Judges - Commentaries by Unknown Author

Christian Treasury: Volume 8, Sweeter Than Honey

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By C. H. Macintosh

In Judg. 14:5-9, we find that Samson was pursuing his journey, and when he came to the vineyards of Timnath "behold, a young lion roared against him." So it was when Jesus came into the world, He found Satan going about as a roaring lion and he roared, too, against Him.

How crafty was his device to put the young child to death through the proclamation of Herod the king to slay all the young children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under! How the roaring of the lion is heard in this.

Again, how he tried to overcome the Savior by direct temptation, as well as by the hatred of men, their scorn, rejection, and snares to catch something out of His mouth that they might accuse Him. In how many ways the lion roared against Him! But the tongues of the despising Pharisees, as well as of the infidel Sadducees and Herodians, were silenced by Him, and all Satan's temptations resisted.

We are told in this typical narrative that "the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him [Samson], and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand." (v. 6.) So the Lord Jesus not only resisted Satan, but destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. This He did, not by taking human weapons, for instead of taking anything in His hand, He was crucified through weakness; His hands and feet were pierced. It was through death that He triumphed over Satan.

He went into death for us, even the death of the cross to pay the penalty of our sins. By going through death and rising out of it triumphantly, He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. Had Jesus remained in death, Satan would have gained the victory, but Christ rising out of death thus set aside victoriously Satan's power, and gave us deliverance from the fear of death. Thus death is abolished and Satan vanquished for all who believe on the Son of God.

Though Satan is still the deceiver of the world, and the accuser of the brethren, and his messengers are allowed of the Lord to buffet the Lord's servants, yet nothing of the kind is permitted unless for our benefit. "All things work together for good to them that love God." What a triumph Christ accomplished, when He did by Himself purge our sins, and sat down on the right hand of God!

We are told that after a time Samson "turned aside to see the carcass of the lion: and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion." Do not those who look back and contemplate the finished work of Jesus on the cross, and His triumphant work in resurrection, find sweetness and comfort to their souls? Surely we triumph in His triumphs. We there see that God is for us, and "if God be for us, who can be against us?”

We are reminded of peace made, righteousness established, justice satisfied, sins judged and put away, God glorified, and Satan vanquished. Thus we are forgiven, delivered, redeemed, and forever objects of divine favor and blessing. This gives us comfort beyond all else. It is sweetness indeed, so that with such thoughts we can truly exclaim, "What is sweeter than honey?”

When the soul is thus happy, it cannot but wish others to participate in the same blessings. Samson, having found and enjoyed the honey, is at once prompted to communicate the blessing to others. We are told that he "went on eating." He fed as he walked, and the honey out of the carcass of the vanquished lion strengthened him as well as comforted him. When he came to his father and mother, he gave to them and they did eat.

How significant is all this! How it reminds us that the very essence of practical Christianity is caring for the blessing of others. This is like Christ. It has often been said that in the gospels you never find Christ doing anything for Himself. He loved His enemies, prayed for His murderers, went about doing good, and died for the ungodly. To the man named "Legion," out of whom He had cast many devils, He said, "Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee."

And we are told that “he went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.” Luke 8:30, 39. Are we not also instructed by an apostle to "look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others"? But we must taste and know the goodness of the Lord in our own souls, before we can communicate sweetness and comfort to others. The principle is surely not less true in us than it was in apostolic days that we comfort others "by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." 2 Cor. 1:4.

Things New and Old: Volume 24, What Is Sweeter Than Honey?

We find, all through the Old Testament scriptures, Christ and His death, and triumphs, every now and then, in some way or other, brought before us; and we also sometimes find the results which necessarily flow from acquaintance with His work.

The great comfort to us is that it is a finished work. Nothing more is to be done for the remission of sins, or to give us title to glory. We have to do with a Person who has suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. We have to do with a victorious Savior, and, through faith, we can now triumph in His triumphs; we can say, “Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” What a victory!

In the verses before us, we find that Samson was pursuing his journey, and when he came to the vineyards of Timnath, that “behold a young lion roared against him.” So it was when Jesus came into the world, He found Satan going about as a roaring lion, and he roared too against Him. How crafty was his device to put the young child to death, through the proclamation of Herod the king to slay “all the young children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under!” How the roaring of the lion is heard in this! Again, how he tried to overcome the Savior by direct temptation, as well as by the hatred of men, their scorn, rejection, and snares to catch something out of His mouth that they might accuse Him! In how many ways the lion roared against Him! But the tongues of the despising Pharisees, as well as of the infidel Sadducees and Herodians were silenced by Him, and all Satan’s temptations resisted.

And more. We are told in this typical narrative that “the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him [Samson], and he rent him as he would have rent a kid, and he had nothing in his hand.” (Ver. 6.) So the Lord Jesus not only resisted Satan, but destroyed him that hath the power of death, that is the devil. This he did, not by taking human weapons, for instead of taking anything in His hand, He was crucified through weakness, His hands and feet were pierced; but it was through death that He triumphed over Satan. He went into death for us, even the death of the cross, to pay the penalty due to our sins, and by going through death, rising out of it triumphantly, He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil. Had Jesus remained in death, Satan would have gained the victory; but Christ rising out of death thus set aside victoriously Satan’s power, and gave us deliverance from the fear of death. Thus death is abolished, and Satan vanquished for all who believe on the Son of God. Though Satan is still the deceiver of the world, and the accuser of the brethren, and his messengers are allowed of the Lord to buffet the Lord’s servants, yet nothing of the kind is permitted unless for our benefit, so that “all things work together for good to them that love God.” What a triumph did Christ accomplish, when He did by Himself purge our sins, and sat down on the right hand of God!

We are further told that “after a time,” Samson “turned aside to see the carcass of the lion,” and “behold there was honey in the carcass of the lion.” And do not those who look back and contemplate the finished work of Jesus on the cross, and His triumphant work in resurrection, find sweetness and comfort to their souls? Surely we triumph in His triumphs. We there see that God is for us, and “if God be for us who can be against us?” We are reminded of peace made, righteousness established, justice satisfied, sins judged and put away, God glorified, and Satan vanquished; thus we are forgiven, delivered, redeemed, and forever objects of divine favor and blessing. This gives us comfort beyond all else. It is sweetness indeed; so that with such thoughts we can truly exclaim, “What is sweeter than honey?”

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Bible Treasury: Volume N12, Judges, Lessons From the Book of

“But his father and his mother knew not that it was of Jehovah, that he [Samson] sought an occasion against the Philistines” (Judg. 14:4).

Now that the occasion calls for it, one may notice by the way the transparent boldness of Scripture, as wonderfully instructive as the reserve we have already remarked. If man had the writing of the story, would he have dared to speak out thus plainly? I doubt that any believer, without inspiration, would have felt it desirable to write that verse, and many more, as God has done it. If unveiling the fact at all, he would have apologized for it, denounced its evil to clear himself, spoken. much perhaps of God's permitting and overruling. Now I am far from denying that it is right for us to feel the pain and shame of Samson's ways. But there is one thing that God's Spirit always assumes—the perfect goodness and the unswerving holiness of God. And this, beyond all doubt or fear, we are entitled always to keep before our hearts in reading the Bible.

Never then let the breath of suspicion enter your soul. Invariably, when you listen to the written word of God, range yourself on His side. You will never understand the Bible otherwise. You may be tried; but be assured that you will be helped out of the trial. The day may come when nobody appears to lend you a helping hand. What is to become of you then? Once allow your soul to be sullied by judging those living oracles, and real faith in the Bible is gone as far as you are concerned. If I do not trust it in everything, I can trust it in nothing.

So dangerous is apt to be the reaction against one ever so honest; the more you have trusted, when you begin to doubt, the worse it is apt to be, even with poor erring man, who knows not what a serious thing it is. Nor ought any one to allow a suspicion until he has the certainty of that which can be accounted for in no way save by guilt. And this, I need scarce say, is still more due on the score of brotherly relation and divine love, not merely on the ground of that which we might expect for our own souls.

But when God and His word are in question, it ought to be a simple matter for a child of God. How often it is ourselves who make the difficulties of which the enemy greedily avails himself against our own souls and His glory! For objections against scripture are always the creation of unbelief. Difficulties, where they exist for us, should only exercise faith in God. The word of God is always in itself not only right, but fraught with light. It makes wise the simple; it enlightens the eyes. “The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.”

Undoubtedly there are many things in scripture of which we are ignorant; but then we are not entitled to interpret the word of God by ourselves. There is such a thing as to be taught of God. The Holy Ghost is given for this as for other purposes. It may often be, doubtless, that we are obliged to wait, and a wholesome thing too for our souls it should be. It is well sometimes for all those who teach that they should be obliged to learn; well that they should be forced to feel that they do not know; an excellent moral lesson that they should confess it—not only

be conscious of it, but own it; for indeed the necessary claim of scripture is that it be confided in as the word of God, though it does not thence follow that we are competent to explain all. By the Holy Spirit only can we enter in and enjoy.

It is not here meant that there is any special difficulty in that which has been the occasion of these general remarks; still less is it implied that he who speaks makes any pretension to know anything as he ought to know, more than those he sees around him. If through the unction from the Holy One we know all, it is equally true that we all are but learners.

Again, it is not of course any attainment of mine that leads me to speak as I have done now. If I have spoken strongly, it is only, I trust, what becomes every believer. I have taken no ground beyond your own, my brethren; but surely this is a ground that calls you to assert the very same inestimable privilege that I boast as by grace a man of faith. It is not the vanity of setting up oneself as possessed of exclusive powers or special means of attaining or explaining anything; for I should distrust any one who pretended to anything of the sort, no matter who or where he might be. But that which does good to every saint and to every soul, is the unqualified confidence in God and His word, which, if it does not reproduce itself in hearts purified by faith, at least deals with the consciences of all others till utterly blinded by Satan. Nor are you thus called to believe anything like an extravagance, though it surely would be so if the Bible were a human book, and so to be treated like any other, which after all even infidels do not: witness their occupation with it and zeal against it. Who troubles himself with the Koran or the Shastres, save their votaries?

But scripture claims always to be the word of God—never the word of Isaiah or Ezekiel, of Peter or Paul (1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Peter 3:15, 16); for, whatever the instrument may be, it is as truly God's word as if the Holy Ghost had written it without a single instrumental means. If this be submitted to (and you might more consistently reject the Bible altogether, if you do not submit), one sees the hollowness and falsehood of sitting in judgment upon it; for who can question that to doubt that which comes directly from God Himself would be to take the place, not merely of an unbeliever, but of a blasphemer or an atheist? And if unbelief be probed home, it comes to this: it is a virtual denial of God's veracity, of His revelation, if not of His being.

Eastern Manners and Customs Illustrating Various Bible Passages, Eastern Manners and Customs: "Grinding in the Prison House"; "Put Out His Eyes"

"He did grind in the prison house."-Judg. 16:21.

GRINDING in the prison house was performing the task of a menial slave, of course. If we are to suppose Samson working at a hand mill, then there was a spice of that kind of humiliation in his labor which consisted in degrading the mighty hero to the place and character of a woman: a thing in which the ancient Orientals, like every other people of imperfect civilization, greatly delighted. Illustrations of this point are to be derived abundantly from the old Greek writers, unmistakable in character. But it is more probable that Samson was degraded to the state of a beast, and made to turn such a mill as that alluded to in, say, Luke 17:2: that is, a mill usually turned by asses or mules. It is quite in accordance with the known treatment of captives in the ancient east, to harness them like beasts, and make them turn a mill or windlass, or perform any labor of draft or burden.

The prison house, in this case, was probably the open court surrounded by the prison buildings, such as is still to be seen in the east.-Professor Isaac PL. Hall.

" The Philistines took him and put out his eyes."-Judg. 16:21.

TO disable a rival, not to mention an enemy (as here) by boring out his eyes, has ever been a common expedient in the East. Even to-day it is not unknown. In Persia, it is said by competent witnesses, children of royal blood are accustomed to a kind of game of blindfold whose ostensible purpose is to familiarize them with possible future blindness of the sort. We need not go outside the Bible to find other illustrations, but, if we wish, there are many others to be found, both in sculpture, and in ancient writings. Nor is it so very long ago that the thing was known among the Western nations.-Professor Isaac W. Hall.

To Every Man His Work, Snares of the Lord's Servant, The

" The Philistines be upon thee, Samson." (Judg. 16: 4-21).

The condition of Israel, portrayed in the book of Judges, is a picture of that of the Lord's people to-day. Both are found in a place of blessing, to which they have been brought by the goodness of God, and both have fallen into a sad condition through their sin and unfaithfulness. In both, the individual is called to rise above the low condition of the many, and to contend for the Lord's glory and the blessing of His people.

Samson was alone in Israel. To-day many are afraid to stand alone for God. They look round for precedent and example, for human companionship, instead of looking to God alone for guidance and strength to serve Him.

How often the words of Judah (Judg. 15: 2) are echoed to-day: " Know-est thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us? What is this that thou hast done unto us? " If a man seek to serve the Lord in devotedness and energy, even christians will discourage him, because it disturbs their dishonorable ease. They speak of prudence, but the Lord says " Thou hast left thy first love." (Rev. 2: 4.)

When the Holy Ghost descended on the day of Pentecost there appeared tongues as of fire and it sat on each of them. He appeared as a dove when He descended upon Jesus, but after Jesus was glorified it was as tongues as of fire to signify energy, enthusiasm, burning zeal for Christ. A wonderful thing happened.

An invincible power took up its abode in men on the earth, and was to change the lives of millions. The gates of Hades could not prevail against the power of the risen Christ. This power is available to each of us by faith. We are now not pleading for the wild fervor of the fanatic

who is driven by his own imaginings to all kinds of extremes unsanctioned by the Word, or for the shallow enthusiasm of those who anon with joy receive the Word but because they have no root, in time of temptation they wither away. We plead for the sustained ardor that draws its constant inspiration from Christ in glory, and that need never fail while He is there and His Spirit here. Sever that ardor from Him and it loses its power and heavenly character. It either fades out or goes into foolish extravagance.

The christian is not an ordinary man. He is called to complete devotedness to God. " They which live should not henceforth live unto themselves but unto Him which died for them, and rose again."

(2 Cor. 5: 15.) This is the measure of the devotedness that the Lord has a right to expect from His own, but to live up to it may involve the reproaches even of fellow-believers.

The Nazarite (Num. 6) was to have long hair, which speaks of confessed weakness and dependence, to drink no wine, that which typifies the joys of the natural man, and to avoid contact with a dead body, symbolic of that which is defiling and unsuited to God. Samson was a Nazarite from his birth, but particular emphasis is laid upon his long hair as the secret of his strength. " If a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him." (1 Cor. 2:14). The courage and strength of a christian should be of a different order from those of the natural man. In the latter the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life play their part. In the christian self should be consciously weak and faith relying on Christ alone. Where the secret of strength is maintained the man of God may perform feats of courage and endurance beyond all that is of nature. This is the lesson of Heb. 2, and of the story of Samson.

Samson had serious faults even when his secret was kept and his strength unimpaired. This tells us of the Lord's faithfulness even when we are unfaithful, but his trifling with the enemy took him into danger and eventually led to his undoing. Christian, beware! Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. The beginnings of departure from the Lord are subtle.

Samson, trifling with the enemy but still keeping his secret, suggests that Delilah should bind him with seven withs or strings that have never been dried. Some peculiar strength may reside in those bonds which still have the greenness or freshness of nature in them. But Samson rises from sleep at the shout of danger and the divine power dwelling within him breaks the withs as a thread of tow is broken when it toucheth the fire. The green withs would appear to speak of the power of nature, natural affections and desires used by the adversary to hinder the testimony. One recalls that the Lord Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost was led by the Spirit into the wilderness and after forty days without food was tempted as regards the satisfaction of the needs of His body. The same Spirit now indwells the believer, although alas often sadly grieved. Elsewhere the Lord would not allow natural relationships, beautifully maintained in their proper place, to hinder His Father's business (Luke 2: 45 and Mark 3: 31-35). " If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple." Luke 14: 26.

One might speak of missionaries and martyrs who have triumphed in this way in the power of the Holy Ghost. In the year 202 A.D. Perpetua, a christian woman of noble birth, twenty-two years of age, was led before the Roman Governor of Carthage. Her aged father, a pagan, brought her infant son in his arms and stood before her. " Have pity on thy father's gray hairs," said the governor. " Have pity on thy helpless child. Offer sacrifice for the welfare of the Emperor." " That I cannot do," she answered. " I am a christian." Shortly after, singing a psalm she entered the amphitheater to be tossed by a cow and so to enter the Lord's presence.

Perhaps the affections of a young disciple are engaged with one who loves not the Lord. The power of nature is strong, so strong as to appear irresistible, even as seven green withs. But the One Who claims the entire life can give the power to triumph over everything that the enemy would bring in to hinder. Alas how we fail in these things little and big, because we forget what we Nazarites are to be to the Lord.

Secondly, Samson invites Delilah to bind him with new ropes never used for work before, but these too are broken like threads. Here the enemy tries to ensnare the man of God with that which is new or untried. Such are the attractions of the modern world, its many subtle devices to engage the heart and to give the christian no time for reading, meditation, prayer and service. But the power of the Holy Ghost in the dependent child of God can triumph over these and fix the eye on Jesus Christ the Same yesterday and to-day and forever. With so much to see, to know, and to do, the world looks more attractive to-day than ever before, but true life-eternal life-is " to know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ Whom Thou hast sent." Divine spiritual energy is necessary if the christian is not to be deprived of his soul's sustenance to-day.

Thirdly, Delilah weaves his hair with the web and fastens it with the pin, but Samson awakens out of sleep and goes away with the pin of the beam and with the web. The passage of the shuttle in Job. 7. is symbolic of the fleeting days of our lives, and in Isa. 38 the threatened cutting off of Hezekiah's life is likened to the action of a weaver in separating the web from the thrum or fringe of threads remaining attached to the loom when the work is complete. In a less figurative way the web is plainly suggestive of days of toil, the routine of our avocations. The lesson would appear to be that although the christian finds his weakness interwoven with the circumstances of his daily life, its necessities and duties, he is to rise up in the power of the Holy Spirit and bear himself in the place where God has put him for God's glory. He is not to allow the testimony to be hindered by his circumstances, but to make circumstances the very means of glorifying God. Thus his hair remains in the web and yet he is the Lord's freeman. One might say, " My position is so difficult. There is so much opposition in the office and I am so prone to failure myself that I am fain to keep silence. Another who has a business of his own is much better placed to serve the Lord." All such suggestions are the wiles of Delilah. There is divine, overcoming,, strength for the dependent one.

Then comes the sad fall. Samson yields up his secret to the enemy and is undone. Even so is it with the christian who tries to make the world a third party with God and himself. His confessed weakness is his strength through dependence and communion with the Lord. He cannot share divine secrets with the world, as the world, without losing the power of them himself.

He that is spiritual discerns all things and he himself is discerned of no one (1 Cor. 2: 15). He has spiritual intelligence to discern the true character of things, but to the world he is inexplicable, also its praise and blame are nothing to him.

But if the christian tries to make the best of both worlds-to stand for the truth and yet to cultivate the approval of the ungodly, he will find that his testimony has lost its power and the world itself does not respect him.

Once a Samson, called Martin Luther, was summoned to Worms to stand before the great ones of the earth. " There sat Charles, sovereign of half the world. And there on either side of him were ranged the peers and potentates of the German empire-bishops and archbishops,

cardinals in their scarlet robes, papal nuncios in their official magnificence, ambassadors from the mightiest kingdoms of christendom, to say nothing of deputies and officials. Such was the assembly of the States-General at Worms. And gathered, the reader may ask, for what? It was really to hear the trial and judge the son of a poor miner. Dressed in his monk's frock and hood, pale-faced and worn with the fatigues and hazards of his recent life, he stood silent and self-possessed in the midst of more than five thousand spectators. ' Yet prophet-like that lone one stood, with dauntless words and high,' answering all questions with force and modesty."

When he was asked whether he would retract his writings he desired time for consideration that he might frame his answer aright. " One day was granted. Whatever may have been Luther's reason for this request we need not stay to inquire: one thing is certain, that it was overruled by God to discover and reveal the secret springs of Luther's strength and courage, and the strength and courage of faith in all ages. That wonderful prayer which was offered up shortly before his second appearing, is the most precious document in the whole history of the reformation.

" For a moment Luther felt troubled; his eye was off the blessed Lord; he was thinking of the many great princes before whom he had to stand; his faith grew weak; he was like Peter when he looked at the waves in place of the person of Christ; he felt as if he would sink. In this state of soul he fell on his face and groaned deep thoughts which could not be uttered. It was the Spirit making intercession for him. A friend hearing his distress, listened and was privileged to hear the broken cries of a broken heart ascending to the throne of God.

" Luther was but emerging from the darkness of superstition; he had not fully learned the blessed truth of death and resurrection, of his oneness with Christ, of his acceptance in the Beloved. But his nearness to God, the power of his prayer, and the reality of his communion, refresh our hearts after an interval of three hundred years." The next day he gave the answer that shook the power of the papacy and secured the triumph of the reformation.

How can you walk in the Spirit to-day? By getting into the Lord's presence like Luther, confessing your need of Him every moment and seeking His grace, feeding on His Word and walking in communion with Him. He is able to make all grace abound towards you, able to keep you from falling, able to save to the uttermost, able to do exceeding abundantly above all that you ask or think.

The Spirit does not occupy us with Himself so much as with Christ the Object of faith above. This is walking in the Spirit. This is invincible strength to serve Him without help of man. But " the children of Ephraim, armed and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle." (Psa. 78: 9). When we reach the glory we will have to own that the sinews of war were fully provided and that we failed to use them, even as Israel refused to go up to take the land at God's command (Num. 14.).

" Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." (Eph. 6: 10-13).

Scripture Queries and Answers, Moses or Manasseh?

Q.-Judg. 18:30. The Revised Version substitutes " Moses " for " Manasseh " in this verse. Has this change good authority? INQUIRER.

A.—The R. V. is not without good reason for the change from " Manasseh " to " Moses." Even D. Kimchi, a famous Rabbi, allowed that the copyists were ashamed that a grandson of the legislator should have sunk into becoming the priest of an idol, and sought to conceal the fact by the substitution of " Manasseh." De Rossi as well as Kennicott have the witness of MSS. for the true reading. Even in the Masoretic text there is the remarkable and suspicious circumstance that the " n " is written above the proper line. Now this is the only letter in the unpointed Hebrew, by which the one name differs from the other.

It may be added that the two incidents at the end of Judges (chaps. 17; 18, and 19-21) are not in chronological sequence of what precedes (as a careless reader might assume from their place), but occurred in the early days of its history. Both took place in the second generation after Aaron and Moses, as attested by Gershom's son in the one, and by Phinehas in the other. The aim of both accounts was to show how deeply Israel was even then corrupted Godward and manward.

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Words of Faith: Volume 3, Answers to Correspondents: Benjamin Destroying the Israelites?

5. Q.-Why did God allow the Benjamites to destroy in one battle twenty-two thousand Israelites, and in another eighteen thousand, seeing that they were judging a great sin committed by the Benjamites, and seeing, also, that the Israelites had first asked counsel of God as to whether they should go to battle against their brethren? (Judg. 20:1;2-48.) J. w.

A.-The first thing to. notice, in this solemn and instructive episode in Israel's history, is the general state of the nation before God, of which this particular sin of Benjamin's was but one sad fruit. It was quite in accordance with God's mind that Benjamin's terrible sin should be judged, and all Israel had to do this, but the state of the nation as a whole, in connection with this particular sin, had to be judged too, and this was done by God Himself in allowing the first two defeats, which show us that the power of evil cannot be dealt with unless God Himself be with His people. Now, this He cannot 'be if His people be in a state unsuited to His presence. To.secure His presence, a true estimate of their own condition before Him, in weakness and failure, is requisite; moreover, if collectively the condition of His people give rise to.sin, that brings chastisement from God, the whole people fall under this chastisement, in order that their hearts and consciences may be reached by it, and that they may judge their condition and own it before Him.

Now, the state of Israel at this time was very bad, as we read, " In those days there was no king in Israel: every man,did that which was right in his own eyes." God, and what was due to Him, had no place in their thoughts, and the nation, as a whole, was morally far from Him. Benjamin's sin) shocked their natural consciences, and aroused their indignation at first in simply a fleshly way; nor did they at the beginning take any counsel of God, as to how, or when, they should deal with the evil. They had arranged all this before they went to Him, and then it was merely to inquire who should " go up first." The Lord indicated Judah, and on them the heaviest blow fell. Perhaps Judah had already taken the lead in the matter without God, for God is just in all His judgments. On the second occasion the inquiry was whether they should go up again against Benjamin, but before doing, this they " encouraged themselves, and set their battle again in array, in the place where they put themselves in array the first day they again make all their arrangements before going to the Lord. Beaten a second time, when they more than before expected victory, they cease altogether from themselves and their own plans; and now we read, "Then all the children of Israel, and all the people went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the Lord, and fasted that day till even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord." The lesson was learned, and Israel truly humbled and broken before God, and taking ground before Him in connection with His altar, inquire again, and they get the answer that leads to victory. God could be with them now, and He says, " Go up, for to-morrow I will deliver them into thine hand." The judgment inflicted on Benjamin was terrible and complete; for though the men of Gibeah alone had committed the sin, all the Benjamites had taken sides with those who were guilty of it, and God judged the associates with the guilty as severely as He did those directly guilty.

All these ways of God in government are deeply instructive, and surely have a special voice for the people of God. at this moment. C. w.

" God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." (Psa. 89:7.) " Thy testimonies are very sure; holiness becometh thine house, 0 Lord, forever." (Psa. 94:5.)

Eastern Manners and Customs Illustrating Various Bible Passages, Eastern Manners and Customs: "A Lordly Dish"

To this day in some parts of the east, the largest dish in the house is called Sultanea, or Sultan-like, being from its size sovereign, as it were, over the smaller dishes and plates. Many old-fashioned housekeepers in our own country still preserve the set of custard glasses, one of which, of the same pattern, but much larger than the others which were ranged round it, was called the Master. Anon.

Rahab, Achsah, Jael, Deborah: June 2020, Led Captivity Captive

The history of the expression, “lead thy captivity captive,” first found in Judges 5:12, strikingly illustrates the remark of a well-known writer, that “he who does not see Christ everywhere in the Old Testament, sees Him nowhere.” The above expression is here addressed to Barak. “Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.” After the victory over Sisera, the Holy Spirit put a song of celebration into the lips of Deborah and Barak, in which they are made to recall the former state of Israel, the gathering of the people, and the circumstances of the conflict. The words occupying our attention take the form of an exhortation in the prospect of the struggle, urging Barak to grapple with, and to bring into captivity, the power which had been holding Israel captive.

Description of Christ

Passing on to Psalm 68, we read: “Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captivity captive: Thou hast received gifts for men [or rather, in the man]; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them” (Psa. 68:18). Here in this psalm the conflict is over, but the words are not, as in Judges, an exhortation, but a description — a description of the victorious issue of the conflict in the ascension and exaltation of Christ as man. But there is more, as another has remarked, for “He has led captive the power of the enemy who ruined all — conferred blessing, and as man, and in His human nature, He has received gifts even for rebellious Israel, that Jehovah Elohim might dwell among them.”

Present Fruit of Victory

We learn, therefore, that the divine energy of the Spirit, that wrought in and through Deborah and Barak for the overthrow of the enemies of Israel, was but a foreshadowing of that divine power which was displayed in and through Christ. His conflict with the power of Satan was seen clearly in His death on the cross (see Col. 2:15), and will be exhibited through Him again when He returns for the deliverance of His people Israel in a later day. Psalm 68, though all is based upon and flows out from the virtue of His death, refers to Israel and the future; but if we now turn to Ephesians — the last place where the expression is found — the reference is to His past conflict and victory, when He overcame

the whole power of Satan. “When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men” (Eph. 4:8). That is, He brought to naught the power that held us captive; and Satan, as the enemy who has been overcome, now only waits for the execution of his sentence (See Rev. 20:1, 2, 10). Not only so, but we, freed from our captivity, are brought into the enjoyment of the present fruits of the victory in the gifts bestowed by the victorious and ascended Christ (Eph. 4:7-14).

The effect for Israel will be that their Lord God will once more dwell among them in power and blessing, while believers now have already entered upon the blessings won for them in the provision made “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,” and can joyfully anticipate the full result, in the future glory, of the victory.

E. Dennett (adapted)

Christian Friend: Volume 13, Judges 5:12

The history of the expression “lead thy captivity captive,” first found in this scripture, strikingly illustrates the remark of a well-known writer, that “he that does not see Christ everywhere in the Old Testament, sees Him nowhere.” It is here addressed to Barak. “Awake, awake, Deborah; awake, awake, utter a song; arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam.” After the victory over Sisera, the Holy Spirit put a song of celebration into the lips of Deborah and Barak, in which they are made to recall the former state of Israel, the gathering of the people, and the circumstances of the conflict. The words occupying our attention take the form of an exhortation in the prospect of the struggle, urging Barak to grapple with, and to bring into captivity, the power which had been holding Israel captive. Passing onward to Psalms 68, we read, “Thou hath ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men (or rather, as in the margin, in the man); yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them.” (v. 18) Here the conflict is over (see vv. 1, 2, 12); but the words are not, as in Judges, an exhortation, but a description—a description of the victorious issue of the conflict in the ascension and exaltation of Christ as Man. But there is more, as another has remarked, for. “He has led captive the power of the enemy who ruined all—conferred blessing, and as Man, and in His human nature, He has received gifts even for rebellious Israel, that Jehovah Elohim might dwell among them.” We learn, therefore, that the divine energy of the Spirit, that wrought in and through Deborah and Barak for the overthrow of the enemies of Israel, was but a foreshadowing of that divine power which was displayed in and through Christ in His conflict with the power of Satan in His death on the cross (compare Colossians 2:15), and which will be exhibited through Him when He returns for the deliverance of His people Israel in a later day. The psalm, though all is based upon and flows out from the virtue of His death, refers to the latter; but if we now turn to Ephesians—the last place where the expression is found—the reference is to the former—His overcoming the, whole power of Satan. “When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men,” etc. (Chapter 4:8) That is, He has brought to naught the power that held us captive; and Satan, as the enemy who has been worsted and overcome, now only waits for the execution of his sentence. (See Revelation 20:1,2,10) Not only so; but we, freed from our captivity (compare Hebrews 2:14,15), are brought into the’ enjoyment of the present fruits of the victory in the gifts bestowed by the victorious and ascended Christ. (Ephesians 4:7-14) The effect for Israel will be that their Lord God will once more dwell among them in power and blessing; while believers now have already entered upon the blessings won for them in the provision made “ for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,” and can joyfully anticipate the full result in the future glory of the victory.

E. D.

Gideon's Victory: Jehovah-Shalom - The Lord Send Peace, Gideon's Victory: Jehovah-Shalom — the Lord Send Peace: No. 2

We have seen how the Lord took up this timid man who was nothing in his own eyes, the least in his father's poor house, to give peace, and deliverance to God's people Israel: and how God gave him the assurance that He would be with him. How He also patiently gave him a sure token of His grace, in that He accepted his offering, which pointed to God's acceptance of our Sin-bearer when He raised Him from the dead for our justification. Then, Gideon's offering being accepted, fear fell upon his soul at the conscious presence of Jehovah. How the Lord spoke peace to him. This produced worship, and then arose the cry, Jehovah-Shalom, the Lord send peace. That very night the testing came. This will be the case with us, even as Jesus speaks to us in resurrection "Peace unto you." Believing God, we are accounted righteous before Him, and being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Having peace with God, we worship God, but never till then. This produces the earnest desire to be the messengers of peace to others. But if the great camp of the Midianites (to us of worldliness), is to be attacked, where must we begin? With Gideon, we have seen, it was at home. The young bullock must be killed, and his father's shameful altar to Baal must be thrown down.

We will now trace the effects of this faithfulness at home. Is it not remarkable that this act of obedience to the Lord was used of God in converting Gideon's father, so that he said that the altar of Baal was a shameful thing? And is it not a shameful thing for a Christian to be linked with this world, and with Satan the god of it? and especially to be linked with the world's false worship?

If there be, however, true faithfulness to God, the hatred of the world will be aroused. "Then all the Midianites and the Amalekites and the children of the east, were gathered together." Yes, as surely as you enjoy peace with God, and your heart in worship cries, u Lord send peace;" this giving energy to throw down the altar of Baal, at whatever cost; then buckle on your armor, the whole armor of God, and look out. Satan will bring the power of the world to destroy, if possible, at least all enjoyment of peace, worship, and testimony. "But the Spirit of the Lord came upon Gideon." The sealed believer has more than this; for his body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. "And he blew a trumpet, and Abiezer was gathered after him." Now what a reward is this; he blew the trumpet, and the very men that wanted at first to kill him, are the first to be gathered by the sound of that trumpet. You say that was the power of the Spirit, true it was. The servant of the Lord now, having the same blessed Spirit dwelling in him, may sound the gospel trumpet in faith; and count on God bringing the greatest enemies of that truth to obey the call of salvation. Oh, how much there is in this to encourage the servants of the Lord!

And now, having taken the true place of humility, and entire dependence on the Lord, and in the power of the Spirit, he sent messengers to Manasseh, Asher, Zebulun, and Naphtali; and they came up to meet them. Again, there is exercise of heart in this servant of Jehovah. He says " if" again. The moment we look at ourselves we may well say "if." But God bore in grace with His exercised servant. The dew was caused to fall on the fleece, and it was dry round about; and again it was dry in the fleece, and the dew round about. Many of God's servants have known similar experiences. Sometimes one may experience overflowing blessing in one's own soul; and yet it be dry to those around. And again we may seem like Gideon's dry fleece, and yet divine blessing to souls around. Thus we may learn the lesson, u He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

We now come in chapter vii. to a very interesting point in Gideon's history, and the people that were with him. "They rose up early and pitched beside the well Harod." Now it is a serious matter to "be pitched" in decided testimony for the Lord. We might here ask the reader in the midst of the heaving confusion of these very last days, have you yet pitched for and with the Lord? Here is a feeble man, and those with him, beside the well, and there is the host of Midian. What a picture of the church by the well on the one side, and the world on the other. Are you with the Lord, or with the Midianites, that is, the enemies of the Lord? Has God spoken peace to your soul? that is one thing; and are you also pitched, in separation from the world, with the Lord? Can there be a more deeply solemn question, Are you really at this moment with the Lord or with the world? You may say the whole church of God is not thus pitched or gathered to the Lord. Many are devoured with worldliness—its politics, its wealth, its cares, or its pleasures. It was precisely so with Israel; many were devoured by the Midianites; they had scarcely time or place to eat a bit of bread; like many a Christian in this day.

But here was a large company who had taken the ground of testimony for Jehovah. Yes, the Lord said to Gideon there were too many. " The people that are with thee are too many for me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest they vaunt themselves," &c. They were all of the tribes of Israel. That is not the point. They were too many for the testimony of the power of God, using utter human weakness. They had not learned the lesson that "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty," yea," things which are not, to bring to naught things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence." It is very sweet to hear the soft sounds of the peace-giving gospel trumpet. But when we rise up early and see the whole world against us, like the vast host by the hill of Morah; ah, then? how many pause and tremble, and fear to pitch in decided testimony to Christ! Yes, how many are afraid to remain gathered alone to Christ, like the company gathered to Gideon! But what saith the Lord? "Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return and depart early from mount Gilead." And how many went back? "There returned of the people twenty and two thousand, and there remained ten thousand." They were not excommunicated, but they returned to their tribes. It was not a division, but they gave up the testimony of Gideon when they saw the consequences. Some now living can remember this history repeating itself. Many were gathered to the testimony of Christ in these last days. The world was gathered by Satan against them, like the hosts of the Midianites, and many fearful Christians went back. They did not cease to be Christians, anymore than the tribes ceased to be Israelites. They failed to remain pitched with Gideon. And many have failed to remain gathered alone to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And the Lord said, "There are yet too many." Is not this the very opposite of all human thought? Man seeks to be prominent and eminent, and boasts of numbers. When do you hear men say with the Lord, "There are yet too many"? This second testing was even more remarkable than the first. The whole of the ten thousand were to be brought down to the waters. There was to be no human choice of persons. The Lord said, "Whom I say unto thee, this shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, this shall not go with thee, the same shall not go." Now this testing is the more to be observed by us, as it may be the very sifting through which all gathered to Christ may be passing at this very time. Let us look then at the testing of the ten thousand men of Jehovah-Shalom. "So he brought down the people unto the water: and the Lord said unto Gideon, Everyone that lappeth of the water with his tongue, as a dog lappeth, him shalt thou set by himself, likewise every one that boweth down upon his knees to drink." Oh how few out of ten thousand were content to just take what was necessary, and stand in their ranks ready for service and victory! And how many kneeled down, seeking their own gratification to the full? Not one case escaped the eye of the Lord. "And the Lord said unto Gideon, By the three hundred men that lapped will I save you, and deliver the Midianites into thine hand: and let all the other people go every man unto his place."

Now let every soul professedly gathered to Christ pass before His eye. Not one escapes that eye. He knows how many to a man are pitched in decision for Him, content to take what is necessary, but ready for service and victory over the whole world. And He knows how many are seeking their own personal gratification to the full—living for self. If we look at the worldliness that has come into the very camp professedly gathered to Christ, can we wonder that the Lord is saying of many, Let them go every man unto his own place? Is it not sad when the world is the own place of a Christian? Has not our Lord Jesus said of us to the Father, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world"? How could the company with Gideon have possibly mixed with the host of Midian? Think of one of the three hundred going to vote at an election in the camp of Amalek! " Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwelt in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be ray people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. 6:14-18.)

Friendship with Midian must be enmity to Gideon. "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (Jas. 4:4.) "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," &c. (1 John 2:15-17.)

Thus there are three companies. The little company pitched with Gideon, the vast host of Midian and those with them, and the Israelites in their own place. In one of these is found every reader of these lines. Do you say it is a very serious thing to be with so few, and the whole world against you? It is, and if you are not quite sure it is the testimony of God, and that He is with you, far better never take such a solemn place of testimony. Nothing could have been more ridiculous in the eyes of men than this little company. The first thing named of them is this, "so the people took victuals in their hands, and their trumpets." Think of such a company meeting the French, the German, or the Russian armies! It would be evident, unless the power of God be with them, they would perish quickly to a man.

Yes, it must be just so with those who would serve Christ with purpose of heart. They must take their victuals in their hand. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly." It is only as they feed on Christ, by His Spirit's teaching through the word, that they can sound the trumpet of salvation, and of judgment in this evil world.

In our next paper we hope to look at the question of complete victory over the world. Here we would pause a moment and contemplate this feeble company gathered to Gideon. Does it not point to that feeble company gathered in the closing days of Christendom to the name of the Lord Jesus, " He that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth"? Small indeed was the power of Gideon's little army. Three things were true of them. They had not denied Gideon, and returned to their place in the tribes. They had their victuals in their hand and their trumpets. Three things Jesus says of the approved little company gathered to Him who is the holy and the true. He says, "Thou hast a little strength." Yes, all boasting, all seeking of eminence, all self-importance, is far, very far from the approval of Christ; "and hast kept my word." Have we thus got our victuals in our hand? Can we say, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart; for I am called by thy name?" (Jer. 15:16.) Are His words unto us more than our necessary food? "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." And again, Jesus says of the approved little company, 'and hast not denied my name." (Rev. 3:18.)

Now is it not striking how the Holy Ghost does gather a feeble few to the name and person of the Lord Jesus, in the midst of the worldliness of Christendom, just as this feeble but ready-for-service little company was gathered to Gideon? There they stood with their victuals and their trumpets, when thousands had gone back to their tribes and their own places.

Very beautiful was their decision for Gideon. Oh ye children of God who may read these lines, do we answer to this picture? Are we thus decided for Christ? Are we bowing down to drink, seeking our own mere gratification, with the nine thousand seven hundred? or, receiving strength by food to pass on for service and testimony for God, are we still gathered to the Lord Jesus with the word of God in our hands, and the trumpet ready to sound as He shall bid?

Let us not be deceived. Surely there can be no holy separation to Christ if we are yoked with the world. Would the three hundred have been true to Gideon, if seeking the pleasures, the politics, or the wealth of the hosts of Midian? No more can we be true to Christ, if our minds are set upon the things of the world.

What is then the path of the feeble few who desire to know and do the will of the Lord? We do not see how the three hundred could be charged with division because they remained true to Gideon, when thousands went back. Neither do we see how those can either, who, however few they may be, are still kept faithful to Christ. The Lord search our hearts by His holy word, and keep us by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Bible Treasury: Volume 12, God's Answer to the Exercised Heart

It is instructive to observe here the difference between the exercises of heart which are the result of faith, and the answer of God to the wants and difficulties which are caused by those exercises. We have the expression of these exercises in a soul under the weight of the same oppression as his brethren, but who feels it thus because his faith in the Lord was real. Then we have the answer which produces peace, and, with peace, worship. It is the same, when, after having suffered death, the risen Jests reveals Himself to His disciples with the same words that God uses here, and lays down the foundation of the church gathered together in worship. In Luke 7 we find the same experiences in the woman who was a sinner. She believed in the person of Jesus. His grace had made Him her all; but she did not know yet that one like her was pardoned and saved, and might go in peace. This assurance was the answer given to her faith. Now this answer is what the gospel proclaims to every believer. The Holy Ghost proclaims Jesus. This produces conviction of sin. The knowledge of God in Christ, and of ourselves, casts down (for sin is there, and we are in bondage, sold under sin); but it produces conflict, perhaps anguish. Often the soul struggles against sin, and cannot gain the mastery; it cannot get beyond a certain point (the greater number of the sermons from which it expects light, go no farther); but the gospel proclaims God's own resources for bringing it out of this state. “Peace be unto thee,” “thy sins are forgiven.” “Thy faith” (for she has faith), says Christ to the poor sinful woman, “hath saved thee.” This is what she knew not yet. Compare Acts 2:37, 38.)

Gideon's Victory: Jehovah-Shalom - The Lord Send Peace, Gideon's Victory: Jehovah-Shalom — the Lord Send Peace: No. 3

We now come to Gideon's victory. "And the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley." (Judg. 7:8.) It is important for the man of faith to know that, however vast the host of the enemy may be, it is "beneath him in the valley." We must not expect victory unless we know our dead and risen position in Christ. Greatly increased was the host of Midian. "And the Midianites, and the Amalekites, and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the sea-side for multitude." Great the power and ever increasing the worldliness of Christendom. But all were beneath Gideon in the valley. What is your stand-point? Are you in the worldliness, like Lot in Sodom? Or are you consciously in Christ, and the world beneath you, like Abraham, when he looked down on the doomed plains beneath him? and like Gideon, as he looked down on the hosts below? It is written, " For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

The faith of Gideon was in God. In himself there was great weakness; it is so with us. The first step must be according to his position.

The Lord said unto him, " Arise, get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thine hand."

How important, then, it is to be in our right place. How can we get down, if we are down? If of the world, how can we be used in testimony, any more than Lot was? Had he not to be pulled out of it? How little is real separation to Christ understood in this day? And perhaps quite as little the true place of the believer, as dead and risen with Christ.

"Get thee down unto the host; for I have delivered it into thy hand/' Now mark the secret of the Lord. Not by might, nor by power. There lay the vast hosts of the enemy. Gideon was bidden to go down, and hear what they say. " And when Gideon was come, behold there was a man that told a dream unto his fellow, and said, Behold, I dreamed a dream, and, lo, a cake of barley bread tumbled into the host of Midian, and came unto a tent, and smote it that it fell.....And his fellow answered and said, This is nothing else save the sword of Gideon, the son of Joash, a man of Israel; for into his hand hath God delivered Midian, and all the host." This is God's way -His principle. "God hath chosen the weak

things of this world to confound the things which are mighty." It was not the thunder of an eighty-ton gun that affrighted the hosts of Midian. It was "a cake of barley bread."

Was it not so when destructive famine was about to devastate Egypt and the countries around? A cake of barley bread was placed in the court of Pharaoh. A poor despised young man, forgotten and cruelly wronged, lay in one of Egypt's prisons. That was the cake of barley bread whom God made lord of all Egypt—the deliverer, Joseph. In a later day, when the children of Israel groaned in bitter bondage, a little helpless babe was heard crying in a basket of rushes, exposed on the banks of the Nile. That little babe was the cake of barley bread tumbled again into the court of Pharaoh. That little babe was the chosen instrument by which God overthrew the hosts of Egypt, and delivered His people. Again, when Philistine hosts defied the trembling armies of Israel, a ruddy youth was tending his father's sheep. This young David was the cake of barley bread tumbled into the valley of Elah. David was the chosen deliverer of God's people. Again, who is that cake of barley bread in the mighty court of Assyria? Daniel, the captive of Judah. But all these disappear when we contemplate the lowly path of the Eternal Son of God made flesh. Though God over all, blessed for evermore, yet He made Himself of no reputation. The perfect expression of humility and dependence. Not one atom of Satan's usurped world would He accept.

And when He had accomplished redemption^ risen from among the dead, ascended to glory and sent down the Holy Ghost, who were the men chosen, and sent forth as His ambassadors into the world? Again, it is still the cake of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian. Poor fishermen, who had no artillery but the sword of the Spirit, the word of God. What a picture of this was Gideon's little army! "And it was so, when Gideon heard the telling of the dream, and the interpretation thereof, that lie worshipped, and returned into the host of Israel, and said, Arise; for the Lord hath delivered into your hand the host of Midian." Beloved reader, is this the effect on you? If the Spirit give you the interpretation thereof, you will see that it is not by outward show, by numbers, by learned books, learned scholastic lectures, or by great and learned men; but that God is glorified in using the feeblest instruments, the nobodies. Does the interpretation thereof bow our hearts in worship? It is no question with Gideon as to numbers: the little company of three hundred are to faith the host of Israel. The Lord hath delivered; this was enough for faith. Strong in faith, "he divided the three hundred men into three companies, and he put a trumpet in every man's hand, with empty pitchers, and lamps within the pitchers." Every eye was then to be fixed on himself—as he did, so were they to do. "When I blow with a trumpet, I and all that are with me, then blow ye the trumpets also on every side of all the camp, and say, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

Thus they brake the pitchers, and held their lamps, and they cried, The sword of the Lord and of Gideon. "And they stood every man in his place.' In the judgment of man nothing could be more contemptible. Yes, these three hundred are a striking picture of the chosen servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, of that ministry and testimony which is truly of God. The apostle says," For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord..... For God, who commandeth the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." (2 Cor. 4:5-7.) Now is this our position, gathered to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, like they were to Gideon? Are our eyes fixed on Him, not of the world, even as He is not of the world? Are we as separate from this world as they were separate from Midian? Are we every man in his place? Are you in yours, am I in mine? Not of a tribe or sect of our own choosing, are you sure you are where God has placed you? Each believer was so in the church as the Holy Ghost formed it, (1 Cor. 12)

We would call special attention to these words, u For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord." That devoted servant of Christ, Paul, could thus speak, satisfied to be less than nobody. But what Gideon's pitchers were on that dark night, and as he commanded the light to shine from those broken pitchers, those earthen vessels; so now, in this dark world, are we, who have this treasure in earthen vessels. What a treasure, what a light in a dark place—the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And the power of this testimony is the Holy Ghost dwelling in us. What a picture this is of the utter weakness of man and the mighty power of God! A broken earthen vessel. But the light shines, the trumpet sounds. The victory was complete; "and all the host ran, and cried? and fled."

From the days of the apostles to this moment, it will be found, that the spiritual power of the church, or the remnant out of what arrogantly calls itself the church, has been in proportion to its weakness. The barley cake in the host of Midian has ever been repeated. What a path was that of Paul's! A broken earthen vessel. In stripes, in labors, in prisons, in deaths oft; beaten, stoned, shipwrecked. And what perils, what weariness and painfulness, what watchings, hunger, thirst, fastings, cold, nakedness. (2 Cor. 11) And in history how God did use the poor men of Lyons, as they were called—the poor sufferers of the valleys; and in this country, when Wycliff sent out the poor priests to preach Christ through the length and breadth of the country.

Surely we are in great danger at this time in forgetting the cake of barley bread. It is evident, just as we seek to be, and become prominent, we fail in the testimony of God. Let God decide as to numbers, the question for each soul is this, Do I answer to these devoted three hundred? Am I in my place, gathered to Christ, my eye fixed on Him, seeking to walk as He walked? Have I the light in the pitcher, oil in the vessel? No wonder, where persons take the place of profession, like the foolish virgins without oil, without Christ, that they should become one with Midian. Surely this is the closing scene of the dark night of a worldly Christianity. Now, are you a light in this dark place? Oh, let us awake, for "the night is far spent, the day is at hand."

What is the watchword of victory? "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon." If we are truly gathered to Christ, what have we? The sword of the Spirit; that is, the word of God and the Holy Ghost.

Gideon pursued the host to Jordan, the well-known figure of death and judgment. This is the great principle of the Christian's victory over the world, and every lust of the flesh. "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him in baptism unto death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even we also should walk in newness of life." This is the true killing-place of the lusts of the flesh, and all the worldliness that has come in. Whatever temptation may assail, pursue it to Jordan. No prince or king lust must be spared; death to it. For sin has been judged on the cross. Our very sin has been forever judged in the person of Christ on the cross. Shall we live, then, in that which has been put to death on the cross? But we are not only reckoned dead with Christ, but we are also risen with Christ. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness which is idolatry." (Col. 3:1-5.)

Though, as we see, this principle of death is our very profession in baptism, yet how little it is owned in practice! The Lord give us grace to judge everything inconsistent with our place, as dead and risen with Christ. What can be so offensive to God as to take this place, and then

follow the fashion and practices of the world? Jordan was the place of Gideon's victory. Death is the Christian's victory. Dead to sin, dead to law, dead to the world; crucified with Christ, risen with Christ. Header, there must be reality in all this. These are the last days. There must be decision for Christ, our true Gideon, our true center.

Gideon failed after all this in the matter of the ear-rings. The Captain of our salvation never tails. We may fail, He never fails. Twenty thousand of us may fail, and go back—ah, and ten thousand more; but God's word remains the same. Christ is the same. Like Gideon's army numbers may have to be less, but as they all looked at Gideon, and did as he did, so may we have our eyes fastened on Christ, God over all blessed for evermore. Yes, what a path of humiliation! " He made himself of no reputation." Can we be doing as He did if we seek the opposite of this? Have we not done so? Instead of taking the lowest place, yea, of being nothing, have we not assumed to be important, and in various ways sought prominence? Blessed be God for coming in to humble us. Oh, to be the barley cake again. If each believer was like one of the lamp-bearers in his place- everyone in his place—what an effect it would have! If each who professes to be in the testimony of God were so, what an effect it would have in this dark night! "Among whom ye shine [or shine ye] as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." Do we hear this word from the Lord? He expects each one to be a light-bearer,, and to shine in the world. The darker the night, the brighter the light. Only, not self, but Christ I Gideon's victory was blessing and peace for all Israel. Let us never forget this: though called to take the most decided stand for Christ and with Christ, like Gideon's little army, yet it is that the heart of Christ may flow out in its infinite love to the whole church of God. Thus keep us, dear Lord, and thus use the least of Thy saints, in Thy boundless love to all. And thus grant that we may be as separate from the world, and all its ways, as Gideon's little army was separate from the host of Midian! What a thought, that He desires each believer to be a light in this dark night!

Food for the Flock: Volume 2, Two Cities, The

UD 7:1-18{I have read this Scripture not So much to interpret it, as to give a Clue to the path the Lord would have us follow in this day; and, in order to see what this path is, you must be instructed from the word as to two great things now going on. These two are the New Jerusalem and Babylon-two great structures now in course of formation; and we are helping on one or the other-contributing to one or the other in each one of our actions. Every one on earth is aiding and abetting either Babylon or the New Jerusalem. This is a momentous thing for us. There is the divine path, and the Lord can lead us along it, though the keenest eye-the vulture's eye, as it is said-cannot see it. I have read this Scripture simply as a waymark to point out the road, but the subject I wish to bring before you is these two great cities.

We must go back to the beginning of things to see how these two gather force as they go along. God never deserts His plan-His thought about a thing; but the evil gathers strength as it goes on. Gen. 11. gives us Babylon at its beginning Here we look at the city, which we soon drop; but it is principles that form cities; and, Babylon once set up, we can trace without difficulty the principles that it represents right on to the end.

" Nimrod began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: wherefore it is said, even as Nimrod the mighty hunter before the Lord. And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel." This is the first allusion to it; and I would call your attention to the state of things in the midst of which Babylon sprang up. It was not before the flood; it arose when God had set man in new favor on the earth-everything mitigated as to the curse upon it, and man himself placed there in new terms; God had smelled the sweet savor of the offering of Noah, and had brought in blessing in a new form. But, instead of man using these favors for God, he used them to make himself independent of God. Men combined together to reach a point where they should be independent of God. This being the principle of the organization of the city, I shall drop the name Babylon, and call it independence.

This will touch us all very closely-that the favors of God here upon earth, instead of turning our hearts to God, only tend to make us independent of Him Prosperity makes a man independent of God; when money accumulates he has an opportunity of gratifying self, and, unless he be able to deny himself in the midst of plenty, it will prove a snare to him. This is the principle that Babylon was formed upon. Nimrod was a mighty hunter before the Lord; that is, he pursued the object that attracted his heart—his game, if you like-he pursues it to death. A saint may be like Noah; he drinks of the wine and exposes his weakness; but that is not what a hunter is: a hunter is girt up to his work; he does not lose his senses in the least; he is all on the alert; it is the most exhilarating pursuit-human energy reaching to its goal. That is what the beginning of this Babel is.

I seek to make it simple to any here, for in the smallest hamlet you are not exempt from this danger. Where it looks least likely to crop up there it comes, for the heart so easily rests in mercies and forgets the Giver of the mercies.

In Gen. 11 This independence comes to a head. " They said, Go to, let us build us a city, and a tower whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name; lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth." Here it takes its form, independency being the principle on which it is formed, God confounded it for a time, but it is very plain to any who have read Scripture, that Babylon will yet come forth and be destroyed. " In one hour is thy judgment come. How much she hath glorified herself, and lived deliciously, so much torment and sorrow give her: for she saith in her heart, I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow. Therefore shall her plagues come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her." It is well for us to know this-what the consummation of Babylon will be-because it is what men will come to.

Besides Babylon, however, there is another city coming, of which I cannot say much, for there is but little told us about it; but this I can say, that it is what Christ Himself has formed, and that in it there is every beauty that He Himself can bestow on it-it is the display, of all His divine beauty as a man to the earth. In the one there is every natural attraction without God; in the other every heavenly attraction with God. And you are contributing to one or the other, for you must belong to one of the two.

We see next, in Gen. 12 That God calls out Abraham to be a witness against all this. Thus I get independence in Babylon, and now dependence in Abraham. His history is a history of dependence. It is not that there is not failure and trial; there is; but throughout he is a dependent man. First and foremost he starts by being a very peculiar man; he has to break with country, and kindred, and father's house. What a thing dependence is! what it calls us to! who would have thought it would have called us to such a path as that-to give up not what was wrong, but actually things that are right! "Country, kindred, and father's house." But it is often the things that are right that interfere with

our walking with God. The man who is to be the leader in this wonderful line of dependence-the character of this man is: I break with country, kindred, and father's house.

It is not that he does not encounter difficulties by the way; he does; " there was a famine in the land," and every one knows that " hunger will break through a stone wall;" but he recovers himself; and, when he does get back to the land, the true character of dependence comes out. He says to Lot: I do not choose; I am a dependent man; I make no choice; I have nothing to seek or to choose. Of course as he was the elder-his uncle -the one who had brought him with him he had the right to the choice in every way; but he says: I do not choose; I leave you to take what you like.

This is an important point in the history of dependence. Failure is continually coming in because saints do not know how to refuse. When Satan attacks a saint he comes first in an attractive form; he comes with devices. The invitation is, " Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant; " and would not you like something? Say a day in the country?—Satan knows you, and, what is more strange your own family knows you very well too. They put before you something that they know will tempt you; and, if they do not succeed in making you yield, they will censure you. It is always so; Satan first invites and then opposes. If the first shot carry you away, Satan will not use a second; he economizes his forces. Here, in Judges, the water carried them away at once; that was enough; they could not stand favors; there was no need for any other attack upon them. You say, But surely may I not accept an opportunity that offers? I say, I must refuse offers, I must refuse opportunities, and then I can suffer for God. I want you to get hold of the great principles of dependence, and you will see them very clearly in Abraham. Look at every servant of God and you will see this brought out more or less in him. Even our blessed Lord Satan tried first with seductions; he offered Him everything in the wilderness to tempt Him; and then, in the garden of Gethsemane, he brought everything down on Him; He first refused and then endured. Did you ever refuse anything for Christ? If you never do, you will never suffer for Christ. If you accept, you will suffer for yourself. That is what Lot did, and he was carried away captive. And who then comes to his rescue? Abraham let Lot have the choice, and so, when he was taken captive, it was Abraham suffered for him. If we suffer for Christ, we shall suffer for others; and the greatest earthly distinction that ever was given to any one is that of suffering for Christ. This is our place. If you cannot refuse, you will not be put in a place to suffer for Christ. How could a deserter be called out for a forlorn hope?

I want you to understand what dependence is; but the Lord alone can conduct your soul into it. I say I am not looking for anything; " I have nothing to seek or to choose." Well, then,-do I get nothing? Why I have " manifold more in this present time! " As soon as Lot was separated from Abraham, the Lord said to him, " Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art, northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward: for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed forever; " 'and then he goes to Hebron, the resting place. People are all for relegating rewards to the future, but I get them now. Afterward Abraham had to suffer for Lot, who got into difficulty. Here the servant character comes out; he had to risk all he had I become a servant, I risk my comforts. There is not an insurance office in the world would have given anything for Abraham when he went out in service after Lot. He went out with his life in his hand, risking all to serve the very man who took the choice before him. It is the one who chooses that gets into trouble; but the, one who is dependent, who suffers for him, has the sufferings of Christ abounding in him, and his consolation abounding by Christ; and this the present gain.

I will take David for a, moment, as another instance of the difference, there is between a person walking in the simplicity of denying himself; and that same person when yielding to what is naturally attractive. David yields to Joab, and brings Absalom back to Jerusalem, thus listening to the voice of nature pleading for his son; and Absalom actually drives him out of Jerusalem. But -when he might have killed Saul, he would not, because he was dependent upon God. If you choose, you lose. If you do not choose, you gain, and you gain in God's way. I never saw a person get into a scrape yet but because he would have his choice; he was not observing that grand line of faith dependence-that God has set, fulfilled only by His own beloved Son.

I next come to Josh. 7 It is very difficult to carry ordinary students of the word rapidly through a long subject like this; but I can just give you waymarks tracing out the progress of dependence and independence. I am sure that whilst we all talk of dependence, we often have but very little understanding of the characteristics of it.

I do not then go into the history of the children of Israel, who eventually went down into Egypt; but I see here God, after having brought them out of the wilderness, leading them into the land. Now there are two ways of being in the land. One is the heavenly stranger, Abraham; not a foot of the land has he in possession. But Joshua comes in in quite another way; he goes in to take possession as a warrior-to take possession in power. We are here on the earth in both these attitudes: heavenly strangers like Abraham, and men of war like Joshua.

As soon as they get into the land, the reproach of Egypt is rolled off them, and then we get the most surprising instance of dependence. The walls of Jericho fell down! No one did anything! It was patient dependence going round the city seven days. But the men were armed all the time; armor for Satan, and prayer for God. The efficacy of prayer is to get armor for Satan. You must have a good character; nothing stands with Satan but character; all the truth in the world will riot carry any weight with him; it must be the breastplate of righteousness," etc.

Here dependence has gained an immense victory-a wonderful day! And immediately in walks independence in one man. Achan sees among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment and a wedge of gold, and hides them under his tent; and no sooner is the greatest victory in the land gained than they are on the way to Babylon. You see this by looking at Hos. 2, where they are brought back by the valley of Achor for a door of hope. Achan was the very first man who traced the way to Babylon, and God brings them back through sorrow. He says, I will bring them back by the very valley where he was stoned. And this prophecy was written before ever they went into captivity. These dealings of God are very remarkable, and enough to make us tremble. If you allow the leaven to work, if you do not judge it in its commencement, you will reap the misery of it eventually, for it will surely yield its crop. It may be a very small thing walks in. Achan says: Have I not got this opportunity? See what an offer! And you yield, and then see what you come to. The children of Israel never recovered dependence; in all their history they never had again such a thing as Jericho. So long as you maintain dependence, Babylon is not heard of. When the star of Israel is in the ascendant, Babylon is nowhere; but the moment the star of Israel descends that moment the star of Babylon ascends We do not hear of Babylon again until the ten tribes go into captivity. And the next time after that is when Hezekiah receives the courtesy of the ambassadors of the king of Babylon. One would have thought there was not much harm in this; but God says, You have committed yourself, and all you possess shall go into Babylon. And, as we know, they were all eventually carried away to Babylon. Then they lost their power; the power of God, the right of kings, was in the hands of Israel, and that power lapsed; it passed into the hands of the Gentiles. I pray your attention to this, for it is of the greatest importance. God says to Nebuchadnezzar " Thou art this head of gold; for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory." And the power never returned to Israel. The captives returned to their land; but earthly power was

never given back to them. God says to them by Haggai, My word and my Spirit remain among you, but not power. So much so, that when it became a question of crucifying the Lord they say: "By our law he ought to die; but it is not lawful for us to put any man to death." They could only deliver Him over to Rome, the fourth power: Israel was a people that were to be dependent upon God, and, so long as they were, He was their power. When they were carried into Babylon it was the kingly power that went down-it was not a question of the priestly; but the kingly they lost.

One redeeming point, however, is, that there never was a place where there was such a bright expression of dependence upon God as in the midst of that very city of Babylon; and this by men who refuse the king's wine, and so they are not afraid of the king's fire. They refused the king's meat; they would not eat anything but pulse, and yet in the end of the days they were fairer and fatter than all those who did eat the portion of the king's meat. They could refuse; and I thank God, if I have it in my soul to refuse, I am sure to be able to bear. Satan will come down upon me in a hundred ways, but I Say, I am not afraid of you; I have been able to refuse you, so I know I shall be able to endure. You cannot beat me; for the grace that enabled me to refuse, is the grace that will enable me to endure. The king called on these men of God to bow down to king image, and what is their answer? " O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this Matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the &den image which thou hast set up." They [said, We will stand the fire: and what did it do? Merely let them loose. Here was dependence. Let me be in the very midst of Babylon—of its attractions or its fire-by simple dependence I may astonish them all and win the day.

But these three men also brought out another great principle which marks the servant of God; he has a base and a door; a base behind-the ground on which he stands; and a door before him-in presenting the truth to others. The greatest proof of a faithful man is that he knows what he is about. Others may not see it, but I see it myself. He says: " I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego knew what they were about. They said: We are not a bit afraid of you; there is an open door set before us by God Himself. Thus they gave the greatest expression of dependence in the midst of the city of independence.

I am sure we are losing if we do not know what things are going on to. One set of things around us is going on to a city that suits man-Babylon the other to a city that suits Christ- the New Jerusalem. Which are you going to? It is a great question. We get the picture of the future Bride; how she will be adorned for her husband; and this is put before us when everything has failed in the church. The nuptial garments are brought out before the wedding day, in order that we may try them on. The bridal costume is shown us in order that we may acquire the characteristics of the Bride. We are presented in Rev. 21 with all the beautiful features in which the Lord will have us stand before Him on the wedding day.

One passage more in the Old Testament before I go to the New. In the fifth of Zechariah it says: " And they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there 'upon her own base." Now this lawlessness is;` between earth and heaven "; the weight of lead has been cast upon it; it is not allowed to come out in all its evil. But it is going to be set up on its own " base " in the land of Shinar. It is really going back to the place where we found it in the eleventh of Genesis, and there all they first principles will again come out. That is thorough independence.

And now to turn to the New Testament. In Matt. 16 I find a Man who was thoroughly dependent upon God-a Man whom no one understood. First led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of, the devil and there overcome him through dependence. And then, through a dependent life, His service, His public life, culminated on the Mount of Transfiguration, whence He descends to die. „ This is the One we have to do with. In this chapter He is coming to the close of His ministry, and, on speaking to them of Himself, Peter makes the confession, " Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God; " when He tells them that on this rock He will build His church. That church is the New Jerusalem, and nothing piior to that is. If you ask: Why does not the New Jerusalem take in the Old Testament saints? I answer: Because it is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets," and every builder knows that the first thing that is laid in a building is the foundation; I cannot have anything prior to that.

The city that the Lord is about to build will be a brilliant display of every divine beauty here upon the earth, where man and the church have made such total shipwreck. The heavenly city is a most compensating thing. I belong now to a people who have completely failed to set forth Christ on the earth. Where is the church? People often say there is none! But though the church has so entirely failed as the candlestick, yet is it necessary that it should fail as the Bride? Not at all! Though there never be a recovery of what is lost, the faithful are brightened up to what is coming.

We are the Bride. I get her moral features in Rev. 21 The Bride is formed by the Bridegroom; He makes her suitable to Himself; she is His helpmeet. " For Adam there was not found an helpmeet for him; " and that is what Christ is seeking for Himself-a helpmeet; as it is beautifully brought out in the German translation, " one over against you." He is seeking something that answers to Himself. We are that which will not entrance man's eye, but which will suit His eye. We have lost too much the sense of how His heart takes pleasure in the beauty He has formed in us Himself. I turn round to those who say there is no church, and say: Are you the Bride then? If people are answering to Christ as that, they will be on true church ground. He says: You have failed to man but you must not fail to me; I form a thing that my eye can rest upon; and to be this you must be occupied with me. We would be the most holy separate people on earth if we were truly the Bride. We should get light as to what suits Him so as to stand morally in all the capabilities of the church, though it be not the church or the candlestick either restored. or revived.

So the Lord says: " Upon this rock I will build my church." And in this same chapter this very man to whom it was revealed' lets out that which will try to come in and spoil all this. He rebukes the Lord about the cross-says to Him, " Be it far from thee, Lord." The cross here is not looked at as setting aside sins, but as setting aside man, and Peter refuses this. The very man who was at one moment telling who Christ was, is the next refusing His cross; he cannot see it; and the Lord says to him, You are Satan. I cannot think of anything more sad than that this same `man should take up natural feelings to such an extent that the Lord should be able to say this to him-that the one who got the greatest revelation should be the one to seek to neutralize it, however unwittingly.

I must maintain the two o-: the Rock and the cross. Do you accept the Rock? I am sure you do; we all accept it; and the cross too, as that which delivers us from our sins; but do you accept it as that which sets man aside? Do you say, Yes, I do? Let us look a moment at the

fourteenth of Luke, to see whether you do or not. A man here, says to the Lord, " Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." He meant the millennium. But we will have a great day before the millennium comes, says the Lord; we will have a great entertainment, because of poor sinners received now by the Father.

Now what hinders any coming to. it.? There are two things that do, and we find them in Judges. One is earthly mercies, and the other the ties of nature-mercies given from God's hand, and ties formed by Himself. Nothing wrong at all—no harm in them! Are not earthly mercies beautiful? And may not man receive from God oxen, and ground, and marry a wife? To be sure he may. But yet these things tend to hinder from seeking the great supper. Are you proof against right things? It is not wrong things; it is the right thing that will do the mischief. The apostle could say: "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." I give up all that is bright and beautiful in the first man, for the surpassing excellence and beauty of the second. I can supersede man if I have got Christ. I have to exercise my soul every day so to keep the beauties of that blessed One before me, that I may be proof against all the beauties that are around me here. It is impossible, to be proof against either attraction or affliction if you have not Christ to compensate you for the one and comfort you in the other. He eclipses everything for me. I have not got to steel my heart, but I have to guard it against all the beauty that is around me. I do not go to Christ in sorrow only; every one does that; I go to Him for beauty. " If a man hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Hate my father and mother! I never heard of such a thing! The question is, Will you have the cross? " Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." You are taken off natural ground. If you say, I attend to my unconverted father because he is an old man, and so on, I say, All very well. But if he say, I would sooner be without your company, then he has set me free, and. I leave him mournfully. You must have Christ first; if you have not you will never go forward; you will neither be a tower nor an army—a tower to resist the enemy, and an army to attack him. And why not? Because you have not got the grace in you. Gideon's ten thousand began, but they could not stand it; they turned back; they had not got it in them.

There is one more passage I must refer to to bring this to the final issue; that is the latter part of Rev. 3 I would gladly trace it all through the New Testament, but it would be too much exercise for patience. I may, however, say in passing, that the grand point of the apostle in the espistles is to keep out the man. It is the man I am afraid, of, and that is the reason I -say to you, Get rid of the man. And why? Because Satan cannot turn anything against God except man. He does not turn an elephant against God. But, as to man, he says, I have turned your own image against you. But God says, I Till deprive you of the man; I will have the I cross on him. In Romans we see man without any restraint, and see what a state he has got to, and then how faith in God justifies him. Then in Corinthians it is the worldly man. In Galatians it is the legal man: " God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." In Colossians it is the religious man, and thus rationalism and ritualism crop up. And in Hebrews it is the earthly man. But if you get rid of the man you clear the ground.

And now in Rev. 1 get the closing scene. There is one link, perhaps, that I have a little lost sight of; and that is, that with this new city Christ brought in a new power-an invisible power. The power of Babylon was visible, and it is still in existence, but it has nothing at all to do with this new structure. Would to God I could get the saints to see this; they would then refuse to use a particle of the power of that beast which is soon to carry the church—as soon as it has been spued out of Christ's mouth. When I hear of saints licensing rooms, putting up notices and so on, I can only say they are stepping outside to the power that would carry them; you are coquetting with the beast, and he will end with carrying the harlot-the spued-out church. If you give up witnessing to the place the Holy Ghost has here in bearing testimony to Christ, you are losing power in your own soul. A man might say, I will shut out the sun from one side of my property; but if he do he will injure the whole of it. One office of the Holy Ghost here on earth is to comfort me n the absence of Christ; the other is to stand for Christ as a witness to the world; and if you say, I understand the one, but not so well the other, then I say, you are losing the other too.

In Rev. 3 it says He is " the beginning of the creation of God." What comes in to delude the saints is present advantages; and they end by being so drawn away by them that it comes to Christ Himself being outside. He stands at the door and knocks. The final state of things in the church is that of having need of nothing; it is independence again. This is the church, not the body; 'it is the vessel; it will be spued out of Christ's mouth; and then the beast says, I will carry you. Christ takes the body to heaven with Himself. Then the Holy Ghost is gone, and the vessel left behind becomes the harlot, and. the beast carries it.

Now what is Babylon working for? I turn to Rev. 18 to show you. Babylon is this great structure where everything is pleasing to the natural eye. People are cultivating ease and comfort in this world, and what is the effect of it all? Is it suffering for Christ? I say, I am not to be taken up with it. I may enjoy a beautiful day, but I seek not to be carried away by it. God says, I will bring you to the water to test you, and the one that is proof to earthly mercies is the one who will go on with Christ, and be kept from the delusions that are so ensnaring to man, and so pleasing to his heart-from all those things which culminate in Babylon. She says: " I sit a queen, and am no widow, and shall see no sorrow." She has all that is beautiful in nature, but nothing of Christ. It is not that I would deprive a feeble person of any comfort, but this I do say, When you go into your house just think whether it is a question of ease that is before your mind, or whether it is that you are here to suffer for Christ? How much is your heart set upon Him 9 Look at poor Anna-an old woman of eighty-four. I wish we were more like her. She departed not from the temple, though it was ruined. It is not a question of ability and intelligence, but it is whether I have a heart for Christ. Why should He not come into this room and be greeted by many Simeons and Annas here? Simeons who know what Christ: is to them, and Annas who are here for Him.

Surely it is a word for each of us. In everything, I remark, the world is getting richer. It is all there, and can I not accept what is offered? Yes, you can; but, if you go on your knees to it, you lose your true path for Christ here. Which am I helping on to-day? Is. it this heavenly Jerusalem, the illustration of all divine beauty which is coming down to make up for all the failure of the church in this world where we have been such poor wretched things? Or am I going on with that whose " plagues shall come in one day, death, and mourning, and famine, and she shall be utterly burned with fire, for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her?" Is it a happy thing to be in any wise supporting that which is rival to Christ? As I look at the little urchin in the streets I say, That is one part of this vast machine that is working up to either one or the other. The grand consummation for the world is Babylon; the grand consummation for the church is the New Jerusalem.

Some may perhaps say, How do, you get to Babylon? When the church is cast out of Christ's mouth it is not the body; the body has been taken up to heaven; but the church-the vessel of testimony-has no longer any vitality, and the beast takes it up; he takes the place from which the Holy. Ghost has retired. You find this in Rev. 17 And then " upon her forehead is the name written: Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." Do you ask, What induces the beast to take up the church? I answer, What is the character of Laodicea? It is that which fits her for it. Laodicea is trying to get men embellished by Christianity-getting up that terrible thing called self-culture. People talk wonderfully about it, but what is it? A man may be all right outside, and yet have the most terrible rage boiling up

within. Some twenty years ago, they got the leader of Romanism in England to lecture on self-culture at the opening of an Institute. It is nothing but a form of Christianity without power. A person converted now-a-days is generally drawn into anything for man's benefit; young men's associations and everything utilitarian. I admit such a man is agreeable to his neighbors through all this, but he is nothing better in the sight of God.

Babylon is a " mystery; " that is, a thing that is not yet unfolded. So when it first comes out it does not take openly the character of independence that it assumes in the end. But soon it will come out in its true colors; and the beast will carry her until he hates her, and makes her desolate, and burns her with fire.

There shall not be a bit of Christianity left; but man shall be satisfied in his own acquisitions.

Well, what about the three hundred? The ten thousand are tested, but they never hear the order of battle. And what is that? It is, As ye see me do so shall ye do. If you want to get on now you must keep your eye on Christ. I cannot give you any directions; I can only give you the order of battle. " As I do so shall ye do." The Lord lead us to be very distinctly for Christ, and open our eyes to see whether we are helping on that which man has got his heart set upon, or that which Christ's heart is upon.

(J. B. s.)

" Make the tree good and his fruit good." I cannot do that; the only thing is to kill it. And indeed I cannot do that either. But God has done it, and I can therefore say, I am dead, and my life is hid with Christ in God. (J. N. D.)

What is service? It is having part in Christ's ministry of love. (J. N. D.)

Present Testimony: Volume 2, 1850, Faint Yet Pursuing

"And Gideon came to Jordan and passed over, he and the three hundred men that were with him, faint, yet pursuing." The opening of a campaign, the carrying on of the struggle, with. endurance to the end, are all included in Paul's memorable summary—" I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous Judge shall give me at that day" (2 Tim. 4.7, 8). A ship may be making little progress and yet answer her helm; ready to take advantage of a favorable breeze. Delays unlooked for may occur: yet her log-book of the course she kept, with the winds that blew, may justify the master and crew in the eyes of her owners that all had been done that could be accomplished. In our Christian career unlooked for difficulties may arise (and necessarily so for the trial of our faith). We may have to encounter opposition where we looked for assistance. We may have to suffer most from those with whom we once held sweet fellowship. It may be our lot to have bitter experience of the words in Psa. 55:12: " For it was not an enemy that reproached me, then I could have borne it; neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me, then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide and mine acquaintance, we took sweet counsel together and walked to the house of God in company," How little, after all, have we been prepared. for it; how impatient under it! What scope has been given to the exercise of reason: how little for the exercise of faith? We have held truth in the head, and it could not meet the necessities or trials of the heart. And it is gracious of the Lord to skew this to us, and to bring us to acknowledge it before him, and to have bowels of sympathy for those who entered into conflict without tried weapons of war (1 Sam. 17:9).

Yet, let us not be misunderstood. Strength to pursue a course depends upon the course being right. The right object attracts forward, has propelling power in it, because it is right. Hence the momentous importance of truth simply as truth. How well does it repay any real regard for it. What provision for necessities, what charges it undertakes! In Prov. 4 "Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee..... Exalt her and she shall promote thee to excellent honor." And what is here advanced of Wisdom is true also of the Lord Jesus. A due regard to His glory and His honor is the charge of His people's safety. The precept given by Him, "No man goeth a warfare at his own charges," is made good in His service. He amply provides for every emergency. It is true wisdom to apprehend this. And here the simplicity of faith enters. The doctrine of justification by faith may be peremptorily insisted upon and Scripture ransacked in support of it; yet the very ablest advocates of this truth, and convinced, too, of its being true, may break down in the sister fact, that we must walk by faith, put on faith; -have faith in God, and whatever we enter upon or undertake, perform it in dependance upon God.

What mistakes arise from forgetfulness of this! How men plunge into the Lord's battles with their own weapons: bringing their own artillery to play upon their antagonists, and exposing, in their censure of other men's motives, the whereabouts of their own. But the Lord hath no need of this. The dignity of the truth is above this. Faith will act the part of a general who makes his observations before entering into the melee, and disposes his forces for the attack, and continues his plans unmoved by the din of conflict, or the clouds of smoke and dust. Combatants there will be in the ranks who fight on for fighting's sake. Without principle to lead them into action, and having no energy but their self-will to maintain them there; and if this be crossed, and their own importance interfered with, are forward to throw aside their weapons in disgust, or discharge them, when retreating, in the faces of those who had been companions in service. Alas! how sorrowful is all this to the heart quickened of Jesus to have sympathy with Him. The triumph of the truth swallows up in its grandeur, the individual share in promoting the victory. So the fall of an opponent in such a struggle gives no room for self-exultation, but rather for commiseration. Victory is hallowed by tears of regret for those who, from love of ease, carnal security, carelessness of walk, error in judgment, or weakness of faith, were led into a position where they were sure to be vanquished.

Still, while it is the privilege of faith to anticipate the end, ever assured of blessing from God, yet the way is weary, and often the hands are heavy, the spirits droop, and then the trial of constancy of purpose comes on; and, though faint, yet to be found pursuing, is the precursor of blessing and triumph. And this is the turning point of the career. Unbelief sheers off when difficulty threatens. Faith escapes none of these trials, yet holds on her course " though faint, yet pursuing." Let us beware of misjudging our condition by our feelings or perceptions; of putting our enjoyment in the service, in the place of the service itself; and so, contrariwise, of confounding our trials, which necessarily arise from it, with the end in view. It is easy to do this. How many are the ways by which men delude themselves into supineness. It is the cause of a controversy which justifies one. It is at all times unpleasant in itself, but still it may be imperative duty to engage in it. The plea of the evil of it, as such, may be made an excuse of by same. Its tendency to lead bystanders to mock at the truth, the apology of others. Yet if it comes in

the way of duty, we cannot avoid it. To everything there is a season; " a time of war, and a time of peace" (Eccl. 3:8), but servants have no right to be choosers, much less to refrain from action, when the service is arduous and attended with difficulty, seeking into the future for excuses for inertness, instead of being earnest and zealous in the work of to day.

The book of Judges gives the history of man's un, faithfulness in the very place of blessing, sinning in the very face of the bounty and grace which had put him there. It gives also the dealings of God with His people, in chastisement and repeated deliverance. Such was His love and regard, that He pitied them in their sufferings, which their own sin brought upon them. " Yea, many a time turned- He His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath" (Ps. 78:38). The sixth chapter of Judges opens with a renewed account of Israel's iniquity, and the consequences of it. "The hand of Midian prevailed against Israel,... and Israel was greatly impoverished... and the children of Israel cried unto the Lord." How gracious His ways! He sent a prophet unto them, to remind them of His goodness, how He had delivered them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all them that oppressed them, and gave them their land. "And I said unto you, I am the Lord your God; fear not the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but ye have not obeyed my voice." The testimony to their evil is recorded. The bounty of His grace is unfolded to meet it. Gideon is appointed a deliverer. And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him, and said unto him, " The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." And Gideon said unto him, " If the Lord be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?" It is hard, in the midst of the chastening for departure from God, to realize that it is because relationship had existed that this had befallen them. To recognize His hand, was the germ of faith; to see His deliverance in purpose, the growth of it. " If the Lord be with us, why then has all this befallen us?" When he was grieved with their sins, and insulted by the setting up of false gods, He left them to reap, as they had sown, confusion and strife-to be scattered and peeled. Yes, He noticed them in chastening, because they were His. And Gideon said, "O my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? Behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house. And the Lord said unto him, surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." And it is just here that the spring of confidence rises,-"I will be with thee." It was so with Moses of old. If the Lord be not with me, carry us not up hence. The starting point of faith is " God with us." Without this, all contest is in vain and worthless. He met them as they were, and acted on His faithfulness to His promise to their fathers, passing by in marvelous grace their own sinfulness and unbelief.

But how should Gideon be assured of this? The Lord would accept of his offering; and so little did Gideon apprehend his ways, that the seal of his acceptance was regarded by him as the knell of his death; for he said, "Alas, O Lord God! for because I have seen an angel of the Lord face to face." And the Lord answered him. "Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die." And Gideon built an altar there. His soul is awakened for his work. There is struggle for establishment, and the Lord condescends to his weakness, and submits to be proved, that his servant might trust him (verses 36 to 40). He has evidence of His favor, and starts on his career. What wretched confusion was around! What prospect of remedy! How hopeless, to reason, the task! Yet faith laughs at impossibilities, for they exist not before Him with whom we have to do. Omnipotence sees hills as the plains, and water in the flinty rock. Now Gideon had got hold of a great principle-the Lord with his people in chastening them, and therefore His hand in deliverance. Being His, they were sure of the former, and equally safe for the latter. Looking at troubles amongst saints apart from the Lord's hand in permitting them, the eye discerns no remedy; the heart is overwhelmed with consternation. Fear enters; and that which in communion would have been the precursor of blessings, becomes to unbelief the harbinger of defeat. But, blessed be God! it is not so, the name of the Lord invoked, the two or three assembled together in that name, the Holy Ghost recognized in the body, surely the Lord will show He acknowledges us by chastening when needed, that He may bless us the more. "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord and shall not we receive evil." But, as was before stated, this is the trial of faith, it is a step in the right direction to discern the Lord's dealings with His people. "The Lord with them " becomes recovered strength to Gideon; and accordingly as this was discerned, there was blessing in his career. How his faith sought encouragement, and how the Lord dealt graciously towards him, the scripture records.

How pride should be hid from man, and salvation of the Lord fully manifested, the sequel discloses—three hundred only of the many thousands of Israel, and with such weapons of war as appeared very folly in the eyes of the world. But the deliverance would be more manifestly of God, and the hearts of the people brought back to Him; for this was the object, not the triumph of a party but the blessing of the whole people of Israel. -We lose sight of this. We are apt to narrow our views to our localities. The blessing we have enjoyed belonged to the body, we sought to keep it in our own hands, hedging ourselves in, and stipulating conditions of access which the Lord had not imposed upon us. Now the pulling down of our fences and tearing up of our stakes, creates no little consternation among us; but what if the Lord's purpose (as surely it is) is only that our area may be enlarged, our charity widened, our affections called forth for the church as a whole? Surely there is encouragement for faith from the very fact of our chastening. Let us beware of writing (as has before been observed) the sentence of death upon our position and privileges instead of upon ourselves. To recognize the hand of our Father and to acknowledge the needs be, is the first step towards recovery.

This was attained to by Gideon. The Lord's hand was seen in permitting the chastisement; the Lord's hand made bare to faith in working deliverance. But the position of faith is the path of trial, and that, too, because it is the one of faith. We have forgotten this in our folly. We have asked, with Gideon, if it be so, why, then, has all this befallen us? And, instead of the language of Nehemiah, "Should such an one as I flee?" (Neh. 6:11), "we have run every man into his own house," whilst the Lord's house lay waste (Hag. 1:9). Trial by the way, is no excuse for getting out of the way; failure in man, no reason for quarreling with God.

But the rather, our every discomfiture should quicken our feet to our hiding-place. "Thou art my hiding-place" (Psa. 119:14). But the path of faith is one of trial. Service for God can only be sustained in the power of God. There is danger whilst working ostensibly for Him, of ceasing to abide in Him; and then leanness of soul enters, and the heart, unsustained by communion, shrinks under trials which, in a healthy condition, would have had no pressure upon us. Now, Gideon had eminent service, and consequently trials in it. He had wrought a victory in the energy of the Spirit of God, and this exposed him to the envy of Ephraim (ch. 8). He came to Jordan and passed over, he and the three hundred men that were with him, "faint, yet pursuing." And he asked bread of the men of Succoth and he was mocked of them; the princes of Succoth saw nothing imposing in the small band of the faithful so wearied and famished, for whom unbelief had no sympathy, and less of discernment, when acting for God. And he passed on to Penuel, where a like reception awaited him. There are few allies for faith, and few spirits to lead on a forlorn hope into conflict. Yet pursuing God's enemies, and employed in His service, though faint, He sustains them. "He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increases strength." The hosts of Zeba and Zalmunna are defeated in Karkor, and the two kings taken (chap. 8:11) and slain; the elders of Succoth taught with thorns and briers in the wilderness (verse 16); the men of the city of Penuel slain, and their tower beaten down (verse 17), and all this by a feeble few, "faint, yet pursuing."

What comfort and encouragement is here! Have faith in God. How imperative the precept! How certain the results! The Lord strengthen the hands that hang down! May the good of His church be the object of pursuit, the truth of His presence where two or three are gathered, the testimony borne; and though Ephraim wax wroth in the spirit of envy, and Succoth and Penuel will furnish no sustenance, yet onwards is the word,-"Speak to the people that they go forward." May the Lord encourage us that we may be found though "faint, yet pursuing."

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