faith lifted him out of the murmurs of Israel, their cowardice, and their reproaches of the Lord. He trusted in God, held on to Him and left in His hands difficulties and giants; one thing only he sought—the Lord's delight in him.

And Moses sware on that day, and promised Caleb the land whereon his feet had trodden. God grant His people the courage to put down their feet upon His promises, for every one shall be made good.

From that day in Kadeshbarnea, Caleb occupied a peculiar position in Israel. In the darkest hours of the wilderness, in the dreariest nights of Israel's wanderings, amid pestilence and divine displeasure, Caleb was sustained by the promise of his God. He had to suffer with the unbelieving host, to be afflicted with them (which principles are as true today as then, for all suffer together, and the unbelief and rebellion of one affects others); but while Israel's warriors might perish, Caleb knew that his feet should stand upon the mountains of Hebron; and while thousands might die at his right hand, Caleb knew that his family should possess the great and fenced cities of the children of Anak, for the Lord had said it.

Caleb is an example to us in our day of weakness and murmuring. In him we behold a sample of the finest qualities of Christian soldier ship; wholeheartedness for God, unabated strength through God, and continual dependence on God. Forty-five years of habitual reliance on God had not elated his soul in his old age to self-reliance, nor had forty-five years of God's continued favor in any wise diminished in Caleb the sense that in God alone is our strength, as his words declare. "If so be the LORD will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the LORD said." How this noble possessor shames the feeble, nerveless soul! To have lived for thirty-eight years in a very chorus of murmurings and yet still to sing, "The LORD is my strength and song," is a miracle indeed; and a miracle it was, as Caleb owned, "The LORD hath kept me alive, as He said." "As He said"; for Caleb had not dropped down like other men of war and died.

All his wilderness way, and all his soldier life, the Lord's delight in His people was Caleb's source of courage—courage which, when he was eighty-five years of age, impelled him to battle with the families of the giants of Canaan with ardor equal to that which had enabled him, when he was forty years old, to withstand greater giants than they, even the murmuring and unbelief of Israel. "Now therefore," said he, "give me this mountain," for "I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in." Few soldiers of Christ can so speak. Too many an aged Christian soldier seems to regard his long term of service as a plea for immunity from that hourly dependence on God, which at the first won him his victories; and "if the Lord... be with me" becomes exchanged for the vainglorious and the degenerate, "I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself" (Judg. 16:20).

Joshua blessed Caleb as he spoke; and a special blessing from Christ, our Leader, rests upon every Caleb-like Christian. The Lord honored Caleb's dependence on Himself; He drove thence the three sons of Anak and smote Kirjath-arba, and restored to the city its old name of Hebron, which associated the locality with the father of the faithful, and not with the great man among the giants.

Caleb is a name of rude signification, for it means a whelp. Some regard this as an index to his faithfulness, for as the dog follows his master, so did Caleb follow the Lord with true purpose; some regard the name as indicating the special glory of Judah, for "Judah is a lion's whelp" (Gen. 49:9). Be the true significance of his name what it may, Caleb, the faithful man, had his portion in the great inheritance of Judah—"Praise." And thus it is to this day in things spiritual among God's soldiers; faithful men dwell in praise; yes, and "They will be still praising Thee" (Psalm 84:4). His brave spirit arose to its greatness among the murmurs of Israel, and he inherited in the noblest portion of the promised land; God, as it were, granting to the man who spoke well of His name in the place of murmurings, a home in the land of "Praise."

Principles of Spiritual Warfare: Joshua, Joshua 14:6-15: Trueheartedness

Joshua 14:6-15

“With purpose of heart ... cleave unto the Lord” (Acts 11:23).

The Lord is assuredly better pleased to record the energy of His people than their laxity, their triumphs than their defeats. The true-heartedness of Caleb forms a bright contrast to the spirit pervading the camp generally, and it is not without Divine purpose that his story is introduced before the lands and possessions of Israel are detailed, whether enjoyed or merely apportioned.

Caleb’s history is a sample of noble purpose, a handful of the finest of the wheat; his spirit was after God’s own heart.

Caleb had been proved in the day of declension. He had stood firm with Joshua when all Israel practically forsook the Lord. When the spies that accompanied him to search out the promised land brought back their evil report, lamented over the presence of the giants, and made all Israel to languish, Caleb, only thinking of the goodness of the inheritance, and of God's delight in His people He had brought up out of the land of bondage, out of the abundance of his heart said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." His heart being filled with God's goodness and faithfulness was garrisoned against unbelief and murmurings. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and Caleb with Joshua "wholly followed the Lord his God," and in the face of their faintness and unbelief – greater foes than all the sons of Anak – earnestly declared to Israel, "The Lord is with us." Caleb, therefore, occupied a separate place among his brethren, who went up with him to spy the land. (Read Num. 13-14:10.)

As is frequently the way of God's dealings with His people, after the promise was given, trial was sent. The sorrows of the wilderness intervened; its discipline, its chastening. Caleb had to wander with rebellious Israel, to bear grumblings in common with them; he saw the men of war drop down, one by one, and die – he saw the Lord dishonored by His people – he grieved over their neglect of circumcision and of the Passover feast – he mourned over the idols they carried with them; but the promise stayed him – his eye was upon it – it shone beyond the dreary waste – it lighted up his path – it framed his life; his soul was lifted out of the wilderness, having found her treasure in the promised land.

He had trodden that country once, and by faith made it his own. He knew that it was an exceeding good land, and that the God of grace, who had given such a land to His people, would bring them, in whom He delighted, thither. He had not lost the savor of the first ripe grapes, nor forgotten the Valley of Eschol.

The fire of his love which was kindled upon that first day burned within him still.

His wholeheartedness was in no way marred by waiting for the fulfillment of the promise, by afflictions, by prospects seemingly blighted.

Neither was his strength impaired, for at fourscore and five years old this noble soldier was as strong for war, both to go out and to come in, as he was forty-five years before. Looking back upon his rugged path in the wilderness, he said, "And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as He said, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word unto Moses."

He trusted God both for himself and his children, and not one word of the Lord fell to the ground! Fellow believer, would that our hearts were true and strong like Caleb's! Let not the murmurings, nor the agitation of our companions, draw away our souls from the grace of God. We must undergo discipline, not only for our own sakes – to test our own hearts – but also in companionship with God's family at large. If we walk for any length of time in the wilderness we shall see "men of war" fall by our side. Some will step out of the ranks, some will go back into the world, some will make common cause with the adversary; but may none of these deep afflictions draw our hearts from our God. The Lord is our strength, His comforts never fail; if we abide in His presence He will be with us all the way.

Caleb looking back to the past in the power of the present, was a sure sign that his heart did not condemn him, and that he abode in God's strength. It was not doubtingly he said, "If so be the Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said"; but in the realization of the needs be for the Lord's strength and presence to enable him to obey His word. The gracious promise, "the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest," was the energy of His strength. The delight of the Lord in His people with which he had sought to encourage Israel at Eschol, was his courage before the giants, and their great and fenced cities.

Sometimes the Christian soldier, after being long in God's service, almost forgets that God alone is his strength, and "if so be the Lord will be with me," is exchanged for a vainglorious self-confidence, "I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself" (Judges 16:20).

The Lord honored Caleb's dependence upon him; he took Hebron, and "drove thence the three sons of Anak" (Josh. 15:14).

In Caleb we have a sample of the finest qualities of Christian soldier-ship, a whole heart, unabated strength, continual dependence.

"And Joshua blessed him." Doubtless his soul was moved at Caleb's words.

With a note of praise this history closes. "And the land had rest from war." Faithfulness earns rest. "Well done, good and faithful servant ... enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." Caleb had his portion in the great inheritance of Judah. (Praise!)

Christian Truth: Volume 25, Peace and Worship

"And the whole congregation of the children of Israel assembled together at Shiloh, and set up the tabernacle of the congregation there: and the land was subdued before them." Josh. 18:1.

This verse introduces a new era in Israel's history. Instead of the camp at Gilgal, Shiloh, the place of worship, becomes the center for the people. It is now no longer the place of God-made liberty, where the reproach of Egypt is rolled off, but the place chosen of God for the tabernacle of the congregation to stand. The camp, with its self-denial and its hardship, is exchanged for peace and worship.

Standing in God-made liberty, and not being slack in self-denial, we go forth to spiritual warfare, and so become possessors practically of our God-bestowed portion in Christ; and this spirit leads to the further step of worship. Shiloh signifies "peace" or "rest"; and Israel, having conquered a large amount of their inheritance, and being at rest (for "the land was subdued before them"), set up the tabernacle of the congregation in that place which the Lord had chosen to put His name there (Deut. 12:11).

At Gilgal the Lord rolled off the reproach from Israel, and made His people His freed men; at Ebal He established His word in the promised land, and laid Israel under obedience to His laws; at Shiloh He established His name in their midst, and dwelt among them. God makes the peace; and, blessed in the peace He has made, His saints worship Him. His hand produces the rest in which alone His people can dwell with Him, and He among them.

Shiloh was situated nearly in the center of Israel's inheritance; and, if we regard Shiloh (peace) as a figure to us of Christ who is our peace, remembering that one of His names is Shiloh (Gen. 49:10), we find at once the true Center of all the vast circle of God's saints, in the fullness of their spiritual possessions.

At Shiloh were the one altar and the one tabernacle, Israel's center; around this divinely appointed center the circle of the twelve tribes was drawn. The extent of the circle would be according to the multitude of the children of Israel; the center itself could never vary. Thither would each faithful heart of the vast congregation turn, as surely as every compass points to the pole. Christ is the Center for His people, and around Him is the circle of all His redeemed—"Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be" (Gen. 49:10). Christ alone is the Object of each heart's adoration. God has given no other attraction for His saints. Christ will be the Center in the glory; and even now upon the earth, despite all the divisions of language and of race, yes, and of creeds and isms, Jesus only is the Center for His people.

Israel's tabernacle was the common inheritance of the nation; the chief of the fathers and the humblest of the Israelites alike worshiped there, for Jehovah's one people they were, and He dwelt among them.

There could be no divinely owned association of the tribes, save where the glory of God was—at Shiloh. Every true association of the saints of God has His presence, and fellowship of heart and purpose in His presence; "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another" (1 John 1:7). Christ is the only Center of true fellowship among those who are united to Him and to each other; and true fellowship among Christians only exists so far as this is practically recognized. Christians are now God's circle upon the earth, of which Christ is the Center. God has made them, though many, one body by His Spirit who dwells in them; and so long as Christ is really and truly the practical Center of God's saints, unity among themselves, holiness, peace, and the joy of worshiping the Father result.

Let Christ be lost sight of as the Center, and, lo! Shiloh becomes but a name, a memory of bygone days. Shiloh now is strewn with stones, one of the waste places on the earth, a solemn remembrance of glory, worship, and peace of departed years.

The tabernacle was Jehovah's tent, or dwelling place; and since Israel was His chosen nation, it was "the tabernacle of the congregation"—the tent of the meeting of the people and God. They were not only established in the place of God's appointment, surrounding Him according to the principles of His Word, but they were associated with God and He with them. His name demanded holiness in them, obedience from them, practical godliness and a national life, such as He could smile upon. Alas, how Israel's history comments upon Israel's disobedience! Jehovah's changeless holiness is written upon the ruins of Shiloh. Its desolation is an eloquent testimony to the divine displeasure against departure from Himself. "Go ye now unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel." Jer. 7:12. Yet each of the three hundred and fifty years and more that the ark remained there declares the Lord's great patience with His rebellious people! God will ever keep His truth, but He has made His saints the caretakers thereof; if then His people dishonor Him, He will scatter them, and they will lose their place of trust. As we ponder over the suggestive history of Shiloh, let us take heed to the word of our God, "Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, The temple of the LORD, are these.... Is this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD." Jer. 7:4, 11.

But Shiloh foretells a brighter day to come. It speaks of the gathering together of the scattered tribes of Israel to the Christ they now reject. It has also its encouragement for the Christian believer. We find, declared in the 17th of John's Gospel, the union of the family of God's children. First, the apostolic unity,

which nothing did sever; second, the general unity of grace; third, the unity of glory. Practical union, displayed upon the earth, is a testimony to the world; and to this, responsibility attaches itself; but there shall be union displayed in the glory when this day of divisions is no more. In the coming day of peace and rest, the one undivided company of the family of God shall behold the glory of the Lord Jesus, which the Father has given Him. Then all hearts shall be united eternally; then all desires shall be fixed undistractedly upon Christ; then the saints shall all see eye to eye. Then the whole of God's rich blessings shall be the portion of the whole of God's people. Then rest from war shall be the portion of all; and, in the sunshine of cloudless peace, in the glory of God, shall our Shiloh be. The tabernacle of God shall be with men! (See Rev. 21.)

Principles of Spiritual Warfare: Joshua, Joshua 18:1: Worship

Joshua 18:1

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

After these tribes had received their portion, all Israel assembled at Shiloh. “And the land was subdued before them.” Shiloh signifies rest or peace, there the people “set up the tabernacle of the congregation.” Shiloh is henceforth Israel’s center. The tabernacle was God’s, and Israel being God’s people, it was “the tabernacle of the congregation.”

Until the believer has divinely given peace, he cannot worship in spirit and in truth. If the consciousness of the load of sin bows down a soul, there is no ability to sing the song of praise “Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.” And although the believer may be assured of his acceptance in the Beloved, and know the forgiveness of sins, yet if his conscience accuse for unconfessed transgression, until restored to communion with God, he cannot worship Him. It is when at rest in the finished work of Christ upon the cross, and at rest in His holy presence, that the believer in spirit and truth worships the Father.

Jehovah had given Israel victory and possessions, “the land was subdued before them.” If they had not conquered their foes, and received their inheritance, they would have required Jehovah’s promise of victory instead of being at liberty to assemble around His tabernacle. If we are asking God to bless us, we are not at that time worshipping Him, for prayer is seeking benefits from God; neither is hearing of His grace worshipping Him, for this is learning of His goodness; yet both prayer and preaching may and should lead the soul into adoration. The heart of the worshipper is a vessel filled by God and overflowing with thanksgiving; a heart, which lacking nothing delights in Him who made it rich. Worship is blessing the Giver of the gifts Himself, and not alone for the gifts He bestows.

At Shiloh were the one altar and the one tabernacle; this was Israel’s center, and around this divinely appointed center the circle of the twelve tribes was drawn. The breadth of the circle would be according to the multitude of the children of Israel, the center could never vary. Thither would each faithful heart of the vast congregation turn, as every compass points to the one common attraction. Christ is God’s center for His people, and around Him is the circle of His redeemed. “Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be” (Gen. 49:10). Christ alone is the object of each heart’s adoration. God has given no other attraction for His people. Christ will be the center in the glory, and even now upon the earth, despite all the divisions of language and of race, yes, and of creeds and isms, Jesus only is the center for His people.

Israel’s tabernacle was the common inheritance of the nation, the chief of the fathers and the humblest of the people worshipped there as one people, for Jehovah’s one people they were, and He dwelt among them. It was as a body, therefore, and not simply as individuals, that Israel worshipped at Shiloh, all the Lord’s congregation looking to the Lord’s tabernacle.

There could be no divinely owned association of the tribe save where the glory of God was – at Shiloh. True association of God’s people ever has God’s presence in it, it is fellowship of heart and purpose in the light of God. “If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another” (1 John 1:7). Christ is the only center of true fellowship, and there cannot be true fellowship among those who are united to Him and to each other, unless this be practically recognized. Christians are now God’s circle upon the earth of which Christ is the center. God has made them, though many, one body by His Spirit who dwells in them, and this oneness no power can disturb; but notwithstanding the perfection of the unity of the Body, unless Christ be foremost in His people’s hearts, the oneness will not be manifest.

In the days of Israel’s freshness and simplicity, as we read in the Twenty-first chapter of the Book of Joshua, they regarded with feelings of abhorrence the erection of another altar, considering it nothing short of rebellion against the one God and His one congregation. As time elapsed, the people at large departed from the Lord, and the union of their tribes was broken; then self-will and independence erected other altars (1 Kings 12:27-33), and at length Israel became the “children of the captivity”; still, the faithful heart, true to the one God and one congregation, turned from the stranger’s land towards the place where the glory of Jehovah stood, and linked itself in spirit with the twelve tribes of Israel (1 Kings 18:31; Dan. 6:10).

How welcome is the scene here described. God’s people prospered with victory over all their foes, surrounded with an inheritance greater than all their needs, assembled in one body, and in the excellence of God’s peace worshipping Him as one spirit.

It foretells a brighter day of the gathering together of the scattered tribes of Israel to the Christ they now reject. And it has its encouragement for the Christian believer. We find, in John 17, the union of God’s people which nothing can sever (John 17:11), and their union displayed upon the earth a testimony to the world (John 17:21), and their union which shall be displayed in the glory (John 17:23), in that coming day of peace and rest, the one undivided company of God’s people shall behold the glory of the Lord Jesus, which the Father has given Him. Then all hearts shall be united eternally, then all shall be fixed undistractedly upon Christ, then “shall all see eye to eye.” Until that day dawns, though the testimony of the oneness of Christ’s people is not manifested upon the earth, may it be the anxious care of each believer to endeavor “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Christian Truth: Volume 24, Arise and Possess

Joshua, 1:1-9

God had given Israel a leader to bring them into their promised possession; and, as a preliminary to their conflict, He taught Israel definite principles to insure success, which are stated in the exhortation opening the book.

From the study of divine exhortations to the Christian, we learn that we are to live, or walk, in the power of what we have. God does not bid sinners, dead in sins, to walk in His ways; but, having given us life in Christ when we were dead in sins, He bids us walk as Christ walked. God does not require the sinner in his spiritual paralysis to do one single work of righteousness; having given us, when in that condition, strength through Christ, He exhorts thus: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12, 13). God enables His people to do, and He gives the desire to perform.

The exhortation, opening the book of Joshua, is based upon the fact that the land belonged to Israel by divine promise. On that ground God commanded them to "arise" and "possess" it. The beauties of the plain of Jericho, noted for its countless flowers, the wealth of Canaan's cornfields, olives, vineyards, and mountains out of which they should dig "brass," spread themselves before the eyes of Israel. The brooks of water, and depths that spring out of valleys and hills, were before them. One thing only was requisite to, the enjoyment of their portion-they must "arise", and possess. Arise, believer, and enter into the blessings wherewith God has blessed us in Christ. All things are yours; arise, enter in.

The land across the river, which spread itself before the eyes of Israel, was the evidence of the faithfulness of God respecting His promises. The sight stirred the soul of the people. Before them was their home, with its wealth and delights, the gift of their God who had brought them out of Egypt.

What shall the Christian say who obtains a sight, ever so feeble, of his spiritual blessings? He sits down and ponders over the words, "Blessed... with all_ spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3); and as he meditates upon them, and owns that the blessing is his, a fresh zeal enters his soul. He reads on, and gives his earnest Amen to the inspired prayer, that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding [or heart] being enlightened; that ye may know" (vv. 17, 18).

God attracts to Himself by the display of what is ours in Christ. "Arise."

It was harvest time, the time of the year's richest good, when Israel thus saw their place of blessing; but the Jordan (the Descender) on its impetuous way barred them out, for "Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest." The river was swift, wide, and deep. What then was to be done? Obey the word of the living God. Go forward, and leave God to deal with the difficulty. Each of us has his own difficulties in

the path to full blessing of the soul. "I cannot be truly devoted to Christ until my aged relation dies," said one to us not many years ago, "for if I were, it would break her heart." "If I were decided for Christ," said a man to us, with tears, "my friends would give me no rest." Arise, go forward, believe God, and leave the difficulty with Him.

"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you," is a deeply practical word, for beholding the cornfields was not eating their fruits, nor was gazing on the mountains, digging out their wealth; the one condition which the Lord imposed upon His people for actual possession was, that as a matter of fact they should enter, and have foothold on the land which He had given them.

No ability to map out doctrines or dispensations, no power to see what this epistle teaches, or that prophet tells, is of itself practical spiritual possession; not what the eye takes in, but what the foot covers, is experimentally our own. The eye directs the foot, and the further the foot goes, the more the eye sees. The eye beholds a vast expanse, the foot covers a very small space; and that little portion only of the truth of God which we have laboriously trodden is, as a matter of realization, our own.

All is ours in Christ; but such of our blessings only are ours, in our spiritual apprehension, as we have gained by the Spirit's teaching. Real possession becomes the portion of those who by individual contest, step by step, have won ground- "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you." Are we ready to say, "How little have I covered with the sole of my foot; how small is the area that I have really won"? God is for us. Be strong, and of a good courage. Win in the strength God gives. Get direct from Him; shun that secondhand knowledge which never avails in the day of difficulty, nor gives strength in the hour of conflict. "Foot"-possessors in the Church of God are comparatively few. Many are geographers, who can map out the varied doctrines of the Bible; few are travelers, who describe what this and that blessing is, having themselves found its preciousness.

In the purposes of Jehovah, Israel's possession was vast: "From the wilderness of this Lebanon even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast." Now, save for a very limited period (1 Kings 4:21), Israel has not entered upon these lengths and breadths; that day of permanent possession is yet to come. The Christian's portion in Christ is immeasurable; but today is his day of possession, for God, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3), has made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:6). Yet, what does this "all" mean? The most well taught believer is simply learning what it is, as he advances day by day in the truth of God. The more he sees what the blessings are, the less does his apprehension seem to him to be, for God's gifts are, like Himself, infinite.

More than the bare knowledge that God has made all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places ours in Christ, is necessary to stimulate true Christian zeal; personal communion with Christ Himself, as to the truth of these heavenly blessings, is needed. Jehovah said to Joshua, "I will be with thee:

I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee"; and the Lord Jesus in effect has said the same to each believer. He will not allow the heart to sink; He will not fail to uphold us with His hand. We have, therefore, promised and secured to us, His abiding presence, His unfailing grace and strength, and the assurance of His never forsaking us.

In the exhortation before us there are three calls to strength and to courage; the first, because the possessions belong to God's people; the second, because in obedience to the word, success is assured; the third, because the Lord Himself is with His people.

As to the first, Christ being, risen from the dead, and seated above all power at God's right hand in the heavenly places, in Him His people have their blessings secured. Nothing stimulates Christian courage like this certainty. Jehovah had sworn to the fathers to give the land to Israel; the knowledge of and faith in God's purpose, therefore, were the strength of Israel's energy; and God, in His purpose of grace, is the source of our strength and courage to go forward. The glory will be ours, for "He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God.... Therefore we are always confident" (2 Cor. 5:5, 6). The foe will be overcome; "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Rom. 8:31. Self is silent when faith views God's thoughts, and herein is strength. Christ is risen from the dead. He is in heaven, and in Him are our blessings. Therefore, fellow-Christian, let us go forward in this strength to enter practically upon our portion. "Stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." 1 Cor. 16:13.

As to the second call to courage, we fall back upon God's thoughts as expressed in His Word, in order to act obediently to Him. The written Word opens to us the mind of God; there is the revelation of His gracious thoughts about His people, and there He records what He says is ours by grace. To obey that Word is a command from God. In believing what God says, when He tells us how He has blessed us, we practically lay hold of these blessings. The courage that flows from faith in God's Word makes the Christian soldier hardy and resolute. He pursues the path of obedience because he believes the Scriptures.

Practical blessing lies in obedience to the Word of God- yea, to all of His Word. Herein is the condition of blessing. First we believe that what God says is ours in Christ, is really ours; next, we lay hold of those blessings in the way He has enjoined us to lay hold of them. We can only go forward in the soul as we both know and obey His Word; and for this we need not only courage, but to be very courageous, for Satan will array himself against us immediately we put down our foot to tread the path of obedience to God.

Strength and courage to "observe to do" according to all the divine Word, are of vital importance. The giants who overcome God's people are not the enemies they encounter- for these are as nothing to God-the victorious giants are our own unbelief and disobedience.

We are called to obey God's Word as a whole-all His law -not our particularly prized portion of it. When the believer follows his favorite lines of truth, he is not strong and very courageous in obeying the whole of God's Word. Some believers have selected from God's Word certain portions for their obedience most congenial to them, and thus have practically constructed a revised Bible! All My Law is the divine exhortation.

A wise path will be a prosperous one, and the prosperous path is acting wisely on the straight line of obedience to the distinct instructions of the divine Word. No deviation is lawful-"Turn not from it to the right hand or to the left."

Now how shall intimate knowledge of the will of our God be obtained? The word of Scripture is to be ever in our mouth (Josh. 1:8). To depart from it is certain failure. We want Scripture for anything. "It is written" must decide all questions. When a difficulty arises, our first duty is to hearken to "Thus saith the Lord." A degenerate Christianity evades the plain truth of the divine Word, and substitutes for it the voice of human

authority. The book of the law has departed out of the mouth, and, as a consequence, instead of prosperity, demoralization, confusion, and disorder exist among the soldiers.

Now, how shall the believer have his mouth filled with the words of his God? How shall he know what God says to him? By deep, painstaking, prayerful labor over it. The knowledge of even the letter of the Word is not gained at once. Continual feeding upon the Word is requisite; the whole soul needs to be taken up with it-"Thou shalt meditate therein day and night." By filling the affections with the words of the sacred volume, by loving labor over the Book of our God, by seeking the Holy Spirit's teaching, praying for the eyes of our heart's enlightenment, and for the spirit of revelation in the knowledge of God, the heart becomes so stored with its words, that we are able to observe to do according to all that is written therein. And thence flow spiritual prosperity and good success. The great aim of the child and servant of God should be acquaintance with, and obedience to, his God's mind.

"Thou shalt meditate" is a distinct call which should exercise the heart. Spiritually feeding upon the Word, we gain the desired heart knowledge. There is no hour more profitably spent than that in which the Christian is alone with God over His Word, humbly pondering upon God's thoughts in God's presence. A book-learned and a Spirit-taught Christian are very distinct. There may be a knowledge of the truth of the Word, obtained by reading or instruction, where "thou shalt meditate" is but scantily observed. There may be an intellectual grasp of the doctrines and principles of Scripture, and what then? "Knowledge puffeth up"! The Christian who has learned to enter in secret into God's presence as to knowledge, is necessarily humble and lowly in mind. We say necessarily so, because God's presence ever makes man humble.

Truly blessed is the man whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates therein day and night; "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." Psalm 1:3. This beautiful figure is considered to be taken from the orange, which tree blossoms and bears fruit at one time, and is evergreen. The fragrance of Christ diffused from the believer; the sweetness of Christ waiting to be gathered from the believer; always the same Christ-like spirit; ever fresh, ever sustained by the living streams' of the hidden watercourses! Where such orange groves are found, how attractive they are! Let us seek for the sustaining nourishment of the water of the Word entering into our spiritual being, reaching into that which the eye sees not, even to our roots; for then shall there be profitable testimony for God. Dryness and fruitlessness arise from not being Spirit-fed.

Having meditated upon the Word, we are to observe to do according to all that is written therein, upon which course of action prosperity and success depend.

The third call for courage is because the Lord is with us (Josh. 1:9).

God's own command is our authority, His presence is our power. God, who gives the command, is with the soldier who obeys His command. The strength here enjoined is that of the hand for taking and holding, and that of the knee not to be overthrown. In the epistle to the Ephesians, we are exhorted to be "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.... For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (chap. 6:10-12), which are to the Christians what the hosts of Canaan were to Israel. Neither must there be rest in this warfare, but "having done all," or, as the margin reads, "having overcome all," we are called upon to stand.

Like sentinels at their posts, they must "stand" who hope to retain what they gain. It is ever easier to obtain than to maintain in the things of this life, and how distinctly is this the case in the things of God. Persistency in God's strength, and in courage, is required. Many a Christian who followed in the path of self-sacrifice to reach the knowledge of some truth of God, having obtained what he sought, has settled down into indifference and spiritual sloth. The Apostle Peter warns that, unless there be adding to what is obtained, we shall lose what we have (2 Pet. 1:5-10).

Finally come the words, "Be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed." Fear is a bad symptom in the Christian. Fear indicates the presence of unbelief in God, or of some unjudged evil in ourselves. Not, indeed, that godly, loving fear- that reverence which dreads lest God should not be really obeyed, or His will should not be clearly apprehended-but that fear which quails before the enemy and hinders Christian warfare. Firm faith in God dispels dismay before enemies.

The principles set out in this stirring exhortation to Israel are of the utmost importance to ourselves in this our day. Therefore, may each of us know the grace and the power of the appeal.

Principles of Spiritual Warfare: Joshua, Leader, The: Joshua 1:2

Joshua 1:2

“Moses My servant is dead; now therefore Arise” (Joshua 1:2).

In the wisdom of God, the Scripture histories of many of the holy men of old present Christ to us under varied types.

Moses typifies Jesus bringing His people out of the land of condemnation, whilst Moses and Aaron typify Jesus Christ leading His people through this wilderness world. Moses did not lead Israel into Canaan. Joshua, who typifies the Lord Jesus Christ as the Captain of our salvation, was appointed for that service.

In the book which is before us, Moses, “the drawn out,” Jehovah’s servant appointed to bring forth His people out of Egypt, has passed from the scene. Jehovah has buried him, and hidden the place of his sepulcher to this day (Deut. 34:6).

Joshua takes his place, and the name of Joshua is also significant. Originally he was called Oshea (Deliverance), but this was increased to Jehoshua, or Joshua, which means “The Lord’s salvation.”

Moses was dead, and Joshua was Israel’s divinely appointed leader, therefore Israel’s path of obedience and blessing was in following their new captain.

The lessons of the book of Joshua, spiritually considered, refer to the Christian's heavenly calling. Here, under the captaincy of his risen Lord, the Christian may see himself. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above" (Col. 3:1).

Principles of Spiritual Warfare: Joshua, Exhortation: Joshua 1:2-9

Joshua 1:2-9

"Moses, My servant, is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give them, even to the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon even unto the great river the river, Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast. There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them. Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses My servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:2-9).

It is an unfailing principle, that Scripture exhortations are founded on grace.

God is the God of all grace, therefore, what He exhorts His people to do, He gives them power to perform.

Perhaps in no portion of God's Word is greater grace to be found than in His exhortations; for the object of them is to bring His people nearer to Himself, and to lead them more deeply into their privileges.

In the moving exhortation which we have just read, the basis is, that the land belongs to Israel according to promise; and thus, because God had given them the land, He bids them "Arise, and possess it." When this exhortation was given, Israel was brought, by sovereign grace and forbearing kindness, to the very borders of the land of promise. Its glories spread themselves before their eyes-the corn fields, olives, vineyards, and the mountains out of which they shall "dig brass." Already, by anticipation, the "brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills," were theirs, and one thing only was requisite to the enjoyment of their portion; they must "Arise," and possess. It was harvest time-the time of the year's richest good-and Jordan (that is, the river of Death or of Judgment) threatened to bar their way, for "Jordan overfloweth all his banks all the time of harvest." Yet faith would lay hold on the word of the living God, and, regardless of the difficulty, obey that word immediately.

Now, beholding the corn fields was not eating the fruits, and gazing on the mountains was not digging out their wealth; and the one condition which the Lord imposed upon the people was, that they, as a matter of fact, should enter and have foothold on the land which He had given them.

How true it is, regarding spiritual possession, that no, what may be termed, geographical acquaintance with the truth of God, no ability to map out doctrines or dispensations, is of itself possession. Real possession becomes the portion of those who have, by individual contest, step by step, won ground; and to them is the promise, "Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given you."

In order to stimulate His people to gain their possession, the Lord graciously promised His unfailing presence, strength, and nearness to them in the conflict. The Lord had not forgotten their fears at Eschol. He knew that the sons of Anak trod the land still, and that cities great and high, walled to heaven, filled the country; and, in His grace, He would so encourage His people, that they should learn to measure the sons of Anak by Jehovah's strength instead of by their own, and the walled cities by His power, and not by the fitness of their weapons of war.

The strength that Jehovah desired in His people was strength of hand for taking and firmly retaining; and strength of knees so that the wrestler should not be cast down. And we Christians are exhorted to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," "for we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places," which are to us like the hosts of Canaan were to Israel. Neither must we rest contented in the fact of overcoming a foe; "for having done all," or as the margin reads, "having overcome all," we are called upon "to stand" (Eph. 6). The walled city may be taken, but, like sentinels at their post, we must "stand," if we hope to retain it.

God, by giving exhortation and encouragement, warns us of danger and difficulty. But, beloved reader, if we shrink from the difficulty, let us remember that we shrink from the land of promise. What! shall a Christian sit down on the wilderness side of Jordan because of Canaan's giants?

Again, the Lord calls upon His people for strength and for courage. And this time it is that they may obey all His Word. Not the slightest deviation is permitted. It is a straight road, and one step aside would lead astray altogether; "turn not from it to the right hand or to the left." His word was not to depart out of their mouth, "It is written" was to decide everything; and it was to be their meditation, both by day and by night, their continual study. Prosperity and success would be theirs as they obeyed God's Word.

And, fellow Christians, here is a good occasion to be plain with ourselves. Why is one without full peace with God? Why has another leanness of soul? Why has another trouble instead of joy? The Word of God is not implicitly followed, the plain path of Scripture has been overstepped.

A third time we have the Lord saying, "Be strong and of a good courage." The first time, because all is of grace; the second, because the Word is His; and now, because His own authority is our commission. Once let the Christian lay hold of the fact of the divine authority of the Word of God, and forthwith all that is human must bow.

With the promise “The Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest,” the exhortation closes; for it would not be possible to obey His command unless blessed with His presence.

Principles of Spiritual Warfare: Joshua, Joshua 1:10-11: Admonition

Joshua 1:10-11

“Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying, Pass through the host, and command the people, saying, Prepare you victuals; for within three days ye shall pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God giveth you to possess it” (Joshua 1:10-11).

There is something contrastive with human ways in the people of Israel being bidden to tarry three days after receiving such a stirring exhortation as that which has just been given to them.

They have to prepare food, and wait a perfect period of time, and not rush on impetuously; and thus it is, that having removed from the last stage of their wilderness way – Shittim – Joshua, and all the people lodge on Jordan’s banks before they pass over.

We have to learn that human energy cannot cross rivers of death, or break down the walls of this world’s strongholds, and that should we be stirred up to follow the Lord. It must be in His time as well as according to His Word. Impulse is not faith, and going forward in the mere strength of our own acquired knowledge of God’s truth will surely manifest itself to be impulse.

God has His own time. He is not in haste, and He would neither have His people act in fleshly zeal, nor in the excitement of freshly gained knowledge. Right actions may be wrought at wrong times, and well would it be if some that love their Lord, instead of pushing on in the impulse of newly-acquired truth, would first tarry their three days and digest it – make it, by the grace of God’s Spirit, thoroughly their own. Unless we make the truth of God part of ourselves, as it were, our weakness will betray itself in the day of testing. That knowledge of the divine Word which does not, sink down deep into the heart, will not stay the soul when its support is most needed; it will be found then that such knowledge was of an exterior kind; and that, therefore, we cannot use it. To learn as a matter of intelligence a truth of God from another, without having experienced the force of it in our own souls, is knowledge without power.

In drawing instruction from this literal history let us not, however, suppose that a set interval of time is necessary to effect a needed exercise of soul, for God can and does work in some in a short period, what it is His pleasure to accomplish in others by a life-long lesson.

Principles of Spiritual Warfare: Joshua, Joshua 21:1-42: The Believer's Portion

{vi 6383-6424}Joshua 21:1-42

“The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup” (Psa. 16:5).

The provision for the slayer’s need being fully met, the inheritance of the Levites is set out. “Unto the tribe of Levi Moses gave not any inheritance: the Lord God of Israel was their inheritance.” “The sacrifices of the Lord God of Israel made by fire are their inheritance” ({vi 6188;6169}Josh. 13:33,14). Thus, though “scattered in Israel,” according to the prophecy of Jacob, and possessing but a small territory, their inheritance crowns the blessings bestowed upon Israel, shines the brightest of them all.

To the tribe of Levi was committed the service of the sanctuary, the custody of Jehovah’s law, and the culture of the hearts of His people. “They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law” (Deut. 33:10). They were the influencing power in Israel, and their influence flowed from the nearness of their position to God.

With the material blessings of Israel before our eye – their land flowing with milk and honey, and fed with depths springing out of valleys and hills – it is not difficult to discern the peculiar position occupied by Levi. And, spiritually understood, in the Levites’ inheritance we see the believer’s most perfect portion; for while we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ – while we have in Him pleasures bestowed upon us for evermore, we have beyond all blessings which are conferred upon us through Christ – Christ Himself. Indeed we are brought into the blessings of Christianity that we may delight in Christ. God has saved us and brought us to Himself, for no less an end than being like the Lord and knowing as we are known (1 Cor. 13:12). His grace towards us reaches even beyond deliverance from wrath and entrance into life; thus while we contemplate His mercy – the forgiveness of our sins, the end of the first creation, death and resurrection with Christ – the Spirit of God dwelling in us would have us reach forth, in order that we may realize and abide in our portion now. “That I may know Him,” is the aim of the energy of the new life. Paul so longed to grasp his portion that he would fain have passed clean out of this earth to reach it, for Christ in glory was to him experimentally what He is verily to all believers, “the prize of the high calling of God.”

Every event recorded in the Book of Joshua has a voice in itself, and also in the order in which the events are recorded there is instruction, as in the inheritance of Levi following the cities of refuge. A similar order is usually to be found in the experience of God’s people, who most frequently learn their need of Christ before learning what Christ is for them. Our sins, the discovery of self, learning divine righteousness by His Spirit, enhance Christ to us as our Saviour, Acceptance, Life; but let us seek to go on to acquaintance with Him in His own intrinsic excellence. May it not be that some having full assurance that they are in the city where the Levites dwell, use little diligence to acquire the joy of their Levite inheritance?

The fugitive from vengeance, who entered the City of Refuge, would be at the first necessarily occupied with his own deliverance and safety, and would bless God fervently for having Himself provided and set apart the city for men in his case, and thus – though in a right way – self would be before him; but the Levite who dwelt in the city, and was at home there, was there that he might be free for God’s service; he was called into association with God, and it was for him to consider the depths of the Word, and to ponder the service of the sanctuary. Do we

know more than salvation by Christ? Are we, while rejoicing as with the fugitive saved, yet also learning of God as with the Levite? And if while blessing God for salvation we are also rejoicing in Christ, in what degree have we attained to the fullness of the believer's portion? We find some among the Levites fulfilling a more hallowed service; some handling more sacred instruments of the sanctuary than others; and there are degrees even among those who know Christ, as their portion.

There can be no other way of learning Christ than by communion with Him through the Word. We discover the heart – the character – of an earthly friend by intimacy; and in proportion as his moral excellence is beyond us, we must grow up into his stature before we can appreciate him. His gifts we may comprehend, perhaps, for the gift may be appreciated in itself or by its adaptability to our wants, but the motive and grace of the giver is not so easily discovered.

All Israel stood before God by virtue of the sacrifices, but the tribe of Levi alone had "the sacrifices of the Lord God of Israel made by fire" as "their inheritance." We may see God's love in giving His Son to die for us, yet miss spiritual fellowship with Him.

The Levite could only dimly read God's thoughts about Christ through the shadows of the law; in us God's Spirit dwells, and teaches us all things. The Levite was set apart for the service of the sanctuary and the contemplation of God's Word, and this should be our work, for thereto we are separated by God to Himself. The whole of that economy with which the Levite was busied set forth Christ in His intrinsic excellence, and as He is esteemed by God in His work for His people. We may well desire the service which attaches itself to the Lord Himself, and that separatedness which finds occupation in Him only.

When the Lord is seen, by faith, in His excellence, the glory of His light dims everything else. Saul of Tarsus saw His face eclipsing the brightness of the noonday sun, and thenceforth was no longer for the earth. The Lord in the heavens instructed him not only concerning the glory, but opened to him the wonder of His own heart there. Saul thereupon counted all things loss for Christ, and many years afterward, as Paul, he wrote, "Yea doubtless, and I count"; his mind had not changed; rather, we should say, his energy had increased.

One who is now present with the Lord, "absent from the body," remarked, "Next to the simple, happy, earnest assurance of His personal love to ourselves (the Lord increase it in our hearts!), nothing more helps us to desire to be with Him than the discovery of Himself. If one might speak for others, it is this we want, and it is this we covet. We know our need, but we can say, the Lord knows our desire."

When the inheritance of the tribe of Levi is marked out, and they fill their cities and dwell there, nothing more remains to be done for the Israel God loved, for the people He had brought up from the land of bondage into the land of promise; and there follows rest.

Principles of Spiritual Warfare: Joshua, Joshua 21:43-45: Rest

Joshua 21:43-45

"If Joshua had given them rest, then would he (David) not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (Heb. 4:8-9).

The rest here spoken of may be taken in one sense as the conclusion of the book of Joshua. What follows, morally considered, is hardly a development of the history of Israel – certainly it is not going on in the Lord's strength, but conveys rather a warning to such as having a promise given them of entering into rest seem to come short of it (Josh. 22), and an exhortation to those who have in spirit entered into rest, to abide in the power of it (Josh. 23-24).

When we have obtained the object of our desires there is rest; the character of rest depends upon the nature of the desire.

In one sense Israel entered Canaan at rest – at rest from the judgment of Egypt – from the pursuit of the destroyer – from the wilderness. All their hopes concerning deliverance from the land of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh, and of their reaching the land of promise, were fully realized. Thus, they began their fight in Canaan as God's men of war and in the power of His liberty; and, having waged Jehovah's wars for many years – as it is generally understood, seven years, which implies a perfect period of an earthly kind, "the land rested" (Josh. 11). Conquest produced rest from warfare; but as the rest produced by conquest could only be sustained by incessant watchfulness, and would be lost to them if they failed to exterminate the enemy, it was not complete.

It is the Christian's portion to enjoy present rest through Christ's victory over sin, death, and Satan, which is illustrated in Israel's rest upon entering the land of promise. It is the Christian's portion by faith to realize a full deliverance from the judgment of the world by the precious blood of Christ, and to know that Christ being risen has broken the power of death and Satan, neither of which now have power over His redeemed people. The Christian knows that he is already in Christ in the heavenly places, and, in the power of this liberty and rest, he is called upon to fight against spiritual wickednesses in heavenly places under the banner of the risen Lord. The Christian is enabled also to enjoy the peace of his Shiloh, to have seasons of communion with God's people, to worship with them, notwithstanding there are enemies in his spiritual Canaan. But, although all these blessings are his to enjoy and dwell in, yet, while he is still upon this earth, there is a rest which he is anticipating, a rest which he has not at present entered; the rest of God is his hope.

Every character of rest which Israel enjoyed resulted from divine faithfulness. The rest which is here described was of a different character from what they had previously enjoyed; it was the fulfillment of all that Jehovah promised to their fathers. It anticipates a day when, every foe of God's people being subdued, all the blessings which are promised them in Christ shall be realized.

Rest is incomplete so long as blessings are unenjoyed; and before it is said, "the Lord gave them rest," it is said,

"And the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which He sware to give unto their fathers: And they possessed it, and dwelt therein. And the Lord gave them rest round about, according to all that He aware unto their fathers; And there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; the Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass."

Jehovah had been unwearied in bringing Israel into the enjoyment of their portion in the land of promise: He came down into the land of their bonds; He was afflicted there in their afflictions; He ransomed them from captivity. Having given them the spirit of pilgrims, He guided them as a flock through the wilderness, where He fed them daily, went before them, and was their rearward. He healed their wilderness backslidings, and forgave their questioning His grace. He brought them through the river into the promised land, fought for them, gave them victory over all their enemies, and made the land their possession. All that Jehovah gave Israel to anticipate was now actually fulfilled to them.

The Christian is already blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ, yet he is a man of anticipation, “We are saved by hope.” Did he not enjoy complete peace and rest with God in the finished work of the Lord Jesus, he could not hope for that which awaits him. As far as his salvation is concerned everything is complete; the precious blood of his redemption was shed many, many years ago. He has already entered into rest about sin by faith in that precious blood, but, so far as the longings of the new nature are concerned, it is, with him, anticipation still. “Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Rom. 8:24-25).

The Christian is not yet transformed into the image of Christ, “Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). He is not yet morally like the Lord, although by beholding His glory he is day by day changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord (2 Cor. 3:18). He has the Spirit of God within him, yet he is compassed about with infirmity, and with the whole groaning and travailing creation, groans within himself, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body (Rom. 8:21-23). But the promise is sure, “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Cor. 15:49); and he is looking for the “Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body” (Phil. 3:21). If true to the sympathies of Christ, he is anticipating the day of His glory. Longing to behold His glory as the Lord prayed the Father (John 17:24); expecting with Christ when Christ’s foes shall be made His footstool; hoping for the day when the name of Jesus shall be confessed by every tongue, and when every knee shall bow to Him and own Him Lord, to the glory of God the Father. He is anticipating the time when Israel’s twelve tribes shall own their once rejected Messiah, when the north and south shall give up the people who are now nationally dead, when their land shall once more flow with milk and honey, and shine with God’s favor, when the groans of creation shall be hushed, and Israel shall sing to their Lord, “Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him.”

In a word, the Christian is expecting all that shall accrue to Christ’s glory, which His precious death has purchased, and for which He Himself waits. “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” Vast as are the present blessings of God’s people, there are longings of heart to be satisfied; great and precious as are their present enjoyment of divine blessings, yet “Now we see through a glass, darkly – as in a riddle – now we know in part,” – “But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.”

Our present rest resembles that previously spoken of, which had to be retained by ceaseless vigilance, rather than the rest which is pictured here. “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” Fightings without and within will cease before long; idols and their names will come no more into remembrance. The strivings of sin and the buffetings of Satan have an end for God’s people; it shall be said of all – of the weakest – “The Lord delivered all their enemies into their hand.”

There is a day to dawn (and it may be at the doors!) when, after this world and the lust thereof shall have passed away, it shall be proved that the word of the Lord endureth forever; and, resting in God’s rest, heart shall respond to heart with joyful praise – “There failed not ought of any good thing which the Lord hath spoken ... all came to pass.”

Christian Truth: Volume 24, Promised Possessions, The

"And it came to pass after three days, that the officers went through the host; and they commanded the people, saying, When ye see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests the Levites bearing it, then ye shall remove from your place, and go after it. Yet there shall be a space between you and it, about two thousand cubits by measure: come not near unto it, that ye may know the way by which ye must go: for ye have not passed this way heretofore. And Joshua said unto the people, Sanctify yourselves: for to-morrow the LORD will do wonders among you.... And the LORD said unto Joshua, This day will I begin to magnify thee in the sight of all Israel." Josh. 3:7, 2-5.

The action begins with recounting how Joshua rose early in the morning and, with all Israel, left the camp at Shittim and came to the borders of the Jordan. There is a remarkable group of lessons in the teaching commencing with the third chapter and ending with the sixth. Such divine instruction as these chapters contain demands, as the very first requirement in those that hear them, diligence of soul. Joshua in his energy rose early in the morning; a lively state of soul is needful if we would not miss our lessons in grace and glory. Christians cannot see divine truths so long as they sleep. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." Eph. 5:14.

Three distinct lessons shine out in the verses given at the head of this article. First, every eye was to be on the ark; second, the people were to sanctify themselves; third, Joshua, personally, was to be magnified.

The first is of the deepest practical importance. Fixing the eye on Christ, the ark, is the only means whereby God's ways for His people can be understood. By no other plan will the soul be filled with God's thoughts. The officers went through the host with the command, Observe the ark, leave a space between it and you, for Israel is going away never before trodden. Every genuine officer among God's people, every servant duly commissioned by God to lead, has but one voice to those he addresses-Look at Christ, keep the eye on Christ; with reverential steps give Him the pre-eminence; follow where He leads. Where the path may be is not the question; where Christ leads is the consideration. Obedience to His voice relieves from the thousand questions and difficulties which hinder progress in divine things.

Israel had the pillar of fire to lead them out of Egypt; they had the ark to lead them into Canaan. In either case they had but to follow the divine guidance, for they could not make a way for themselves through the waters. Efforts after path-making hinder many from treading that which God has made, but in looking to Christ the path of blessing appears before the feet. The steps of faith are of necessity ever new, and it is simply by looking off to Jesus that we can "know the way by which ye must go."

In the wilderness, if the ark abode beneath its curtains, the people remained in their tents; if it went forward, they followed. And as they were now about to tread a path hitherto untrodden, one of which they had no knowledge, in an especial manner they needed to observe the leadings of the ark—"that ye might know the way by which ye must go."

Yet while they were to observe the ark and follow it, they were not to come near it; far from pressing upon it, they were to leave a set distance between it and them, a measured space of two thousand cubits. And the Christian must ever give the Lord Jesus Christ His full place, for in all things He must have the pre-eminence (Col. 1:18). There is a divine distance between Him and His people. He is the way, and He has made it. He is the leader, and He leads. We learn God's way as we see Him, and we take it as we follow Him. If looking at one another, we are not looking off unto Jesus. Every eye must be on Him. If the Israelites had not left a space between themselves and the ark, the fore ranks would have prevented those that followed from seeing it. How happily the officers directed the eyes of the people from their own guidance to the guiding ark! What a brilliant example for preachers and teachers of Christ! The Christian must have an uninterrupted view of Christ if he would walk in God's way, a view of Christ Himself and not of officers who, though they can direct where to look for salvation and blessing, can neither save nor bless. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed?" The great Apostle never obstructed the vision of the weakest saint by placing himself between that saint and Christ.

At the Red Sea, God made the path by the rod of His power; there Israel had the pillar of glory behind them, and the way cleft through the sea before them. At Jordan, the rod gave place to the ark. The ark, in a special way, represents a personal Christ; its shittim wood—His humanity; its gold—His deity; its contents (the law)—His righteousness as a man. All testify to Him personally. The sign for their movement, their only sign, was the guiding ark.

"Ye have not passed this way heretofore" is true, experimentally, of numbers of God's people in relation to their entrance into the heavenly places. Experimentally, we say; for in fact all saints of God are now seated in the heavenly places in Christ. It is not possible to be a true Christian and not to be seated by God in Christ in the heavenly places. Yet, if following God, the believer will often find himself, practically speaking, treading an unknown path—a simple but solemn reality which tests faith.

In the next place, the word to Israel was, "Sanctify yourselves." Reverence and holiness were the necessary conditions to seeing the wonders the Lord was about to work for them. No truth of God can he lightly taken up by the believer save at his spiritual peril; and unless there be this holy fear of the Lord our God, we shall not in spirit truly enter into His work for us. Walking by faith in the way the Lord Jesus has made, apart from reverential footsteps, is impossible. Then how shall we sanctify ourselves? No outward sanctification, or external separation from any form of evil, will avail. True heart work, in the power of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, is essential. "The flesh profiteth nothing." The Spirit of God is the sanctifier. The more closely the Jewish ceremonial sanctification is regarded, the more evidently is it seen that its figures pointed to true heart and conscience work.

In the third place, Jehovah promised Joshua a place of glory in the sight of all Israel, such as he had never had before, one which was to be as that of Moses when he was the divinely appointed leader of God's people. This is very sweet to the true Christian who loves his blessed Lord and Savior. It is a joyous thing to know that the mighty work of God in raising up the Lord from the dead, and in giving life in Him risen to all for whom He died, is direct honor and glory to the Lord Jesus Christ. The more genuinely believers receive in the soul what God has done in raising up Christ from the dead, and in setting them in heavenly places, the more their hearts magnify Christ.

Let us exalt Jesus as our Savior from sin and from this Egypt's doom, and also as our leader, step by step, through this wilderness world; let us also magnify Him as He is, the ascended Son of man in glory. He is not fully magnified in the soul until He is known as the Joshua, the risen and ascended Lord. Jehovah promised that Joshua should be magnified before the Jordan was passed, and Israel accepted Joshua as their God-honored leader by the emptied Jordan. Christians know Christ as their Joshua by His having overcome death, and by His entrance into heaven. If the true Christian has one desire more deep than another in the blessing of God's people, it is that they should so know and so enjoy their blessings in Christ risen as to magnify Him.

Passover, Red Sea and Jordan: December 2009, Leader’s Memorial and Glory, The

Jehovah wrought “wonders” for Israel at the Jordan, both in the actual work performed and in the hidden meaning of the work. Hence, in the type before us, great things of God’s mind are to be found.

“Joshua set up twelve stones in the midst of Jordan, in the place where the feet of the priests which bare the ark of the covenant stood: and they are there unto this day.” When the record was written, the swelling of Jordan had not swept away the leader’s own memorial of the passage of the river’s bed. Israel’s memorial set up in Canaan was for all in the land of promise to see — “a memorial unto the children of Israel forever.” Joshua’s, reared in the bed of the river, was for no eye to behold when the waters were at their flood, but nonetheless a memorial for the leader himself. In the river, we may justly say, his deepest feelings would center; there, where the priests stood, the whole burden of Israel’s security was borne, and there the secret power of all Israel’s blessing in entering Canaan lay.

Joshua in Canaan being a type of Christ, we have in this action a significant teaching. Our Lord never forgets the deep waters through which He passed — those sufferings in and unto death, by which He vanquished him that had the power of death, the devil, and by which He opened to His people their heavenly inheritance. From the throne on high He remembers the travail of His soul, His cross, its shame and agony. Jesus, whose work has brought the people of God into heavenly places, ever remembers the swellings of Jordan, the flood of deep waters, where He, blessed be His name, stood firm for us to bring us to His God and Father.

God’s people are much occupied with their blessings and, indeed, of moral necessity, these must at first fill the heart, for until, by grace, it be known how the saints are blessed in the heavenly places in Christ, it is not possible to meditate upon the way our Lord has brought us into our blessings. Our stones of memorial tell us of Jordan’s depths and what Christ suffered for our sakes and of our blessings, but let not His memorial be forgotten! His holy person in glory still bears the marks of the wounds of Calvary, and from heaven Jesus, speaking of His death, says to His people, “Remember Me.”

The sacred memory of the place where His feet stood firm when the billows of God's wrath rolled over Him should be present to the heart. True, He is no longer the sufferer; His sorrows are forever passed; He is the ascended Son of Man, triumphant in His victory over death, but forever shall memories of His death fill the hearts of His people; eternally shall it be said of the Lord's stones of "witness," "They are there unto this day."

Jehovah magnified Joshua by the passage of the Jordan, and thereby obtained for him the leadership in Israel's eyes. "On that day the Lord magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel; and they feared him, as they feared Moses, all the days of his life." The present exaltation and place of the Lord Jesus as man is of His God and Father, and His glories and exaltation are the blessed answer to His sufferings and humiliation. "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things" (Eph. 4:9-10). The Lord Jesus, the Son of Man, who went down to the lowest depths, occupies the highest height in heaven, and there He bears in His person the solemn witness to Calvary. Because of His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross, God has highly exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name (Phil. 2). He has been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, and God the Father has set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come (Eph. 1). As this exaltation of the Lord is apprehended, He becomes indeed the Leader of His people and is magnified by them.

The Lord is not fully honored by His people until His present glory is recognized. In the light of His present exaltation as a man, on the life side of death, His glory as the Lord who died is seen. He, the risen and ascended Christ, is the firstborn from among the dead, the Head over all things, the Head of His body, the church, and the more the heart apprehends Him thus, the more all that He did in dying for us is remembered.

The heavenly Leader is before His people in the teachings of the portion before us. Even in earthly matters, a leader's influence over his followers is proportionate to the honor in which they hold him. Now Christ is in heaven and in glory, and as His greatness and majesty, His strength and power, are apprehended by faith, a mighty influence is exercised over the souls and lives of His people. His position in glory and His victory determine the blessing of the redeemed; the fullness of the blessing of the members is determined by the glory of the Head. His honor and their blessing are not to be separated. Our heavenly position in Christ is exclusively of divine grace, but it is ours in Christ on high. Now indeed it is a subject for faith, but soon it will be displayed in glory, and that display will be seen to be to the honor of our exalted Saviour, Jesus Christ the Lord.

H. F. Witherby

Jordan: January 2014, Gilgal - the Place of Power

Joshua 5:9

Gilgal, which signifies "rolling" or "rolling away," is Israel's center of strength all through the conflicts recorded in the Book of Joshua. They returned to Gilgal, whether after victory or defeat, and from Gilgal they went forth to battle.

At their circumcision "the Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of this place is called Gilgal [rolling away] unto this day." It might have been expected that God would have declared Israel free from the reproach of Egypt after He had cast their enemies into the depths of the sea or immediately upon His bringing them over Jordan into Canaan, but no, He required them to be circumcised first.

At Gilgal Jehovah Himself rolled the reproach away, and Israel stood before Him in the blessing wherewith He had blessed them. Pharaoh had said that if they got out of Egypt, they would be shut in the wilderness, and truly it had seemed as if they would wander and die there. At Gilgal in Canaan they were before Jehovah as His army, His nation on the earth, according to His accomplished purpose. They were His purchased people situated in His promised land, and marked out by Him for Himself from the nations surrounding them.

Here we see a picture of what God has wrought with Christians today; we are established in His grace, which is in itself the prime element of our strength. God has accomplished His purpose toward His redeemed in Christ and has planted them who were of the land of bondage in the heavenly places in Christ. Through Christ He has removed from them every single thing His eye saw in them that was contrary to His own mind, for His people are seen as dead with Christ. He has made them in Christ exactly in accordance with His mind, for they are risen with Christ, seated in Christ on high, and Gilgal is our place of strength. In whatever way the world may be viewed or in whatever way the flesh as the principle of evil is regarded, in Christ (who is risen from the dead and has gone up on high) the reproach is rolled off God's redeemed people by God Himself. He Himself pronounces them free, for it was not what Israel said of themselves, but what Jehovah declared respecting them, that rendered Gilgal their center of power.

It was at Gilgal the twelve stones from the bed of the Jordan were pitched for the memorial, which declared not only the divine power which had arrested the river, but which also reminded Israel of the depths where the ark of the covenant had stood for them. And here it is in spirit that the true practical spirit of circumcision is carried out by God's saints; true mortification of self is found where there is true heart-dwelling in the memory of Jesus' death. As Israel beheld these memorial stones, they would, of necessity, consider the place where the ark had been for them. And abiding in the memory of Christ's death for us, we, being risen with Christ, are, practically speaking, in the place of power, for we cannot overcome the foe for God unless we ourselves are in subjection to Him.

The believer knows well enough that though he is seated in the heavenly places in Christ, yet unless he mortifies his members which are on the earth, he has no practical power for his daily life. The knowledge of our death with Christ and our mortifying of our desires cannot be dissociated in practical life. We are not in the Jordan; we are taken out of it, but the memory of Christ's death for us needs to be ever in our hearts if we would live truly for Him. A saint may know his position in Christ from the Scriptures, yet be living a very untoward life as a Christian. But such would not be the case if his heart was occupied with Christ's death for him, by which his sins were put away and in whom he is raised to the new life. The Apostle says, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). The memory of Jesus' dying love was always before his soul. As our hearts gaze, as it were, upon the

memorial stones, we say to ourselves, He went into death for us; we died with Him, and by the power of the Holy Spirit we are enabled to put to death our pride and our ways which once we loved.

Two great witnesses mark the camp of Gilgal: the twelve stones taken from the bed of Jordan, the memorial of God's work in bringing them into the promised possession, and circumcision, the witness that nationally they were absolutely Jehovah's own people. The teachings of these two figures give precisely the two great elements of Christian blessing and strength. First, in Christ ascended, the Christian is brought into all the privileges of all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places; second, by identification with Christ in His death he is, as a fallen child of Adam, dead and buried out of sight before God.

From the stronghold of divine grace the Christian soldier needs to be continually going forth and returning; the twelve stones and the circumcision made without hands (Col. 2:11) must ever be before his soul; he needs to be again and again strengthened for his warfare by the faith of the truth of his being a member of the body of Christ and by the faith of the truth that he has been crucified with Christ.

The effective soldier of Christ is girded about with divine realities, he is braced up in heart by God's Word as to what real blessing is, and his energy for warfare lies in being in the Spirit as to the truth. The powers of darkness and spiritual wickedness in heavenly places are the foes, and by dwelling in heart in the faith of being blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenly places in Christ, we fight the enemy in the field he occupies. To slacken the girdle of truth is to give Satan an advantage. Do not give up a single truth God has given us, for if we fail in practically putting our own desires to death, we surrender our spiritual strength, and our courage will fail.

H. F. Witherby, adapted

Principles of Spiritual Warfare: Joshua, Joshua 5:2-9: Christian Character

Joshua 5:2-9

"At that time the Lord said unto Joshua, Make thee sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel a second time ... . And this is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: All the people that came out of Egypt, that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way, after they came out of Egypt. Now all the people that came out were circumcised: but all the people that were born in the wilderness by the way as they came forth out of Egypt, them they had not circumcised. For the children of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, till all the people that were men of war, which came out of Egypt, were consumed, because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord: unto whom the Lord sware that He would not show them the land, which the Lord sware unto their fathers that He would give us, a land that floweth with milk and honey. And their children, whom He raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way ... . And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal (that is, Rolling or Liberty) unto this day" (Josh. 5:2-9).

"Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God ... mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth" (Col. 3:3,5).

The more a man learns of God, the more he knows of grace. If we would apply to ourselves spiritually the lessons of the circumcision in the land, we must give the grace of God, which led to the circumcision, full place, and remember that God asks for the devotion of His people, because He has, in Christ, brought them into perfect favor; otherwise, we shall fall into the error of monk-like minds, and, with them, wrong God, by seeking to attain that favor through our own efforts.

Was it by observing God's ordinances, or was it through God's almighty grace that Israel entered the land of promise? They entered it as a nation in uncircumcision, and, therefore exclusively by God's sovereign grace. The people of Israel were circumcised before the judicial sentence was passed upon the men of war at Eschol, where they slighted God's grace, and had therefore forty years of wandering in the wilderness assigned to them. During these forty years the nation neglected circumcision. God, therefore, regarding His people as a whole, now He had brought them into the land of promise, bade Joshua "circumcise again the children of Israel the second time."

God made no demand upon Israel for circumcision so long as they wandered "by the way," but when He brought them into the land, then ("at that time") He required it. And why did God not seek for circumcision from the people of Israel, so long as they walked in the wilderness? The wilderness was the scene of their distrust of God. While there they doubted His promise of bringing them into His land, and were not therefore in a condition warranting that entire separation to Himself which circumcision signified. But now, being brought by God's own faithfulness, and we may say, almost in spite of themselves, into the land of promise, and, because they were there, doubting no longer, God could call upon them for circumcision. Grace had delivered them from the unbelief of their hearts – grace had brought them into the land, and God could call them into full nearness to Himself, and, consequently, into entire separation from the rest of the nations.

A distrusting spirit is ignorant of God's real character, and consequently is not morally fitted for separation to Himself; but God, having brought us by His grace to know ourselves to be in the heavenly places in Christ, seeks separation to Himself, corresponding with the liberty into which He has brought us. Grace known and realized is the only true power for heart separation to God.

"This is the cause why Joshua did circumcise: all the people that came out of Egypt, that were males, even all the men of war, died in the wilderness by the way ... .And their children, whom [Jehovah] raised up in their stead, them Joshua circumcised: for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them by the way."

Here distinction is made between the men of war who came out of Egypt, and those who grew up in the wilderness. The "men of war" that came out of Egypt, "because they obeyed not the voice of the Lord" concerning the promised land, were consumed in the desert (See Num. 14:32-33). At Eschol they disbelieved God's promise of bringing them into the land, and then added to their sin of unbelief that of self-will, self-will even to going up to the land of promise in their own disobedient energy. Such men of war God rejected, and instead of these, He raised up in the wilderness others, whom He trained, by discipline, for Himself.

Israel learned death to their men of war that came out of Egypt by a long and painful process; one by one, for forty weary years, they dropped down and died, until they were all consumed. And slowly, very slowly, the strength and vigor which we brought up out of the world dies in us,

as God disciplines, chastens, and teaches us what we are. This lesson is not learned in a day. It is a lifelong experience, and, in a sense, occupies all our “folly years” of pilgrimage. Yet this teaching is blessed, for the same hand which “consumes” “raises up in the stead of” that which it withers. In the very place of discipline, that is, this wilderness world, God quickens in His people new powers; as self dies, the life of Christ manifests itself. The process is painful, but the end is blessed. God consumes our fleshly zeal in grace, so that His own power may dwell in us.

Circumcision with Israel was merely a carnal ordinance, and, in common with all ordinances, gave neither power for communion with God, nor for conflict with His enemies. It was a sign that the children of Israel were God’s earthly family, and a people separated from all the rest of mankind. The circumcision made without hands, with which the Christian is circumcised, in Christ, is a separation to God from the whole world. God had brought His people, Israel, into His own land, and this being their position before Him, of necessity, to satisfy His own character, He required in them a suited condition. He could not, without compromising Himself, permit His people to be like the rest of mankind. “Holiness becometh Thine house, O Lord, forever” (Psa. 93:5). It is a principle in Scripture, that the nearer the relationship to Himself into which God graciously brings His people, the more stringent the call made upon them for separation from evil.

God first brought Israel through Jordan into Canaan, and then He bade them be circumcised. As Israel was by the river of Jordan separated to God, from Egypt, the wilderness, and their old “men of war,” so the Christian, by the death of Christ, is separated to God from the world and his old nature, whether in its unbelief or energy. And because we have new life in Christ, we are bidden, in the power of that life, to reckon ourselves dead. In the walk and testimony of the believer, the order of God’s word runs thus; “Ye are risen”; “ye are dead.” “Ye are risen”; therefore, seek those things which are above, and set your mind on them. “Ye are dead”; therefore, mortify. Ye are risen; Christ is your life; hence the strength for heavenly energy. Ye are dead; Christ died; hence the power for dying to the world and to self. The Christian is, in the sight of God, dead to all that to which Christ died; “our old man is crucified with [Christ]” (Rom. 6:6). But the Christian, although he has divine life, is yet in the flesh. Once he walked in the lust of the flesh; but now, being dead with Christ, he is exhorted to “put off” old nature vices, “seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.” The Adam-nature is called the “old man,” which the Christian is said to have “put off.” Such as are not dead with Christ are living in disobedience to God, and are called “the children of disobedience” (Eph. 2:2; Col. 3:6). They are thus called, because they are of their father Adam, the disobedient man.

As the people of Israel, because brought through the Jordan, were enjoined by God to be circumcised, and their careless Wilderness ways were allowed no longer; so the Christian, because he has died with Christ to the world, and to his old self, is exhorted to mortify his members, and his worldly ways are no longer permitted. This mortification is simply self-denial, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Man naturally loves sin; he loves his own way, which is the essence of sin; but he who lives in Christ is called to die to himself in daily walk and conduct. There is no way of living to Christ, but by dying to self.

The Son of God, seen in the glory, dries up all the sources of our old nature on the one hand, and on the other, energizes the new life. And if the Christian would live up to the measure of that grace wherein he stands – as one alive in the risen Christ, he must remember that he has died with Christ to the world. It would be impossible to glory in the fact of being risen with Christ, unless we were dead with Him. There could be no seat for the Christian in the heavenly places, unless Christ had hung upon the cross for sin. There could be no dwelling in the cities of the land of promise for the children of Israel, if they had not passed through the River of Death.

That system of Christian doctrine which merely glories in the “life which is hid with Christ in God,” and does not treat self as dead, is unpractical. To be practical in our walk upon the earth, we must be as circumcised men; as men who, being dead to the world and self by Christ, mortify their members which are on the earth.

It was by no means sufficient to Israel to know that they went across the Jordan, in order to enjoy the riches of the inheritance; for until circumcision was effected, none of Canaan’s food was spread before them, nor were they called to conflict. And we may be sure that so long as we walk in the flesh and please ourselves, there can be no communion – no feeding upon Christ. Neither can there be any victories for the Lord, unless self is subdued.

The tendency of man is to give undue prominence to some favorite doctrine, and the sorrow caused by this universal failing is widespread. God of late has graciously taught His people much truth relative to the life in Christ, and the heavenly calling of the Church; and Satan is busy trying to induce God’s people to take up portions only of those truths, that he may introduce false weights into the balances, and so turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.

Satan would beguile the youthful believer into the misty atmosphere of a Canaan of the imagination, where the flesh is allowed to work. In this aerial Christianity, circumcision – self-mortification – is not permitted; the practical result of being dead with Christ is not allowed to wound the will. But there is no stability of soul, no solid devotedness. Such a believer is like the insect, which, well nigh composed of wings, and possessing scarcely any weight, is driven from the flower garden by the first storm. When God by His Spirit leads such a one into the full clear light of His own presence, there is a holy, watchful self-denial which outweighs all the pretensions of verbal Christianity.

Sorrowful as is the result of letting the imagination carry away the soul, perhaps the effect of accepting divine truth in intellectualism is more so. A Christian holding the doctrine of death with Christ, and resurrection with Christ, in the understanding only, goes out from the sunlight of God’s presence into a land of deathlike coldness. If he transgresses, he exercises not his soul about his sin, but answers, “I am dead.” He covers his evil ways with an ice-like mantle of doctrine, and perhaps goes so far in moral distance from God as to say that his Christian character is of little moment compared with his standing in Christ. Alas, this is no fanciful picture; we have seen the tender fruits of God’s cultivation roughly trampled upon by men of this spirit. The doctrine has been boasted in, but the virtues which belong to it have been unheeded. It is, indeed, a vain thing to hold a doctrine in word only; at the best it is no better than the clear shining of the moon on a bleak snow-clad landscape, which cheers no heart, and excites no desire to remain under its influence.

If circumcision in its spiritual signification were rightly valued, such abuses of the truth of God would certainly find no place in the believer’s heart. To mortify our members is not a painless exercise. Saying, “We are dead,” is not mortifying; but it is to deny the wishes of our old nature because “we are dead.” “If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:13).

The mere fact of the people of Israel's entrance into Canaan did not constitute them at liberty before God. They were brought into the land of promise by the passage of the Jordan, but were not pronounced free by Jehovah until circumcised. "And the Lord said unto Joshua, This day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you. Wherefore the name of the place is called Gilgal (Rolling or Liberty) unto this day." God brought His people out of Egypt, through the Wilderness and into the Land of Promise, bade them to be circumcised, and then declared that He had made them free.

God's liberty for His people is that of His own making, and therefore perfect. It is what He thoroughly approves and delights in. And the means by which, step by step, He brings His people into the enjoyment of this liberty, is grace. If we are God's free men, it is evidently in the land of promise that we have liberty, for only in the fullness of God's favor can we experience His rolling away the reproach of our bondage.

Now every believer in Christ is spiritually over the river of death, and set down in the heavenly places; "all the people are clean passed over," for Christ is risen. It is then a solemn and heart-searching question that the believer may put to himself, Am I one of the Lord's free men? Not only risen with Christ and seated in Christ in the heavenly places, but practically free from the love of the world? Has the death of Christ severed my affections from the world, or is there, as Israel lusted at times for Egypt's food, still a lusting after its attractions? God Himself pronounced His people to be free; their freedom was the result of His own work. His gracious hand had so wrought for them that they had not only passed through the Jordan and entered the land of Canaan, but they had circumcised themselves.

Gilgal is the center of Israel's strength through all the conflicts recorded in the book before us. Thither they repaired; both after victory and defeat, there was the camp. And we need a continual returning to our Gilgal; both in the hour of sorrow, and in the time of prosperity. If we would be true men for the Lord, we must ever hasten to the secret place of strength – holy self-judgment in the presence of a once crucified and now ascended Savior.

As it is a principle so deeply important, let it be repeated, that God exhorts His people to carry out what actually exists. He says, "Ye are dead," "mortify therefore your members." God places death to our old nature as the starting point; man, in his religious teachings, exhorts to destroy the old nature in order that some day life may be attained, and thus drives souls to despair. Such taskmasters are more relentless than those who beat the bondsmen in Egypt when, their straw taken from them, they pleaded their powerlessness to make the bricks. Bitter is the cry which rises up to God from many of His beloved ones; some, afflicting their bodies in order to purge away their lusts; some, tortured with penances; some, rising up early and late taking rest; and all beaten by spiritual tyrants, and goaded on to their hopeless tasks, with "Ye be idle, ye be idle." Such are trying to destroy their old nature; not knowing that they have been crucified with Christ, and are dead; such are endeavoring to mortify themselves by their own strength, being ignorant of the power of the indwelling Spirit. "If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live." "The flesh profiteth nothing" (John 6:63).

It is marvelous, in the face of such plain teaching as that of the Epistles to the Colossians and the Ephesians, such spiritual bondsmen can submit to their thrall, unless the believer had a new nature, he would not be bidden to reckon himself (that is his old nature) dead. When the Christian imposes upon himself the bondage of carnal ordinances, subjects himself to a religious system, which addresses itself to the soul through his senses – through sights, and smells, and sounds – it is evidently not of faith nor of the Spirit of God. If, by the death of Christ, the Christian is severed from and dead to the rudiments (or elements) of the world, shall he, as if he were living in the world, be subject to ordinances which merely affect the senses of his old nature, "Touch not; taste not; handle not"? Shall he turn from his exalted Head in the heavens, from whom all nourishment is ministered, to such weak and beggarly elements as meats, drinks, holydays, new moons, or sabbaths? Who shall beguile the feeblest of God's free men into a false humility and worshipping of angels? This "show of wisdom" is after the commandments and traditions of men, and not after Christ.

The springs of the believer's life are in God, and not in man; and this simple, yet blessed truth (blessed beyond utterance to those who know experimentally somewhat of the workings of sin within), is the believer's strong tower. There is not a particle of intercourse with God through the channels of the old-Adam nature. When God made these channels they were lovely, and as originally formed, intercourse with God flowed through them. But, when Adam fell – when, in disobedience and independence, he ate of the forbidden fruit – the springs of his nature were corrupted, and the channels broke down. God has never purified the springs, neither has He repaired the channels. He leaves them in ruin. Now, from Christ in the heavens, as from a life-giving fountain, and through the Holy Spirit, as by a channel, nourishment is ministered to God's people on the earth. The heavenly water feeds the new nature which He has imparted to His people, it ministers nothing to the old nature – it never reaches it. Such as may have observed the wells dug about the sides of Italian hills, which receive their nourishment from the distant fountain, will understand our illustration. There during the long summer months, drought parches the valleys, and to supply the need of the fruit, the peasants dig wells about the hill sides. The wells receive their nourishment from the sky-girt mountain, from the heights of which the exhaustless fountain pours out its waters. The waters of the fountain are, we may say, the life of the wells. And the medium through which the water is received into the wells is a thread-like watercourse, humble to the eye, but all-important. This watercourse reaches from the mountain top to the wells, spanning gullies and edging gorges in its downward course, and brings, with unerring certainty, the bounty of the fountain down to the wells. Like the fountain is our Head in heaven, and like the watercourse, the blessed Spirit of God, who testifies of Him; and communicates of His fullness to God's people.

The Word of God teaches this doctrine, and the experience of the child of God witnesses to its truth. Appealing to this experience, we appeal to the Spirit's testimony to Christ within God's people. Now, what saith this voice? It speaks alone of Christ, Who is our Life, our Fountain, our Strength. Nothing of self, or from self, or in self, aids one bit in knowing, loving, or enjoying Christ; but, contrariwise, when self is put out of sight, reckoned dead, and forgotten, then the love of God and the power of God fill the earthen vessel. "We are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, who rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3).

What is it God would have His people use for their self-mortification? It is, we believe, the cross of Christ. Being risen with Him, we have grace to use the fact of His death, as the instrument of severance from what is of self and of the world. The Cross has proved our old man – self – judicially dead in "sight of God:" "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). When the believer, by God's grace, realizes that he is dead with Christ, there is no longer excuse given for the proneness of the old man to act contrary to God, or allowance for the workings of the flesh, or sanction to sinning. And so far as he walks with God in the power of the life of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, he has grace practically to refuse the inclinations of the flesh. The carnal mind is enmity to God still. The world which hated the Son of God, is the world still. Its religion, its rulers, its people, one and all, are opposed to Christ. But has the power of the Cross failed in the hearts

and lives of those who are dead to the world and alive to God?

It is vain to say, We are risen with Christ, and seated in Him in the heavenly places, if we walk here as men of the earth. “Ye are dead ... .mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.”

Principles of Spiritual Warfare: Joshua, Joshua 5:10-12: Communion With God

Joshua 5:10-12

“The children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho” (Josh. 5:10).

Exactly forty years before the children of Israel encamped at Gilgal they were slaves toiling in the house of bondage, and God had so arranged their entrance into Canaan, that the first feast they kept there was the remembrance of their deliverance.

The passover and the feast of the passover were distinct; one was the deliverance itself, the other the memorial of the deliverance. In the first, Israel were occupied with their escape, in the other, they meditated upon the means by which God had brought them out.

They now rejoiced before God in a manner impossible heretofore, for being in Canaan they had no destroying angel to fear as in Egypt. And for them who are in Christ Jesus, who have passed from death unto life, there is now no judgment. Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. Let us keep the feast; let us meditate with thanksgiving upon our ransom, and upon the dying love of our Saviour. God has given our conscience rest, and He would have our affections in constant exercise. In proportion as we contemplate the sacrifice of Christ, our hearts grow in communion with God the Father.

If we had not passed from death unto life we could not remember the death of the Lord Jesus, and the more we know of eternal life in Christ, the greater the value we set upon His death.

There was a testimony in the sight of God when His redeemed people, whom He had brought into the land, kept the passover feast. “And it shall be for a sign unto thee upon thine hand, and for a memorial between thine eyes” (Ex. 13:5-10). And in the remembrance of the death of Christ by His redeemed ones, who are set in Him in the heavenly places, God is glorified.

As Israel encamped in Gilgal, the place of perfect liberty, God spread this table for them in the presence of their enemies “in the plains of Jericho.”

But this was not all; “They did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the Passover ... 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). Until the land was entered the old corn could not be eaten. The old corn of the land figures the Lord Jesus risen from the dead. Risen with Him, we have entered in Him into the heavenly places, and He is the strength of our souls. If we would grow up into the apprehension of our heavenly inheritance, it must be by our communion with the ascended Saviour. He is our heavenly object, and we can only in any degree appreciate the riches of the “things above” by intimacy with Him through the grace and power of the Spirit.

The daily need of the believer casts him upon the Lord Jesus, who was once humbled and rejected here. We require suited grace for the day, and must go to Him, who has Himself passed through the wilderness, as the One who can succor and strengthen us, and thus we learn of Him as “the bread from heaven,” as the Manna.

As to the mortal body the believer is in the wilderness, but “your life is hid with Christ in God,” and the supplies for this life are all found in the person of Christ. We need to know Christ both as the Manna, and as the Old corn of the land.

Unleavened bread accompanies these feasts. “There shall no leavened bread be seen with thee, neither shall there be leaven seen with thee in all thy quarters.” “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.” It is impossible to realize the presence of Christ, to feed upon Him, and at the same time for wickedness to be sweet in the mouth, to be hidden under the tongue. When we have communion with Christ, this also is known in “the selfsame day.” Let us keep the feast with the “unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

Henceforth the land of Canaan supplies Israel with food, “they did eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan that year.”

But let us mark the divine order – the old corn first, the fruit of the land afterward; Christ first, the joys of heavenly things next.

Is there one who reads this page unmindful of heavenly blessings, having no relish for divine things? He has not yet tasted that the Lord is gracious. He is satisfied with the world. The full soul loatheth the honeycomb, so does the heart of the worldly man turn from Christ.

Israel’s feasts were held yearly, they were but fleeting shadows of the eternal substance. Our feasts are eternal. Our passover is “a feast to the Lord” “forever,” the heavenly corn of our heavenly land food for evermore.

Christian Truth: Volume 24, Captain of the Host of the Lord, The

Josh. 5:13-15; 6:1-5

We look at Joshua in the portion before us as a man of faith in whom the Spirit of Christ is, and we see him the spring and energy of Israel.

Joshua was by Jericho, surveying its walls rising up to heaven, and its brazen gates; and as Israel had no offensive weapons of war wherewith to throw down these defenses, how should this stronghold be won? Reason might suggest a thousand difficulties; God presents us with a sight of the man of faith alone with Himself, obtaining His mind as to the victory. The forces of the world are to us what the defenses of Jericho were to the nomad tribes of Israel. In ourselves we are impotent before them. With divine power all things are possible.

As Joshua lifted his eyes, he saw before him a man with a drawn sword in His hand. Here was the divine revelation to him, and thither he turned his eyes, not on the defenses of Jericho. In the energy of his soul, Joshua challenged the Stranger, who declared Himself to be the Captain, or Prince, of the host of Jehovah, whereon Joshua immediately fell on his face before Him, and sought His bidding.

God's resources are infinite, and He makes them known to us in Christ, according to His own glory and our need. To Moses He discovered Himself in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush, for His people were in the furnace of affliction, and of Him they were not consumed; "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His presence saved them" (Isa. 63:9); and on the holy ground of Jehovah's presence, with unshod feet, Moses received his mission of deliverance for Israel from Egypt's bondage. To Joshua, Jehovah revealed Himself in Christ, as the Prince of all power, as the Captain of the host of heaven, on behalf of Israel, His army; and with unshod feet, on the holy ground of the presence of the Lord, Joshua learned the way Jericho was to be overthrown, and gained the knowledge that Jehovah had given over to Israel, the city, its kings, and all its men of war. And worshiping at the feet of the Son of man risen from the dead, the soldier of Christ learns the end of the powers of evil and of this world.

As the supreme authority, the absolute power, of Christ our Lord engages the heart, faith increases, and we give heed to the exhortation, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might" (Eph. 6:10). To the Lord Jesus Christ, as man, all power is given in heaven and in earth (Matt. 18:18). God has put all things under His feet (Eph. 1:22). He, in heaven, "is the head of all principality and power" (Col. 2:10). True Christian conflict is for His glory and for His alone; hence, so far as the Christian is truly warring for Christ, the array of Satan's powers is against him. "We wrestle not," says the Scripture, "against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [heavenly] places." Eph. 6:12. In the presence of these mighty forces, as we recognize, by faith, the Captain of the Lord's host, and as we are strong in Him and in the power of His might, so we overcome.

The drawn sword had now taken the place of the outstretched rod. The rod was the emblem of divine guidance and deliverance out of Egypt, but the sword was that of divine guidance and victory in Canaan. No longer were Israel led as a flock; they were henceforth the army sent by God to overthrow the iniquity of Canaan. We greatly mistake Scripture if we confine our testimony to comfort and peace, for therein also are words of judgment and of woe. In the most emphatic way, at this time, out of the mouth of the Lord goes a sharp two-edged sword (Rev. 1:16); and decided and unmitigated judgment against evil is pronounced from heaven against iniquity. In the hastening day of the kingdom, when the heavens shall be opened, the Lord, the Faithful and the True, shall smite the nations with the sharp sword which goeth out of His mouth. (Rev. 19:15, 21.) The exceeding terribleness of God's wrath against sin, and the testimony to the judgment Christ will, by His word, execute against sinners, form part of Christian offensive warfare against this world. To render such testimony, we must have our hearts occupied with the revelation of Himself with the drawn sword, and this revelation is received at His feet. (Read Rev. 1.)

The whole of the solemn passage we are considering should be read as the verses are given in the heading of this article. In it this parenthesis occurs: "Now Jericho did shut up, and was shut up [margin] because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in." The whole passage gives us God's mind about the sword, the end of Jericho, and His way of bringing about its overthrow. The parenthesis states what was Jericho's condition; and occurring, as it does, between the statement of Joshua's worshiping on the holy ground of the divine Presence and the revelation concerning Jericho's end, it is most suggestive. We learn God's mind in the sanctuary of His presence; and, according as we are in His presence, so does He reveal His truth to us. He who became dead, lives to die no more; we bow at the feet of the Son of man in glory.

Where Joshua fell down, and where John fell down, let us fall down and worship. At His feet are revealed the reality of His sword and the judgment of the world. The history of evil, dark and dreadful as it is, is but a brief parenthesis in the purposes of God. A rebellious life, or the life of a rebellious world that goes on its course in resolute opposition to God, is a thing of a moment, viewed in the light of eternal ages. Indeed, the world's history is but the parenthesis of the creature's will, occurring in the midst of the divine purpose. How soon will all be over! Boast as the world does, or as a worldly man may do, in shutting God out, sudden destruction must come, and there will be no escape.

Observing the parenthetic verse, it is seen that the Captain of the Lord's host is Jehovah-Jesus, who gave Joshua directions as to the manner of Israel's warfare, and before a step was taken, laid out their mysterious career on the number of the days of a week. The number seven governed their proceedings; for priests, trumpets, days, and times, all were sevenfold. God has marked out His dealings with the earth into periods of sevens; from Genesis to Revelation, His ways with the earth in reference to the kingdom are thus divided; and each week we live proclaims to every man the history of time, and in the last moments of that history our lot is cast.

The array of Israel is also suggestive. The ark that has brought them into Canaan was the center of the armed host (v. 9), and so is Christ the center of the army of God's people, while before the ark went praise—the seven priests; and true it is, that in Christian warfare, praise sevenfold is in the front. The character of the praise too is significant, for each priest had the trump of gladness, the cornet of jubilee (not a ram's horn), the notes of which proclaimed freedom—liberty—the acceptable year of the Lord. These joyful sounds were to fall continually upon the ears of the men of Jericho, as the armed men encircled the city.

Such was the array of Israel, day by day, until the end. Let such be ours-Christ first, praise next, then work- a foolish spectacle to the world, it is true, but "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds." 2 Cor. 10:4.

Christian Truth: Volume 24, Mode of Warfare, The

Josh. 6:6-21

The action of Israel as the army of God begins immediately after the command is given by the Prince of the host of Jehovah. Up to this point the book of Joshua describes God's work in bringing His people into Canaan, and giving them of its food preparatorily to their active service in war. So the establishment of the Christian in grace is of necessity antecedent to his being an effective soldier of Christ. God's work for the

believer must be rested in, and His work in him must be unhindered, before the soldier of Christ is fit to fight for Him. A child of God, doubting his sonship, or engaged in spiritual struggles with himself, is not an effective soldier of Christ. He may wear the uniform, but he is unable to take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and wield it in the might of the Lord; for, so long as "I" is the burden of the soul, offensive warfare is impossible. "What I would, that do I not," "but the evil which I would not, that I do," is the expression of inward struggling to be free, and a proof that the standing in Christian liberty, without which spiritual conflict cannot be waged, is still not enjoyed.

Again, if Christian liberty be known as a matter of faith, through grace, there must be holy living in order to maintain spiritual conflict. A right state before God is requisite, as well as faith in our being blessed in Christ. Subjection to God and obedience to the Scriptures are necessities for true Christian warfare. We must walk with God if we would war for God. Suppose the Spirit who indwells us is striving with us because our ways are not pleasing to God, could we be truly contending for God at such a moment? Impossible. There may be a semblance of true conflict in such a case, but it will be but the semblance. Christian soldiership demands that there should be both faith in what God has wrought for us, and a yielding to His working in us.

Both the blessing of the believer in Christ and the healthy state of the Christian's soul, as seen in the types and figures in the book of Joshua, are preliminaries to the active warfare which now opens up. The passage of the Jordan showed us, in figure, the believer's entrance into the heavenly places; and Gilgal likewise figured his true place of liberty, while the partakings of the feasts of the passover, of the unleavened bread, and the corn of the land, proclaimed true feeding on Christ; and upon these great realities came the vision of the drawn sword and the commands relative to the overthrow of Jericho.

It would appear that Joshua gave his orders to Israel immediately upon receiving them from the Captain of the Lord's host. Faith is equally balanced in its energy and patience, for faith is simply carrying out the mind of God. To the priests the word of command was, "Take up the ark"; to the armed men, "Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the LORD."

Soldiers of Christ, our Lord is in heaven. Let us stir up our souls to faith. The Lord has promised the victory as He promised it to Israel. They believed Him; "by faith the walls of Jericho fell down." Faith grasps God's strength; "all things are possible to him that believeth." Let the soldier of Christ, at his Lord's bidding, go forth to fight for Him; and let him be as assured of victory as was Israel, before whom the ponderous walls fell down flat.

Soldiers of Christ, stir up the soul to courage! Christian courage tells upon adversaries as nothing else does. Christian courage is the first-born son of faith. Again, let us stir up our souls to hardness. Warriors do not fight upon featherbeds, nor stretched at ease in arm chairs; and the Christian soldier must expect hardship. Moreover he must not entangle himself with the affairs of this life, but please Him who has called him to be a soldier. Life's duties must be honorably performed, but we are forbidden to entangle ourselves with them. There are many "indispensables," as they are called, which are really entanglements, and which a Christian, zealous for Christ, learns to discard. He cannot afford to be occupied during the few hours of active service he is called to on earth, with things which once engrossed his thoughts and time. Like the racer, he lays aside every weight. Weights and entanglements are sore hindrances to Christian service. Anything that keeps the mind busy, to the exclusion of Christ's interests, should be suspected.

In Christian conflict, the armed men ever go on in the front; the gathering host make up the rear. God has always His front-rank men-men able to use the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God-men too who expose themselves to Satan's attacks.

A good soldier loves his profession, and a true Christian soldier loves Christian warfare; it is his joy, his delight, to take pleasure in hardships and weariness. He enjoys what featherbed Christians regard as self-inflicted penance, or as unnecessary trouble. Forward, ever forward, is his cry. It is no burden to him, but rather his happy service, to spend and to be spent for his Lord; it is heavenly rapture to him when sinners are made captive for Christ, when Satan-bound souls are loosed, and pass from death unto life, from the power of Satan to God. Idleness and ease are a distress to the one who is fired by eternal prospects, energized by the Holy Ghost, and constrained by Christ's love. "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" is his reply to the countless efforts to damp his ardor and to quench his zeal. Eternity, eternity, he whispers to himself, when his weary body almost resents carrying out the orders of his soul. Such a spirit marks the frontrank men. May God bring Christ's soldiers to the front; and especially, may the young Christian who reads this page, be fired by the prospects of eternity, and be filled with holy zeal the entire period of his short life below.

Expectation is the offspring of faith; small expectations are born of small faith; but when God is before the soul, expectation of blessing exists, and result follows. We do not say immediate result is always visible; but working for God without expecting Him to bless, is like sowing seed without looking for the harvest, or firing at a fortress without hoping to hit it.

An army without faith in its leaders is sure to be discomfited. Without faith in their Lord, Christ's soldiers strike no good blows. Alas for the pointless, aimless, self-satisfied routine which goes by the name of fighting for God! such parade duty is not warfare. The untutored eye may consider both very much alike; however, when men fall down wounded, and cry for mercy, we know it is not the effect of mere human energy, but the work of God the Holy Ghost.

Joshua gave orders for the day only: "Pass on, and compass the city, and let him that is armed pass on before the ark of the LORD." So all work of faith is day by day work, step by step progress; and this is the only true and happy way of living for God. In the happy satisfaction that they had obeyed God, Israel's first day ended-a comfort which we trust may be ours each one daily-and as to the rest, let the men of Jericho think as they please.

Early in the morning of the second day Joshua arose, and the priests took up the ark of the Lord. A fresh fact is now presented, and one which is of practical moment. The seven priests "went on continually, and blew with the trumpets." No voice was uttered by Israel, and the only sounds the army gave forth were the continual tramp of its many feet and the loud and penetrating blast of its trumpets-the grand herald notes of the kingdom of God. We may fairly assume that such a mode of warfare, such a continual trumpeting, was to the men of Jericho, shut up and secure within their defenses, as consummate folly as is the joy of the gospel to the infidel world. A huge army, betaking itself to marching round a strong city, and ever giving out such joyful sounds, was, to the eye and ear, fanaticism. No casting up of mounds, no construction of battering rams, no scaling ladders, nothing but the trumpets of jubilee! And what their blasts meant, the men of Jericho knew no more than does the world today understand the joy of the acceptable year of the Lord, and of the coming kingdom of Christ.

The notes of our trumpets of jubilee, like those of Israel, are few and simple: Christ is coming! Christ is coming! But they are joy notes, uttered from the heart, by true souls who long for the Lord and His return. Let the world man its great walls of infidelity and superstition, let it boast in its improvements and development; Christ is coming! Let reasoners say, Since the fathers fell asleep. all things continue as they were; Christ is coming! Let scoffers cry, Fanaticism! Be the life answer of the Christian, to all the arguments of unbelief, these notes of love and joy: Christ is coming!

The priests-the men whose service on this earth was the worship of Jehovah-blew the trumpets. So the joyful sound comes from worshiping souls. The doctrine of Christ's coming may exist in the mind, but joy in His coming arises solely when the love of Christ is sweet in the heart. Such is true testimony. The testimony of Israel to Jericho, through the priests going on continually, was one long jubilant sound. The force which lies in true Christian courage has already been spoken of; but true Christian joy is almost as great a witness of God's presence. Israel could not help singing their joy song at the Red Sea. They were free, their chains were gone, and their fears were buried with their oppressors in the deep waters of their deliverance. Neither can the soul, brought into the knowledge of perfect salvation in Christ, abstain from joy-yes, exuberant joy. And a healthy thing it is for older Christians to renew their youth in singing to the Lord, who has triumphed gloriously, in company with such as have just been brought by grace to God. As the stiffness and self-occupation of old age melt away in the presence of the simple joys of children, so do dryness and coldness in older Christians disappear in the presence of the joy God gives to the newborn babe in Christ. True, too true, Israel's song at the Red Sea died away into wilderness murmurings; but there was no dying away, no cessation of the joy notes of the jubilee trumpets all the seven days-all the perfect period of Israel's compassing of Jericho.

The joyful sound was not merely a song of their own freedom, but the continuous witness that the powers of evil were about to be overthrown, and that God's kingdom should come. The obedience of the silent host, and the continual sound of the trumpets proclaiming the acceptable year of the Lord, offer a very suggestive contemplation for Christian soldiers. Israel struck the blow that overwhelmed Jericho by blowing the trumpets.

The seventh day was marked by especial zeal and sevenfold energy. "And it came to pass on the seventh day, that they rose early about the dawning of the day, and compassed the city after the same manner seven times: only on that day they compassed the city seven times." We cannot doubt that this scene looks on to the end, to Israel's future, and the world kingdom of our Lord. It takes us on to the circumstances of the book of Revelation-to the approaching end. But in view thereof we may well stimulate our souls to renewed zeal and fresh patience. Patience is stamped upon the mode of Israel's warfare-that peculiar patience which goes on till God's time of victory arrives. "Persistency" is the word every Christian needs to have inscribed on his banner. There is a sevenfold, a perfect, trial of faith for the soldiers of Christ in the path of obedience; and the nearer the day, the more the need of earnest toil for the Lord. The nearer the end, the more call for diligence.

The power of Satan cannot be overcome save in divinely given strength; and, whatever the zeal and the fervor of God's saints, prayer is their constant need. "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance" (Eph. 6:18), is what God enjoins upon the soldier of Christ.

The shout of victory will soon be heard! The Lord will give the word, and then the defenses of evil will fall before Him. When men shall say, "Peace and safety," then sudden destruction will come upon them. In the prospect of that day, let every man go up straight before Him; for there is too much of following leaders, and too little of simple obedience to the Lord, among the soldiers of Jesus Christ. Men crowd on one another's steps, and the nobleness of individuality is lacking, few daring to brave the sneer of being peculiar in doing each his own duty in obedience to the word of the Lord.

Principles of Spiritual Warfare: Joshua, Joshua 5:13-15 and Joshua 6: Victory

Joshua 5:13-15; Joshua 6

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about seven days” (Heb. 11:30).

Much had to be done for Israel before God could use them as His army, as the passage of Jordan – the circumcision and Gilgal – the passover and the old corn of the land – have, one by one witnessed. The people now go forth to warfare. All the land was given them, but upon the express condition of conquering every foot of it, therefore their responsibility to enter into the fullness of their blessing would not cease until every foe in Canaan, every giant, and every walled city was subdued. Only when all this was done might they sit down and rest.

Joshua, fresh from the feasts of the passover and the first fruits, approaches Jericho, and sees the Captain of the Lord’s host, “with His sword drawn in his hand,” and, worshipping at His feet, hears that the city, its people, and its king are given into Israel’s hand, and learns also what weapons must be used in the warfare.

It should be noted that Joshua 6:1 is a parenthesis, occurring in the midst of the words of the Captain of the Lord’s host, which marks the hard and defiant spirit of Jericho; “It did shut up and was shut up” (margin), “none went out, and none came in.” They believed not (See Heb. 11:31). This description is, alas, only too true of the spirit which now governs the world. Are we then, day by day, taking our march of faith, despicable as it may seem in the eyes of worldly men, or are we not? Are we among the contemptible company which blows with the rams’ horns, or are we among the scoffers upon the high walls of the city of destruction?

Jericho is the world in figure. Egypt also is a figure of the world, but as the “house of bondage,” out of which God delivers the sinner by the blood of the Lamb. Jericho is the world as the city of destruction to which, as a soldier of Christ, and in the power of Christ’s resurrection, the believer comes to conquer.

The Lord had promised that Israel would be victorious. Their weapon of warfare was faith. “By faith the walls of Jericho fell down.” Faith lays hold of His strength with whom all things are possible, and thus “all things are possible to him that believeth.” If cities be “walled to heaven,” God sits upon heaven’s throne. If the believer’s antagonists be “the rulers of the darkness of this world,” the Lord of all is his strength. Therefore, whatever the enemies, as they are less than nothing before an almighty God, the soldier of Christ, if acting in reliance upon the Lord, goes forth in full assurance against them; “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” The hand of God is not

shortened, and He answers prayer for His people now as mightily as when, according to the faith of Israel, the walls of Jericho fell down: and those who count upon Him for everything, prove by their frequent victories, how well pleasing it is to God when His people place their confidence in Him. “Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.”

Joshua gave orders only for the day, although the Lord had allotted seven days for Israel’s work of faith. On the first day, he said, “Compass the city ... once,” and thus the final victory promised of the Lord, and not their own day’s march, occupied their minds. Let us leave results with God. If we are occupied with the present results of the work which our God has appointed to us, faith is scarcely in exercise. The climax to the believer’s work of faith, and the end to which we should look, is the final victory – the day of Jesus Christ.

Israel had to learn patience also in their work of faith, for they had to march seven days around Jericho, and upon the seventh day seven times. If they had not persistently marched on, the wall of Jericho would not have fallen down. And there is a seven-fold, a perfect, trial of faith for the soldier of Christ in his path of obedience. And the Lord frequently passes His people through the discipline of expectation, as He did Israel, that he may bring out the qualities of the soldier in them. “The trying of your faith worketh patience.”

Besides the unwavering faith, and the patience of Israel, there was diligence: “Joshua rose early in the morning,” and, on the seventh day, “they rose early about the dawning of the day.” Genuine faith, while it reposes calmly upon God, is never idle. The greater the faith of the soldier of Christ, the more vigorous his energy in his Captain’s work. But let us heed the divine order; faith first, energy next. Alas, the order is too frequently reversed. In such energy, self is the source of strength, and God is left out. Faith connects our souls with God, and we cannot exercise faith unless we are in communion with Him. It draws all strength from Him. It is an active, vigorous principle, which never loses sight of its object, yet, at the same time, it is patient.

Obedient to Joshua’s word, “Ye shall not shout, nor make any noise with your voice, neither shall any word proceed out of your mouth, until the day I bid you shout; then shall ye shout”; Israel marched around Jericho, and by their action expressed the obedience of their hearts. God’s mind ought to be readable in the lives of His people now. A Christian life is more convincing than sermons or books. And in this testimony, both the babe and the father in Christ bear part. Let none say he is too feeble, but let him learn of the army of Israel, where not only the “men of war,” but also “the gathering host” – the rearward – were bidden compass the city.

The sure result of faith in God is victory. As the trumpets continually sounded, it was as if Israel were proclaimed conquerors, or rather as if they proclaimed the hastening triumph. True, the day of jubilee did not occur until many years after Jericho’s fall, but the trumpets used upon the occasion had their significance, sounding forth triumphant faith in the face of defiant Jericho. The soldier of Christ has a song of victory even now – anticipative of his jubilee – and the Lord on high loves to hear it sung. We should not be behind the noble men of faith of by-gone times, for we know that everything which opposes itself – all that walls out Christ from the world, the power of this world’s god and king, everything, shall be subdued to our Lord. If we were to place our song and our praise, as it were, in the front, as did Israel; if we said to our hearts, “Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established,” we should rejoice over more enemies than we now do. Simple confidence in the Lord begins and ends conflict with thanksgiving; and if we realize that Christ is with us, as Israel carried the ark in their front, there must be praise. Would that the Lord’s host now presented as glorious a unity of faith, patience, diligence, obedience and triumph as did the people of Israel when compassing Jericho! Would that each believer in the prospect of the coming day, might obey his Captain’s command, and go up, let the path be rough or smooth, “Every man straight before him”!

This word, “Every man straight before him,” is peculiarly suited to our own day, when men herd on in one another’s steps, when the nobleness of individuality is so sorely lacking, and when few dare to brave the sneer of being peculiar in obeying God’s Word.

May we also never forget that this world is the City of Destruction, and, remembering this, give all heed to the solemn warning which is contained in Joshua’s curse upon him who would rebuild Jericho!

Christian Truth: Volume 25, Victory, Lessons in

Josh. 8:1-28

So long as Israel's sin remained unconfessed (see chap. 7), it remained unforgiven; and consequently they had no strength to war for Jehovah. He was not with them, for the sin in their camp had separated between them and their God (Isa. 59:2); but having now confessed and forsaken their sin, God had put it away. Some of God's people spend months- nay, years-of their lifetime in a condition of spiritual inaction, their hearts like water, and themselves afar from the knowledge of God's mind! Let there be but a hair's breadth severing the telephone line, and we cannot converse with our friends. Thus does sin separate between God and His people. Not indeed that God foregoes His grace toward His own, or fails to bring them safely home; but here on earth, during this lifetime, unconfessed sin breaks into the communication of God's mind to us, and to it is due the absence of divine power in us, and hence ineffective soldier-ship.

So long as communion with God is broken, courage for Him is lacking. Spiritual courage is the consequence of faith in God, and active faith follows communion with Him. Abraham walked with God, and God said, "Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do?" Upon the mind of God being communicated to the servant, the servant acts in faith, and gains the victory. Unfaithful hearts, proud self-reliant spirits, occasion defeat in the Lord's work. Jehovah's word, "Neither will I be with you any more," is a solemn sentence for the Christian soldier, and until the evil God exposes be cast out from the midst of His people, defeat follows their steps. The really effective soldier of Christ is not only a constant and energetic worker for God, he is also a truly humble and dependent man walking with God. Unless the Christian be in a right state before God, the Spirit is grieved, and His fire in the soul is quenched. True power in the believer is not his own might, but God's strength in him; he is but a vessel filled by the Lord.

Men once used for God are at times set aside by God; they go on as of old in their work, but win no victories; they essay, like Samson, to shake themselves, but the Philistines obtain the mastery. The story of Ai unveils the cause—hidden evil is in the camp. Again these selfsame servants arise, and, after a period of defeat, become once more vessels of power with God and with men. The story of Ai again lets us into the secret: they have been before God, and have humbled themselves. As He has discovered to them the cause of their failure, so they have judged themselves in His sight, casting out the evil thing from among them; and once more God gives them courage to go forward, granting

victory to their efforts.

Having turned from the fierceness of Hi s anger against His people Israel, the Lord encouraged Joshua to go forward, saying, "Fear not, neither be thou dismayed: take all the people of war with thee, and arise, go up to Ai." Reassuring indeed were God's words; recalling His first gracious exhortation and encouragement, victory was ensured. But how differently was the battle to be fought from the way in which Israel had at first proposed to overthrow the heap of ruins, Ai. They had said, "Make not all the people to labor thither"; the Lord said, "Take all the people of war"; and as the thousands of Israel arose to battle, each soldier had to remember that small foes cannot be made light of, for of Jehovah alone was Israel's strength and courage.

"Labor thither" all Israel did—some to the ambush, others to the front—for when we lightly make errors, and sin willfully in our service, God enforces upon us by toil and labor those lessons we neglected, even though He has shown us our errors and pardoned our ways. And not only did Israel labor up to Ai, but God made them victorious through humiliation; by apparent defeat, by fleeing before their foes, they won their success. Falls and failures teach the believer to walk with diffidence. He who is not of a chastened spirit after a fall or a failure, has not thoroughly repented of the iniquity of his sin; neither is God truly with the man who is not of a chastened spirit, "for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

Hidden work, that which goes on in the heart with God, the world sees not. God's ways with His people baffle all human calculations. The foe reckons merely on human might; of the secret things which render God's hand against His saints in their path of service and warfare, the world concerns itself not. We see this principle in the way the king of Ai came out against Israel. He saw no change in them. To his eye, they were the selfsame people who had fled before him a day or two previously; therefore he imagined they would fall into his hands as easily as before. He wist not that the Lord was among them. On he came, but only to meet his doom and to complete the destruction of his city. Joshua's outstretched javelin was the signal to Israel, and the sign of a war which cannot cease till every foe is cast down and destroyed.

Little did the heathen king dream what was the result of God's secret work in the camp, accomplished through His dealings with them in government and in rebuke. Israel was a different people from what they had been a few days previously; their hands were clean and their hearts were strong. What the spirit of pride designates as the folly of fasting and prayer, had been favorable in the eye of the Holy One, though to human gaze it had been but degradation of self. Spiritual movements are incomprehensible to the world- all that it recognizes is the result of the movement. May God's hidden works in the hearts of His people deepen and increase; may His soldiers be alone with Him in the camp, and, judging themselves and purifying themselves from iniquity, find God among them, and at His bidding come forth to victory, their eyes upon the outstretched spear of their Leader.

Principles of Spiritual Warfare: Joshua, Joshua 8:30-35: The Word of God

Joshua 8:30-35

“Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart” (Psa. 119:2).

The discipline Israel had suffered yielded the peaceable fruits of righteousness; they were earnest to obey God’s Word. This is seen in Joshua’s command to bury the body of Ai’s king before sundown, lest by its remaining upon the tree the land should become defiled (Deut. 21:23). But besides this, they now repaired to Ebal and Gerizim, and set up the stones whereon the law was written.

The Lord had, by Moses, instructed Israel to set up the stones upon their entrance into Canaan; He had pointed out the mountains where they should put the blessing and the curse consequent upon their obedience and disobedience to His Word, and had given them to know that by setting up the words of His law they placed themselves under its authority, and became His willing people. (See Deut. 11:29-30, and Deut. 27:9-10.)

Joshua’s faith is expressed in dedicating the first altar erected by Israel in Canaan to “the Lord God of Israel.” This altar was built of unhewn stones, not “polluted” by iron tool, stones which no human hand had shapen. It was for burnt-offering and for peace-offering, and no mention is made of sin-offerings sacrificed upon it. The sacrifice offered upon it would therefore imply, that Israel hearkened to God’s Word as worshippers, and as in communion with Him. The altar was built upon Mount Ebal, from which the Amens responding to the curses for breaking the law were uttered.

They also set up great stones upon the mount, plastered them with plaster, and wrote thereon the words of the law (Deut. 27:1-2). Having done this the Levites surrounded the ark in the valley between the mountains and read the words of the law, the whole host of Israel filling the hillsides (Josh. 8:33). The elders of Israel, the officers and their judges; “The stranger, as he that was born among them”; the infant and the warrior, men, women, and children; none were absent. All this vast company were gathered together, that, by solemn Amens uttered before God, they might bow to His Word, and take upon them its responsibility.

What a lesson does this assembled multitude teach us in thus manifesting their obedient honoring of God’s Word. Alas! the Word of God is too little revered, too little obeyed by His people now. Human ideas are allowed to stand beside it; it is not always the final appeal as well as the strength and food of God’s people. Their Amen does not always arise heavenwards when its precepts are uttered.

The curses were read with a loud voice by the Levites, and, as each curse for disobedience sounded in Israel’s ears, the hundreds of thousands assembled upon Mount Ebal responded with unanimous Amens. Twelve times they said “Amen” to the twelve times uttered curses, and the twelfth, “Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them,” included every possible neglect or failure. Blessings also were read (Josh. 8:33-34), but where were the Amens sounding from Mount Gerizim? Scripture is silent. It records not one responsive “So be it” to blessings earned by the obedience of fallen man. (Read Deut. 27.) Man may justly assent to “all the judgments” (Ex. 24:3) of God’s law, but they who remain under the law remain under its curse (Gal. 3:10).

The standing of the Christian presents a striking contrast to that of Israel in this scene. Christ has, by His death, made His people free, for they have died to the law in Him. His cross has severed them from the law’s power and dominion, for the law addresses not its demands to men

who are dead: “My brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ” (Rom. 7:4).

The covenant inscribed upon the plaster covered stones, Paul said, eighteen hundred years ago, “decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” (Heb. 8:13), but the covenant of grace is changeless and eternal. “If that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second” (Heb. 8:7). But that of grace is perfect before God. The Lord Jesus is the mediator thereof. His own precious blood has confirmed it.

Our blessings are not entrusted to our own custody, but are in the safe and eternal keeping of God our Father Himself, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings “in Christ.”

Our altar of thanksgiving and worship is, therefore, not set, as was Israel’s, upon an Ebal – a mount of curses – for “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.”

But the contrast reaches to our responsibility as well as to our blessings. God requires holiness of His people in accordance with the revelation which He gives them thus, Israel’s standard of holiness was the law, the Christian’s standard is Christ. Inasmuch as our blessings are greater than were Israel’s, so is our responsibility.

The Christian is beloved in sovereign grace and is bidden obey the truth because he is so beloved, not lest being disobedient he should forfeit the goodness shown him. (Compare Rom. 12:1-2, with Deut. 11:26-28.) Those who say they are Christians are professedly under the authority of the Lord Jesus, and their responsibility is to walk as He walked. “He that saith he abideth in Him ought also so to walk, even as He walked” (1 John 2:6). Such are subject to the precepts of the Word, and if the Christian obeys not the word of God he belies his Christianity. “He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:4). It is the “reasonable service” of those who are brought into the fullness of God’s blessing to present their “bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.” Because their sins are forgiven for His name’s sake, it is for them to seek and to do those things which are pleasing in the sight of God. “For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3).

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