Luke - Commentaries by Edward B. Dennett

Three Marys, Mary Magdalene

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If the surmise be correct that Magdalene means simply that Mary came from the town of Magdala, she was a Galilean, and had been brought up by the shores of the lake of Galilee. The notices in Luke 23:49,55, certainly indicating Mary (see Luke 8:2-3), make it very clear that she came from Galilee, and consequently support the above conclusion. This being so, her identification with Mary of Bethany by many older writers is entirely without foundation, as we also believe is the attempt to connect her with the woman who was a “sinner,” who washed the Lord’s feet with tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment, as recorded in Luke 7. Nothing is more evident, if the narrative be carefully examined, than that the woman who was a sinner, Mary of Bethany, and Mary Magdalene, are three distinct persons, and that the anointing of our Lord in Luke 7 is to be distinguished from the anointing recorded by Matthew, Mark, and John. There are similarities, for indeed it could not be otherwise, but morally, and in their significance, they are completely different. If the records be read in their spirit rather than in their letter, it will at once be perceived that two very different states of soul and stages of spiritual experience are described and presented.

Three Marys, Lord's Mother and His Brethren, The

From a comparison of the first two scriptures it would seem that the incident they contain, which again brings Mary to our notice, took place at Capernaum. Here at this moment the Lord was entirely engaged in His blessed ministry, and so greatly were the crowds attracted to Him, that He and His disciples “could not so much as eat bread.” His “friends,” either in their concern for Him or inconvenienced by what was going on, “went out to lay hold on Him: for they said, He is beside Himself” (Mark 3:21). It is this incident which explains the occurrence now to be considered, for in Mark’s gospel it follows almost immediately upon it. Again, then, we find Him diligently pursuing His divine mission, and “the multitude sat about Him” (Mark), and “while He yet talked to the people” (Matthew), “behold, His mother and His brethren stood without, desiring to speak with Him,” but, as we gather from Luke, they “could not come at Him for the press,” that is, the crowd. Then, “standing without, [they] sent unto Him, calling Him,” as we learn from Mark. Word was thus passed into the inner circle of His audience that our Lord was wanted by His mother and brethren, and thereon, following the account in Matthew, one said unto Him, “Behold, Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with Thee.”

Christian Truth: Volume 26, Scripture Notes: Hebrews 3:6; 1 Timothy 2:1-7; Luke 4:5-7

Heb. 3:6

This verse is more accurately rendered as follows: "But Christ as a Son over His house," etc. To take it as it stands in the King James Version would make it mean Christ's, or the Son's, house; but it is God's house. This is clearly seen from the comparison drawn. The Apostle and High Priest of our confession (Jesus) was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was in all His house; that is, in the house of God in the wilderness. But though both alike were faithful, Christ is more glorious in His Person than was Moses; for He built the house (see Matt. 16:18); and, moreover, having built all things, He is God. Again, if Moses was faithful in all His house, it was "as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after"; but Christ as a Son over His house. The glory of Christ thus outshines that of Moses, both as to His Person and as to His position; and we also learn that as Son He is supreme over the house of God. (Compare John 8:35, 36.) And we believers are the house, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. (See Eph. 2:22.) In the wilderness we are tested, and thus continuance or perseverance becomes the sign of reality.

2

1 Tim. 2:1-7

The ails of this scripture are most interesting. The Apostle exhorts that supplications, prayers, etc. be made for all men. The foundation of this precept lies in two great facts; first, that God is now presented to the world as a Savior God who desires that all men should be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth; and, second, that there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. In accordance with this attitude of grace toward all men on God's part, and the universal scope of the death of Christ (giving Himself a ransom for all), Paul is commissioned (as a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher) to all. Not to the Jews only, but to the nations (the Gentiles); in fact, to all men. (Compare Col. 1:23.) We thus see that Christ died for all, that God desires all to be saved, and that Paul was sent with the gospel to all; and hence it is that, in fellowship with the heart of God, and the object of the death of Christ, as well as with the apostolic mission, believers are to pray for all men. But even while praying for all, the moment kings and all that are in authority are brought into view, the welfare of the saints in their worldly circumstances, as under human laws and government, is remembered. How true it is that God's affections and desires should govern those of His people!

3

Luke 4:5-7

As to the question whether Satan had really the power which he here claims, it is, like every other, answered by the Word of God itself. The point in the temptation, we apprehend, was to induce the Lord, if that had been possible, to take the sovereignty of the kingdoms of the world from Satan's hands, instead of from God's, and apart from the cross. This wile was instantly defeated by the invincible sword of the Spirit, "Thou shalt worship the Lord Thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve." Passing onward to a later day, we shall find who did receive his sovereignty from Satan. In Rev. 12:3 we have the vision of a great red dragon, who is declared in verse 9 to be "that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan," who has seven heads and ten horns, and seven crowns (diadems) upon his head. In the next chapter (v. 1) we see a beast rise up out of the sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns (diadems); and we read in the following verse that "the dragon gave him [the beast] his power, and his seat, and great authority." Without entering into details, we may say that this beast represents the head of the revived Roman Empire, and that he has all the forms of governmental power (for the number seven indicates completeness), and that ten kingdoms, the ten kingdoms of prophecy, as shown by the ten horns with their respective diadems, will form his dominion and own his sway. We learn then that Satan had at this period the sovereignty of the kingdoms of the world in his possession, and that he bestowed it upon one who worshiped him- as is evident from the second part of chapter 13. But Christ, as we have seen, refused the gift from Satan's hands. He, the blessed, perfect, dependent One, would take nothing, whether the "cup" or the glory, but from the hands of His Father.

And passing now still further on, we shall discover that it was only for a brief season that Satan was allowed to tempt man with his golden bait, and only for that brief season, in order to show out all the depths of man's evil heart before judgment fell both upon man and upon himself. God never surrenders His rights, or allows His purposes to be frustrated; and thus in chapter 19 we behold heaven opened, and a white horse issuing forth; "and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns [diadems]" (vv. 11, 12). At length the diadems are on the head of the rightful Sovereign, the One who has on His vesture and on His right thigh the name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." Man is forever discrowned, and Christ having waited in patience for His Father's time for the accomplishment of His glorious purposes, has at length all things put under His feet. On His head are MANY diadems, for the fullness of all dominion is His, and His by right. He who has been the humbled One is now the exalted One on earth, as well as in heaven.

Three Marys, Mary and Joseph Finding Jesus in the Temple

Twelve years passed by, and concerning this whole period two things only are mentioned. The first is, that “the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him,” and the second is, that “His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.” This is another testimony to the piety of Mary and her husband, and it may be that it is on this account the fact is noted; for it is not even said if Mary took the child Jesus with her on these occasions. Not a word is added to gratify human curiosity; only that is given which is requisite for the object the Spirit of God has in view. All is divinely perfect, because every word of Scripture is the expression of divine wisdom; indeed, the fact stated in verse 41 is but the introduction to the incident which follows, and it is this we now proceed to consider, in so far at least as it relates to Mary.

The first two verses will prepare our way—“And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and His mother knew not of it.” It would seem from Jewish records that twelve was the age when Jewish youths were considered sufficiently mature to take upon themselves their individual responsibilities before God. A boy who had reached this age was termed “son of the law,” and then first incurred legal obligations.

Three Marys, Mary in the Temple

The godly and devout character of Mary and Joseph is testified to by their careful attention, in every particular, to the Word of God. Both in respect of the circumcision of the holy child Jesus, and in Mary’s own purification, they were found in exact obedience to the prescriptions of the law (see Lev. 13), as likewise in the presentation of Jesus to the Lord, “as it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord.” Forty days were to elapse before Mary could thus appear in the temple at Jerusalem.

During the visit of the wise men from the east, recorded by Matthew, as in the visit of the shepherds, Mary is in the background, and we may surely say that she was there willingly. In communion with God’s mind, at least in her measure, she would delight in the recognition of the coming glory of the One who was “born King of the Jews,” and she would in no wise be astonished when she saw them fall down and worship Him, or when they opened their treasures and presented to Him gifts—gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. It was her joy that she had been the chosen vessel of His birth, but she had thenceforward to learn that to be in relationship and identification with God’s Anointed would bring upon her the persecution of the god of this world. The moment God’s man-child was born, the dragon (Satan), who had been waiting for the event, sought to devour Him. Mary, with Joseph, as well as Jesus, became the object of the enmity of the wicked king, but, sheltered by divine protection and guidance when they fled into Egypt, and again, after they had returned to the land of Israel, into Galilee to their former home, they enjoyed the inestimable honor and privilege of ministering to Him who was no less than the Son of God.

Three Marys, Mary and the Shepherds

If we refer to these pious men, who were elected of God to receive the announcement of the birth of “a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord,” it is only because of their connection with Mary’s history. It was not with the great of the earth that God was at this moment concerned, but it was with His poor and afflicted people, amongst whom these shepherds were numbered. Divine communications can only be received by those whose hearts have been divinely prepared, and hence we may be confident that these humble men were amongst those that looked for

redemption in Jerusalem. (See Luke 2:38.) Thus it was to these, as they were keeping watch over their flock by night, that the angel was sent to bring them good tidings of great joy, which should be to all people, and to certify their faith a sign was given unto them: “Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” No sooner had he delivered his message than “suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men” (good pleasure in men).

Three Marys, Mary at Bethlehem

If God is sovereign in His purposes, His sovereignty is no less displayed in His selection of instrumentalities for their fulfillment. More than seven hundred years before the birth of Christ the prophet Micah had said in the name of Jehovah, “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” That this was regarded as a prophecy of the birthplace of the Messiah is shown from the fact that it was quoted by the chief priests and scribes in answer to Herod’s question where Christ should be born. But Mary’s home was at Nazareth in Galilee, and the time was drawing near for the birth of her holy child; and lo, “it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world [the ‘habitable world’—the Roman empire] should be taxed.” The effect of this decree was that Joseph (together with Mary, his espoused wife, being great with child) was compelled, because he was of the house and lineage of David, to go up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem. Little did the Roman emperor know what would be the consequence of the thought which had come into his mind. As a writer has remarked, “This act only accomplished the marvelous purpose of God, causing the Saviour-king to be born in the village where, according to the testimony of God, that event was to take place.” And what is so remarkable is that though the decree was issued, and Joseph and Mary, doubtless with many others, went to their city to be registered, it would yet appear that the census was not actually made until some time afterward, “when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.” How admirable the wisdom of God, and the perfection of His ways! God constrains the emperor to set the machinery of his empire in motion so that Joseph may be compelled to take Mary his wife to Bethlehem. What a proof it is that God still holds the reins of government in His hands, and that He turns the hearts of men whithersoever He will! The Christian believes and knows it, and he thus rests in peace in the midst of all the busy activities of men, and amid all the confusion, turbulence, and strife which prevail on every hand.

Christian Truth: Volume 3, Green Tree and the Dry, The

"For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" Luke 23:31.

The "green tree" in this scripture is Christ Himself, and the "dry" is the Jewish nation. Together with others, the women of Jerusalem followed Jesus on His way to Calvary and, in the natural tenderness of their hearts, they "bewailed and lamented Him." Jesus, turning, bade them weep rather for themselves and for their children on account of the judgment that would soon fall upon the unhappy and guilty city and people (vv. 29, 30), adding, "For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" That is, if such things—wicked malice, hypocrisy, unrighteous judgment, and a degrading death were visited upon Him who was like a green tree (compare Psalm 1:3; Jer. 17:7, 8), what should be done to the people who were as a dry tree, morally dead before God, without fruit or even leaves, and who were now committing their crowning sin in the rejection of their Messiah? For such a state, symbolized by a dry tree, there remained nothing but the ax and the fire (Compare Matt. 3:10.)

Three Marys, Magnificat, The

(The Magnificat is a name which was attached to Mary’s utterance in the early age of the church— from the Latin word to magnify.)

Let these words of Mary be given in their entirety, that the reader may perceive more fully their divine meaning and beauty:

My soul doth magnify the Lord,

And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

For He hath regarded the low estate of His handmaiden:

For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

For He that is mighty hath done to me great things;

And holy is His name.

And His mercy is on them that fear Him

From generation to generation.

He hath showed strength with His arm;

He hath scattered the proud in the imagination

of their hearts.

He hath put down the mighty from their seats,

And exalted them of low degree.

He hath filled the hungry with good things;

And the rich He hath sent empty away.

He hath holpen His servant Israel,

In remembrance of His mercy;

As He spoke to our fathers,

To Abraham, and to his seed forever."

Three Marys, Mary's Visit to Elisabeth

Whenever there is a work of grace in souls they are drawn together in the bonds of divine love. So was it with Mary and Elisabeth. Gabriel had revealed to Mary that God had also visited her cousin Elisabeth, and with the sense of what was to be accomplished through herself, whether she understood or not the full import of the communication she had received, she had been made to feel that there was one friend to whom she could pour out her soul. Accordingly she "arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; and entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth."

Burdened with her tidings—tidings which told, moreover, of God's faithfulness to His word, and of His unquenchable love to His people—it could not be otherwise than that she should go "in haste." And what thoughts would fill her adoring heart as she sped on her mission! As one of the holy women of Judah, she well knew the scriptures that spoke of the coming King and the glory of His kingdom. Such scriptures, for example, as "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the Lord hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem" (Isa. 52:7-9); or again, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee" (Zech. 9:9). The very words the angel had employed could not fail to remind her of these glorious prophetic statements, and to cause her heart to overflow with praise in that she, a humble virgin, should be connected with their fulfillment.

Three Marys, Mission of Gabriel to Mary, The

When we come to the gospel of Luke, Mary is the prominent figure in the account of the nativity. Of Joseph's exercises here there is no mention; it is only said that Mary was "a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary" (Luke 1:27). It was to her, dwelling in Nazareth, that the angel Gabriel was sent from God. (Matthew does not mention that Joseph and Mary were inhabitants of Nazareth before the birth of Jesus: his object is to show the fulfillment of prophecy in the birth of the King of the Jews at Bethlehem, and afterward he tells us that, having returned from Egypt, Joseph "came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth." The two records supplement one another, each containing what was necessary for the special object in view.) Sitting in the house, as is clear from the words, "The angel came in unto her"—she received the salutation, "Hail, thou that art highly favored, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." Gabriel, who stood in the presence of God (see vs. 19), was in the divine secret concerning the chosen virgin and, as is evident from the nature of his greeting, he appreciates the immense favor, together with her exaltation amongst women, which God in His grace had bestowed upon her. His words, indeed, did just expressed his own delight in communion with the thoughts of God.

But Mary, when she saw the angel, who doubtless appeared in human form (see Luke 24:4), "was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be." That is, she reasoned inwardly as to the nature of Gabriel's words, what was their "aim and meaning." We can understand this if we recall her character and position. She was a pious, God-fearing woman, and, whatever her genealogy, would seem to have been in lowly circumstances. Meekness, humility, and faith were manifestly the features of her spiritual life, and she might therefore well be troubled at the saying she had heard, and reason, not with the natural mind as the offspring of doubt, but rather as springing from perplexity of soul, concerning the significance of the angel's address. With divinely-given insight into Mary's feelings, Gabriel first of all calms her mind, and then, in preparation for the marvelous communication he was sent to make, assures her that she has found favor with God. (Commenting upon verse 28, another has observed that "the expressions 'found favor' and 'highly favored' have not at all the same meaning. Personally she had found favor, so that she was not to fear; but God had sovereignly bestowed on her this grace, this immense favor, of being the mother of the Lord. In this she was the object of God's sovereign favor." It may be added that finding favor with God refers to Mary's spiritual state, while being highly favored speaks rather of her being God's chosen vessel for the birth of Jesus. But the two things are assuredly connected.) We say "in preparation" for Gabriel's message, for until the soul is at peace and in liberty, divine things cannot be communicated. (Compare Dan. 10:19.)

Avoiding the Point, Avoiding the Point

"And when one of them that sat at meat with Him heard these things, he said unto Him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God." Luke 14:15.

The utterance of this man who had the privilege of sitting at table with the Lord Jesus, seems at first sight to be a very pious reflection; but looking deeper, it is seen to be an attempt to turn aside the application of the Lord's words. The Lord, as men speak, had been intensely personal, and many at the table must have felt very uncomfortable; and the speaker comes to their relief. He said, as it were, Let us raise our thoughts to heaven. Souls in a bad state never like the word to reach their conscience.

Three Addresses on the Lord's Return, Lord's Return: Luke 12:32-40, The

The subject of this chapter is simply, as pointed out last week, the state of soul suitable to meet the Lord on His return; and we see in detail, I think, how the Lord sought to prepare His disciples, and to impart to them the state of soul which He requires.

I might just, perhaps, go back, and state the points of the chapter, in order to connect them with what I have before me tonight.

We saw, in the first place, that the Lord Jesus sought to deliver His disciples from the fear of man, in order that there might be a bold confession of His name while they were passing through this scene. Then, in the second place, He sought to deliver them from anxiety as to the things of this life, that they might seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, that all needful things might be added to them. Then we saw that He sought to establish them in grace, as we read in Luke 12:32: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom”; and He sought, not only to establish them in grace, but also to make them the representatives of grace as they passed through this world. Thus He says to them, “Sell that ye have, and give alms.” Then there is another point to which I call attention, as it connects itself with what is before me this evening. It is this. If we represent God in grace in this world, we lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. It is a wonderful thing, but you cannot get away from it; if we are givers in this world, and thus represent God as a giver, we lay up treasure in heaven for ourselves. But then remember, when we speak of treasure in heaven, that everything is centered in Christ, and, therefore, where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. I understand, therefore, that Christ is our treasure, and so, beloved, the way to be heavenly-minded is to have our hearts set upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I am sure every one here tonight realizes this, that the dearest object we have upon earth is the one that commands our attention, our thoughts, and our affections. It is always true that where our treasure is our hearts will be also, and the Lord applies the figure, I think, without doubt to Himself, and so He tells us that if we have Him as our treasure, then our thoughts will be with Him. “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Luke 12:34). There is a distinct connection between that statement and what follows, which is the subject of this evening. The Lord immediately says, consequent upon that statement, “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning” (Luke 12:35). I may say at once that if you have your treasure upon earth you will not have your loins girded, or your lights burning; it is impossible. There is the absolute necessity of having your treasure in heaven if you would be found waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What I feel myself in regard to the coining of the Lord Jesus Christ is that, as we pointed out in the last address, it is too much of a doctrine, and too little practical as affecting us in our daily lives. We shall never wait for the Lord unless He possesses our hearts; He must possess our hearts if we are to be found waiting for Him. “But,” you will say to me, “every one of us has the Lord Jesus Christ in his heart.” Are you sure of that? Are you sure that the Lord Jesus Christ dwells in the hearts of all His people? If He does, nothing but Christ will come out from them. No, if He is in our hearts He must be expressed, and the only way to express Christ in passing through this world is to have Him enshrined in our affections. If He is not, He will never be expressed; and this, let me say, illustrates a principle of great importance: that is, we only express as much of Christ as we are like Him; we could not express more if we tried. It is only in the proportion as He is formed within us that He can be expressed by us. If we have only a little of Christ, we cannot express much of Him, and thus you will see the importance of pressing this, that the Lord Jesus can only come out of us in our daily walk and conduct in proportion as we are like Him. A little of Christ—alas, how little some of us possess! We all know it; but then, beloved, we can only present Christ in proportion as we are like Him, and that is why He presses this scripture, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

Now He tells us to let our loins be girded about and our lights burning, and then He says, “And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when He will return from the wedding” (Luke 12:36). Now let us look at this statement in detail. “Let your loins be girded about.” Now I think it is only three times in Scripture that reference is made to the loins being girded. In Ephesians 6:14, “Having your loins girt about with truth”; and in 1 Peter 1:13, “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind.” Now put these three together, and we get this, that it is inwardly we are to be girt; it is in the spiritual mind; and then our loins are to be girt about with the truth. What is the truth? The truth, beloved, is the revelation of God in Christ Jesus; and it is with this that we are to be girded. The Lord says plainly, “Let your loins be girded about “; that is, as I understand it, girt about with the truth in its application to us in the power of the Spirit, so that inwardly under the influence of the truth we may be girded about, so that we may be prepared for conflict or service, or whatever we are called to do. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance that we should understand this expression, “Let your loins be girt about with truth.”

Then there is another thing—“And your lights burning.” Now let me say one word about that. Does the light of every Christian shine out? Well now, the Apostle Paul speaks in Philippians in this way, “Among whom you appear as lights in the world.” The word “appear” here is really the same word as would apply to the rising of the luminaries in the heavens. For example, the moon shines tonight, for it is set there to shine. Every believer in like manner is set to shine, but then, alas! we don’t often shine, and so the Lord Jesus says, “And your lights burning.” In the first place, we have to ascertain what the light is. As far as I understand Scripture, the light is always Christ in the New Testament. It is the only light in the midst of the darkness, and so He speaks in this scripture of the lights burning; it is the light coming out in the daily life, there is no other light for men: “The light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” That received into the heart should flow out of us in our walk, our ways, and our conduct.

I think every one of you will see the necessity of this in regard to the Christian life, that the light should be burning; but why don’t our lights burn always, let me ask? Well, you will find in the tabernacle that Aaron had to use the snuffers. And why? In order that the light might be pure, that it might shine without obstruction. We all know what it is to see a candle with a long wick, and the light dim in consequence. It needs to be snuffed, in order that the light may shine clearly. Do you say, “How does that apply to you and me?” I will tell you. Some of us Christians may have bad habits—they will obscure the light. Suppose I were hasty in temper—that would obscure the light. If I were worldly—that would obscure the light; so would evil associations. Thus you will see you have to judge yourselves. There must be self-judgment, in order that everything that is inconsistent with Christ may have no place with us. How many of us have been the causes of stumbling to our

fellow-Christians because our lights have not shone clearly! If we were living and walking in the power of the Holy Spirit there would be a manifest testimony to the Lord Jesus shining out of every one of us. The light cannot be hid; we read of the Lord Himself that He could not be hid. And why not? Because of the light that shone so perfectly from Him. You have this statement in John 1: “The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not.” The darkness sought to put the light out, and so they crucified our blessed Lord and Saviour.

You will now say to me, “What is the condition for the outshining of the light?” I know of only one; the Apostle Paul gives it to us in the statement about himself: “Always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus” (2 Cor. 4:10). Now what is the dying of Jesus? Simply, it is the application of the truth of the cross to what I am. What the apostle meant is this, always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that nothing of Paul might come out, only Christ in all he said and did. Let me give you a simple illustration. Suppose I am a witty man, and I meet you, and we have a conversation together. If not held by the power of the Spirit of God, I might be tempted to display my wit. That would not be Christ, but self; and so it is, in order for the light to shine, there must be the application of death to all that I am, that only Christ may be displayed. This, I apprehend, is what the Lord means in this scripture, “Your lights burning.”

Now, before I go further, let me just make one or two applications, because it is one thing to see the meaning of Scripture, but quite another thing to be in the power of it. May I ask you, and myself too, Are our loins girded? Are our lights burning? Do you say, you don’t know? We do know! I am sure of this, if you will allow me to say it, that where the light shines out of a Christian distinctly and clearly, the man of the world will hate it. “Will it go as far as that?” you say. Yes! It was so in the case of the blessed Lord, and men could not bear the fierceness of the light, therefore they sought to quench it by crucifying Him upon the cross. Let us, then, bear in mind that if you and I would be ready to Meet the Lord Jesus when He returns, there must be the girded loins and there must be the burning lights.

Now we come to the attitude that has to be maintained, and then we will speak of the blessed recompense which the Lord will give to those who are waiting for His return. You will see the attitude is this, “And ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately” (vs. 36). Now we are to understand that this figure which the Lord uses is given to indicate what the attitude is to be. We are to be like unto men that wait for their lord; he has gone to the wedding, and he is coming back. The figure, then, is this (to make a modern application). The servants are in the hall, they have their hands upon the door, waiting for the first sign of their lord’s return, and, on his first knock, they throw the door open wide in order to receive him. There are two things: they are wanting their lord to return, and, consequently, they are waiting for him. The two things will go together. Now let me make an application of these two things. Do you and I desire the Lord to return? I know we sometimes sing a line of a verse—

Take Thy poor, waiting pilgrims home.

Do we mean it when we sing it? Because it means that while we are singing we are asking the Lord to take us home. Is that our desire? No, beloved, often times it is not our desire. Hence what the Lord presses upon us here is that we are to be in the condition suited to His return, and in the attitude of always expecting Him.

If you remember, I asked last week how many of us really from day to day have thought of the Lord’s return. How many have said from day to day the Lord may be here before the close of the day? Yet the attitude the Lord enjoins in this scripture amounts to that, always waiting, always expecting, and always longing that you may see Him face to face. I know how easy it is to swim down the stream of time, and to forget the possibility of a sudden change, that while we are passing along day by day, and while the course of business flows on, there may be a sudden catching away of the people of God, caught up to meet the Lord in the air, to be forever with Him. The question, therefore, comes to each one of us, Are we ready to see the Lord face to face? Let me give an illustration. Let me suppose a true wife whose husband has gone to Australia or one of the distant dependencies of the British Empire. She does not know when he will return, and let me say, in order to complete the illustration, that during his absence she has not ceased to love him, but she has gathered about her some few things he would not like on his return. She receives a letter to say he is coming, and coming soon. What is her first thought? She looks round the house, and says, “My husband would not like to see that.” She is a true wife, and so she puts it away, and not only does she do that, but she says, “He would like to see this and that,” and so she collects everything that will please him when he returns home.

I apprehend this illustration will have its application to us here tonight. Is the Lord returning? If He is, I want to get rid of everything that will not please Him, and that is the meaning, I apprehend, of the passage in 1 John 3:3, “Every one that hath this hope in Him [that is, in Christ] purifies himself, even as He is pure.” Now purifying oneself is this—getting rid of all that is unsuited to Christ, and the acquisition of everything that is suited to Him, and that is the only possible way of being ready to meet Him when He does return. Let us not pass by a scripture like this, but let it lay hold of our hearts in living power, when the Lord says, “Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately.”

I was reading a little book lately; it was not according to the truth in all its aspects, but still there was one thing in it which struck me very much. A rich merchant returned home to his family from his business in the evening. His wife noticed he was very depressed. “What is the matter, dear?” she said. He answered, “I have heard today that the Lord Jesus is likely to return very soon.” “What of that?” “Oh” he said, “I am not prepared to meet Him,” and he began to mourn over the fact. “There will be an end to all my plans, all my gain and profit will pass away if the Lord does really come.” And yet that man was a Christian! Well now, I want you to make the application to ourselves, so that we may not be occupied with anything whatsoever on which the Lord cannot smile when He returns. It shows us how practical the whole thing is, and that is the object of the whole chapter, to build us up in a state of suitability to meet the Lord. The Lord has that end in view through the whole chapter.

Well, now let me pass to the other side: the Lord’s recompense for those who are found in this way, watching and waiting. He says, “Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them” (Luke 12:37). The first thing is, “Blessed are those servants whom the Lord shall find watching.” Now you all know what watching is. If you had a dear friend returning from a distance to you, and suppose you could see the way from the window, you would be watching and waiting there expecting him. Well, the Lord pronounces blessing upon those who are so watching, and thus I ask myself, as I ask you here tonight, Are you really watching?

How many of us attend to the signs of the times, to political movements, and all that kind of thing, the confusion and agitations that go on around us, worldly schemes and plans. But of what value is all that? Why, it will all end for every child of God the moment the Lord comes. In

that very day our thoughts and imaginations will all end, as we all know, just as they end when we come to die. The blessing is reserved for those who are found watching. And so, beloved, the conclusion I press upon you is this, Are we watching? We must be watching if we would please the Lord. I have sometimes said, and I quite believe it, that even domestic happiness is sometimes a great barrier for waiting for the Lord. You say, “Is it not a good thing?” It is, beloved; I was about to say it is one of the flowers of the Garden of Eden. But still, domestic happiness may come between the soul and Christ, and it does sometimes; and thus the Lord strips some of us, and we wait, and are solitary while waiting, because He cannot trust us with too much affection in this world. He loves us so much, that He is jealous over us, and wants us for Himself. Do you ever read that expression in the Canticles, “Jealousy is cruel as the grave “? What is the meaning? I will tell you how it presents itself to me. When a body is committed to the ground the grave closes in over it and shuts out every other object; it possesses that body absolutely. Well, the Lord’s jealousy is like that. Do you suppose the Lord could contemplate with indifference our hearts going after this thing, and that thing, and the other thing, which are contrary to Himself? No; if He loves us, and He does love us, He wants our whole hearts. Nothing less than our whole hearts will ever satisfy Him. “Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching.”

Now see the wonderful recompense! “Verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.” You will see there are two things. “He shall gird Himself” as the servant. The Lord was the servant down here; you remember He said to His disciples, “I am among you as He that serveth.” The blessed Lord, entitled to everything, the One who created everything, and the One who died upon the cross, yet took the place of a servant amongst His disciples. Ah! what imperfect disciples they were. Christians sometimes say to me, “It is impossible to love So-and-so, their conduct is so strange.” Well, was not the Lord surrounded by those whose conduct was very strange? Was there not a Judas, and Peter who denied Him? Did the Lord cease to love them? Nay! He says, “As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you.” No; the only way to love the people of God is to see them as God sees them, accepted in Christ, and then you can love them. The Lord will gird Himself, He will take the lowest place amongst His people. This is in the glory itself after He has come. “He will gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat.” You will say, “What is the meaning of that?” Well, I will tell you, the thought in the statement which satisfies my own heart. It is this. He will cause us to feast on His own delights; what delights His own heart will delight yours and mine. “He shall make them to sit down to meat.” He will cause us, I repeat, to feast upon His own delights. Is not that wonderful? Sharing His own joys with His beloved people, and not only sharing His own joys with His people, but, coming forth to serve them, He will minister these delights to us Himself, beloved, and He will take the lowest place, the servant of His people, and He will make them rejoice in the sense of His presence and the enjoyment of His love; and so they will not have a single object that He has not. Then remember that we have often been taught that there is not a single future blessing which may not be enjoyed now in measure, at any rate. If we are going to feast with the Lord on His own delights by and by, may we not do so now? There is a line of a verse—I always challenge my own heart when I sing it—which reads:

His joys our deepest joys afford.

How feebly it is true of us, and yet it may be so. Thus you see in the glory itself the Lord Jesus will come, and will cause His people to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them; and so it is that He holds out all this blessed prospect to encourage our hearts, and to keep them upon Himself in the place where He is.

Then the Lord says this: “And this know, that if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, and not have suffered his house to be broken through” (vs. 39); and then He adds, “Be ye therefore ready also” (that is, on the watch): “for the Son of Man cometh at an hour when ye think not” (Luke 12:40). I don’t go now into the distinction between the public coming of Christ and His coming to receive His people. I speak in a general way; next week I shall hope to take up the distinction. Here it is the Son of Man coming, and that always applies to the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the prospect of which we live day by day, as the apostle says, “those who love His appearing.” The point of this additional figure which the Lord uses is this, that we are always to be ready, “Be ye therefore ready also.” Now you will say, “How can we be ready?” It is not state of soul only; it is mainly that, but there are many things to be settled. I was dining one day with a lady in London, and I said to her at the table, “Would you like the Lord Jesus to return today?” “No,” she said, “I would not.” “And why not?” “Well,” she said, “I have many things to settle up first, there are many things I would not like Him to see; I would rather He did not come today.” Well, the Lord says, “Be ye ready,” that is, everything settled up, and we as real pilgrims and strangers passing through this world with nothing to detain us. And why? Because our hearts are upon Him where He is now. It all resolves itself into that.

I will just press these few last words upon you. Does the Lord Jesus possess your hearts? If He does, then your hearts will be in the place where He is, and that will be the means of the readiness for His return of which He speaks. What I gather is this, that all depends upon the state of soul, our state, so that I cannot conceive of anything tending to greater edification than to sit down quietly in the presence of the Lord, and to put this question to oneself, “Am I ready to meet Him? Would He find in me and round about me all that would delight His own heart?” If I can say, “Yes, He would,” then I am in the state which He desires.

Let me just recapitulate the chapter. In the first place, He would deliver us from the fear of man. This is a snare to many of us. I have known many young Christians who have made shipwreck as to their profession because of the fear of man round about them.

Then He would deliver us from anxiety. Many of us have cares. “No,” the Lord says, “you need not have a single care, God will take care of you.” So leave yourselves in His hands; He points to the birds and flowers in order to convince us that God does care for us. “Ye are of more value than many sparrows.” God’s care may always be trusted in. “I have been young, and now am old,” says the Psalmist, “yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor His seed begging bread” (Psa. 37:25).

Then He wants to establish our hearts in grace. It is a wonderful thing! “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” You can’t earn it, He will give it to you. So if our hearts are established in grace now, we can go out in grace, and we can give because God is a giver. Then, as I pointed out at the outset, when we represent God in grace we will lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven, and then our hearts will be there, and that will lead to preparedness to meet the Lord—the loins will be girded, and the lights burning.

Well, I believe it is of all importance to have the Lord continually before our hearts. May He grant that our meditation tonight may lead many of us to judge ourselves as to anything that is not suitable to Him, and lead us at the same time to acquire everything that would please His eye and delight His heart. May He grant it to us for His name’s sake.

There are two things I desire to say before proceeding with what is indicated to us in these verses. The first is, that the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is not a doctrine. Many people consider it to be such, and then regard it simply as a matter to be received or refused at their pleasure. It is not a doctrine! It is a part and parcel of Christianity, and I want you to understand that very distinctly; indeed, if you eliminate the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from Christianity it is destroyed altogether in a certain way, because redemption is not completed until the Lord returns. You remember we have a scripture for that in Romans 8:2-3. You will therefore see that Christianity cannot be complete until the Lord returns, that is, as to the revelation and the truth of it. Moreover, if you leave out the truth of the coming of the Lord Jesus you miss a power for holiness that God has given to us (see John 3:3).

The second thing is that we cannot wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ unless we are in a right state of soul; and this chapter—a part of which I have read—reveals to us how the Lord would prepare His people to wait for His coming. You cannot wait because you believe the Lord is coming back, or because you try to wait, but you must be in that state of soul without which it is impossible to be found in the attitude of the expectation of His return.

There are some here tonight who will admit to me very readily, “Yes, we do believe the Lord Jesus Christ is coming; but we also find day by day that we are not waiting.” Now, beloved, let me put to you a simple question: How many of you have said today in your hearts, “The Lord Jesus Christ may be here before the day closes”? It just shows us how that our knowledge goes far beyond our state and condition, and thus it is that the Lord is concerned in this chapter to prepare us in our souls to wait for His return. I may say He goes right down to the bottom, and builds up from there to the top. Now the Lord Jesus does that in this chapter, as I hope to show you.

In the first place, He seeks to deliver us from the fear of man. And why does He do that? Because if you are not delivered from the fear of man you will never be able to confess Christ, and, if you do not confess Christ day by day as you pass through this world, you will never be waiting for Him. Then you get the principle, which is continually found in the Scriptures—warning and encouragement intermingled.

In the first place, He says, “Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do”; but then He goes on to say, “I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell.” He gives us warning—don’t forget, then, that God is able not only to kill, but to cast into hell. But, then, in connection with that warning, He turns to the other side and gives a very sweet encouragement. You do not need to be afraid of man, he cannot touch you except by divine permission. Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. “Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows” (vss. 6-7). Man may rage against us, but he cannot touch us; it is impossible without God’s permission. I have seen men out shooting, and I have seen them aim at birds, and I have said to myself, “You may be skillful shots, but you cannot hit one bird without divine permission.” That is taught us here. “If that be so,” says Christ, “remember that God is watching over you; you are dear to Him; the very hairs of your head are all numbered, and you are of more value than many sparrows.”

Then He gives a further blessed encouragement. “If you confess Me before men, I will confess you before the angels of God.” I want to say a word or two about confessing Christ. Suppose you are going to town tomorrow, and some one in the carriage should take out a Bible and read. You might say, “I wouldn’t make such a display in the presence of other people.” Why not? Suppose I were in the carriage tomorrow, and that I had a thought about the state of the souls of the people there, and I were to say to myself, “I cannot speak to them, but I would like them to see that I am a Christian,” so I take out my Bible. Would you condemn me for that? No, don’t condemn me! On the other hand, remember, if I do it to make people think I am a very devout person, it would be wrong; but if the motive of my heart is to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and to magnify Him, then it is a blessed thing.

Well now, beloved, I think there are many ways of confessing Christ. I once said to a young Christian, “Have you confessed Christ?” “Yes, I have,” he said. “Are you confessing Christ now?” I got no answer. You see it is a daily thing; it does not mean confessing that you belong to Christ once when you connect yourself with the people of God. It is much more than that, it should be the habit of our lives. I will explain what I mean. I was in a certain town when one very dear to me was suddenly taken ill; I had to send for a doctor, and he was not in the house two minutes before he let me know that he was a Christian. He owned the Lord; he did not say, “I hope to be able to pull her through,” but “the Lord will bring her through, I hope.” What a difference! You see he owned the name of the Lord, and did it really, for I found afterward that he was known as a real and devout Christian.

If you are not confessors of Christ, you won’t want to see Him, and if you don’t want to see Him, you won’t be waiting for Him, and thus I attach the utmost importance to what the Lord teaches in the beginning of this chapter, namely, that we should be confessors of Him.

Then see the encouragement to do it. Here we are in all our weakness, and yet by the grace of God we are enabled to confess Christ. Well, if we confess Christ in that way, what is the encouragement? “Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God.” Now imagine for one minute the time has come when the Lord will recompense His people, and down here in this world there has been a humble Christian who has been in the habit of confessing the name of the Lord Jesus, delighting to speak His name, because “Thy name is as ointment poured forth,” then the Lord Jesus Christ will speak his name before the angels of God. Now, I have been told, and I believe it is true, that there is nothing an officer in the army during a campaign so covets as to be mentioned in the dispatches concerning any battle that has been fought. If he is mentioned, it leads to his promotion. He longs for the distinction; but how much greater the joy to the simple Christian, wherever he may be, or in whatever circumstances, or in a small circle unnoticed day by day, whose delight it is to mention the name of Christ. The Lord says if you do that, He will confess your name before the angels of God. What an immense honor to have one’s name told out by the lips of the Lord Himself in the presence of all the angels.

I want you, dear young people, especially to remember this, because there are many temptations to conceal that you are Christians. We all know the temptations, but the Lord brings in the blessed encouragement. Don’t conceal that you belong to Him, let your heart be so full of Him that you will delight to speak of Him, and then He will by and by confess your name before the angels of God.

Now He turns to the other side, and it is very solemn. It does not apply to a Christian, because the statement is absolute: “He that denieth Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God “; but there may be many a professing Christian who does that. It is a very solemn thing if a Christian does even once deny the Lord, but the Lord Jesus is not speaking of Christians in this verse. If you are not confessors of Christ

you cannot love Him; love has waxed feeble when you don't confess His name; and if you are not confessors you will not be in a state to wait for His return.

Now just to connect this part of the chapter with what follows—and the connection is very beautiful—you will notice in verse 13 that one of the company said to the Lord, "Speak to my brother, that he may divide the inheritance with me." But the Lord said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or a divider over you?" He had not then come for that purpose; and then He draws the lesson, "Take heed, and beware of covetousness." Then He brings in a parable in verse 16, and thus the foundation is laid on which the second lesson is built up. The man in the parable has his abundant crops, but he has not sufficient room to garner them. He says, "What shall I do? I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." That is, all his thoughts were confined to the present moment. He wanted, as many of us have often wanted, not only abundance in this world, but also enough to last as long as we continue in this life. And that was all he cared for, I am sure many of us have known that temptation. If you set your hearts upon things in this life, you are shutting out your responsibility; and so in the parable God says, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee"; and then the question is put, "Whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" And now comes the lesson: "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God." I will not dwell upon that, but I wish to call attention to one point in the next verse (22) which shows the connection. The Lord says to His disciples, "Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat." Therefore, the whole thing turns upon that word; it is the deduction which the Lord draws from the example He has given in the parable.

Now we come to the second lesson. The first is deliverance from the fear of man, the second is deliverance from anxiety, from that care, which often times robs us of our peace. In the parable of the sower in the Gospel you get this, the seed that fell among thorns is choked by what? Cares, and the pleasures of this life. The cares are in the same category with the pleasures of this life. The Lord thus proceeds to deliver His disciples from care, that they may be able in their hearts to maintain the attitude of waiting for Him. If my thoughts are down in the dust, how can I be found waiting for Christ? He therefore comes in, and would deliver us from the cares of this world, from anxiety concerning what we may put on, or our daily food. "No," He says, "there is no need for that"; and He gives an example, firstly, of the ravens, and, secondly, of the lilies of the field. They are not anxious about things, but the ravens are fed, and the lilies are clothed, and clothed in such a way, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of them. If we take that home, we shall understand how foolish it is to be anxious. The truth is, beloved, we are dependent upon God.

He next gives the way of deliverance from anxiety. He says in verse 29, "Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after; and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." If we did but live in the sense of that! "I am in want," you say; well, the "Father knoweth." There is not a single thing that can affect one of His people that does not affect the heart of God. A sentence which I read many years ago, and which has never passed from me is this: "Whatever might be a care to you produces a care for you in the heart of God." And so it does; do we not read in the Epistle of Peter, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." He watches over us even to the smallest and most minute things that might trouble us. Will He forsake us? No, beloved. If you remember the Apostle Paul brings it on in the Epistle to the Hebrews; he says, "Be content with such things as are present, for He has said I will never leave you nor forsake you," so that, as the apostle goes on to say, "We may boldly say the Lord is my helper, and I shall not fear what man will do unto me." So the Lord casts us upon the Father's knowledge and the Father's heart. Then, beloved, He gives the reason why it is we don't enter into the comfort of this: it comes out in the next verse, "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you" (vs. 31). Now let me point out one beautiful thing. In verse 30 He says, "All these things" (eating and drinking and clothing) "do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things"; then, "But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things" (about which He has been speaking) "shall be added unto you." But there is a condition annexed, and I will just call attention to it for one moment. It is all summed up in two lines of an old hymn—

Make you His service your delight,

Your wants shall be His care.

Seek ye the kingdom of God, that is, God's interests, and all these things shall be added unto you. So, beloved, there is no need that one of us in this meeting here tonight should be troubled by a single care; and we shall not be troubled if we only get into our hearts that God loves us, and cares for us, and is watching over us because He cares for us, and thus He will not allow one of His children to want if he seeks first the kingdom of God. The condition is put in this way because God needs to chasten us sometimes, and He does when we need drawing to Him and to His interests. If we make His objects our supreme end, then we shall want nothing as we pass through this world.

Thus the first two lessons of the chapter are deliverance from the fear of man, and deliverance from anxiety. The Lord would have us free from the fear of man and from anxiety. "How happy we should then be!" you say; yes, you would be very happy. The poorest Christian in the world would be able to say, "I am poor, and I have nothing I can call my own, and yet I know I shall never want, because the Father knoweth that I need all these things." How the Lord encourages out hearts; and He seeks to do this in order that we may be in a state of soul to wait for His return.

There is another thing. I will suppose for a moment that all fear of man is gone, and that you can rest upon the heart of God and say, "Yes, I don't know what is going to happen tomorrow, or where tomorrow's food is to come from, yet I know that God cares for me." Now the other thing is that the Lord seeks to establish us in grace now, and we must be, if we are to wait for the Lord's return; and so you get, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (vs. 32). There is an exhortation to seek in the previous verse, now it is all grace. He wants to establish the hearts of His people in the grace of the Father. I want to point out two things. It is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom; that brings in relationship. It is His delight as the Father to do it. It connects itself with the passage in Matthew 13 "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (Matt. 13:43). It goes on to the display of the kingdom by and by, when all God's people will be seen in the same glory as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. It is then that He will come forth as the Sun of Righteousness, and it is then that, in connection with His people, He will take the kingdom and reign from the river to the ends of the earth, and all His people of this present period, and past periods too, will be displayed in the same glory with Him. I have alluded to the passage more than once: "When He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Then just see the contrast! Look at the conditions now; most of us know what bad health is, and to be weak in body in passing through this world. Now just raise your thoughts to

that day when all the saints will come out with Christ and be displayed in the same glory as Himself. “It is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom.” The whole force of the scripture lies in that word “GIVE”; it is the grace of the Father, and what the Lord wants to do is to establish us in the sense of this grace of which He is speaking.

There are, in the next place, two other things. The first is this, until I am established in grace I will never grow. I wonder if you understand that? A legal soul may be very pious, but it won’t grow, and so Peter says at the end of his first epistle, “Grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.” If you want to grow you must be established in grace. When a saint falls into temptation we sometimes have an idea that we shall help him best if we go and bring a little bit of law to bear upon him. We feel we ought to be hard and find fault. No, beloved, you will never restore a soul in that way; you must go in the truth of grace if you would touch his heart. I knew a lad once who had a father and mother. The father was a good father, but he was very severe to his boy, and when the boy fell into any mistakes, or was guilty of any disobedience, the father chastised him severely. The mother, on the other hand, tenderly looked, though pained. It was a look of love, but she had far more influence than the father. She acted in grace, he acted in a legal way. So it is with ourselves. We will never grow unless we are established in the grace of God. You get illustrations of it in Scripture. In 2 Timothy 2:1, where everything has gone to the bad, the apostle writes to Timothy, “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus.” It is that only which will give us power to deal with souls in days of difficulty, and so here I need to be established in grace, and when I am so established, then it is I shall grow, because then I shall be in the holy atmosphere in which God would have me be, and my heart is melted by the revelation of His grace to me in His beloved Son.

May I add one thing to that, and, say—we never get established in grace until we get to God’s side of things, and view ourselves from God’s side? Why were you born into this world? Only for one reason if you are Christians, namely, to be connected with the purpose of God. It is all of grace. It was God who brought me into the world, who revealed Christ to me, who sustains me every day, and will take me all through the wilderness, and preserve me unto that moment when I shall see the blessed Lord face to face. It is all grace, and I need to be established in grace to understand the heart of God, and to be able to wait for the Lord’s return.

Now I pass to another thing, and it is this. If I am established in grace, then I have to become a representative of grace to those about me, and thus the Lord says—for it is the connection in the thought of the scripture—“Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (vss. 33-34). I think you will see plainly that unless I am in the truth of grace I cannot express grace. Now it is a principle in Scripture that the believer in any dispensation is to reveal God as known in that dispensation; that is, the Jew was to express a righteous Jehovah, but now He is revealed as the God of all grace, the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the God of our salvation. He is a giving God; “giving” characterizes the day of grace, and we are to be givers too, and so express the heart of God in our contact with men as we pass through this world.

The Lord now goes back to the principle He laid down at the end of the parable. “So is he that layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God.” Now, consequently, you get treasure in heaven —“a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth.” I was exceedingly struck in meditating upon this today with a scripture that came across my mind in connection with it: “Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name, because ye belong to Christ, verily, I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.” How marvelous! You meet a child of God, who is weary and thirsty; you give him simply a cup of cold water in Christ’s name. This act becomes a treasure in heaven, and by and by it will be acknowledged, for “he shall in no wise lose his reward.” The Lord points out the same truth here, and there will be a treasure laid up for you in heaven. That is the principle which the Lord teaches us here, and then He adds, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” If somebody is very dear to you, you are always thinking about that person, your thoughts follow your treasure; and so the only way to have your minds set upon things above is simply to have your treasure in heaven. We may consent to that, and say Christ is our treasure. If Christ is my treasure my thoughts will be with Him. That is the last point in the condition of soul needful for waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ.

When a brother gets up and commences to read at, “Let your loins be girded about,” I have always said to myself, “How?” My loins never will be girded about unless Christ is my treasure; if not, I have not the motive or the power for it. Every one will admit that where your treasure is there will your heart be, but that shows the importance of having Christ as our treasure in the heavens.

I am conscious of it myself, and I am sure many of us are while I am speaking, how our thoughts are so often upon things of earth, and yet God is beckoning us on to be occupied with things which are where Christ is at the right hand of God. It you want to be heavenly-minded, the only way is to have your mind upon the things of heaven.

I have given you tonight a kind of preliminary address to show the necessity of a right state of soul to wait for the Lord’s return. I trust the Lord will lay it upon our hearts to consider what has been advanced this evening, that we may all seek to be in this condition, so that day by day it may be a constant thing for us to be waiting for the Lord’s return—a real expectation. Where there is a real expectation there will be power in the soul, because the Spirit of God will lead to it, and there will be a holy walk and conversation, for “every man that hath this hope in Him (that is, Christ) purifieth himself, even as He is pure.”

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