Luke - Commentaries by William Kelly

Notes on Luke, Luke 9:57-62, Notes on

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In all this context, since the transfiguration, human flesh is judged in its various forms. Indeed even there the flesh was shown quite incompetent to appreciate the glory of God, or the new things of His kingdom. Thenceforward disciples and man manifest their unbelief and consequent powerlessness before Satan; their unintelligence as to the sufferings of the Son of man; their worldly ambition, cloaking itself under the Lord's name, though so utterly inconsistent with Him; the party-spirit that overlooks the Spirit of God who deigns to work sovereignly; and the spirit of grace that God was now showing in Christ as contrasted with all that even an Elias did.

But now we have not the failure of the apostles themselves, but the judgment of those who either were or wanted to be disciples. This is brought before us in the close of the chapter in three different forms successively. “It came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” It was apparently a good confession, as it was a zealous resolution; but man never can go before the Lord. No one ever did give himself up to God—he must be called. He who says “I will follow thee” knows not his weakness. When we think what man is and what Jesus is, for man to say “I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest” is manifestly the grossest presumption, yet man sees no presumption in it. So ignorant is man, so besotted in unbelief, that to his eyes real faith seems presumptuous, whereas there is nothing so humble; for faith forgets itself in the goodness and might of Him on whom it leans. It was the expression of self-confidence to say to Jesus, “Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” Now he who does this always miscalculates. He overlooks the glory of Christ and the depth of His grace. He overlooks also his own total want of power and perhaps even his need of forgiveness. No man is competent, till he is called by grace, to follow the Lord. And when we are called, the Lord does not send us forth at our own charges. He gives liberally the needed wisdom and ability to those who ask Him; but He goes before us. To follow the Lord whithersoever He went, before His death (as in this case), was beyond man. When even Peter, at a later date, said something like it, it was just before he denied the Lord. Such is flesh. “I will follow thee to prison and to death,” said Peter; but in fact the very shadow of what was coming frightened him. A servant girl was enough to terrify the chief of the apostles. It made him tell lies with oaths; whereas the same Peter, after the death and resurrection of Christ, when his own conscience had been purified by faith according to the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, became bold as a lion, as he finally followed the Lord not only to prison but to the death of the cross. But this was altogether the strength giving effect of God's grace, not of his own power, which utterly failed. When his natural energy was gone, he was stronger than ever: be was only truly strong when he had no strength of his own. The Lord answers the scribe (for such we know him to be from another gospel) “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” The man was judged. He came for what he could get, and the Lord had nothing to give him—nothing but shame, and suffering, and destitution. The foxes might have holes, and the birds of the air nests, but the rejected Messiah had not an earthly resting-place. There was to be found in Israel no man so poor as the Lord Jesus. When He wanted to teach them a lesson of subjection to Caesar, whom their sins had set over them, He had to ask for a penny to be shown Him. We do not know that the Lord ever possessed a fraction. “Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” It was no use therefore for this man to follow Him in hopes of gaining by it. What now could be gained there by it on earth, but a share of His rejection? “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”

But now comes another case, considerably different, where the Lord takes the initiative.

“He said unto another, Follow me.” The flesh, so bold in its offers to go after. Jesus, is really slow to follow when He calls; as this man, though called, instantly feels the difficulties, and says, “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.” You find this in true believers. When a person has Christianity before his mind as a theory, all seems easy. He thinks he can do anything. Ordinarily, where the faith is genuine, difficulties are felt; and this man pleads the very first of all human duties. What would seem not only reasonable, but so incumbent on him, as first to go and bury his father? Did not the law command the child to honor father and mother? To be sure; but One was there greater than the law. The God who gave the law was calling, and if He says Follow me, faith gives up everything, even be it father, or mother, or wife, or children, for Christ's sake. Persons must come to this sooner or later; generally, in the long run, every one who thoroughly follows Christ. It is not felt at every moment; but the principle of Christianity is the sovereign 'call of God in Christ that takes one clean out of the world. Whilst still in the world one belongs to another—absolutely and only to Christ to do the will of God. Hence all natural ties must be in comparison like the green withs with which Samson was bound, and which were no more than tow before his all-overcoming strength. The most intimate of natural ties are after all but of flesh; whereas flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The link with Christ is of the Spirit; and the Spirit is mightier than the flesh. Therefore, whatever might be the claim of a dead father, or of what was due to the feelings of a Jew—for the Jew regarded him that did not bury his father with suitable care and affection as lost to all that was proper and as unworthy of any association with them; yet if the distinct person and call of Christ comes in at that moment, surely He must be followed.

This was a test; Christ knew all and not without moral motive had called him at that point precisely rather than any other; and the. question for him was whether Christ was more to his soul than any one or thing in the world besides. Was it really so, that standing well with the Jews and with his family was of more consequence to him than Christ, than heaven or hell, than eternity itself? This man may have honestly desired to follow Christ, yet he pleads for a delay on the road. But the Lord's answer to him is “Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God” —a perplexing answer to a person whose eye was not single. Thus the Lord tries faith. He does not put things in the simplest possible form to faith or to unbelief; above all, where there is something allowed that hinders. The Lord will be inquired of. So He says here, “Let the dead bury their dead” —that is, let the dead spiritually bury their natural dead— “but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.” It was not only that this man was called to follow Jesus, but to be a witness for Him, to be a proclaimer of God's kingdom. How could it fare with others, if there was not faith in him to give up all for Christ? One of the reasons why there is so little power in the testimony of Christ is because there is so little faith in those who testify it. Mohammedans, &c., constantly tax Christian missionaries with this. “You profess to have a revelation from God in the Bible; but you yourselves evidently do not act according to that book. How can you seriously ask us to

believe? How can we think that you believe it? We believe our books, and if we accept loyally the Koran, with its system of prayers and ablutions, we follow it. We scrupulously conform to the prescriptions of the prophet. You affirm that Christ preached the sermon on the mount for instance. Yet you constantly get out of the difficulty of not following it by the plea that the times are changed. We stick to the Koran every day and at all costs. God is the unchangeable God, and He has a constant claim upon the faithful." Thus one of the main obstacles to the conversion of other religionists is the way in which ministers of Christ expose themselves by their want of faith to the mockery of their adversaries. This increases the heart's unbelief, because for the most part professing Christendom does not even pretend to adhere inflexibly to scripture. They say that times have so altered that they can take only such parts as suit the present day. They think nothing of seeking the world and its glory and everything that will attract flesh. They think to draw some by this means and some by that; whereas the truth is, they are themselves drawn away by the world from the truth and will of God. To court the countenance of man, to seek what the world values, is practically to abandon Christianity for the will of man. It is the living mingling with the dead, instead of leaving the dead to bury their dead. The Lord's call must set aside every other.

The third case again differs somewhat. "Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell which are at home at my house." There we have one who allows the amenities of life to be "first." It was no such serious detention. It was merely to pay them ordinary courtesy. But the Lord insists upon the absolute renunciation of every hindrance. "No man, having put his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." If Christianity is anything, it is and must be everything. It admits of no rivals and of no delays. It could not be the kingdom of the true God if it tolerated the turning aside of His servants forever so little. Christ is the first and the last, and must be all to the heart or He becomes nothing through the wiles of the devil.

Notes on Luke, Luke 9:37-56, Notes on

The next scene plunges us at once into the realities of the world as it is, the more painfully felt because of the bright vision of the age to come on the mount of transfiguration, whether in the sample of the kingdom of the Son of man (or the inner scene of those who entered the cloud). Here on the contrary we have the world as it now is through the power of Satan. "It came to pass that on the next day when they were come down from the hill, much people met him. And behold, a man of the company cried out saying, Master, I beseech thee, look upon my son, for he is mine only child: and, lo, a spirit taketh him and he suddenly crieth out; and it teareth him that he foameth again; and bruising him hardly departeth from him. And I besought thy disciples to cast him out, and they could not." It was a picture indeed of Israel and we may say of man. Such was the power of the demon over him; and the fact most distressing was that the disciples were quite unable to meet the case. They were men of God; they were His most honored servants, already sent out with power and authority by the Lord Jesus, as we saw in the beginning of this chapter: and yet they could not cope with this aggravated form of demoniacal possession.

"And Jesus answering said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and suffer you? bring thy son hither." The Lord had thus before His mind the vivid feeling of His approaching departure: "how long shall I be with you and suffer you?" It was for want, not of power but of faith, that they could not cast the spirit out. Faith always supposes two things; sense of the weight and yoke of evil that presses on man, and confidence in God as always superior to evil in His gracious power and supreme. There may be failure but never final defeat where room is left for God to come in, and the heart cleaves to the certainty of His glory concerned in the matter. The lack of this was what grieved the Lord Jesus; their inability was due to want of faith and of self-judgment.

"As he was yet a coming, the devil threw him down, and tare him. And Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, and healed the child, and delivered him again to his father." The Lord had thus before Him a fresh and, if possible, mightier effort of Satan; but His power, or rather the power of God, which He wielded as the self-emptied Son and obedient Man, rose above all the efforts of Satan. He rebukes the unclean spirit and heals the child. "And they were all amazed at the mighty power of God." Yet why should they have been? Jesus was God Himself manifest in the flesh. But the blessedness of Jesus was this, that He never did anything simply as God, but as the Man that was dependent on God. Had He not preserved such a place and wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost as man, He would have failed to preserve the perfect place of man and of servant in the world. But this was His human perfection from the time He came born of woman. Nothing could be so powerful as either motive or example to us.

"But while they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, he said unto his disciples, Let these sayings sink down into your ears; for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men." They were astonished with a wonder, which, while it was a homage to what was done, was also an indication of a want of intelligence. The Lord now brings out a far deeper cause of amazement and of adoration, had they only felt it rightly. Alas! it is what unbelief always stumbles at. "The Son of man should be delivered into the hands of men." He who could rebuke all the power, not only of men but of Satan, was nevertheless to be delivered into the hands of men. Such was the purpose of God, such the perfect willingness of Jesus the servant of God and Lord of all! Whatever would demonstrate the truth of man's state and of Satan's power here below; whatever would evince the ruin of the people of God and the destruction of His glory through their ruin on earth; whatever would prove the vanity of all present hopes for man and the world—for this Jesus was willing to encounter all and to suffer from to the uttermost, that God might be, first morally, then in power glorified, and man be set in perfect peace outside it all, first by faith and at last in palpable fact and forever. The work of atonement came within this most complete humiliation of the Son of man; but these words of Christ speak simply, it is evident, of His suffering at the hands of men.

"But they understood not this saying." Yet scripture was full of it; but the will of man blinds him to what he does not like, and nowhere so much as in scripture. The Jews greedily caught at the vision of glory and the promises for the people—the exaltation of their nation and the downfall of their haughty Gentile oppressors. And so the words of God, which described the humiliation of the Messiah, were quite overlooked in general and always misunderstood. Even when our Lord here told them, not in prophetic form, nor with any obscurity of figure, but in the simplest terms possible, they understood not His saying. How little the understanding of scripture has to do with its language! The true cause of darkness lies in the heart. The only real power of intelligence is in the Holy Spirit who makes us willing to bow to Christ, sensible of our own need of such a Savior and really in earnest that God should save us on His own terms.

This was not the case with the disciples— "They understood not this saying." They had not confidence fully in His love. Confidence in Him has much to do with intelligence of His word; and even if we do not understand, confidence in Him leads us not to cavil nor to hurry but to wait

and count upon Him that He will surely clear up what we do not understand. He will reveal even this unto us. The disciples merely dropped the matter. “They feared to ask him of that saying.” The real state of their hearts is brought before us in the next account: “Then there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, and said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.” This was what they wanted—to become as little children. It is not here presented as in Matthew, in order to enter the kingdom, but in relation to Christ and to God Himself. They wished each to be greatest; there was consequently a discussion which of them should have the higher place. A little child does not think about this; but is content with its parents' love and with that which comes before it. It is not occupied with thoughts of itself, nor should it be. Indeed this is just what is wrought in the heart by conversion; and especially by the subsequent power of the indwelling Spirit of God giving us to see Another's greatness and goodness, in the enjoyment of which we forget ourselves. “Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me.” The reception of Jesus is the reception of God Himself and thus the root of real greatness. But practically, flowing from this, to be least is the true greatness of the believer now. Such was Christ Himself. He was willing to take and did take the place of the most despised of all.

“And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us.” Here comes a considerably subtler form of self. The grossest form was in the question which of them should be greatest; but now comes a certain disguise of self, which consists in apparent zeal for the Master's honor. “Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbad him, because he followeth not with us.” What a reason! It was well, it was an immense honor, to follow Jesus; but John betrayed himself by his very language “he followeth not with us.” Had he kept Jesus before his eye, he never would have uttered the complaint. He would have seen that it was for Jesus to call; as they had been chosen by Him in pure grace unto this honor. It was evident that John looked at it as an interference with the apostles, and a failure in acknowledging their importance. But Jesus, superior to everything of a fleshly nature, answers, “Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us.” Jesus, in the sense of His humiliation and looking for it even unto death, owns whatever is of God. It was not Satan that cast out Satan. It was the power of God that cast out the demons. Nay, more than this. The demons were cast out in the name of Jesus; why then should John have a jealousy so narrow and unworthy? Why should he not own the power that answered to his Master's name. Ah was it really his Master and not himself that he was thinking of? “He that is not against us is for us.” Where it was a question of the unbelief of the nation, where Jesus was utterly despised, the word then is, “be that is not for us is against us.” The converse principle is true, no doubt; but where there was a simple-hearted man, serving God according to the measure of his faith, the Lord vindicates his action in His name. By John's own account the power was there which answered to the name of Jesus. There was one who resisted the demons, using the name of Jesus against them. And there was power; for he did cast them out, and this through the name of Jesus. Had there therefore been a true care for the glory of the Lord Jesus, John would rather have rejoiced than have sought his prejudice. “Forbid him not,” says the Lord, “for he that is not against us is for us.”

Then comes the last scene I shall notice at this time. “It came to pass that when the time was come that he should be received up, he steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face: and they went and entered into a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him: and they did not receive him because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.” There was no readiness for the Lord. Their dislike of favored Jerusalem made them utterly forget the glory of Jesus and the testimony of His gracious power which these very Samaritans had every reason to know and to feel grateful for. But “they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.” How often circumstances bring out the state of our hearts! What they would not dare to do, were it simply a question of Jesus, some paltry selfish feeling arouses some latent jealousy and brings all to light. These same men stumble over the personal glory of Jesus; others, attracted by the world, prove that they have no heart for a Savior, by seeking what it has of present things to bestow. Others again, disliking the inevitable shame of the cross of Christ shrink from the trial it brings them into, and prove that they have no faith, because wherever this is real, it looks fixedly and simply to Jesus. Where other objects come in, there is a turning aside; but where real faith is, it welcomes the cross and receives Himself, and to such God gives title to become His children.

What was the effect of Samaritan party-feeling now on the disciples? “When his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them even as Elias did?” Now it was not contrary to the principles of the disciples that Elias should thus be the instrument of divine judgment; but how painfully did James and John (for now John was not alone), two that afterward were of great weight and value in the Church of God, show their little perception of the grace of Jesus! The Lord of glory passes On, accepting His rejection, and bows to the ungrateful unbelief of the Samaritans. But His two servants, deriving everything of which they could boast, the only One that could take away their evil and bestow the goodness of God on them, under pretense of honoring Jesus, would command fire to come down from heaven and consume them like a Jewish prophet. How little love had they for souls! As little was it a true regard for Jesus. It was honest Jewish nature, though in apostles. It was no doubt indignation, but this far more springing from themselves than for Jesus. Jesus turned therefore and rebuked them. It was not now simply a correction of what they were saying, but a rebuke to themselves. “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.” The next verse would seem to be—the first part at least—an interpolation. It was not a question of saving souls in this place. If inserted here, it would make man the reason and end; whereas the suggestion was contrary to the display of what God is, and inconsistent with His grace, which does not merely save the soul but fills the heart with the moral glory of the Lord Jesus. “And they went to another village.”

It is God who speaks in the person of the Son, who, while truly man, manifests also the Father.

Notes on Luke, Luke 9:18-36, Notes on

The Lord is again praying alone, as we have found Him in previous parts of this Gospel, and indeed in others. So it was at His baptism, when the Holy Ghost descended on Him; and afterward in His ministry, when we are told that He withdrew Himself into the wilderness and prayed. This was when multitudes came to hear and to be healed, whereon the power of the Lord was there to heal afresh. So also before He chose the twelve apostles, it is said, “He continued all night in prayer to God.” It was after men were communing to kill Him, and before the appointment of the apostles and the discourse on the mount.

Now He is about to disclose His death. The sense of His entire rejection filled His soul, because of the unbelief of the people; and the Father was about to give the most direct personal witness of His glory, as well as to show what was reserved for Him in the kingdom. He would own Him as Son of God now. He would display Him by and by as the Son of man. Accordingly “it came to pass, as he was alone praying, his disciples were with him: and he asked them, saying, Whom say the people that I am? They answering said, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others say, that one of the old prophets is risen again.” This elicited from Peter, in reply to the direct question of the Lord— “Whom say ye that I am?” the confession that He was the Christ of God.

It is remarkable how Luke here omits what Matthew records. In point of fact He owned Him to be the Son of God as well; but this is peculiar to Matthew. The reason why it is given in Matthew seems to me because that is the title of Christ’s personal glory, which is the joy of the Christian. The Church of God delights in Christ as the Son of the living God; Israel will hail the Christ as the Son of David. The world, all mankind, will be blest by Christ as the Son of man but the Christian and the Church have their joy in him, as the Son of the living God. It is clearly the most elevated and properly divine of His titles. It is intrinsic and personal. Along with this we find in Matthew, and in him alone, the revelation from the Lord Jesus that upon this rock He would build His Church, that is, on this confession of His name. Consequently as Matthew is the only one who gives us His name, and the confession of it by Peter, so the Lord alone is represented there as about to build the Church.

All this disappears from Luke. Here Peter simply says “the Christ of God.” The Lord “straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing.” This is a remarkable word. Why withhold from people that He was the Christ of God? Why this reserve as to His Messiahship? It was useless to bring it forward. Some said one thing, and some another. No man had faith in Him except those that were born of God. Man as man rejected Him. The Jews rejected Him. The disciples confessed Him, Peter pre-eminently; but it was no use to go on preaching Him as the Christ or Messiah of Israel. He was the Anointed of God, but in truth He was going to suffer, and consequently the Lord introduces another title in connection with His cross. “The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders, and chief priests and scribes, and be slain and be raised the third day.” It was particularly this very title that the Lord habitually gives Himself. So in Matthew: “Whom say ye that I the Son of man am?” Peter then confesses Him as really the Jewish Christ, but also “the Son of the living God.” The Lord intimates that they must drop the first. It was useless to speak about it, it was too late. Had the people received Him, He would have reigned as Messiah. But, morally speaking, that could not be. On the one hand man was unbelieving, wicked, and lost; on the other hand it was according to the counsels of God that Jesus was to be put to death on the cross, and to rise into a new creation in which He would have man His fellows. If Jesus had not been crucified, it would have proved that man was not altogether so evil as God had said. But as man really is profoundly bad, according to the word of God, it was a moral certainty that man would crucify the Lord Jesus, and so God predicted by His prophets. The Lord now reminds them that the old proclamation as the Christ must close. He was going to die as Son of man. He had His death always before Him. It was the settled counsel of God the Father, and the settled purpose of the Son. He came to die, not only knowing it, but with His heart fully devoted to the accomplishment of the will of God, cost what it might, as it did cost His own death and rejection. In His death He wrought atonement for our sins. Here, however, His death is simply viewed as rejection from man: “The Son of man must suffer many things and be rejected of the elders, and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day. God’s part in the matter, either in judgment of our wickedness or in introducing redemption, is not stated. Assuredly it was then and there, as it was always destined to be; but sometimes the one side of truth, sometimes the other, is presented in scripture. He is rejected by the heads of the Jews. It was a sad and humbling fact that they should cast off their own Messiah, who was, adds He Himself, to “be raised the third day.”

This suffering of the Son of man at once defines the path for the disciple. “He said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself; and take up his cross daily and follow me.” It was in no way enjoyment of earthly things. That would be all suited and seasonable in the kingdom when He reigns as the Christ, as well as Son of man, according to the hopes furnished by the prophets. There we find every kind of proof of God’s beneficence, and men’s hearts will be filled with gladness. But such is not the character of Christianity. The cross shows us our true path. If Christ suffered, the Christian cannot expect to be above his Master. Christ was going to the cross; therefore if any man would come after Him, “let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?”

The truth comes out. Everything now depends on eternal life. It is no longer a question of living long on the earth. This was and will be all very well for the Jew. But the cross of Christ is the burial of all Jewish thoughts. Hence if a man is careful to save his life now, he will lose it. He may save it in a lower sense, but he will lose it in a deeper. He may save it in this world, but lose it for eternity. But if I am willing to lose it in the lower, I shall save it in the best — the eternal — sense. The death of Christ brings everything to a point: all then becomes the momentous question of eternal life and salvation. The Jews did not think of this. They panted for a great king that would raise them to the pinnacle of earthly greatness. Christianity shows us the One on whom all turns, Himself crucified; and those who come after the Crucified cannot escape from the cross. Each Christian must deny himself, and that not merely once, but daily taking up his cross and following Him. “For whosoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father’s, and of the holy angels.”

There lies the solemnity of the issue. If ashamed of One rejected and of His words, He will be ashamed of us in glory. We have not Christ personally, but we have Him by faith, His name, and also, as a test of our truth of heart, His words. A man might plead the words of Moses and the prophets; but these would not avail now. A man who merely attached himself to the words of the law and the prophets, to the exclusion of the New Testament, could not be saved. When God brings out the full revelation of Christ, I must go forward and be subject to what God gives. The Jews hold on to the truth of the unity of God in order to deny the truth of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. True faith now values all that God gives. It is not real if it does not value what He gives for the present time. Hence the test is truth freshly used of God for the actual moment, and not merely what was known of old. Unbelief is always wrong; it takes advantage of what is traditional to deny what was newly revealed.

“Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he shall come in his own glory.” There we find the proper glory of the Son of man. It is a rejected man who is exalted on high; but He will come in His own glory, and “in his Father’s and of the holy angels.” His being a man did not at all touch His divine rights. The angels were all subject to Him as man. He had a title above them because He was God; and He had won a title superior to them, because He had died on the cross. Thus by a double title the Lord Jesus has not only all mankind but angels subject to Him as man. “But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the kingdom of God.” This was a bright witness calculated and intended to strengthen those who were meant to be forward

and at the head of things in God’s testimony and in the Church. The reference is to Peter, James, and John, who were permitted a sight of the kingdom of God before it comes in power.

Eight days after, when the glory was about to appear, the Lord prays. “And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistering.” Luke is the only one of the Evangelists who mentions His prayer here, and that, as He prayed, He was transfigured. “And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias,” the representatives of the saints dead and raised, living and changed. Moses died and is here seen as risen, and Elias as the pattern of those who shall be changed. “Who appeared in glory and spoke of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” This is the great topic of heavenly discourse. There can be no fact above so precious as the death of Jesus. It will be the grand theme throughout eternity. It is the foundation of all the ways of God in redemption, the highest moral glory of God as it is the fullest proof of His love. “They spake with him of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” On earth Jesus takes the highest place, as alas! the lowest also for us and our sins, yet He is too the highest in grace, as He will be in the ways of God. It will be so in the days of the kingdom, when God’s counsels shall appear for the earth as well as the heavens.

“But Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep.” They slept in the garden when Christ was going through His agony, and they were heavy with sleep when Christ’s glory was being revealed. Thus man is utterly worthless for communion, whether with suffering or glory, and this not man without life from God, but the chosen disciples, the future pillars of the work, the most worthy and excellent of the earth. Yet these, as they could not watch one hour when it was a question of the sorrows of Jesus, so they were oppressed with sleep when His glory in His kingdom was revealed. So wholly incapable of answering in his soul to God’s display is man of the grace of Christ or of the glory He intends for him.

“And having awoke (or kept awake), they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him. And it came to pass as they departed from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias: not knowing what he said.” Indeed he did not know. It was sheer forgetfulness of the personal dignity of Jesus. “Let us make three tabernacles,” one for his Master and the other two for His servants, Moses and Elias. Would he then put his Master, the Lord of all, on the same level with the head of the law and the chief of the prophets? Peter thought this would be great honor for Him! He was altogether astray. The root of all wrong is depreciation of Jesus. The power for all that is good is faith in His glory. Thus Peter, in a human way seeking to honor Jesus, in reality lowers Him; and this God the Father would never allow, specially in a disciple. “While he thus spake, there came a cloud and overshadowed them,” the well-known symbol of Jehovah’s presence in Israel: it was not a dark, but a bright, cloud, as we are told in another gospel: “And they feared as they entered into the cloud,” meaning, I suppose, that the disciples feared as they saw Moses and Elias enter the cloud. They could not understand that men, even glorified, should be within the circle of the peculiar presence of Jehovah. The pavilion of His glory might tabernacle over man; but it seemed too much to them that men should thus be at home there, even though it were men in glory.

More follows: “There came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him.” It is no longer a question of Moses and Elias. The law and the prophets were admirable forerunners, and not a tittle can fall unfulfilled to the ground; but the Son of God comes and necessarily takes precedence of all. “This is my beloved Son: hear him.” Do not put Moses and Elias on a level with Him. They were to be heard as the finger-posts which point to Christ; but when Jesus the Son of God is there, He is to be heard. This is Christianity. Almost every working of unbelief in Christianity now consists in lowering Jesus to the law and the prophets, or, at any rate, to man, the first man. No one born of God would slight the law and the prophets; but it is one thing to own them as having divine authority, quite another to put them on a level with the Son of God. They were divine witnesses, but the Son must have His own due supremacy. In all things He must have the pre-eminence. And so God the Father here insists upon it. “This is my beloved Son: hear him.”

“And when the voice was past, Jesus was found alone.” This is really the very strength of our souls —that we have but one person who is or can be the full objective revelation of the mind of God to us. We honor most the Father, and we show best the power of the Holy Ghost when we have Jesus before us, and we are following Him day by day. “This one thing I do,” says the apostle. “And they kept it close, and told no man in those days any of those things which they had seen.”

Notes on Luke, Luke 9:1-17, Notes on

THE last chapter showed Christ's testimony to the change that was coming. This chapter gives us the twelve entrusted with the same testimony. They were to go forth representatives of Christ everywhere, invested with the power of the kingdom. They had both power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, as well as a mission to preach the kingdom of God. The Lord gave them their authority. They were to be manifestly dependent on the King, and in a remarkable way the King's power would open and none should shut, and shut and none could open. Nevertheless, this sovereign power of the King over the hearts of His people Israel was not without the maintenance of their responsibility. Whoever rejected Him must bear his burden. The word, however, is, “Take nothing for your journey, neither staves nor scrip, neither bread, neither money.” It must be manifestly the resources of God, however He might work by men. They were not to care for themselves, not even to have two coats apiece. “And whatsoever house ye enter into, there abide and thence depart. And whosoever will not receive you, when ye go out of that city, shake off the very dust from your feet for a testimony against them.” Thus then they departed, “and went through the towns, preaching the gospel and healing every w here.”

Then we find the working of conscience in Herod. “Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by him: and he was perplexed because of the thoughts of men, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead; and of some, that Elias had appeared; and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again.” Herod's conviction was that he had beheaded John: he knew this too well. “John,” he said, “have I beheaded: but who is this, of whom I hear such things? And he desired to see him.” But desire in divine things, unless it be accompanied by the action of conscience in the sense of sin on the one hand, and of grace on the other on God's part, never comes to any good. Many a man has heard God's testimony gladly, and given it all up. Many a man has had respect for the witnesses; but, as we see in Herod's case, first as to John, it did not hinder him from beheading John; and next, as to Jesus, it did not hinder him from taking his part in the last scene of the uttermost humiliation of the Lord. There was nothing of divine life in the action of his conscience. There was no working of grace, because there was no sense of his own sin and need in God's sight, which might drive him to God.

The apostles return, telling the Lord of all that they had done. But it is evident that they knew not how to avail themselves of the power that was entrusted to them. So Jesus takes them and goes aside “privately into a desert place belonging to the city, called Bethsaida.” And now we see how perfectly Jesus wielded the power of which He was the vessel as man. For although He had turned aside privately, the people follow Him there; and he received them and spake unto them of the kingdom of God, and healed them that had need of healing.” No one ever came amiss to Jesus. No need ever was presented without drawing out His grace. No retirement led Him to treat those who came as intruders. But the difference between the Master and the servant appears. For “when the day began to wear away, then came the twelve and said unto him, Send the multitude away, that they may go into the towns and country round about, and lodge, and get victuals: for we are here in a desert place.” But this would not suit Jesus. “He said unto them, Give ye them to eat.” Unbelief begins at once to reckon. They counted the loaves and the fishes: there were but five loaves and two fishes, except they should go and buy meat for all this people. Thus those, who ought to have been the witnesses of the power and grace of God, are ignorant of the Lord's present resources and only think of what might be procured by money from man. The Lord says to His disciples—so great was His grace that He would put honor upon them even in their weakness and want of faith: “Make them sit down by fifties in a company. And they did so, and made them all sit down. Then he took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude.” Viewed as the Son of man, and the Son of God as man (and so Luke does view Him), God was with Him; not only when He went about doing good, but when men followed Him into the wilderness. There was no difference. Everywhere the grace of God was upon Him, the power of God with Him. So He blest them, and brake, and gave to the disciples to set before the multitude. He fed His poor with bread. It was not the true bread which came down from heaven, because He, and He alone, was this. But He who was the true bread loved to feed them even with the bread that perishes, though He would have loved still better to feed them with that bread which is unto life eternal. The Lord Jesus alone knows, therefore, how to use all the resources of the kingdom of God. He waited for no special time and for no special circumstances. He is able to bring in the blessing according to need now; for God was with Him, and He was with God touching all circumstances. “And they did eat, and were all filled; and there was taken up of fragments that remained to them twelve baskets.” There was more at the end than at the beginning, though five thousand men, besides women and children, had partaken. Such was Jesus; and such will Jesus be when the kingdom of God appears—the furnisher of all the nourishment, and joy, and blessing of the kingdom. Nor is He less, or other, but the same now, though the manner of exhibiting His gracious power is according to the present purpose of God in the Church. But He is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

Selections for Saints, Take Heed How Ye Hear

(Luke 8:18)

“Take heed how ye hear.” Christ is looking for the results of His sowing. There must not only be the hearing, but the possessing, and in this rests the responsibility; for if you keep the word which you have heard, more shall be given you. If, on hearing, I possess that which I hear, not merely have joy in receiving it, but possess it as my own, then it becomes a part of the substance of my soul, and I shall get more; for when the truth has become a substance in my soul, there is a capacity for receiving more.

Suppose you hear the truth of the Lord’s second coming and see your portion as the bride of Christ, and you do not lay hold of it practically, so as to possess it (have communion with God about it, which is possession), you will presently lose the expectation of His coming and forget your place of separation from the world, and the truth will gradually slip away, because you are not holding it in your soul before God. Consequently your soul becomes dead and dull, and you lose the very truth you have received. Thus, if one lives daily as waiting for the Lord from heaven, there will be no planning for the future, no laying up for the morrow; such a man will learn more and more, as other truths will open around this one grand central one, and he will be kept in the truth. If, on the other hand, he drops this center truth by saying, “He cannot come yet; so many things must happen first,” then is the process of his communion with God hindered, for, as we have said, it is according to what a man has heard and holds with God that there can be any growth; for what is the use of teaching me that the Lord may come tomorrow, if I am going on living as though He were not coming for a hundred years? Or where is the comfort and blessedness of the truth to my soul, if I am saying in my heart, “My Lord delayeth his coming?” Though I cannot lose my eternal life, yet if I am losing the truth and light I have had, I shall be merely floating on in the half-current of life, half world and half Christ, and all power of Christian life will be dimmed in my soul. If the truth is held in communion with God, it separates to Himself. Truth is to produce fruit, and you have no truth that does not bear fruit. Truth must build up the soul. “Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.” Christ becomes precious in and by the truth that I learn; and if it has not that power, it all drops out, comes to nothing, and is taken away. If Christ is precious to me, I shall be waiting for Him with affection, and if it is not so, the bare truth will soon be given up.

“Nothing is more opposed to Christ, yet nothing more common among Christians than a pretentious, self-asserting spirit, which will boast of the distinctive possession of the truth which we know, even though it most condemn us. God looks for reality in a world of shadows and untruth; He looks for the possession and reflection of His revealed light and truth where darkness reigns; He looks for divine love where only self is found, though in subtle forms; He looks for the faith which reckons on Him according to His Word in the face of all difficulties and dangers.”

The person who asks for a command for everything is a person who does not want a command; and because he does not think there is one, he asks, Where is it? He who has an obedient heart does not ask for a command, but finds it. Directions and motives to obedience he sees everywhere in the Word, but the power is through the Holy Ghost revealing Christ.

Faithfulness is always in proportion to faith; and where faithfulness breaks down, it is because faith has been dim before.

Notes on Luke, Luke 8:40-56, Notes on

Two other scenes (interwoven, it is true) close the chapter. The Lord is appealed to by Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue. “He fell down at Jesus' feet and besought him that he would come into his house.” This was the way in which a Jew expected to be healed—by the coming of

Messiah to his place. “For he had one only daughter about twelve of age, and she lay a-dying.” Such was the condition of the daughter of Zion now. Israel was proving that there was no life in them; but Christ is entreated, and He goes for the purpose of healing Israel.

While He is on the way, a woman crosses His path, having a most urgent need— “an issue of blood twelve years, who had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any.” It was therefore a hopeless case, humanly speaking. Nevertheless she comes behind Him in the desperate sense that now was her opportunity, and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her issue of blood stanched.” The Lord was, of course, conscious of that which was done. If faith feels the grace and power of Jesus in any measure, and applies ever so feebly, hesitatingly, and tearfully, Jesus knows it well and yearns over that soul. His heart was towards her, and He would have her know it. She touched Him from behind. Jesus would bring her into His presence, face to face, and would have her to know that His hearty consent went with the blessing, which she had seemed to steal but really acquired by the touch of faith. Hence He says, “Who touched me?” It was in vain that Peter or the others sought to explain it away, when all denied. It was in vain to say that the multitude thronged, and therefore why ask who touched Him. The Lord stood to it: somebody had touched Him. It was not a crowd's pressure: it was not an accident. It was distinctly one who had touched Him. There was the real recourse of faith, however weak. “Jesus said, Somebody hath touched me, for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me.” The multitude thronging could extract no virtue: not thus did Jesus heal. No such external pressure is of avail to bring blessing out of Him. But the soul that finds itself near to Jesus, and touches however timorously, never fails to gather blessing from Him. “And when the woman saw that she was not hid [this was not the state in which the Lord would leave her, nor any who are blessed], she came trembling, and, falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she had been healed immediately.” The glory of God was thus secured, and a bright testimony to man was rendered; but her heart needed also to be thoroughly restored. She must learn what love God has, and how completely Jesus would give her communion with Himself in the blessing conferred. Thus is the Giver known, and the gift enhanced infinitely. It was not something stolen, but freely imparted. Therefore says He, “Daughter, be of good comfort.” He uses the term of affection expressly to banish all terror and uneasiness. “Daughter, be of good comfort, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace.” What a joy it would be to her ever afterward to know that she had not only got the mercy her body needed from God, but that the Savior, the Lord God who healed her diseases, the ever blessed Physician had spoken to her, given her His own warrant, comforted her when her heart was utterly afraid, used terms even of such endearment towards her, owned her faith, feeble as it was, and finally sent her away with a message of peace.

“While he yet spake, there cometh one from the ruler of the synagogue's house, saying to him, Thy daughter is dead; trouble not the Master. But when Jesus heard it, he answered him, saying, Fear not, believe only, and she shall be made whole.” (Ver. 49, 50.)

Such turns out to be the real condition of Israel, not sick only, but dead, But Jesus carried within Himself the secret of resurrection. He is equal to all emergencies, and knew infinitely better than they both the maiden's need and His own mighty power. He did not come down to do what others might have done. An angel may trouble the pool of Bethesda for a man not too infirm to step in immediately. The Son quickens whom He will. And the Jews, long rebellious in unbelief, long seeking to destroy His name who by such a claim makes Himself equal with God, will yet own the despised Messiah as their Lord and their God, and the dry bones shall live; and all Israel, at length saved, shall blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit! Of this the sick and now dead maiden is the pledge; and He, who then bids her father fear not but believe, will redeem the pledge He gave of old.

“And when he came into the house, he suffered no man to go in, save Peter, and James, and John, and the father and the mother of the maiden. And all wept and bewailed her: but he said, Weep not; she is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And he put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, Maid, arise. And her spirit came again, and she arose straightway: and he commanded to give her meat. And her parents were astonished: but he charged them that they should tell no man what was done.” (Ver. 51-56.) The spirit of scorn then and there was but a little sample of what is to be; but such can have no portion in the blessing permanently. For while many of Israel that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, with some it will be to shame and everlasting contempt, as surely as with others to everlasting life. For they are not all Israel that are of Israel. But the word of gracious power shall go forth from Him in whose eyes the virgin daughter of Zion was not dead but sleeping; and she shall arise. And He who at length wakes her up from her death sleep shall care for her and strengthen her for the great work to which Zion will then be called. It was, however, but a passing act of power then; the time was not yet come for more; and Jesus charged them to tell none what was done. If He were not received Himself, if His word were refused, it was vain to publish His power. Unbelief would only turn it to worse evil.

Notes on Luke, Luke 8:19-39, Notes on

Jesus was going everywhere preaching and evangelizing, followed by the twelve, and not without the return of grateful hearts in the women who ministered of their substance. He came not a King as yet, but a sower; and instead of governing in righteous power, was but creating a light of gracious testimony as yet. He next disowns any association with Himself after the flesh, were it even His mother and His brethren. Whatever love to all, and even subjection to His mother, He owed, He most surely paid in full; but now it was a question of the word of God, and nothing else would suffice. Thus even before His death and resurrection there was a complete moral break. Flesh does not understand the things of the Spirit. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” “It was told him by certain which said, Thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to see thee. And He answered and said unto them, My mother and my brethren are these which hear the word of God and do it.” Natural links were proving themselves to be nothing now: all must be of God and grace; and this exactly falls in with the tone of our evangelist.

Then we find the circumstances of those to whom the word of God and the testimony of Christ was committed. Jesus goes into a ship with His disciples, and tells them to go over unto the other side of the lake. “But as they sailed he fell asleep: and there came down a storm of wind on the lake; and they were filled with water.” Humanly speaking, they were in great jeopardy. This was ordered of the Lord, and the enemy was allowed to put forth all his resources; but it was impossible that man should overthrow God. Impossible that the Christ of God should perish. All the blessedness of the servants, if wise, would be seen to be concentrated in the Master; and all their security derived from Him. There was therefore no ground to faith why they should be alarmed. He fell asleep; He allowed things to take their course: but whatever might happen, the ship in which Jesus was could not be unsafe for those with Him. Jesus might be tempted of the devil, and might encounter all storms; but He came to destroy the works of the devil and to deliver, not to perish. It is true that, when the time came, He went down Himself

into depths of sorrow, suffering, and divine judgment—far, far greater than anything that the winds or waves could do; but He went down to the death of the cross, bearing the burden of our sins before God, and enduring all God felt against them, in order that rising again He might righteously deliver us to God's glory. The disciples, knowing nothing as they ought, through unbelieving anxiety for themselves (for this it is that blinds the eyes of God's people), come to Him and awake Him with the cry, “Master, master, we perish.” They told the secret. Had their eye been upon the Master, according to what He was before God, impossible they could have spoken of perishing. Could He perish? No doubt, separated from their Master, they might, nay, must perish; but to say, “Master, master” to Jesus, and “we perish” was nothing but unbelief. At the same time they chewed, as unbelief always does, their intense selfishness. Their care was for themselves, not for Him. “Then he arose, and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water: and they ceased, and there was a calm.” Any other would have first rebuked them. He rebuked the raging of the wind and water; and when there was a calm, He asks them, “Where is your faith? And they being afraid wondered, saying one to another, What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him.” It is evident that all depended upon the Master. The disciples were to be sent forth on a most perilous mission; but the strength was in Him, not in them; and they from the very beginning have to learn that even Jesus inquired, “Where is your faith?”

Then we find another scene: not the enemy's power shown in stirring up what we may call nature against Christ and His disciples, but the direct presence of demons filling a man. We have this desperate case set forth in one that had been thus possessed for a long time. He had broken with all social order; he “wore no clothes, neither abode in any house, but in the tombs.” A more dreadful picture of human degradation through the possession of demons could not be. “When he saw Jesus, he cried out, and fell down before him, and with a loud voice said, What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God most high? I beseech thee, torment me not.” The demons had the consciousness of the presence of their Conqueror, the Conqueror of Satan. They dreaded to be bruised under His feet; for Christ “had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man;” and then we have a further description of this power of Satan. “For oftentimes it had caught him: and he was kept bound with chains and in fetters; and he brake the bands, and was driven of the devil into the wilderness.” Jesus was led of the Spirit there, but the devil led this man in misery; whereas Christ went in divine grace, and in order righteously to break the power of Satan.

That the awfulness of the case might be more fully brought out, Jesus asks him, “What is thy name? And he said, Legion: because many devils were entered into him. And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep.” They dreaded their hour. There was the instinctive sense in these demons, that Jesus will commit them to the abyss. “And there was an herd of many swine feeding on the mountain: and they besought him that he would suffer them to enter into them. And he suffered them. Then went the devils out of the man and entered into the swine; and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the lake, and were choked.” This at once roused those who had the charge of them. “When they that fed them saw what was done, they fled, and went and told it in the city and in the country.” They come out, and finding the man out of whom the devils were departed, “sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind,” they were afraid. Now the state of the people discloses itself. Had there been one particle of right feeling, they would have given thanks to God; they would have delighted in the presence of One who, though to be bruised by him, was to break Satan's power forever. But though they saw “the man out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed, and in his right mind, they were afraid,” though they knew how the demoniac had been healed, still their own hearts were not won, but the very reverse appeared. “The whole multitude of the country of the Gadarenes round about, besought him to depart from them.” Ah foolish Gadarenes! who bewitched you? They all had alas! a common interest; but the common interest of men was to get rid of Jesus. That was their one desire. After the certainty of His gracious power, after the plain overthrow of Satan's energy before their eyes, after the deliverance of their fellow, restored now, and sitting, clothed, and in his right mind, all their thought was to beseech Jesus to depart from them, for they were taken with great fear. What a proof of the delusion of men! Whatever might be their terrors in presence of the man possessed with a legion of devils, they had greater fear of Jesus, and their hope and object was to get rid of Him as fast as possible. He brought in all that was holy, true, loving. He fed, He healed, He delivered; but man had no heart for God, and consequently sought only how to get rid of Him, who brought in the power of God. Any other person was more welcome. What is man! Such is the world.

Not so with him that was healed. He besought Jesus that he might be with Him; and then stood in moral contrast with the whole multitude which besought Him to depart from them. He had been in far more awful circumstances than they. But such is the power of God's grace. It creates and forms what we should be. If any one, according to natural antecedents, might have been expected to keep far away from Jesus, it was this demoniac, so completely had he been led captive of Satan at his will. But he was delivered, and so perfectly from the first hour that his one desire was to be with Jesus. This was the first-fruit of the Spirit's action in a man whom grace had delivered—the untutored instinct of the new man to enjoy the presence of Jesus. The simplest soul that is born of God has this wish.

“But Jesus sent him away, saying, Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee.” He will have his desire later; meanwhile “Return to thine own house.” This is of price with the Lord, to show God's wonderful works, not merely to strangers, but to one's own house. Such as they would know best the shame, and sorrow, and degradation to which he had been reduced. Therefore Jesus says, “Return to thine own house, and show how great things God hath done unto thee.” The man in faith bows and understands; whatever might be his heart's desire, he is now to do the good, holy, and acceptable will of the Lord. “He went his way, and published throughout the whole city how great things Jesus had done unto him.” Mark, it is of Jesus he speaks. Jesus would have him to tell what God had done; and God would have him to tell what Jesus had done. This could not have been, had not Jesus been the Son of God Himself. Though the lowliest servant of God, He was none the less also God. The man was right. He was not contravening the will of God, nor breaking the command of Jesus. Its spirit was the more kept, even if in the letter it might sound somewhat differently. God is honored best when Jesus is most shown forth.

Notes on Luke, Luke 8:1-18, Notes on

The last chapter broke out into the widest sphere, and brought in divine power over human sickness, and death; yea, more, divine grace in presence of nothing but sin. Nevertheless moral ways are produced according to God's own nature. Grace does not merely forgive. Those who are forgiven are born anew, and manifest their new life in suitable ways, and this in due season in the power of the Holy Ghost.

In this chapter we find how grace goes forth in service. “It came to pass afterward that he went through every city and village.” How indiscriminate is His “preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God!” Anywhere and everywhere grace can go as to its

sphere, but it distinguishes according to God's will; because He must be sovereign. Be pardons whom He will, and whom He will He hardens. The twelve were with Him; and not they only, but “certain women which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chusa Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others which ministered unto him of their substance.” Thus we find grace produces fruits now, in this present life. I think it plain and certain that Mary Magdalene is not the person described in the last chapter as the woman that was a sinner. Tradition fluctuates, some supposing that the forgiven woman was Mary Magdalene, others Mary the sister of Lazarus; but to my own mind the internal evidence is conclusive that she was neither the one nor the other. In fact there is evident moral beauty in the absence of her name. Considering that she had been a notoriously sinful woman in the city, why name her? The story was not to inform anyone who she was, but what the name of Jesus had been to her. It is His name, not her's, that is the great matter. And accordingly all the effect produced in her by the Spirit of God is according to this. She does not go before His face, but behind Him. She is at His feet, weeping; washing His feet with tears and wiping them with the hairs of her head. The Spirit of God, therefore, casts a veil over her person. However much she might be the object of grace, there is no indulgence of human curiosity. It was a part of the very plan of the Spirit that her name should not be mentioned. Mary, sister of Lazarus, stands before us in scripture (whatever legends feign) a character evidently and altogether different, and remarkable, I should judge, for moral purity, as well as for that insight into God's mind which was brought about by the grace that gave it to her.

So also Mary Magdalene, although a desperate case, manifested evil of a wholly different nature. It was not corruption, but Satan's power. She was possessed; as we are told here, “out of whom went seven demons.” This was her scriptural description; and uniformly so, wherever she is brought before us. Never is moral looseness attributed to her.

But besides Mary Magdalene, one of those that ministered to the Lord of their substance, was Joanna the wife of Chusa Herod's steward. Thus God called where one might least expect it: and she that was connected with the court of the false king rejoiced to be permitted to follow the despised but true King, Jesus of Nazareth.

But others were not wanting— “Susanna and many others” but of whom we know nothing, save that which grace gave them, in honoring Jesus to find their everlasting honor. They were attracted by the Lord Jesus, and ministered to Him as they could.

“And when much people were gathered together, and were come to him out of every city, he spake by a parable.” He was not come to be a king, though a king. He was come to sow, not to gather in and reap. This He will do by and by at the end of the age. He was come to produce what cannot be found in man—to give a new life that should bear fruit for God. “A sower went out to sow his seed.” It is the activity of grace. “And as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it lacked moisture. and some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up, and bare fruit a hundredfold. And when he had said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” It is remarkable that we have not here, as in Matthew, “Some thirty, some sixty, some a hundredfold.” We have only the complete result of grace: the modifying causes are not taken into account. There was good seed sown upon good ground, as He afterward said, “That on the good ground are they which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” The other cases are cases not of good seed producing fruit imperfectly borne; but we have the moral hindrances to any fruit at all. Luke brings out the sad and painful fact that it is not Satan's power only that hinders souls from being saved and receiving the word of God. The world hinders, flesh too, as well as Satan. Those are the three enemies that are brought before us.

The first is the open and evident power of Satan: “As he sowed, some fell by the way-side.” There was no pretense of receiving it; it was simply dealt. with contemptuously— “it was trodden down and the fowls of the air devoured it.”

The next class is, “And some fell upon a rock.” There was an appearance here. It sprung up, but it withered away, because it lacked moisture.” These represent the persons who, when they hear, receive the word with joy, but having no root they believe only for a while, and in time of temptation fall away—a very serious description; because there is apparent reception, but there is no root. They receive the word with joy—not with repentance, but only joy. Now there may be joy; but where there is no spiritual action in the conscience, there is no root. This is exceedingly serious, specially in Christendom where people are apt to be taught the elements of Christian truth, and where they may be received on the faith of a parent; not of God's word, but of a father, or mother, or teacher, brother, sister, or anybody, the prevalent religion of the country, the common creed of Christendom. All these things may operate, but it is mere nature. It is the seed sown upon a rock: there is no real root; for conscience is the real door. Without conscience the word of God has no abiding effect. The Spirit of God is not forming great scholars, but leading poor sinners to believe and be saved. It matters not who the person may be; scholar or not, he must come in as a sinner, and if as a sinner, with repentance towards God. Now repentance in its own nature gives a chastened feeling, horror of self, judgment of the whole man, certainty that all one's hope is in God, and the judgment of all that we are. This does not produce joy. Other things may gladden the heart, spite of and along with it. The mercy of God seen in Christ is most assuring; but repentance itself works sorrow. It is not in itself sorrow, but it works sorrow. They are mistaken who suppose that repentance is sorrow; but, nevertheless, such is its effect, where according to God.

That which fell among thorns represents those that, “when they have heard, go forth and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.” Luke views the matter in its full result, not in an individual, not the new nature hindered, but the new nature producing its full results. It is the word not received from one cause or another; and where it is received, it is said to be those who, “in an honest and good heart, having heard the word keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” Along with the word of God, there is the operation of the Spirit. It is these that produce this honest and good heart. Thus the heart is purified by faith; and that, working by the feeling and confession of our sinfulness. Luke, as always, brings out the moral roots, both of that which hinders, and also of that which receives the word. These “having heard it, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”

There is another point I would just observe. Matthew speaks of understanding—that is the great point with him who speaks of the word of the kingdom. Like speaks of the word of God (not so much of the kingdom, though we know it was the kingdom of God). But it is the word of God— “the seed is the word of God” that they who believe (not they who understand) should be saved. Matthew speaks of hearing and understanding; Luke of believing and being saved. This admirably suits the different objects of the gospels. Matthew shows us already a people of God dealt with, put to the test by the Messiah proclaiming the kingdom of heaven; and those whose hearts were set on worldly objects did not understand the Messiah nor care for the word of the kingdom. But Luke shows us the word of God dispersed; and although within the limits of Israel as a matter of fact for the time being, yet in its own nature going out to every city and village in the world. In

principle already they were tending towards it, and about to be sent out actually in God's due time. Accordingly, it is not merely the kingdom, but the word of God. It is for man as such; and hence as the great mass of men outside Israel were wholly ignorant of the kingdom, it is a question of believing, not of understanding. It is not a word they had already, or knew things either, that they could not understand, but it is a question of believing what God was sending. It was a new testimony to those who had been wholly in the dark, and consequently it is a question to them of believing and being saved. Thus we find, even in the minutest particulars, Luke was inspired to hold to that great design which runs through his gospel—deep moral principles, and at the same time the going forth of grace towards man from God. It is as it were the gospel of God in the salvation of men—just what we find in the Epistle to the Romans; and Luke, we must remember, was pre-eminently the companion of the Apostle Paul.

Then there are some further moral principles added. “No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed: but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light.” To receive a new nature by the operation of the word of God is not enough. God raises up a testimony for Himself. Where a candle is lit, it is not meant to be covered: it is to shine, to give light, “that they which enter in may see the light.” God loves that the light should be apparent. Is it not there to be seen? “For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest.” Darkness shrinks from the light, and man is in the dark, and loves darkness rather than light, because his deeds are evil. But God's resolve is that all shall appear. “For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither anything hid, that shall not be known and come abroad. Take heed therefore” —not only what, but— “how ye hear.” The mingling of truth and error makes it of the greatest importance what we hear; and in Mark this is the warning: “Take heed what ye hear.” But Luke regards the heart of man; and it is not only of importance what I hear from another, but how I hear it myself. My own state may expose me either to receive error or to reject truth. It is not always the fault of what I hear, but my own. “Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given.” Having is a proof of valuing. “And whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.” Where any do not really possess, it is not for want of God sending, but because of the unbelief that either has not at all or only seems to have. Nothing but faith possesses: and if I possess a little really, God will vouchsafe me more. “He giveth more grace.”

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: 13. The Two Debtors

Luke 7:41-43

AMONG the beauties of this beautiful story is the fact that no name is given to make known who the sinful woman was, now plainly renewed by grace through faith. Many have thought her to be Mary of Magdala. But she first appears only in the chapter following, with a terrible history quite different from the woman “that was a sinner.” Others yet more strangely have fancied Mary of Bethany had once sunk into that infamy, because she too at the close anointed the Lord—with marked difference from this. Luke was inspired to leave in the shade, not the trophy of grace, but her name, whose previous life had been so shameful.

Why should any wish to know what the Lord hid? It is enough to hear what she had been; best of all that He who knew and felt all according to God, pleaded the cause of grace, as it was never pleaded before, pronounced her forgiveness, and sent her away in peace. Whether she had heard the Lord before, or only heard of Him, she came in faith. This drew her to the Lord. This made her brave the Pharisee’s scorn. This bent the eyes of her heart on the Savior only, raising her above all fear of the company. The grace of God in Jesus so filled and transported her soul that at all cost she went to pour her precious unguent on His feet washed by her tears, wiped by her tresses, and covered with her kisses. She came behind as He lay at meat in Simon’s house, and thus told her love, and devotedness of that heart, once so debased, now repentant and purified by faith. Not a word did she say with her lips; but the Lord Who knew the hearts of all men appreciated every feeling and every act of a new-born soul entranced with the moral glory of Christ while bowing to light and love of God rising above her many sins. Simon too saw enough to manifest his utter distance from God and alienation from His goodness; he judged as a natural man, confiding in his own righteousness, and condemning the Lord from all that passed yet more than the woman that stood at His feet behind weeping. He had gone so far as to have Him at his house, and felt assured that He could be no prophet who allowed such a woman to touch Him.

The Lord answered the Pharisee’s unuttered thought, and showed Himself not only a prophet of God, but God of the prophets, come in the lowliest humiliation not to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. Only, he that believeth on Him is not judged; but he that believeth not hath been already judged, because he hath not believed on the name of the Only-begotten Son of God. The Lord put the case. “A certain creditor had two debtors: one owed five hundred denaries, and the other fifty. As they had nothing to pay, he forgave them both. Which of these then will love him most?” On Simon’s supposition, “He to whom he forgave most,” He said, “Thou hast rightly judged,” and contrasted the woman’s deep, fervent, and humble affection with the Pharisee’s scant courtesy, which told the tale sufficiently of those two hearts.

“And turning to the woman, he said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house: thou gavest me no water for my feet; but she wetted my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her tresses. Thou gavest me no kiss; but she, since I entered, ceased not kissing my feet over. With oil thou didst not anoint my head; but she with unguent anointed my feet” (vers. 44-46).

Simeon had in the temple said of Him as a babe that He was set for the fall and rising up of many in Israel, and for a sign spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts should be revealed. But there was more here. Jesus revealed God’s heart, of which the Pharisee proved unconsciously that he knew nothing. The woman had learned it. His goodness had penetrated her; and her sense of it expressed itself in her profound reverence to the Lord Jesus. There she had met God; there God made Himself known to her as God of all grace. It was not dogma, but a divine person of infinite love Who attracted, filled, and fixed her heart. All her way and bearing testified to her self-judgment, to her faith, and to her love (for she loved much); as Simon’s conduct demonstrated, in Jesus slighted and grace misjudged, that he knew not God. But she knew Him, or rather was known of Him.

“Wherefore, I say to thee, her many sins are forgiven. For she loved much; but he to whom little is forgiven loveth little.” Simon had unwittingly sentenced himself. Impossible to know God in Christ without discovering His goodness and our own shameful endless badness. “And he said to her, Thy sins are forgiven.” O reader, have you heard His voice? This is your need; and this is His grace. May you too believe! Are there those who resent such love to the guilty on God’s part? Who resist the Savior, not knowing that they fight against God to their own ruin? How did He meet this, for well He knew it? “And He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.” May it be your portion.

Luke 7:36-50

BUT God, rich in mercy toward sinners, drew the woman that was a sinner, to the Lord Jesus. Who else could meet her guilt and shame and misery? And we are told that she brought with her an alabaster box or flask of ointment. It is better to say unguent (for when men speak of “ointment,” not a few think of provision for a wound or sore). It was a precious unguent fit for a king's use. But those unhappy women, living by their shameless ways, often spend recklessly on their faces in order to recommend their persons. It is not said she bought the unguent for the purpose, but that she “brought” it. One can scarce doubt that she bought it for her own purposes. All was now changed. It was the most precious thing she had in the world, and therefore she brought it with a full heart for Jesus. She did not consult the apostles nor ask the virgin Mary. Yet nothing could be more comely, or appropriate, than her conduct. Who taught her? The Spirit of God. It was because her heart was opened to the power of the grace of Jesus. She needed no tongue of man to tell her now. In the depths of her soul she knew by the teaching of God's Spirit that there was none to compare with Jesus; and she was right.

This entirely changed all her thoughts and affections. Christ was now her life, however little she understood it, transforming accordingly her character, and forming new ways. Instead of being as formerly the brazen-faced woman, henceforth she became modest and humble. Christ made her forget herself altogether—a thing otherwise impossible to any; and how in contrast with all her life before! Why should we wonder? Such is the true and spontaneous effect of Christ on the soul that believes on Him. Who could fail to observe the marked change? and all the more because she forgot the others and hid herself behind the Lord Jesus.

Up to that day she sought the eye of men; now she thought of none but that Savior. What now were any other eyes to her? Time was when she planted herself boldly and tried to catch if she could get the least admiration from anyone; but now for her soul “Jesus only”! And when she ventured in with her cruse of unguent, she stood behind at His feet weeping. What an unexpected marvel of moral beauty! It was the life of Christ manifesting itself in suited ways. She was standing as a penitent behind Him. Never did she think of coming before His face? She did not reason on it; but in truth He could give peace behind, just as readily as in front. Behind was her place. She knew by a divinely given instinct that He Who gave eyes to the blind and raised the dead would understand her need and distress and repentance. Yes, and she understood Him better than by any human intelligence.

Alas! that any should wish to reduce the Lord Jesus as much as possible to the level of an ordinary man. “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father; he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also.” The woman knew better, as she stood behind at His feet weeping. It is known, of course, that they did not sit on chairs as we do, but when taking their meals, lay reclining on couches with their feet stretched out for their convenience behind them. Thus the woman could reach Christ's feet readily, because they appearing without would be accessible to her as He lay reclining at table. Not only did she weep, but “began to wash His feet with tears.” Who would have thought of this but a woman deeply feeling and changed from all her old ways? She also wiped His feet with the hairs of her head. Ah! how often had those hairs been like nets to catch loose and foolish men: now they were used to wipe the feet of Jesus. “And she kissed His feet, and anointed them with the unguent.”

There were those who looked upon that scene with very different eyes. First of all turn to Simon: he had little estimate of the Lord when he asked Him to his house. This was plain enough in that he did not kiss Him (which was the usual mark of kindness in a host); nor did he give water for His feet, which was only common courtesy. He perhaps said to himself, “A man like that ought to feel highly honored, if he is asked to my house, and I give him a dinner.” But now that he saw a loose woman thus engaged, he was sure that Jesus could not be what he was thought. A prophet to his mind must be more rigid than a Pharisee; and assuredly a Pharisee would have walked on the other side of the road with a scowl at the woman, if he deigned to notice her at all. All turned in his mind against the Savior. “He spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner.” How far from the blessed truth that Jesus came for sinners, not for little only but for confessedly great sinners! Who can be conceived worse than “the lost”? What does it mean now, what by-and-by when God enters into judgment? Simon entirely missed the mind of God in his thought. He was like the Pharisees generally in the darkness of nature, whilst flattering himself that he was a guide of the blind and an instructor of the foolish.

The Lord proved that He was a prophet and infinitely more than a prophet. He read the man's heart as well as the woman's, and, yet more, He revealed God's love. Not that Simon uttered a word but thought his evil saying within himself. “And Jesus, answering,” i.e., the unuttered judgment of Simon's mind, “said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee,” giving the parable of the two debtors, the great and the small. “And when they had nothing to pay, he [the creditor] frankly forgave them both. [Tell me] which of those therefore will love him most” (ver. 42). “I suppose,” said Simon, “he to whom he forgave most.” Thus did Simon unconsciously condemn himself and vindicate the grace of God. There was a man without real sense of sin, with no sense whatever of forgiveness and consequently without fear of God (Psa. 130:4), to say nothing of love. There was the woman who truly acknowledged her enormous debt in presence of grace. Her love was real and great; in faith she came to Him Who will in no wise cast out, and did not doubt that the great Savior would look on the great sinner, compassionating even her; and so He did. “She loved much,” Simon not at all. As our Lord said, Simon had rightly judged the truth in the abstract, but, having no faith, he hated and despised the Lord.

It was equally plain that the woman loved after a new and divine sort. What produced this? Faith in Jesus. Love without faith is of no account with God, absolutely worthless, merely human. Faith is the root, and love is the fruit as here. “And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment” (vers. 44-46).

O my friends, why not go and spread out your guilt before Him? Why tarry longer in willing bondage to Satan, when the Deliverer is near to save you? He knows all already, so that you may honestly confess all to the Lord. And how did she tell it? By her tears, her ways, her heart. Nor was she wrong. For He recognized the faith His own grace produced. The word of God speaks of doing the truth, as she did now. Words of truth are good; but acts are more powerful sometimes than any words of man. And there was the only Man that could read the heart and interpret it justly, truly, and graciously. This was everything to the woman, now turned from darkness to light, sanctified to God by faith in

Christ, a jewel that will shine in His presence for evermore.

Dear souls, are you to be one of His to receive forgiveness and inheritance among the sanctified like her? The only way is to be at His feet now, taking the place of the lost sinner at once. Doubt not His salvation by grace. It is not exactly saying that from a lost sinner you may be a saved sinner, but a sinner saved. There is no small difference between the two. A “saved sinner” is a common phrase, which might lead a man to think that he may sin after being saved without any ado; that God allows him quite naturally to go sinning and sinning. But the word to the family of God is, “we write unto you that ye sin not” (1 John 2) For the sinner, when he obeys the call of God, becomes the saint, in other words a man separated from sin, the world, and Satan, unto God. Nobody denies that the old man is still there as a fact, but to his faith crucified with Christ, that he should not serve sin. But in himself what weakness, and how exposed to snares, and his path full of dangers! He is like one going through a furnace with his pockets full of powder. He needs a mighty Guide and Protector; and this and far more is Christ, on Whom God calls him to hang as a child clings to its mother. Without Him the Christian can do nothing acceptable to God—can bear no fruit.

We need, therefore, all through the journey to depend on the Savior. So the woman was doing—looking to the Savior and to Him only. As she listened, what must have been her joy when she heard the Lord of heaven and earth, the Creator of the world, vindicate her and God's wisdom with that erring child of folly, now by His grace a child of wisdom evermore! Whatever may have been your folly, it is high time now to become a child of the wisdom that comes down from above. Beware of the earthly kind, earthly, sensual, devilish. What He was to the woman once so depraved, He will be even to you in the midst of your sins to deliver you from them. Do not wait to get a better character, but go as you are to the Lord. We do not know that this woman had been even the day before brought to hate herself and her sins. Even at the moment she entered the house, she was known only and significantly as “a sinner.” What time or means or power of reform had she? No, it was Jesus attracted her; grace, yea God, she found in Him. It is the grace of the Lord Jesus that produced faith; and all that is good and holy follows: grace sees to it. Beyond doubt I am called to believe. If I believe not, I neither judge my sins and sinfulness, nor know the true God. Jesus is nothing to me. If I believe in Him, it is all mine; and all yours if and when you believe in Him. How good is our God! He has sent His own Son to do the work of redemption, to suffer for our sins. So Christ applies the parable.

Do not confound this woman with Mary in John's Gospel (not named by Matthew and Mark). The one anointing took place at the end of the Lord's ministry, the other far earlier which Luke here records. The one was the anointing of Himself by a saint devoted to Him; the other by a sinner without a character, just being brought to God. They were wholly different facts. We do not find Mary of Bethany weeping over the Lord, or any sign of penitence there. If you speak of some resemblance, how could there but be, if divine love worked in the heart of either the lately abandoned woman or the long proved child of God?

Some have supposed her to be Mary Magdalene. This is another of the fallacies of tradition, and irreconcilable with scripture. Mary of Magdala comes forward first in the next chapter (Luke 8.) as a stranger. “And certain women which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven demons, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others.” These are brought before us as altogether new persons. This Mary is nowhere spoken of as having been a woman of loose life; hers was the dreadful lot of having seven demons dwelling in her—an extremely awful case as a prey to the power of the devil, whether men believe it or not. Such is the difference that scripture makes between the two women.

To confound the penitent with Mary of Bethany, or Mary of Magdala, is one of those moral blunders theologians make with regard to the Bible, of which none would dream if dealing with any other book. Men let loose their fancy when they read or write on the Bible. They betray far less with other books. They like to lower God's book. Take up the Bible as a mere divinity student, and you will never understand it. You must approach God and it as a sinner. The scribe of this age, the “higher critic,” is insensible and lost to all its blessing. The Bible judges man; but if I set up for such unworthy criticism, I am judging the Bible, which is the essence of infidelity; for who and what is man to judge God and His word? Yet this spirit of infidelity was never so rife as now in Christendom, and never before so abundant in Great Britain, to say nothing of less favored lands, whatever some prophesy of a good time coming. It is a day of rebuke and blasphemy. It is an hour of many antichrists. The Word personal is humanized, no less than the written word. May grace give you who believe the love and reverence of the new born penitent!

The person who reads this divine story in faith gets a true and holy and profitable view of God's way with a sinner. The grace of the Lord does not tell us who the woman was. There are men and women curious to know all about her. What the Christian wants to learn is just what God reveals. The Lord threw a gracious veil over the woman's name. It is enough for us to know that, bad as she had been, grace saved her forever; and this means a new life given, as well as propitiation made in due time. What edification for you or me or any to hear her name? We shall know her in heaven; we ought to see and admire the holy love which withholds her name, while disclosing her misdeeds sufficiently. We hear that her sins were “many.” The Christian has not a good word to say about himself; and if you were known as God knows you, who would have a good word to say about you? Oh, let us have the very best word to say of the Savior, as He warrants me to say His good words to you. Indeed the Lord is a Savior in earnest and a friend in need; a Savior to the uttermost and above all price. The love of Christ, how rich and true! It was His love which, by the action of the Holy Ghost, reproduced its like in the woman's heart.

To His host the Lord turned and said,” Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins which are many are forgiven; for she loved much.” The word “for” is sometimes a reason why, and sometimes an evidence why. In this case it is the evidential “for,” not the causative. It was not because she loved much that the Lord forgave her. It was His grace that caused her love.

But there is more. “And He said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.” Without this, declared to herself, how much would have been lost It was a great thing to hear Him tell those that judged her and misjudged Him (which was far worse), “I say unto thee (Simon), Her sins, which are many, are forgiven “; but how much more when He deigned to turn round even to her and say, “Thy sins are forgiven!” And you think all this quite extraordinary; and so indeed it is. But let no one think himself a real Christian till he is in the enjoyment of this primary blessing of the gospel. For what is it but the Lord saying to you, not of course in a dream or in transient feeling, but by the precious word which you receive from God, “Thy sins are forgiven?” How can you sing and praise with joyful heart if your sins are not forgiven? There can be no genuine thanksgiving, no cry to Abba Father, unless you know your sins forgiven. Until then, you dread God; and fear has torment; but when consciously forgiven on divine testimony, you rest on God's love to you in the Lord Jesus. Thenceforward, what matters anything the devil can insinuate? what man or woman say? or the world may frown?

It is impossible, some affirm (nay many a minister constantly teaches), that anyone can tell whether his sins are forgiven. Really one might think from such unbelieving ignorance that people had gone back to heathenism. Were there no Savior, they could truly say it; and so they

might, if there were no divinely inspired record of the Savior. But for what is the written word given, but that we may know that forgiveness is as much for us who believe as for her?

What was the effect on the Jews that had the law and the prophets, but disbelieved Jesus? Very much the same as on those who, having the scripture now, hesitate to receive forgiveness at His word. “Who is this,” they said, “that can forgive sins also”? They had heard of His healing the lame, feeding the hungry miraculously, performing all wonders of power and love; but now He had gone so far as to forgive sins also: who had ever heard the like of that? Was it not God's prerogative? Undoubtedly. How does the Lord answer them?

He said to the woman, “Thy faith hath saved thee: go in peace.” How simple, suited, and beautiful! It is not “Thy love hath saved thee.” She did love and much; yet not this but her faith saved her. You recollect, perhaps, a natural philosopher (once a missionary) who flooded the country with a little book crying up love as the greatest thing in the world. It is the greatest thing where there is living faith; without faith it is not divine but merely human and of the creature.

Now God accepts not what is of the creature as between Him and the guilty soul. But His saving grace has appeared to bless the soul, however guilty; and the entrance of blessing into it is and must be through faith; and love and hope follow. Hence the Lord says, “Thy faith hath saved thee.” Listen not to deceivers, who are self-deceived; listen to no words of charm, no matter how sweet they sound. Friends of error may be by your side; enemies of the truth may rise up against you. Jesus, the Son of God, is more and nearer to a needy soul than all beside. We shall all give account of ourselves to God. We must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. Those who mislead will not answer for you, nor avail you. Can you say, with that manifestation in view, that you are “always confident”? Does the Lord look you in the face and say to your spiritual ears, “Thy faith hath saved thee”? It is not in heaven He says this first, but here on earth; and what we have received from Him on earth, we will not lose in heaven. If we have not heard His voice here, do not expect to hear it there. A resurrection of judgment awaits you, if you believe not.

To the woman He said more: not only “Thy faith hath saved thee,” but “go in peace.” Think what a blessed word and passport it is, “go in peace” from the lips of Jesus! Whatever may come, let the trying circumstances be as they may—adversity, poverty, sickness, or death; opposition, detraction, persecution, or aught else—whatever changes be in the course of this life, His word to every believer is, “go in peace.” Look therefore to God now, rest on the name of Jesus. You are about to return to your home, and to partake of the food that is needful for the body; but is not His message of forgiveness far more than food? Is not He infinitely more than any earthly good? You hope to enjoy a refreshing rest to-night; but what is this compared with “go in peace” from the Savior? Think of him who fared sumptuously every day; with his purple, and fine linen, and every luxury that wealthy selfishness could command; but he died and was buried, and in hell, or Hades, “he lifted up his eyes, being in torments.” May this never be your portion! The only security against it is Jesus. You require nothing good to bring. Bring your sins—yourself with all your sins on you. If you come confessing your sins, but believing on Jesus, He will blot them all out. When told to wash and be clean, do not say as Naaman, “Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel '"? When the sinner comes to the fountain opened for all uncleanness, he is purified. “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin.” “This is He that came by water and blood.” The grace of the Savior can and will bless you as you are. May you not put God's assuring word from you, not neglect so great salvation!

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The Sinner Saved, Sinner Saved, The: Part 1

IMMEDIATELY before the deeply affecting interview between our Lord and the woman that was a notorious sinner in the town into which He had passed, we have Him pronouncing on the moral state of mankind—more particularly of those that had the word of God, the Jews. For we must remember that among such our Lord was manifested. They were not, like the heathen, ignorant of the scriptures. They were entrusted with that great privilege, and professed to prize and preached the word. They had no excuse on the ground of sitting in darkness. All the word of God then revealed was theirs; and yet what could compare with that generation, as the Lord says? John the Baptist they did not like: he was too strict for them. And when the Son of Man, the Savior Himself, followed, they called Him by still more shameful names—He was too loose for them. Thus, it does not matter what may be the testimony God gives, man has always some reason for refusing.

“But wisdom is justified of all her children.” In the Gospel of Matthew wisdom is justified of her children, because the Lord there welcomes the weary and heavy-laden that come to Him, and gives them rest. But Luke was led to specify in the Pharisee's house the guilty woman of the city. It is in truth the Lord anticipating what God was going to do in the gospel everywhere. So he says, “Wisdom is justified of all her children.” Who could have expected that henceforth a child of wisdom was to be found in a notorious child of folly? This was her known and evil character; but when God drew her to the feet of Jesus, all was changed. Such is the power of His grace in Jesus. And He has taken care that this admirable fountain shall not be closed, having employed Luke thus to point it out in His word. Who else would have thought of a robber reconciled to God on the cross? who of a sinful woman picked out from the mass of human beings? a reprobate character saved by faith and sent away in peace?

“But wisdom is justified of all her children.” The robber vindicated the wisdom of God; for he confessed the Messiah when the High Priest, the Roman Procurator, and the Tetrarch of Galilee, in that day, mocked, rejected, and condemned the Lord and Savior. That robber gave the lie to the wisdom of the world.

People thought not a little of education in those days; and they think a great deal more of it nowadays; but where were the “cultured"? Not on the side of Jesus, but against Him. The robber had nothing to boast on that score; but he justified the wisdom of God against all the pride, knowledge, power, and glory of man. They all rejected the Lord to their own everlasting shame and ruin, The robber at the last moment was saved; only then he became wise, for he had been Satan's dupe all his life before; but how gracious that divine wisdom which can take up its abode in the breast of a hardened criminal at the last!

And here was a woman that no decent person had the smallest acquaintance with, who had sunk into the depths of depravity; here is this woman brought forward to vindicate divine wisdom in another way altogether. There are two characteristics of human wickedness. The one is violence; the other is corruption. The woman clearly was a sample of corruption, as the robber of violence. But the distinctive truth of the gospel is, that redemption depends not upon what you bring to the Redeemer, but on what God gives in and from Him. There is not—a single quality in your heart or life that could commend you to God; nay, if you read them in the light of God, you would yourself condemn all. “But God commendeth His love toward us [not ours towards Him], in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”

It was impossible to give a greater proof of love than dying for His enemies, and enemies in mind by wicked works, not merely through some mistaken cause or misunderstanding. Sinners, because powerless, are the very persons God takes up and saves; therefore let no person whatever, man or woman, aged or youthful say, “I am too bad to be saved.” It is just because you are so bad that you need such a Savior. Therefore does Jesus bring God's saving grace to you. He does not expect any good from you as you are. You must first receive the blessing; then, as Luke proceeds to set forth, when the grace of the Savior is applied, when the heart bows to Him, His grace transforms the man or woman so that he or she becomes a totally different person. Yet not the transformation saves, but only Christ; and this gives the entire glory to God. If it were the good the Christian afterward does that saves the soul, it would be man reaping the glory.

But it is not so. Since the fall, man is altogether bad, as well as guilty. God no doubt works a great change in the heart that receives the Lord Jesus; but it is not his new moral qualities, not the difference of his life practically, that procures salvation, nothing but Jesus; and therefore by believing on Jesus. For only the sovereign grace of God, coming down to man in Christ His own Son, could save the sinner from his sins and from the judgment of God. This we are here given to know; as God has written it for the purpose.

If the story of this woman were quite exceptional, we should not have it presented as it is. Many things of great moment took place that were not historically recorded in Scripture. For instance, at the beginning of the Bible, we have not a single word about the creation of angels. Man would have put it there if he had written a Bible, instead of God alluding incidentally elsewhere as to an already accomplished fact. For God, in writing the Bible through inspired witnesses, does not state when He made angels. Why not? Because it does not fall within His design to disclose it as history. And to this faith always adheres. Let us then not doubt that what God reveals is at the right time and place, not otherwise. So here we do not find the new and blessed effects of grace in the woman, real as they were, enlarged upon. It must have done souls harm. They would fall from grace in seeking to first acquire good qualities. Even as it is souls too often strive to win for themselves a good character in order to be pardoned, and thereby Christ and His work are annulled.

Scripture simply presents the Savior, and in the background the host that invited Him into his house, a man without faith, though a Pharisee. A woman also came there uninvited, the last person seemingly to be attracted by the grace of Jesus. But God showers grace on souls that least deserve it. What a witness is here of the way of grace with one that had been altogether abandoned to evil! Is it not enough to enlarge our thoughts of God and to humble the pride of human nature? Where in the Gospels did grace produce more beautiful and deep effects, or more immediately, than in this poor woman, without a character? What produced it will practice it again. The woman was the object of mercy; the transforming power was Christ. Indelible was the impression that the Savior made on that woman's heart, and the consequence was that His reflection shone out in her ways. It would be hard to find greater humility, a clearer repentance, or a more devoted heart. And this all wrought so soon! How great must be, therefore, the efficacy of the Savior's grace! This is what God commends. It is indeed His own love to the sinner; and faith can commend it not only to any hitherto unconverted, but to the converted that hesitate. What a reproof for any, converted or not, to be left behind by such a woman!

Let us then look into the Holy Spirit's account of this transaction. Simon, the Pharisee, asked the Lord to his house. No doubt he thought he was acting in a generous manner. But while the Lord and the company were there, a stranger entered” a woman in the city that was a sinner.” Those terms are sufficiently emphatic. They do not mean a sinner in the ordinary or broad sense that we all sinned, but in that peculiar force which made the woman notorious in the town; and everybody knows what this is. What drew her? Jesus, nothing but Jesus.

The first thing for your attention is that God does not make the path of faith an easy one. His word is truth, His call is simple, so far as the message is concerned. He uses all plainness of speech to sinners, no matter where they be. But there are always difficulties for the soul. There is a lion in the way of every one that believes in the Lord Jesus. The Destroyer tries to hinder, just as much as there is a Savior that loves to save. The “lion” in the way of the woman was that Jesus was “at meat” in the house of Simon the Pharisee. Such a man, hating no faith in God's grace always stands upon morality or forms or both. The man that prided himself on his religion would be exceedingly disgusted with an immoral woman coming into his house, especially when he had company.

What emboldened the woman to go there and then? Apply it to your own case. Supposing a party invited to dinner, what would you feel at the intrusion of a worthless character, especially a woman of scandalous life? There is not a single man from a lord to a laborer but would feel that his castle, great or small, was invaded. Would not the laborer be as indignant as the lord? Nor was the intruder insensible in the least; yet Grace drew her notwithstanding, and gave her the needed courage to go at all cost. Whose grace? Her own? It was Christ's—entirely and exclusively the attractive power of His goodness. She felt herself so much in distress about her sins, so much in earnest to cast her burden on the Savior, that she said as it were to herself, “There is only One that can aid me; He who has been giving sight to the blind, and strength to the lame; He who cleanses the leper, and bids the paralytic rise; He who has been blessing even a Gentile and healing his servant; He who quickened a dead man as he was carried to the grave, might perhaps deign to speak pardon to a depraved and wretched woman like me.”

What was the way of grace with her soul? The good news of Him by the Holy Spirit touched the springs of her heart, so that her awakened conscience could not but go with guilt to His feet. When it is but an idea or a feeling, there is not such earnestness of purpose. Shame, fear, pride, &c., outweigh and turn aside. Naturally the woman might have thought the difficulties insuperable, the moment most inopportune. What would the Pharisee say and do at such a liberty on her part? And the holy Savior! How could she venture to go near Him, especially in such circumstances as these? “Ah, but” (whispered the still small voice to her) “there may never be another opportunity. You may never see or hear Him again. Go now; seek Him at once.” Sense of need in herself and of grace in Him silenced every doubt and refused yielding to any fear. Not a moment must be lost. Her sins, her grievous sins, drove her to Him. He was there; Pharisee, disciples, all the world, could not keep her back from the Only One that availed her. She was in good earnest. Are you, my dear friend? Yet you know you have sins on your conscience warning you of God's judgment for evermore? How awful to put off, to make excuse, to trifle with His grace! For is not the Savior always passing by when you hear the gospel? Do you neglect so great salvation? Is He not near to everyone of us? You are called to go neither to the heavens nor into the depths to find Him. “The word is nigh thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart which we preach... that if thou

shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in thine heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”

I remember a friend that was saved by these very words; and a remarkable man he was, one most acceptable in a certain city in the north of England. Private and public dinners were not quite complete in the place without him. He was the man for a good story and a bright song, able to enter genially into all that occupied the company. But he was utterly without God, living only for this world, pleasing himself and other people, but with no sense of sin, and no care for God. He had a friend who was rather an imitator of this. You know there are many imitative wits, but not many original ones. Now this friend was regarded as of the former class and passed off jokes like the latter in his humble way. The lesser had a grave brother who was the constant butt of the greater's pleasantry.

One day the greater met the grave man, and asked him “How is your brother”? The grave man looked graver still and said, “He is saved.” The effect was as though a chasm opened at his feet. He was astonished at the answer and the fact alleged. He had never heard of such a thing in his life before. A man saved! particularly a man he knew, who had no more thought of God than himself, not the least concern for his salvation, but living in pleasure and vanity! When he recovered his breath, he asked how that was. Why, said the grave man, do you not know the scripture? quoting the words from Romans “You do not mean to say that is in the Bible,” said he. Some that do not read the word of God, when once arrested, are much more affected than those only reading it as a duty. This shows how carelessly men read: it ought not to be; but it is a common fact. The words seemed to him wondrous. He apparently had not heard them before, though of course he had; he did not remember the words because he knew nothing of the truth conveyed by them. Asking where was this passage, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved,” he was told the epistle, chapter, and verse. As soon as his public position permitted, he got alone with God, and did not leave his retirement until he by the faith of Christ was brought to Himself.

That man lived a devoted Christian, an excellent and earnest preacher of the gospel, and departed to be with Christ but a short time ago. The story may show that what God describes in the Bible is going on day by day. Do not think it is something out of your reach, or not urgent on you now. Why should this man and that woman be saved, and you not? Why should you turn a deaf ear to those gracious words of God, mighty to save? Why not follow the converted robber, or the abandoned woman, brought out of all their iniquity to God? Alas! there are men and women too proud, as themselves say, to be saved in the same way as either. But, my friends, have you no fear of being lost with the other robber? There are only two ways, like the two robbers, the one lost and the other saved. Are you then too proud to be saved with the believing robber, but not too proud to be lost with the impenitent robber? What is this but supreme folly, madness, and sin? Is it not the blinding power of the enemy, God's enemy and yours?

Think of their endless doom who thus live and die; think now of that awful companionship through all eternity. Think on the other hand of the blessed on high, many no doubt taken out of the gutters of this world, out of all their wallowing in open wickedness or selfish frivolity and pleasure, yea out of darkness and evil and ungodliness even when veiling themselves in a vain mantle of religion. Oh! what a blessed portion “to be with Christ” in the blessed throng! The word declares that the Lord Jesus gives eternal life for heaven, and will adjudge to hell. All depends on how you treat the Lord Jesus. Those who believe God honor His Son. See how this woman bore herself toward Him. She was aroused in conscience, drawn in heart, and so filled with good courage that she appears not to have thought of the Pharisee or of any one else in the house but the One on Whom her soul was concentrated. She sought only the Savior, caring not for aught else that she might he saved. She went because of her sense of her sins and utter ruin. She knew how unable she was to resist temptation and refuse sin; she knew that, having sinned habitually and in the face of shame, she would go on sinning to the end. Without Him she could do nothing.

But what about you? It is not a question what kind of sin is committed. It is very encouraging for the soul that the Savior does not disdain the grossest sinner, the most unworthy man or woman. This ought to encourage you. If you say, “I have not been so bad a sinner as that,” remember that it is not the gross sinners merely that are cast into hell but sinners, whatever the sort or degree of sin theirs may be; and without doubt you are not saved, unless you receive Christ by the Holy Ghost for your soul. This is what the woman did; and mark her conduct. Assuredly she showed her faith by her works: this is always God's way. It is not that works could save of themselves for a moment; but faith working by love is most acceptable to God. This is the kind of works the epistle of James speaks of. Therein are specified two examples, Abraham, and Rahab.

Now it is plain that the work of Abraham, if it had not been of faith, would have been the worst possible. Can you conceive an act so evil as for him to have offered up his son Isaac with his own hands, unless it had been a trial of his faith in the words of God? And what does the Holy Spirit tell us of Rahab? She received the spies that came to destroy her king and country. This would have been another execrable work, if it had not been bowing to God in faith. The one and only thing that made it acceptable to God, was that He was leading His people, and she knew it and was obedient. This was the difference between her and every other in Jericho. Rahab alone had faith in the living God of Israel, and this saved herself and her family. As Abraham gave up to God's will the resistance of all natural affections in the sacrifice of his son, assured that God would give Isaac back, so with Rahab and her feelings of patriotic duty. She would have been shocked at the idea of entertaining the spies if she had not seen the authority of God at stake. Was she to fight against God? It is the same God fully revealed in Christ Who has to do with you now.

God in view of eternity is calling on you to hear Christ’s word, even commanding to believe the name of His Son (1 John 3:23) Yea, commanding men everywhere to repent. And how can one truly show repentance? By, turning away from all sins and self in the sight of God. The attempt to avoid evil and get good by watching and praying, by reading the word of God and taking the sacrament, is not repentance. It is a religious but unbelieving abuse of scripture and of those institutions of God. What is there more blessed than the word of God and prayer, than baptism and the Lord's supper, in their proper places and for their right ends? But if one make them the means of salvation, putting them in place of the Savior, it is only less evil than the worship of the mass, and prayer to the virgin and the saints, or anything alike idolatrous.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Notes on Luke, Luke 7:36-50, Notes on

As illustrating wisdom justified of all her children, as well as the superiority of the new system of grace, the kingdom of God as it was about to come in, the Spirit leads Luke to give the story of the woman who followed Jesus into the house of the Pharisee (it would seem in His train). All was arranged to bring out the truth and the grace of God with great precision. “One of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him.” The Lord goes into the house and takes His place at table. A woman in the city, a sinner, evidently of notorious character, “when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and to wipe them with the hairs of her bead, and kissed his feet and anointed them, with the ointment.”

Faith makes a soul very bold; at the same time it gives great propriety. But its boldness is inspired by the attractive power of the object looked to. It is from no qualities of our own. What for instance could be more beautifully in season? What more modest and right in feeling and act than the conduct of this hitherto abandoned woman? Now, at least, so much the more glory to the object of her faith who brought about this immense change. When she knew that Jesus was invited there, she goes too. It was the last place where she would otherwise have ventured. It was Jesus without invitation that emboldened her to go there. But when she found herself there, she does not ask Peter or James or John or any of them, as the Greeks asked Philip, to see Jesus. She goes at once: not merely her own deep sense of need, but her sense of His ineffable grace—the grace of Jesus—gave the entree at once and introduced her without further form or ceremony. Completely absorbed in an object, which she may not have defined to her mind to be a divine person, but which proved itself to be none the less divine by its all-overcoming power over her soul, she must have instinctively shrunk from the Pharisee's house under any other circumstances. Ordinarily there was everything to repel, nothing to attract her, in that house. Yet she makes no apology for the intrusion; she knew without being told that Jesus made her free to draw near; and there she is found, standing at His feet behind Him, weeping.

Remark too, how every way, every act, every feature of the case was perfectly suited to express without a word the real truth of her past as well as present, and of His goodness. She began to wash His feet with tears and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment. Mary did it another day—did that which was so similar, that some have even fancied this to be Mary. But that is a profound mistake. We hear nothing at all of her tears. We do hear of her anointing the feet of Jesus as well as His head and wiping them with the hair; so that the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. In both it was an act of devotedness to Jesus; and devotedness does not imitate, but like devotedness to the same object produces similar effects, though each with its own peculiarity. But besides devotedness, there was in this woman confession of her own self-abasement, of her horror at her sins, of her repentance towards God, and her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. That was not the question with Mary. Mary was filled with a sense of the danger that impended over Jesus. She had a vague but true consciousness of His approaching death, so that the Lord counted it an anointing for His burial, gave it divine value, expressed what her heart had not uttered even to Himself; but nevertheless what she could not but feel, though she could not articulate it. But in this woman's case it was the unaffected pouring out of a burdened heart, which felt its only relief in thus “washing his feet with tears and wiping them with the hairs of her head.” Thus, sense of grace produces effects very similar to a deep sense of His glory. They are both divine, both of the Spirit of God. Sense of His grace, shaded by the sense of her own sinfulness, was the predominant feeling in this poor woman's mind; as sense of His glory, shaded by the feeling of approaching danger, was of Mary's.

All this was lost upon the Pharisee, or rather it stirred up the unbelief of his heart. “When the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner.” His thought was that the being a sinner would unfit for Jesus. Yet he had no adequate notion of the glory of Jesus, nor of His holiness, nor of course of His grace: he would not even allow Him to be a prophet. Had He been so, as he thought He must have seen through the woman that touched Him. Simon knew that the woman was a sinner. It was known commonly in the place. If Jesus had only known her character, it was inconceivable to Simon that He would have allowed her to take such a liberty with His person. But Jesus thoroughly knew her as well as Simon; and if she was a sinner, He was a Savior. Alas! the Pharisee neither felt the sin nor saw the Savior according to God. Phariseeism is an attempt to take a middle ground between a sinner and a Savior, and this ignores both the misery of the one and the grace of the other. All worldly religion avoids a real deep confession, as of sin, so of a Savior. It contents itself with generalities and forms. They own sins, and they own a Savior after a sort: but the golden mean, which in the world's things is so valuable, is fatal in what is divine. This is what Christianity was intended to bring people out of. It is what the faith of God's good news disproves and banishes: for the gospel of salvation goes expressly on the ground of total ruin through sin. Now man, religious man, dislikes all extremes, likes moderate views; but by this moderation of view, the depths of sin are unfelt and the Savior is un-honored. The Pharisee shows it out in contrast with the woman. He was not a child of wisdom: “wisdom is justified of all her children.” He found ignorance, where she found perfect grace; and she was wise. She was a child of wisdom. Wisdom was not justified by him. It was unseen and denied. “This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner.” He did not know: such was the Pharisee's account of Jesus.

But Jesus answered what he did not utter “Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee; and he saith, Master, say on.” And the Lord then tells him the parable of the creditor. “There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty” —one a comparatively large, and the other a small sum; but neither could pay, and he “frankly forgave them both.” Who would love him most? The Pharisee would answer on human ground with correctness, “I suppose that he to whom he forgave most.” The Lord owned that he had rightly judged, and then He at once applies it, “Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house; thou gavest me no water for my feet.”

After all, the entertainment that even a Pharisee—a religious man—provides for Jesus, is very short. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks: the poor reception betrayed how little his heart was in receiving Jesus. Yet he thought to patronize Jesus. This is what natural religion always does. He thought be was doing honor to Him, but instead of that he was nourishing himself, and proved the low conception he had of Jesus by the measured scale of that which he provided for Jesus. “I entered into thine house; thou gavest me no water for my feet” —that was an ordinary thing in these countries; “but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss” —in these lands no strange reception— “but this woman, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet; my head with oil thou didst not anoint” —but here again how entirely she went beyond— “but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.” Not even a king was so entertained. “Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."'

It was evidently not the woman's first sense of the grace of Christ. What she had done was because with her heart she did believe in Him. She believed before she came. It was her faith brought her, but she did not know that her faith saved her. She loved before she came, and all that she did was the fruit of her love; yet not her love, but her faith saved her. She loved much, because she was forgiven much; and she felt it. Thus she was led to this love by the deep sense of her sin, and of the attractive grace of the Savior; and so she must hear how truly she was

forgiven. The Lord says to her, “Thy sins are forgiven.” This drew out the inward question of those around, and not Simon's only. “They began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?”

Here, again, also it was not the first time. The Lord had said publicly to the palsied man, “Thy sins are forgiven thee.” But there was a difference, and a weighty one, between that forgiveness and this. There it was within the bounds of Israel, and it was specially in reference to this world. I do not mean to say that the man may not have been forgiven eternally; but that it was emphatically the forgiveness of sins proved by the healing of his body, and both in connection with the earth. Thus it was what may be and has been called governmental forgiveness, and after this sort I suppose it will be that God will act in the millennium. It might or might not be eternal. The millennial reign of Christ will be accompanied by the banishing of diseases and the forgiveness of sins. There will be nothing but blessing everywhere. But whether it be eternal or not will depend no doubt on the reality of the work of God in the soul (i.e., on faith).

In the case before us the forgiveness has nothing to do with the present life. It is absolute, unconditional, and eternal; and assuredly this will be found by and by in the kingdom of God, as it is now brought out in the power of the Holy Ghost. It was what ought to be in Christianity—a kind of little anticipation or example of what was to be proclaimed in the gospel; and it is peculiar to Luke. He said to the woman in answer to these doubts, “Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace” —words nowhere said to the palsied man. It was not her love that saved her, but her faith. Love is the exercise of that which is within us—of that new nature which the Holy Ghost imparts, and of which He is Himself the strength. But faith, although of the Spirit of God, nevertheless finds all in its object, in another. Love is more what people call a subjective thing; whereas the essence of faith is that though in man, it is nevertheless exercised on what is outside him. The whole of that which it depends on is in its object—even Christ. “Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.” Thus there is present salvation; and this in such power that the Lord can bid her “go in peace.” This is precisely what the gospel now announces freely, and unfolds fully, according to the value of an inestimable, exhaustless Christ and His work.

Notes on Luke, Luke 7:19-35, Notes on

Up to the end of chapter 6, the Lord is still within the precincts of Israel, though undoubtedly there are principles of grace which intimate much more—the outgoing of divine mercy toward every soul of man. Yet until the end of that chapter the Lord does not actually go beyond the godly Jews now associated with Himself, and in mission too, as the apostles. If He gathers, He sends out from Himself to gather unto Himself: and their moral traits which distinguished them from the nation, are laid down with great emphasis and direct personal application to the close of that chapter. Then we have a Gentile's faith, who owns Christ's divine supremacy over all things, whether even disease or distance here below. Nothing could be too great for Him. Jesus, the day after, proves His power over death. Most truly man, He is nevertheless above nature, so to speak, and that which sin had brought in as God's judgment on the race. Clearly therefore in all this we have what goes beyond Israel as such; and expressly so in the case of the Gentile centurion's servant.

This, accordingly, brings in deeper things. John's disciples reported all these things to their master, who calls two of his disciples and sends them to Jesus, questioning whether He were “he that should come, or look we for another?” The Lord, in the same hour that they stated their errand, cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits, and unto many that were blind He gave sight. And then He “answering said unto them, Go your way and tell John what things ye have seen and heard: how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached; and blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.” It was a solemn answer, and should have been a very touching reproof to John. Here was One that sought not His own glory, yet He could not but point to that which God was doing, for God was with Him. He “went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with birth” God meant this for a witness. But was it not sad and humbling that be who was raised up specially to render witness to Jesus should require witness from Jesus? And Jesus, in the overflowing of His grace, gives witness not only to what God was doing by Himself, but to John also. Thus no flesh glories in His presence. He that glories must glory in the Lord. John himself failed completely in the object for which he had been sent, at least at this crisis. None can bear utter rejection but the Spirit of Christ; nothing else can go through it undimmed, unstained. Christ is not only the great doer, but greatest sufferer; and John did not look for this. He had known what fidelity of witness was in an evil world: but the testifying of the Messiah that He should be a sufferer, and consequently his own share of it as His herald in prison, seem to have been too much for his faith or that of his disciples. He needed at the very least to be confirmed; he needed to have proof positive that Jesus was the predicted Messiah, for himself or for others. We have seen the answer given him by our Lord.

Observe here that there was no point more remarkable in the ordinary ministry of Jesus, than His care for the poor. To the poor the gospel was preached. His concern about them was the very reverse of all that was found among men before. If others had cared for the poor, it was but the working of His Spirit in them, and nothing characteristic; in Jesus' case it was opening out His heart if possible, with greater care to them than to any others, the bright hopes that the gospel announces, the display of that which is eternal for the eyes of believers in the midst of present need among those who were most liable to be overwhelmed by it. “And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.” There we find a rebuke, couched undoubtedly in the gentlest terms; nevertheless, it was that which was intended, no doubt, to deal with the conscience. John seems to have been stumbled; but blessed was he whosoever was not offended in Jesus. There is nothing that so grated upon every natural thought of a Jew than rejection and shame accompanying the Messiah or those that bore witness of Him. Man was wholly unprepared for it. They had been waiting for long and weary years for the Messiah to bring in deliverance. Now that He was come, that evil should fall with apparent impunity on His servants, and shroud Himself—that they and He too should be despised of men—was too much for their faith. They were offended in Him.

Christianity, let me say, has given immense range to the display of all this. Indeed it is the glory and blessing of the Christian. He is not stumbled at the rejection of Christ. He sees the cross in the light of heaven, not of the earth; he knows its bearing on eternal things. Present things are not the question. God has brought in the unseen, and the Christian is familiar with them even now. He accordingly rejoices in the cross of Christ, and boasts in that which is the overthrow of all the natural thoughts of men, and the judgment of the world, but which is really in the grace of God the judgment of sin, and the vindication of His own moral glory. Therefore the Christian triumphs in it. Besides, it is that which gave occasion to the infinite grace of the Lord Jesus, and in all these things he delights. He therefore has the blessing fully; and is strengthened, not offended, by the cross.

When the messengers of John go away, the Lord can speak in vindication of His servant. After all, viewed not in connection with what was coming, but according to that which had been and was, who was found among men worthy of such honor? He was no reed shaken with the wind: this they might see any day in the wilderness. Neither was he a man clothed in soft raiment: they must look to kings' courts to find men gorgeously appareled and living delicately. There is no moral grandeur in any of these things. A prophet then he was, and much more than a prophet. Such is the witness of Jesus. “This is he of whom it is written, Behold I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.” He was the immediate forerunner of the Messiah. God put singular honor on him. There were many prophets; there was but one John, but one who could be the messenger before His face. Consequently our Lord adds, “Among those that are born of women, there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist.”

Yet this, be it noted, brings out so much the more the superior blessing of those who were to be in the new state of things, when it should be no longer prophecy or unfulfilled promise, but the basis of the kingdom was laid in the work of Christ. That new order was coming in, first to faith, then in power; and Luke gives great force to that which was revealed to faith, because it is known through the word of God and the power of the Holy Ghost. It is not yet the visible manifestation of the kingdom, but none the less God's kingdom, which was to come in through a rejected Son of man. Redemption may be the basis of better and still more glorious things, but it is the basis of the kingdom of God: and in that kingdom the least was greater than the greatest before—greater even than John. The least in that kingdom would rest on redemption already accomplished; the least would know what it is to be brought to God, sin put away, and the conscience purged. John the Baptist could only look onward to these things. The Christian knows them to be actually come, and by faith his own portion. He is not waiting for them; he has them. Thus he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than John.

At the same time we are told that all the people that heard John the Baptist, and the publicans too—that is the mass, even the lowest of them—justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. They were right as far as it went. It was a witness of what was coming: it was a confession of their own sin. Thus far they justified God. But the prudent and wise, the religious, learned, and great, the Pharisees and lawyers, rejected and frustrated the counsel of God against themselves, because they refused even the preparatory work of John the Baptist. Having refused the lesser testimony, they never passed into the greater things—the reality from God. Having refused that which their own consciences ought to have proved to be true, they were not prepared to receive the gift of His grace. Christ can only in the conscience be received to salvation. Feeling and understanding will never do alone. There must be conscience. Those that had conscience awakened Godward about their sins were too glad to receive Christ. Those whose consciences slept or were roused but for a moment were never brought to God savingly. When Christ is received by faith, the conscience is active toward God, the mind and heart rejoice as they enter into and appropriate the blessing, but not otherwise. Where there is no work in the conscience, all is given up speedily. They are offended by this or that. Thus, the men of that generation were like captious children, “sitting in the market place, and calling one to another, and saving, We have piped unto you and ye have not danced; we have mourned to you and ye have not wept.” Whatever God called to was offensive. If God brought in joy, they would not dance: if God brought in a call to mourn, they would not weep. Thus, when John the Baptist came, neither eating bread nor drinking wine, the expression of no communion, because sin was in question (and how could God send one to have communion with sin?), they said, He had a demon. “The Son of man is come eating and drinking.” Now there could be communion: the rejected Christ is the foundation of all true fellowship with God. But “they said, Behold a gluttonous man and a winebibber, the friend of publicans and sinners.” Man, thinking well of himself, counts the grace of God to be allowance of sin. When God calls to righteousness, it is too severe for man: when He calls to grace, it is too loose for him. Every way man likes not God: he shrinks in presence of law; and he despises in presence of grace. “But wisdom is justified of all her children.” And the incident that follows is a striking proof of it in both its parts—the witness of it not only in her who was a sinner, but is now a child of wisdom, but also in him who could not appreciate the One who is the wisdom of God.

Notes on Luke, Luke 7:1-18, Notes on

We have already had the leper in chapter 5, which Matthew displaces, in order to put it along with the centurion's servant, which opens our chapter; the one being used to show the dealings of the Lord Jesus and the character of His ministry among the Jews, and the other to bear witness to the great change which was about to take place in the going forth of mercy to the Gentiles on the rejection of Israel. Luke, as we have seen, was inspired by the Spirit of God to use it for a wholly different purpose. The leper was put with the paralytic man, not with the centurion, in order to bring out the different moral effects of sin, not the change of dispensation. Here then we find that the Lord has fully separated the godly remnant of His disciples and shown out the qualities of God's kingdom as realized, and Christ's own character as looked for in them: this would extend to the Gentiles also when they were called.

Now He gives us, in the case of the centurion's servant, a manifestation of His power and goodness which carries out the truth still farther. There are certain points of difference here, worthy of all note, as compared with Matthew, which we might not expect at first sight. The manner of its relation by Luke brings in two things, one of insertion and the other of omission; both very different from Matthew. First, the embassy of the elders is mentioned here, not in Matthew. “A certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant.” This brings before us not only the officer's affection for his servant, but his employment of the elders of the Jews. “And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying that he was worthy for whom he should do this, for he loveth our nation, and he hath built us a synagogue. Then Jesus went with them.” Then we have a second embassy: “And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof.” Second thoughts are not always best among men. They constantly mar the simplicity of the first impression, which is apt to be direct from the heart or the conscience. But the mind which sees the consequences continually affects to correct these early impulses; and not seldom for the worse. Simplicity of purpose is ruined by secondary and prudential considerations. But it is not so with real faith, which makes us grow; as it is said, “Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” In this case we have what is beautifully characteristic of our evangelist, both in the first embassy and in the second. The first is his reverence for God's dealings with the Jews shown in his employment of the elders, of those who were the leaders of Israel, to send to Jesus.

But next also we see his employment of friends, who more spoke of his own heart. Matthew mentions the case, but far more succinctly. We should not even learn from the first evangelist but that he came himself “Then came unto him a centurion, beseeching him.” Whereas it is

clear there was the intervention of both elders and friends. The clue to it is that old maxim of law or equity, that what one does by another one does by oneself. The second occasion brought out more fully the reconsideration in his soul of the glory of Jesus. It was natural that in sending the Jews he should ask for His presence. For not a Jew only, but a faith that leaned upon Israel, that laid hold, as it were, of the skirt of a Jew, was always bound up with the personal presence of the Messiah; but when he spoke out his own proper feeling, and when friends consequently were the medium of his second mission, he says, “Lord, trouble not thyself; for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof.” This brings out two things; the deep sense of the Lord's glory, and a corresponding sense of his own nothingness. “Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee.” This is left out in Matthew entirely; because Matthew, summing it all up, simply speaks of the centurion. If we had had this alone, then we might have thought that the centurion actually came, and that there was only one message to Jesus. But it was not so. Here, as we have the embassies mentioned, it is added by the Spirit of God, “Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee.”

And that was just his state. It looked the saddest case. He was not worthy that the Lord should come: and neither did he think himself worthy that he should go to the Lord. How could mercy flow? Faith finds in each extremity the opportunity for grace worthy of God, and for the glory of such an One as Jesus. “But say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.” Thus the “word,” as we habitually find in Luke, has its paramount place. The turning point is not the bodily presence even of Messiah, but the word. Jesus was man, but He was the vessel of divine power; therefore He had only to say in a word, and his servant should be healed. His coming to the spot was in no way necessary—His word was enough. “For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers: and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.” That is, his faith owned that Jesus had the very same power, and indeed more; for he was only a man under authority: Jesus, the perfectly dependent and obedient man, could command all, ever to the glory of God the Father. Even he, under authority as he was, nevertheless had authority himself to order this one and that one, especially his own servant. All things were but servants to Jesus—all subserved God's glory by Him. He had only to speak the word: disease itself must obey. “Say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.” “When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.”

But there is an omission—and this was the second point of difference I wished to mark—an omission of what Matthew adds: “And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” At first sight one might have expected this, particularly in Luke; but a closer inspection will show that its proper place is not here. The Lord does bring it in elsewhere in Luke, namely, in chapter 13, when the time was come for distinctly indicating the change; and this on moral considerations, and not on dispensational ones only. Whereas Matthew, being intent on the impending change for Israel and the Gentiles, is led of the Spirit to introduce it in this place and time, where no doubt it was uttered. But with equal wisdom Luke reserves it for another connection. do not doubt that the moral reason for that reservation was this, that while the Lord did acknowledge, if I may so say, the simplicity of the faith of the Gentile—and simplicity in faith is power—while He exceedingly valued that faith which saw much more than a Messiah in Him, which saw God in Him (man though He really was)—saw His power over sickness, even though at a distance from it, which is so effectual a bar to all human resources, but which only displayed One that was man, but far more than man. Such was to be the faith of the Gentile, in due time, when Jesus should be actually absent from this world, but when all the virtue of Jesus should be as, or even more, conspicuous in some important respects. Such is Christianity: and the Gentile centurion was an illustrious type of the character of this faith. Nevertheless Christianity being brought out, specially among the Gentiles, as Rom. 11 shows us, the continual danger is for the Gentile to account that the Jew has been cut off that he might be grafted in. Hence there was the wisdom of God in not introducing that solemn judgment upon Israel, as well as the strong expression of the substitution of the Gentile for him in this place. It was evidently to correct Gentile conceit. It is true the Jews were to be judged, in fact were already under judgment; but that sentence was to be executed still more stringently, when the Gentiles were to be gathered in. But the Lord waits a more fitting season for announcing it. Thus the Gentile is taught by this scene the proper feeling towards a Jew. Faith would not despise them. It may go beyond Jewish intervention, but it should honor the Jews in their own place. At the same time his own danger of presumption, as if he were the exclusive object of God's purpose, is guarded against by the omission of any such sentence here.

It is needless to say that they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that bad been sick.

But there follows, the day after, another scene of great interest, carrying out the picture of our Lord's power more completely; and it is a scene peculiar to Luke. “It came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.” Two touches very characteristic of our evangelist, as indeed the whole scene is peculiar to him: he was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. It is the heart of a man touched by the circumstances of desolation, and open to the affections that suited such a case. The Lord of glory deigned to feel, and to bring out by the Holy Ghost, these circumstances. “Much people of the city was with her.” Even man showed his sympathy. What did the Lord? “When the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not.” He came to banish the tears which sin and misery had brought into the world. I do not say that He came not to weep Himself; for, in banishing it, He must weep as none other wept. But to her He would say in His gracious power, “Weep not. And he came and touched the bier, and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.” Vain words, had they not been His words, or from any other mouth! What a difference it is who says it! That is what men forget when they think of Christ, or speak of scripture. They forget it is God's word, they overlook God in man and by man, the man Christ Jesus. “And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.”

God was there; God was with that man in His own power: for what is more characteristic of God than raising the dead? It was even more wondrous than creation. That God should create, is, so to speak, natural. That God should raise the dead to life again, after that which is created is fallen into ruin, that He should show His all-compassing power of retrieving to the uttermost, supposes indeed man's weakness and evil, and the enemy's temporary success, but God superior to all circumstances of hostile power in the creature, and His own just judgment of sin. And this is true most evidently in the gospel. It is viewed as the quickening voice of the Son of God, and this in view of sin and of eternity. But the Lord shows it in matters of time here. “And be said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise.” And our evangelist closes with words in keeping with all his spirit: “And Jesus delivered him to his mother.” If He was a man acquainted with grief, He was a man acquainted with the power of sympathy. He knew how to minister to the heart that was bereaved. “And there came a fear on all, and they glorified God, saying that a great prophet is risen up among us, and that God hath visited his people.” He had the power of life in the midst of death. He was a prophet, and more than a prophet. God had anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about indeed doing good. “And this rumor of him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the region round about.”

Luke 7:11-17

As this is a miracle peculiar to the Gospel of Luke, it strikingly illustrates God's design therein. Luke alone tells us of the penitent woman sent away in peace, of the good Samaritan, of the tax-gatherer in the parable self-judging and contrasted with the self-righteous Pharisee, of the prodigal son, of Zacchaeus, of the converted robber: all of them cases of overflowing grace. So it is here where the gracious power of God manifested itself, and this in the man Christ Jesus, and with marked commiseration of human grief. All this and more was in the Savior, as God would have all men know.

" And it came to pass the day after that he went to a city called Nain, and there went with him his disciples, and a great crowd. Now, as he drew near to the gate of the city, behold, there was carried out dead, an only son of his mother, and she a widow, and a considerable crowd of the city was with her, And the Lord seeing her had compassion' on her, and said to her, Weep not. And coming up he touched the bier (or, open coffin), and the bearers stopped. And he said, Youth, I say to thee, Awake. And the dead sat up and began to speak; and he gave him to his mother. And fear visited all; and they were glorifying God, saying, A great prophet is arisen among us, and God visited his people. And this report about him went out in the whole of Judea and in all the surrounding country " (vers. 11-17).

The power in which the grace of Christ acted was not limited to sickness, even so extreme as leprosy or paralysis. It was not confined to Israel: faith drew it out mightily in answer to Gentile appeal. Here without an appeal we see it supreme over the ravages of death, and with exquisite tenderness toward sorrow otherwise hopeless. Outside the gate of Nain, still called Nein, and mounting the steep declivity of Jebel Duhy, or Little Hermon, with its many sepulchral caves, the Lord and His disciples, with a great crowd following, met another great crowd drawn together by the funeral of a young man, a widow's only son. With a heart full of pity He said to the mother, " Weep not." They were words in vain from other lips. To men it is appointed once to die; and the young man was really dead, as the inspired physician attests. Man born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. There is hope of a tree, even if it wax old and the stock die in the ground; through the scent of water it will bud and put forth boughs. But man dies and is prostrate; yea, man expires, and where is he? The waters retire from the lake, and the river water dries up; so man lies down and rises not: till the heavens be no more, they awake not, nor are raised out of their sleep.

But now the Second Man was here, the last Adam. The Kinsman-Redeemer was hard by, and uttered words of hope to the widowed mother, stricken afresh and without hope. The strong one fully armed, who had the might of death, thought to keep his own credit and his goods in peace; but a stronger than he had come upon him and overcome him, and would take from him his whole armor wherein he trusted and divide his spoils. As a sample of this the Lord touched the bier, and the bearers stood still; and His voice was again heard. This time He spoke to the corpse, Youth, I say to thee, Awake.

Never was such a call uttered or heard before. The great prophet Elijah prayed and stretched himself over and over again on another widow's child; and Jehovah hearkened to Elijah's importunate supplication (1 Kings 17). He too that asked and received a double portion of Elijah's spirit with no less prayer and urgent effort labored for another dead child, and was heard for his faith. So in later N. T. days Peter ventured not to say to the body of the deceased disciple, Tabitha, Arise, till he had knelt down and prayed, any more than Paul when he fell on the dead Eutychus and enfolded him in his arms.

How different His bearing Who alone is the Resurrection and the Life! " Youth, I say to thee, Awake." Yet He Who by the act thus done was marked out Son of God in power by resurrection of a dead man, habitually called Himself the Son of man, as it is carefully shown in chap. 3 of this Gospel. And He Who subsisting in the form of God counted it not rapine (or, prize to be clutched) to he on equality with God, in the perfection of human affection gave the youth (no longer dead but sitting up and speaking) to his mother. How able, how willing, is He to help the tried! How suited and ready to sympathize with our infirmities!

Do you, my reader, answer that this was a miracle, and therefore exceptional? Learn then that, though true miracles, His miracles, like His words were written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His name. Be assured then of a love in a human heart infinitely beyond man's, even the love of God shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us. His voice now appeals to you in the gospel. For the hour now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live. O you that read, hear Him and live. Why should you die? Why despise grace and truth in not hearing them? Listen to Him again: "Verily, verily, I say to you, He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath life eternal, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life " (John 5:24).

Notes on Luke, Luke 6:39-49, Notes on

The first principle that the Lord here lays down is the necessity of a man himself seeing in order to lead others aright. This has been constantly lost sight of in Christendom. It was not in the same way necessary to priesthood in Israel, though there were duties of a priest which needed discernment, to judge between clean and unclean. Still their function lay in mere outward things, which required no spiritual. power. But it is not so in Christianity, though there are moral principles—first principles of everyday life—which are unchangeable. Yet as a whole, Christianity does suppose a new nature and the Spirit of God; and he who has not that nature and the power of the Spirit is incapable of rightly helping others. Now ministry demands this, even in the gospel. There are varying states; and unless a man is capacitated by his own personal faith as well as by the word of God, he will misapply scripture. But it is still clearer in the instruction and guidance practically of believers. He who is called to help them on must necessarily be taught of God, not in mind only but in heart and conscience, well and thoroughly furnished in scripture, so as rightly to divide the word of truth. The blind therefore cannot lead the blind. Neither is it Christianity that the seeing should lead the blind. The true principle of our calling is, that the seeing should lead the seeing—the very reverse of the blind leading the blind.

Although every believer is supposed to see, yet he may not see clearly. He has the capacity, but may not yet have been exercised in using it. But when the truth has been brought clearly out, he is able to see it without more ado, and, it may be, as distinctly as he who had taught it. Thus that which he receives (whatever the means employed) stands on the word of God and not on the authority, either of church or of teacher. If the teacher were removed or went astray, still he sees the truth for himself in the light of God.

Thus it remains true that the seeing, whom God has qualified to lead on others, teach the seeing who have light enough from God to follow, and who know that they are not following man but God, in that they intelligently follow those who are taught of God, and who lead them according to His word, that which commends itself by the Holy Spirit to the conscience. So far is ministry therefore from being incompatible with Christianity, that it is characteristic of it. Strictly speaking, it was not a distinctive feature of Judaism. They had priests to transact their religious business for them; but Christians have ministry in order to guide and cheer them on, and strengthen them by God's grace, in doing that which pertains to the whole body of which ministers are but a part. “Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?” This is precisely what Christendom, by confounding Christianity with Judaism, is falling into rapidly. Some take the side of infidelity, some of superstition. But they both fall into the ditch, on the one side or the other.

On the other hand, “the disciple is not above his master.” Our portion is according to Christ. Christ was despised and so are we. Christ was persecuted, and so must the disciple be content to be. He has Christ’s portion: if above, so upon earth. “Every one that is perfect shall be as his master.”

Then there is another danger, and that is of censoriousness. The habit of always seeing faults in others is exceedingly to be deprecated and watched against. “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye?” What is the true root of it? Invariably, where there is the habit of beholding faults in others, there is an overlooking of our own. Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but perceivest not the beam that is in thine own eye?” In that state of things we cannot help others: we must have our own evil dealt with first. “Either how canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye” (love would meet another’s want: self is blind and busy, forgets its own faults, but can be zealous in correcting others for its own glory)— “when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye?” Our own fault, unjudged, always obstructs our affording real aid to another. Whereas, where we have judged ourselves, it is not only that we can see more clearly, but we can enter upon the work more humbly and lovingly. It is this that makes a man spiritual. Nothing but self-judgment can ever do it, coupled with the sense of the Lord’s great grace and holiness, which is the crown of self-judgment, by the Spirit’s power. But it is only the sense of the Savior’s grace and regard for His holiness, which produces self-judgment; as on the other hand, the exercise of self-judgment increases our sense of that grace, and keeps us bright in it, instead of letting ourselves be lowered to the level of surrounding circumstances, and the state to which the allowance of flesh would ever reduce us. The Lord speaks very severely of such— “Thou hypocrite!” and I believe censoriousness as a rule does tend directly to hypocrisy. It leads persons to assume a spirituality which they do not possess; and is this truthful? A person who is continually commenting on others, you may therefore set down as more or less hypocritical in pretending to a holiness which is certainly beyond their measure. Such is the Lord’s judgment; and you may be sure that the word which He has spoken, will so decide at the last day. People forget that there is no way of pretending to spirituality more cheap and more imposing on thoughtless minds than this readiness to speak of the faults of others; but there is scarcely anything that the Lord Jesus more sternly refuses and condemns. “Thou hypocrite cast out first the beam out of thine own eye, and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote that is in thy brother’s eye.”

Then He shows how clearly it is a question of nature. “A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit, neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.” You cannot change the nature. “Every tree is known by its own fruit; for of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes.” The Lord did not as yet show the action of two natures, and the way in which the fruits of the new creation might be hindered by the allowance of the old. He simply points out the fact that there are two natures, but not their co-existence in the same person, which is the matter of fact even in the real believer. “Every tree is known by its own fruit.” This is peculiar to Luke—I mean the putting it in so strong a manner. Matthew says, “By their fruits ye shall know them.” Luke makes it more comprehensive and emphatic. “Every tree is known by its own fruit.” “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.” This is another addition of Luke’s in this place. Our words are very weighty in the sight of God, as Matthew reveals in chapter 12 of his gospel, quite in a different connection “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” He had in view particularly the great dispensational change when the Jews should be cut off, not only for speaking against the Son of man, but for blaspheming against the Holy Ghost—the sin that cannot be forgiven, into which also the Jews fell. They rejected not only the humbled Lord Jesus, the Son of man, but they refused the Holy Ghost’s testimony to Him when He was glorified. They rejected every evidence that God gave them, and all advance in the ways of God was utterly loathsome to them. The consequence was that they broke out in violent rejection, according to their own evil, of God’s good things. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” Their mouth spoke, and they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment, even as men generally shall; of every idle word they shall give account. The Jews have thus lost their place for the time, and God has brought in a new thing.

But Luke presents the matter far more as a moral principle. It is true of every man, that out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh: and this is an important test for the state of our souls. Our lips betray the condition of our heart—of our affections. Then there is another thing. If we own Christ to be Lord in word, how come do we not to do what He says? The very saying that He is Lord implies the obligation of subjection to Him. “Why call ye me Lord, Lord; and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like. He is like a man which built a house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock.” Nothing could shake that house. “And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house.” But in vain: when the flood arose, it could not be shaken; “for it was founded upon a rock.” The heeding the words of Christ is that which survives every shock of the adversary. He who proves his faith thus in his obedience shall never be moved nor ashamed. “But he that heareth and doeth not” —which is precisely what has characterized Christendom as Judaism then and since— “is like a man that, without a foundation, built a house upon the earth, against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.” So it shall be. The heaviest blow of the Lord returning in glory will fall not upon pagans who have never heard, but upon the baptized who have heard and not obeyed the gospel.

Moralizing for others, or bare unfruitful hearing even of Christ’s words, is but adding to one’s own condemnation. Nothing can be substituted for real obedience of heart. Christ was the obedient as well as the dependent Man, the bright moral contrast of the first man; and such must

be and are those that are His. In all respects the discourse supposes and insists on a reproduction of His character in His disciples. It is not only promise come and fulfilled in Christ, but the manifestation of God in Him, and this now forming the disciples who are thus morally and actually distinguished from the nation.

Notes on Luke, Luke 6:27-38, Notes on

There is no such open contrast with the law as in Matt. 5-7. The reason is manifest. Matthew has the Jews full in view, and therefore our Lord contrasts “ye have heard that it was said to them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you,” &c. All that Luke says is, “But I say unto you which hear.” The disciples actually addressed were Jews, but the instruction in its own nature goes out to any man, and is profitable for all the faithful, to the Gentile as much as to the Jew. Notwithstanding it was pre-eminently important for a Jew who had been formed on the principles of earthly righteousness. None the less was it full of instruction for the Gentiles when they should be called to hear. The Gentile believer has the same heart as the Jewish, is in the same world, has to do with enemies and those that hate. Hence the value of such a word, “I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, bless them which curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.” This is entirely contrary to nature; it is the revelation of what God is, applied to govern the heart of His children. “Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you.” It is this that He was doing and showing in Christ, and the children are called to imitate their Father. “Be ye therefore followers of God as dear children.” This is of the deepest importance practically, for Christ is our real key according to that revelation of Him which is given in the New Testament; and this alone enables us to use rightly and intelligently the Old Testament. The Christian who is under grace understands the law far better than the Jew who was under law—at least, ought to enter into it as a whole and in all its parts, with a deeper perception of it, than the saints who had to do with its ordinances and ritual. Such is the power of Christ and such the wisdom of God which is our portion in Him.

But, besides these unfoldings of truth, there are the affections that are proper to the Christian. “Bless them that curse you and pray for them which despitefully use you.” The Lord looks for the activity of good, and the looking to God on behalf of those who might treat themselves despitefully. Thus it is not only kindness and pity, but there is the earnest and sincere pleading with God for their blessing.

Verse 29 is remarkable as compared with the corresponding portion (ver. 39, 40) of Matt. 5 They both deserve our particular consideration and well illustrate the difference of the gospels, and, what is also of the greatest importance, the manner of inspiration generally. It is a mistake to think that the Spirit of God is limited to a mere report even of what Jesus said. He exercises sovereign rights, while He gives the truth and nothing but the truth; and inasmuch as His aim is to give the whole truth, He is not tied down to the same expression, even while He is furnishing the substance of all that is needed for God's glory.

Thus in the Gospel of Matthew the case is of one who sues at law. In that case the object is to take away the coat; and the Lord bids the disciple to let the cloak be taken also. Luke, on the contrary, writes “him that taketh away thy cloak, forbid not to take thy coat also.” It is not a case of legal suing, but of illegal violence; and the spoiler who would take the outer garment is not to be resisted if he proceed to take the inner one also. This clearly gives a far greater fullness of truth than if the Spirit of God had restrained Himself to only one or other of the two cases. The apparent discrepancies of the gospels are therefore their perfection, if indeed we value the entire truth of God. Only thus could the different sides of truth be presented in their integrity. The Jew would require especially to be guarded on the side of law; but there is also violence in the world contrary to law; and it was necessary that the disciples should see it to be their calling and privilege to hold fast their heavenly principles in the face of man's force, no less than law. To maintain the character of Christ in our practice is of greater consequence than to keep one's cloak or coat also.

Then the Lord says, “Give to every man that asketh of thee.” It is no question of foolish prodigality, but of an open hand and heart to every call of need. “Of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again.” It is of all consequence that, as there should be the patient endurance of personal wrong— “unto him that smiteth thee on the one cheek, offer also the other,” so there should be also the testimony that our life does not consist in the things which we possess. At the same time He adds for our own guidance toward others, “As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise. For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.” To love those that love us is not the point for a Christian; it is a mere human principle—as the Lord emphatically says here, “sinners also love those that love them.” It is not as in Matthew, publicans or Gentiles, but “sinners,” according to the ordinary moral tone of Luke. This was true of man everywhere, and the word “sinner” has a great propriety and emphasis. It is not only men, but bad men, may love those that love them. So too the doing good to those who do good to us is but a righteous return of which the evil are capable; as indeed lending, when they hope to borrow or to receive. Sinners do quite as much. But for us the word is “love ye your enemies, and do good and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great.” Nor is the reward all. “And ye shall be the children of the Highest.” How soon it was made their conscious relationship! Thus it becomes the desire and aim—to acquit ourselves according to the relationship grace has given us. “For he is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.” How truly divine! We ourselves are the witnesses of it in our unconverted days.

Hence the call in our gospel does not follow as in Matthew, “Be ye therefore perfect even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,” but Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.” The perfection in Matthew seems to be in allusion to the call on Abraham, whose perfection was to walk in integrity, confiding in the shadow of the Almighty. The disciple, instructed of Jesus, had the Father's name declared, and his perfection is to illustrate his Father's character in indiscriminate grace—not in the spirit of law. Writing for the Gentiles, Luke simply calls them to be merciful as their Father was merciful. This would be obvious even to such as had not a minute acquaintance with the Old Testament, and therefore incapable of appreciating the delicate allusions to its contents here or there. Any believer could understand the force of such an exhortation as “judge not and ye shall not be judged.” The tendency to censoriousness, the imputation of evil motives, and the danger of sure retribution, are here brought before us. “Condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned.”

On the other hand, says our Master, “forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.” It is the spirit of grace in the experience of wrongs. “Give, and it shall be given unto you.” It is the spirit of large generosity; and who ever knew a giver with nothing to give or receive? Yea, “good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over” —not exactly shall men give, but “shall they give” (in the sense of “shall be given") into your bosom.” Men are very far from giving thus; and the Lord leaves it entirely vague. It might be by men or by believers: certainly God thus acts. Whoever gives will find his account sure in the far-surpassing goodness of God. “For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it

shall be measured to you again” —whatever the means that He employs and whatever the time of recompense.

Notes on Luke, Luke 6:12-26, Notes on

The pronounced enmity of the religious leaders led our Lord to special prayer. From man He turns to God. But there was another reason. He was about to call others to take up the work in which He had been engaged, and to carry it out to the ends of the earth. “And it came to pass in those days that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.” This special prayer suited both the circumstances of evil on man's side, and the fresh mission of grace on God's part. “And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.” These were to be His chief envoys in the work.

“And he came down with them and stood in the plain."1 This has been often misunderstood, and some have contrasted the discourse in “the plain” here with the discourse on “the mountain” in Matt. 5; 6:7 There is no ground for this. The expression does not really mean a plain, but a plateau or level place on the mountain. It was the same discourse, which Matthew set down, without presenting the special circumstances which led to particular parts of it—questions, &c.; whereas Luke was inspired to give it in detached portions here and there, and generally with the questions or other circumstances which led to each particular part. The two inspired writers, I doubt not, were governed in this by the special design of the Holy Ghost in each.

Here, then, Jesus stood, where a vast multitude might hear Him. “And a great multitude of people out of all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the sea-coast of Tire and Sidon, which came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And they that were vexed with unclean spirits, and they were healed. And the whole multitude sought to touch him: for there went virtue out of him and healed them all.”

But now we come to what was still better, not for the body nor for this world, but for the soul in relation with God. “And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.” There is this remarkable difference in the manner of presenting the discourse on the mount here and in the first gospel. That in Matthew gives it in the abstract, presenting each blessing to such and such a class. “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” Luke makes it a more personal address. “Blessed be ye poor.”

The reason is manifest. In the one case it is the prophet greater than Moses, who lays down the principles of the kingdom of heaven in contrast with all Jewish thought, and feeling, and expectation. In the other case it is the Lord comforting the actually gathered disciples, addressing themselves as so separated to Himself, and not merely legislating, so to speak. It was now the time of sorrow; for as bringing the promises in His person, man would not have Him.

Again, it is always “the kingdom of God” in Luke. “The kingdom of heaven” is more dispensational and finds its perfect place in Matthew. Luke, as ever, holds to that which is moral. Certainly the poor were little in man's kingdom. “Blessed,” were they, said the Lord, “for theirs is the kingdom of God.”

Further, it may be remarked that there is no such fullness here as in Matthew, where we have the complete sevenfold classes of the kingdom, with the supernumerary blessings pronounced on those persecuted, whether (1) for righteousness' sake, or (2) for Christ's sake.

But here we have another difference very notable. There are but four classes of blessing—not seven; but then they are followed by four woes, which in Matthew are reserved to a still greater completeness in chapter xxiii., at the end of His ministry for the same dispensational reason which is adhered to throughout his gospel. Luke, on the other hand, presents at once, first, the blessings; and immediately after, the woes. It was not the time of ease; judgment was coming. This flows from the moral character of his gospel, just as we find Moses in Deuteronomy, which has a similar purpose, telling the people that he sets before them the blessing and at the same time the curse. (Chap. 28.)

The first blessing, it will be noticed, is that which man always counts the greatest misery. So the poor in this world look to be despised; but “yours is the kingdom of God.” The next blessing is hungering now, with the certainty of being filled. The third is present sorrow with joy promised (that is, in the morning). Lastly, “Blessed are ye when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.” Luke, it will be noticed, leaves out entirely persecution for righteousness' sake, which finds its fitting though not exclusive place in Matthew. “Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.” This supposes exercised faith, with the greatest resulting blessing. But the fact that Luke confines himself to the blessedness of those persecuted for the Son of man's sake beautifully accords with the direct addresses in his four classes. As the blessed here are immediately before the Lord, so the persecuted here are only for His sake. All is intensely personal.

Then follow the woes. “But woe unto you that are rich for ye have received your consolation.” Nothing more dangerous than ease and satisfaction in this world—there is no greater snare even to the disciple. So again: “Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger.” This of course has its moral bearing. There is leanness for the soul where the heart has all that it desires. “Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.” A still further carrying out of the danger of man's heart. “Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you.” Here it is not personal only, but relative satisfaction. “For so did their fathers to the false prophets.” In all respects it is a complete picture of that which is spiritually desirable or to be dreaded. And thus our evangelist closes this part of the discourse.

Notes on Luke, Luke 6:1-11, Notes on

The evangelist is inspired to introduce these accounts of two sabbaths here. Very probably also they took place at this point of time. If so, it is because the moral object of the Spirit in Luke coincided here with the historical order. Thus we may infer from a comparison with the order of Mark, who, as a rule, cleaves to the sequence of events. In Matthew, on the contrary, these facts are reserved for a much later point of his gospel. (Chap. 12.) A vast compass both of discourses and miracles is introduced by him before he speaks of these two sabbath days. And the reason is manifest. Matthew here, as often, departs from the order of occurrence in order to show the long-continued and ample testimony to

the Messiahship of Jesus, before he makes use of these incidents on the sabbath, which even the Jews themselves felt to slight their sabbatical practice, and threatened the legal covenant. Ezekiel speaks of the sabbath as a sign between Jehovah and Israel. (Chap. 20:12, 20.) And now this was about to vanish away. Hence these actions on the sabbath day are extremely significant. They occur in Matthew, in the chapter where our Lord announces the unforgiveable sin of that generation, as also at the close He disowns His natural ties, and speaks of the formation of a new and spiritual relationship, founded on doing the will of His Father in heaven. Then forthwith in the next chapter He shows the kingdom of heaven and its course, which was about to be introduced because of the utter apostasy of Israel and the consequent rupture of that economy.

In Mark and Luke this is not the immediate object. They are given, it would appear, as they occurred, and Mark had to tell. Still, it is evident that their mention here falls in with Luke's design remarkably. He takes notice, we saw in the last chapter, of the working of divine grace, which calls not the righteous but sinners to repentance. Nor will the new thing of Christ, the Second Man, mix with the old things. Yet man's preference is undisguised for the old because it suits his habits and self-importance. Grace exalts God, and must be paramount.

In this chapter (7.) we are told, “It came to pass” —not on the second sabbath after the first, but “on the second-first sabbath"1—a very peculiar phrase, which has perplexed the commentators and critics immensely. It is found in no place or author but here. The only thing which really explains it seems to be a reference to Jewish customs and their feasts.

On one of these occasions (Lev. 23:10-12) the first cut sheaf of corn was waved before God. The disciples were now going through the corn-fields. Thus the connection was evident. It was the earliest sabbath after the firstfruits had been offered. This adds to the striking character of the instruction. The passover took place immediately before, as we know: the paschal lamb was killed on the fourteenth of Nisan between the evenings. Then followed the great sabbath immediately, and, on the day after, the first sheaf of corn was waved before the Lord. It was the type of Christ's resurrection. The corn of wheat had fallen into the ground and died, but was now risen again. As the killing of the lamb was the type of His death, so was this wave sheaf of His resurrection. From the day on which it was offered, seven weeks were counted complete (of course with their sabbaths), and then came the next great feast, or that of weeks. The first of these sabbaths, in the seven weeks, counted from the day of the wave sheaf, was not the great paschal sabbath, but it followed next in succession. The sabbath that opened the feast of unleavened bread after the Passover was the first, and the following sabbath day was “the second first.” It was “second” in relation to that great day, the paschal sabbath, but “first” of the seven which immediately ensued. Thus it was the first sabbath-day after the wave sheaf; and no “Israelite indeed” could have counted it lawful to have eaten of corn till after Jehovah had received His portion.

On that sabbath then, the disciples, in passing through the corn fields, “plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands.” This was always allowed, and is still, in eastern countries round the Holy Land—no doubt a remaining trace of the old traditional habit of the Jews. It is allowed as an act of charity to the hungry. What a condition for the followers of the Lord Jesus to be in! What a proof of His shame and of their need!

But nothing moved the Pharisees: religious bitterness steels the natural heart. “And certain of the Pharisees said unto them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days?” The Lord answered instead of the disciples, “Have ye not read so much as this, what David did when himself was an hungered and they which were with him; how he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the showbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat but for the priests alone?” The Spirit of God here takes up only David—not the priests of whom also Matthew treats, which was very suitable. He, writing for Jews, would use a proof of the folly of their objection which was before their eyes every day. But Luke refers to the moral analogy in the history of the great king David, who, after his anointing, and before coming to the throne (which was just the Lord's position now), was reduced to such excessive straits that the holy bread was made profane for his sake. God, as it were, refused to hold to ritual where the anointed king and his followers were destitute of the barest necessaries of life. For what did it imply? The depth of evil that ruled the nation. How could God sanction holy bread in such a condition? How could He accept of the showbread of the people as the food of His priests, when all the foundations were clearly out of course? Was not this evident in the hunger of His anointed and of his trusty hand? Was not the rejected Son of David as free as the rejected David?

The Lord closes this part of the subject with the declaration, “That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath."2 Thus there is another reason yet more powerful. David was not the Son of man as Jesus was. The Son of man had, in His own person and position, rights altogether superior to any ritual. He was entitled to abrogate it. He would do so formally in due time; for this attached to His personal glory. “The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath,” which David was not.

Nor is this all. The Lord Jesus on another sabbath enters the synagogue and teaches, where “there was a man whose right hand was withered.” And now the scribes and Pharisees with deadly hatred are watching to see “whether he would heal on the sabbath day, that they might find an accusation against him.” Such was man on one side: on the other there was a stranger come down from heaven, a man also, to fallen man, and with a heart to display heaven's and God's mind perfectly. But those who prided themselves upon their righteousness and wisdom are afraid lest men should be healed by Him at the expense of their ceremonies, and they seek to fasten an accusation against Him. “But he knew their thoughts and said to the man which had the withered hand; Rise up and stand forth in the midst. And he arose and stood forth.” The thing was not done in a corner, but boldly in presence of them all.

The Lord even challenges them publicly and says, “I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the sabbath days to do good or to do evil? to save life or to destroy it?” They were doing evil; it was His to do good. They were seeking to destroy His life; He was willing to save theirs. “And looking round about upon them all, he said unto the man, Stretch forth thy hand.” It was enough: the man did so, “and his hand was restored whole as the other.” How simple, and yet how truly divine! Was this then a work done? Was the Son's healing what God had forbidden? Was this unworthy of God? Was it not, on the contrary, the very expression of what God is? Is not God always doing good? Does He forbear to do good on the sabbath day? Was not the very sabbath itself a witness how God loved to do good, and a pledge that He will bring His people into His own rest? Was not Jesus doing so to this sufferer, and giving a witness of the gracious power that will do so fully by and by?

And what was the effect upon unbelief? “They were filled with madness, and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus;” and this because He had shown that God never foregoes His title to do good even on the sabbath-day in a world that is ruined by man's sin and Satan's wiles. A superior power has entered and manifests the defeat of Satan. But, meanwhile, the instruments of Satan are filled first with his lies and secondly with his murderous hatred. “They communed one with another what they might do to Jesus.” For indeed they had no communion with God and with His mind. They were only filled with madness and communed one with another how to injure the Lord, the

manifest children of their father: such did not Abraham.

Bible Treasury: Volume 20, Early Haul of Fishes, The

{vi 25109-25119}Luke 5:1-11

THE Holy Spirit transposes the call of Peter and his companions to a later place than the historical order adhered to by Matthew and Mark, which fell in with His design in their Gospels. But it suited His work by Luke to give previously the Lord's preaching in the synagogues of Galilee, His striking procedure in Nazareth on the sabbath day, His deliverance of the demoniac in the synagogue of Capernaum, His healing of Peter's mother-in-law with many more, and His preaching in Galilee. He Who arranged the task for each evangelist knew all the truth, which judges every man, and can be judged by none save at his peril.

In beautiful connection with the great work of proclaiming the gospel, we see the Lord standing by the lake of Gennesaret, as the crowd pressed on Him to hear the word of God. Into one of two little vessels there, from which the fishermen had gone and were washing their nets, He entered, and asked Simon (for it was his) to put out a little from the land, and thence He, sitting down, taught the crowds. After that He said to Simon, Put (thou) out into the deep, and let (ye) down your nets for a haul.

What can one conceive to act more powerfully on the mind of Simon and the rest! Sailors, especially fishermen, are apt to trust their own judgment in their craft and to think cheaply of landmen's advice. The circumstances too made any hope naturally forlorn. Master, said Simon (who had already, been led to Jesus and received from Him a name of honor), through a whole night we labored and took nothing; but at Thy word I will let down the nets. And having done this, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes. And their nets were breaking. And they beckoned to their partners in the other ship to come and help them; and they came and filled both the ships, so that they were sinking.

But great as the wonder was and pointing to the Son of man with all things put under His feet down to the fish of the sea, it was small compared to the spiritual power which let the light of God in Christ into Simon's soul. For when he saw it, he fell down at the knees of Jesus, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. He knew himself as he never did before. God in His grace brought thus near filled him with self-judgment, and he pours out the confession of it at the Lord's feet. He believed already, and before the miracle promptly gave up his own thoughts and his discouraging experience at Christ's word. Then the immediate and amazing answer to his confidence not only awed his soul but searched his conscience thoroughly. It seems like a moral dilemma to say at Jesus’ knees, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. It is really what an exercised soul feels on which the light falls with overwhelming power. Nothing farther from one than to depart from the Lord, yet His divine goodness and glory so realized that one feels utterly unworthy to be near Him while clinging to Him. When the work of redemption was done, much more could be enjoyed by the purified conscience and the heart resting on His love known in peace; but for this all had yet to wait. Even now the grace Simon saw in Christ made manifest his sinfulness but filled his heart.

The vast take of fish, the bursting nets, the sinking ships, each of which would have commanded Simon's interest at any previous time, were all unheeded. Jesus was all to his soul. Self-importance dwindled, no less than anxiety, and every earthly desire. He fell before One, a Man on earth, Who presented God with a power which delivered from Satan and the effects of sin for soul and body. As He Himself had read at Nazareth the opening of Isa. 61 and said, To-day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears, so His course demonstrated in an outreaching grace which irritated even then all who would limit divine privilege to themselves. Even then it was clear that preaching the kingdom of God was more momentous in His eyes than the mightiest deeds of power: “therefore am I sent.” He received not glory from men; He would by the word bring them into Living relationship with God; He would not only lead such as Simon into deeper blessing, but call them from every object and tie on earth to Himself and the activities of His grace.

Depart from Simon! from a sinful man! Why, the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost. As His grace made God better known, so it discovered Simon to himself, who would soon learn and own that He the Lord Jesus knew him perfectly, yea all things. Yes, the Lord Jesus knew all when He entered Simon's ship, and heard him own His word; and He so revealed Himself to his soul that Simon could not but follow such a Master and Lord.

And now He Who spoke the word of power for the miracle says to Simon, Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt be catching men. There is a season to everything, a time to fear, and a time not to fear. Nor is this peculiar to Simon. It is for every believer in Christ. Till we know Him by faith we do well to fear. Not to fear before that is impenitence with indifference or presumption. But when grace makes Him known to us, “Fear not” is as truly for us as for him. And so it was for James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were Simon's partners. The word addressed to Simon they took for themselves believingly; and they were right. It was written for us, that we might believe and have the blessing with like assurance. Perfect love casts out fear.

All, no doubt, are not called to “be catching men,” as Simon was; and eminently was made good in due time this word of the Lord also. But while the Lord still calls and sends to preach the gospel, neither man nor woman that believes ought to hide the word of His grace, but publish His name far and wide, as they have opportunity, and in all earnestness, though decently and in order. Time was, whilst all the apostles lived too, when the scattered faithful went through the world evangelizing the word; and the Lord's hand was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord ({vi 127178;127309}Acts 8; 11). Let us fear neither for ourselves, if we believe on Him, nor to speak a word in season, His word, to the weary, if they too by grace may hear and live.

Notes on Luke, Luke 5:27-39, Notes on

We have seen the grace which both cleanses and forgives. The soul needs both. God is “faithful to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” But now it will be found, that it is not only grace which characterizes the power of God, but the direction in which it works. The cleansing and forgiving might have been solely within Jewish precincts. It is true that the latter of the two—the forgiving—is tied to the person of the Son of man (“The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins"), and that the title of Son of man supposes His rejection

as Messiah. This, therefore, at length, opens the way for His working in grace among men as such—not merely in Israel. But all comes out far more distinctly in the new scene.

“And after these things he went forth and saw a publican named Levi sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me.”

The Jews had an especial horror of tax-gatherers. They were their own countrymen; and yet they made themselves the instruments of their Gentile masters in gathering the taxes. Their position constantly gave occasion to the improper exercise of their authority, to oppressing the Jews and to extorting money on false pretenses or to an unlawful amount.

Hence, as a class, the publicans were peculiarly in disfavor.

But when grace acts, it calls the evil as well as those that men would count good. It goes out to the unjust no less than to persons just as far as men could see. The Lord calls the tax-gatherer Levi (who is named by himself Matthew, the inspired writer of the first gospel). He was called as it were in the very act, “sitting at the receipt of custom.” We hear nothing of any antecedent process. There may have been: but nothing is revealed. All we know is that, from the midst of this work, naturally odious in the eye of an Israelite, Levi was called to follow Jesus. This was a very significant token of grace going out even to what was most offensive in the eyes of the chosen people. When God acted in grace, it was necessarily from Himself and for Himself, entirely above the creature; there was no ground in man why such favor should be shown him. If there were any reason in man, it would altogether cease to be the grace of God. Grace means the divine favor, absolutely without motive save in God Himself, to a good-for-nothing creature, miserable and lost; and the moment that you come down to that which is utterly ruined, what difference does it make what may be the nature of the ruin, or what the means of it? If people are needy and ruined, this is enough for the grace of God in Christ, who calls such that they may be saved and follow Him.

Thus Levi quits all for Jesus: “He left all, rose up, and followed him.” But more than this: his heart, gladdened by such undeserved and unlooked-for grace, goes out to others. He “made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and others that sat down with them.” This was a further carrying out of the same grand truth. God was displaying Himself in Jesus after a sort entirely unexpected by man. It is difficult for us to conceive the light in which the Jews regarded the publicans. But here was a great company of them, and of those who were associated with them; and, wonderful to say, Jesus the Holy One of God, sits down with these publicans and sinners. Jesus was now making known the grace of God. Man never understands this—never appreciates it. On the contrary, he charges grace (implicitly at least) with being indifferent to sin. The truth is, that self-righteousness covers sin, and is always as malignant as it is hypocritical, imputing its own evil to others, especially to grace. There is nothing so holy as grace; nothing which supposes sin to be so very evil. Nevertheless there is a power in grace which calls and raises entirely above the conventionalities of men. It supposes total guilt and ruin when it comes to deliver; and if it comes to deliver, why should it not work among the neediest and the worst? Were it human, the effort would be unavailing. But it is the revelation of God Himself, and therefore it is efficacious by the gift and in the cross of Christ.

Man, however, objects. “Their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?” They had not the honesty to complain to Jesus, but vented their spleen against His disciples. But the Lord answers for His people: “Jesus answering said unto them, They that are in health need not a physician; but they that are sick” —a simple but most satisfactory and impressive answer. Grace always enables even a man, a believer, to speak the whole truth; it is the only thing that does. How much more did He, who was full of grace, speak in the power of truth! Granted that they were sick; they were just the persons for the physician. It is not even said that they were conscious of their sickness. At least God knows the need, and God seeks the needy, and Jesus was God Himself as man presented in grace. As He said, “I came not to call righteous men, but sinners to repentance."1

Then comes in another truth of immense importance. In reply to the question, “Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but thine eat and drink?” “He said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them?” They were ignorant of the glory of the person of Him who was present, as much as of His grace. Had they known the singular dignity of Jesus, they would have seen how incongruous it would have been to fast in His presence. At ordinary times, in view of the evil of the first man, in the sad experience of his rebellion against God, to fast would be appropriate. But how strange would be His people's fastings in presence of their longed-for King! His very birth was announced by angels as good tidings of great joy, and the heavenly host praised God, saying, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will towards men.” Certainly, then, His disciples should act in consistency with the presence of such a glorious person, with such a spring of joy to heaven and earth. Would a fast be in keeping with the circumstances? The Lord therefore answers,” Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast while the bridegroom is with them?” Gladness of heart suits both the grace and the glory of the Lord. “But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.” The Lord had the full consciousness of what was at hand—of man's fatal, suicidal opposition to God, and to God above all manifest in His person. His rejection would soon come, and sorrow of heart for the disciples. “And then shall they fast in those days.”

But He furnishes more light than this. He points out the impossibility of making the principles of grace coalesce with the old system. This He sets forth by two similes. The first is the garment: “No man putteth a piece of a new garment upon an old; if otherwise, then both the new maketh a rent, and the piece that was taken out of the new agreeth not with the old.” There can be no harmony between the old thing and the new law and grace will never mix. But next, He sets it forth under the figure of the new wine. “No man putteth new wine into old bottles; else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish. But the new wine must be put into new bottles, and both are preserved.” He shows that there is an energy in the new thing which is destructive to the old. Just as the new wine would burst the old skins and thus the liquor would be lost and the bottles perish, so would fare that which Christ in the gospel introduces. Where there is the attempt to connect grace with anything of the law, the old no longer retains its true use and the new completely evaporates. “New wine must be put into new bottles.” Christianity has not only an inner principle peculiar to itself, as flowing from the revelation of God in Christ, but also it claims and creates forms adapted to its own nature. It is not a mere system of ordinances and prescriptions. It has living power, and that power makes new vehicles for itself. But man does not like it.

Accordingly the Lord adds what we have at the close of the chapter, and what is peculiar to this gospel, the general maxim, “No man also, having drunk old wine, straightway desireth new; for he saith, The old is better.” The legal system is far more suited to the fallen nature of man; it gives importance to himself and it claims his obedience, and falls in with his reason. Even a natural conscience owns the rightness of the law; but grace is supernatural. Though faith sees how perfectly suitable grace is to God as well as to the new man, and how it is the only

hope for a sinful man who repents towards God; nevertheless it is wholly above the reasonings of man, and it is constantly suspected by those who know not its value and power. Man's nature cleaves to its old habits of prejudices, and distrusts the intervention of grace.

Notes on Luke, Luke 5:12-26, Notes on

We have seen that the call—the special ministerial call—of Peter and the rest, was taken out of its historical place, in order to present the Lord uninterruptedly in the activity of His grace, when He entered upon His manifestation.

Now we find two remarkable miracles, which, I believe, set forth sin in two different forms. The first is under the phase of leprosy. “It came to pass, when he was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy.” Luke particularly mentions this symptom. It was not in an incipient stage or a slight case, but a man full of leprosy, “Who, seeing Jesus, fell on his face and besought him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” The man wanted confidence in the Lord's love and good pleasure to meet his need. The Lord, accordingly, showed not only His power but His goodness. “He put forth his hand and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean.” This was by no means necessary for healing. Love, however, does not limit itself to man's necessities, but takes occasion by them to show the great grace of God. Under law it would have been defiling: but we shall never understand the gospel unless we see that He, who was pleased as man to come under law, was really above law. And we find these two things running through the account of our Lord's life on earth—dispensationally under law, and in His own person above it. Nothing could overthrow the rights and dignity of His person. But now we find Him both displaying what man ought to be towards God and what God is towards man. In the first case He is found under law, but this course of miraculous manifestation was the display of what God is—God present and active in goodness among men, and this in the reality of a man's soul, mind, and affections. So Christ put forth His hand and touched him, and, so far from defilement accruing to Himself, the leprosy immediately departed from the man. He “charged him to tell no man: but go and show thyself to the priest.” Thus we have in the injunction a man under law, as truly as we have, in the Lord God who healed the leper, One above man and consequently above law. “Go and show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.” Until the cross, Jesus rigorously maintains the authority of the law. To have been merely under law would have defeated the whole object of the gospel; it would result in leaving man under his leprosy, under the utter loathsomeness of sin, the hopeless and defiling ruin that sin produces. Therefore if grace was to be shown, Christ must be infinitely above man, must in a human body put forth a hand which is the natural emblem of its work, and touch the man that was lost in sin beyond all human remedy. “I will” —which only God was entitled to say— “be thou clean.” Divine power at once accompanies the word. “Power belongeth unto God.”

The Lord would make the healing known, but according to law. “Go and show thyself to the priest,” whose business it was to inspect. The priest would have known the reality of the leper's case, and would be the best judge among men of the reality of the cleansing. “Offer for thy cleansing according as Moses commanded for a testimony unto them.” There was no provision under law for healing leprosy, but there was provision, when a man was healed, for his purification, his cleansing. None but God could heal. When, therefore, the healed leper came and showed himself to the priest with his offering, it was a proof that God was there in power and grace. When had such a thing been known in Israel? A prophet had once, with characteristic difference, indicated a cure from God, outside Israel. But God was now present in the midst of His people. The conviction would thus be forced upon the priest that God was there in Christ above law, but yet not overthrowing the law's authority. “Go, show thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing according as Moses commanded for a testimony unto them.” If that testimony were received, they would themselves (and in due time openly) enter the ground of grace. “By grace ye are saved,” as it is grace too that enables us to walk according to God. “Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” This is the Christian's ground.

Again, the more the Lord forbade his speaking, so much the more went there a fame abroad of him: and great multitudes came together to hear, and to be healed by him of their infirmities.

The Lord, however, instead of yielding to the applause of the multitude, “withdrew himself into the wilderness and prayed.” Nothing can be more beautiful than this retirement for prayer between these two miracles. However truly God, He was man, not only in maintaining the authority of the law, but also in practicing dependence upon God.

“And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judea, and out of Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them. And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him.” Now we have the other form in which sin is set forth, not so much in its defiling influence, but in the impotence which it produces—in man's total powerlessness under it. Sinful man is not only defiled and defiling, but also has no strength. The Lord accordingly proves Himself equal to meet this result of sin as much as the other. There were difficulties in the way; but what are these to the sense of need and faith? “When they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling, with his couch, into the midst before Jesus.”

Wherever real faith exists, there is earnestness. Here the difficulties and obstacles only increased and made manifest the desire to meet with Jesus. Accordingly the man submits to all these efforts on the part of those who carried him. He was let down into the very midst of the crowded assembly where Jesus was. “And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.” Not, Man, thy palsy is healed; but, “thy sins are forgiven thee.” This is very instructive. In order to reach the powerlessness of a sinner, he must be forgiven. There is nothing keeps a man feebler, spiritually, than the lack of a sense of forgiveness. If I am to have the power to serve the living God, I must have the assurance that my sins are forgiven. (Compare Heb. 9) Accordingly the first word of the Lord took up his deepest need, that which, if not supplied, would always leave him without strength. “Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.”

But forgiveness on earth at once aroused the incredulous opposition of the scribes and Pharisees. They “began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?” As God alone could heal a leper, so God alone could forgive sins; so far they were right. The great mistake was that they did not believe Jesus to be God. But then in both these miracles Jesus is man as well as God, and this comes out distinctly here. For, “when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he, answering, said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts? Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?” One was as plain as the other. He could have said either. He had a true and a gracious spiritual motive for dealing with the real root of the evil first. The deepest necessity of man was not to rise and walk,

but first of all to have his sins forgiven. “But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins (he said unto the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise and take up thy couch and go unto thy house.” He did not say, That ye may know that God in heaven will by and by forgive sins; but, “that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins.” Jesus is God; but here it is in His quality of the rejected Messiah, the Son of man, that He has power on earth to remit sins. He has authority from God, as indeed He is God; but still it is as Son of man, which adds immensely to the grace of His ways. The despised Messiah of Israel had authority on earth to forgive sins. Thus the strength that is imparted by the Holy Ghost to the believer is not at all the ground of the remission of his sins, nor is to be the proof to himself that he is forgiven, but “that ye may know,” &c. Others ought to know the reality of this forgiveness, and, above all, of the Son of man's authority to forgive man. This is God's great object. It is not merely doing good to man, but the display of the rejected man, the Lord Jesus Christ. God is putting honor on Him, not only in heaven but upon earth. Now He is exalted in heaven; but even as the Son of man, the rejected Christ, He has authority on earth to forgive sins: and this the gospel proclaims. Then the strength to rise up and walk imparted to the poor powerless sinner is just a witness to others of the forgiveness of his sins; but the great thing for such an one is not merely what others see and judge of; but what pertains to himself alone, what note can absolutely know outside, what is a word from the Lord to his own soul— “Thy sins are forgiven thee.”

The public fact, however, acts powerfully upon the beholders. “Immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house glorifying God. And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to-day.” They had not the sense of forgiveness, but at least they were filled with fear. It was a new thing in Israel.

Notes on Luke, Luke 5:1-11, Notes on

It will be remarked that the account of the call of Simon and of the rest of his companions, at the lake of Gennesaret, is given not only more fully in Luke than in any other evangelist but in a totally different connection. In Matthew and Mark we find it mentioned immediately after our Lord began to preach, when John was reported to be put into prison. The first thing named then is when Jesus was “walking by the sea of Galilee, be saw two brethren, Simon called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishers; and he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Both in Matt. 4 and in Mark 1 The account is given in general terms. We have far more detail in Luke. Is this an accident? Contrariwise, it is the fruit of a gracious design of God. Luke had the task confided to him more than any other of bringing out God's grace toward man and in man. Along with this he had also to lay bare the working of man's conscience and heart, especially under the operation of the Spirit of God.

The Lord then is shown us calling Simon not at the time when it actually occurred, but in connection with the development of this great purpose—calling men to be associated with Himself. Hence this notice of their call, which had taken place some time before, is reserved till the opening and character of His own ministry have been fully set before us; His reading at Nazareth with grace and nothing but grace to man—not judgment as yet, for He stopped before it; His subsequent comment when they began to show their unbelief, even after their confession of the gracious words which had proceeded out of His mouth; His proof from the law that the unbelief of Israel turns the stream of grace toward the Gentiles, the intimation of what God was going to do now and their subsequent deadly wrath and indignation; then His course in the power of the Holy Ghost, but above all, His word with power, not nevertheless without mighty works, as in dealing with Satan's dominion over man and all the physical consequences of it, the healing of all diseases and the casting out of demons. But especially He preached the kingdom of God, and that far and wide, fame among men being only an additional reason for moving elsewhere.

Thus it is man by the power of the Holy Ghost, entirely above Satanic working and human weakness, delivering mankind and ministering the word of God as the sole means of spiritual strength and association with God, as the Spirit is the source of all that is good and great according to God. But even this is not enough for His grace; He would associate men with Himself in good. Hence in the next scene before us, the Holy Spirit skews us the Lord calling others. He rejoices in the habitable part of His earth, and, His delights are with the sons of men; He associated them with Himself. It was not only for men's pardon that He came, but for salvation and all its fruits. Simon Peter, being the more prominent of those now called, is brought into the foreground. If he is to help others, he must be first helped himself; and man cannot be truly helped without raising the question of sin and settling it in the heart, as well as by Christ outside ourselves.

The Lord now effects this. Standing by the lake, He sees two ships there, and the fishermen engaged in washing their nets, when the people pressed upon Him to hear the word of God. So he enters “into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and asked him to thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down and taught the crowd out of the ship. But when he ceased speaking, he said to Simon, Thrust out into the deep and let down your nets for a draft.”

The work must be carried within. Even the word may seem to fail, but it may be followed up by some act or way on God's part in order to drive it home to the heart. He tells Simon therefore to thrust out and let down the net for a haul. A seaman is apt to think that he understands his own business best; and Simon answered saying, “Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.” Thus, feeble as his faith might have been at this time, it was real. He bows to One who naturally could not be considered to know anything of a fisherman's work, but Peter has confidence that He is Messiah and learns that He is this and far more, that He had the mind and grace of God. It would be now shown whether He had all power at His command. Simon had reason to know that He had divine energy as to men on earth; but now there was a new thing, One who had dominion over the fish of the sea. Sin had greatly hindered the exercise and even proof of the large dominion which was originally granted to them. But here was the repairer of all breaches: in Peter's ship was the Second man, the Lord from heaven. “And when they had thus done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes.” The failure of human resources, as they are, to avail themselves of the blessing, is made manifest. Their net brake, and they beckoned unto their partners in the other ship to come and help them. And they came and filled both the ships, so that they were sinking. The help of man is as vain as man himself, even for the blessing of God. The day was coming when the net should not break, no matter how large the fishes nor how great the variety. But this is reserved for another age, when the Second man shall reign in righteousness and power. Here we see the feebleness of this age.

“When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and they that were with him, at the draft of the fishes which they had taken.” Now comes the deep moral result for Peter's heart. The greatness of

the Lord's grace as well as His power brought his sinfulness more than ever before his soul. A strange moral inconsistency follows. He casts himself at the Lord's feet and says, “Depart from me.” But he does not depart from Jesus. Rather does he fall down as near to Jesus as he can; yet he says, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” He confesses his unfitness for the presence of the Lord, yet would not lose Him for all worlds—goes to Him, yet feels and owns that He might justly go away from such a sinner. Thus the Lord, who knew the heart, did that which was eminently calculated to act upon Simon, who knew the powerlessness of man as he is to do what the Lord had done. They had all shown how unable they were; they had “toiled the whole night, and taken nothing.” But the Lord not only knew all but could do all; and this brings up sin on Simon's conscience.

But, further, the Lord's answer thereon was, “Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt be catching men.” He banishes the fear so natural to the heart where sin is, which is even increased at first by the action of the Spirit of God. The Holy Ghost only removes fear by the revelation of Christ, His work, and His word. His operation is to make us know what is calculated to produce fear as well as to lead us to Him who alone by His grace can banish it. The effect of the state of the first man when rightly viewed is to fill with intense fear and horror: as to himself he could not but fear; from Christ he hears, “Fear not.” And who is entitled to be heard? “My sheep hear my voice; and I know them, and they follow me.” It is blessed to learn from God that our sinfulness, while not only naturally but even spiritually it ought to produce torment, is met and fear is cast out by the perfect love of God in Christ. Our Lord, on the ground of that great redemption which He was about to bring in by His blood, was entitled righteously to say, “Fear not.” This was the divine way of forming one that was afterward to become a fisher of men. He must be in the experience of the blessing of grace himself before he was fit to be the witness of it to others.

“And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all and followed him.” Such was the power of grace; it made all things little in comparison of Christ, and of what Christ becomes to the man who believes in Him.

Notes on Luke, Luke 4:30-44, Notes on

The result of the Lord's first appearance at Nazareth in the synagogue was that, though He Himself characterized His ministry from the word of God, or rather the Spirit of God had already anticipated it as He then openly proclaimed it, as being the ministry of grace, by reading this scripture and declaring that it was that day fulfilled in their ears, man soon turns from it in anger and dislike. Attracted at first, he revolted from it afterward, because grace both tells out the ruin of man and always insists on going out wherever there is need and misery. Nevertheless the Lord did not make it plainly known. that grace should go out to the Gentiles till their rejection of Himself began to manifest itself. And now the same men who were so smitten with the charm of grace at first were ready to turn upon Him and east Him down headlong from “the brow of the hill whereon their city was built. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way.” His time was not yet come. He “came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power.” This wag what Jesus showed. It was not first miracles and then glory, but the truth of God. The word, not a miracle, forms the connecting link between the soul and God; no miracle can do this—nothing but the word of God. For the, word addresses itself to faith, while a miracle is done as a sign to unbelief. But as God produces faith by the word, so He also nourishes it by the word. This proves the immense value of the word of God; and Christ's word was with power.

“And in the synagogue there was a man which had a spirit of an unclean devil.” This is the first great work that is recorded in Luke. Our Lord seems already to have done mighty deeds in Capernaum (that is in this very place) before He went to Nazareth; but Luke begins with Nazareth, in order to characterize His ministry by that wonderful description in the word of God which opens out grace to man. Now we find Him in Capernaum, and the first miracle recorded of Him here, whilst He was teaching in the synagogue, was the cure of a man possessed with a spirit of an unclean devil which had the consciousness of the power of Jesus. For the demoniac cried out, saying, “Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.” It is remarkable here and elsewhere the “I” and the “we” —the man himself and yet the identification with the evil spirit. Moreover this possessed man says, “I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.” This appears to be the same character in which Psa. 89 speaks of Christ, where it says, “The Lord is our defense; and the. Holy One of Israel is our King.” It is a psalm full of interest because the Holy One there the sole groundwork of the hopes of the people, as well as the stay of the house of David, otherwise ruined. It is just the, same thing in our gospel; save that Luke goes but more widely. The point of Psa. 89. is that every hope depends on Him. Israel have come to nothing; the glory had waned; and at length departed; the throne is cast down to the ground. But then He is the king; and therefore it is perfectly secured. The shame of God's servants shall be removed, and their enemies shall surely be put to perpetual reproach, after the downfall of that pride, and all the painful discipline that the people of Israel shall pass through. '

Here the unclean spirit prompts the man to acknowledge Jesus as this Holy One. But He refuses such testimony; He did not even receive the witness of men, how much less of devils! “Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy Peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not. And they were all amazed, and sake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out. And the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about.” He has thus shown that the power of Christ must first put down Satan (but not without a certain allowed humiliation for man;) that this is the chief evil which pollutes and oppresses the world; and that until Satan's power expelled, it no good to expect full deliverance: We must go to the source of the mischief. This; therefore, is the earliest of the miracles of Christ brought before us by Luke. But then there is also compassion—deep and effectual pity for men. So our Lord, when He leaves the synagogue, goes into the house of Simon. “And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her: And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.” Not only was there power to dismiss the disease with a word, but there was, contrary to all nature, strength communicated to her. A great fever leaves a person, even when it is gone, exceedingly weak, and a considerable time must elapse before the usual vigor returns. But in this case, as the healing, was the fruit of divine power, Peter's wife's mother not only arose, but ministered unto them immediately.

The same evening, “when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them.” It made no difference. It was not only that He could cure the fever, but He could cure everything. “He laid his hands on every one of them and healed them.” Another thing to be noticed is the manner of it, the tenderness of feeling—He laid His hands on them. This was in no way necessary; a word would have been enough, and the Lord often employed nothing more than a word. But

here He shows His human compassion—He laid His hands upon them and healed them. Devils also came out of many, but we find Him here keeping up the testimony to man of the power that Satan had in the world. There are few things more injurious to men than forgetfulness of the power of Satan. At the present time there is exceeding unbelief on the subject. It is regarded as one of the obsolete delusions of the past. But we find most clearly demons going out of many, not in any one peculiar case, “crying out and saying, Thou art Christ, the Son of God.” These acknowledged the Lord, not as the Holy One of Psa. 89, but as the Anointed One, the Son of David, of Psa. 2. He was the King of Israel in both cases. But the Lord accepted not their testimony in any instance. He really was the Holy One and the Son of God, but it was from God that He took His title, and recognition by the demons He refuses. They knew that He was the Christ. What a solemn thing to find that man is even more obdurate than Satan! for the demons were more willing to acknowledge Jesus than the men even who were delivered from the demons, and who were healed of all their diseases. Man for whom Jesus came! What a proof of the incurable unbelief of man and the certain ruin of those who refuse the Son of God! Devils believe and tremble. Man, even when he does believe with his natural heart, does not tremble. He may believe, but he is insensible in his belief. Can such faith save him? The only faith that is good for anything is that which brings in the sinner in his need and ruin before God, and which sees God in infinite mercy giving His Son to die for him. Anything short of this ends in destruction; and so far from natural faith bettering a man, it only brings out his evil and turns to corruption the more speedily. It is a kind of complimenting the Son of God, instead of a lowly and true owning of man's own condition and God's grace.

But there is another thing which this chapter brings before us—namely, that our Lord departs when it was day “into a desert place; and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them. And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent. And he preached in the synagogues of Galilee.” The great object of the coming of Christ was to preach God's kingdom; it was bringing God and God's power before men—God's power visiting man in mercy. No healing of diseases or expulsion of demons could satisfy the Lord. And when He had by His miracles attracted attention in any place, it was the more reason for going to another. He did not seek His own fame; another should come in his own name who would. But for our Lord Jesus to attract a name, was a reason for departure, not for staying.

Notes on Luke, Luke 4:14-29, Notes on

It is important to notice that the temptation in the wilderness preceded the active public life of the Lord, as Gethsemane preceded His death in atonement for our sins. It is an utterly false notion that this defeat of Satan in the wilderness was the basis of our redemption. Such, I believe, is Milton's view in his “Paradise Regained.” But this theory makes victory to be the means of our deliverance from God instead of suffering, and gives consequently the all-importance to living energy, rather than to God's infinite moral or judicial dealing with our sins on the cross; it puts life in the place of death and shuts out or ignores expiation. The real object and connection of the temptation is manifest, when we consider that it is the prelude to the Lord's public life here below, in which He was continually acting on His victory over Satan. When the enemy came again at Gethsemane, it was to turn the Lord aside through the terror of death, and specially of such a death as His on the cross. In the wilderness, and on the mountain, and on the pinnacle of the temple (for there were three different sites and circumstances of this temptation) it was to draw Him away from the path of God by the desirable things of the world.

But however this may be, Jesus now returns in the power of the Spirit into Galilee; “and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.” This is the general description, I apprehend; but the Spirit of God singles out a very special circumstance which illustrates our Lord in the great design of this gospel. It is peculiar to Luke. “He came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written.” It was in fact the beginning of Isa. 61. This is the more remarkable because the connection of the prophecy is the total ruin of Israel, and the introduction of the kingdom of God and His glory when judgment takes its course. Yet in the midst of this these verses describe our Lord in the fullness of grace. There is no prophet so evangelical, according to ordinary language, as Isaiah; and in Isaiah there is no portion perhaps of the whole prophecy that so breathes the spirit of the gospel as these very verses. Now what can be more striking than that this should be read on that occasion by Christ? and that the Spirit of God gives Luke alone to record it? Our Lord takes the book and reads, stopping precisely at the point where mercy terminates. It is the description of His grace in ministry; it is not so much His person as His devoted life, His work, His ways on earth. In fact it is pretty much what we have in Acts 10 “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.” Immediately after in the prophecy follows “the day of vengeance of our God.” But our Lord does not read these words. Is not this, too, extremely remarkable? that our Lord should stop in the middle of a verse and read what describes His grace and not what touches on His judgment? Why is this? Because He is come only in grace now. By and by He will come in judgment, and then the other verses of the prophecy will be accomplished. Then it will be both the year of His redeemed when He will bless them, and the day of vengeance when He will execute judgment upon their enemies.

Meanwhile, all that He was about to do in Israel for the present was only gracious activity in the power of the Spirit. To this accordingly God had anointed Him— “to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised;” and this is what He was to preach— “the acceptable year of the Lord.” “And he closed the book.” Now nothing, it is plain, can more aptly suit the object of the Spirit of God in Luke, who is the only writer inspired to record this. All through the gospel, this is what He is doing. It is the activity of grace among men's misery and sins and need. By and by He will tread the winepress alone, He will expend the fury of the Lord upon His adversaries; but now it is unmingled mercy. Such was Jesus upon the earth and so Luke describes Him throughout. No wonder therefore that He closed the book. This was all that was needful or true to say about Him now; the rest will be proved in its own time. The judgment of God in the second advent is as true as the grace of God that He has been showing in the first advent.

Another thing too is remarkable and proved by this. It is that the whole state of things since Christ was upon the earth till the second advent is a parenthesis. It is not the accomplishment of prophecy, but the revelation of the mystery that was bid in God that is now brought to view. Prophecy shows us Christ's first and second advents together; but what is between the two advents is filled up by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, who is forming the Church wherein there is neither Jew nor Gentile. Prophecy always supposes Jew and Gentile. The Church is founded upon the blotting out of this distinction for the time being. It is during the period when Israel does not own the Messiah, which

stretches over all the interval between the two advents of Christ, that this new and heavenly work proceeds.

The Lord therefore stopped dead short, and closed the book. When He comes again, He will, as it were, open the book where He left off. Meanwhile, His action was exclusively in grace. The Lord draws their particular attention to this; for when He returns the book to the officer who had it in charge, He sits down. People were all gazing at Him in wonder. He tells them, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.”

But unbelief at once betrays itself. “Is not this Joseph's son?” They could not deny the grace, but they contemn His person: “He was despised and rejected of men.” In point of fact, unbelief is always blind; He was not Joseph's son, except legally—He was God's Son. “And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.” His answer to their thought; was, that “No prophet is accepted in his own country.” Nevertheless grace shines out all the more because Christ was rejected. It is remarkable that He does not vindicate Himself by power; He does not work any miracles to make good the rights of His own person, but appeals to the word of God, the Old-Testament scriptures, for what suited the present time. “I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout the land; but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.” Grace, therefore, when Israel rejects (and they were doing so now), goes out to the Gentiles. Sidon was under the special judgment of God, and there was a widow there, bereft of all human resources, and she was the one to whom God sent His prophet in the days of deep distress. When Israel themselves were suffering from a terrible famine, God opened stores for the desolate woman in Sidon. Thus grace goes outside His guilty people. So too in the time of Elisha the prophet. Many lepers were in Israel, “and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.” Grace is sovereign, and in the days of Jewish unbelief Gentiles are blessed. This scripture showed; and how beautiful this was and in keeping with Luke! It paves the way for the going forth of the gospel. When Israel rejected the Lord Jesus, the grace of God must work among the Gentiles, among those who least expect and deserve mercy. How did the men of Nazareth relish this? They were “filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.” This is the expression of the hatred which follows rejection of grace. When self-righteous men are convicted of wrong without feeling their guilt against God, there are no bounds to their resentment; and the enmity of their hearts is most of all against Jesus.

Notes on Luke, Luke 4:1-13, Notes on

Is none of the synoptic gospels has the temptation a weightier place than here. Matthew confronts the Messiah with the great enemy of God's people; and, giving the three closing acts just as they took place, reports them as they illustrate dispensation, and the great impending change, which is emphatically his theme. Mark notes the fact in its due time, and the devotedness of the blessed Servant of God thus tempted of the devil in the wilderness, with none but the wild beasts near, till at its close, as we know also from Matthew, angels came and ministered to Him. John characteristically omits the circumstance altogether; for it clearly attached to His being found in fashion as a man (when He emptied Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men), and not to His being God. To Luke it was of capital moment; and the Spirit, as we shall see, saw fit to arrange the order of its parts so as the better to carry out the design by our evangelist.

Here is noted the transition from Jordan of Jesus, “full of the Holy Ghost.” (Ver. 1) It might not at first sight appear to be a likely path; but the more one reflects, the more one may see its wisdom and suitability. He was just baptized, sealed of the Spirit, and, above all, owned by the Father as His beloved Son, forthwith led in the Spirit into the wilderness; and there He was forty days tempted of the devil. The principle is true of us too. Sons of God by the faith of Jesus, and consciously so by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, we too know what it is to be tempted by the devil. Temptation is hardly the way in which the devil deals with his children; but when we are delivered, such conflicts begin.

The first in order, and this in Matthew too, is the appeal to natural wants. “And in those days be did eat nothing; and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread.” The Lord at once takes the lowliest ground, really the most elevated morally, that the sustenance of nature is not the first consideration, but living by the word of God. He waits for a word from Him whose will He was come to do. He refuses even in His hunger to take a single step in the way of satisfying His sinless wants without divine direction. The true and only right place of man is dependence; and He, having become a man, would not swerve from the dependence which referred to God instead of following wishes of His own: indeed, His will was to do God's will. “And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” (Ver. 4.) Such was the true estate of man, and his right relation to God; and Jesus therein abode, in circumstances of the greatest trial, the bright contrast of the first Adam who left it where all circumstances were in his favor.

Historically Israel were so tried and failed totally, spite of that constant lesson in the daily manna of their dependence on God and of His unfailing care of them. They hardened their hearts, not hearing His voice; so that forty years long Jehovah was grieved with that generation and said, “It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways.” But the heart of Jesus was toward His Father and He with the full power of the Spirit refused to supply even the most legitimate wants of the body, save as obedience. “My meat,” as He said later, “is to do the will of him that sent me.”

The next here (the third in Matthew, and as I believe in the order of occurrence) is the worldly appeal. “And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.” (Ver. 5-8.) But here I must observe that the best authenticated text leaves out of the Lord's answer to the devil “Get thee behind me, Satan; for.” And a little reflection shows that, as the external authority demands this omission, so it seems necessarily to follow from the change of order in which Luke was, I doubt not, guided of God. For the vulgarly received text would give the strange appearance that the Lord told the adversary to get behind or go away, while Satan is represented as staying where he was and tempting the Lord after a new sort. Omit these words, and all flows on in exact connection with the context. Internal evidence is thus in harmony with the external.

In Matthew where the words occur in the third place, as in fact it was so, the command to get hence is followed by the devil leaving Him. Thus all is as it should be. In Luke where the transposition occurs, the necessity for omitting the clause is evident; and so it was.

The Lord rebuts the worldly temptations by insisting according to the written word on worshipping the Lord God and serving only Him. Homage to Satan is incompatible with the service of God.

Lastly comes the religious trial. “And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” (Ver. 9-12.) Here the devil would separate the way from the end, omitting this part of the Psalm which he cites. The Lord replies with the saying in scripture, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” To trust Him and count on His gracious ways is not to tempt. The Israelites tempted Jehovah by questioning whether He was in their midst or not; they ought to have reckoned on His presence, and succor, and rare. Jesus did not need to prove the faithfulness of God to His own word; He was sure of it and counted on it. He knew that Jehovah would give His angels charge over Him, and this not outside, but to keep Him in, all His ways. Thus foiled in His misuse of scripture, as everywhere else, the enemy could do no more then. And when the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from Him for a season. (Ver. 13.) Jesus, the Son of God, was victorious, and this in obedience, by the right use of the written word of God.

Notes on Luke, Luke 3:15-38, Notes on

John the Baptist's appearance in Israel at this moment struck them the more, because, in consequence of Daniel's famous prophecy of the seventy weeks, and it may be other scriptures, they were at that very time waiting for the Messiah. The expectation was general over the East, no doubt through the Jews who were scattered abroad. Therefore a man so distinguished as John the Baptist was for righteousness raised the question whether he were the Christ or not. But his answer was always distinct. He pointed to the fact of his own baptizing with water. This was peculiar to him and a sign to Israel. But even his (if I may so say) coming by water gave him the opportunity of contrasting One who had come after a far different sort, even looking at power, not to speak of blood. Jesus “came by water and blood.” The point however that John contrasted with the water is His baptizing with the holy Ghost. It was a person infinitely greater than himself, One whose dignity was such that the tie of His sandals he was not worthy to unloose; One not only mightier and more dignified, but who would be distinguished by baptizing with the Holy Ghost and with fire—baptizing with the Holy Ghost as the fruit of His first advent; and baptizing with fire as the accompaniment of the second. When the Lord Jesus comes again, He will baptize with fire; He will execute the solemn judgment of God upon the world. Baptizing with the Holy Ghost is what makes the Church (that is God's present assembly) separate from the Jew even.

The Acts of the Apostles may serve to make this particularly plain. When the disciples were with the Lord after His resurrection, He spoke to them of the things concerning the kingdom, besides giving them many infallible proofs of His own life in resurrection after His suffering. Among the rest He told them that they were not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father. The Lord therefore distinguished John's from His own mission by this. He baptized with the Holy Ghost, John only with water. Accordingly not many days after this, on the day of Pentecost, the baptism of the Holy Ghost became a fact. The Lord shed forth what was then seen and heard: the Holy Ghost came upon them, and they were thus baptized (as Paul afterward taught—into one body; that is, the Church). Of the baptism with fire, you will observe, the Lord does not speak one word. The reason is that this was not to be accomplished then. When John was looking onwards, he sees both, but when Christ had actually suffered on the cross, He announces the one and not the other. Baptism with fire will take place when the Lord will be revealed from heaven “in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is plain from verse 17.

“Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor and will gather the wheat into his garner; but the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable.” This is the baptism with fire. “And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people.”

Then we have in Luke's remarkable manner a compendious description of John up to his imprisonment. “But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.” The object is to present a full picture of John; and hence Luke does not adhere to mere time any more than Matthew does. Whatever adds to the moral description is Luke's province. John was faithful not only to the lower classes but also to the highest. His testimony to Christ was decisive, making nothing of his own glory in order to exalt the Lord; and he suffered for it too: he was shut up in prison because of righteousness.

And now the door is open for presenting Jesus. “When all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized and praying, the heaven was opened.” How lovely the picture! The Lord, perfect as He was, did not keep Himself aloof from the people. Morally separate from sinners, nevertheless their confession of sin, which was implied in their baptism, attracted the Lord's heart, and He would be with them, though Himself absolutely sinless. The Holy Jesus also being baptized and praying—so thoroughly was He found taking His place as the dependent man upon earth, and while He was praying—the heavens were opened “and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.” The heavens had never been opened before, except in judgment when Ezekiel had seen them. But now there was an object upon earth that even God could look upon with delight. There was none in heaven that was adequate to draw out and fix the attention of God; nothing could elicit His complacency: a creature could not, but Jesus, because He was not only God but perfect man, was precisely what met the love of God—of His heart. It was God's delight to look down and see a Man who could answer to all His affections and nature and mind and judgment about everything. This is beautiful, and shows what the grace of God is in connection with His being baptized when all the people were. Man as such knows nothing of the mind of God. As the heavens are high above the earth, so are His thoughts higher than our thoughts; and the heavens now answer to Jesus on the earth and the Holy Ghost descends upon Him.

From the very first the Holy Ghost had to do with Jesus as man; we were told so in the first chapter, where it was said (when Mary inquired how she was to be the mother of a child) that the Holy Ghost should come upon her. But Jesus was much more than thus conceived of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost descended upon Him. This is what is called by Luke in Acts 10 His anointing of God; “Now God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power.” The anointing of the Holy Ghost was not to counteract the evil of human nature—this was already secured by His miraculous conception. There was no taint of evil whatever in the humanity of Christ; all was perfectly pure, and there being a total absence of sin, sin in nature as well as in act. But now there was more than this; there was the Spirit of God poured upon Him.

Him God the Father sealed, and this when He was baptized, before He enters upon His public service. It was the expression of God's perfect delight in Him, and it was also power for service. He alone of all men needed no blood to fit Him, as it were, to be anointed with the holy oil. I speak now after the language of Exodus and Leviticus. Others of His people would receive the Holy Ghost, but this only in virtue of blood, His atoning blood being put upon them. Where the blood was put, the oil could be. But Jesus as man receives the Holy Ghost without blood shed or sprinkled. The Holy Ghost descended upon Him in a bodily shape like a dove. I do not doubt that the outward form of the Spirit's descent was in relation to the character of Christ, just as the cloven tongues as of fire were in relation to the place and work of the disciples on the day of Pentecost. It was not merely a tongue, but a divided tongue, showing that God was now going out to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews. If it was a tongue of fire, whatever the grace, it was in the divine judgment of all evil. But in Christ's case there was neither one thing nor the other. In bodily shape the Spirit came down like a dove, the emblem of what is proverbially pure and gentle to the last degree. “Holy, harmless, undefiled” —such was Christ.

But more than this, the voice came from heaven which said, “Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.” This voice is of all importance too. It manifested that Jesus was the delight of God as man, not merely in consequence of a work that was going to be done; it was the person that was owned, and His person too after He had identified Himself with the people that were baptized. They must not mistake nor misinterpret His baptism: it was the baptism of repentance for them, but thoroughly in grace for Him. He had nothing to own. He was about to enter upon a great work, but baptism was in no way the expression of need on His part nor to fit Him for what He was entering upon. “Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased” —not only I am, but I have been well pleased. It is retrospective and not present merely.

Then we have in a very remarkable manner the genealogy of Jesus introduced. It ought to strike any thoughtful mind that the Spirit of God must have sufficient reason for introducing it here. The natural place we might think for such an account of our Lord's ancestry would be when He was born, or even before His birth, as we have had one in Matthew. A Jew would require it there, and has it there in the first gospel; but here it is introduced when He is baptized. The reason is just this, that the genealogy here is brought in not so much to skew whence Jesus was naturally, or rather legally, to meet the difficulties of a Jew and to prove He was truly the Messiah according to the flesh, but to bring out the person of Jesus on the human side as the Father had just owned Him on the divine. Accordingly the genealogy is very peculiar in this—that it traces Him up to Adam and to God. Why so? Clearly this has nothing to do with His being the Messiah; but it is expressly to manifest One whose heart was toward the whole human race. It is the genealogy of grace as Matthew's is of law. It is not one traced down from the two great fountains of blessing for Israel, Abraham and David, the stock of promise and the line of royalty. Here it is tracing Him up; this wonderful person owned as the Son of God, who is He? So the Spirit of God deigns to show that He was, as it was supposed (He was legitimately counted) the son of Joseph. This implies that the writer of the gospel was perfectly aware that He was not a mere man, that He was not Joseph's son except before the eyes of men. I presume that the genealogy was really Mary's, but (Mary being Joseph's wife) He could be, as was supposed, the son of Joseph and so on. This will accord with the character of the gospel, because the Lord Jesus was not a man in virtue of His connection with Joseph but with Mary. The reality of His manhood depended upon His being the son of Mary; nevertheless He was, as was supposed, the son of Joseph, which was of Heli. Heli, as I take it, was the father of Mary; hence the genealogy here traces Him through Nathan to David; this was His mother's line, as it appears to me. In Matthew He is derived through Solomon, which was Joseph's line. Therefore, as the law required, it was the father who gave Him His title, and thus He had a strict legal title to the throne of David. The great point in the Jewish system was the father. Thus Matthew gives us Joseph's royal genealogy; but Luke furnishes the maternal line through Mary. This indeed was the real one for Christ's humanity; and the object of Luke was to attest the grace of God displayed in the man Christ Jesus. The humanity of Christ has the largest place throughout this gospel.

If we have to bear our own reproach, it is because we were not bearing the reproach of Christ. When the eye is not on Jesus, we are like Samson shorn of his locks, and our weakness as well as folly will come out. Let us remember that our rash words and foolish ways dishonor God in this way—that they stumble those who do not know His grace by giving the appearance, as far as we are concerned, that these things are compatible with the grace of which we talk.

Notes on Luke, Luke 3:1-14, Notes on

The dates are given in Luke reckoning from the years of the Roman Empire. Judea is but a province of it, the Herods are in power. All this was a very humiliating and significant circumstance for Israel—impossible if the people had been faithful to God. But God does not hide the shame of His people; on the contrary He makes it manifest by this very fact—He gives it a record in His own eternal word, the word that liveth and abideth forever.

“Now, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being Tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip Tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests.” We see from this that, although the high priests were there, yet even this holy office was affected strangely by the new circumstances of Israel. There was not one high priest but two; there was disorder that not only dislocated the people politically but tainted their religious relations. However, God was faithful and His word “came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness” —even in spite of these circumstances, but in the wilderness. It is no question of the city of the great King now, but of the wilderness; and John the Baptist's dwelling in the wilderness, and the word of God coming to him there, speak volumes as to the real state of the Holy Deity, It was not to Zion that the word of God came.

Accordingly, John “came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” (Ver. 3.) Repentance was what characterized John's preaching; not but what repentance was and abides always a truth obligatory upon every sinful soul that comes to the know, ledge of God. Under Christianity repentance, so far from being lessened in its character, is deepened yet you could not say that it is characteristic of Christianity—faith is much more so. Hence in Galatians the apostle speaks of “when faith was come.” When repentance was come would be no description of the new thing, whereas in John the Baptist's preaching it was the emphatic word that description the character of his message. John came therefore “preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” He had indeed a peculiar position. It was not law simply nor even prophets, though in truth he was the greatest of prophets; none had arisen greater than John the Baptist. But it was one who was the herald of the Messiah whom he proclaimed to be just at the doors—yea, in their midst, as he says—and in view of His immediate coming he calls men to repentance. It was the confession of utter failure with respect to the law and

despising of the prophets, but it was also to confess their sins in view of One just coming who could and would forgive their sins. He preached therefore “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” This was not arbitrary but of divine authority. “He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.” He was really sent to baptize with water; but at the same time there was an intimation given to him that he should see the Spirit descending upon some special individual—the Messiah; and that the Messiah should be a baptizer (not with water, but) with the Holy Ghost. This was his peculiar mission. Christ and He alone baptizes with the Holy Ghost, and this the Lord Jesus did when He went up to heaven. But John baptized upon earth with water. No doubt under Christianity baptism with water still continues and has a very important meaning—I do not doubt a good deal deeper than John's. It is not merely baptism unto repentance that “they should believe on him which should come after him.” But now baptism is founded on the faith of Him who has already come and died; consequently, the great point of Christian baptism is burial (not into Christ's life of course, but) into His death. John could not say this; He saw a living Christ though he spoke by the Holy Ghost of His being “the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.” How far he entered into the meaning of what he said is another matter. We know for certain that when he was thrown into prison himself afterward, he was somewhat offended or stumbled and sent some of his disciples to ask, “Art thou he that should come or do we look for another?” It is clear therefore that he looked for a Christ in power to break the chains of the oppressed and to deliver the captives, as well as to preach the gospel to the poor. But to see a Savior despised and rejected more and more, and himself His forerunner languishing in a prison, these were altogether new and strange thoughts to John the Baptist. Nevertheless God had taken care that his lips should proclaim the mighty work of Christ in both its parts, as the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world, and as the One who baptizes with the Holy Ghost.

Now we have John the Baptist acting here according to Isaiah the prophet. “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.” Only the Spirit of God in Luke takes pare to give it the utmost breadth, “Every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low, and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.” We have not this elsewhere. In Matthew, Mark, and John, the quotation stops short of this. But Luke, though he begins with the Jew, does not end with him; but very decidedly goes out to all the nations. Hence expressions that would add largeness and comprehensiveness are particularly added by the Spirit here. (Ver. 4-6,)

But another peculiarity of Luke is exemplified here also. There is not only exceeding breadth given to the ways of God, but also the word of God in its moral power is continually enforced. So when John the Baptist speaks to the multitudes that come to be baptized of him, be warns them, as the other evangelists do also, to flee from the wrath to come and not to presume upon their privileges of birth, saying, “We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.” Moreover, already “the ax is laid unto the root of the trees;” judgment was at the door; “every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” (Ver. 7-9.) This process was what was now going on. So far we have what is common to Luke with Matthew. But we have afterward what is peculiar. “And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then?” and then we have John the Baptist's detailed exhortation to different classes of men. “He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat let him do likewise.” (Ver. 10, 11.) Although John called to repentance, it is a poor and superficial sorrow for sins that simply owns the past and judges, however strongly, the evil that has hitherto broken out in our ways. John lays down suitable conduct for those who professed to repent. God was acting Himself for His own glory in the spirit of this same grace. Repentance prepares the way for grace; it is produced by grace of course, but at the same time it leads into a path of grace.

So also (ver. 12, 13) when the publicans came to be baptized, instead of dismissing them contemptuously as a mere Jew would have done, He answers their question, “Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you.” Notoriously they were extortioners, their rapacity was proverbial, they plundered the people of whom they were the official tax gatherers. The soldiers similarly (ver. 14) “demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.” It is clear that there we are warned against violence and corruption, the two great features of men left to themselves. But, besides, contentedness with their wages is pressed upon them. It is remarkable how much the spirit of contentment has to do not only with the happiness of a soul but with its holiness.

There is scarcely another thing that so tends to disturb our relationship with God and man as discontent. It makes an individual ripe for any evil. It helps, on a great scale, to the revolutions of nations and other social ruptures. On a smaller scale, it subverts the equilibrium of families and the right attitude of individuals as nothing else can. So we read of “unthankful, unholy” classed together by the Spirit of God. We also find unthankfulness mentioned as leading into idolatry. The Gentiles not only did not glorify God as God, but they were unthankful, and they fell into all kinds of moral depravity. There is nothing more important than to cherish a thankfulness of heart, sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts, having confidence in His goodness, and also in the certainty that He has given to ourselves individually exactly the thing that is best for us. But the only way to be thus content, whatever may be our lot, is to look at God as dealing with us in Christ for eternity.

There is thus, under the most homely words of John the Baptist, real moral wisdom from God suitable to men's circumstances here below. We have not here heavenly things; these are the fruit of Christ's redemption. Nevertheless, the sketch that is given us of John the Baptist's teaching, is eminently practical, and suited to deal with the conscience and heart. And we shall find this to be always true as we advance farther in our gospel.

Notes on Luke, Luke 2:39-52, Notes on

Turn was the full recognition of the law of the Lord, while the person of Jesus is brought before us with all evidence as the great manifestation of God's grace. This surprises some. They are apt to set law and grace in contradiction to each other. Now for this there is no just reason. It is true neither of the person of Christ nor of His work, any more than of those that are Christ's. In no case does law suffer through the grace of God, but on the contrary, it never receives so important a testimony either to its authority or to its use as through grace. Indeed it is grace alone which accomplishes the law. Other people talk about it and employ it for their own importance; but in point of fact they weaken it, and even teach or allow in their doctrine that God mitigates it under the gospel, instead of maintaining all its real authority. This is very strikingly shown in our Lord's case, but it is equally true both in the cross and in Christianity. Hence in Rom. 3 we read that through faith “we establish the law,” because the believer rests upon the mighty work of Christ on the cross, which gave the most solemn sanction to the law that it ever

received or could have. Faith beholds Jesus suffering the curse in all its depth and its bitterness; whereas, in the view I am opposing, God is conceived to depart from the rigor of the law in order to show mercy. The doctrine of the apostle shows, on the contrary, that Jesus underwent the extreme judgment of God for sin and bore all that God could display against our evil when imputed to Him. Therefore nothing but grace remains, so to speak, and becomes the portion of those who believe. Thus faith establishes the law, as legalism undermines it in order to let off the guilty. It is the same principle with the people of God. In Rom. 8 it is written, “What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” It is not merely fulfilled in Him, but in the Christian; it was established in the cross and it is fulfilled in us “who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.” The reason is because the new nature in the believer always loves the law of God and is subject to it, as nothing else is. This displays itself in the ways of the believer, in holiness, obedience, and love. For he that loves has fulfilled the law; as the apostle says elsewhere, “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” Hence we find that in the case of Christ who was the proper manifestation of God's grace, there was the fullest homage paid to the law; though personally His own title was above law, yet was He in grace made under law as truly as He was made of a woman, and this fittingly and righteously to accomplish redemption.

“And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.” The law was owned in Jerusalem; grace takes its place among the insignificant and despised and outcast and good-for-nothing in the eyes of men: indeed, not only in Galilee but in a place proverbially obscure even there—Nazareth. What a wonderful witness of the way of divine grace! People when they choose a place are apt to consider what pleases them most and will answer their interests best. What pleased God most and answered the interests of grace best was Nazareth. There His Son spent His earliest days. “And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.” How entirely independent of human culture, of anything that man could bring from without—this child, the Son of God, filled with wisdom; but as it is written, “the grace of God was upon him.”

“Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover.” It is this, their yearly visit to Jerusalem, which accounts for their being at Bethlehem when the magi came up from the east. Certainly their arrival was not immediately after the Babe was born. It can hardly be doubted that it must have been on one of their regular subsequent visits, when they not only went up to Jerusalem, but, as we can understand, they turned aside to Bethlehem which had now more than ever the deepest interest in their eyes, as the birth-place of the Child that had been given them—the Messiah. On the occasion of this visit, at least a year after His birth, the Magi came up and found the young child with Mary His mother and presented unto Him their gifts. And this accounts for the fact that, when Herod found it out, he ordered the children to be killed from two years old and under. He would scarcely have done this, cruel a man as he was, had the child been just born; but because at least a year had passed or more, to make sure of his purpose, he orders all to be killed from two years old and under “according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.” This causes at first sight a difficulty, because the child is again seen in Bethlehem, whereas we are told that they lived at Nazareth. But there is really nothing to perplex the weakest believer. Luke supplies the link by telling us of the annual return to Jerusalem, while Matthew gives us the additional scene of the visit of the magi to Bethlehem according to prophecy. Nothing would have been easier than, when they were at Jerusalem, to have turned southward to Bethany—nothing more natural than that they should revisit the scene of the most important event in their lives. Indeed never had anything in interest approached the birth of Jesus since the world began. It was to be eclipsed, or at the least outshone by the greater and altogether incomparable work of His cross. But this was not yet come.

We are next given to see that, when He was twelve years old, a remarkable illustration of His youthful days takes place. “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. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days, they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions.” (Ver. 43, 45, 46.) A more attractive sight morally there is nowhere even in God's word. Just at the ago when there is apt to be neither the simplicity of the child nor the exercised good sense of the man, we find Jesus thus engaged. Others of like age were, no doubt, bent upon their play, or the indulgence of curiosity in such a city, frittering away the most valuable time, that never can return, before the bustle of human life begins and the great struggle in which so many lose themselves continually. But Jesus was found lowly, and at the same time filled with wisdom, using the golden opportunity, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them (a proof of His humility), and asking them questions, a proof of His interest in the scriptures. It was not enough that the Lord wakened His ear morning by morning to hear as the learned: it was not enough that He gave Him the tongue of the learned that He might know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. But here it is the ear and tongue of the learner in the use of the means at the command of any child in Israel. However taught of God He might be immediately, here He was none the less sitting in the midst of the doctors of Jerusalem, both hearing them and asking them questions. It was not teaching them, though perfectly competent and personally entitled to do so as the Son of God. No doubt His very questions were most instructive, such as never had been heard in this world before. Still, this beautiful picture displays the perfect propriety of the child Jesus. For though He was God, He was man; and not only man, but in this special stage of His manhood, as a youth, He shows all deference to those who were older than Himself. Had He acted upon right, He was the Lord of that temple, He might have taken up the word of Malachi, which bore witness to His coming there in power and glory. He might have claimed as Jehovah “suddenly [to] come to his temple: and who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.” But no. He, the Master, is found there as the disciple of the word of God, as one that does not for Himself dispense with, but, on the contrary, would seek the profit of that word which was in the lips of these doctors. It was, after all, His Father's word: so He hears them and asks them questions. “And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers.” Thus His questions led to the manifestation of divine truth; so yet more His answers, as it is evident from this that they also put questions to Him.

And when His parents “saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?” Thus from early youth our Lord had the consciousness of being the Son of God above all earthly claims. But exactly as grace acknowledges the law, so the eternal Son acknowledges His human place as the child of Mary. He asserted and proved that He was really the Son of the Father in His own consciousness and that consequently He must be about His Father's business. It was not open to, or possible for, Him to set aside His Father's will. This was the first object before His heart. But spite of all this devotedness as Son of God, spite of His parents not understanding what He said, He comes down with them “to Nazareth and was subject unto them,” while His mother keeps all these sayings, little understood, in her heart.

“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man.” Thus we have this fresh notice of the Lord's growth outwardly as well as inwardly. How can we reconcile such intimations with His being God Himself, though man? Most evidently He was always perfect, but then He was the perfect babe, and the perfect youth, as we shall also find Him to be in due time the perfect man. At any given moment He was absolutely perfect, and yet He grew. He advanced from a babe to a youth and from a youth to a man. And so it was, that, as He grew up, the perfection was in exact harmony with His growth, and proved itself to be so both to God and man. If the immaculate and holy Babe was precious in the sight of God, yet more as youth, and most of all the developed maturity of a man.

It is thus therefore that, while all was perfect and always so, still that perfection admitted of progress; “and Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” But all this, we may observe, is in precise accordance with the spirit and design of our evangelist, and in fact found in this gospel alone.

Notes on Luke, Luke 2:21-38, Notes on

We now see the Lord Jesus under the law of Moses, as in the earlier verses, born of woman. For “when eight days were accomplished for the circumcision of the child, his name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.” This name refers both to His being Jehovah and a Savior, as we are told in Matt. 1:21. Here the fact simply is mentioned. Nevertheless we have here—beyond what we have in Matthew—the Jewish evidence of the poverty of the holy family, as we had before the contempt of man proved in the lowly circumstances in which the Lord was born. (Ver. 7.) “And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem to present him 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); and to offer a sacrifice, according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle-doves or two young pigeons.” Now we know from the Pentateuch that this sacrifice was a provision where the parents were extremely poor. Thus Luke preserves the two traits that we have noticed as the characteristics of his gospel. First, there is the evangelist showing that the Lord met Israel thoroughly according to all the divine ordinances—that He was presented in the strictest compliance with the law “to the Jew first.” The next feature is the display of moral principles manifested in all that surrounded the Lord on His coming into the world, as well as His ways in it. To the poor the gospel is preached; and the Lord did not preach the gospel to the poor as One who was a rich and mighty and distinguished Patron, though entitled even as man to the highest place on earth. But though He was rich, the Lord Jesus tasted what it is to be poor and despised in all its reality. It was not as a benefactor, which is the way of the world; their great ones are called benefactors, when they spare of their bounty for the destitute. As it is said, “They that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so.” And as we are commanded not to act thus, on the other hand Jesus was surely not so, but the very reverse. Infinitely above all, He nevertheless took His place with the least, with the most obscure and overlooked in the land: and this, as we see, from the very beginning of His earthly course.

But if there was no natural éclat but evident humiliation in the facts of our Lord's infancy, what was there not of moral glory? This again it was most suitable for Luke to notice, and he alone does so. “And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel; and the Holy Ghost was upon him.” The consolation of Israel was come; the Person who brought it in, and who would make it good in due time, was here. But, further, it was revealed to Simeon “by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ.” These and the like revelations were vouchsafed before the canon of Scripture was complete. “And he came by the Spirit into the temple.” It was a part of that same goodness of God, who would give suitable witnesses, that this godly man came in at the very time when the parents brought in the infant Jesus to do for him “after the custom of the law.” But he sees that there was in that babe One altogether above the law. In grace He might become subject to it, and His parents were of course quite right in paying every due deference to its ordinances. But Simeon “took him up in his arms and blessed God, saying, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” The law of Moses never could give a sinful man to depart in peace—so to speak, it never ought. Peace must be in order to be real and righteous, from the God who gave the law present in grace, present as man in this world, and present to suffer for sins, the Just for the unjust. And so He was, for such was Jesus. No wonder then that he whose eyes were touched with a better eyesalve than that of earth could see God and his salvation in the Babe, could say, “Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace.” It was not imagination, but sober faith; it was “according to thy word.” It was not a mere craving desire nor a sanguine hope. There is nothing so sure as the testimonies of God and His word; and he had an intimation that he should not see death until he had seen the Anointed of Jehovah. But to depart in peace according to the Lord's word was a matter of broader interest; it was for others who might not see the babe. To him, however, it was pledged and performed. “For mine eyes have seen thy salvation.” This was what kings and prophets had desired to see, and now Simeon saw it in the person of Jesus. And so, as it was grace of the most marked character in the favor shown to the aged Simeon, he enters more or less into the dealings of grace by the power of the Spirit of God. Thus he pursues it: “Mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people.” —not now “all the [Jewish] people,” but “all the peoples.” Again, it is “a light,” not exactly “to lighten the Gentiles,” but “for the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” To this godly man there was an intimation of the momentous change that was at hand. The salvation of God could not be restrained to one people; if God's salvation was upon earth it must at least in result be before all the nations; as Paul said, “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.” That goes farther DO doubt, because it supposes the work done, as well as the person manifested; nevertheless the principle is the same, and it is here.

But, further note, “a light for the revelation of the Gentiles.” This is an unusual expression and to be weighed. The Gentiles during God's dealings with Israel were in the dark. Those were the times of ignorance, and God winked at their ways. But now, says the apostle, He commands all men everywhere to repent. There is no excuse for ignorance longer. The light shines, the true light. Christ was that light, and He is a light for the revelation of the Gentiles. This is the time during which Israel is blinded, and the long-hidden Gentiles are revealed, brought out of the degradation in which they had hitherto lain. But when God has accomplished His work among the Gentiles, that which is added here will be made true, “and the glory of thy people Israel.” This verse is very important as showing what was to ensue when Israel would reject the Messiah and before they shall be brought in by and by. This is not the order that we find in the prophets. There the Lord wherever He is presented as the glory of Israel, is also seen as blessing the Gentiles subordinately to the chosen people. Here the reversed order is, I think, significant; “a light for the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.” The predicted and regular state of things will follow this exceptional period during which the Gentiles have been revealed. Nevertheless once God has brought the Gentiles into light, He never puts them back into darkness. But this will not hinder Him from bringing Israel to the highest pitch of earthly glory above all

the Gentiles. Thus God's wisdom will secure that His goodness to the Gentiles shall never pass away, but at the same time He will accomplish His ancient and special promises to Israel. During the present dispensation these two things are necessarily separated. The Gentiles are being revealed now, and though hereafter they shall not cease to be revealed, Christ will be the glory of His people Israel. Now He is, as it were, their shame, or rather they are His; because they crucified Him, and they have not yet repented of their sin but added to it their contempt of the Spirit's message of forgiveness on faith in the gospel.

“And Joseph and his mother marveled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them.” Now too he is given to supply the key to the fact that the glory of the people Israel should be postponed. He “said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.” The personal sorrow of Mary is alluded to, who is to be a witness of the crucifixion of her own son. Luke always brings out these touches of human affection and sorrow. This is a part of his province, because he particularly portrays the Lord Jesus as a man; and in accordance with this he brings out the feelings of those so nearly connected with Him as His mother. The moral object and effect is added with equal propriety— “that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

Such is the issue of the rejection of Jesus. If men's hearts are set upon present glory and ease, the cross of Jesus scandalizes them. If their hearts, on the contrary, are taught of God to feel the need of redemption through the blood of the Savior, then the cross of Christ is most welcome and sweet. If divine love has value in our eyes; if the alienation of the world from God is strongly felt by their hearts, then the death of Christ will have its just place more or less. On the other hand, to self-righteousness, or self-will, or worldliness the cross of Christ is just hateful and repulsive in the measure in which it is understood. Where there is the sense of need, where there is the teaching of God, where there is entrance into divine love, where the world's position in His sight or the place of faithful testimony for God is appreciated, there the cross rise, in its value before our hearts. Thus the thoughts of many hearts are revealed, and by the cross above all other tests.

God, however, brings in, beside Simeon, another witness, Anna the prophetess, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.

As Simeon was said to be just and devout, so the Spirit loves to record a blessed account of this believing woman, Anna. If he, too, had the spirit of prophecy, so had she. “She was a widow of about fourscore and four years which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.” The subjection of these godly ones in Israel to ordinances, or their submission to God according to the law, is carefully noted here. “And she coming in at that instant, gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.” The present guidance of God is equally conspicuous in her case as in that of Simeon. There was then, as ever, a remnant according to the election of grace; and God took care that the testimony should reach those whose hearts were prepared for Jesus. Grace might and would in due time go out to the very vilest; but God first of all makes Him known to those whose hearts were already touched, waiting for Jesus. The moral wisdom of such ways seems to me equally apparent and admirable.

Such is the presentation of the Lord as yet in Jewish circumstances, given by our evangelist, though not without hints and predictions which look out to a larger vista of divine goodness.

Notes on Luke, Luke 2:1-20, Notes on

We have had the forerunner of Jesus and the announcement of the birth of Jesus. But now this chapter opens with a providential event which we find nowhere else in the gospels, and yet which explains a fact that is found in the first gospel as well as in the third. Jesus was born in Bethlehem. His parents were in the habit of living in Galilee. How then, if the ordinary residence of His parents was at Nazareth, which was at one extremity of the land, could He be born at Bethlehem which was almost at the other?

“And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed (or enrolled).” Caesar Augustus was the then Emperor of Rome, the last human kingdom of Daniel. Even the holy land was put in subjection to these imperial powers, and Caesar used his power and marked it in this that he demanded the presence of every man in his own city, as if all belonged to him. It was a testimony to the total subjection of the habitable world to himself, not to Christ. This indeed will in due time be according to God, the fruit of His own power, when Jesus is manifestly exalted and God's direct power is vested in His hands, who, being Himself a divine person as well as man, will thus exercise all the power as man, yet without derogating in the smallest degree from the rights and authority of God, yea, displaying them gloriously before the world, as He has already established them before God and to faith in the cross.

With Caesar Augustus however it was far different. Even the people of God were placed in servitude; and wonderful to say, the mother of the Messiah was among those, as well as His legal father, who had to pay obedience to the decree of the Roman Emperor. They went up accordingly for the census to their own city, the city of David, Bethlehem, thus accomplishing the prophecies. And what made it the more remarkable is that in verse 2 we are told that “the census itself first took place when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.” It was not effected at the time here in view as proposed, but was sufficiently carried out to call the parents of our Lord from Nazareth in Galilee to Bethlehem, which accomplished not man's census, but God's prophecy. God took care that it should be just fulfilled enough to carry out His purposes. It was not till some years afterward that Cyrenius was governor of Syria. Then it was carried into effect fully; but meanwhile all went up to be enrolled, each to his own city.

Therefore “Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David), to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.” From the time that a woman among the Jews was espoused, she was considered legally the wife of him to whom she was betrothed. Thus the Lord while really Son of His mother Mary, was legally of Joseph; and both Joseph and Mary were of the royal line. The Lord Jesus therefore represented David on both sides; but, as the law required, He was the descendant of Solomon on the legal side. For no matter how unquestionably He might have been the Son of Mary, descended from the Nathan stem, He could not have been according to law the Messiah as long as there was a living representative of the Solomon branch. But the Lord, being the legally reputed Son of Joseph as well as Mary's Child, was precisely so descended as to be in every required respect “David's Son,” the Messiah. I say this quite independently of His divine glory which was demanded for other and far deeper reasons.

Thus then “while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in the manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.” Luke always loves to present moral features. Accordingly there is an intimation very instructive for us in the circumstance that it was in the manger Jesus was laid, not in the inn. There was no room for them in the inn. The Lord of glory when born into this world was laid in the manger. What a picture of the state of the world! There was no room for Him who was God in the world! The children of men according to their means found their place in the inn as it suited them. Those who had money could command a place proportioned to what they were willing to pay. But the parents of the Lord were in such poverty as to be thoroughly despised at the inn, and the only place where they could find a shelter for the Babe was a manger.

But this did not hinder the outflow of divine grace any more than it could deny, except to unbelief, the divine glory of Him who was laid there. Unbelief never receives that the Lord of heaven and earth could be born in such circumstances and of such parents. In fact to be born at all, to be really a man, to know beyond all other men the bitterness of the world, the scorn and hatred of men, and finally the cross—all this is utterly stumbling to unbelief. But this is just the truth of God, and the only truth that really makes known God or delivers man. And those that receive it are the simple. Grace makes them such, especially the lowly. It can make the proudest simple, no doubt; but it addresses itself in particular as the rule (and Luke marks the fact) to those that are despised on the earth as Christ was.

“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them and the glory of the Lord shone round about them and they were sore afraid.” Nevertheless there was no reason. Man, because he is a sinner, is afraid of God, but in truth “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.” The angel in the spirit of this says, “Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be” —but not exactly “to all people.” For although Luke does finally proclaim the saving grace that goes out to all men, he begins within the strict limits of Israel, and shows God faithful to His people and willing to accomplish all His promises if they would receive Jesus. But they would not, and therefore God was morally justified in turning from the despising Jews to the Gentiles. The true way of understanding this clause is, “which shall be to all the people,” meaning the people of Israel. This is confirmed in the next verse. “For unto you is born this, day, in the city of David, a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.” It was the Anointed of God that their fathers had long waited and looked for. The Child was now born, the Son given, and unto them, as said the prophet.

“And this shall be a sign unto you; ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” “A babe” it should be. And so it was: a most significant sign—a Messiah, not in power and glory as the Jews expected, but a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, who in grace was subject to all the realities of the circumstances of a human birth and infancy, and who was found in fact, as to external position, lying in a manger.

But if such was the place of obscurity that He entered, all the world being really out of course and God unwilling to allow such a thought as a sanction by His Son of the state of men in sin, if He gives Him therefore a place as it were outside, on the other hand there was suddenly “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 in men.” This is comprising in a few words the whole scope of divine purpose. The manifestation of the Son, now man, leads to this, not exactly the moral ground of it, or the means by which it will be brought about, but the result as illustrating to their unjealous eyes, God's good pleasure in men (not angels). First of all, there is “Glory to God in the highest.” Up to the birth of Jesus, all had been disappointment in man. The creature had broken down under the best circumstances, and every attempt by any other means to correct it had brought either destruction to men or rebellion against God, growing worse and worse. The deluge had not mended the world, but simply destroyed men. The law had only aggravated the condition of man, provoking their sin into open transgression and sealing them up in condemnation.

But the birth of the Lord Jesus is at once the signal for the angels to sing, “Glory to God in the highest.” It would not be merely glory to God below, but in the highest, throughout the entire universe of God, and expressly in its highest places—glory to God at length everywhere. On earth, where nothing but war had been against God, and with man, confusion, misery, and rebellion— “On earth peace.” Nothing less than this would ensue from the birth of the Messiah, though not all at once; but the heavenly host take in the magnificent issues of His birth who is father of the age to come. That birth, too, was the expression that God's complacency is in men. There could not be a greater proof of God's good pleasure than this; for the Son of God did not become an angel but a man. He was God from all eternity, but He became man. This bore witness, irrefragable and evident to every one who reflects, what an object of love men were to God. The heavenly host therefore only sing of these great outlines. They do not enter into detail; perhaps they did not know how any one was to be brought about. But the great fact was there before them; the Lord from heaven was this babe, the object of contempt to man, wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, perhaps as no other babe was. No wonder it drew out the loudest songs of the angels. They see God's glory in it; they see men thus the object of His infinite love and condescension; they anticipate peace for the earth, spite of all appearances, spite of Caesar Augustus or his decrees, spite of the Roman armies, those massive iron hammers that battered down the nations, the beast that trampled what it could not devour—spite of all this, “Peace on earth.” They looked at things as the scene for displaying in man (because the Son was now man) God's glory and grace; and they were right.

When the unwonted vision passed away, the shepherds say one to another, “Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known to us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.”

Thus, in their artless way, they acted upon what was made known to them, upon the report of the angels; and when they had proved its truth, they spread the news. They were anticipating thus far the way of grace. Tidings of such great goodness and joy could not be, ought not to be, confined to the breasts of those to whom it was first communicated. They made it known wherever they could. “But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.” A deeper feeling no doubt wrought in her mind. The time was not come for the propagation of the gospel which was in store: the basis for it was not even laid. But she who must needs have been intimately interested in the wonders that surrounded her—she weighed all, and treasured it all up in her heart. The shepherds, too, simple men, favored as they had been of God, returned, glorifying and praising Him “for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.”

Christian Truth: Volume 35, Importance of the Written Word, The: Lessons of the Trip to Emmaus

Luke brings before us in chapter 24 the journey to Emmaus, where Jesus joins Himself to the two downcast disciples who discoursed, as they went, on the irreparable loss they had sustained. Jesus hears this tale of sorrow from their lips, brings out the state of their hearts, and then opens the Scriptures instead of merely appealing to the facts in the way of evidence.

This employment of the Scriptures by our Lord is very significant. It is the Word of God which is the truest, deepest, weightiest testimony, even though the risen Jesus Himself was there and its living demonstration in Person. But it is the written Word which, as the Apostle Paul shows, is the sole, adequate safeguard for the perilous times of the last days. Here, too, the loved companion of Paul proves in the history of the resurrection the value of the Scriptures. The Word of God-here the Old Testament interpreted by Jesus-is the most valuable means for ascertaining the mind of God. Every scripture is inspired of God, and is profitable-yes, able to make us "wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Hence, our Lord expounds to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. What a sample that day was of the walk of faith! Henceforth, it was not a question of a living Messiah on the earth, but of Him that was dead and risen, now seen by faith in the Word of God. On the face of the account, this was the great living lesson that our Lord was teaching us through the two disciples (Luke 24:13-29).

But there was more. How is He to be known? There is but one way that can be trusted in which we can know Jesus. There are those in Christendom that talk a great deal about Jesus, yet who are as ignorant of His glory as a Jew or a Mohammedan. Our own day has seen how men can speak and write eloquently of Jesus as a man here below, all the while serving Satan-denying His name, His Person, His work, when they flatter themselves that they are honoring Him, like the weeping women (chap. 23:27), without a grain of faith in His glory or His grace. Hence, it is of all importance that we should learn wherein He is to be known. Thus Jesus sets forth the only way in which He can rightly be known. On this alone God can put His seal. The seal of the Holy Spirit is unknown until there is the submission of faith to the death of Jesus. And so our Lord breaks bread with the disciples. It was not the Lord's supper; but Jesus made significant use of that act of breaking the bread, which the Lord's supper brings before us continually. In it, as we know, bread is broken-the sign of His death. Thus Jesus was pleased that the truth of His death should flash upon the two souls at Emmaus. He was made known to them in the breaking of bread-in that most simple but striking action which symbolizes His death. He had blessed, broken, and was giving the bread to them, when their eyes were opened and they recognized their risen Lord (v. 31).

There is a third supplemental point which I now touch on-His instant disappearance after He was made known to them in the sign of His death. This is also characteristic of Christians. We walk by faith, not by sight.

Thus the great Evangelist, who exhibits what is most real for man's heart now, and what most of all maintains the glory of God in Christ, binds these things together for our instruction. Though Scripture was perfectly expounded by Jesus, and though hearts burned as they heard of these wondrous things, still it must be shown in concentrated form that the knowledge which alone can be commended by God or trusted by man is this- Jesus known in that which brings His death before the soul. The death of Jesus is the sole foundation of safety for a sinful man. For a Christian, this is the true way of knowing Jesus. Anything short of this, anything other than this, whatever supplants it as a fundamental truth, is false. Jesus is dead and risen, and must be known so if He is to be known aright. "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more." 2 Cor. 5:16.

And so that same hour we see the disciples returning to Jerusalem and finding the eleven there, who say, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon" (vv. 32-34). There is another truth needing to be known and proved-His real resurrection, who stood in the midst of them with a "Peace be unto you," not without His death, but founded on it, and thus declared. So in the scene at Jerusalem this finds its full display; for the Lord Jesus comes into their midst and partakes of food before their eyes. There was His body; it was risen. Who could any longer doubt that it was really the same Jesus who died and will yet come in glory? "Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself." They identify the risen Jesus with Him whom they had known as their Master, and withal as still man, not a spirit, but having flesh and bones, and capable of eating with them. (vv. 36-43.)

After this our Lord speaks once more of what was written in the law of Moses and the prophets and psalms concerning Himself (v. 44). Once again, it is the Word of God gloriously revealed, not merely to two of them, but to all, in its unspeakable value.

The Promise of the Father, Promise of the Father: Part 2, The

Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4

It is clearly impossible to lower the language of these chapters (John 14-16) to anything short of the Holy Ghost Himself. Effects and manifestations are beyond doubt enlarged on elsewhere; but such is not the theme here. It is the Spirit personally, the Comforter Himself. It is One Who could be described as a teacher, remembrancer, testifier and convicter—One Who could be said to come, hear, and speak. It is a really present and acting person Who leaves heaven when Jesus ascends there, and Who, as thus sent down, takes His place with and in the disciples, only on the footing of the accomplishment of that work to which the heavenly glory is the only adequate answer in the estimate of God, however necessary it might be to all His earthly purposes: a footing clearly impossible in the days of the Lord’s flesh.

Even then, while here below, the body of Jesus was the temple of God; but this could be predicated of none else. Elizabeth and Zacharias and (from his mother’s womb) John were filled with the Holy Ghost; but upon Jesus alone in that day did the Holy Ghost descend and abide. It was not so with His disciples, any more than with believers before them. They, unlike Jesus, could not righteously be the temple of God, until the blood-shedding was actually effected and accepted; even as in the consecration of the priests (in Lev. 8). Aaron is first anointed alone and without blood (ver. 12); afterward, the blood is put upon his sons and him (verses 23, 24), previous to their being all anointed together (ver. 30), for the anointing oil is the well-known symbol of the unction from the Holy One. Thus Jesus was first anointed Himself with the Holy Ghost (Acts 10:38); afterward being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, “He hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear” (Acts 2:33). Having borne the wrath of God, and also annulled by death him that had its power,

thus removing every obstacle, He was enabled to send the Holy Ghost to dwell in the believers; so that the apostle could appeal to them, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you (1 Cor. 3:16)?”

Plainly also the miraculous conception of Jesus is totally distinct from His anointing, though both were of the Holy Ghost. As man born of the virgin, He was the Son of God. But besides this, the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus baptized and entering upon His public service: in other words, He was anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. Analogously, we find as to believers, that their life and relationship to God, and their anointing by the Holy Ghost, are quite distinct. When Jesus arose, He could say, “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.” But they were not yet anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power. Later but before His ascension, He says, “Behold, I send the promise of the Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” Waiting, they found the sure promise of the Father. The Holy Ghost was given. They were anointed then and not before. Nor was this anointing, one need hardly add, a boon conferred there and then only; for the apostle in addressing the Corinthians writes, “Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” These are assuredly not signs and wonders wrought by the hands or tongue, but the blessed presence and actings of the Spirit in the saints. Compare also 1 John 2:20-27.

In principle, then, the coming of the promised Spirit was contingent on the departure of Jesus; and in fact, it was when He took His seat as the glorified Man in heaven, that the Spirit was sent down. Assembled together with the disciples previous to His ascension, He “commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me: for John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost, not many days hence” (Acts 1:4, 5). The next chapter records the accomplishment of the promise on the day of Pentecost. The Comforter was given. Now in them was He Who was promised to abide with them forever1 (John 14). The third person of the Trinity was now, and permanently, present in them, as truly as the second person had been with them before He ascended to heaven. The Holy Ghost was the abiding witness, as His presence in the disciples was the new and wondrous fruit, of the glorification of Jesus in heaven.

Are the operations of the Spirit of God from the beginning denied? In no wise. Creation, providence and redemption, all speak of Him. His energy is to be traced in every sphere of God’s dealings. Who moved upon the face of the waters—strove with man before the deluge—filled Bezaleel with understanding and all manner of workmanship—enabled Moses to bear the burden of Israel, or others to share it? By Whom wrought Samson? By Whom prophesied Saul? It was by the Spirit of the Lord. And as in their early national history His good Spirit instructed the people, even so could the prophet assure the poor returned remnant, “According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you.” Were any born anew? They were born of the Spirit; and the blessed and holy actings of faith in the elders who obtained a good report were, beyond controversy, the results of His operation. So far, the way of God is still and necessarily the same. Jesus set not aside in the least the need of the Spirit’s intervention. He proclaimed its necessity as a sure irreversible truth—“Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Far from weakening its place, He rather gave it a prominence never so clearly enunciated before, though of course always true.

Life, peace, and sonship (while all are communicated and known by the effectual working of the Holy Ghost), are in no sense the presence of the Comforter. We have seen that the disciples possessed these privileges before the Lord Jesus ascended. They are therefore entirely distinct from the promise of the Father, which the disciples did not possess, and which none ever did or could possess till Jesus was glorified. The presence of the Comforter is clearly the distinctive blessing since Pentecost. It was never enjoyed before, though the Spirit had wrought, and wrought savingly as regards believers at all times. The signs and powers which attested His presence at the first were extraordinary () and even more distinct from the gift () of Himself to abide with the Christian forever.

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The Promise of the Father, Promise of the Father: Part 1, The

Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4

When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son. Never had intercourse been so fraught with healing and joy to publicans and sinners. The Son of man had power on earth to forgive sins. He was come to save what was lost. Never had saints of God listened to such words of sweetness whereby was disclosed to them the bosom of His Father, which He, the only-begotten Son, knew so well. “The Word became flesh,” one of them could say, “and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of an only-begotten from a Father) full of grace and truth.” In the simple tale of the Gospels, we have the blessedness of the disciples in the presence of the Lord. There is no distance nor reserve. He speaks to them face to face; He calls them and treats them face to face; He calls them and treats them as His friends. And oh, what a friend was He! Blessed pattern of all meekness, of lowliness unknown, of patience that could not be wearied, of grace that flowed out the more, the more He was wounded in the house of His friends, like a sweet herb that breathes fragrance when trodden by the heedless foot of man!

It is indeed sadly true that His presence rendered more conspicuous the infirmities, the dangers, the sins, and the enemies of God’s people. But never did murmur break from His lips Who had undertaken their cause—God’s cause. Notwithstanding their unbelief, their pride, their insensibility, and their perverseness, never did He complain, “Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? Wherefore have I not found favor in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?” Instead of saying, “Have I conceived all this people? Have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swarest unto their fathers?” Jesus, the good Shepherd, looks onward through the vista of His sufferings to the day when He would say, “Behold I and the children which God hath given me.” Instead of saying, “Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people?” He, and He alone, could say, “The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”

It was assuredly a crisis when Jesus appeared. God had given His law; but holy, just, and good as the commandment was, it could not better, and was not meant to better, the heart of man. It detected and condemned what issued thence; for through law is the knowledge of sin.

Prophets, too, had been sent by the Lord God of their fathers. But what could those avail save to show the importunate love of Him Who rose up betimes and sent them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling-place? They alas! mocked and misused His prophets “until the wrath of Jehovah arose against His people, till there was no remedy.” In this state of things He appeared. Truly we may say that in the person of Jesus God brought Himself nigh to the sinner. But in vain. Jesus must suffer for sins, the Just for the unjust. So must He bring us to God. All might bear Him witness and wonder at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth; and surely had there been one pure thought in the heart of man, one feeling undepraved by sin, Jesus must have drawn it forth. But there was none—nothing Godward. His presence, therefore, could but demonstrate, that the carnal mind is enmity against God. “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. He that hateth Me hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both Me and My Father.”

“Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken and by wicked hands have crucified and slain; whom God raised up (Acts 2.).” The grand basis of blessing was laid. God’s righteousness was declared not only at this time, but for the passing over of sins that were past in His forbearance.

Still, while in that death all the past dealings of God were divinely vindicated, Christ Himself, in anticipating His approaching departure, hints at a new order of things: an order consequent upon His rejection by the world, and exaltation to the right hand of God. And was it not worthy of Him, that, when Jew and Gentile joined to show their implacable enmity to God, He should then show the exceeding riches of His grace to them?

From Christ, I say, risen and seated at God’s right hand on high a new and unprecedented and peculiar work of God begins. Their sins had been borne away. They were sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. They did believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, Who was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification. If a work of God commenced then, it was necessarily something above and beyond the blessings they at that time enjoyed, however great these might have been.

Both before His death and after His resurrection the Lord had told His disciples of the promise of the Father. He had spoken of another Comforter Whom the Father was to give them, an ever-abiding Comforter (John xiv.). In chapter xv. He speaks of the same Comforter as not yet come, One Whom He would send from the Father. In chapter xvi. we have further particulars still.

“These things (their, as well as His, sufferings from the world) I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go my way to Him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.” He had told them that He was going to prepare a place for them in heaven, and that He would come again and receive them unto Himself.

On these two truths, deeply interesting as they are, it is not my present purpose to dwell. Suffice it to observe here, how closely bound up with them is the truth of the intermediate descent of the Holy Ghost. It hangs upon the departure of Christ to the Father. So peerless was the gift, “that,” said our Lord, “it is expedient that I go away.” Wherein then was this inestimable preciousness that outweighed the presence of the Lord Jesus? For Him they had forsaken all; and more than all He had been to them. He is about to go. What could turn a loss so grievous and seemingly so irretrievable into positive gain? Was it solely that the Crucified was about to take His seat on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, crowned with glory and with honor? Was it needful merely for the display of God’s righteousness in vindication of His Son? “I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away.” The reason, and the only reason stated here is, “If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.” (To be continued, D.V.)

Notes on Luke, Luke 24:28-53, Notes on

A great lesson was taught during the walk to Emmaus. The accuracy and light of the scriptures showed, where men, and even believers, had overlooked much. The Jews had contented themselves with their general testimony to the hopes of the nation and the glory of the kingdom; but they had passed by, as the Lord proved, what was really deeper and now of the most essential importance—the sufferings of Christ, no less than the higher and heavenly part at any rate of the glories which should follow. The Lord condescended to draw the evidence from the written word of the Old Testament, rather than to take His stand upon present facts alone, or His own fresh revelations. But more was needed than the value of scripture thus proved, and this He supplies.

“And they drew near to the village where they were going, and he made as though he would go farther. And they forced him, saying, Abide with us, because it is towards evening and the day is sunk low. And he went in to abide with them. And it came to pass as he was at table with them, having taken the bread, he blessed, and, having broken, gave [it] to them. And their eyes were opened thoroughly, and they recognized him, and he disappeared from them.”

Not that the occasion was the Eucharist, but that He chose the act of breaking the bread, which He had previously made the symbol of His death for us, to be the moment and means of making Himself known to the two disciples. Thus was He to be known henceforward, no longer after the flesh, but dead and risen. Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new, and all things are of God who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ.

Hence, too, the moment He was recognized, He vanished from them. It is no longer a visible Messiah, any more than a living one. He is only rightly seen by the Christian when unseen, yet He must have come and accomplished the mighty work of redemption first. For this purpose He had died, having glorified His Father on the earth and finished the work given Him to do. But this done, He does not yet take His old and predicted place on the throne of David. This awaits the day when Israel shall be brought back repentant and blessed in their own land, under His glorious reign, and all the earth shall reap the fruits to the praise and glory of God the Father. But, for the present, new things have come in. The Redeemer is gone to heaven, not come to Zion, and on earth He is known by His own disciples in the breaking of bread, His presence being exclusively known to faith.

“And they said to one another, Was not our heart burning in us, as he spoke to us on the way, as he opened to us the scriptures? And having risen up that hour, they returned to Jerusalem and found assembled the eleven and those with them, saying, The Lord is indeed risen and hath appeared to Simon. And they related the things on the way, and how he was made known to them in the breaking of bread.” (Ver. 32-35.) As the angel had expressly said, “Go tell his disciples and Peter” (Mark 16), so He appeared to Cephas (1 Cor. 15:5), then to the twelve. And so it is taught us here, “And while they were talking these things, he himself stood in their midst, and saith to them, Peace to you. But confounded and being frightened, they supposed they beheld a spirit. And he said to them, Why are ye troubled, and wherefore do reasonings rise in your heart? See my hands and my feet that it is I myself; handle me and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones even as ye see me have. And having said this he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they were yet unbelieving for joy and wondering, he said to them, Have ye anything to eat here? And they gave him part of a broiled fish [and of a honeycomb]. And having taken, he ate before them.” It is the Lord Himself, risen from the dead but a real man, with hands and feet, capable of being handled and seen, not a spirit, but a spiritual body. Of this He gave the fullest proof, by proceeding to eat in their presence. As having a body He could eat; as having a spiritual body, He did not need to eat. Thus the resurrection of the body had its glorious attestation in His own person, the needed and weightiest possible support of their faith. Christianity gives an immensely enlarged scope to the body as well as the soul; for our bodies are now the temple of the Holy Ghost as surely as we are bought with a price, and exhortations to Christian holiness are founded on this one wondrous fact. Christ was the great exemplar as man; His body was the temple of God. We are only fitted for it through His redemption.

But, further, there is a message. “And he said unto them, These [are] the words which I spake unto you, while being yet with you, that all that must be fulfilled that is written in the law of Moses and prophets and psalms concerning me. Then he thoroughly opened their understanding to understand the scriptures, and said to them, Thus it is written that the Christ should suffer and arise from [the] dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name to all the Gentiles beginning at Jerusalem. Ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but do ye settle in the city, until ye be endued with power from on high.” (Ver. 44-49.) It was no new thing for the Lord to disclose His death and resurrection. He had been intimating it from before the transfiguration with increasing plainness; but they had heeded little a truth the need of which they did not feel for themselves and the moral glory of which for God they could not yet see. It was impossible to affirm with truth that it was a surprise to Jesus, or that law, psalms, and prophets had overlooked it, for on this truth of His death and resurrection hang the types as a whole, and this is the deepest burden of the prophets and of the psalmist. But now the suffering Christ was risen from among the dead, and repentance and remission of sins must be preached in His name to all the nations with Jerusalem as the starting-point. What wondrous grace! The nations had slain Him at Jerusalem's instigation, but God is active in His love above all the evil of man or of His own people.

It is well to note however that repentance is preached with remission of sins; nor can we exaggerate its importance if we do not misuse it to depreciate God's work of grace by Jesus Christ our Lord. Many, no doubt, misuse it, and more misunderstand it; but repentance abides a necessity for every soul which looks out of its sins to the Savior. He has finished the work by which comes remission of sins to the believer; but it is not the faith of God's elect where the soul overlooks its sinfulness, where the Holy Spirit does not produce self-judgment by the word of God applied to the conscience. Faith, without such a recognition and self-loathing and confession of our sins and state, is only intellectual and will leave us to lie down in sorrow when we most need solid ground and peace with God. Repentance, on the other hand, is no preparation for faith, but the accompaniment of it, and is alone real where faith is of God. It is deepened too, as faith sees more clearly.

It is well to note also that the promise of the Father is distinct from repentance and remission of sins, as it is again from the opening of the understanding to understand the scriptures. These the disciples had already; they had to wait for the promise of the Father. Till the descent of the Spirit they were not endued with power from on high. Then the Holy Ghost, sent down from heaven, wrought variously to the glory of the Lord.

“And he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. And it came to pass, while he was blessing them, he was separated from them, and was carried up into heaven. And they, having done him homage, returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God.” (Ver. 50-53.) To that spot outside Jerusalem Jesus had often gone. There was the family that He loved; thither He leads the disciples for the last time on earth, and thence, in the act of blessing, with uplifted hands, departed from them and is borne up into heaven—the risen man, the Lord from heaven. What a contrast with him who fell and all the earth through him, transmitting the curse to his sad descendants! Here it is not the first Adam, but the Last; and as is the Heavenly, such are they also who are heavenly. Filled with peace and joy what could they do but continually praise and bless God, who had, in the second Man, accomplished His own will, though at infinite cost, and perfected them that were sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all? They were, and are, perfected in perpetuity: no less a result than this satisfies God's estimate of the sacrifice of His Son. But assuredly the promise of the Father, when fulfilled, did not make the joy less or the praise more scanty. For He is not only power for testimony, but also for the soul, the One who gives us now the full taste of fellowship and causes worship to ascend to our God and Father in spirit and in truth. But of this the sequel of Luke, commonly called the Acts of the Apostles, is the due and full witness, and there, if the Lord will, we may enter into the detailed account which the Spirit has given us of His work, whether in individuals or in the Church to the glory of the Lord Jesus. Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

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Notes on Luke, Luke 24:1-27, Notes on

The sabbath day had interrupted the loving labors of the women with their spices. “On the first day of the week, very early [at deep dawn] in the morning” they returned. (Ver. 1.) Love is usually quick-sighted; it might have the sense of coming danger where others were dull; it might have the presentiment of death where others saw triumph and the effects of burning zeal for God and His house. None but God could anticipate the resurrection. Their labor was bootless, as far as their own object was concerned, whatever might be the reckoning of grace. In these scenes of profoundest interest Jesus alone is perfection.

“And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher; and entering in they found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, in their perplexity about it, that behold two men stood by them in shining raiment; and as they were fearful and bending their faces to the ground, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living One among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spoke to you being yet in Galilee, saying, That the Son of man must be delivered up to the hands of sinners and be crucified and rise the third day.” (Ver. 2-7.) But men and even saints are dull to appreciate the resurrection; it brings God too near to them, for of all things none is more characteristic of Him than raising the dead, and most of all resurrection from among the dead must be learned by divine teaching as only He could reveal it of His grace. For this breaks in upon the whole course of the world and displays a power superior to nature, triumphant over Satan, which delivers even from divine judgment. Here it was the deliverer Himself: often had He told the disciples of it; He had named even the third day. Yet those who were most faithful, as they understood not at the time, so remembered not afterward till the fact had taken place and heavenly messengers recalled His words to them afresh. “And they remembered his words and returning from the sepulcher related all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. Now they were Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the [mother] of James and the rest with them who told these things to the apostles; and these words appeared in their eyes as idle tales and they disbelieved them.”

The resurrection of the Savior is the foundation of the gospel; but it is the writers of the Gospels themselves who let us know both the ignorance and the obstinate unbelief of those who were afterward to be such devoted and honored witnesses of Jesus. Nor need the believer wonder. For if the gospel be the revelation of God's grace in Christ, it supposes the utter ruin and good-for-nothingness of man. Doubtless it is humbling, but this is wholesome and needed; no sinner can be too much humbled, no saint too humble; but no humiliation should weaken for a moment our sense of the perfect grace of God. The lesson must be learned by us in both ways; but of the two the sense of what we are as saints is far more profound than of sinners when just awakening to feel our real state before God. And this is one of the great differences between evangelicalism and the gospel of God. Evangelicalism owns the fallen and bad estate of man as well as the mercy of God in the Lord Jesus Christ; but it is altogether short when compared with God's standard, death and resurrection.

It owns that no power but that of Jesus can avail; but it is rather a remedy for the sick man than life in resurrection from the dead. It is the same reason which hinders saints now from appreciating themselves dead and risen with Jesus that made the disciples so slow to comprehend the words of Jesus beforehand and even to receive the fact of His own death and resurrection when accomplished.

We may observe too how little flesh could glory in what we have here before us. Out of weakness truly the women were made strong, while they who ought to have been pillars were weakness itself or worse. The words of the witnesses of the great truth seemed in their eyes a delirious dream, and they who were afterward to call men to the faith knew by their own experience, even as believers, what it is to disbelieve the resurrection. How this would enhance their estimate of divine grace! how call out patience no less than burning zeal in proclaiming the risen One to incredulous man! He who had so borne with them could bless any by Him who died for all.

“But Peter rising up ran to the sepulcher, and stooping down seeth the linen clothes lying alone, and went away home,1 wondering at what had happened.” (Ver. 12.) It is to John we are indebted for telling his part and God's analysis of his own inner man. “Then entered in therefore the other disciple also who came first to the tomb, and he saw and believed. For they had not yet known the scripture that he must rise from the dead.” “He saw and believed.” It was accepted on evidence: he no longer doubted that Jesus was risen; but it was founded upon his own sight of indisputable fact, not on God's word. “For as yet they knew not the scripture that he must rise from among the dead.” Still less was there any intelligent entrance into God's counsels about resurrection, any adequate understanding of its necessary and glorious place in the whole scope of the truth.

Next our evangelist gives us fully and with the most touching detail that appearing of the risen Lord which the Gospel of Mark sums up in a single verse, “After that he was manifested in another form to two of them as they walked going into the country.” (Chap. 16:12.)

Here I cannot doubt that it is a testimony to the walk of faith to which the Lord no longer known after the flesh would lead on His own. It is of no consequence who the unnamed one may have been. They were disciples staggered by the crucifixion of the Messiah, whom grace would comfort, founding their faith on the word and giving the saints to see Jesus unseen, whom they knew not while they looked on with natural eyes. One of the ancients, Epiphanius, conjectured the companion of Cleophas to be Nathaniel; among moderns the learned Lightfoot is confident that he was Peter. We may rest assured that both were mistaken, and that he could hot have been an apostle; for on returning to Jerusalem the two found “the eleven” among those gathered together. (Ver. 33.) The grand point of moment is the Lord's grace in leading them out of human thoughts to Himself as the object of all the scriptures, and this too as first suffering, then entering His glory.

“And behold, two of them were going on the same day unto a village, distant sixty stadia from Jerusalem, called Emmaus; and they conversed with one another about all these thing that had taken place. And it came to pass while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus himself drawing nigh went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him. And he said unto them, “What words [are] these which ye interchange with one another as ye walk and are downcast?2 And one of them named Cleopas answering said unto him, Dost thou sojourn alone in Jerusalem and knowest not the things come to pass in it in these days? And he said to them, What things? And they said to him, The things concerning Jesus of Nazareth, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people; and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to [the] judgment of death and crucified him. But we hoped that he was the one who should redeem Israel; but then also, with all these things, this is the third day since these things came to pass. Yea, and some women from among us astonished us, having been early at the sepulcher, and not having found his body they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels who say that he is alive. And some of these with us went to the sepulcher and found even as the women also said; but him they saw not.” (Ver. 13-24.)

How blessedly we see the way of the Lord Jesus drawing the hearts of men of God with the cords of a man! In resurrection He is still truly man, “the same yesterday, to-day, and forever,” and adapts Himself to the heart, even though, as Mark lets us know in the verse already cited, their eyes were holden so that they should not recognize their Master: He had appeared “in another form.” But He drew out their thoughts to lead them into the truth, in order that the very sorrows of His rejection which seemed so inexplicable to them and inconsistent with their expectations might be seen to be required by the divine word, and thus be a confirmation, not perilous, to their faith. They had looked for redemption by power; they now learn in His suffering to the uttermost, the Just for the unjust, redemption by blood; and not this only but a new life out of death, and superior to it, witnessed and established and given us in Him, Satan's power in sin and its consequences being vanquished forever, though for the present only a matter of testimony to the world and of enjoyment by the Holy Ghost to the believer.

“And he said unto them, senseless and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory? And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets he expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.” (Ver. 25-27.)

Such is the real secret of unbelief in believers. They fail because they do not believe all. Having but a partial view of divine truth they easily exaggerate here or there; and the rather as, not reading Christ throughout scripture, they are apt to shirk that rejection in the world now which disciples must accept or at least experience if they follow the Master, as surely as they will share His glory by and by. In the world, as it is, Christ could not but suffer: and every one that is perfected shall be as He. It is morally inevitable as due to the divine nature, as well as required by the word. It could not be otherwise, God being what He is, and man a sinner in thralldom to the enemy. But now He was dead and risen; and they must know Him thus, no longer according to their old and Jewish thoughts. We have Christ's own word for it, that He was in the mind of the Spirit in all the scriptures; and they are blind or blinded who see Him not in every part of the Bible. He is the truth, but it is only by the Holy Ghost we can find Him even there.

Salvation by Grace, Salvation by Grace: 4

BLESSED be God, when the kingdom comes, we shall not lose our communion with Christ in Paradise. We shall eat of the tree of life in the Paradise of God; and this will be in the days of the kingdom. We shall be remembered, not one forgotten, when Christ comes in His kingdom, and we shall reign with Him. Yet I say that Christ is Himself more precious than what He gives one, and that to be with Christ is even better than to sit upon a throne in His kingdom. This is all glorious; but to be with Christ, when we remember what Christ is, to be there the object of His love, to be able then perfectly to behold His glory, is a deeper privilege than to be crowned in the kingdom. Yet it was what the thief entered into that day. There was also great force in being there “to-day.” All the thoughts of gradual preparation here, all theory of waiting dimly in another world, every form of purgatory—I do not mean only of a Roman Catholic pattern, for many a Protestant has got a quasi-purgatory of his own—all these things are completely dissipated to the winds. Here was a man in himself black enough to be kept out forever doubtless; none the less was he to be with Christ that day in Paradise, perfectly purged by His blood for the intimate presence of God.

What a comfort this ought to be to any of you who have fears that you are not fit for heaven! For it is meant for you that believe as much as for the penitent on the cross. Have you not Christ too? Are you not resting on grace? is it a different measure to you from what it was to the dying robber? If it be the same way of faith to you as to him, is it not really the same portion with Christ in Paradise? Hence death, when you look at it thus, is no longer to be regarded as an enemy. Assuredly death is the last enemy apart from Christ, is it really so to the man who possesses Christ? To him death is in truth only a servant to open the door, and let him in to be with Christ. Is this an enemy's work? Death is yours who believe, as all things are.

May God then bless His own word. May He bring home the testimony rendered to Christ and Christ's blood to-night; and may you see what a joy it is to wait for Christ to come in His kingdom, and, above all, what it is to have a portion with Christ by faith wholly superior to death, so that if Christ were to come to-morrow you would never die in any sense. For “we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.”

“For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with archangel's voice, and with trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we the living that remain, shall be caught up together with them in [the] clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” You see then, “we” ought to be expecting Christ, not death. The “we” in that day ought, and the “we” in this day ought, and the “we” in every day ought, to be so. If death comes when we are looking for Christ, that will not at all disappoint us. Death will only be our usher into the presence of the Lord; then instead of waiting for the Lord on earth, you will wait with the Lord in heaven, which is far better. It is a good thing to be waiting for the Lord on the earth; but it is a better thing to be waiting with the Lord in heaven—to come when He comes—to reign when He reigns—but above all to be with Him now, or by and by, and forever, in Paradise. Amen.

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Salvation by Grace, Salvation by Grace: 3

Why should it not be so now? Must there not be some strange barrier in your way? some hindrance of Satan, that keeps genuine souls from entering into peace for months, or even years? And the worst of it is, that when people do enter, they dread lest they should deceive themselves. It is curious enough that in the two hymns we sung tonight I was really embarrassed; because they both take for granted that the Christian must die, that the tongue shall be silent in the grave. Both are assumptions, although the authors of them were excellent persons—John Newton the writer of the one, and W. Cowper of the other. They were both of them, beyond a doubt, true saints of the Lord; but the truth should be dearer than either.

Now just look at the grave departure from Scripture. I ought never to assume, as a Christian, that I am going to die, but rather to be waiting for Christ. One may die, of course, as is perfectly true; but I ought not to speak as if I must die, as both hymns do. I was rather hard put to it to find a hymn I could sing, and just refer to it to show how adulterated the truth is in reference to the question. Do you think people do not lose by it? Of course they do. What is the remedy? The grace and truth of our Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in the gospel. We know people say this is dangerous! The truth of God dangerous! The grace of God dangerous! Just wait for a moment, and you will see how excessively false and evil such a notion is. Nay, it is rebellion against the grace of God, as God has revealed it in His word.

Look again at this man. I have shown the blessed testimony he bore to the Lord Jesus as the Holy One, who had done nothing amiss. Surely He must have been more than man to have done nothing amiss. But then the dying robber does not rest there. He turns to our Lord, and strikingly said, “Remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom” —not exactly “into,” but “in Thy kingdom.” This is a particular point, because our Lord does not go into His kingdom there. He comes in His kingdom from heaven; He receives a kingdom from God and comes back. It is given Him by God before He comes, as is shown in the parable, where it is said that “A certain nobleman went into a far country to

receive a kingdom and to return.”

Is it not a marvelous thing that the robber should know the truth better than our authorized translators? They made the mistake of thinking He had come into this kingdom there. The robber knew more about the kingdom than they. He no doubt had heard the Prophets read—had heard of the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, and all His angels with Him; and he asked to be remembered of the Lord. When you think of how the robber had lived up to that time, what a thing it was for him to ask of Christ “Remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom!” That the Lord Jesus in that august moment, when claims of the countless interests of the kingdom over all the earth rested upon Him, should remember the new-born one, the poor converted robber! For him personally to be remembered by the King of kings and Lord of lords at that moment, you would say was a bold request. Yes, but the Lord Jesus loves the boldness that confides in Him. What you have to guard against is just the contrary—the bravado of unbelief. Oh, think of this!

People talk about the presumption of believers. It were wiser to warn them of the presumptuous sin of unbelief. Is it not truly presumptuous to think that they can ever make a title to the skies, or a title to Christ's kingdom comparable with His grace? You never can have so good a title as the robber had unless you have his title. There is but one title good. The title of grace is perfect; and this is Christ—Christ in all His worth—Christ in His perfection—Christ in all the power of His redemption. Is that your title? If so, blessed are you: you have got the same title as the converted robber; you cannot have a better; you may easily have a worse. All else is good for nothing. There are some Christians who consider it the way of wisdom and prudence to mix a little bit of self with grace. The more they do so, the weaker they are, the less happy. And so they deserve; for they dishonor Christ, by marring grace, and darkening the truth.

What a deliverance to have done with self! What self-abandonment to have only grace, and nothing but grace, and all grace! Such was the case with this poor man. He saw he could look in the Lord's face, and say to Him, “Remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.” And the Lord did not reply, “What! you talk about that. You may think yourself well off to be just the boy borne with, as it were, in heaven.” The Lord will not have one in heaven save like Himself. He will not allow a person there with a single token of shame about him. They are resplendent every one in the beauty and glory of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I remember seeing a curious mistake in a tract by one of our brethren; for you must not suppose we want to maintain that they do not make mistakes. “The Broken Crown” was the point of the tract. But seriously, in heaven there are no broken crowns—nothing of the sort. When saints go with Christ to heaven, they are crowned: no broken crowns are there, nor men in robes that are not the best robes. Nay, the best robe is given here. What is the best robe? Christ. Put on Christ: no robe so good as He. Be true to Christ. It is impossible to have Christ, and not have the best robe. This is the truth of the figure; and the man that had not on the wedding garment was one who dared to come in his own righteousness. So that, when the robber begged the Lord to remember him when He came in His kingdom, he was thoroughly within the just petitions to Christ. He was there, if I may so say, swimming in that blessed sea of love in which he was made to find his true bliss. He was at home there, at ease there, breathing freely there. He was buoyed up and made strong in the grace that is in Jesus Christ; yea, he was as good as preaching from that cross to every creature, and showing what the cross of Christ can do for a poor guilty sinner.

Is this to be your portion now? I call on you not to believe half the gospel, nor to seek and find a little something for your soul. I want you to see that Christ does not give in such fashion at all. It is not His way to give a little now and a little again. The crumbs that fall from His table are turned into richer and still richer blessing. He gives better than the whole loaf of man. He was asked, “Remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.” What is the answer? It is in accordance with a blessed principle of God, that, whatever faith asks, grace gives yet more. The Lord knew well that the boldness of the man's faith was to be eclipsed by the fullness of God's grace. The grace of God will always be greater than any faith on man's part. The man asked a very great thing—to be remembered when the Lord comes in His kingdom. His heart was filled with assurance that at such a moment Christ would be able to remember him; but the Lord lets him know He will do it and far more. “Verily,” said Jesus unto him, “I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.”

This is surely more than to be remembered in the kingdom. You will not suspect me of running down the kingdom, or of willingness to depreciate the day of the Lord. You know that one loves often and publicly to insist on it, and on its great importance. You will not think, therefore, that slight of it is meant. But this I do say, that, great as may be the glory of the kingdom when our Lord Jesus comes, to be with Christ in Paradise is even more and better. The two blessings go together, and therefore it is not at all a question of setting the one against the other. But there is this difference. The kingdom will be an outward display when the Lord will give five cities to one servant and ten to another. It will be a day of rewards for service, for fidelity, when every laborer will account according to his labor. But to be with Christ in Paradise means the fullness of grace; and beyond doubt, great as is the importance of the kingdom, the privilege of a sinner saved to be with Christ in the presence of God is one that nothing can exceed or equal.

Salvation by Grace, Salvation by Grace: 2

It was in Jerusalem—the city of solemnities, in the midst of the ancient people of God, of those who had the law and the prophets, where these events occurred. There was not then for Jews a single idol in Jerusalem. I dare say the Roman soldiers, as their manner was, worshipped their standards, and may have had some of their little gods in the castle or elsewhere. Ah possibly you have got some little idols in Montrose. At any rate they are to be found in most places throughout this country. What is worshipping a wafer? That is a little enough god, I am sure. Think of angels, saints, the Virgin, the crucifix, or any relic of that kind! It is of no use saying that people do not worship them. There is a great deal more worshiping of Mary than of the true God in the Roman Catholic body; and it is in vain to tell me that they are not professing Christians. They are; and this makes it truly awful: real idolatry among professing Christians I

I do not wish to allow an unkind thought about them, and I have not one. There is no Roman Catholic in the world I would not serve so far as I could for God's glory, without the cheat of torturing or burning heretics, and calling it an act of faith and God's service. I could not be expected to join them in what I believe to be wrong: for why should one do wrong for any person under the sun? But to do good to them—or even for that matter to a Turk or a Jew—surely that is the business of a Christian man in this world; to magnify the Lord Jesus in well-doing to others, and in bringing the truth to bear upon them. But take care to do so in a loving way, and not so as to hinder the very truth you desire to commend to their consciences. Such was the way the Lord Jesus took with this poor man. For is it not absolutely certain that there is not a single sheep ever brought to God that the Lord Jesus does not personally pursue? does He not go after till He finds it? does He not lay upon

His shoulders, and bring it home rejoicing?

Would you like to have the Lord Jesus laying you upon His shoulders, and bringing you home with joy? Why not now—this night? Why not have the blessed Savior your Savior, and know it? You may tell me, Oh, but the man was in such danger! It was no wonder he turned to God. I tell you that if you were crucified, you would not think it a nice time for conversion. You do not know what it is to be in the agonies of the cross. It was one of the most cruel and shameful forms of torture; one reserved for slaves only. But then it was, while the man was suffering such agonies, that the Lord Jesus won his soul to God.

But this also I would point out to you: people of every sort think this is quite an exceptional case. It is altogether a mistake. Granted that there is a grandeur and simplicity about it that exactly suits the cross of the Lord Jesus; but I maintain that the way whereby the man was brought to God is that in which you must be brought to Him: not of course by the outward agony, but by the word of the Lord; by the Holy Ghost applying the word to your conscience, and by your submission to it as the grace of God that bringeth salvation. It is no use to say it has not appeared to you. The grace that bringeth salvation hath appeared to “all men.” It is not meant that all men have seen it. A man may plunge his head into a dark cave and cannot see the sun shine; but the sun shines over the rest of the world for all that. There are men that do not see the sun. It may be that they are blind, and there is such a thing as moral blindness; and above all there may be a willful turning away from God. But still the true light already shines.

The Lord Jesus, by the grace of God, tasted death for every man (or everything). This does not mean that every one will be saved. But every man ought to have that grace presented to his soul. It is true that the church of God has not been faithful; that the servants of the Lord have not done their duty. Even very real Christians are too often content with doing a little now and again, instead of all living only and always for Christ.

The Lord's charge was that the gospel should be preached to the whole creation. Thus nobody should be shut out from the bright light of the gospel—no class so bad that they are excepted. And just as there were these two men on either side of the Lord Jesus, so there are always two classes in the world now—those who believe, and those who refuse. On which side are you? Have you been won to God through hearing the blessed word of Jesus? “He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath eternal life.” The law of Moses would not suffice. It could not give life. Law could not set free. “He that heareth My word.” Now, this is what one poor robber did, as the other did not. Yet physically both heard. Externally one robber was just as near as the other. And you too have been just as near the gospel. Have you heard with your soul? Have you taken those words as good for you, valid and sufficient for salvation? The converted robber believed the word. He heard the word of Christ, and believed God that sent Him—gave Him credit for truth, gave Him credit for love, in sending the Savior of sinners; and he reaped the blessing.

And look at his testimony. He could give the lie to all the world; for all the world had said that Jesus was a malefactor, and treated Him as such in the most gross and shameless manner. Alas! we do not find that even the two robbers were hurried to death in the way that Jesus was. Then His trial was one of the most scandalous transactions of its kind. They rose early in the morning to do their bad work, and rushed it through as if their very salvation depended upon their injustice to that Blessed One. This was done by the Sanhedrim; the highest council in Israel. But what an awful thing this world is without Christ! Take care that you are not arrayed against Him, and on the side of the devil.

Has Satan insinuated into the heart of any of you to refuse the Savior to-night? This is as great an insult as you can do Him. Now He is seeking to bless you. Now He is appealing to your souls. He wants you to rest upon His precious blood, just as the poor robber did. Oh, beware of turning away from Him! Remember those solemn words of the apostle Paul, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” One of the robbers did, the other did not. Many a one has said he would not like to be with a robber in heaven. Would you prefer to be with the other in hell? This is what it comes to. With one or other of the robbers you must be. Nobody can help that. If you were a king, you could not avoid it: but what folly of men to refuse to be saved on the only ground on which men can be saved—God's absolute sovereign grace in Christ!

But it is not grace without righteousness. Where is the righteousness? It is God's in Christ. In yourselves you are not righteous. I know few in this hall; but I do know this of every one of you, that there is no righteousness here that could stand in the presence of God. Where is it? In Christ Jesus only. Oh! to have the righteousness of God by faith of Christ, to have righteousness fit for the throne of God. That righteousness is ours if we believe in Him, for “God made to be sin for us Him who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” Have you, then, got it, or are you content to live without it? Without it you must be judged; and if you are judged, you are lost forever. Do you deserve to be saved? Dare you say so?

There are two things in Scripture—judgment and salvation. The people that are judged are not saved; and the people that are saved are not judged. It is not that they do not tell out all that they have done here below. Every person must do that—saved or lost. Every man must out with what he has done in the body, and out with it to one Man, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Judge, not God the Father. All judgment is committed to the Son. It was the Son who was insulted; it is the Son who is to judge. Men turned upon the Son of God because He became man; but as man He will judge all mankind. All emperors, kings, and commanders—all the mighty men that have ever lived—must bow down before that one Man. So must you; no man so obscure, no man so hidden in the crowd of this world, as to escape. If a man be buried in the deepest abyss of ocean, it must give him up—Hades give up his spirit, and the ocean give up his body. For we must all stand to tell out all our lives to the Savior. But if you have not got Him as Savior, you will meet Him as Judge.

Those who believe have Him now as Savior; and when they tell all out, they will do so to One who loves them with perfect love, to One who shows them the secrets of their heart, to One who explains every difficulty. We shall know then as we are known. We shall assuredly learn, from that wonderful transaction before the throne of the Lord Jesus, the depth of His love, the extent of His goodness towards us, and our own inexcusableness. We shall then see perfectly how nothing but His work could have saved us.

But if you refuse Him now as Savior, then His unsparing judgment will fall upon your guilty heads—spirit, soul, and body. For every man has got all this complex being. It is a mistake to suppose that it is only believers who have got spirits as well as souls. All this is merely the description of a man. The believer has a new man, which is another thing. He has in Christ a new life, a new nature. The spirit, the soul, the body, are characteristics of men, no matter where they are or what they are. And there is the solemnity of it. If man had only a body of flesh and blood, or if he had only an animal soul, we could understand his carelessness; for a merely animal soul will never appear in the resurrection. Precisely, because MAN alone, of all animals on the earth, has got a reasonable soul, a soul that came from the inbreathing of God—therefore it is that he only is to rise, as his spirit returns to God who gave it. Brutes do not rise—man must. But those who are Christ's

will rise in all His beauty and glory; and those that are not Christ's must rise to be judged, not merely to give account. The believer will have to give an account, but not as a criminal. A criminal has to give an account no doubt, or at any rate an account is taken of what he has done; and he is judged. The believer is not judged. The words quoted show this, particularly as given in the Revised Version of John 5:24, as many knew it long before, I refer to it now, not that I have a very high opinion of that revision, but it is often right. “He that heareth My word and believeth Him that sent Me hath life eternal, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life.” Our old version had “condemnation;” and many of us used to say that it was not exact, and the Revisers say so too. “He that heareth My word... cometh not into judgment.” How blessed! There would be no sense in judging a man who is already saved. Till a man is saved, he is under judgment; and when he is saved, he is taken out of judgment. Only theologians talk of putting him into the dock again. The whole thought is a mistake. The believer is justified while in this world. Where is the sense of his being judged afterward? Would it not be a denial of his being now saved? The mistake arises from nature always denying grace.

Do you know how it is that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred people are mistaken about the teaching of the Bible? It is because, being not right about the gospel, they are not sound as to the first foundation. Everybody knows that if a foundation is faulty, the building is sure to have cracks in it, and is not to be trusted anywhere. May grace keep one from finding fault; but I do want Christians to understand how it is that they are not more happy. Is it not for the same reason that poor anxious souls are kept, for years perhaps, in misery and doubt? It is for want of seeing the fullness of the grace of God that meets them in our Lord Jesus. Scripture knows no such a thought as that people should wait for weeks, or months, or years before knowing themselves saved. You have only to read the Acts of the Apostles and see men that knew nothing at all before, who were saved the same hour. Look, for instance, at the gaoler at Philippi, or at the Ethiopian treasurer to Queen Candace. It does not matter where you turn, to Jew or Greek, they were through faith blessed at once.

(To be continued, D.V.)

Salvation by Grace, Salvation by Grace: 1

Luke 23:39-43.

THE occasion was unique. It was just the moment for God to make manifest His grace. Man's iniquity was complete. And when all classes, the high and the low, were alike implicated in pouring scorn upon God and His Son, it was of no use to be drawing distinctions. It was due to the Son of God that His Father should show the efficacy of His blood for any—the immediate and abiding value of His blood.

The moment gave a striking opportunity; for there was a man openly a sinner, a criminal, a malefactor of the darkest dye. Indeed there were two; and we have no ground whatever for supposing that he who repented and believed was less a criminal than the man who died in impenitent rebellion against God. Still less is there any ground to suppose that the man who there confessed the Savior had been under previous process, or that any deep work had been going on in his soul before he hung upon the cross. Scripture, as far as it speaks, is distinctly against such a thought. Matthew and Mark speak of the robbers railing upon Him; not of one only, but of both. We know that men try to get rid of this, and would make out the one to be something not so bad as his fellow. A good deal has actually been made of the fact that they were not thieves, but robbers! Is it not extraordinary that men should think there was any difference to signify? A thief may be a sneaking robber, and a robber a bold thief; but one would think that when sin is weighed in the presence of God, it is not very much worth talking of the difference between them. For one thing is very clear—that they were both suffering as robbers. That is, they were not merely dishonest men, purloining what was not their own, but they accompanied it as usual with boldness rather than treachery, with violence or even murder. Barabbas certainly did so; and these at any rate were both of them robbers.

The difference between them does not lie there at all; and they would have been no better or worse if they had been thieves and not robbers. We must not lose ourselves by letting slip the grand truth of the grace of God through Christ toward the lost. But there was an expression produced not merely in the feelings, but in the conscience, of one of these robbers; and we can well understand that the wonderful spectacle of the Holy Sufferer, which had impressed Pilate when He was not in the depth of His sufferings but only in the outer circle of them, should have deeply impressed the dying man. Even such a hardened soul as Pilate, accustomed to condemn so many to death, and historically known to have been a man of desperate character, and most unscrupulous—even he had his feelings, and shrank (I do not say with really righteous indignation) from the suggestion of the priests. He morally condemned them, and evidently felt how false they were, and hypocritical and bloodthirsty. He wanted to let Jesus off, not wishing to add one more crime to the long list of his life's villainies.

But there was more than this, and quite different from it, dawning on one of the robbers; and what brought it out was the continued railing of his fellow. “If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us.” The conviction evidently pierced the soul of this penitent robber that here was a Man who differed not so much externally as morally and essentially.

No circumstances made such a difference. Education, religion—as people call it, or whatever they like—none of these things made the difference. The robber had heard Him, for faith cometh by hearing, not by seeing. It was not the sight of Jesus, for thousands saw the same thing that he saw; but he heard the Holy Victim for sin on the cross say, “Father, forgive them.” One may not say that these were the words to sink so deep into his soul; but how calculated they were to go right through the conscience of the man, and to act on his heart!

So it is written “There is forgiveness, that Thou mayest be feared.” Yes, “forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared!” not fear of being lost merely, that he knew. No Jew could be without more or less knowing the danger of ruin if a man die in his sins. But “there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared.” And here was that most solemn moment, when never were so many, not merely of the rabble but of the greatest in the land, and those that occupied officially the highest religious places, animated with one implacable desire for the destruction of this most holy Man! and this most holy Man uttered not one word of judgment, but at that awful crisis pleaded that His Father would forgive them! A new light dawned upon the dying robber. Samuel did not so pray, nor David, nor Solomon. Who ever before? You must wait for Christ that you may have such a prayer: then only is everything in perfection.

It was the proof of this perfection of the Lord Jesus, along with His wonderful words, His looking for and counting upon mercy for others, which touched the heart of the robber. Who could He be? There was but One Person conceivable. The woman of Samaria, although she was utterly

dark and ignorant, knew quite well that “when the Messiah cometh, He will tell us all things.” Every Jew of course knew that. Now this poor crucified robber sits in judgment on himself, and wholly refuses the railing in which he had up to that moment himself participated.

“Dost not thou fear God?” said he. He feared God then. He is astonished at the other robber. He cannot tell why the words that had won his own soul to God had not won his fellow. “Dost not thou fear God, seeing that thou art under the same condemnation?” They were all alike crucified; but, oh, how different each! The Messiah crucified; hardened, unbelieving, robbers crucified. But in one, as he hung upon the cross, there was such a new-born sense of grace that it produced “fear of God,” horror of sin, faithful dealing with it, reproving his fellow with whom he had joined, not dreading a retort, nor afraid of being asked— “Who are you? what do you pretend to? Why, you have been railing, too!” What then produced such an entire change of feeling in the man? Faith. Yes, it always produces repentance when it is itself genuine. Faith makes a man willing to see sin as he never saw it before, and makes him see it because God is revealed to him. We never can see sin, except through the cross of Christ, in the light of God. It was Christ crucified Who brought the light of God into the man's conscience. How exceeding sinful must his sins be to bring down the Son of God to die for them.

The very effort to please God makes a conscientious renewed man feel his inability, and sin becomes increasingly sinful. There is nothing that brings out the hideousness of sin so deeply, and so prominently, without destroying confidence before God, as the grace of Christ. Law does it in measure. Christ does it far better than law, as was the case with this poor robber. It was not law, but Christ that made him thus judge himself, and form a sound estimate of the sin of his fellow— “Dost not thou fear God, seeing that thou art in the same condemnation? and we, indeed, justly.” His conscience was purged. When a man has a purged conscience, he can afford to confess his sins. He now tells all out exactly now, even to men. He had been with God in the secret of his heart. It might be only just before, but he had been with God. No man is ever true before men that is not true before God; and truth before God must come previously to truth before men. It was the Lord Jesus that stripped him of all the disguises of his soul. It was His grace to the guilty that gave him confidence to make a clean breast to God, no longer hiding his sins, but assured that God would receive him by the blood of Jesus.

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven; whose sin is covered.” But he is not a blessed man who covers his own transgressions; and such is the way of the unbelieving man. The believer has God to cover him, and God covers his sin with the blood of His own Son. The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from every sin. Such was the real secret of this converted robber; and now he takes all the shame to himself. He owns his guilt, and says to his fellow— “We indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss.” Who told him so? He had never heard it from the lips of man. On the contrary, men had been condemning Christ; not least those who paid mock honor. Pilate would have let Him off. Herod found nothing to call for death. It was the chief priests—the High Priest above all—the religious heads of God's ancient people, who would crucify the Lord Jesus; and the voices of the crowd gave their loud approval. Had public opinion been his guide, had he listened to the great men of the nation, he would have come to a different conclusion. Just apply it to yourself. Are you not influenced by to-day's opinion? Are you not influenced by what great men think? Evidently, you must see, man does not change. The world is just the same world substantially as it was then. There may be superficial changes, but the world, as such, is the same.

Notes on Luke, Luke 23:39-54, Notes on

Here God would give a testimony of His grace to man, suited to His Son and suited to the cross. Hence He was pleased to choose the most hopeless circumstances in the view of nature, and even while delivering a soul, up to this steeped in guilt and degradation, in the agonies of death, and with the forebodings of a judgment incomparably more solemn, even as it is eternal, to secure in the fullest way His own immutable character, and to manifest in practical righteousness the ungodly one whom His grace had justified by faith. All this and much more may be seen in the history which our evangelist alone gives of the converted robber.

“Now one of the hanged malefactors reviled him, Art not thou the Christ? Save thyself and us. But the other in answer rebuking him said, Dost not even thou fear God, because thou art in the same judgment? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due requital for what we have done, but this [man] hath done nothing amiss. And be said to Jesus, Remember me when thou shalt come in thy kingdom. And he said to him, Verily, I say to thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” (Ver. 39-43.)

There is no sufficient reason to suppose that the robber was converted before he was crucified or even before he had joined his fellow in reviling the Lord. The earlier Gospels give us ground to believe that both were thus guilty, that the rejected Jesus was exposed to this as well as to every other draft of the bitter cup. I am aware that general phrases may be used, but I see no sufficient ground to doubt that each of the robbers did thus join in insulting the Lord of glory. “Why should we hesitate? Is it because the conversion of one of them might seem too sudden? a reason in my judgment wholly insufficient. Conversion is usually if not always sudden, though the manifestation of it may not be. The entrance of the soul into enjoyed peace may be long delayed and may demand the removal of many hindrances. This is rarely done in a very short time; but it is wholly distinct from conversion, and the two things should not be confounded as they too often are. Conversion is the soul's turning to God through a believing reception of the Lord Jesus; the enjoyment of peace depends on the soul's submission to the righteousness of God when the redemption-work of the Lord Jesus is seen by faith. Hence there are many souls who are truly converted because they have bowed to Jesus, who nevertheless are often cast down and unhappy and burdened, because they do not equally see peace made by the blood of His cross. Where there is the simple reception of the gospel the converted soul passes so soon into peace that one can well understand how the two things get confounded in the minds of many; as many others, on the contrary, confound them, because, unconsciously slighting conversion, which frequently plunges the soul in deep exercise and trouble of conscience before God, they only take into account that complete relief and peace which the gospel ministers.

Certain it is that the malefactor was now converted who rebuked the sin of him who persisted in reviling the Lord. On the other hand there may be the surest reviling of the Savior without one word which man as such would consider blasphemous. In this very instance the impenitent robber simply said, “Art not thou the Christ? Save thyself and us.” It was a thought, it was language not unnatural to man's mind under such circumstances. It was blasphemy to the mind of the Spirit. That the promised center and medium of every blessedness for the earth, for man, and for God here below, should die upon a cross did seem beyond measure strange; that He who had all power to save others, not to speak of Himself, should be pleased so to die, was naturally incredible. Man does not understand the depth of the humiliation of Jesus

any more than the grace of God, or of his own utter need as measured and met by both.

But it is deeply interesting to see that a new born soul discerns according to God, and this instinctively in virtue of the new nature where no formal teaching had been given or received. The converted robber at once warns his impenitent fellow of his sin, sets before him his danger, confesses his own natural state, his own life, his own ways no less evil than the other's, and in the most serious and feeling way vindicates the glory of the Lord Jesus. “Dost not even thou,” said he in a reply of rebuke, “fear God?” The death which was before his spirit gave the gravest tone to it and made him speak out with evident anxiety, and this not so much for himself personally as in compassion for the reviler, however he might feel his sin. There they were, “in the same judgment,” as a fact, but how different in God's eyes!

And faith gave him to estimate this aright—the crucifixion of a malefactor unrepentant, of another repentant, and of Him whose grace drew out the repentance of the latter and hardened the former to the uttermost because he believed not. There is no true fear of God apart from faith; but faith produces not only hope and confidence in God, but also the only genuine sense of what it is to be a sinful man in His sight, and hence the only real humility. Such was the present state of this converted robber. Nothing shows it better than that he should so forget himself as practically to preach to the reviler, to set before him his sin and his danger, to hold up Jesus Christ the righteous. He does not stop to think of the singularity of such words from his own mouth, that he, a wretched guilty degraded malefactor should appear to presume to speak of God to man, to rebuke a fellow-sinner, to maintain unsullied the name of Him whom the highest authorities had just condemned to die on the cross. This in truth is the humility of faith, not the mere human lowliness of trying to think as ill of ourselves as we can, but the divinely given sense that we are too bad to think of ourselves at all, because of the perfection we have seen in the Savior, the Son of God, the man Christ Jesus.

Not that this self-forgetfulness produces the smallest unwillingness to confess our own sins, but on the contrary makes us free to acknowledge them fully, as we see in the words “And we indeed justly, for we receive the just requital for what we have done, but this man hath done nothing amiss.” The converted man owns himself as bad and as justly condemned as the unconverted one, but lie takes all care to exempt Jesus from the common character of fallen man. “This man hath done nothing amiss.” How had he learned it? We know not that he had ever listened or ever seen Him before; but we may be certain that never before had he such a knowledge as would warrant such language. Was he rash then? He was taught of God, he had beheld the Lamb of God. On the cross he had seen enough, heard enough, to be certain that there was hanged beside him the long-expected Messiah who should save His people from their sins and blot out their iniquities as a thick cloud, who should make reconciliation for iniquity and bring in everlasting righteousness. As for himself, his wicked life was ending, the forfeit of his crimes, due to the outraged majesty of the laws he had broken. But if there was a just sentence of man in his case, there was forgiveness with God that He might be feared; and the spotless dying Lamb had given him to realize both his own sins and God's holiness as never before.

Without a particle of high-mindedness, he felt that the opinion, yea the solemn judgment of man was nothing in divine things. The high priest had treated the claim of Jesus as blasphemy; the Roman governor had given him up, knowing he was innocent but afraid of displeasing Caesar, to the murderous will of the Jews. But grace had made single the eye of the converted robber; and his whole body was full of light. He could answer for Jesus as one that was known thoroughly. “This [man] hath done nothing amiss.” It was contrary to all made experience, not only to what he knew of himself and of others known to him but to all ever reported since the world began. Yet it was not more sure that others were sinners than that Jesus was not. It was faith, and exactly such a confession of Jesus as glorified Him at that moment when in the eyes of the world at the lowest point, despised and rejected of men. No angel was here to comfort, no apostle to confess who He the Son of man was. If all else had forsaken Jesus and fled, the converted robber from the cross was there to confess the crucified Lord, in terms hardly hoard before but truly adapted in the wisdom of God to give the lie to unbelief. The God who opened the lips of babes and sucklings a few days before to set forth His praise wrought in the hanged robber with yet greater power now.

“And he said to Jesus,1 Remember me when thou shalt come in thy kingdom.” An admirable prayer and in beautiful keeping with the whole truth of the position. It is not what we might have thought at first sight suitable to such a case. The Lord described a poor publican saying acceptably to God, Have mercy upon me, the sinner that I am. The converted robber here has no doubt of the Lord's mercy. He does not ask for a part in His kingdom, but to be remembered by Jesus then. What! He, a robber, to be remembered by the King of kings and Lord of lords? Even so. He was right, and those who would judge him wrong are so themselves. They enter not, as he did, into the glory of Jesus, who, as He calls His own sheep by name now, will not forget the last any more than the first then in the perfection of His love. He prays to be remembered when Jesus should come in His kingdom, for he at least believes in the kingdom of the Son of man. Others might set up the inscription without faith over the Crucified, but the name and kingdom of the Crucified were inscribed on the converted robber's heart.

Remark also how he was guided of the Spirit, not more concerning Christ and His ways and character than about His kingdom. Truly be was taught of God. Some looked only for the kingdom of Messiah here, others since conceive that Jesus is gone into a kingdom far away. He prays to be remembered when Jesus shall come in His kingdom; for, as our evangelist shows in the parable (chap. xix. 11, &c), He is gone to a far country to receive for Himself a kingdom and to return. He will be invested with the kingdom on high, as also is shown by the prophet Daniel; but He will surely come in His kingdom instead of merely closing all things here below. Not so He will come in His kingdom. He shall reign over all peoples and tribes and tongues. Yet it is no mere earthly realm, but the kingdom of God, consisting of heavenly things us well as of earthly (John 3:12); nor is it a kingdom of the Spirit, though the Spirit makes it good now in those who believe, but a real personal kingdom of Jesus; and the converted robber, with all saints, will be remembered when He shall come in His kingdom. The once robber will surely have his place in that day. He knew whom he had believed and was persuaded that He is able to keep what he had committed to Him against that day.

But the prayer of faith, while it surely has its answer according to the measure of our soul's confidence in divine love according to the word, has its answer also according to the depths of divine grace and truth far beyond our measure. so it was now. “And he said to him, Verily, I say to thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise” (ver. 43). If the prayer of the robber was admirable, much more was the reply of Jesus, a reply ushered in with special emphasis, not for him only to whom it was said, but for us also who believe in Him that died and rose again for us. The blessings of accomplished redemption are not deferred till that day. They are true now whether we live or die. “We are the Lord's, and we know it; we are bought with a price; we are washed from our sins in His blood. By Him the Father has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Such is the position, such the standing, such the assured known privilege of the believer by virtue of redemption. The converted robber was the first soul to taste of this rich and fresh mercy. The Lord assures him not merely of His remembrance in the kingdom, but of being that very day with Himself in paradise. What a testimony to the all-overcoming and immediate power of His redemption! A robber so purged by His blood as to be that very day with the Son of God, and this, not in heaven only, but in its brightest highest seats. For such is paradise.

Believer, heed not those who may say that the Lord, separate from the body, abode in gloom till His resurrection. Not so. His spirit was shut up in no prison, but commended by Himself to the Father; and where He is, there too are His saints. Doubtless He had not yet ascended; for ascension, like resurrection, is predicated of the body; but His spirit went to paradise, and as Adams paradise of old was the choicest spot of an unfallen earth where all was very good, so is the paradise of God the choicest of heaven. Hence the Apostle Paul, in 2 Cor. 12, connects it with the third heaven; and the Apostle John holds it out as the promised scene of glory where the overcomer shall by and by eat of the tree of life. No believer can conceive that this will be a place of dimness and doubt and restraint, but of divine and everlasting glory through the Second man, the last Adam.

In this paradise then the Lord declares that the converted malefactor should be with Him to-day, so completely were his sins blotted out by blood, so rendered capable himself, by and in that new nature which grace gives the believer. Instruction most weighty for us, and a hope full of glory, for it is the present fruit of redemption and the gift of grace to every believer. It was not assuredly his own act of dying which had this virtue for the malefactor, but the death of the Lord; and this is as free and full for every Christian as for him to whose faith it was then made known. To us now it is proclaimed in the gospel. Shame on those who profess to believe the gospel, but deny its most precious and eternal blessings. Nor is it merely the dark and queen-like Circe who cheats her victims and destroys them with poisoned cup, and will surely find her plagues from God in one day. How few among those who have cast off her thralldom enjoy the liberty wherewith Christ has set us free! How many with an open Bible overlook the plainest lessons where there is no veil, but man stands immediately confronted with the light of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ! Anything short of this is not the true grace of God, is not the gospel of the glory of Christ, but the darkening effect of that unbelief, so prevalent in Christendom, which has, as it were, sewn up the veil again with God at a distance within, and man without wistfully looking for a deliverance as if the Deliverer had not already come and finished the work of redemption. For the soul salvation is come: for the body, no doubt, it waits till Jesus come again. But this is another matter on which we need not inquire more now.

Nor did God permit that so stupendous an event as the death of His Son should leave unaffected that world which He had made, or that legal system which He had set up by Moses in the midst of His earthly people. “And it was now about [the] sixth hour, and darkness was over the whole land till [the] ninth hour, and the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit; and, having said this, he expired.” (Vers. 44-46.) And the testimony was not without immediate effect on, the officer in command at the crucifixion. “Now the centurion, seeing what took place, glorified God, saying, Certainly this man was righteous.” (Ver. 47.) But the mass were filled with the sense of having committed themselves to they knew not what. “And all the crowds that came together for that sight, having beheld the things done, returned beating their breasts.” (Ver. 48.) Not that some were not there who prized His ministry and were attached to His person, but far off in that of man's shame and guilt and of Satan's power. “And all his acquaintance stood afar off, and women that accompanied him from Galilee, seeing these things.” (Ver. 49.)

But God used that very day and His grace who was thus put to death to bring out to distinct association with His name a good and righteous man. If Jesus in His life of rejection had not Joseph openly in His train, the death of the cross made him bold while others fled or stood aloof. “And, behold, a man named Joseph, being a counselor and a good and righteous man (he had not consented to their counsel and deed), from Arimathea a city of Judea, who waited for the kingdom of God, himself went to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus; and, having taken down, rolled in fine linen and placed him in a rock-hewn tomb where none had ever been laid. And it was preparation day, and sabbath dusk2 was drawing on.” (Vers. 50-54.) On their affection, not without darkness a brighter day was soon to dawn.

Notes on Luke, Luke 23:1-38, Notes on

We have next the scene before the Roman governor. Heartless as he was and with little conscience, still willfulness characterizes the Jews. “And the whole multitude of them rose up and led him to Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this [man] perverting our nation and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ a king.” (Ver. 1,2.) Thus they who were really impatient under the Roman yoke and breaking out from time to time into turbulent opposition were here forward in the pretense of loyalty. But this was a little thing compared with the blindness of unbelief which denied their own Messiah. Nor could any charge be more false. He had departed from themselves when they wished to make him a king. He had only just before expressly enjoined that they should render to Caesar the things that were Caesar's, no less than to God the things of God.

It will be observed that when “Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? he answering said to him, Thou sayest.” (Ver. 3.) The Lord acknowledged the authority that was ordained of God, however He might suffer from it. This is the true safe-guard of faith, let the authority be ever so faithless. We are called to walk in His steps. We are not of the world even as He is not of the world. By and by we shall reign with Him and shall judge the world, we shall judge even angels. The more are we called above the world in spirit to be subject to God's authority in it: only we must obey God rather than man and therefore suffer where His will and the world's authority come into collision. So the Lord here witnesses a good confession and submits to all the consequences.

But it is striking to observe that the Lord's confession of the truth (for indeed He was the King of the Jews) did not damage His cause before the Roman governor but with His own people, blinded against the truth. On the contrary “Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowds, I find no fault in this man. But they insisted, saying, He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Judaea, beginning from Galilee as far as this.” (Ver. 4-6.) Satan was pushing the incredulity of Israel to the lust extremity. It is always so finally with his victims. Christ, in the fullness of His grace and truth, thoroughly brings out what is in man, because He brings in God.

“But Pilate having heard of Galilee asked if the man were a Galilean. And having learned that he was of Herod's jurisdiction he remitted him to Herod who himself also was at Jerusalem in these days. And when Herod saw Jesus he rejoiced exceedingly, for he was wishing for a long time to see him, because of hearing [much] of him. And he hoped to see some sign done by him, and he questioned him in many words, but he answered him nothing.” (Ver. 6-9.) The silence of the Lord was a very solemn condemnation of Herod, while it gave the fullest opportunity for the rude insolence of his followers as well as of the accusers. “And the chief priests and the scribes stood and accused him vehemently. And Herod with his troops set him at naught and mocked him, and having arrayed [him] with a splendid robe, sent him back to Pilate.” The Spirit of God does not fail to notice here the moral peculiarity of the transaction. There had been a feud between the Governor and the King, but “Pilate and Herod became friends with one another that very day, for they had been previously at enmity with each other.” (Ver. 12.) Thus it

is against Christ that Satan contrives to make his union in the world, as the grace of God does by Him and for Him.

The closing hour approaches. “And Pilate having called together the rulers and the chief priests said unto them, Ye have brought to me this man as turning away the people, and, behold, I, having made examination in your presence, find no fault in this man, as to the things of which ye accuse him; nay, nor yet Herod, for I remitted you unto him, and, behold, nothing deserving of death is done by him. Having chastised him therefore, I will release him.” (Ver. 13-16.) Such was the boasted equity of the Roman empire, of man. There was no doubt of the innocence of Jesus. The charges of the people had been proved to be fictitious. The hardened judge could not condemn but acquit as a matter of justice. He was willing to concede something to please the people, but he was anxious to release the prisoner. Whether the 17th verse be genuine or not, there can be no doubt from what follows that it was the custom to release a prisoner at this time. Several excellent authorities omit the verse, as the Alexandrian, the Vatican, the Parisian uncials (62 and 63), with several very ancient versions, whilst others change its position. Nevertheless the Sinai, with the mass of MSS. and some of the best versions, contains it. On the whole the balance seems in its favor, as it also would be harsh to act upon an unexplained custom. “Now he was obliged to release one for them at [the] feast. But they cried in full crowd, saying, Away with this [man] and release Barabbas for us; who for a certain tumult made in the city and murder had been cast into prison.” Such was the choice of man, such the value of their loyalty to Caesar, such their care for God's respect to the life of a fellow creature made in His image. A rebel and a murderer preferred to Jesus!

“Again therefore Pilate addressed [them], wishing to release Jesus. But they kept calling in reply, Crucify, crucify him. And he said unto them the third time, Why, what evil has he done? I have found no cause of death in him. Having chastised him therefore, I will release [him]. But they were urgent with loud voices begging that he might be crucified; and the voices of them and of the high priests prevailed. And Pilate gave sentence that what they begged should take place, and released him that for tumult and murder had been cast into prison for whom they begged, and delivered up Jesus to their will.” (Ver. 20-25.)

Thus all the world was proved guilty before God, but none were so deeply involved as those whom it least became. The people who had the law fell under its curse, not merely because they were disobedient to its requirements, but worst of all, because they were resolutely bent on the rejection of their own Messiah to death, and this, when the heathen sought to let Him go. Such is what the world was proved to be, where the reality came out through Him who alone was real, the Holy and the True. No room for boasting more: there never was, in truth, but now it is evident and impossible to be denied by him who rightly reads the word of God.1

Nevertheless the Spirit of God gives us more. “And as they led him away, they laid hold of a certain Simon, a Cyrenian, coming from [the] country, and put on him the cross to bear [it] after Jesus.” (Ver. 28.) There was no restraint now, but if man were lawless, God remembered Simon another day, and his sons are not forgotten in the record of life. (Compare Mark 15 and Rom. 16) It may be a terrible truth that God looks down from heaven and beholds the children of men, and sees none so worthy of reprobation as those who misuse selfishly the highest privileges of His mercy; but when we know Him, or rather, are known of Him, it is not the least of our comforts that God takes account of everything and knows how to reply in His grace to those who have power on the side of their oppressor.

It is not that man lacks feeling: but feeling without faith comes to nothing, no less than mind, or authority, or position, were it the highest in the religious world. The affections of nature may be sweet but never can be trusted to stand firm to Christ, however moved for a season. “And there followed him a great multitude of the people and of women who wailed and lamented him. And Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not over me, but weep over yourselves and over your children; for, behold, days are coming in which they shall say, Blessed the barren and wombs which bare not and breasts which suckled not. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall upon us, and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be in the dry?” Jesus knew what was in man, despised not the feelings of the women, but trusted Himself to none. Tenderly He warns them of that which man believes not till it comes, for it is a part of man's wisdom to suppose the future uncertain in the words of God, because it is uncertain to man. Fools and slow of heart to believe what the Lord said no less than their own prophets! Had they believed them, they had not refused Him. Had they received Him, days of heaven had dawned upon the earth, on Israel especially, and all the glorious visions of His reign had been accomplished. But Israel was ruined and guilty, man fallen and lost, and all in such a state reject Jesus. Therefore God works out deeper counsels by the cross of Jesus in heaven and for heaved, now testified by the Holy Ghost sent down here below. These are the counsels and the ways of His grace, but His warnings stand equally and His word must be accomplished to the letter. Soon had they an accomplishment, though I do not say that there may not be more in store at the end of the age, when those who refused the true Christ that came in His Father's name shall receive the Antichrist coming in his own. And the overflowing scourge shall pass through and the apostate Jews be trodden down by it. The Messiah was the green tree, the Jews the dry. If He because of their wickedness came into such sorrow, what was not reserved to them for their own? For, whatever His grace, God judges righteously.

“And two others, malefactors, were led with him to be put to death.” (Ver. 32.) Jesus was spared no insult. As He was the song of the drunkard, so He made His grave with the wicked. “And when they came to the place called Skull, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand and the other on the left. And Jesus said, Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” It is not here, as in Matthew and Mark, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” It is the expression of His grace towards sinners, not of His abandonment by God in accomplishing the work of atonement; and it is of the deepest interest to see that, as the answer to the one came in resurrection-power and heavenly glory, so of the other in the proclamation of forgiveness by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Therefore Peter could preach (Acts 3:17). “And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as also your rulers. But those things which God had showed by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. Repent therefore and be converted for the blotting out of your sins, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord,” &c. But here again we have to wait. The message of forgiveness was refused, a remnant indeed believed, received forgiveness, and rose into better blessings; but the mass pursued their heedless unbelief to this day and will sink into deeper darkness. Yet assuredly light shall spring up in the darkest hour and the remnant of that day shall be brought out of their sins and ignorance alike to be made the strong nation when He appears to reign in glory.

The horrors of the crucifixion in its detail come before us. “And parting his garments they cast lots. And the people stood beholding, and the rulers also with them sneered, saying, He saved others, let him save himself if this is the Christ, the chosen of God. And the soldiers also were mocking him, coming up, offering him vinegar, and saying, If thou art the king of the Jews, save thyself. And there was also an inscription over him, The king of the Jews [is] this.” (Ver. 35-38.) In every respect the word of God was accomplished, and the ways of men laid bare. It was no question of a class and its peculiar habits. High and low, the governed and the governors, civil and military, all played their part; and the part of all was enmity against God revealing His love and goodness in His Christ. The folly too of man was apparent no less than grace in presence

of his wickedness. It was because He was the king of the Jews, as none other had been or can be besides, that He saved not Himself, and can therefore send out the message of salvation now and bring salvation by and by. Little did man, in that day, weigh the import of that which was written over Him in Greek and Roman and Hebrew letters, “This is the king of the Jews.” If man wrote it in scorn, God will give it all its own force—God who overrules the will and the wrath of man to praise Him. Through the crucified, God will bless the world by and by, Jew and Gentile, high and low, even as His grace gathers out from it now.

Notes on Luke, Luke 22:35-71, Notes on

The Lord now prepares the disciples for the great change at hand. He contrasts their past experience with that which was coming. “And he said unto them, When I sent you without purse and scrip and sandals, did ye lack anything? And they said, Nothing. He said therefore to them, But now he that hath a purse, let him take [it] and likewise his scrip, and he that hath none, let him sell his garment and buy a sword. For I say to you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among lawless [men], for also the things concerning me have an end.” Thus the changes to them depended on Him. Jesus was about to be given up to the hands of wicked men; the protection thrown around Him, as around them, was now to be withdrawn. Clearly this is no question of atonement though of suffering and rejection in which others could have communion, as the apostle expressly teaches in Phil. 3 Jesus was despised and rejected of men, yea, given up to it finally of God, besides being for us made sin which belongs to Him alone.

Little did the disciples understand their Master. Indeed flesh and blood can never relish suffering, more especially suffering such as His where man proves his vileness and opposition to God to the uttermost. Even saints are slow to enter in. They necessarily feel the value of atonement; for otherwise they have no standing-place, not even a well-grounded hope of escape as sinners before God. “And they said, Lord, behold, here [are] two swords. And he said unto them, It is enough” —a correction of their thought, however mild. For had it been a question of the literal use of the sword in self-defense, two must have proved a wholly inadequate means of protection. The Lord had employed the sword, purse, and scrip as symbolic of ordinary means on which the disciples were henceforward to be thrown, but certainly not to abandon personally the ground of grace in presence of evil, even to the last degree of insult and injury, on which He had insisted at the beginning of their call and charge as apostles. No more however is said; the true sense is left for that day when the Holy Spirit being given would lead them into all the truth. Alas! Christendom has lost the faith of the Spirit's presence as well as the certainty of the truth, into which grace alone has been leading back a feeble remnant as they wait for the return of the Lord Jesus. Truths such as this cannot be appreciated unless We go forth unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach.

But now we approach what is still more solemn and sacred ground. “And going out he proceeded according to custom to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples also followed him. And when he was at the place, he said to them, Pray that ye enter not into temptation. And he was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and, having knelt down, he prayed, saying, Father, if thou wilt, remove this cup from me; nevertheless, not my will but thine be done.” It was indeed no wonted occasion even for Him, but the awful moment of the enemy's return who had departed for a season after his old defeat in the wilderness. But this garden was to behold an equally decisive defeat of the enemy as became the Second man, the Lord from heaven. It was no longer Satan seeking to draw away from the path of obedience by what was desirable in the world. He sought now, if he could not drag Jesus out of the path of obedience, to fill Him with alarm and to kill Him in it. But Jesus shrank from no suffering and weighed before God all that was before Him.

He watched and prayed and suffered being tempted. The disciples failed to pray and entered into temptation, so that nothing but grace delivered them.

The Holy Spirit does not give us the detail of the three prayers of the Lord as in Matthew, but rather a summary of all in one. In both we see His dependence in prayer and His tried but perfect submission to the will of His Father. Here however we have what is characteristic of our evangelist, both in the angelic succor which was sent Him, and in the bloody sweat that accompanied His conflict. It is well known that many fathers, Greek and Latin, have cast a doubt upon verses 43 and 44. “And an angel appeared to him from heaven strengthening him. And being in conflict he prayed more earnestly and his sweat became as clots of blood falling down upon the earth.” Several of the more ancient MSS indeed also omit them, as the Alexandrian, Vatican, and others, besides ancient versions; but they are amply verified by external witnesses, and the truth taught has the closest affinity to the line which Luke was given to take up. The true humanity and the holy suffering of the Lord Jesus stand out here in the fullest evidence.

Here again however, observe that the suffering differs essentially from atonement. For not only does He speak out of the full consciousness of His relationship with the Father, but He has also the angelic help which would have been wholly out of season when forsaken of God because of sin-bearing. All was most real. It is not meant that His sweat fell merely like great drops of blood, but that it became this as it were; that is, the sweat was so tinged with blood which exuded from Him in His conflict that it might have seemed pure blood. “And rising up from prayer he came to his disciples and found them sleeping from grief. And he said to them, Why sleep ye? Rise up and pray that ye enter not into temptation.” We shall see presently the result of their sleeping instead of praying. Not only did the absent Judas betray, but all forsook, and the most prominent of the three chosen to be nearest the Lord denied Him with oaths, denied Him thrice before the cock crew. They entered into temptation and utterly failed. We can only be kept by watching and prayer. Evil is not judged aright save in the presence of God. There the light detects and His grace is sufficient, even for us. But man has no strength against Satan. It must be His light and His grace; without the power of His might we enter only to dishonor our Master. Leaning upon Him the weakest of saints is more than conqueror. Thus only is the devil resisted, and he flees from us.

“As he was yet speaking, lo, a crowd and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them and drew near to Jesus to kiss him. And Jesus said to him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?” How gracious, but how terrible the words of Jesus to him who knew his Master and his Master's haunts enough to deliver Him thus to His enemies! “And those around him, seeing what was about to happen, said, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? And a certain one of them smote the bondman of the high priest and took off his right ear. And Jesus answering said, Suffer thus far, and having touched the ear he healed him.” He could still work miraculously by the Holy Ghost. Indeed we know from John 18 that He could and did cast them all down to the ground by the power of His name; but here it is the witness of His grace to man, even at such a moment, rather than of His own personal majesty, who was about to be cast off and to suffer on the cross. Each

incident is of the deepest interest and eminently suited to the Gospel in which it occurs.

“And Jesus said unto the chief priests and captains of the temple and elders who had come against him, Have ye come out as against a robber with swords and sticks? When I was day by day with you in the temple, ye did not stretch out your hands against me; but this is your hour and the power of darkness.” (Ver. 52, 53.) God was giving up the Lord Jesus to men before He was forsaken in accomplishing the work of redemption.

“And having apprehended him, they led and introduced him into the house of the high priest. And Peter followed afar off. And having lit a fire in the midst of the court, and sat down together, Peter sat among them. And a certain maid having seen him sitting by the light fixed her eyes on him and said, And he was with him. But he denied him, saying, Woman, I do not know him. And after a short while another seeing him, said, And thou art of them. But Peter said, Man, I am not. And after the distance of about one hour, another strongly maintained, saying, In truth he also was with him, for he is a Galilean too. But Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he was yet speaking, a cock crew. And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he said to him, Before the cock crows to-day, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter going forth without wept bitterly.” (Ver. 54-62.) We see here the worthlessness of natural courage in the saint and the weakness of one's own love when relied on. Only God can sustain, and this too in exercised distrust of self, when the word is received by faith and the heart abides in dependence on God. A servant girl frightens an apostle, and the first false step involves others deeper and farther if possible from God, for what is our consistency if we be not consistent with the cross? The unbelief which refuses the humiliating warning of the Lord works out the accomplishment of His word. But the Lord never fails, and as He had not in faithfulness beforehand, so, after the fact, He does not hide His face from Peter, but turns round and looks at him. His own sufferings did not pre-occupy the Lord, so as to forget Peter, and Peter's guilt and shame in no way turned the Lord from him but rather drew His look towards him. “And Peter remembered the word of the Lord,” and his sorrow worked repentance, though the Lord carried it farther still, as we know, after He rose from the dead; for the root of evil must be judged as well as the fruit, if we are to be fully blessed and would know how to help others, as Peter was called to do and did.

Then follows the sad tale of men's insolence and blasphemy towards the Lord. “And the men that held him, mocked him, striking him; and covering him up they asked, saying, Prophesy who it is that struck thee. And many other things they spake blasphemously against him.” (Ver. 63-68.) Such was the rude evil of the underlings. The chiefs might act with more seeming decorum, but with no less unbelief and scorn of His claims. “And when it was day, the elderhood of the people, both chief priests and scribes, were gathered together, and led him into their council, saying, If thou art the Christ, tell us. But he said to them, If I tell you, ye will not at all believe; and if I should ask, ye will not at all answer. But henceforth shall the Son of man be seated on the right hand of the power of God. And they all said, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. And they said, Why have we need of witness further? For we have ourselves heard from his mouth.” (Ver. 66-71.) There was lying testimony brought against Jesus; but it failed. He was condemned for the truth, which man believed not. He declines speaking of His Messianic dignity, which was already rejected by man, and was about to be replaced by His position as Son of man on the right hand of the power of God. If they all infer that He is the Son of God, say it or gainsay it whoever will, He acknowledged and denied not, but acknowledged that truth which is eternal life to every believer.

Notes on Luke, Luke 22:1-34, Notes on

The end approaches with all its solemn and momentous issues; which our evangelist relates after the wonted manner, adhering to moral connection rather than illustrating dispensational change, or the series of facts in His ministry, or the glory of His person.

“Now the feast of unleavened [bread] that is called passover was drawing nigh, and the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might kill him, for they were afraid of the people. And Satan entered into Judas that is called Iscariot being of the number of the twelve; and he went away and spoke with the chief priests and captains how he should deliver him up to them. And they rejoiced and engaged to give him money; and he agreed fully and was seeking an opportunity to deliver him up to them away from [the] crowd.” (Ver. 1-6.) When the will is thus engaged on the one side and on the other nearness to the Lord was enjoyed without self-judgment, nay, in conscious hypocrisy and the habitual yielding to covetousness, Satan readily found means to effect his own designs, as a liar and murderer, against the Son of God. Yet how reassuring it is to observe that both man and the devil were powerless till the due moment came for the execution of God's purposes which their malice even then only subserved, unconsciously and in a way which they counted most sure to hinder and nullify them. But He catcheth the wise in their own craftiness.

It may be well here to note that the English Version misleads if it be inferred from verse 3 that it was at this time Satan entered into Judas; for we know from John 13:27 that it was only after the sop, the latter Gospel also distinguishing this full action of the enemy from the earlier occasion when he had put it into the betrayer's heart. The truth is that Luke has no expression of time here, using only a particle of transition, and therefore contents himself with the broad fact without entering into the detail of its successive stages, which found their fitting place with him whose task of love was to linger on the person of the Lord.

“And the day of unleavened [bread] came in which the passover was to be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare the passover for us that we may eat. But they said to him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? And he said to them, Behold, when ye have entered into the city, there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he goeth in; and ye shall say to the owner of the house, The Master saith to thee, Where is the guest chamber where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. And they went away and found as he had said to them; and they prepared the passover.” (Ver. 7-13.) There is no ground of difficulty here for him who believes the word of God. He who beforehand could describe thus minutely the person, place, time, and circumstances was in communion with the divine power and grace which controlled the heart of the Jewish householder, even though a stranger hitherto, and made him heartily acquiesce in the Lord's using it for the paschal feast with His disciples. That God should thus order all in honor of His Son for the last passover seems to me beautifully in keeping as a testimony in Jerusalem where the religious chiefs and even a disciple with the mass were hardening themselves to their destruction in His rejection and death.

“And when the hour was come, he took his place, and the apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer, for I say to you that I will not any more at all eat it until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And having received a cup, he gave thanks and said, Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will in no wise drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God come.” (Ver. 14-18.) What an expression of tender love for the disciples! For the last time He would eat it with them, not at all more. As to the cup of the passover, they were to take and divide it among themselves, not He with them. The passover was to be fulfilled in the kingdom of God; and of the fruit of the vine He would in no wise drink henceforth till the kingdom of God come. It is the sign of the passing away of the old system.

Next, the Lord institutes the new thing in a foundation sign of it. “And having taken a loaf with thanksgiving he broke and gave [it] to them, saying, This is my body that is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup after having supped, saying, This cup [is] the new covenant in my blood, that is poured out for you.” (Ver. 19, 20.) It was a better deliverance on an infinitely better ground, as the cup was the new covenant in His blood, not the old legal one guarded by penal sanction in the blood of accompanying victims. What immeasurable love breathes in “my body that is given for you,” “the new covenant in my blood,” &c. It will be observed that Luke presents a more personal bearing of the Lord's words here, as in the great discourse of chapter 6. Matthew gives rather the dispensational change in consequence of a rejected Messiah.

“But, behold, the hand of him that delivereth me up [is] with me on the table; for indeed the Son of man goeth according to that which is determined, but woe to that man by whom he is delivered up! And they began to question together among themselves which of them could be he that was about to do this. And there was also a strife among them which of them should be accounted greater: but he said to them, The kings of the nations rule over them, and those that exercise authority over them are called benefactors. But ye [shall] not [be] so; but let the greater among you be as the younger, and the leader as he that serveth. For which [is] greater, he that is at table or he that serveth? [Is] not he that is at table? But I am among you as he that serveth. But ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations. And I appoint to you as my Father appointed to me a kingdom, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” (Ver. 21-30.) The Lord announces the betrayer's presence at that last feast of love. How perfect the grace which knew but never once by behavior made known the guilty soul! how consummate the guile of him who had so long heartlessly companied with such a Master! Now when His death in all its ineffable fragrance and power for them is before Him and as a sign little then appreciated by them, He tells out the sad secret which lay on His heart, a bitter burden He felt for him who as yet felt it not at all. And the disciples question who it could be, but none the less strive for the greater place. How humbling for the twelve, especially at such a moment in presence of Him, of the supper before them, and of the cup before Him alone! But such is flesh, in saints of God most of all offensive when allowed to work. No good thing dwells in it. Tenderly but in faithful love the Lord contrasts the way of men with that which He would cultivate and sanction in His own. The condescension of patronage is too low for saints. It is of earth for nature's great ones. He would have them to serve as Himself. In a ruined wretched world what can the love that seeks not its own do but serve? The greatest is he that goes down the lowest in service. It is Christ: may we be near Him! Then He turns to what they had been in view of His disposal of the kingdom according to the Father's mind, and puts the highest value on all they had done. Matchless love surely this which could thus interpret His calling and keeping them as their continuing with Him in His temptation! But such is Jesus to us as to them, while in the day of glory each will have his place, yet all according to the same rich unjealous grace.

But the Lord makes a special appeal to one while warning all of a common danger. “Simon, Simon, behold Satan has begged for1 you to sift as wheat, but I have besought for thee that thy faith fail not; and thou, when once turned back,2 stablish thy brethren. And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both unto prison and unto death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow to-day till thou hast thrice denied that thou knowest me.” (Ver. 31-34.) Love not only brings into what itself possesses, but holds out and provides against the greatest possible strain where every appearance must condemn the object loved. Yet was it no lack of love that exposed Peter to the sin of denying his Master, but his self-confidence made shipwreck of his faithfulness. Through grace alone his faith failed not utterly. We see it not only in the tears of bitter self-reproach, but yet more in the earnest ardor after the Lord which went into the tomb whither John had outrun him. But we see the grace of the Lord, which here supplicated beforehand, still shining after all in the message to the “disciples and Peter,” in His early appearing to him by himself, and in his later more than reinstatement when all his failure was traced and judged to the root. What can we express but our shame and sorrow that such is nature even in the most zealous, when put to the test and above all when the word of the Lord is practically slighted? If we believe not His admonition of our own weakness, we are on the point of proving its truth, perhaps to the uttermost.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Malchus Healed

Luke 22:50, 51; John 18:10, 11

The moral perfection of the Lord shone only the more brightly in His new and last trial. Satan, foiled in his effort to tempt Him out of His path of obedience, came now to kill Him in it. But nothing moved Him out of that way, nothing provoked Him, even when the disciples slept instead of praying, unable (even Peter and James and John) to watch one hour with Him.

When the crowd of men with swords and staves laid hold on and seized Him, Peter (too hasty to await the answer to the appeal, Lord, shall we smite with sword?) drew his, and smote the high priest's bondman, and took off his ear. This the Lord rebuked: " Return thy sword to its place; for all that take the sword shall perish by the sword. Or thinkest thou, that I cannot now call on my Father, and he will furnish me more than twelve legions of angels? How then should the scriptures be fulfilled that thus it must be?"

He abides the righteous Servant. He came to suffer for sins, Just for unjust, that He might bring us to God, and fit the children of God to share His glory on high when He takes all the creation heavenly and earthly, and reigns over Israel and the nations on earth in His day. Those who believe now are called to suffer with Him, as the Lord had taught His own when correcting their thoughts and desires about His kingdom. " Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and the great exercise authority over them. But it shall not be thus among you; but whosoever will be great among you, he shall be your servant; and whosoever will be first among you, let him be your bondman; as indeed the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many " (Matt. 20:25-28).

But Peter, ever rash as yet, thought of nothing but his Master's danger; and, in fleshly zeal seeking to defend Him, he stood reproved. It was human nature, but contrary to Christ and His word. If carried out, it would have made redemption impossible, like his warm and hasty error in Matt. 16:22, for which the Lord bade him, Get away behind me, Satan, and added, Thou art an offense to me; for thy mind is not on the things of God but on the things of men. Peter failed not only to appreciate Christ's death, but to apprehend that the Christian must deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Him. He did in his measure and spirit what the Lord told Pilate was not for His servants to do, because His kingdom is not of this world. It is of heaven, and of no worldly source.

In the Gospel of Luke (22:51) we first hear that Jesus said in answer, Suffer ye thus far, and with a touch He healed the cut-off ear. Even at such a crisis as this He is thus presented as the gracious Son of man, anointed with the Holy Spirit and with power. If He was no longer going about doing good and healing all that were under the devil's power, because God was with Him, He was just as ready to heal one wounded by His thoughtless follower.

John lets us know particularly the names, not only of His follower but of the wounded man. And here the healing has its significance, like every other word and fact in this Gospel as illustrating His personal dignity. As the mention of His name hurled to the ground the band which came to capture Him, and to which He thereon gave Himself up, with the words, Let these go away; so now the answer to Peter spoke His glory and His grace in a way peculiar to the last Gospel. " Put the sword into the sheath: the cup which the Father hath given me, shall I not drink it? "

Blessed Savior, as Thou in Thy love and light and lowliness art alone in Thy perfection, so art Thou in the ineffable sufferings which were in that cup for Thee to drink And Thou Bidst drain it, that God might be glorified, and we who believe might be saved worthily of God. Yet do we rejoice also that as God was glorified in Thee, and in Thy death especially and infinitely, so did He glorify Thee in Himself, and this immediately in heaven, before the world-kingdom of our Lord and His Christ come, who shall reign unto the ages of the ages.

Nor need poor souls who are in their sins wait for that displayed kingdom. While Jesus is glorified on high is just the time during which the Holy Spirit is sent forth, not only to dwell in the church, but to proclaim the gospel, the glad tidings of God to guilty and perishing man. Doubt not then but believe the witness God bears to the Lord Jesus, His Only-begotten Son. Great as is your need, many as are your sins, His grace is far greater. It is as infinite as His person. Come as you are that you may find Him as He is, full of grace and truth. Does not this suit you who have nothing but sins? Receive of His fullness: it is open to all who believe. Then will you live to Him.

The Dealings of God With Peter, Dealings of God With Peter: 7. In the Gospels, The

Luke 22:50-62

I have chosen the account that is given in the Gospel of Luke rather than that of Matthew or Mark, because the Spirit of God presents it very particularly in its moral links. In John, on which I shall dwell afterward, all turns upon the person of the Lord Jesus, and we shall find, I think, this difference, when we come to look at it. But here the human heart is opened more; there the glory of the One who was making Himself known. Now the results of what we have already had before us begin to appear. The temptation has come, and Peter enters into it. We always do enter, where we are not found in prayer before the temptation. Then we are surprised. The Lord, on the contrary, had been in prayer, and He only makes the difficulty and the trial, when it came, an opportunity of manifesting the grace of God. Hence, therefore, when one of the persons that came to take the Lord—one of the servants of the high priest—presented himself, he became an object for one of the disciples. This was Peter. His very love for the Lord—his indignation—broke forth. It is not that the others were not just as ready to fall as Peter, for that is the solemn thing that appears. Our very love for His person, our very fervor of spirit, instead of being a preservative power, where there is not self-judgment, exposes one to go farther astray. Here it was, first of all, in the shape of violence. “He smote the servant of the high priest and cut off his right ear.” Thus the Lord's warning fell entirely powerless upon Peter; and in such a state of mind—and that is the importance of it—one perverts the word of God.

I do not doubt myself that Peter thought the sword was in his hand for the purpose. Had not the Lord spoken about taking a sword? And so, you will find, we are as dependent upon God for the use of His word. We cannot do without it. just as much as we need the word, so do we need the Spirit of God; but this is never given unless there be that dependence upon Him that goes forth in prayer, and, I repeat, in prayer not at the moment. Indeed, the moment was come for action or suffering. To Peter it was a question of action: to the Lord it was suffering. The Lord bows. It was no question now of any action, except, indeed, of repairing the mischief that Peter had done. This the Lord always does; and so He touched the servant's ear and healed him. And this is a statement admirably finding its place in the very Gospel from which I have read, because Luke shows us the heart of man, or even of a saint, that is searched and found wanting where there has not been self-emptiness, where there has been self-confidence; and undoubtedly this was the case. And further, too, I am not in the least denying spiritual feeling and affection. They were sleeping for sorrow, but why? Why sleeping? The sorrow was all well, but why sleeping for sorrow? They ought to have been praying in sympathy with our Lord. They ought to have been in fellowship with Him. Not so; they found a sort of resource and relief in going to sleep when the Lord was calling them to watch, if it was only for the one hour. But there was no watching at all, any more than prayer: they went to sleep.

Now, when the Lord goes forth, in the calmness of one who had gone through the trial with God before the trial came, He is perfect calmness. Yet we know what was before Him. We know how He had felt it. There was the One that had been in the agony. There was the One that had been sweating, as it were, great drops of blood. Not a trace of it now. He had gone through with God. Satan now was to go through with Peter. Satan had carried completely away in the case of Judas. I do not mean that he was to carry Peter away as he had done Judas, but certainly it was to sift. As the Lord Himself said, Satan desired to have him that he might sift him as wheat; and this was now going on, so that Peter shows out himself. His way of sheaving his love for Christ was by taking a sword to cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. Poor Peter! Not an atom of fellowship with the mind of God at that moment, nor, indeed, at any moment, as far as the Lord Jesus was concerned. It was entirely out of the current of the thoughts of God, and yet we cannot doubt that he might have found a sort of reason for it, as I have said, in a misuse of the very word of the Lord.

And this is a solemn lesson to us that the word of God itself will never guide a person aright until the spring of self is broken; until a person has judged himself before God, and is found, above all, with the loins girt with truth before he takes up the sword. When it is taken up

afterward it is the sword of the Spirit, and not a material one to cut off an enemy's ear.

Now here, then, we see the difference, first of all, but there was a far more solemn one afterward; for they go a little farther. When the elders and captains and the rest take the Lord, and lead and bring Him into the high priest's house, Peter follows. We are told in the Gospel of John that he was not alone. Nay, John tells us; and it is beautiful that it should be so. How lovely are these traces of grace! He had seen the One that was full of grace and truth. What was the effect of it? A spirit of grace in himself. But it is John that tells the story of his own folly, his own selfishness, his own worldliness, for John went there rather in the capacity of a friend of the high priest—an acquaintance at any rate than as a follower of the Lord Jesus. That does not come before us here; indeed, it was reserved to himself to tell it. Now, was not that like the way of God? It had been a long time. Why tell a story that was so old? Perhaps there was not a single person in the whole world that knew it then—none but John. But John lived long enough to bring this out himself in his own word.

Here, however, we have the story of Peter pursued. “Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.” It was a little of that same spirit that we have the Lord warning against eating and drinking with the drunkard; that is, it was an association with the men of the world when they were set upon deepest enmity against the Lord Jesus, and with motives, in some respects, a little like themselves. I do not mean as regards the Lord, but all that was secret in his heart towards the Lord was entirely unknown. And who was the person that concealed it? Peter. He feared the world. He feared the men among whom he found himself. It was the spirit of the world. There is nothing that so destroys confession as fear of the world, and it is evident that this was the case. He had got with the world on its own ground. He wanted, no doubt, to see what was going on. I do not say that there were not deeper and better things at the bottom of his heart, but he did it in concealment. He was off the ground of faith. Here was another fruit of his not watching even one hour—of his failure in prayer when the Lord called him to pray.

And so the trial came—a new kind of trial, not now of patience; but here the question was, Would he confess? The occasion soon came. “A certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him and said, This man was also with him.” Now there was nothing violent; there was no strong language; but it was too much for Peter. It was—what? beloved friends. Association with Christ? He was ashamed of his Master. Oh, what a solemn thing! It was not that he did not love his Master, but he feared even this servant-maid. So mighty is the spirit of the world when we are off the ground of faith, and when we have failed in prayer before the temptation comes.

So he denied, saying, “Woman, I know him not.” It was not only a failure in confession: it was a lie! I know there are many Christians who think that a believer never can tell a lie. I pity them! One's feeling always is, You are going to fail in that which you think impossible. You are going to fall into a lie yourself, and just because you do not believe it possible. “Woman, I know him not.” Nor was this all. “And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not. And about the space of one hour” —for God did not permit all to come in a few moments. No, He will have it made most plain. He would have the awful consequence of neglecting the word of the Lord in prayer. He would have a total humiliation of His servant; and so it was, for now it is bitter aggravation that, although, of course, conscience must have been at work, he must have known perfectly the sin against his Master, and the lie, as a mere question of morality. “And about the space of one hour after, another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilan. And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest.”

Oh, beloved friends, what are we apart from Christ? The worth of every Christian is just the measure in which he has Christ, practically, as his life. I am not now speaking of a person being brought to heaven by blood. No doubt the two things go together; but I do say that all that is precious in a saint of God—all that one can speak of as giving pleasure and satisfaction—is that which gives pleasure and satisfaction to God. And we must remember this. It is no question of character: you cannot trust flesh. Character you may count upon in a man of the world, but never trust it in a Christian. God will not allow character to reap the praise. God will not sustain a person according to his character. Who would have expected this from Peter? Peter may never have been guilty of anything of the kind in his life, even about the common transactions of the world, or about other persons. It is quite evident, from what we see of him in his ordinary ways, that Peter was in no way a man of deceitful character. If one looks at Rebecca, one is not surprised that the sister of Laban should be full of her plans and tricks and ways. And one is not surprised, again, that Jacob should savor of the family character. One sees that there were ways that were unworthy, bearing a most suspicious resemblance to his mother. Well, there, I say, it is his natural character; but not so with Peter; and I think that these two things are of great importance; that is, that natural character has a great deal to do where it is a question of the enemy, but natural character is a very small thing with the Spirit of God.

[W. K.]

(To be continued)

Notes on Luke, Luke 21:5-38, Notes on

Luke alone of the Evangelists notices the fact that the disciples spoke to the Lord about the votive offerings with which it was adorned; all three speak of its goodly stones or buildings. But this does not warrant the inference that the prophetic discourse which follows belongs to those in the temple rather than those on the Mount of Olives. It has been properly remarked that the questions are distinct from the Lord's solemn answer to the admiration expressed, and may well have been to the chosen four on retiring thither as we are told He did by night at the end of our chapter. “And as some spoke of the temple that it was adorned with goodly stones and offerings, he said, [As for] these things which ye behold, there shall come days in which stone shall not be left upon stone which shall not be thrown down.” On the other hand it is surely without justification to assume that Luke could not have omitted the change of scene and auditory if aware of it. On both sides such reasoning leaves out the Spirit of God, and His having a purpose by each which alone accounts for differences on the basis of His own perfect knowledge of all, not of the writers' ignorance.

“And they asked him saying, Teacher, when then shall these things be? and what [is] the sign when these things are about to come to pass? And he said, See that ye be not misled. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am [he]; and the time is drawn nigh: go ye not after them. And when ye shall hear of wars and tumults, be not terrified; for these things must first come to pass, but the end [is] not immediately.” (Ver. 7-9.) It will be observed that the Holy Spirit inspired the writer to drop the question respecting the coming of the Son of man and the

completion of the age. As with Mark, they ask when the destruction of the temple shall be, and the sign of its commencement. The Lord fully replies, but as usual gives much more. But there is neither the completeness of dispensational information right through, nor details as to the consummation of the age, found in the Gospel of Matthew. On the other hand here only are we given distinct light on the coming siege and capture of Jerusalem by the Romans, here only its subsequent ignominious subjection till the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. Other peculiarities of Luke we may see as we proceed through the chapter. The question of the disciples goes no farther than the demolition the Lord spoke of, the Spirit having reserved for Matthew the parabolic history of the course, conduct, and judgment of Christendom, as well as the special account of the Jews at the end of the age, and of all the Gentiles gathered before the throne of the Son of man when He is come. The early warning that follows the inquiry here refers to what soon ensued. There may be analogous deceits in the last days; but I apprehend that here we are in view of what has been. If it were the closing scenes, where would be the propriety of assuring the disciples that the end is not immediately? Matthew may take in what soon followed; but the characteristic feature with him is the end of the age, first in general, then specifically, with its shadows before.

“Then said he to them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: there shall be both great earthquakes in various places and pestilences and famines, and there shall be fearful sights and great signs from heaven. But before all these things they shall lay their hands upon you and persecute you, delivering up to synagogues and prisons, being brought away before kings and rulers for my name's sake; but it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle therefore in your hearts not to meditate before your defense; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to resist or gainsay. Moreover ye shall be delivered up by parents and brethren and relations and friends, and they shall put to death [some] of you, and ye shall be hated by all on account of my name; and a hair of your head shall in no wise perish. By your patience ye shall gain your souls.” (Ver. 10-19.) The strict application of all this to the state of things whether in the world or among the disciples before the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans must be evident to every unprejudiced mind. Luke alone sets forth the grace of the Lord in giving His own a mouth and wisdom beyond the craft and power of all adversaries. In Mark they are to speak “whatsoever shall be given you; for not ye are the speakers but the Holy Spirit.” Luke also puts in broad terms their winning their souls, which would be true in the highest sense for heaven if they were slain.

Next we have a graphic picture of the crisis for Jerusalem under Titus. “But when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that its destruction is drawn nigh. Then let those in Judea flee unto the mountains, and let those in the midst of it depart out, and let those in the fields not enter into it. For these are days of vengeance that all the things written may be fulfilled. Woe to them that are with child and to them that give suck in those days; for there shall be great distress upon the land and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by edge of sword and be led captive into all the nations; and Jerusalem shall be trodden down by [the] nations until [the] times of [the] nations be fulfilled.” (Ver. 20-24.) Here there can be no misunderstanding unless for a pre-occupied mind. The siege with its consequences described by our Lord cannot be a future event because it is followed by the humiliating possession of the Jewish capital by one nation after another till the allotted seasons of Gentile supremacy terminate. This is peculiar to our evangelist who accordingly speaks of armies encompassing the city, which was true then, not like Matthew and Mark of the abomination of desolation, which can only be verified in its closing throes. Hence too the reader may notice, that in spite of a considerable measure of analogy (for there will be a future siege, and even a twofold attack, one of which will be partially successful, the other to the ruin of their enemies, as we learn from Isa. 28; 29 and Zech. 14), there are the strangest contrasts in the issue; for the future siege will be closed by Jehovah's deliverance and reign, as the past did in the capture and destruction of the people dispersed ever since till the times of the Gentiles are full. Accordingly we hear nothing in this Gospel of the abomination of desolation, nor of the time of tribulation beyond all that was or shall be; we hear of both in Matthew and Mark where the Spirit contemplates the last days. Here we are told of great distress on the land and wrath on the Jewish people, as indeed there was. The notion that Luke's variation is designed as a paraphrase of Matthew and Mark, a simpler expression in his Gospel for one more obscure in theirs, is most unworthy of the Holy Ghost and destructive of the truth in the first two Gospels if not in the third. There is fresh truth, and not a sacred comment on what the others said.

In verse 26 and onward we are naturally carried on to the conclusion of the Gentile times. “And there shall be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations in perplexity at sea and waves roaring, men fainting from fear and expectation of the things coming on the habitable earth; for the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draweth nigh.” (Ver. 25-28.) It is Luke only who mentions the moral signs of men's anguish spite of the deceits and pretensions of that day. No doubt there will be strong delusion and the belief of falsehood; but for this very reason there is no rest nor contentment, for only the grace and truth of God in Christ can give peaceful enjoyment with a good conscience. Hence God will know how to trouble men's dreams and to break up Satan's ease, their horror culminating at the sight of the rejected Lord, the Son of man, coming in a cloud with power and glory. But there will be those then on earth, disciples tried by the evils of that day, for whom even the beginning of these troubles and the tokens of change for the world will be the sure harbinger of deliverance.

“And he spake a parable to them, Behold the fig tree and all the trees: when they already sprout, by looking ye know of your own selves that summer [is] now near. So also, when ye see these things take place, know ye that the kingdom of God is near. Verily I say to you that this generation shall not pass away till all things be done. The heaven and the earth shall pass away but my words shall in no wise pass away. But take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be weighed down with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of life, and that day come upon you suddenly; for as a snare it will come upon all that are settled down upon the face of the whole earth. But watch, at every season praying that ye may be deemed worthy to escape all these things that are about to come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” (Ver. 29-36.) We have here an instance of the exceeding accuracy of scripture even in figures. Who but God could have thought of giving only the fig-tree in Matthew speaking of Israel, the fig-tree and all the trees in Luke where the Gentiles are mixed up with the troubles of Israel?

But this is not the only point of interest in this appendix to the prophecy. For the Lord has given us the positive proof, by the way in which verse 32 stands here, that “this generation” cannot mean a mere chronological space of thirty or even one hundred years, for it is brought in after the running out of Gentile times and the coming of the Son of man with power and glory, events still unfulfilled. Its force is moral; not exactly the nation of Israel but that Christ-rejecting race which then refused their Messiah as they do still. This will go on till all these solemn threats of judgment are accomplished. It is profitable to remark that here, not in doctrine or in practice only, but in these unfoldings of the future, the Lord pledges the impossibility of failing in His words. The Lord does not say that “this generation” shall not pass away till the temple is destroyed or the city taken, but till all be fulfilled. Now He had introduced the subsequent treading down of Jerusalem to the end of Israel's trials in His appearing, and He declares that this generation shall not pass away till then; as indeed it is only then grace will form a

new generation, the generation to come. The more we hold fast the continuity of the stream of the prophecy, as distinguished from the crisis in Matthew and Mark, the greater will be seen to be the importance of this remark.

Notice the strongly moral tone in which the dangers and snares of the days before the Son of man appears are touched by the Lord, an often recurring characteristic of our evangelist, The concluding verses (37, 38) are a summary of our Lord's manner or habit at this time, the nights spent on the Mount of Olivet, and by day teaching in the temple, whither all the people came early to hear Him. It was this which led several copyists to insert here the paragraph from John 7:53 to 8: 11; but there is no real ground for such a transposition, any more than for denying it to be the genuine writing of the last evangelist in spite of alleged difficulties.

Notes on Luke, Luke 20:41 and 21:1-4, Notes on

In the various parties, if the leaders of religious thought in Israel, did not dare any more to ask the Lord anything, He puts the crucial question to them; not of course to tempt like them, but to convince them that the Pharisees had no more real faith than the Sadducees, and that the scribes had no more understanding of the divine word than the crowd who knew not the law. His indeed was a probe to conscience and an appeal to the scriptures, if peradventure they might hear and live. Alas! they had ears but heard not, and their own Messiah's highest glory they denied to their own perdition and God's dishonor. And this is no peculiarity of the Jews in that day; it applies as really now throughout, and even more conspicuously among Protestants than among Papists. At bottom, all appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, earthly religion slights Christ: sometimes by open antagonism as when His Deity is opposed and His sacrifice set aside; at other times by setting up rival mediators, the virgin, saints, angels, priests, &c., who usurp that which belongs exclusively to Him. To us then there is but one Lord, even Jesus Christ; and as we cannot serve two masters, so we cannot have two Saviors; but either men hate the one, and love the other; or else they hold to the one, and despise the other.

“And he said to them, How say they that the Christ is David's son; and David himself saith in the book of Psalms, Jehovah said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I put thine enemies [as] a footstool of thy feet? David therefore calleth him Lord; and how is he his son?” (Ver. 41-44.)

There is and could be but one answer. The Messiah, David's son, must have been a divine person in order to be David's Lord, the everlasting enigma of unbelief, now as then the stumbling stone to the Jew. Yet is it as certainly if not as clearly and continually presented in the Old Testament as in the New; and as it is essential to His proper dignity and enhances incalculably the grace of God, so it is indispensable that there should be an irrefragable rock of salvation whether for an Israelite or for any other. Without the Godhead of Jesus, however truly man as He is, Christianity is a delusion, an imposture, and an impossibility, as Judaism was an unmeaning child's play. To Him, God and man in one person, do the law and the prophets bear their unequivocal witness, not more surely to God's righteousness without law than to the Christ's glory above law, however He might deign to be born of woman, born under law, in order to redemption for those who were in this position. (Gal. 4)

But man fears to face the truth till he is born anew. It annihilates his pride, it exposes his vanity in every sense, as well as his guilt and ruin; it makes God the only hope and Savior. Man does not like what grinds his self-importance to powder, and, unless grace intervene savingly, will risk everlasting destruction rather than yield to the testimony of God. But the truth erects a judgment-seat in the conscience of each believer, who now owns himself lost that he may be saved, and saved exclusively by His grace who will be the judge, to their endless misery and shame, of all who despise His glory and His mercy now.

To the believer no truth is simpler, none more precious, than the Christ a man yet God, son of David yet David's Lord, the root and the offspring of David, who came to die but withal the living and eternal God. On the intrinsic dignity of His person hang the grace of His humiliation and the value of His atonement, and the glory to God of the kingdom He will take and display as Son of man. He is now the center to faith of all who are brought to God reconciled by the blood of His cross; as He will be of all things that are in heaven and that are on earth reconciled by Him; but if not God, equally with the Father, such a place of center in grace or glory must be a deadly blow at that honor which is due to the only God, because it would be giving to a creature however exalted the homage proper to Him alone. His Godhead therefore is essential to His character of the model man; the denial of it logically implies the horrible libel and lie that He is no better than the most fraudulent and successful of impostors. This may serve to prove what the guilt of discrediting the Son of God really is; this explains why whoever denies the Son has not the Father, while he that confesses the Son has the Father also. He who honors not the Son honors not the Father who sent Him.

Therefore is judgment given only to the Son; because He alone in infinite love stooped to become a man and to die for men, yea for the guiltiest of sinners, who alas! repaid His love by the deepest dishonor, rejecting Him when He came in grace, as they reject Him preached in grace still, who will judge them as Son of man in that nature because of the assumption of which they despised Him and denied His Godhead. Thus will God compel all, even the proudest unbeliever, to honor the Son as they honor the Father. But this will be to their judgment, not salvation. Eternal life is in hearing Christ's word now and believing Him that sent His Son in love: otherwise nothing remains but a resurrection of judgment in vindication of His injured name, the rejection of the Father in the Son.

We need not dwell on other truths wrapped up in the citation from Psalm 110, though of the deepest interest and elsewhere applied in the New Testament. Here the object is as simple as it is fundamental, an inextricable riddle to the incredulous, Jews or Gentiles. But it is especially the former who have ever stopped short there, silenced but not subdued. As for such Gentiles as professed to receive the only solution in His person, the enemy finds other ways to nullify the truth wherever they are unrenewed by grace. False friends are no better than open enemies, but rather worse; ungodly men turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only master and our Lord Jesus Christ, whose judgment is just and sure, as we sec in the solemn epistle of Jude.

“And, as all the people listened, he said to the disciples, Beware of the scribes that like to walk in robes and love salutations in the markets, and first seats in the synagogues and first places at the feasts, who devour the houses of widows and for a show make long prayers: these shall receive more abundant judgment.” (Ver. 45-47.)

The difference in the object of the Holy Spirit's writing by Matthew and Luke, as well as Mark, comes out here in a striking way. For the former devotes a considerable chapter to their position, their utter failure and the stern judgment awaiting such hollow formalists from God. Mark and Luke touch the question only, the one as a falsifying of service, the other on moral ground, for the instruction of disciples. What is specially Jewish, either in title or in forms and habits, disappears; what Mark and Luke record is not loving service but selfishness and hypocrisy, the more fatal because of the profanation of God's name.

Luke again is with Mark in giving the widow poor but rich, and this doubtless for reasons analogous to their report of the exposure of the proud and empty scribes; Matthew has her not at all. For far different was the Israel of the then day, and with this he is occupied, the judgment coming on Jerusalem, rich but poor, with which the Lord concludes His denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees.

“And he looked up and saw the rich casting their gifts into the treasury, but he saw also a certain poor widow casting into it two mites. And be said, Verily I say unto you, that this poor woman hath cast in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have cast into the gifts, but she out of her need hath cast in all the living which she had.” (Chap. 21: 1-4.) It is a lovely picture of devotedness in the widow: how much lovelier to behold Him, who gave her the faith and drew out her love, admiring and so richly appreciating the fruit of His own grace! May He have so to speak of our wealth toward God in the day that approaches, when mammon and every false estimate shall have disappeared forever!

Notes on Luke, Luke 20:1-40, Notes on

The Lord is now seen in contact with the various classes of officials and religious and political bodies among the Jews, who successively present themselves in the hope of perplexing and inveigling Him, but in effect to their own confusion, Essaying to judge Him, they expose themselves and are judged by the truth from His lips on their own evidence one after another.

“And it came to pass on one of the1 days as he was teaching in the temple and evangelizing, the priests and the scribes came up with the elders, and said unto him, saying, Tell us by what authority thou doest these things; or who it is that gave thee this authority.” (Ver. 1, 2.)

It is ever apt to be thus in an evil day. Worldly religion assumes the sanction of God for that which exists, its permanence and its future triumph. It was so in Israel; and it is so in Christendom. Prophets then held up the fate of Shiloh to the religious chiefs who reasoned from the promises of guaranteed perpetuity for the temple, its ordinances, its ministers, its devotees, and its system in general; and those who warned like Jeremiah found bitter results in the taunts and persecutions of such as had the world's ear. They denied God's title to tell them the truth. And now a greater than Jeremiah was here; and those who stood on their successional office, and those who claimed special knowledge of the scriptures, and those of leading influence in the counsels and conduct of the people, demanded His right to act as He did and its source. No wonder they felt the solemn testimony of approaching ruin to all that in which they had their importance; but there was no faith, no conscience toward God. They therefore turned away from the consideration of their own ways and responsibility to the question of His title.

The Lord meets them by putting another question. “And answering he said unto them, I also will ask you a [or one]2 word, and tell me: The baptism of John, was it of heaven or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we should say, Of heaven, he will say, Why3 believed ye him not? but if we should say, Of men, the whole people will stone us, for they are persuaded that John is a prophet. And they answered that they knew not whence [it was].” (Ver. 3-7.)

The wisdom of the Lord's procedure is worthy of all heed. He who alone could have taken His stand on personal dignity and the nearest relationship and the highest mission pleads none of these things. He probes their consciences; and, in their desire to escape from the consequences of answering truly, they are compelled to confess their incapacity both to guide others and even to act aright themselves in a matter of the deepest and most general concern to all Israel of that day. “The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of Jehovah of hosts. But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith Jehovah of hosts.” So said Malachi, and so the Lord proved now. “Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways but have been partial in the law.” They could not deny, yet refused to profit by, the moral power of John, who bore witness to Jesus as Messiah and to Israel's need of repentance. To own therefore the baptism of John, a new institution, as of heaven, without the least appearance of traditional sanctity or claim of antiquity or connection with the priesthood or the temple, was of the most serious import to men who derived all their consequence from the regular course of the law and its ordinances. Besides, it at once decided the question of the Messiah, for John in the strongest and most solemn way declared that Jesus was the Christ. To disown John and his baptism would have been fatal to their credit, for all the people were persuaded that John was a prophet. It was to them a mere question of policy, and hence they shirked answering under cover of a lie. They could not afford to be truthful; they said they knew not whence John's baptism was. They were as void of faith as the heathen. He who read their dark hearts winds up with the reply, “Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.” (Ver. 8.) It was useless to inform unbelief. Long before the Lord had forbidden His disciples to tell any man that He was the Christ; for He was going to suffer on the cross. “When ye shall have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am [he], and that I do nothing of myself, but even as my Father taught me, I speak these things.” (John 8)

Here we have no special application to the Jews in order to let them know that the most despised men and corrupt women go into the kingdom of God before the heads honored by the peoples. This has its appropriate place in the Gospel of Matthew. But we have the parable of the vineyard let out to husbandmen in all three synoptic accounts, each with its own special shades of truth.

“And he began to speak unto the people this parable: a man planted. a vineyard and let it out to husbandmen, and left the country for a long time. And in season he sent unto the husbandmen a slave that they might give him of the fruit of the vineyard; but the husbandmen beat and sent him away empty. And again he sent another slave, and him also they beat and dishonored and sent away empty. And again he sent a third, and they wounded and cast out him also. And the lord of the vineyard said, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: perhaps on seeing they will reverence him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours. And him they cast out of the vineyard and slew: what therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy these husbandmen, and will give the vineyard to others. And when they heard they said, Let it not be. But he looked on

them and said, What then is this that is written? A stone which the builders rejected, this has become head of [the] corner. Every one that falleth on that stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it shall crush him to powder.” (Ver. 9-18.)

On the truth common to all it is not needful to speak now. But the reader in comparing may notice the greater fullness of detail in Matthew and Mark than in Luke as to the dealings with Israel; as also the greater minuteness in Mark of the reception the servants and son received. So also observe on the other hand that Mark and Luke speak simply of giving the vineyard to others, Matthew on letting it out to other husbandmen such as shall render him the fruits in their seasons. Responsibility is thus most maintained in Matthew, grace in Luke, both being true and of capital moment. Again, in Matthew it is “he that falleth,” in Luke “every one,” &c. There is breadth in judgment as in grace. Mark has not the verse at all, as not bearing on service, the theme of the Spirit by him.

“And the scribes and the chief priests that very hour sought to lay hands on him (and they feared the people); for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them.” Again does the Holy Spirit notice their bad conscience, their hatred of Jesus, and their fear of the people. God was in none of their thoughts: else had they repented and believed in Jesus. What a comment on the parable was their desire to lay hands on Him! Thus were they soon to fulfill the voice of the prophets and the parable of the great Prophet Himself.

“And they watched and sent suborned persons pretending to be righteous that they might lay hold of his word so as to deliver him to the power and the authority of the governor. And they asked him, saying, Teacher, we know that thou rightly sayest and teachest, and acceptest no person, but in truth teachest the way of God. Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar or not? But perceiving their deceit he said unto them, Show me a denarius; whose image and title hath it? And answering they said, Caesar’s. And he said unto them, Therefore render the things of Caesar to Caesar, and the things of God to God.” (Vers. 20-25.) The moral depravity of all concerned is here very marked, whether of suborners or suborned. Simplicity of purpose detects and exposes the crafty. Jesus sacrifices no duty. Let Caesar have what is his, and God His own. The world-panderers and the zealots were alike foiled, who set one duty against another, doing neither aright because each was seeking self. “And they were not able to lay hold of his word before the people, and wondering at his answer were silent.” (Ver. 26.)

“And some of the Sadducees who deny that there is any resurrection came up and asked him, saying, Teacher, Moses wrote to us, If any one's brother having a wife die and he be childless, that his brother take the wife, and raise up seed to his brother. There were then seven brothers, and the first having taken a wife died childless; and the second, and the third, took her; and likewise also the seven left no children and died; and lastly the woman died. In the resurrection therefore of which of them does the woman become wife? For the seven had her as wife. And Jesus said to them, The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage; but those counted worthy to obtain that age and the resurrection from among [the] dead neither marry nor are given in marriage, for they can die no more, for they are equal to angels, and are sons of God, being sons of resurrection. But that the dead rise even Moses showed at4 the bush when he calleth Jehovah the God of Abraham, and God of Isaac, and God of Jacob. But He is not God of dead but of living, for all live to Him.” (Verses 27-38.)

We need not combat here men like Dr. Campbell, ably as he wrote on the Gospels, or Dwight, who contend that the point is a future life rather than the resurrection of the body. Not so. The proposed case could hardly have risen but as a difficulty in the ways of a risen body, though it is doubtless true that the Sadducees went farther and denied angels and spirits.

Our Gospel, it is of interest to observe here, furnishes several distinct truths beyond what is found in Matthew and Mark. Resurrection from among the dead (not resurrection as such) has its own proper age, a time of special blessedness which the resurrection of the unjust cannot be 6aid to be. It was after this the apostle longed so ardently, minding no sufferings meanwhile, none above all of Christ in character. The resurrection of the wicked is for the second death. The resurrection from among the dead is for the righteous who die no more, being equal to angels and sons of God, being sons of resurrection. The resurrection of the unjust is the awful condition of eternal judgment, as they had rejected Christ and eternal life in Him. God is Abraham's God and will raise the dead to enjoy the promises not yet fulfilled; He is not God of dead men but of living; for to Him all live, even before the resurrection comes as well as when it does come. Thus Luke above all the evangelists gives us a full glimpse of the separate state, besides the certainty of resurrection and glory. “And some of the scribes answering said, Teacher, thou hast well said. And5 they did not dare any more to ask him anything.” (Ver. 39, 40.) We shall see that the Lord's turn is come to question them.

Notes on Luke, Luke 1:26-80, Notes on

It was the angel Gabriel who was sent to Daniel to make known of old the Messiah's coming and cutting off in the famous prophecy of the seventy weeks. Now he comes to Mary, the espoused of Joseph, and announces to her, “the virgin” of a still older prophet, the birth of that same Messiah. No wonder that he salutes her as a favored one, with whom the Lord was. Blessed was she among women! Mary, though troubled, pondered what might be the meaning of this salutation. The angel bids her not fear, for she has found favor with God. She is the chosen channel of the wondrous purposes which should yet fill the world as well as her own people with blessing—the appointed mother she is to be of One in whom God was about to solve all the difficulties that sin had brought into the world by a righteous triumph over it—nay, to make it possible for God to bless those who believed, sinners though they had been, and to make them righteously triumph through and with Himself.

Therefore he says, “Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus” —a divine Savior. “He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David.” This is another and quite different glory, which evidently combines with saving power His title of Messiah. “And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” Even in its lowest domain, how far is His kingdom from being a mere human dominion!

“Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?” She does not doubt, but she asks confidingly. Hence there is no smiting dumb nor any sign of unbelief, as in the case of Zacharias, who asked, “Whereby shall I know this?” There may be a question in the spirit which needs an answer, but betrays no lack of faith. There might be one not so dissimilar in form, but which really sprang from unbelief. God does not judge according to appearance but the heart.

The angel accordingly explains in all grace to Mary. “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee.” It was not to be nature but divine power. “Therefore also that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God,” and not merely Son of man. This is exceedingly important. “Son of God” is a title that belongs to our Lord both in His divine glory before He became a man and here; for, in this place when He became a man, He did not cease to be Son of God. As incarnate He was still the Son of God. So, again, when He rose from the dead, the same thing was true; He was the Son of God as risen again. It is plain therefore that it is a title that appertains to Him in the three conditions in which Scripture represents our Lord. He was the Son of God when He was purely and simply a divine person; Son of God when He became a man; Son of God when risen from the dead and gone out of this world to heaven.

But there is another thing also to note, that His taking manhood did not in the smallest degree connect Him with the taint of man's fallen nature. This was absolutely counteracted by the singularity of His conception, which was effected through the power of the Holy Ghost: “therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.” Thus He was holy, not merely in His divine nature, but in His humanity. He was emphatically the Holy One of God: without this not only would salvation have been impossible for us, but even His own acceptance as man would have been out of the question. We have therefore in this passage the most important truth as to the birth of this wondrous child, and the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ. Much here given is peculiar to Luke. Mary is informed also of what God was doing to her cousin Elizabeth, for as the angel added “with God nothing shall be impossible.” She bows at once to the will of the Lord, with the words, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.”

Mary then arises, enters into the house of Zacharias and salutes her kinswoman, Elizabeth, which gives occasion to the wonderful obeisance that was paid even by the unborn babe, Elizabeth's child, to her the predestined mother of the Messiah, in honor of the Messiah Himself. The consequence was that Elizabeth, filled with the Holy Ghost, breaks out into all acknowledgment of the place that God had given Mary. “And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” It is remarkable how beautifully it is owned that even the child that was yet to be born was the Lord. We find just the same thing with Mary herself. She has no notion of being taken out of the place of a needy sinner, whilst the miraculous birth of John does not detract from Elizabeth's sense of the glory of the Messiah, but rather adds to her sense of it. She owns at the same time that God had shown singular favor to Mary's soul. “Blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.” She knew what had happened to her husband because of unbelief, and contrasts with it Mary's meek, because believing, heart.

Mary answers, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.” It is remarkable how simply scripture has met beforehand the monstrous unbelief of man which lowers God, as much as it exalts a human being. Mary had no thought of such exaltation. She says, “All generation, shall call me blessed,” but not a Blesser. She was the object of blessing, not the giver or mediatrix of it. “For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name (not a word of her own). And his mercy is on them that fear him (not that pray to or worship me) 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” —alluding to her own place as well as Elizabeth's. “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 spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever.” It is remarkable how Jewish the character of the joy is, and the acknowledgment of the mercy.

So Mary abides with her cousin three months and then returns to her own house. “Now Elizabeth's full time came that she should be delivered: and she brought forth a son. And her neighbors and her kinsfolk heard how the Lord had shown great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.” The general thought was to call the child after his father's name; but the mother, who alone can speak for it, directs him to be called John. Zacharias is appealed to and writes, “his name is John.” And immediately the punishment of his unbelief departs from him. His tongue was loosed and he spake and praised God; which filled all around with fear, astonishment, and anticipation of what this child would be.

Zacharias breaks forth into a strain of praise. “Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.” It is remarkable the grace that does not so much look at his own house as at the house of God's servant David. There was faith here. During the season of his dumbness Zacharias had pondered the ways of the Lord, and the Holy Ghost, as He had filled Elizabeth, and as He had filled the babe from his mother's womb, so now filled Zacharias who prophesies the end of these wonders. “That we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he sware to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear.” It is important to observe how thoroughly this savors of Old Testament hopes. It is not a question of sins merely but of being delivered from their enemies, which last is assuredly not, nor ought to be, the feeling of the Christian now. Does not the Christian serve God, delivered from his sins, in the midst of his enemies? So when the Lord comes, it is simply a taking him up out of the midst of his enemies to be with Himself in heaven. Whereas the Jew cannot but look for the destruction of his enemies when the time of his deliverance comes. Here then the language is, “That we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.” Such is the expectation of Israel according to the Psalms and the Prophets.

“And thou child shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways” —an allusion clearly to Malachi as well as to Isaiah. “To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins.” It is not that the Jews will be without the remission of their sins; they will have that, beside deliverance from their enemies. All this is on account of the bowels of “mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace.”

Such will be the condition in which the Jews will be finally met by God; there will be a special darkness more immediately before the light shines out upon them. It was when they were in bitter degradation under the Gentiles, as well as in moral darkness that the Lord came the first time; still more will this be the case when He comes again. There will be renewed bondage under the power of the west; a stranger king will reign in the land, and a special delusive power or Satan will be there: but the Lord will appear to the discomfiture of all their foes and the full deliverance of His people Israel.

Meanwhile “the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his showing unto Israel.” We have seen that, before the large universal character of the gospel of Luke appears—the grace of God to man, there is the utmost care to skew the goodness and forbearance of the Lord in meeting Israel as they then were. Thus they have the responsibility of refusing their Messiah, before God lays the foundation of the richest grace to man generally.

Notes on Luke, Luke 1:5-25, Notes on

That the Gospel of Luke has a special aspect towards men at large, that it displays the grace of God towards the Gentiles who had been so long forgotten, or seemed to be so in the outward dealings of God, is very plain. Nevertheless some have found, as they thought, an insuperable difficulty to their admitting this to be the characteristic business of Luke, because we find for instance at the very beginning a striking occupation of the writer's mind with the circumstances of the Jewish people before, at, and after the birth of Christ. In fact, none of the gospels introduces us so thoroughly into the whole routine of their state and worship, with their relation to the worldly powers: first of all to the king that then ruled over them, Herod the Great; and, in the next chapter, to the Roman Empire.

But I think it will be found, if we look below the surface, that there is no real inconsistency between such a preface as we have in Luke, and the general regard that he pays to the Gentiles in the rest of his gospel. In fact, it answers closely to what we find in the ministry of the apostle who had Luke for his companion in labors. For although Paul was so emphatically the apostle of the Gentiles, the uncircumcision being delivered over to him as the circumcision was to Peter; none the less was it Paul's habit in every place first to visit the Jews, or, as he says himself, “to the Jew first and also to the Gentile.” So it is precisely that Luke begins with the Jew; discloses God working in the midst of the remnant of that people before we find the intimations of His mercy towards the Gentiles. So far from inconsistency on the part of Luke with his purpose, this very introduction of the Jews in the beginning of his gospel seems even to be morally necessary; because God could not, so to speak, go out to the Gentiles according to the analogy of His dealings from the beginning and His promises to the Jewish people, unless there were first the manifestation of His goodness there and the unheeded effect of it as far as the Jews were concerned. God proves amply His mercy towards Israel before He turns to the nations. Israel would none of Him or His kingdom: the Gentiles would hear.

Hence we find that, although Luke's be the Gentile gospel, there is first this full and bold outline presented to us of the working of God's grace among the Jews.

“There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.” Thus we have the living picture of the state of things then going on in Israel. There might be a foreign prince over them—an Edomite, and high priests in strange confusion, as we shall see shortly; but for all that there was a priest duly married to one of the daughters of Aaron, Zacharias, of the course of Abia. “And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” Low as the state was in Israel and outwardly most irregular, nevertheless, in the midst of all there were godly ones: and the only thing that enabled any to walk after such a sort in Israel was the faith of the coming Messiah: this at least had not disappeared. On the contrary, God's Spirit was working in the hearts of a few, preparing them for the One who was coming. Zacharias and Elizabeth were among these few. They w ere expecting in faith, the effect of which, where it is real, is to give power of walking rightly. The only souls who walked well, even according to the law, were those who looked beyond the law to Christ. Those who merely rested in the law broke it, though the law might be their boast. On the contrary, such as looked for the Messiah were faithful, “walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.”

It is the same thing in principle now. There are those who cry up the law as a rule of life, but such never carry themselves well even according to that standard. On the contrary, those who go forward in the sense of God's grace, knowing the full deliverance of the believer in the redemption that is in Christ, do really manifest the righteousness of the law; as it is said, “What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” If I am walking after the law, I do not fulfill it; if I am walking after the Spirit, I do. The same doctrine appears in Gal. 5. If we walk according to the Spirit, there are good fruits: “against such there is no law.” On the contrary, the law justifies the fruits of the Spirit, but the Spirit never justifies the ways of any man who finds his rule of life in the law, which is and must be to a sinful man a rule of condemnation and death. There is no power of grace, unless Christ be the object of the heart.

Such was the case with this godly pair in Israel. The aged priest and his wife were really (i.e., believingly) looking for the Messiah. Their hope was no fleshly desire to exalt themselves or their nation in earthly power; though it remains true that Israel will then be the head and the Gentiles the tail, when Messiah comes to close their last fiery tribulation and deliver them from their foes. But in that day the hearts of the godly remnant will be lifted above pride or vanity; they will bear to be exalted above all other peoples of the earth. Such is the divine counsel according to prophecy which God will surely accomplish in its season.

Observe how faith leads to faithfulness. Those who merely look to the law (i.e., as much as God requires) never accomplish His righteous requirement. In every case one must be above any obligations in order to fulfill them. I must have faith in God's object in order to fulfill God's will. If my mind is occupied with Christ, I shall be able in the same measure to glorify God.

Thus it was with Zacharias and his wife. They looked in faith for the Messiah: hence they were righteous, and walking in the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blamelessly. Nevertheless they had a disappointment of heart which answered to the stake of things in Israel. “They had no child, because that Elizabeth was barren; and they both were now well stricken in years.” They had prayed about it, as we find afterward. Though Zacharias seems even to have lost sight of his own prayer, yet God had not. And so “it came to pass, that while he executed time priest's office before God in the order of his course” —for here be was faithful to the requisition of daily duty— “according to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.” We have thus a full and lively setting forth of what was actually going on then in Israel. “And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.” In this form such a visit was unknown for a long while. It was a gracious intervention of God (not merely betimes, as we find in another gospel, for the healing of sicknesses and weaknesses of the people, but) for the more glorious purpose of announcing the forerunner of the Messiah Himself. Was it so strange after all that he was to be born beyond nature of this godly couple One could not have anticipated such a thing; but once announced as God's

intention, how wise and suitable our hearts see it to be! When Zacharias saw the angel “he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias, for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John” (i.e., the gift of God). “And thou shalt have joy and gladness: and many shall rejoice at his birth.” (Ver. 12-15.) It was calculated to strike the eye and heart of any godly Israelite, being manifestly God's gift. The Lord was faithful to His people and His purposes. There were many who at this time were looking for the Messiah. We know even from heathen authors that there was a strong, general, and ancient tradition (no doubt derived from Balaam of old, and Daniel later, and the Septuagint), that at this time a great prince was to be born in Israel, who would lead that nation on to supremacy. Hence they would naturally heed this extraordinary birth, and the singular course of life which John the Baptist ever followed, as well as his preaching when the time for it was come.

“He shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb.” He should be a Nazarite, separated to the Lord, not only in outward separation, but with inward and special power of God. “And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.” (Ver. 16.) This would be the characteristic aim of his mission—to recall them to God from whom they had departed. “And be shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Ver. 17.) Elijah was the prophet who took up the broken obligations of the people. Hence it is that be went to Horeb. Thence it was that Elias had his great commission from before God; there he went through the scene we have so strikingly described in his history. Horeb was the place where the law was given, and Elias went back thither, feeling how deeply the people had departed from God. John should now recall the people in the spirit and power of Elias. It is repentance; it is not of course the great work of God in putting away sin—that could only be done by one, even Jesus the Lord. Neither is it the power of the Holy Ghost shed upon Israel. This also could only be done by Christ. He is, as we find in John, “the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world..... the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.” But John could at least do his own work by God's grace given to him; he should go “before him in the spirit and power of Elias.” This is a remarkable testimony first, because it is said he shall go before the Lord, i.e., before Jehovah; a plain statement of the dignity of Jesus. He was really Jehovah; and this messenger of His should go before His face, next, “in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children.” There was no union, but alienation; everything was broken in Israel. Sin always produces such dislocations. But John should “turn the hearts of the fathers to the children;” that is, he would be used of God to unite them in affection, and also to instruct them morally, or lead “the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.” Hence, in all respects, both in affection and in moral power and wisdom, his mission was “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Such would be John's work” to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

“And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.” Unbelief works just when God was about to accomplish this signal mercy—a remarkable but by no means infrequent case which we would do well to apply to our souls. That is, when God means mercy to us, we are too apt to limit the Lord; to doubt Him even when the blessing comes very close to us; to put some difficulty in the way, yielding to the suggestions of the enemy and the unbelief of our own hearts. Zacharias accordingly asks how he should know it, The angel answers, “I am Gabriel that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee and to show thee these glad tidings. And behold thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words which shall be fulfilled in their season.” (Ver. 19, 20.) A measure of chastening was thus put upon Zacharias—a sign to others, but at the same time a rebuke to himself. The very fact that He was struck suddenly dumb would awaken the attention of the people. They would see that an extraordinary occurrence had taken place and might be led to think about it. On the other hand, when God had sent His angel to tell him that these things should be done, Zacharias showed his unbelief in requiring another sign. Hence his chastening. God's words should be fulfilled in their season spite of his unbelief. Mercy removes the stroke in due season.

“And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he tarried so long in the temple. And when he came out he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple; for he beckoned unto them and remained speechless. And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.” (Ver. 21-23.) Each priest had to serve in his course from sabbath to sabbath; so when the week was up, he leaves. “And after those days his wife Elizabeth conceived and hid herself five months, saying, “Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach from among men.” (Ver. 25.) The feeling of Elizabeth under the circumstances was just as godly as the unbelief of Zacharias was a striking witness of what is so natural to us all.

This closes the opening incidents which the Spirit of God gives us by Luke.

Notes on Luke, Luke 1:1-4, Notes on

There is no gospel which more shows the mind and love of God than this of Luke. None is more truly and evidently inspired. Nevertheless there is none so deeply marked by traces of the human hand and heart. This is its characteristic object in presenting Christ to us. Luke had, as the work assigned him of the Holy Ghost, to delineate our Lord as a man, both in body and soul. This he does not only as to facts which are related about Him, but in all His course and teaching in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension. It is emphatically a man we see and hear, a divine Person, no doubt, but at the same time a real proper man who walks in perfect dependence and absolute obedience, honoring God and honored of Him in all things.

For this reason I believe it is that Luke alone opens his gospel with an address to a particular man. You could not have Matthew, consistently with the purpose and character of his gospel, addressing it to a man; nor is it conceivable of Mark or of John. Luke so writes with the most admirable propriety. “Whereas many have undertaken to arrange a declaration concerning the matter fully believed in among us; even as they who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having thorough acquaintance from the outset with all things accurately, to write to thee in regular order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest truly know the certainty of accounts [or things] in which thou hast been instructed.” Thus Luke was led of God as one who had a thirst and loving desire for the good of Theophilus, and fitly addresses this gospel to him: and this we shall find in harmony with its character throughout. It was not for him only, of course, but for the permanent instruction of the Church yet none the less was it written to him. Theophilus was laid on the heart of that godly man to be instructed in the things of God, and this draws out the workings of the Spirit of God in him to expound the way of God as shown in Christ more perfectly.

Theophilus appears to have been a man of rank, probably a Roman governor. This seems the reason why he is called here “Most Excellent,” or, as we might say, His Excellency. It relates to official position,1 and not to his character morally as a man. It is evident be was a believer, but only partially instructed. The object of the evangelist here was to give him a fuller understanding of “the way.”

At this time there were many accounts of Christ in vogue among Christians. The “many” spoken of here who had undertaken to draw up these accounts of our Lord, were not inspired. Luke does not charge them with evil intent in what they wrote, still less with falsehood, But it was clearly inadequate, as being no more than the fruit of a human effort to relate the matters fully believed among the Christians. They did not accomplish the work so as to set aside the need of a fresh and above all a divinely given narrative of the Lord Jesus. Only we must carefully remember that the difference between an inspired writing and any other, is not that the other is necessarily false, and that the inspired one is simply true. There is much more than this. It is the truth as God sees it, and with that special object which God always has in view when He furnishes an account of anything. A gospel is not a mere biography, it is God's account of Christ governed by the special moral object He was pleased to impress on it. This is characteristic of all inspired writings, whatever their form or aim. Inspiration excludes mistake, no doubt; but it does much more than that. It includes a divine object for the instruction of the faithful in the display of God's glory in Christ. These “many” biographers spoken of by Luke were unauthorized by the Spirit of God. They may have entered on their self-imposed task with the best motives, and some or all may have been persons in whom the Spirit of God was (i.e., Christians), but they were not inspired any more than one who preaches the gospel or seeks to edify believers, There is a weighty difference between the leading of the Spirit in a general way, where flesh may more or less impair the truth enforced, and the inspiration of the Spirit, which not only excludes all error but gives what was never given before. Luke was inspired; yet he does not put forward his inspiration. And what then? Who does? Matthew, Mark, John, Paul, or any other? When people write an imposture they naturally pretend to this or that, and are apt most to claim what they have least or not at all. They may talk much about inspiration; the inspired writers, as a rule, take it for granted. It is self-proved, not posted up. The special character that distinguishes these writings from all others to the heart and conscience, gives the believer the certainty of inspiration. For, I repeat, the Holy Ghost not only excludes error, but writes with a divine object, and communicates the truth as none but God can. And these proofs are such as to leave the unbeliever without excuse. Light wants nothing else to show itself.

Observe one marked difference here claimed between these many uninspired writers and Luke's Gospel.

They had taken up the tradition of such as had been from the beginning of the Lord's public life eye-witnesses and ministers of the word. It was founded upon oral testimony. But Luke takes particular pains to let us know that this is not said of his own Gospel. He does not attribute it to the same sources as theirs; but claims an accurate and thorough acquaintance of all things from the very first (). He does not explain his sources any more than other inspired men; but he does contrast the character of what he knew and had to say with those who merely drew up a report from the earliest and best tradition. This is of high importance, and has been often overlooked. Like Matthew he goes back to the very first and even before Matthew's relations; for he gives us not only the circumstances that preceded the birth of Christ but the account of all that pertained to His forerunner's birth.

Thus, though Luke does so far say that “it seemed good to me also” as well as to them, nevertheless he otherwise distinguishes his own task entirely from theirs. He does not tell us how he had his perfect understanding of all things from the very first; he simply lays down the fact. Again, it seems to me that the reason why he alone gives us his motive for writing, without putting forward his inspired character, is of all interest. Not only is it unusual in the sacred writers, but also Luke has the human element so predominant that it would be somewhat inconsistent with it to dwell strongly on the fact that it was God's word he was writing. He above all therefore would rather avoid bringing it out prominently or formally, though he proves practically, that every line was truly inspired.

The regular () order was not that in which the events occurred. Such a mere sequence is by no means either the only order or the best for all purposes. To Luke it would have been an arrangement infinitely inferior to the one he has adopted. All it means is that he has written his account from the very first in a methodical manner. What that method is can only be learned from studying the gospel itself. It will be proved, as we proceed, that Luke's is essentially a moral order, and that be classifies the facts, conversations, questions, replies, and discourses of our Lord according to their inward connection, and not the mere outward succession of events, which is in truth the rudest and most infantine form of record. But to group events together with their causes and consequences, in their moral order, is a far more difficult task for the historian, as distinguished from the mere chronicler. God can cause Luke to do it perfectly.

Again, Luke writes as a man to a man, unfolding the goodness of God in a man—the man Christ Jesus. Hence all that would exemplify humanity, as in Christ and also in us before God, is brought out in the most instructive manner. He writes for the help of his excellency, Theophilus, that he might truly know () the certainty of those things wherein he had been instructed. God thus takes care of those who know Him, though it may be imperfectly, and He would lead them more deeply into the understanding and enjoyment of what He is now communicating to man by His grace. “To him that hath shall be given.” It is the way of God. Theophilus had been enabled to receive Christ and to confess Him. Hence, though Luke sets forth with particular care, how truly the gospel was preached to the poor (see chap, 4, 6, 7), yet his gospel as a whole is addressed to this man of rank, now a disciple. Circumstantially there is no man so much to be pitied as to the truth of God or who so needs the grace of God as one who is great in this world, because he is peculiarly open to snares, temptations, and cares of the world, which war against the soul and threaten to choke up the seed of the word. Therefore we have the gracious care of Him who knows so well what the heart of man needs and who, despising not any, deigns to provide for the great man now made low, and assuredly feeling his poverty, in spite of rank or riches.

Notes on Luke, Luke 19:28-48, Notes on

Next follows the approach to Jerusalem. The Messiah indeed, but Son of Man, presents Himself according to the prophecies going before even when they are not formally cited, with the fullest parabolic instruction just given that the opposition to Him was deliberately willful and conclusive, for it was not only that His citizens (The Jews) despised Him coming as He did in humiliation for the deepest purposes of divine love, but they “hated” Him and sent a message after Him, saying, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” Awful to hear from His lips, those were His “enemies,” above all others, who would not that He should reign over them. His heavenly glory was at least as repugnant to them as His earthly abasement. They appreciated neither the grace which brought Him down nor the glory to which as man He was exalted.

What could He say then but “Bring them hither and slay them before me?” as ever, the moral springs are laid bare in our Gospel, and, if evil, judged.

“And when he had said these things, he went on before, going up to Jerusalem. And it came to pass when he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, toward the mountain called Olivet, he sent two of his disciples, saying, Go away into the village over against you; in which as ye enter ye shall find a colt tied on which not one of man ever sat: loose and bring it. And if any one ask you, Why do ye loose [it]? thus shall ye say to him, Because the Lord hath need of it. And they that were sent, having gone away, found even as he had said to them. And as they were loosing the colt, its owners said to them, Why loose ye the colt? And they said, Because the Lord hath need of it. And they brought it to Jesus; and, having cast their garments on the colt, they set Jesus thereon; and, as they went, they strewed their garments in the way.” (Verses 28-36.)

The labor of ancients and moderns to find in this remarkable incident a type of the Gentiles obedient to the gospel, as the Lord received and rode on the colt, seems to me far from intelligent. Rather was it very simply the evidence of His divine knowledge and the assertion among the Jews of His claim as Jehovah Messiah, verified by facts and by the proved subjection of human hearts where God was pleased to effect it to the honor of His Son. Hence the minuteness with which the words which passed and the accomplishment of all He said are noted by the Spirit. Doubtless, as in all the Gospels, so here it was in meekness and lowliness He entered; still it was as the king according to the revealed mind of God. It was not yet the day of trouble when Jehovah is to hear His Christ with the saving strength of His right hand; nor was yet the time come for the Jew to glory in the name of Jehovah, but alas I no better than the Gentiles who know not God, these in chariots and those on horses. But One was there who for them and us in all the degradation and selfishness and guilt of the fallen race was willing to bear the uttermost rejection of man, the forsaking of God Himself crowning it, that we might be brought to God owning our sinfulness and resting on the grace which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

But the power of God, which wrought in hearts prepared by grace as a suitable testimony to Jesus at that moment, was still more pointedly marked in what Luke next records, and Luke only as it is characteristic of the Holy Ghost's design in his account. “And as he was drawing near, already at the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began with rejoicing to praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works which they had seen, saying, Blessed the King that cometh in Jehovah's name: in heaven peace, and glory in [the] highest. And some of the Pharisees from the crowd said unto him, Teacher, rebuke thy disciples. And answering he said, I tell you that, if these shall be silent, the stones will cry out.” (Verses 37-40.)

It is not merely the crowds or those who went before and followed as in Matthew and Mark; nor is it the cries of the children in the temple, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David, as in the first Gospel most appropriately. Here we are told of the whole multitude of the disciples, and hence of words only befitting their lips, though surely given of God with a wisdom reaching far beyond their measure, as is known not seldom among the witnesses of Christ. “Peace in heaven and glory in the highest” looks · to things higher and more immediate than the preceding words cited from Psa. 118 and common to all four evangelists.

It is a striking change even from the announcement of another multitude, near the beginning of this Gospel, who suddenly appeared with the angelic herald of the Savior's birth, and praised God, saying, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, in men good pleasure.” Such was the suited celebration of the Son now incarnate, that marvelous and mighty fact which introduced God Himself into the most touching relations with humanity, and laid the basis for the manifestation of the Father in the person of Christ, as well as for the accomplishment of the infinite work of redemption, on which hangs the righteous vindication of God, and the gracious deliverance of the elect, and the reconciliation of all things in heaven and on earth to His own everlasting glory. And the heavenly host speak of the grand result as then invisibly enshrined in Him just born, a babe in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger in Bethlehem. God was pleased to manifest His good pleasure in men, not in angels, and so to fill the highest seats with glory to Himself, and earth with peace.

But in fact Jesus was, as the prophets had fully and distinctly foreshown He must be, despised and rejected of men. This postponed in divine wisdom, though it could not frustrate, the purpose of God. Rather did it make room for a new and higher display of what was hidden in God from ages and generations, and now made known in the church to the principalities and powers in heavenly places. However this be, the disciples in their outburst of praise (now that the Lord was rejected and with Him meanwhile peace for the earth gone, and division and a sword the consequence of the struggle between light and darkness) do nevertheless anticipate “peace in heaven and glory in the highest.” If the former proclaimed the general purpose of God, the latter the ways of God when the enemy might seem on the point of triumphing. If earth disown and cast out the Savior, if the Jews refuse the Messiah because He is incomparably more than the Son of David and come to bring about incomparably deeper and larger purposes, it is but for a season a transfer of the seat of blessing to heaven for the brightest and fullest accomplishment of all God's will and mind. The kingdom itself became manifestly of heaven thereby, and the exaltation of the rejected Lord is to sit down meanwhile on the right hand of the Majesty on high, Satan being utterly defeated by man in the person of the woman's Seed on the throne of the highest, and the kingdom over the earth will follow the moment that it pleases the Father, who is meanwhile forming a people united to Christ His Son, His body, His bride, to be with Him where He is at His coming. Peace is in heaven, because He was going there victoriously, having made peace by the blood of the cross, Himself our peace now whether we have been Jews or Greeks.

If Pharisees, insensible to His glory, complained of the praises of the disciples, the Lord could not but tell them that they were more obdurate than the stones beneath and around them.

Observe further that instead of the dispensational lesson of the fig tree cursed as in Matthew, and in Mark with yet minuter details for instruction in service, we have the grace of the Lord in His weeping over the guilty and doomed city. “And when he drew near, on seeing the city, he wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things for thy peace: but now they are hid from thine eyes. For days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall make a rampart about thee and compass thee round and keep thee in on every side, and level thee with the ground and thy children in thee, and not leave in thee stone upon stone; because thou knewest not the season of thy visitation.” (Ver. 41-44.) Every word of the warning was punctually fulfilled in the siege of Titus; but what grace shone out of that heart surcharged with grief for the people so blindly to their own ruin refusing Himself who wept over them in a love thus truly divine and perfectly human!

It was Matthew's office to bring out the woes He solemnly pronounced over the holy city now so unholy, not their civil destruction but rather the sanctuary once His Father's house, now their house left to them desolate, yet not hopelessly. “For” as He said then, “ye shall not see me

till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah.” All that is left out in this part of our Gospel, and the more remarkably, as we find the cleansing of the temple afterward. “And entering into the temple he began to cast out those that sold,1 saying to them, It is written, And my house shall be a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of robbers.” (Ver. 45, 46.) Without agreeing with Jerome, who saw in the act of our Lord the greatest miracle He ever wrought, one may note profitably how, even at such a moment when irresistible energy accompanied His indignant rebuke of their profanity and cast such unworthy traffic outside the sacred precincts, He employs as ever the written word as His ground and warrant.

In harmony with this we read that “he was teaching by day in the temple; but the chief priests and the scribes and the chief of the people sought to destroy him, and did not find what they could do, for all the people hung on him while hearing.” (Ver. 47, 48.) The word of God from His lips especially told on the consciences of men. The religious leaders, having long rejected Him, not only lost all right feeling but were given up to a murderous hatred soon to be satisfied. Such ever proves the world when confronted with the light of God; and withal the perfect love of God in Christ only provoked it the more.

Notes on Luke, Luke 19:1-27, Notes on

The account of Zacchaeus is one of those peculiar to Luke; and we may readily see how strikingly it furthers the moral aim of the Spirit in this Gospel. Its collocation too may be at once explained on the same principle, supposing as I do that the facts occurred while the Lord was passing through Jericho, whereas the blind man Bartimaeus did not receive sight till He was on His way outside. But it seemed good to the Holy Ghost here, as often similarly elsewhere, to bring the narrative of Zacchaeus into such a position with the parable that follows as to illustrate by them the general character, not only of His first advent but of His second, thereby correcting many a mistaken thought into which men, yea disciples, were apt to slip then and since.

“And he entered and was passing through Jericho; and, behold, a man by name called Zacchaeus, and he was chief tax-gatherer, and he was rich. And he was seeking to see Jesus who he was, and could not for the crowd, because he was little in stature. And he ran on before and got up a sycamore that he might see him, because he was to pass that [way]. And when he came to the place, Jesus looking up saw him and said to him, Zacchaeus, make haste and come down; for to-day I must abide in thy house. And making haste he came down and received him joyfully.” (Verses 1-6.)

The Lord had already in parables set forth divine grace to the lost sinner as such, above all in the prodigal son. “We have now the actual history of a publican, a chief tax-gatherer, and a rich man, to whom grace sent salvation that very day. But here it is well to distinguish what is often overlooked. Some allege that Zacchaeus was a man without the fear of God, and unconverted; others compare him with Simeon in the temple. We should not forget that salvation is more than new birth, that it could only then be pronounced by the Messiah, and that it is now in virtue of redemption proclaimed far and wide through faith in His name. It is the primary Christian blessing that a soul needs and receives in a dead and risen Christ; but it should never be confounded with that awakening which accompanies quickening by the Spirit. As the due understanding of this clears up many difficulties created by the confusion prevalent in Christendom, from the days of the fathers till our own time, so it will be found helpful here. The Lord vindicated the grace of God toward one in the worst possible position, the loathing of the proud Pharisee. He who struggled against the many obstructions in the way, who hesitated not to cast off all conceit of dignity and to brave all ridicule in order to see Jesus, heard with astonishment the voice of the good Shepherd call His sheep by name and invite Himself to remain at his house. Certainly He was none other than the Messiah, who could thus tell all things and would thus meet the desire of a heart that dared not hope for such an honor. What a wonder, yet no wonder! He who knew all knew Zacchaeus; He who asked a drink from the Samaritan woman whose life He read asked Himself to the house of a chief tax-gatherer. It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God; so that they who heard said, Who then can be saved? Now He proves what He then answered, that the things which are impossible with men are possible with God; for assuredly He entered the house not to get but to give.

But nothing is so unintelligible to man as God's grace. “And when they saw [it], they all murmured, saying, that he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner.” (Ver. 7.) How blessed that so He could, and so He would! How hopeless the blank for us if it were not so! It suits His love so to deal with those who have not the smallest claim.

“And Zacchaeus stood and said unto the Lord, Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have by false accusation exacted anything of any man, I restore fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, To-day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham:1 for the Son of man came to seek and to save that which is lost.” (Verses 8-10.) It is not that the Lord discredited the chief tax-gatherer's account of his feelings and ways. Such was his character, such his habits, in a sorrowful position doubtless, with a delicate if not scrupulous conscience. But why this before One who had already proved that all was known to a heart that could not misjudge? Why talk even of what the Spirit had produced in presence of the salvation-bringing grace of God? The Lord denies not, spite of his occupation, that he too was a son of Abraham; but if He Himself were the Messiah, and at this very time presenting Himself as such for the last time on earth, beginning at Jericho, He was the Son of man in grace and humiliation on the way to death, yea, the death of the cross; the Son of man come to save what is lost. What else was worth speaking of? This day salvation was come to his house.

As this affecting incident maintains the activity of grace according to God's aim in the first advent of the Lord, even while He was testing them for the last time as the Messiah, so the following parable was uttered to dispel the wrong expectations which filled their minds who so soon had forgotten that first He must suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation, and that the introduction of the Lord's world—kingdom must await His second advent. Those who were on the stretch for the immediate Betting up of that kingdom were self-deceived. If He was near Jerusalem, He was near the cross, not the manifestation of His kingdom yet. “But as they were hearing these things, he in addition spoke a parable because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and they thought that the kingdom of God was about to be manifested immediately. He said therefore, A certain high-born man went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. And he called ten of his servants and delivered them ten minas, and said unto them, Trade until I come.” (Verses 11-13.) It is obvious that this is quite distinct from a similar parable in the last prophetic discourse on Olivet, and this not less certainly distinct in internal marks, as we shall see throughout. There the lord exercises his rights and gives as he pleases according to his knowledge of the varying capacities of his servants. Here all receive the same at starting, and their respective use of the deposit in business (figuratively) is the main point—the responsibility of the servants in the

one, the sovereignty of the master in the other. Equally in contrast is the result in each: the good and faithful bondmen in Matthew alike enter into the joy of their Lord, while in Luke each receives authority according to his labor and its fruit.

Again, there are weighty moral instructions connected with this parable, but distinct from what we find later in Matthew. For here we read that “His citizens hated him and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.” (Ver. 14.) Such was the spirit of the Jews, who not only rejected the Messiah, but, as another has well said, sent a message after Him as it were in the martyrs they slew, refusing Him glorified no less than in humiliation.

“And it came to pass on his return, having received the kingdom, that he commanded his bondsmen to whom he gave the money to be called to him, that he might know what each had gained by trading. And the first came up saying, Lord, thy mina hath produced ten minas. And he said to him, Well [done] thou good bondman, because thou hast been faithful in a very little: have authority over ten cities. And the second came saying, Lord, thy mina hath made five minas. And he said also to him, And thou be over five cities. And the other came, saying, Lord, behold thy mina which I kept laid up in a napkin. For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up what thou layedst not down, and reapest what thou didst not sow. He saith to him, Out of thy mouth I will judge thee, wicked bondman. Thou knewest that I am an austere man, taking up what I laid not down, and reaping what I did not sow. And why gavest thou not my money into a bank, and at my coming I should have received it with interest? And he said to those that stood by, Take from him the mina and give [it] to him that hath ten. And they said to him, Lord, he hath ten minas. I say to you, that to every one that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not even what he hath shall be taken.” (Verses 15-26.) Here we have the responsible service of Christians till Jesus returns, with His judgment then of their service meanwhile. It is not that the faithless bondman will not suffer the results of his unbelief, like the elder brother who despised his father and scorned his brother. But our evangelist tells the tale of grace, without describing the awful doom of those who corrupt or turn from it. It is in the earthly accompaniment that we hear of divine vengeance. Thus the picture is made still more complete; for we have also the public execution of judgment on the guilty citizens, the Jews, at His appearing. “But those mine enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither and slay them before me.” (Ver. 27.) The judgment of the habitable world is a truth which practically has dropt out of the life, if not the creeds, of Christendom.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Christ's Returning to Reign

Luke 19:12-27

The disciples, little knowing God's mind, were impatient for His kingdom. They thought it was immediately to be manifested. They forgot that " first must He suffer many things " and enter into His glory. They overlooked reconciliation by blood as the basis of all: how else could God be glorified or man be saved? The Lord said therefore,

" A certain man of high birth went unto a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. And having called his own ten bondmen, he gave them ten pounds (mince), and said to them, Trade till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent an embassy after him, saying, We will not that this [man] reign over us. And it came to pass on his coming back again, having received the kingdom, that he bade these bondmen to whom he gave the money to be called to him, in order that he might know what each gained by trading. • And the first came up, saying, Lord, thy pound made ten pounds more. And he said to him, Well [done], good bondman; because in a very little thou west faithful, be in authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound made five pounds. And he said also to him, And be thou over five cities. And the other came, saying, Lord, behold, thy pound, which I kept laid up in a napkin; for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man; thou takest up what thou didst not lay down, and reapest what thou didst not sow. He saith to him, Out of thy mouth will I judge thee, wicked bondman. Thou knewest that I am an austere man, taking up what I laid not down, and reaping what I did not sow; and why didst thou not give my money into a bank, and I on coming should have got it with interest? And to the bystanders he said, Take from him the pound and give [it] to him that bath the ten pounds. (And they said to him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say to you, that to every one that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not even what he hath shall be taken from him. Howbeit those my enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay before me " (versa 12-27).

Redemption by Christ's death must be first, and heaven be opened for the redeemed where He is exalted as its answer. He would receive the kingdom as all things not from man but from God. But He will surely return, having received the kingdom. Then will He take account of their service to whom He gave gifts for trading in responsibility to Him during His absence. For we are here in view, not of His receiving His own to Himself for the Father's house, but of His appearing and His kingdom. And they are rewarded according to their fidelity, one more, and another less. It is not gifts differing according to God's sovereignty, but all alike entering their Lord's joy as in Matt. 25; but here each receives alike a pound and is rewarded respectively according to the different result of their work. The two Gospels present the two sides, but are both true. Both show us also the "evil bondman," without a particle of faithfulness. And why? Because he had no faith in his Lord's grace. On the contrary, he insulted Him Who is full of grace and truth as " an austere man," selfish and dishonest as his own heart; and his end is accordingly.

There is reward then for work that pleases the Master, Who will be no man's debtor, but surely requites all in the coming day. Each bondman shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. But there is a foundation requisite for every one who thus builds; and other foundation can none lay than that laid, which is Jesus Christ. There is and must be faith in His grace for any one to serve Him truly. This the faithful bondmen had, and in the faith of Him they were devoted to His service. This faith the wicked bondman had not, and therefore he served not. He cared only for himself, he wronged his Master and gave the lie to His grace. But he could not escape righteous judgment, and out of his own mouth he was condemned: as those who believed in the Lord's grace receive a righteous reward in the kingdom of glory for their good works.

Take notice, my reader, that it is no question here of heathen but of professing Christians, of the service due to the absent Lord before He appears in His kingdom. Faith in Him, faith in His grace, can alone avail you Alike is the turning-point for every soul that hears His word; it is the spring of acceptable service, no less than of salvation. How could it be otherwise? The Lord is the Son of man Who came to save the lost at all cost for Himself. God will not tolerate slighting His own Son. Not to believe on Him at God's word is to dishonor both the Father and the Son; and as men thus receive not life eternal, they must come into judgment, and hence inevitably into the second death. " He that hath the

Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." 0 unbeliever, what bliss do you not lose? what woe do you not gain?

Then the Lord speaks of another guilty class; not the wicked servant, but His citizens sent an embassy after Him when He went on high, saying, We will not have this man reign over us. They are the Jews that hate Him, instead of professing to serve Him. When the true servants shine in the honors of the kingdom, what will be their portion, His open enemies that would not have Him, Messiah their king, reign over them? Those who. repent not will fall under His destructive judgment. Bring them hither, says He in the parable, and slay them before Me. For when He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be marveled at in all them that believed, there will also be the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, rendering vengeance to those that know not God, and to those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus. Jews that hate and Gentiles that despise the Savior must suffer the due reward of their rebellious unbelief and their evil deeds. How would it be, how is it, with you that read these words? Do not assume that God is indifferent, like you.

Notes on Luke, Luke 18:35-43, Notes on

The final scene approaches. Jesus is about to enter Jerusalem and to present Himself in the flesh to the Jews for the last time. Our evangelist slowly traces this journey (chap. 9:51; 13:22, 31, 33; 17:11; 18:31; 19:28, 29, 37, 41), with the infinite consequences which flow from that cross which, to human eyes, was His rejection, but which faith knows to be the glorifying of God forever, as well as the only possible ground of salvation for sinners.

Jericho held a remarkable place as the way to Jerusalem from the Jordan, and of old, when it stood in its might, the key of the position. Hence its solemn destruction under Joshua; hence the curse pronounced on him who should dare to rebuild it. But there Elisha, after the translation of Elijah and his own crossing through the miraculously parted river, healed the waters. So here the Lord, drawing towards the close of His long and last journey, after the transfiguration, performs a miracle of mercy on the blind man. It was an especial sign of His Messiah-ship; and rightly therefore, led of God, did the blind man call, on Him as Son of David: so the three synoptic gospels carefully record.

It is to be observed however that not Mark or Luke but Matthew records the fact that two blind men were healed at this time. Further, Mark, who as usual adds details of the most graphic description, lets us know that the son of Timaeus, Bartimaeus, was thus healed as the Lord was going out of Jericho, Matthew also intimating that it was on leaving, not entering, the place. Luke on the other hand has been generally supposed to say that the miracle was performed on entering Jericho. So all the old English translations, Wiclif, Tyndale, Geneva, Cranmer, the Rhemish, as well as the authorized: so the Latin, Syriac, and other ancient versions, with most moderns.

But it appears to me that the Greek phrase is so constructed as to avoid any such conclusion, and that the genuine unforced meaning is “while he was near to Jericho,” . According to the usage of the New Testament there might have been ground for the objection raised, if Luke had employed the genitive absolute, , or (or) . In strict grammatical nicety there is nothing to tie the sense to the entry into Jericho; it means equally well, as far as language is concerned, while the Lord was in the neighborhood.

I cannot doubt that what weighed with translators in general is the fact that chapter 19 opens with the Lord's entering and passing through Jericho. Hence it was assumed that the previously mentioned circumstance must have preceded this in time. And it must be owned that if Luke, as a rule, adhered to the order of occurrence in his account, it would be most natural to translate chapter 18:35 as in the authorized version. But it has been shown throughout our Gospel that he adopts another and. deeper order than the mere sequence of events, and habitually groups the words, works, and ways of our Lord in moral connection, whenever it is needful to this end putting together what may have been far apart in time.

In the present case it seems to have been the mind of the Spirit that all three who dwell on the Galilean ministry of Christ should mark Jericho and the healing of the blind there, as a common starting-point before His last formal appearance in Jerusalem. We can understand therefore why Luke, even if the incident of Zacchaeus occurred after the miracle, should according to his manner postpone his account of it till he had told us of the blind man healed. But there seems to have been a yet stronger reason of similar character in the fact that, if the healing had been introduced after Zacchaeus, when (I have no doubt) it really took place, adherence to the mere chronology of the facts would have spoiled the very impressive order actually adopted, in which we see the tale of Zacchaeus with salvation brought to his house though a chief tax-gatherer, followed at once by the parable of the pounds, which together beautifully set forth the general character and differing objects of the two advents of the Lord, who was about to suffer as the ground of righteousness and salvation for the lost, instead of at once establishing His throne in Zion as others fondly thought. If this were the design of the inspiring Spirit, as I conceive it certainly to be, gathered from the special character traceable throughout its course, it does not seem possible to suggest any other order so admirably calculated to convey it as that which is pursued. Hence the point in verse 35 was to choose a phrase, which, while not breaking the thread of the narrative and of course in words thoroughly consistent with the exact truth, should nevertheless convey the thought of a time or state during which the particular act related took place. This, in my opinion, has been done perfectly in the language of Luke: so much so, that, granting the aim to be as I suppose, no man can desire better words to combine what is intimated or to avoid a false inference for all aware of that design. If on the contrary men, however learned, assume a bare order of fact, this naturally would influence their translation; and so I think we may fairly account for the common mistake.

Accordingly there is no need of resorting to any of the various methods of reconciling Luke's account with Matthew and Mark. We are not driven to the harsh supposition that Luke's blind man was healed before entering Jericho, and that the news of this reached Mark's blind man, Bartimaeus, so that he went through a similar process of appeal on the Lord's exit, as Origen and Augustine supposed in early days, Greswell, &c, in our own time. Nor is it necessary (though undoubtedly quite legitimate, and the fact elsewhere) to suppose that Matthew combined the two instances in one summary. Less reasonable is the view of Euthymius who will have it that all three instances were distinct, and therefore that four blind men were healed at this time near Jericho. Nor is there any substantial ground to argue, as men have done from Calvin to Wordsworth, that the blind man began crying as our Lord approached Jericho but was not healed till another joined him outside, and both received sight as Jesus left the place. Still more violent are the hypotheses of Markland and of Macknight. The truth is that there is nothing in this to reconcile, all being evidently harmonious, when the language of Luke is seen to be such as falls in with the time and place described more precisely by Matthew and Mark. It may be well however to add that Matthew elsewhere names two where Mark and Luke as here speak only of one, as in the case of the demoniacs. (Comp. Matt. 8:28-34 with Mark 6:20 and Luke 8:26-39.) See also Matt. 9:27-31. This was all

right, when the fact (as here) warranted it, in one writing especially for Jews, with whom it was a maxim to demand at least two witnesses. The other evangelists were led to dwell only on the one that best suited the design of his own Gospel.

It is striking also to note that as there was a reason why Matthew, and not Mark or Luke, should record pairs which were healed, so there is the strongest indirect evidence in this against the very poor theory that the omissions of the first evangelist were supplied in measure by the second, and yet more by the third and so on. For it was the earliest who in these instances speaks of the two; which is irreconcilable, on the supplementary theory, with the second and third mentioning but one. The Holy Spirit made them by His power the vessels for setting forth the various fullness of Jesus the Son of God on the earth. Each had his own line given and perfectly carried out, and facts or sayings are recorded by each, whether reported by the others or not, as they bore on his proper object.

“And it came to pass, as he was near unto Jericho, a certain blind man was sitting by the way side begging; and when he heard a crowd passing, he asked what this was. And they told him, Jesus the Nazarene goeth by; and he called aloud, saying, Jesus, Son of David, pity me. And those in advance rebuked him that he should be silent; but he kept crying much more, Son of David, pity me. And Jesus stopped and ordered him to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, What wilt thou that I should do for thee? And he said, Lord, that I receive sight.1 And Jesus said, Receive sight: thy faith hath healed thee. And at once he received sight, and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people saw and gave praise to God.” (Ver. 35-43.)

The Lord is still the rejected One, not understood even by His disciples, yet with a heart towards the most lowly and wretched in Israel who cried to Him in faith. The blind man near Jericho was one of them, and seized the moment of His presence, made known to his sightless eyes by the heedless noise of those who seeing saw not. Blindness in part had happened to Israel in good sooth, blindness most of all to such of them as least acknowledged it. Here was one who, near the city of the curse, dared to confess Him to be the Messiah whom the religious chiefs had long desired to destroy and sooner than they hoped were to be allowed it to the full—dared to ask of Him that sign of opening the eyes of the blind peculiar to the Son of David, as even Rabbinical tradition confessed. The story of His gracious power was not lost on the blind man. Now was his opportunity: might it not be the last? He called aloud; and the more rebuked, the more by far he cried. If to others Jesus was but the Nazarene, to him none other than David's Son. “Son of David, pity me.” And never in vain goes forth the appeal of distress to Him. How pleasant in His ears the persistent call on His name! Jesus stops, commands him to be brought, inquires into his want, and gives all he asks. So will He in the day of His power when Israel (the remnant becoming the people) shall be made willing, shall call on Him and find sight, salvation, and every other good thing to the praise and glory of God.

But it was still the day of His humiliation, of Israel's blind and willful unbelief; and Jesus steadily pursues His sorrowful path to the holy city about to perpetrate the most unhallowed deed of this world's sad history.

Notes on Luke, Luke 18:9-34, Notes on

THE next section of our Gospel sets forth, first by a parable, then by facts, lastly by the words which passed between the Lord and the twelve, the characteristics which suit the kingdom of God. The connection is with this as we know it now, rather than with its display when the Son of man comes in judgment of the quick as in the preceding parable. Indeed the exceeding breadth of the lesson about to be taught we learn in the words with which the evangelist opens: “And also to some that trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and made nothing of others, he spoke this parable.” It is no dispensational picture of the divine ways with Jews and Gentiles; it is a moral delineation which tells us how God regards those who plume themselves on their correctness of ways as a ground of confidence with Him, and what His estimate is of those who are broken before Him because of their conscious—and now to themselves loathsome—sinfulness.

“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax-gatherer. The Pharisee standing prayed thus to himself, O God, I thank thee that I am not as the rest of men, rapacious, unjust, adulterous, or even as this tax-gatherer. I fast twice in the week, I tithe all things that I acquire.1 And the tax-gatherer, standing afar off, would not lift up even his eyes to heaven, but was striking upon his breast, saying, O God, be merciful to me the sinner. I say to you, this [man] went down to his house justified rather than the other; because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” (Ver. 10-14.) The Pharisee represents the religious world in its most respectable shape; the tax-gatherer, such as had no character to lose, but whatever he may have been, now truly penitent and looking to God's compassion in self-judgment. How different are the thoughts of God from those of men! A delicate difference is implied in the form of the two forms of the word which we translate “standing” in each case. With the Pharisee the form () implies a stand taken, a putting himself in position, such as one might naturally do in addressing a speech to an assembly. With the tax-gatherer it is the ordinary expression for standing in contradistinction from sitting.

Again, the essence of the Pharisee's prayer, if prayer it can be called, is not a confession of sin nor an expression of need even, but a thanksgiving; and this not for what God had done and been for him, but for what he himself was. He was not, like the rest of men, violent and corrupt, nor even as the tax-gatherer, of whom be cannot speak without a tinge of contempt— “this tax-gatherer.” He finally displays his owns habits of fasting and of religious punctiliousness. Not that he laid false claims; not that be excluded God, but he trusted, as a ground for acceptance, to his righteousness, and he made nothing of others. He never saw his own sins in the sight of God.

The tax-gatherer on the contrary is filled with shame and contrition. He stands afar off, with not even his eyes raised to heaven, and beats withal on his breast, saying, God be compassionate to me, the sinner if ever there was one. There is no solid reason to infer that he pleads the atonement in the word . No doubt the idea of propitiating is expressed by the verb; but it is used fir more widely, like its kindred word in Matt. 16:22, where no one could suppose such an allusion. Whatever the origin or usage of the word, we are not to suppose that the tax-gatherer in employing it thought of the day of atonement, or of the mercy-seat in the holiest; still less are we warranted to attribute to him an intelligence of the mighty work of redemption which Jesus was soon about to accomplish. The word might allude to propitiation; but that he did so in his crying to God thus is another matter altogether. We easily transfer to souls before the death of Christ a knowledge which, however simple and clear to us since the cross, could not be possessed before.

And this misapprehension has led to another, that the Lord was here pronouncing the tax-gatherer justified as we are who believe in the Lord Jesus and His blood. But this is not the teaching of the passage. The strong assertion of Archbishop Trench that it is, and the fact that Roman

Catholic theologians deny it, need neither allure nor deter. It is in vain to say that the sentence of our Lord is that the publican was justified by faith at the time when he is described as going down to his house. There is a distinct comparison with the Pharisee, and it is affirmed that the tax-gatherer went down justified rather than the former. Had justification by faith been meant as in Rom. 3-5, no such statement could have been made. There are no degrees in the justification of which Paul speaks; the Lord implies that there are in what He speaks of. Besides the form of the word differs. He is said to have gone down, not absolutely but 2 ... .'. The common English version seems quite correct, though founded no doubt on the vulgarly received text, . The great mass of uncials and cursives join in giving the strange reading , followed even in his eighth edition by Tischendorf, spite of the Sinai MS. which casts its weight into the scale of the Vatican (B) and Parisian 62 (L), not to speak of D with its not infrequent additions, and some few other authorities. I do not doubt that this is the true text. The late Dean of Canterbury shows us the danger of misapplying the case to justification, which is his own view, by the remark he adds: "Therefore he who would seek justification before God must seek it by humility and not by self-righteousness." It is the more to be regretted that this glaring error should have been made by one who had just confessed that we are not to find any doctrinal meaning in . It would have been more consistent not to have pressed similarly.

From the homily on lowliness in view of our sins we are now to receive another, lowliness because of our insignificance. "And they brought to him also their infants that he might touch them; but the disciples when they saw [it] rebuked them. But Jesus called them to [him] and said, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter into it." (Ver. 15-17.) The babes were of great price in the eyes of Jesus, not of the disciples, who, if not rabbis themselves, would have lowered their Master to the level of such an one in contempt of little ones. But this could not be suffered, for it was not the truth. Neither the Son nor the Father so feel toward the weak and evidently dependent. Nor is this all: "of such is the kingdom of God." Those who enter into His kingdom must by grace receive the Savior and His word as a child that of its parents. Self-reliance is excluded and replaced by dependence on God in the sense of our own nothingness.

Next comes the young and rich ruler, who went away sorrowfully from Christ rather than give up the self-importance attached to his manifold possessions. "And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, doing what shall I inherit eternal life? And Jesus said to him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not bear false witness, honor thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth. And Jesus on hearing [it] said to him, One thing is lacking to thee yet: sell all that thou hast and distribute to poor [men], and thou shalt have treasure in the heavens; and come, follow me. But he on hearing these things became very sorrowful, for he was exceedingly rich. And Jesus having seen him [become very sorrowful] said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to enter through a needle's eye than for a rich [man] to enter into the kingdom of God."

The case is plain. The young ruler had no sense of sin, no faith in Christ as a Savior, still less did he believe that a divine person was there, which indeed He must be to save sinners. He appealed to Jesus as the best expression of goodness in man, the highest in the class in which he counted himself no mean scholar. The Lord answers him on the ground of his question. Did he ask the Lord as the good master or teacher, what thing doing he should inherit eternal life? He took his stand on his own doing; he saw not that he was lost and needed salvation. It had never occurred to him that man as such was out of the way, none good, no, not one. That Jesus was the Son of God and Son of man sent to save was a truth to him unknown. The Lord brings in the commandments of the second table; but his conscience was untouched: "All these have I kept from my youth." "Yet lackest thou one thing," said Jesus to the self-satisfied yet dissatisfied ruler, conscious that he had not eternal life and that he had no solid security for the future: "Sell all that thou Last, and distribute to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." The conscience which had resisted the test of law fell at the first touch of Jesus. "And hearing this he became very sorrowful, for he was exceedingly rich."

Yet how infinitely did the demand fall short of what we know and have in the Master, good indeed, God indeed, who never laid on others a burden which He had not borne, who bore one immeasurably more and under circumstances peculiar to Himself, and for ends redounding to the glory of God, and with the result to every sinful creature on earth of a testimony of grace without limit, and of a blessing without stint where He is received! To the ruler it was overwhelming, impossible, the annihilation of all he valued; for indeed now it was evident that he loved his riches, money, mammon, a thing he had never suspected in himself before; but there it had been all along, discovered now in presence of and by Him who, though He were rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. The ruler valued his position and his property, and could not bear to have nothing and be nothing. O what a contrast with Him who counted it not a matter of robbery to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking a bondsman's form, born in likeness of men; and who, when found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself by becoming obedient as far as death, yea death of the cross.

How plain too that worldly prosperity or wealth, fruit of fidelity according to the law, is a danger of the first magnitude for the soul, for eternity And Jesus did not fail to draw the searching moral for the disciples, ever slow, through unjudged selfishness, to learn it. They knew not yet to what Christians are called, even to be imitators of God as dear children, and to walk in love according to the pattern of Christ. It is all but impossible, it is impossible, as far as man is concerned, for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. "And who can be saved?" is the remark of those that heard a sentence so counter to their secret desires. Jesus replied, The things impossible with men are possible with God. There is no other hope of salvation. It is of God, not of man. Yet to save cost God everything, yea His own Son. And if the righteous are with difficulty saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? and why wonder at the danger to a rich man through the unrighteous mammon? None can serve two masters. Happy he who through grace makes wealth to be only for Christ's service, looking to have the true riches his own in everlasting glory!

"And Peter said, Behold we have left all3 things and followed thee. And he said to them, Verily I say to you, There is none who has left home, or wife, or brethren, or children for the sake of the kingdom of God who shall not get manifold more at this time, and in the age that is coming life eternal." (Ver. 28-30.) But if Peter was thus prompt to speak of their losses for Christ, who certainly repays as God only can both now and through eternity according to the riches of His grace, "he taking the twelve to [him] said to them, Behold, we go up to Jerusalem, and all the things written by the prophets for the Son of man shall be accomplished; for he shall be given up to the Gentiles, and mocked, and insulted, and spit upon; and after scourging they will put him to death, and on the third day he will rise again." (Ver. 31-33.) Again, what a contrast even with the thoughts and hopes of disciples! Alas! "they understood none of these things; and this word [or matter] was hid from them, and they did not know what was said." (Ver. 34.) So it ever is where the eye is not single. By faith we understand. Where nature is still valued by saints, the plainest words of Jesus are riddles even to such.

Whether the parable of the importunate widow was uttered as the sequel to the preceding discourse, I am not prepared to say; but this at least is plain, that the parable connects itself very naturally with what had just gone before, though there seems to me a more general form of the truth also (as is common with our evangelist) so as to fit in admirably with what follows. It forms therefore a pendant as well as a transition.

But the connection with chapter 17 is of importance if it were only to guard from the unfounded idea that its direct application is ecclesiastical, that the widow is the church, and the judge her God and Father in heaven. Such notions are as far as possible from the context, as well as the contents of the parable; and the error lies incomparably deeper than missing the scope of the scripture before us. It is of the deepest moment to understand as a divine truth, in our estimate of relationship with God, that Israel was in the position of the married wife (Jer. 2; Ezek. 16) with Jehovah; whereas the marriage-supper of the Lamb is not celebrated till after the saints, changed into His likeness, are translated to heaven, and Babylon has been judged under the last vial of God's wrath. (Rev. 19) Hence, whatever the anticipative power of faith in realizing our place as the bride before the consummation, and whatever the closeness of exhortation founded on Christ's relation to the church, the apostle speaks of betrothing us to one man or husband to present as a chaste virgin to Christ. So on the other hand the specific form of Israel's unfaithfulness was adultery, as we hear so often in the prophets. But it is not so in Christendom, where the grievous corruption is designated under the figure of a great harlot, not an adulteress. (Rev. 17) The assumption that we are like Israel, the married wife, falsifies our attitude both toward our Lord Jesus and toward the world. It judaizes the church instead of leaving her in her proper place of waiting for Christ in holy separateness from the world.

Babylon the great, who falsely arrogates this place to herself, naturally follows it up by saying in her heart, I sit a queen and I am no widow (as poor Zion is) and shall see no sorrow; and so she has glorified herself and lives deliciously. 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 judges her. But here have we no continuing city, though we seek one to come; and in this world we look for tribulation, and through much tribulation to enter the kingdom, being content, yea joyful, to show Christ's rejection where He was put to shame and death, and assured of appearing with Him when He appears in glory. Hence, though we suffer meanwhile with Christ, and glory in affliction, distress and insult for His name's sake, it is not as orphans or as widowed; for we enjoy the adoption of sons to our God and Father, and are one spirit with the Lord; but for this very reason we, are in the secret of the divine counsels, and await His coming who is on high, not of the world as He is not, till the day arrives for Him to take the world-kingdom and for us to reign with Him. Thus we reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. Refusing to assume the air of the wife in rest and possession of His inheritance, we feel that our sorrow here is joined with the communion of His love before He comes to receive us to Himself and to display us with Himself before the world.

In short then the parable touches the godly Jewish remnant rather than the Christian when we come to the exact application of the widow; and this falls in aptly with those saints involved in the judgment of the quick described just before, where one shall be taken and the other left—an earthly scene, it is plain, without a word implying translation to heaven. Still the Holy Spirit gives the exhortation a more general bearing and with the moral purpose we have so often remarked in our evangelist. Every saint should profit by it.

“And he spoke also1 a parable to them, to the end that they should always pray, and not faint, saying, There was a judge in a city, not fearing God, and not regarding man. And there was a widow in that city, and she came to him, saying, Avenge me of my adversary; and he would not for a time; but afterward he said in himself, Though I fear not God, and regard not man; yet because this widow annoys me, I will avenge her, in order that she may not by continually coming wear me out.” (Ver. 1-5.)

The reflection which the Lord adds as its second part and application makes all plain to the instructed ear. “And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his elect, that cry to him day and night, and he bears long in their case? I say to you that he will avenge them speedily. But when the Son of man cometh, shall he indeed find faith on the earth?” (Ver. 6-8.) It is an a fortiori analogy, which no more views the unjust judge as God, than the unjust steward in chapter 16 means the disciple. In the two cases it is a powerful or a consolatory appeal. Jesus would encourage one always to pray without fainting if the answer seem to tarry and evil to abound. Even the unrighteous judge would rather see to the right of the most friendless and feeble than be ever stunned with appeals. How much more shall not God interfere on behalf of His elect against their enemies? It is true that He bears long as to His own; but He will avenge them soon, as all will own when the blow falls.

The attentive reader will note that the deliverance as well as the prayers are Jewish in character,2 not patient grace like the Christian's. It is not by their going up to meet the Lord, but by divine judgment on their foes. Still there is real faith in thus crying day and night to God, who if He delay is not slack concerning His promises, but is bringing souls to repentance that they too might be saved. And there is perseverance till the answer is given. When the Lord comes, there are elect saints already glorified with Him (Rev. 17:14; 19:14); but here they are on earth crying to God till He takes vengeance on those who wronged them. It would seem also from the question which the Lord puts and does not answer, that faith will be rare then as in the days of Noah and Lot, when few were saved and some nearest to the saved were lost—so feeble and fluctuating the faith too that only He could find it.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Pharisee and the Tax Gatherer

Luke 18:9-14

FROM the widow's pertinacity prevailing over the injustice of the wicked judge the Lord drew the assurance of God's avenging at length the cry of the elect. Here He turns to God's pitiful estimate of a contrite spirit despised by haughty self-righteousness. What an encouragement to the poor self-judging one! What a warning to such as presume on their own fancied superiority! Both parables illustrate the moral light here

cast on man as he is by the Son of man. They are characteristic of Luke who alone gives them.

" And he spoke also this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and set all the rest at naught. Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, the other a tax-gatherer. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus to himself, 0 God, I thank thee that I am not as the rest of men, rapacious, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax-gatherer. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I gain. And the tax-gatherer standing afar off would not lift up even his eyes unto heaven, but kept smiting his breast, saying, 0 God, be merciful to me, the sinner. I tell you, this [man] went down unto his house justified rather than that; because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted " (vers. 9-14).

How deeply " Jesus Christ, the Righteous," resented the spuriousness of a sinner claiming righteousness! how He pitied the soul that really felt its sinfulness before God! He is the Savior of all that believe the gospel, the Judge of all that disbelieve. Simple yet graphic is the scene, and the sentence sound, sure, and conclusive. But in the haze that overhung the temple the Pharisee had as high a repute as the tax-gatherer had none.

There the Pharisee took a position and poured out his complacency in himself. " 0 God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men." Not a word about his sins or even his need. Not a suspicion of his guilt and ruin. He is lifted up with the sense that he was not this or that, extortionate, unjust, adulterous, " or even as this tax-gatherer." Nor that only; for he boasts his religion. " I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I gain." It was another Cain. Oh, the many that go in the way of Cain! They come before God as they are; they offer their fasts and their tithes, as they feel assured they are better than the rest of men. What have they done to offend God? Why should they doubt His acceptance of them?

So it is that men still deceive themselves, or even make God a liar, as the apostle expresses it. They cloak their own sins; they denounce other people's sins; but God is not mocked. His word is that all sinned, and do come short of His glory. But Abel bowed and brought his sacrifice. Fruits of the ground man labored on could not avail for sin. Death must come between God and the sinner. So Cain righteous in his own eyes had no right sense of his ruin; Abel who was righteous duly felt and owned ruin in his offering, whereas Cain's denied it. In a word Cain trusted to self, Abel to Another. Sin or death was nothing to Cain, but great to Abel's faith that looked for the Savior.

And what of the tax-gatherer? He, standing afar off, would not lift up even his eyes to heaven, but kept smiting his breast, saying, 0 God, be merciful to me, the sinner. It was his evil that pressed on his spirit, as he cried to God. Not a thought had he of good deeds done, of bad ones avoided. He did not dream of hiding himself in a crowd of sinners or a vague confession. He singled himself as the sinner if ever there was one. What did he know of others? or, even if he had a slight knowledge, he knew himself far better and overwhelmingly. " 0 God, be merciful to me, the sinner." His light from God might be small, but it was real; and as it disclosed his own sinfulness, he owned himself the sinner. He looked out of himself to God about his condition, without a word of self-commendation, or of comparison with others, or of excuse. No, he was the sinner, and before God he lays himself as he is. On God, a God of grace, he relies in simple real acknowledgment of his ruin.

It was the fear of God, and the beginning of wisdom; and the Lord recognizes it accordingly. " I tell you, this man went down unto his house justified rather than that." Hence the general principle follows, " because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

It was not "justified by faith '' so as to have peace with God. The Lord does not describe one who had heard and believed the word of truth, the gospel of salvation. There was not, nor could be yet, the presentation of the great work of grace, Christ's work. God's righteousness in Him had yet to be manifested. But the tax-gatherer was brought where all the godly in Israel had been before him, to look away from himself to God's mercy; he was believingly taught as a sinner, where the godly outside Israel were taught to renounce self-dependence. See a saint like Job thus broken through severe discipline for his greater blessing: " I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes " (Job 42:5, 6).

For sinners or saints repentance there is and must be. Even he whom Jehovah commended as a perfect and upright man, that feared God and eschewed evil, needed it, as He alone turned the fiery trial to that good end. For Job thought too well and much of what grace enabled him to do, and exalted himself in consequence. The enemy failed wholly to shake him. Jehovah touched the weak point through his friends (more ignorant of God and of themselves than Job), who at length humbled himself deeply and was exalted in due time. This was when he prayed in a spirit of grace for his proud and harshly judging friends. What a contrast with the Pharisee! There the tax-gatherer was led in his measure, a case of true repentance, if not so deep as that of Job both precious in the Lord's eyes. " I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than that."

In justification through Christ's blood are found no degrees. By Him all that believe are justified from all things (Acts 13:39). Here it was faith and repentance, and hence a state morally right before God (which the Pharisee's was not), though short of the clearance and liberty which faith in the gospel brings.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Persistent Widow

Luke 18:1-8

The closing verses of Luke 17 are occupied with the appearing of the Lord, when He comes in His kingdom and executes judgment on the quick. Hence the comparison is with the days of Noah and of Lot. It is not the heavenly hope dawning, as in Luke 12:32-38; but " the day that the Son of man is revealed " (2 Thess. 1), when the birds of prey are gathered together over the corpse.

In moral connection with His coming in personal judgment of the earth the Lord intimates the urgent value of prayer.

" And he spake also a parable to them that they must always pray and not faint, saying, There was in a certain city a certain judge, not fearing God and not regarding man; and there was a widow in that city and she kept coming unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he refused for a while; but afterward he said in himself, If even I fear not God and regard not man, yet because this widow is troublesome to me I

will avenge her, that she by forever coming may not worry me. And the Lord said, Hear what the judge of unrighteousness speaketh. And shall God in no wise avenge his own elect that cry to him by day and night, and he is long suffering over them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Howbeit, when the Son of man cometh, shall he indeed find faith on the earth? " (vers. 1-8.)

As God's call is the warrant of faith, so faith is exercised in prayer, and rests always on the unseen in the midst of seen experience. And when things are most trying through the prevalence of evil, those that believe are encouraged the more to cry, How long, 0 Lord? He puts faith to the proof; He can never deny Himself, nor disappoint His people. But endurance is to have a perfect work, that they may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

The figures employed were the best possible to encourage: on the one hand a judge of unrighteousness neither fearing God nor respecting man, on the other a widow wronged by an adversary near enough to inflict so much the greater evil, because he should have been her protector. Yet her persevering cry wore out the judge's indifference. He could not stand her continual appeal, and, to escape the annoyance, he let her have justice. The Lord reveals the thoughts and motives of the judge's heart, and draws the believer's attention to the way in which even now God's providential ways act in the most reckless and unprincipled on behalf of the oppressed.

But how much more will it be when God rises up in judgment of the world, as He surely will in the person of the Lord Jesus at the end of the age. Then will He shine forth as the Judge of the earth, and the elect will have their cry by day and night at length heard, and the wicked triumph no more. They speak arrogantly now, they boast themselves. They will slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. But Jehovah will not cut off His people, nor will He forsake His inheritance. For judgment, instead of diverging to the right or the left, shall return to righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it. So it will be in the day of the Lord's appearing. She who had long played Him false and sought many lovers will take by repentance the place of the desolate widow, and shall forget the shame of her youth, and the reproach of her widowhood shall He remember no more. For her Maker is her husband in that bright day; and the Holy One of Israel is her Redeemer; the God of the whole earth shall He be called, as indeed He is, and she shall know. He may be long suffering over His own elect in their tribulation; but He will avenge them speedily in that day. For in His hand is a cup, and the wine foameth; it is full of mixture, and He poureth out of the same. Surely the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring out, and drink them; and the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up when those of the wicked also shall be cut off. But it will be a dark hour, not only in the land but elsewhere, and faith seems then extinct as regards public profession up to that mighty intervention.

0 my reader, forget not that you still hear the gospel. Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. Him Who knew no sin God made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him. Such is His testimony to you. It is not a promise or a hope; it is the most wondrous of all facts in the grace of God; and you, if you have not already believed God as to it, are now called to believe on Christ Whom He gave and sent that you might be saved. To Him and His work of redemption does the Holy Spirit now bear witness in the gospel, which is God's glad tidings to every one that believes. Trifle not with grace so unparalleled. To put it off is to trifle with the will of the Father, the work of the Son, and the witness of the Holy Spirit. Can there be more glaring or. guilty unbelief?

Why do you now delay? The atoning work is done. Be it known to you therefore, that through Christ is preached to you forgiveness of sins; and in virtue of Him every one that believes is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. This was no defect of His law, which indeed was God's law and must condemn, not justify, the sinner. But the gospel is from God the good news of Jesus the Lord His Son, the Son of man come to seek and to save that which was lost. Beware then, lest that come upon you which is spoken in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye will in no wise believe if one declare it to you.

Notes on Luke, Luke 17:26-37, Notes on

The Lord next refers to the days of Noah: so should it be in His own days when He comes as the Son of man. It is no question either of receiving the church or of judging the dead, though the latter will follow at the end, as the former precedes. Here it is distinctly the judgment of the quick on the earth, a truth which has very generally passed out of the mind of Christendom. “They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark and destroyed all.” This cannot refer to any but those alive upon the earth surprised by the deluge. “Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded.” There was progress in the world; civilization had advanced, but was it better morally? “But on that day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed all.” Men too easily forget that a judgment incomparably more comprehensive, but after the pattern of these two divine interventions, awaits the world, and more particularly that part of it which has been favored with the testimony of God. There can be no delusion more ruinous than the notion that because there is much good in the midst of Christendom its doom will not come. The Lord lingers in order to save souls. Such is His longsuffering and grace, but He is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness. When His own are gathered out, judgment will proceed so much the more sternly because His grace was seen, its fruits manifested, and His warnings given in vain. As it was then in the days of Noah and in the days of Lot, “even thus shall it be when the Son of man is revealed.” For the Lord speaks only of His revelation from heaven in the judgment of the world, not at all of translating the saints to be with Himself in the Father's house.

“In that day, he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not go down to take it away: and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.” (Ver. 31.) It is no question of the destruction of Jerusalem, any more than that of the final judgment; and it is absurd to apply it to death. But the mind of man is fertile in expedients to parry the blows of the truth. It is a testimony which keeps the advent of the Lord Jesus to judge the habitable world ever hanging over the heads of careless men.

“Remember Lot's wife.” This is a moral touch for those who might seem safer than others, but are not saved. It is peculiar to Luke and a most searching word for everyone whose face and heart are not steadily fixed on the Lord, for she was very near to Lot and seemed to have passed out of all reach of judgment. But her heart was in the city to which she looked back, and she heeded not the admonition of God's messengers, but in her destruction proved the truth of the word which she believed not. “Whoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it, and whoever shall lose it shall preserve it.” There is no security any more than real happiness save in faith, and faith is ever obedient to the word of the Lord.

“I tell you, that night there shall be two [men] in one bed, the one shall be taken and the other let go. Two [women] shall be grinding together, the one shall be taken and the other let go.” Here again the proof is complete and palpable, that it is no question of the Romans dealing with Jerusalem and the Jews, for the conqueror made no such discrimination among the conquered, nor is it any other providential judgment executed by man, for he is incapable of thus distinguishing. But it is not so with the Son of man, who will thus judge between cattle and cattle whether among the Jews or among the Gentiles.

Judged by the witnesses, verse 36 would appear to have no sufficient authority in our Gospel, but seems plainly to have been imported from the Gospel of Matthew, where it finds its just place.

In verse 37, “They answered and said to him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, 'Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.’” The executors of God's judgment will not fail to find themselves where an object demands it in that day. Power and righteousness are then together, and a wisdom adequate even to that great occasion. It is the day of Jehovah for the world. The area of judgment is not limited to Judea as in Matt. 24 where a similar but stronger phrase appears, and indeed much in common between the two passages. That the Jews may be before the Lord here too as the prominent persons warned is very possible. It is always so where the dealings of God with man and the earth are found; for Israel is Jehovah's son, His firstborn. When the church or Christians are in view, it is not so; for there the distinctions of the Jew or Gentile disappear before Him whom we have put on, and in whom is neither Jew nor Greek. The attempt to apply the passages to the Lord's coming for us, or at least not to distinguish between this and His appearing for the judgment of man, Jew or Gentile, is, that people construe “the eagles” as the saints! from Ambrose and Chrysostom, &c., down to Luther, and Calvin, &c., and even to Burgon and Wordsworth in our days. They are still more perplexed as to “the body,” some taking it as “Christ!” others as the “church,” no less than “the eagles;” others as “the Lord's supper;” some as “the judgment;” others as “heaven;” and none really knowing anything rightly about the matter. Most moderns take “the eagles” as “the Romans,” and “the body” as Jerusalem and the Jews. This is nearer the truth, but inadequate when simply applied to the past. M. Henry thinks that the eagles may mean both “the saints” and “the Romans;” and Mr. Ryle thinks it very probable that all the interpretations hitherto proposed will prove at last incorrect! I have given not nearly all the opinions: but my readers will agree that I have given at least enough and that miserable comforters are they all, especially such as think that the truth remains to be discovered only at the second advent. There is not much living faith in such thoughts. What a descent from our Lord's promise, in John 16:13, now fulfilled; “when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all the truth and he will shew you things to come.”

Notes on Luke, Luke 17:20-25, Notes on

The kingdom of God was the national hope of Israel. It was before the minds of all who looked for good from God. It was bound up with the Messiah's presence. Such is the way in which the kingdom is presented in the Old Testament. Nor does the New Testament in any way set this aside, but confirms the expectation: only it discloses the kingdom in another shape before it is introduced in power when the Lord returns in glory.

Of this, however, the Pharisees knew nothing. They demanded of Him when the kingdom of God should come, thinking only of that which is to be manifest when the Jews shall be brought back from all their wanderings, and restored in their full nationality to the land under the Messiah, and the new covenant. The Lord, as throughout Luke, shows something more and deeper, something that demanded faith, before the establishment of the kingdom in power. He answers them therefore, “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation.” This was what was morally important to know now. The kingdom would surely come as they looked for it in its own day, and the Lord distinctly lets us see this afterward. But first, of all He insists, as was most according to God, on that which they knew not, and which it most concerned them to know: “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation,” or outward show. “Neither shall they say, See here, or, See there; for behold the kingdom of God is within you.” Of this they were wholly ignorant, and this ignorance is fatal: for it is not to know God's king, when He manifested the true power of the kingdom in victory over Satan, and over all the results of man's subjection to infirmity in this world—when He manifested it positively in righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, the dependent and obedient man, but in the unfailing power of God which wrought by Him. To all this they were blind; they valued it not, because they valued not God. They did desire as a nation that which would elevate them, and overthrow their enemies; they did not desire that which exalts God and humbles man.

The Lord therefore, in this His answer, first meets the moral need of the Pharisees, and shows that in the most important sense now, from the time of His rejection till His return in glory, it is no question of “See here, and See there,” but of faith to own the glory of His person, and to recognize that the power which wrought is God's. “The kingdom of God is within you.” It was in their midst and they saw it not, because they saw not Him. They thought little of Jesus. This is ruin to every soul who hears but refuses the testimony.

It will be observed that it is the kingdom of God, not of heaven. It is never said, while Jesus was here, that the kingdom of heaven was come; but Matthew confirms this report in Luke, were that needed, and represents the Lord as saying (Matt. 12:28), “If I cast out the demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.” The character of the power proclaimed God's kingdom. He was victor of Satan, and cast out his emissaries: none but the Seed of the woman, the son of David could do this. It was reserved for Him. Others might, as God's servants, but He, as the Beloved, in whom His soul delighted. Those who cast the devil out, by God's gracious use of them, were their judges. Satan is not against Satan: else his kingdom would fall. But Messiah was there then, the king of God's kingdom, yet the Jews recognized it not. They rejected Him and He accepts His own rejection, but is exalted in heaven. Thence the kingdom of heaven begins, the rule of the heavens over the earth, now only known really to faith, the responsibility for those who are baptized to walk accordingly. Indeed thus comes what is commonly called Christendom, the great field where not only wheat but tares grow together. It is, of course, also called the kingdom of God, as always in Luke. Matthew alone speaks of the kingdom of heaven, but he never speaks of the kingdom of heaven save as preached or promised, until the Lord left the earth. In short the kingdom of God was there when Christ was there, the conqueror over Satan, and exhibiting in every direction morally the power of the Spirit. But the kingdom of heaven was not there till from heaven He introduced His rule over the earth. When He returns in glory, it will be still the kingdom of heaven: the rule of the heavens will never be lost, certainly not when the kingdom comes in power and glory.

But the Lord next addresses the disciples, and says, “Days are coming when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.” Here He can speak freely of the future form of the kingdom, of which alone the Pharisees thought. The disciples had received

the Lord by faith; and, however little intelligent they might be, they apprehended the kingdom of God among them. Hence the Lord could give them divine light as to the future, when He should establish the kingdom visibly. “Days are coming when ye shall desire to see one of the days of the Son of man, and ye shall not see it.” He opens His rejection to them, as well as the efforts of Satan, during his rejection. “And they shall say unto you, See here; or See there. Go not nor follow [them].” (Ver. 23.) False Christs should arise; but they were forewarned. “For as the lightning that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven shineth unto the other part under heaven, so shall also the Son of man be in his day.” There will be no question of “See here, or See there” when Christ comes again any more than when He was here. It was unbelief to say, See here, and See there, when Christ was present in the power that revealed who He must be and was. It will be unbelief by and by to say, See here, and See there; for the kingdom will be established in power. They were not to follow such rumors but to heed His word. He returns not merely as the rejected Messiah, but as the Son of man, the exalted ruler of all nations, peoples, and tongues. His kingdom shall be manifested under the whole heaven as He comes from heaven.

“But first must he suffer many things and be rejected of this generation.” This was in principle going on then; the cross would be its consummation. The moral order is thoroughly according to God: first must He suffer. So we read in 1 Peter of the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow. It must be so in a sinful world for one who seeks not his own glory, but God's, and the real and eternal good of man. It would be impossible to take the kingdom when man is in a state of sin and rebellion. In grace then He accepts the rejection which was inexcusable on their part: and in His rejection He accomplishes atonement. Hence God can righteously introduce the kingdom with many a rebel pardoned. Only this goes on now whilst He is gathering out the church, before the kingdom is set up in visible power. “First must he suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.” The Christ-rejecting generation was then and continues right through. In the crisis of the latter day, at the end of the age, this generation will still be there. “This generation shall not pass till all these things be fulfilled.” In the millennial age there will be a new generation who shall praise the Lord and glorify Him for His mercy. But “this generation” is a perverse one, children in whom is no faith. Such were and are the Jews; and such will they abide, till judgment shall have dealt with the mass, who will have fallen into an apostate state and have accepted the Antichrist, leaving only the true remnant who shall become a strong nation, the “all Israel” who “shall be saved” in that day.

Notes on Luke, Luke 17:11-19, Notes on

The incident that is here recorded completely falls in with what we have seen. The Spirit of God is indicating not only the break up of Judaism but the introduction of better things, and very particularly of the liberty of grace. By and by we shall have the liberty of glory; but the saints of God are now entitled to the liberty of grace. Creation will never know this; it will be delivered from the bondage of corruption to the liberty of the glory of the children of God. (Rom. 8)

“And it came to pass, as he went to Jerusalem, that he passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee.” The scene lay in the despised quarters of the land. “And as he entered into a certain village, there met him ten men that were lepers, which stood afar off.” This is a remarkable miracle, peculiar to our evangelist, who brings before us several incidents of similar character, that are given nowhere else. The selection of the Spirit of God, to carry forward the object He had in view in so inspiring Luke, is thereby manifest. “And they lifted up their voices, and said, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And when he saw them, he said unto them, Go show yourselves unto the priests.” The Lord thereby exercised the faith of those addressed, while at the same time He maintained the order of the law for those who are under it. It was a requisition under the law that, if a man was cured, without saying how the cure could be, if the plague of leprosy was healed, the man must present himself to the priest and be cleansed. This was laid down with particular care and detail in Lev. 14. It was an important requirement in this way, for it became a testimony to the power of God that now wrought on earth. For the question would naturally arise: how came these lepers to be cured? This would at once draw attention to the fact that Jesus was there, and that He was really the vessel of God's power in grace.

Hence too, the Lord sometimes, as we read elsewhere, touched the leper. But here these men stood afar off. It was not that there was not grace enough in Christ to touch them, but their feeling according to the law was to stand afar off. It was perhaps right in them that it should be so, as it was certainly the grace of His heart that made Him touch the leper who prostrated himself at His feet. So we see in Mark 1. These men, however, standing afar off, lifted up their voices and prayed for His mercy; and His answer was, as with a leper always, “go show yourselves unto the priests.”

But there was another notable feature brought out in the present case, if there was no touch as the sign of the power that removed the leprosy without contracting defilement, which could only therefore be the power of God which was above the law, even while He maintained the law. In this case there was a trial of faith, so much the more, because they were afar off, and they were bidden to go and show themselves to the priests, without such words as “Be ye cleansed.” The Lord did not use that expression in every case, as far as scripture records. Hence it was, as they went, they were cleansed. They had to go first. They felt nothing, the moment they were bidden to go. It was “while they went” that they were cleansed.

“And one of them, when he saw that he was healed” —for this could not be hid— “turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God.” Surely this is highly remarkable though given here only. The lepers were told to go and show themselves to the priests: one of them, and one alone, turns back, when he saw that he was healed, “and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at his feet, giving him thanks. And he was a Samaritan.” We have grace therefore in this place to the worst. But the lowest object of grace is very often the one that enters most into the fullness of grace in God. He may be the neediest among men; but the very depth of his need shows what God is; and hence grace is often seen and enjoyed more simply by a long way than by others who might boast of much better privileges. Certainly it was so here. This Samaritan is far more simple in his thoughts of God, and at once concluded what Jesus must be, not perhaps definitely and distinctly as to His personal glory. At least he was quite sure that Jesus was the best representative of God's power and grace in that land. If therefore be was to show himself to any one, he would go to Him; if he was to glorify God, it must surely be at the feet of Jesus. He, consequently, who was the farthest removed from the formality of the law and ritual, could all the more readily go straight to Jesus.

“And Jesus answering said, Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine? There are not found that returned to give glory to God, save this stranger.” Now this is most worthy of our consideration. The Lord Jesus accepts the thanksgiving of this man as being the peculiar token

of his faith. The others had equally received a blessing; it was not that they were not thankful, but this man alone had returned to give glory to God, this stranger. The others might show themselves to the priests, carrying out the letter of the word of Jesus; but this stranger's heart was right and his spiritual instinct was of faith. There is nothing good for the soul without the sense of the glory of God. The Samaritan might not have been able to explain, but his heart was thoroughly true and divinely guided. He was therefore far more bright than others who seemed to reason better. The other nine might plead that he was presumptuous, disobedient, and not, like them, acting on the word of the Lord; for Jesus had distinctly told them they must go and show themselves to the priests; whereas he without any express command had turned back to show himself to Jesus, and give thanks at His feet. And appearances favor unbelief.

But Jesus vindicated him in coming and approved the boldness of his faith which acted at once on what he instinctively felt to be due to the Lord Jesus. What is still more striking, the Lord says to him, “Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.” There is not a word of showing himself to the priest now. He had found God in his soul. He, in the healing of his leprosy, had proved the gracious power of God, he recognized it in Jesus, and so gave Him glory.

When a soul is thus brought to God, there is no question of showing oneself to priests on earth. Priests had their place once for those who were under the law. But when grace delivered from it (in principle only then, for it was not yet the precise time to break down the wall of partition for all), the delivered soul could not possibly be left, still less put under, the law. Therefore says the Lord, “Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole.” It is a striking prefiguration of the Gentile who is not under law like the Jew (never was indeed), and who, when brought to God by His grace now and cleansed from all his defilements, is certainly not put under law. As the apostle says, “Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under law, but under grace.” He was to go his way in liberty of heart. This is the calling of a Christian. Christ does not call to the bondage of law. He makes us His freemen though no doubt also bondmen to Himself. This is a very different thing from being under law, which the Christian is not, even if he had once been a Jew.

Notes on Luke, Luke 17:1-10, Notes on

The chapter opens with instruction which follows from what we have already seen. The Jewish system was judged. It was to be left entirely behind. Present favor and earthly prosperity were no tests of God's estimate. That which is unseen will entirely reverse the actual condition of things. Lazarus quits the world for Abraham's bosom, the rich man is afterward tormented in bell; but from both the infinite moment of the word of God is seen for every soul.

Here the Lord lets the disciples know the certainty of stumblingblocks in such a world as this, and the awful doom of those who cause them. “It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he cast into the sea,” says the Lord about any one so offending others. Hence we have to take heed to ourselves, as His disciples; and while guarding against being stumbled by others, we have to cherish the grace of God which is as essential to Christianity as the law was to the Jews as their rule. “Take heed to yourselves; if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.” It supposes that there is an evil course and current in the world, which may affect every one's brother; but grace is never intended to weaken the moral reprobation of what is evil. “If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.”

Repentance is a great word, altogether contrary to the bent of human will. Man may make efforts, but will never repent. Only grace gives real repentance, which, when used in its proper sense, means simply and invariably the judgment of self. Now this man will never bend to. Amends he may offer, he may endeavor to do good, and repair the evil; but to own self thoroughly wrong without qualification, reserve, or endeavoring to throw the blame on others, is never the nature of man but the result of the working of divine grace, and true therefore of every soul that is truly renewed. It is impossible for a sinner to be brought to God without repentance. Faith no doubt is the spring of all; it alone gives power by the revelation of grace in the person and work of Christ; but repentance is the invariable consequence or concomitant. And so it is in particular cases, as here in trespass, as, “If he repent, forgive him.” This was more especially needful to urge on a Jew, accustomed as he was to severity. And further, grace would hinder one from being wearied any more by ill doing in others, than in well doing on our part. “If he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying I repent, thou shalt forgive him.” It is seven times as showing the failure complete and in a day too as adding to the trial. To men's mind this would indicate the hopelessness of any good in forgiveness. But it is so that God deals with us: He is unwearied in His grace. If it were not so, it would be all over with us not only when in our sins but even as believers.

Nevertheless the apostles, (for so it is expressed here for our instruction, “the apostles) said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.” They felt that such a demand was entirely beyond them. “And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.” Thus faith works what is impossible to man, to nature; and this too, wherever there is a grain of reality, be it ever so small. For whether faith be little or strong, if real, it brings in God; and God is the same God, in answer to little faith as to great. There may be a great difference as regards the result for sensible enjoyment; but God answers in His grace the feeblest exercise of faith in Him. “If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamore tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea [all entire contrariety to the course of nature], and it should obey you.” We must always hold, as believers, the superiority of God to all circumstances.

At the same time, we have a place of duty here; and the Lord reminds us therefore, not only of the power of faith above every obstacle, but of the tone of conduct that becomes us in doing our duties, or rather when we have done them. “But which of you, having a” servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? and will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trove not.” Grace in no way weakens the duty that we owe. There are certain proprieties which we must never give up, and of which the Lord here reminds His apostles. The master in such a case does not thank the servant; it is but his obligation, the discharge of the service he undertakes, what he cannot therefore forget or omit without wrong. “So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do.”

People are sometimes apt to think that the proper owning of our unprofitable service is when we do not the things commanded; so at least they speak. But the Lord teaches us to feel that we are but unprofitable servants when we have done all the things that are commanded. Not to do our duty is a real wrong to the Master; but when we have done all, it becomes us to say, “We are unprofitable servants, we have done that which was our duty to do.” All we are commanded is short of that which Christ deserves; and we have to do with the Christ of God. When we have done that which was our duty to do, is love satisfied? It would go farther. Christ loved to obey, ever doing what was enjoined, and hence suffered to the utmost in grace to us and to the glory of God. So love is the fulfilling of the law; and in it we are now called to walk as Christ also loved us and gave Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savor. We are indeed unprofitable servants; yet how rich is the place into which grace brings us even now!

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Ten Lepers

Luke 17:11-19

The Lord in this miracle sets forth the grace, which was soon to supersede the law publicly, as even faith might in a measure enjoy personally. So this Gospel shows the Lord preparing the way in word and deed for the Christianity that was at hand, when Judaism died in His death.

The miracle was striking in its breadth and in its originality, if one may so say. It was not now a single leper prostrate at His feet, and His hand touching him in gracious power as Jehovah-Messiah. Ten leprous men together appealed as they stood afar off, calling aloud for His compassion, and not in vain before Him who came to save that which was lost. But let us hear the instructive account of divine pity and much more here only recorded.

" And it came to pass as He was on the way into Jerusalem, that He was passing between Samaria and Galilee. And as He entered into a certain village, there met Him ten leprous men who stood afar off; and they lifted up their voices, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. And on seeing He said to them, Go your way, show yourselves to the priests. And it came to pass, as they departed they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back with a loud voice glorifying God; and he fell on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks; and he was a Samaritan. And Jesus in answer, said, Were not the ten cleansed? but where [are] the nine? Were none found to return and give glory to God save this stranger? And He said to him, Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole " (vers. 11-19).

Faith was put to the test. While still uncleansed, they were told to go and show themselves to the priests. The solitary leper in earlier days was first cleansed, and then sent; but the ten were to go as they were. Assured of His power and unfailing compassion Who never wrecked the hope of the wretched, they acted on His word; and as they withdrew they were cleansed. What could the priests do but pronounce on the cure by the Master, and perform their prescribed ritual? One infinitely greater and better than they had wrought on ruined men to God's glory.

And this truth had spoken in growing faith to one heart among them where it might least have been expected; for be was a Samaritan. How apt even believers are to settle down contented with the needed blessing, and stop short of the Blesser! But one rose above letter and self; but one of them recognized the new responsibility created by grace; but one of the ten felt the immediate and paramount duty of returning to give glory to God, and of honoring the Man, His image and Son, even as the Father is honored.

Yes, the despised Samaritan alone turned back when he saw that he was healed. The nine might argue and blame the faith that outgrew theirs. " What! you going back to Jesus! Did He not tell us all to go and show ourselves to the priests? " It was plausible to reason, which cleaves to letter; but above letter is spirit, which cannot be satisfied with aught but God's mind; and He is not truly honored apart from Jesus. The nine remained Jews as they were, relieved bodily by divine power, but the heart in the old precincts of law, neither purified by faith nor enlarged by grace. Not so the Samaritan who turned to the Source and honored with the deepest homage Him Who is the Channel too of divine goodness.

It was indeed a living sample of Judaism, the refuge now of mere lettered ritual, soon to give place to grace and truth in and by Jesus, the Christianity of the gospel, and the church, believing man being brought to God reconciled and rejoicing. The first becomes last, and the last first. How the Lord fathomed and felt it all! " Were not the ten cleansed? but where the nine? Were none found to return and give glory to God save this stranger?" Truly their loss is the riches of the Gentiles; their casting away is the world's reconciling, as the apostle announced in Rom. 11

Nor is this all. The Lord instantly proclaims to the grateful Samaritan that liberty which is so essential to the Christian and is now preached to all that believe the gospel. " Arise, go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole (or, saved thee)." The cleansing, marvelous as it was, was but a figure of a deeper cure, even of soul-salvation. God in Christ came out to man in his sins, and man justified can now go in to God, even in the holiest. Earthly priests and temple, sacrifices and rites of law, are all gone in presence of Jesus dead, risen, and ascended.

But how is it with you, my reader? Many Jewish and more Gentile eyes that scan these pages know how true is the gospel to their present and everlasting deliverance. Are you one of those who say that to believe on Christ is one thing, but to realize and appropriate to yourself is another? God says not so; only your human dogma, or your unjudged unbelief, cherishes these churlish thoughts of God. He is better than the strongest faith apprehends; He has declared himself to you in Jesus, full of grace and truth. Believe Him about His Son given for you and testified to you, that you too by grace may be saved through faith.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Unprofitable Bondmen

Luke 17:7-10

One needs to be saved by Christ before one can serve Him. Salvation is of grace and by faith. It was Christ Who alone bore the burden. We contributed the sins, and nothing else; but awakened by the word and Spirit of God we repented and believed the gospel. How is it with you, dear reader? Beware of going on in dark uncertainty. The true light already shines since the Son of God came. Turn not your back on Him, lest

the true character of yourself and your works should be shown as they are. Be honest Godward. Confess yourself a sinner, and your deeds evil. Receive Jesus as the one divine Savior, expressly sent by and from God to save the lost. We were indeed bondmen of sin; but set free from sin by the Savior, we would henceforth yield our members in bondage to righteousness unto holiness, each the Lord's freedman, now Christ's bondman.

We are in a world of snares, pitfalls, and evils. Christ is not only the Savior but the sole path of safety. Hence an exercised conscience, and a spirit of compassion become those who confess Christ and are saved by grace. Self-judgment is the fruit, a careful walk, and readiness to forgive. As we may not weary of well doing, so neither should we of pardoning. Stumbling-blocks abound and work mischief; woe to him through whom they come! A terrible death were better than to cause one to the least disciple. Our Lord's call is, " Take heed to yourselves." Let fidelity to God rebuke sin; let grace forgive it to the repentant, were it seven times in the day. Do we not know it without limit in Christ? It is the kingdom and patience now. By-and-by it will be power and glory, when He reigns.

No wonder that the apostles said, " Lord, increase our faith." All things are possible to him that believes. Were their faith minute as a grain of mustard, He would have it count on God's power that answers the call for His glory, which roots up a tree, say this mulberry, and plants it in the sea obediently. Man may be weakness itself; yet is it God's purpose in and through man to glorify Himself. Is not the Lord Jesus the sure pledge and the manifest proof of it?

Bought with a price (and what a price 1) we are here to obey in all lowliness and meekness. God loves to work in us, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. While faith is encouraged to the utmost, self-complacency is absolutely condemned and excluded. Brokenness of spirit is the fitting preparation for the energy of faith. The Christian here is simply witnessing Him Who is not here, his Lord and the Lord of all. We are not fellow-workers with God, but under Him. We are His fellow-workers, but in entire subjection to Him, in no way on a level with Him. The wording in the A. and R. Versions of 1 Cor. 3:9 and 2 Cor. 6:1 is equivocal and dangerous; if interpreted as it often has been to put God and His servants on a common plane, it is evil and presumptuous. This, scripture repudiates and the new nature surely resents. The parable which follows reduces such a claim to dust.

" But which of you, having a bondman plowing or keeping sheep, will say to him when come in from the field, Come in straightway and recline at meat? But will he not say to him, Make ready what I shall sup on, and gird thyself and serve me that I may eat and drink; and after that thou shalt eat and drink? Is he thankful to the bondman because he did what was ordered? I judge not. Thus ye also, when ye shall have done all the things ordered you, say, Unprofitable bondmen are we; we have done what we were bound to do " (vers. 7-10).

It is a shameful perversion of serving Christ to make it either a ground of acceptance with God, or a measure of ease or rank among men. Bring in the Master, and behold every such plea exposed as evil and vanishing away. Even Christ pleased not Himself, but according as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me. And the great apostle of the Gentiles loved to style himself "bondman of Jesus Christ." What an overthrow of human feeling and worldly pride for him, the free-born citizen of Rome, so to introduce himself to all that were in Rome beloved of God, saints by calling So indeed to the utmost was it with the Lord of all, Who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it robbery to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking a bondman's form, becoming in likeness of men, and being found in figure as man, humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, death of [the] cross.

Here the Lord lays down the servant's place, so readily slipping out of our light hearts. He had shown what faith ever so small can do through God's power. Here He would remind us that we are His bondmen. A great honor it is for us, yet a great reality. It is fellowship with Him in what His love led Him to become.

Time was when we were enemies of God. Death and judgment were then our sure and appointed lot. He interposed and by His sacrifice changed all for those that believe. His love that made Him a bondman constrains us to the same service of love. Whatever our privileges, this is our place: servants not only of Him but for His sake. Has not grace made us debtors to all, to saints and to sinners, to countrymen and to foreigners, to wise and to unintelligent? But pre-eminently and unalienably and always are we Christ's bondmen. In this let us not forget that he who loveth his life shall lose it, and that he who hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. Let us remember that the rule for anyone who may serve Christ is to follow Him, and the issue will be that where He is, there also shall His servant be, and honored of His Father.

Assuredly the Lord owes us no thanks. It is our privilege as our duty to serve Him in all things great or small, day and night, sick or well. We are His altogether and evermore. Is a master " thankful to the bondman because he did what was ordered? So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all the things ordered you, say, Unprofitable bond-men are we; we have done what we were bound to do." Never did man speak like this Man, our Master. Others without an exception have thought, that it was enough to confess ourselves unprofitable when we fail to do our duty; He teaches us to say it, when we shall have done all the things ordered us.

How completely His word destroys the vain and unbelieving dream of works of supererogation I Not a single saint was other than His bondman; not a single right work done by anyone of them but was his duty to do. They were God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God before prepared that they should walk in them. What short-coming themselves found in what others deemed the best! Whatever they were, they had only done what they owed to Him.

Notes on Luke, Luke 16:1-13, Notes on

The Lord here addresses His disciples.

The last chapter consisted of parables spoken to the publicans and sinners that drew near to hear Him in the Presence of the murmuring Pharisees and scribes. They had for their object to show how the sovereign grace of God makes the lost to be saved; and in this the mind and temper of heaven in contrast with the self-righteous of the earth.

Now we have a weighty instruction for disciples. It is no longer sinners shown the way to God, but disciples taught the ways which become them before God, and this in view of the judgment of the world, more particularly of the elect nation. The Jews were now losing their special

place. The peculiar privileges of Israel had wrought no deliverance for themselves or for the earth. Contrariwise they had caused the name of God to be blasphemed among the nations. They had been untrue to God; they had been ungracious and even unrighteous to man. The Lord accordingly sets forth in a parable the only wisdom which suits and adorns those who understand the present critical condition of the world.

“There was a certain rich man which had a steward, and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods.” This had been done by man of course in general, but by the Jew especially, as being the most favored and therefore under a more stringent responsibility. He was not only a man but a steward. There was a trust reposed in the Jew beyond all others; and most justly was he accused of wasting his master's goods. What had he done for God? He ought to have been a light in the earth; he ought to have been a guide of the blind; he ought to have been a witness of the true God. But he fell into idolatry when God was displaying Himself in the temple in the Shekinah; and now he was about to reject God Himself in the person of the Messiah, His Son-a still more profound and gracious display of God. Thus he had altogether lost his opportunities, and wasted the goods of his master. He had brought shame on the law of God, and the living oracles into contempt through his own vanity and pride.

Hence, in the parable, the master called the steward, and said unto him, “How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.” The Jew was about to sink down into the level of all other nations, just as in the Old Testament times we hear that God had pronounced him Lo-ammi as set forth in Hosea. Then the last hope was gone, when not only Israel was swept away but Judah became faithless to the true God. This was confirmed when the returned remnant in the days of Christ proved no better—rather worse. There was a feeble body which represented the Jews that returned from Babylon, and it might have been a nucleus for the nation; but, instead of this they were more and more hardened against God, till all ended in their rejecting the Messiah and the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven.

“Then the steward said within himself, What shall I do? for my lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed.” He had no power; for the law rather provokes evil than gives good. But what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. On the other hand the Jew was ashamed to beg. He was unwilling to take the place of a lost good for nothing sinner, entirely dependent on God, looking up that God might do and give what he could not. Alas! the indomitable pride of the Jew rose up in rebellion against God's sentence of his impotence.

“I am resolved what to do, that when I am put out of the stewardship they may receive me into their houses.” This was prudent, and the precise point of earthly wisdom in the parable which the Lord commends for our admonition. Well for the Jew, had he adopted it! “He called every one of his lord's debtors unto him, and said unto the first, How much owest thou unto my lord? And he said, An hundred measures of oil. And he said unto him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then said he to another, And how much owest thou? And he said, An hundred measures of wheat. And he said unto him, Take thy bill and write fourscore.”

Thus plainly the steward assumes the title to sacrifice the present in view of the future. He acts with the utmost liberality with his master's goods. No doubt it cost him little or nothing. Nor is it the honesty of the step but its prudence which his master commends. He reduced the debt of the first one half, of the second considerably. He thus bound by his favor and leniency these debtors to himself; that, when he was turned out of his place, they might receive him into their houses. “And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely.” There is no ground to suppose that the parable makes light of his dishonesty. He is especially branded as the “unjust steward.” Such really was the position and character of the Jew; they were all unrighteous in the sight of God. But had they done what the steward does when about to be discharged? No! He looked forward to the future, and acted at once upon the conviction. Were they not, on the contrary, absorbed in the present? Is not this the great snare of men, and of the Jew as much as others, to sacrifice the future for the present, not the present for the future “And the lord commended the unjust steward, because he had done wisely: for the sons of this age are in respect of their own generation wiser than the sons of light.” They look onward, though it be only on the earth, for they have a keen sense of their best earthly interests; but for the soul, for heaven, for Christ's love, for God's nature and will, men are apt to allow the smallest of present advantages to blot out all just thought of the future. This is an important consideration for our hearts as disciples. What the Lord is insisting upon is that the present—so fugitive and fallacious—is not the real prize for us; that the future—the eternal future—is the thing to consider, and that it should govern the present. For we cannot walk rightly as disciples unless filled with the sense of what is to be; not carried away by what is. What is it that spoils the testimony of disciples now? That they are living chiefly for the present moment. If circumstances guide, what can one be but governed by what is wished? This ruins not merely the sinner as such, but the disciple—because he is only living for himself and the circumstances of this life. It is impossible to glorify the Lord thus. Let us hear His will and wisdom in this parable.

The unjust steward, as here portrayed, though bad in other respects, was wise in this, that he looked out steadily at the future; so that, when he lost his stewardship, he might be received kindly by the men whom he had befriended. For this it matters not that the goods were his master's rather than his own; indeed, we may see the deepest wisdom in the parable as it is, when we come to the application to our own practical conduct. For the only means whereby we can thus look out for the future is by reckoning what people—what self—would call ours, the resources of our master. We have nothing whereby to secure the future, except we use all as belonging to God. But this is the victory of faith; that instead of looking with a natural eye at the present moment, we resolutely contemplate the future, and act accordingly. Then, instead of seeking to hold fast what we have for ourselves, we learn to use all freely as in truth belonging to God. So assuredly those do who gain that which is future and eternal. Hence we find the Lord applies the illustration thus: “And I say unto you, make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations.” Are you thus making to yourselves friends by the mammon of unrighteousness? Instead of keeping money as something precious, treat it as what it really is.

Observe that the Lord gives here an ignominious name to the objects man covets—money, property, and everything of the kind. He calls it, not only mammon, in itself a word of ill omen, but “the mammon of unrighteousness.” He heaps plentiful disdain upon it; just as the apostle Paul counts all that man values most, even religiously, as the vilest refuse which should be kept or thrust out of doors. This is a great point; for Saul of Tarsus had not always been disposed thus to sacrifice the present in view of the future. His place as a Jew, his tribe, his family, his earthly thoughts and feelings, his personal advantages, he once estimated as much every way to cherish. But when he viewed them in the light of Christ and of that glory to which he was hastening, he counted them but dung. Who would ever think the earth at its best an object to look back on, when they have the glory before their eyes? Who would talk of getting rid of dung as a great sacrifice? Certainly everything, yea in religion too, of which men are apt most to boast, Paul calls dung; such he counted them, and so to the last, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. Was not this really to act in the wisdom of the steward, not in his injustice, but in his looking out and

onward? In Paul's case it was heavenly wisdom; and the love of Christ was its source and spring.

The meaning of the words “that they may receive you” is simply “that ye may be received into everlasting habitations.” Just so the apostle says “That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from the dead.” This answers to being received into everlasting habitations when all that is of earth fails, To be received there is what should be of concern to the heart that loves the Lord and His will. There is no stress to be laid on the form of the phrase “they may receive you.” This has misled not a few. Literally this might hold good on earth, as we see in verse 4, but spiritually it simply means “That ye may be received.” Compare Luke 6:38; 12:20; the first wrongly rendered in the Authorized Version, the last rightly. God alone receives into heaven: no one else has a title to receive there. The expression alludes to the parable, but it is used with the utmost vagueness. It is a virtual impersonal—that reception may be given you into the everlasting tabernacles.

Let us not over-estimate these sacrifices of the present; but imitate the apostle who shows how little he values the best things that earth honors. So our Lord Jesus here says, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much,” The smallest thing affords a sphere in which one can glorify God; but there must be the disregard of the present in the light of the future. It is something to be generous in money matters; it is very much more to love the Church, and be devoted to the Master, suffering with Him and for Him. But there are countless ways in which He may be magnified. “He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much.” Yet, as all know little things constantly test our reality. Many a man might not be dishonest about a thing of great value, but he might make too free in what is petty. There cannot be a greater fallacy than decrying a severe judgment formed about moral failure in matters of little pecuniary value, as it were making much ado about nothing; whereas it is in small things often that a man's true character is best known.

“If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?” The true riches cannot be entrusted where the heart has been false in that which is so trifling in the Lord's eyes as “the unrighteous mammon.” Nor is it only that present honor and riches are not “the true,” but the mere counters of the hour; there is the further consideration: “if ye have not been faithful in that which is another's who shall give unto you that which is your own?” Present property is not strictly one's own. The whole course of the Christian here is really that of one acting for another, even Christ. We are servants in trust for the Lord. The Christian ought to regard his time, his money, his abilities, his property, as the goods of his Master; and his business is to serve his Master, faithfully carrying out His will. This is of immense importance; because covetousness consists in endeavoring to make earthly things your own which God has not given. The wisdom of the disciple is to count what appears to belong to him as really his Master's.

Now it is easy to be generous with another's money. Count your riches another's and act with all possible liberality in faith of the future. We should thus judge by faith what we have to be Christ's and then be as free with it, as the unjust steward was with his master's goods. Those who enter heaven are not men hard and grasping as if by possessing more than is needed a man's life consists of his substance. No doubt the natural spirit of man cleaves to what it counts its own (and perhaps particularly of the Jew), as if the present moment were of all importance. But the true wisdom is to be like the steward in his steady resolve to secure the future by acting freely with what belonged to his lord. When the glory comes, we shall have what is our own. What a wonderful truth! That the wide scene of Christ's glory in which we shall reign with Him will be ours. Then we shall bear power and glory without abusing it; now we can only safely use what we have by counting it Christ's and using it according to His will.

“No servant can serve two masters.” If I have not Christ for my Master, I shall make myself so; and the moment we set up our own will, we find ourselves in Satan's service, for the fallen will is Satan's slave. “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will cling to one and scorn the other.” In the first we find the stronger case. With a man warm in his feelings everything is apt to be extreme. The other case supposes a person of feeble character. But in one way or another, whatever the character, to attempt this double service is fatal. “Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” Alas! mammon is the real ecumenical idol; it is the object of widest homage—not only in the world, but, grievous to add, in christendom. By its own confession (witness the popular prize of that title) mammon now reigns supreme in the hearts of men generally throughout these lands professing the name of the Crucified, who most of all despised and denounced it,

Notes on Luke, Luke 16:19-31, Notes on

WE have seen the conclusion of the earthly state of things; the Jew, who had wasted his master's goods, losing his stewardship, the character of those who receive heavenly things, the close of all the earthly testimony and the necessity of a new one, the kingdom of God preached, which alone was gain (that or nothing), the attempt to keep the old thing being exposed as altogether evil in the sight of God.

This is followed up by the rich man and Lazarus—I was going to say, by the parable, but the Lord does not so say; though it has this character, as it seems to me. It puts in a most vivid manner the condition of the soul viewed in the light of the future, not yet of Gehenna but of torment in hades. The light therefore of the future even before the judgment is let fall upon present things to judge them. “There was a certain rich man which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day.” According to a Jew's notion a good fortune, as men say, was happiness. The Jews regarded such prosperity as a mark of God's favor. His name was not to the Lord's mind worth recording, the beggar's was. The rich man had all that heart, or rather really flesh, could desire; and he gratified it. But it was all selfish enjoyment: God was not in it, nor was there even care for man. All centered in self. This was put to the proof and made evident by “a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores, desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table.” For him it was little more than desire. The rich man cared not for him but for himself; the dogs were more considerate, and rendered him better favor than their master. They came and licked his sores.

Such was man, such the Jew in present life, according to his thoughts of earthly good; but when death comes, when that stands revealed which was beyond the grave, the difference at once appears in all its solemnity. Then we have things in their true light. “And it came to pass that the beggar died.” And how different! There is not a word of his burial: perhaps indeed he was not buried; but he “was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom,” the place of special blessedness according to a Jew, in the unseen world, with the most honorable of God's servants waiting on him.

“The rich man also died, and was buried.” Here there might be splendor of retinue and ample show of grief in the eyes of men. But “in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom.” This is not a picture of the final state of judgment, but of a certain condition after death. This is of great importance. Luke gives us both, confirming what is seen in the Old Testament,1 and even adding to it. He gives its full prominence to the resurrection elsewhere; but here it was of consequence to know what would be even now for man's profit here below. In hades then “he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off.” We are not judges, save so far as scripture speaks and we are subject to it, of what is entirely outside our experience. How far those that are lost can have the knowledge of the condition of those that are saved, it is not for us to pronounce on. Scripture is plain as to the distance between them. There is no mingling of the two together. But what would be incredibly distant to man living on the earth may be simply far off to those in the separate state, and the difference between them mutually known. Lazarus then, according to the word, was seen in Abraham's bosom by him who was in torment. “And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me: and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame.”

Thus we have clear proof that, even before the judgment, the wicked man is in torment. Figures no doubt are employed; but these founded on that which would be intelligible to us. It is through the body that we feel in this world. From this the Lord takes figures in order to be understood by those whom He addresses in presenting according to His own wisdom the case of the unseen world. There at least the departed rich man has the sense of the need of mercy.

It is well to see that this man does not in any way take the place of an infidel. There was no faith in him assuredly, but still he talks of father Abraham; and though he had never looked to God for mercy, he sees that there at any rate the richest mercy was enjoyed—in Abraham's bosom. He asks him therefore to send Lazarus that he might dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue. What a very small favor this had been once! utterly despicable—a drop of water, and above all, sent by such as Lazarus! it would have been detestable to him on the earth. But the truth appears when man has left this life. Do we then hear while on the earth what the Lord says?

“I am tormented in this flame.” He who tells us this is Jesus; and we know that He is the truth, and that these are the true sayings of God. Abraham's answer too is most noteworthy. “Son” (says he, for he does not repudiate the connection after the flesh)— “Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.” He that was of Satan had good things on earth; he that was born of God received evil things here. The earth as it is gives no measure for the judgments of God: when Jesus comes, and the kingdom is set up, it will be different. But the Jew and men in general have to learn that it is not so now, and that, before He comes, there is still the solemn truth that men show by their ways here how little they believe such words of God as these. But when they die, they will surely prove the truth of what they refused to hear in this world. “Now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.”

It is not the day of Messiah's public kingdom. Luke lets us see what is deeper even than it both in good and ill, the unseen portion of the righteous, as well as that of the unjust. “And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot, neither can they pass to us that would come from thence.” The severance between the good and evil in the intermediate state is incalculably great and fixed. There is no passing from one to the other. The notion of possible mercy in the separate condition is absolutely excluded by scripture. It is the mere dream of men who wish to cling to evil as long as they can, or at least to enjoy themselves in this world, who therefore despise the warnings of God, being bent on holding fast or acquiring good things here, and utterly careless of the solemn lesson furnished by the rich man and Lazarus. “Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed” says Abraham—between the departed righteous and those that die in their sins the separation is complete” so that2 they which would pass from hence to you cannot.” Still less can any pass to Abraham that would come from beyond that gulf. In every way such change is impossible.

Thus, as no possibility of change remains for himself, he turns his attention to his family. “Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house (for I have five brethren), that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.” But the answer of Abraham brings out another grand truth from the Lord's mind—the all-importance of the word of God, and this too even in its lower forms. The New Testament undoubtedly has fuller and perfect light; but the Old is no less really inspired. “Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.” Still he pleads: “Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.” The answer of Abraham is decisive. “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.”

There is no proof that can succeed for eternity where the word of God is rejected. Such is the testimony from the unseen world. I do not deny that, for this world, there may be a conviction pressed by crushing judgments of God; but the tale before us is in view of present things before the kingdom comes, and during this state of things there is no conviction so profound, no proof so deep, as that which is rendered by the word of God. In fact also our Lord's own resurrection seals the truth of His words. For what so evident proof of the total failure of any other means to arouse man? Though He rose from the dead, out of the midst of a band of armed men set to watch as we know, men were not persuaded; least of all the Jewish priests and elders who only hardened themselves more completely. As one portion of the people set themselves against the Lord during His life, the rest were equally chagrined by the truth of His resurrection. Thus all the people made manifest their unbelief. It was bad to prove their want of sympathy with the only righteous One here below; it was, if possible, worse to refuse the testimony of grace which had raised Him from the dead and sent the message of salvation in His name. This Israel did.

But there was even more than this and sooner. A Lazarus did proceed from the dead not long after at the call of Jesus; and many of the rich man's brethren came to see him when so raised. But, far from repenting, the chiefs at least, yea the chief priests, consulted together that they might put Lazarus also to death, as well as Him whose resurrection power only provoked their deadly hatred, instead of persuading them to hear Moses and the prophets.

Hence the rich man who had departed, careless o the truth before man during his life, had no doubt received the due reward of his deeds; but those who rejected the testimony of Christ risen from the dead fall into a still greater gulf. Thus all the people were judged. The only light for the benighted soul, the only testimony that brings eternal life to the dead sinner, is the word of God received by faith.

Notes on Luke, Luke 16:14-18, Notes on

Next the Pharisees, not the disciples, come before us. They are characterized here as covetous. It is not their forms or their legalism, but their love of money which was touched by the doctrine of the Lord to the disciples; for after they had “heard all these things,” they “derided [or sneered at] him.” The evil against which the disciples were warned was at work in the Pharisees without a check. This state was not less corrupt than haughty.

“And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify themselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.” Not so those who are justified before God by faith. Such do not justify themselves before men any more than before God, unless so far as they allow nature and slip from their own ground of faith. Nevertheless they are not free from the snare of covetousness; so far as they are influenced by the thoughts of men, they are exposed. “Men will praise thee if thou doest well to thyself.” The intense selfishness of the heart naturally prefers its own care to that of God: thence is a link of worldly sympathy with the men of this age. Let us therefore beware, for “that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.” No evil more common in the religious world of our own day as truly as in our Lord's. Ease, honor, influence, and position are as highly valued as ever, to the infinite disparagement of the truth. Any one can see how strongly the word of God rejects all these conditions of fallen Adam, and how incongruous they are with the cross of Christ. And they are only a worse abomination where men essay to join such worldliness with heavenly truth.

The Lord next insists upon the crisis that was come. For this too adds its emphasis to His rebuke. What is morally true may become more urgently a duty, and such is the fact in the case before us. The religion of the world always takes the ground of Pharisaism; it assumes more or less the present favor of God, and that worldly rank and prosperity are to be taken as a sign of it. Faith looks away from present things since sin came into the world, and each successive step in God's ways is but a fresh confirmation of faith. “The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.” It was in vain, therefore, to rest all upon the law and its rewards to faithfulness. In fact they had broken the law; and because of this indeed were given the prophets, who reproved their iniquities, laid bare the actual state of ruin, and bore witness of a wholly new condition, which would end the present by judgment and introduce a new state never to pass away. John the Baptist, as the immediate herald of the Messiah, insisted on repentance in view of the immediate advent of Christ. This sweeps away all the self-righteousness of man. It is not that the law is not good; the defect lay not there, but in those who, being sinful, felt it not, but assumed to make out a righteousness of their own under law. Since John's time, says our Lord, “the kingdom of God is preached.” It is not here as in Matt. 11:12: “the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence and the violent take it by force.” There it is a question of the true hope of Israel and the necessity of breaking through all that opposes faith. But here it is—much more ground opened to man if he believed. “The kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it.” “Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also; seeing it is one God who shall justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through their faith. Do we then make void law through faith? Far be it. Yea, we establish law.” Thus the great apostle. So here the Lord says, “And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than one tittle of the law to fail.” Neither the truth nor faith enfeebles the law; rather do they maintain its authority over all that are under it as well as its intrinsic righteousness. Certainly our Lord not only honored it to the highest degree, but gave it the weightiest sanction; for He obeyed it perfectly in His life and was made a curse according to it in His death.

But those who while under it hope to stand on that ground before God do really destroy its authority, without intending or even knowing it. For they hope to be saved under law, though they know they have broken it and that it calls for their condemnation. And even those who “being justified by faith” take the law as their rule of life at the least impair its authority and so put dishonor upon it. For what does the law denounce on those who fail to do the things that it demands? Does it not threaten death on God's part? And have they not failed to keep it? It is in vain therefore to plead that they are justified persons: the law knows no such distinction. Justified or not, if they fail, they must die. If therefore they hope to live under the law, while they must confess they have failed, do not they also enfeeble its solemn threats?

How then does the truth set forth the deliverance and maintain the holy walk of the believer? Not by the notion most erroneously taught in the common text of Rom. 7:6: “But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held.” For the law is not dead. If so, the words of our Lord would be falsified; and not only one tittle of the law but the whole of it would have failed long before heaven and earth pass away. But this is notoriously inexact, not only in the Authorized Version, but in the received Greek text, where one letter makes the difference between truth and error. The English margin is right. It is we that are dead to the law, not the law to any. The believer is shown to be dead with Christ, in Rom. 6, to sin, and in Rom. 7 to the law,” that we should serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.” “Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.” The truth therefore is that, even had we been Jews, we are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, instead of living under it as our rule. And the very argument of the apostle is founded upon or at least illustrated by the principle that one cannot belong to two husbands at the same time without adultery. “If, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man she shall be called an adulteress;” if death come in, she is no adulteress though she belong to another man. And so it is with the Christian, for we now belong to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. Deliverance from law is essential to true Christian holiness. Excellent as the law is, its rule is to curse the lawless and disobedient; it “is not made for a righteous man” which every believer is; it is a rule of death for the bad, not of life for the good. Christ only is life and the light of life for the believer.

And does it not seem most striking that in the very next verse our Lord uses the same allusion on which the apostle reasons in the beginning of Rom. 7? “Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.” Undoubtedly both principles apply to the literal fact most truly and in the letter. But can one doubt the connection with the verse before and the context? If so connected, it is a striking instance of the one Spirit throughout scripture; if not so, it is exceedingly hard to understand why such a statement should close the Lord's words on this subject. No doubt the Jews allowed divorce for frivolous causes and marriage after such divorce; and in both encouraged adultery. I cannot but think there is more in the connection here.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Rich Man and Lazarus

Luke 16:19-31

In the second half of this chapter the Lord still makes known the truth which came into evidence through His rejection. The light of eternal and heavenly things is let in on the present state and life on earth. The first man is fallen, evil and lost. If the Jew pre-eminently had been God's

steward, he was unjust, and his occupation gone. Prosperity was no test of divine favor. That which is exalted among men is abomination in the sight of God. Since John, the Kingdom of God is preached: it is therefore an urgent question of pressing into it, and this on the part of " every one "; for grace opens the door to any. His death was at hand, which gives the believer even from the tribe of Judah or of Levi righteous deliverance from the law; so that there is no adultery, when one belongs to Another raised up from the dead, in order to bear fruit unto God, as the apostle wrote to the Roman saints.

How solemn and momentous the issues in the unseen world!

" Now there was a certain rich man, and he was clothed in purple and fine linen, making good cheer splendidly day by day. And a certain pauper by name Lazarus was laid at his gate-way, full of sores and desiring to be filled with the things that fell from the table of the rich man; nay, even the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the pauper died and was carried away by the angels into the bosom of Abraham. And the rich man also died and was buried; and in Hades lifting up his eyes being in torments, he seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom. And calling he said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame. But Abraham said, Child, remember that thou in thy lifetime didst fully receive thy good things, and Lazarus likewise evil things; but now here he is comforted and thou art in anguish. And besides all these things, between us and you a great chasm is fixed, so that those desiring to pass hence unto you cannot, nor those from that side may cross unto us. And he said, I beseech thee then, father, that thou wouldest send him unto the house of my father (for I have five brothers), that he may thoroughly testify to them, lest they too come into this place of torment. But Abraham saith [to him], They have Moses and the prophets: let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one from the dead go unto them, they will repent. And he said to him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, not even if one rise out of the dead will they be persuaded " (vers. 19-31),

The Savior depicts a man easy and luxurious in a world of misery, without faith in a world of sin, morally decent, outwardly religious, but living to self and practically infidel. Who did not know it in Israel? Who is not familiar with it in Christendom? Lazarus represents the contrast of the pious beggar laid hard by with none to pity his bodily sores but the dogs. The Conqueror of death lifts the veil. Then appears the truth for eternity: Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, the rich man that enjoyed himself in torments! What mattered the funeral pomp? or if the poor man had not even a grave? The angels carried the godly soul to the bosom of God's friend; the rich man left the vain and transient show of this world, and opened his eyes in the flame of Hades, aggravated by the sight of the blessed afar off—yea, of him there who on earth awakened only his disgust. Now he implores of his father Abraham that Lazarus might allay his burning tongue with the merciful touch of water at the tip of the finger!

It is not a picture of resurrection to come, but of what instantly follows death, though expressed in figures drawn from the body through which we now derive our sensations. The believer once wretched is comforted, the godless is in anguish. Like the parable before, it reveals not the means of salvation, but the character and end, whether of the saved or of the lost. Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God. If we suffer with Christ, we shall also be glorified with Him. To try to reign now is a danger and delusion: if we endure, we shall also reign together. Even Christ is not reigning yet, but rejected by man He is waiting on the Father's throne.

The latter verses (27-31) bring out the all-importance of faith; as the Jew, long favored, is now the standing witness of ruin through unbelief. The testimony of God in His word, O.T. or N.T, is the ground of faith. Even a Lazarus sent from the grave would not avail to convince those who do not listen believingly to Moses and the prophets. In fact another Lazarus was raised by the Lord Jesus not long after; but instead of convincing the Jews, he only provoked the murderous nature of the chief priests and the Pharisees (John 11:47-53). The carnal mind is enmity against God, and rises, proudly and most of all, against His grace in Christ. Yet by grace only are any saved through faith. Hence it is by hearing the word of truth; and this is now in the richest form and fullness, the gospel of our salvation, as the apostle calls it. For God has gone beyond all thoughts and wishes of man in raising up Jesus our Lord from the dead, Who, as He was delivered for our offenses, was raised for our justification.

It is Christ's death and resurrection which alone could save. Therefore is it God's righteousness, not man's, that He might be just and the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus.

There is no other way, no other salvation. To the poor is the gospel preached; but it had not been God's gospel, unless it were equally open to and reliable for the rich. For the truth of Christ is mighty to make the lowly boast in his elevation, and the rich in his humiliation. To Him be the praise and the glory now and evermore. Amen.

Assuredly for you, my readers, no great gulf is fixed between God and you. Christ is still speaking from heaven as a Savior that you may believe; and as faith comes by a report, so the report is by the word of God. Your guilty conscience may well dread an impassable gulf; but there is a perfect way, a safe bridge fixed between God and you; and Christ is that way. Oh! take it now, this way to the Father in the Son; for the Holy Spirit deigns and loves to proclaim the glad news to you.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Prudent Steward

Luke 16:1-13

Tills parable, though addressed by the Lord to His disciples, is a word of warning and instruction to all. It shows, not the way to the heavenly dwellings, but the character of those who get there.

" There was a certain rich man who had a steward; and he was accused to him as wasting his goods. And having called him, he said to him, What [is] this I hear of thee? Render the account of thy stewardship; for thou canst no longer be steward. And the steward said to himself, What shall I do? because my lord is taking the stewardship from me. I cannot dig; I am ashamed to beg. I am resolved what I will do that when I have been removed from the stewardship, I may be received into their houses. And having called to him each one of the debtors of his own lord, he said to the first, How much owest thou to my lord? And he said, A hundred baths of oil. And he said to him, Take thy bill [writings], and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then he said to another And thou, how much owest thou? And he said, A hundred cors of wheat. He saith to him, Take thy bill [writings], and write eighty. And the lord praised the steward of unrighteousness, because he did prudently. For the sons

of this age are for their own generation more prudent than the sons of light. And I say to you, Make to yourselves friends from the mammon of unrighteousness that, when it shall fail, ye may be received into the everlasting tabernacles. The faithful in a very little is faithful also in much, and the unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much. If therefore ye were not faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true? And if ye were not faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two lords; for he will either hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon " (vers. 1-13).

In a general way man, especially the Jew, has wasted the goods entrusted to him, and forfeited his place. But grace gives him the opportunity of turning these earthly things to everlasting account. It is sheer folly to hold fast the brief present, regardless of the unending future. The Lord praises not the past waste any more than the selfish unrighteousness, but the prudence that sacrifices time and its passing interests in view of the unseen eternity and heavenly glory.

Christ by His infinite sufferings for sin and sinners has made this possible. The first man brought in ruin by sin; Israel made bad worse and earned a curse by his transgression and apostasy. Grace and truth came not by law but by Jesus Christ Whom God made sin for us as He bore the curse, that the guiltiest might through the faith of Him go free. He Whose grace opens the way into blessing beyond all thought has been wronged and plundered without measure. It is not the aim of this parable to show the way in which He is vindicated, and the evils of the sinner are blotted out, and His own righteousness by faith takes the place of man's righteousness sought no matter how assiduously, but always in vain. Thus it comes to pass that no flesh can glory, but he that glories truly must glory in the Lord.

It is Christ alone Who, heard in faith, gives a divinely sound judgment of ourselves and of things around us. Conscience alone is powerless to cope with temptation and blinding wiles of the enemy, ever alluring by what is in sight, seemingly fair and desirable. Without faith it is impossible to please God. To believe in Christ, the Word become flesh and dying for us, the Propitiation for our sins, that we might live of His life, how blessed for us! and how worthy of God! This is grace, this is truth. It centers in Christ, the object of faith; Who gives new eyesight to discern, and decision to abandon the sin-stained present, for an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and unfading, reserved in the heavens for the faithful.

How is it then with you, dear reader? Are you setting your mind on earthly things? cleaving to the dust in quest of the unrighteous mammon, instead of making friends out of it that you may be received, when it shall have failed, into the everlasting tabernacles?

Everything like Judaism is on God's part now obsolete. It is no longer a system of earthly rewards or punishments, of a worldly sanctuary, of present ease, honor, or advantage. Heavenly things are revealed by Him Who was then rejected on earth and is now glorified on high. There alone are the true riches. The bait of Satan is the mammon of unrighteousness. This may procure the pleasures of sin for a season, and present results on the earth. But what will the end be? where must go those who in contempt of Christ lived only for that which is to fail?

The steward's prudence is a lesson for disciples. See the promptness of his course and his careful consideration of the debtors, the generosity too which gave right and left. This, and this alone in the unscrupulous steward, is commended for our imitation. What men call ours is really another's (ver. 12). It is easy to be generous with another's goods; and so faith would consider them. Such is Christ's yoke; and His yoke is easy, His burden light. To accumulate and keep or use for self is unbelief and covetousness. Faith gives freely, makes friends with what is but mammon, and turns it to everlasting account, when, faithful in a very little, we shall have much. The true riches then shall indeed be ours: for with Christ, His own Son, God will also freely give us all things. We are but stewards now, and are exhorted by the Master to the generosity of grace. It is vain, it is impossible, to serve God and mammon.

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES. James 3:11, 12.

In this portion follow fresh illustrations to impress on the readers the incongruity and the enormity of injurious speech, all the worse for utterances of piety and propriety interchanged with it, and beyond just question condemnatory of it, as indicating the lack of the fear of God and of regard for man. The inspired writer's sense of its evil kindles into glowingly indignant questions, to which expostulation he himself supplies the answer in a few pregnant words.

" Doth the fountain out of the same opening pour forth the sweet and the bitter? Can, my brethren, a fig tree produce olives, or a vine figs? Neither [can] salt water produce sweet " (vers. 11, 12).

Here as elsewhere, the homeliness of the examples lends the more force to the reproof. To take the first instance: who ever heard of the fountain from the same slit emitting sweet water and bitter? Nature itself rebukes so shameless a mixture, and issues so contradictory, in those who praise the Lord and the Father. The great apostle of the Gentiles drew weapons from the same armory in 1 Cor. 11:14, 16 for divine order, and in 2 Thess. 3:10 also; as he did repeatedly to his confidential fellow-laborer Timothy in his First Epistle (2:12-15, 4:3-5, 6:6-8). But nowhere have we more telling thrusts of this kind than in the Epistle before us; where the impossible in nature is made to expose and castigate the ethically inconsistent, especially aggravated as it was by the profession of relationship to God and by the claim to enjoyment of His favor. Is the new nature to be disgraced by that which the old universal nature repudiates even though fallen?

In the second the demand is still more peremptory. It is not, Does, but " Can a fig tree produce olives, or a vine figs? " And we have the repetition of " my brethren " in this second case, though so soon after its dignified affectionate introduction just before in verse 10, in order to send the appeal home to their bosoms. One of the learned men who, setting up to interpret the words, set at naught its spirit, dares to compare the figure with our Lord's in Matt. 7:16-20 in order to disparage His servant here. But it is only another sample of the ill-willed ignorance which so constantly appears where erudition is not subservient to faith; that is, where man assumes to judge God, instead of seeking to profit by His word. For the Lord was there laying down the error of expecting good fruit from a bad tree; whereas His servant in, order to rebuke the glaring inconsistency of calling on the Lord of glory and indulging evil speech, confronts it with the natural impossibility of a tree producing any but its own proper fruit. Both are plainly true, and each exquisitely adapted to its purpose. Unbelief blindly errs, but only betrays its sinful presumption to those that know God and bow to His word. It is possible that the first word of the last clause (, neither) may have through hasty misapprehension given rise to the added (" thus") of the Text. Rec. Then came an effort to make the phrase more pointed by reading (no fountain). The Sinaitic Uncial has . But even Tischendorf, and Westcott and Hort decline to follow; for they with Alford, Lachmann, Tregelles, and Wordsworth, read the text which yields the translation given above. There is, it would seem, a certain strangeness in reading rather than . But this appears to be explicable by the writer's carrying on in his mind the preceding clause. The insertion of the

conjunction (, "and") in the last clause is opposed to the weightiest of the ancient witnesses, both MSS. and Vv. and loses the point of the true text, which varies the figure by a negation which is indisputable.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: 23. The Lost Drachma

Luke 15:8-10.

THE parable which follows the lost sheep presents the sinner’s case in another form. It is not as that animal foolish and straying, but like a coin without life, a dead thing. Both are true of fallen man. As all are gone out of the way, and none seeketh after God, with destruction and wretchedness in their ways (Rom. 3), so were all dead in their offenses and their sins, by nature children of wrath one as another (Eph. 2). But grace goes forth to save and does save; not the creature’s grace, but God’s. This the Pharisees and scribes disliked; but the Lord demonstrates it, and draws the despised near to hear One so capable of telling out the love, of which He was the brightest witness and the richest gift. These parables are a pair, as the opening word indicates.

“Or what woman having ten drachmas, if she have lost one drachma, doth not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently till she shall have found it? And on finding, she calleth together the friends and the neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me, because I found the drachma which I lost.

Thus, I say to you, there ariseth joy in presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth” (Luke 15:8-10). Herein is a scene within the house, and a woman is active in seeking out the lost object; as in the former a man strenuous to recover the stray one without. But in both it is divine grace, grace entirely above man or woman, which the Savior sets before us so vividly; and the lost one is man or woman whom grace seeks and saves. Is it nothing to you who read these lines that you are “lost”? that you have turned your back on God? and that you are utterly hard and insensible in your alienation? Assuredly He is not cold or indifferent Who so loved the world that He gave His Only-begotten Son; that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have life eternal (John 3). Not hard nor regardless of guilty man is He Who commends His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us,-died for the ungodly (Rom. 5). Herein is love, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us and sent His Son as propitiation for our sins (1 John 4). Such is the true God Whose compassion the Lord Jesus here makes known. He here represents the painstaking of grace by a woman who spares no pains to win back her lost silver piece. She cannot rest about it. If sinners are beguiled by the enemy to disbelieve their ruin, the direct contrast is plain in her. She lights a lamp; she sweeps the house; she searches carefully till she finds it. It is not otherwise with the Holy Spirit. In the redeemed He is come to dwell, and causes the saints, however opposed in their old natural state as Jews and Gentiles, fitted together, to grow into a holy temple in the Lord, even now being builded together for God’s habitation in the Spirit. Also He takes a most energetic part as well as loving interest in awakening the sinner from the slumber of death. It is He that makes the candle of the word shine into the dark recesses of the heart. It is He that probes the guilty conscience. It is He that discovers the fatal evil of darling sins in the light of God. Oh, have ye not experienced these gracious workings in your souls? Have you not felt as you read or listened to scripture, that somehow God was speaking to your conscience? Beware of turning a deaf ear to Him Who warns and would win you to Himself from all evil. If He press home the certainty that God will have every work and word brought into judgment, He does not fail to remind you of the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering. Do not longer ignore that the goodness of God leads you unto repentance? What goodness can match His spending the Only-begotten on you? What was it for the Lord of all to become Servant of all-yea, to die as a sacrifice for sinners.

Fear not to lay your hand on that infinite offering for sin. If the blood of hulls and goats could be no more than a witness by the way, if their effect could be but provisional and temporary, it is not so with the blood-shedding of the Lord Jesus. By His blood peace was made for those who had been at war with God; and who can wonder? For His blood cleanses from all sin. It is God’s word which so testifies to you. “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven? And his voice then shook the earth; but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I will shake not the earth only but also heaven” (Heb. 12).

It may be remarked, that as the first of these three parables points evidently to the Lord Jesus, so does the second to the Holy Spirit, and the third yet more unmistakably to the Father. How blessed is it, that all the divine Persons of the Godhead are engaged on behalf of the lost one that he may be saved! Who can deny that this the Savior preached when here? And the Spirit has inspired the scripture for you to her and believe.

Notes on Luke, Luke 15:11-32, Notes on

We have seen the Lord Jesus in His work set forth by the shepherd, and the more bidden but at the same time the active pains-taking operation of the Spirit of God, no less necessary in order to bring home the work to men in both giving the light to see and also searching them out. Now we have in the third parable the effect produced; for the work is not merely conversion or pardon, and therefore nothing that is done in this way would suffice unless there was the full bringing of the soul to God and also into fellowship with Him, the new and intimate relationship of a son by grace. This is what the third parable accordingly sets forth. And hence it is no longer a sheep or a piece of money, but a man. It is there that we find intelligence and conscience; and so much the more the guilt. Such is man's case. The first Adam had a certain relationship to God. When he was formed out of the dust, God dealt with him in tender mercy and gave him special advantages in Eden, privileges of every suited sort. But man fell from God, as the prodigal here left his father's house.

In a general way this is represented by a certain man who had two sons. “And the younger of them said to his father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me. And he divided unto them his living.” There was the point of departure, the first and main step of evil. There is scarce anything in which men are apt more to mistake than in what the true nature of sin consists. They measure sin by themselves instead of by God. Now the desire to have one's own way at a distance from God is positive sin and the root of all other sin. Sin against man is sure to follow; but sin against God is the mainspring. What more evident denial of Him in works than to prefer one's own will to His?

The younger son then (which makes the case the more glaring) said to his parent, “Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me.” He wished to go away from his father. Man would be at a distance from God, and this in order the more at ease to do what he likes. “And he divided unto them his living.” Man is tried—he is responsible; but, in fact, he is not hindered from having his way, God only keeping the upper hand for the accomplishment of His own gracious purposes. Still, as far as appearances go, God allows man to do what he pleases. This alone will tell what sin means, what the heart seeks, what man is with all his pretension, and the worse the more he pretends, “And not many days the younger son gathered all together and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.” There was eagerness to get away from his father. It was, as far as his will was concerned, a complete abandoning of his father to do his own pleasure. He wished to be so thoroughly at a distance as to act according to his own heart without restraint. There, in a far country, he wastes his substance with riotous living. It is the picture of man left to himself, doing his own will in this world with its ruinous consequences for the next as well as this. “And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land, and he began to be in want.” Such, again, is the picture not only of the active course of sin but of its bitter issues. Sin indulged in brings misery and want. There is a void that nothing can satisfy, and the selfish waste of all means only makes this to be more felt in the end.

So, in the extremity of distress, “he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.” Now we find the sinner's degradation; for love is not there, but self is. The citizen does not treat him as a fellow-citizen, but as a slave. There is no slavery so deep or degrading as that of our own lusts. He is treated accordingly; and what must this sound to a Jewish ear? He is sent into the fields to feed swine. “And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat; and no man gave unto him.” He is reduced to the lowest degree of want and wretchedness; yet no man gives unto him. God is the giver, man grudgingly pays his debts, if he pays them; never to God, only half-heartedly to man. But no man gives: so the prodigal found.

“And when he came to himself.” Now we begin the work of God's goodness, he comes to himself; before he comes to God. “And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger.” It is God giving him the conviction of his state. Hence his feeling is that even those who have the lowest place in his father's house are well and even amply provided for compared with him.

His mind is made up. “I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.” The last words betray the usual legal state. It is one who conceives that God must act according to his condition. This grace never does. He had wronged his father, he had been guilty of folly, excess, and lewdness; and he could not conceive of his father doing more for him at best than putting him in the lowest place before him, if he received him at all. He felt that he deserved humiliation. Had he judged more justly, he would have gathered that he deserved much worse; that the more favored he was, seeing that he was so guilty, he must be put away—not merely go away, but be put into outer darkness where should be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

But although there was this wrong reasoning, at bottom there was at least a real sense, however feeble, of his sin, and, what was more and better, a real sense of love in God the Father. If he could only see Him, hear Him, be with Him! He rises accordingly and comes to his father, “but when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him.”

It is not the son that runs; but, even though a long way off, the father saw him. It was the father that ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. The son would not have dared to have done so, still less would He have expected it from the father. But grace always surprises the thoughts of men; and therefore reason can never find it out, but rather denies and opposes and enfeebles it, qualifying it, putting clogs and fetters on it, which only dishonor God, and do not alter the truth, but most surely injure man. The father then ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. Not a word about his wicked ways! and yet the father it was that had wrought secretly, producing the conviction of his own evil, and the yearning after his own presence.

Further, it was the father who deepened all that was of himself in his own soul immensely, now that the prodigal was come to him. It is not true therefore that by not putting forward the evil in this case our Lord implied that the father was indifferent to the evil, or that the prodigal son was not to feel his outbreaks or his fleshly nature. Surely it should be so much the more, because it was allowed him to judge himself and the past in the light of such unspeakable grace. “And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” He cannot say more. It was impossible in the presence of the father to say, “Make me as one of thy hired servants.” It was well, as far as it went, to acknowledge that he was no more worthy to be called his son. It was unqualifiedly right to say, “I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight;” but it would have been still better if he had said not a word about anything of which he could be worthy or unworthy. The sad truth was, that he was worthy of nothing but bonds or death. He deserved to be banished forever—to be driven out from the presence of his father.

Grace, however, does not give according to what man deserves, but according to Christ. Grace is the outflow of the love that is in God, which He feels even towards His enemies. For this reason He sent His Son, and He acts Himself. “But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe and put it on him.” All must now be of the very best, because all must be in accordance with the grace of God and the gift of Christ. “Bring forth the best robe, and put a ring on his hand and shoes on his feet, and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and be merry.” The younger son had never worn the best robe before; the elder son never did wear the best robe at all. The best was kept for the display of grace.

The two sons, therefore (of course the prodigal before his return), do not represent children of God in the sense of grace, but such as have merely the place of sons of God by nature. Thus Adam is said to be so. (Luke 3) All men are spoken of similarly in that sense—even the heathen—in Acts 17 as being endowed with a reasonable soul as men, and as having direct personal responsibility to God in presence of His favors and mercy. It is also doctrinally affirmed in “one God and Father of all.” (Eph. 4)

But then sin has completely separated man from God, as we have seen in this very parable. Grace brings into the nearer and better relationship of sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus. The prodigal only enters this state when he at length comes back to his father, confessing his sins and casting himself upon divine grace. The best robe, the ring on his hand, the shoes on his feet, the fatted calf, all these belong, and belong solely, to the relationship of grace, to him who is born of God by believing in the name of Jesus. It is God magnifying Himself to the lost. “For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.”

It is important to see this common joy. It is not only that there is personal blessing for the heart that is brought back to God, but there is the joy of communion, which takes its rise in and its strength from God, whose joy in love is as much deeper than ours as He is above us. Nor is it now only in heaven as we saw before, but there is the effect produced on earth, both individually and also in other hearts; and the great power of it all is after all communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, which the Holy Ghost sheds abroad—His love shed abroad in the heart, no doubt, but issuing also in communion one with another. “They began to be merry.”

But here we have a further picture. “Now his elder son was in the field, and as he came and drew nigh to the house, he heard music and dancing.” The joy of true Christian worship, of living fellowship in grace, is unintelligible to the natural heart. This was what struck repugnantly the ears of the elder son. “And he called one of the servants, and asked him what these things meant.” He could have understood, debt, he could have urged right, he could see and pronounce on failure; but he did not scruple to judge God Himself, as we shall see. “The servant said unto him, Thy brother is come, and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound. And he was angry, and would not go in; therefore came his father out and entreated him.” His heart was outside the home of his father, nor did he breathe the spirit of the love that was being shown to the returned prodigal. He was a stranger to grace; so he had no part in all this joy. He was pursuing his own things. No doubt he was active and intelligent “in the field,” in the world, away from the scene of divine mercy and spiritual joy.

When, therefore, the servant told him that his brother had come, and of the way the father had received him, he shows his aversion on the spot, and yet more, the more he hears what made the others happy. Grace was to him irksome and even hateful. Doubtless he took the ground of righteousness, though he had none; plenty of talk and theory, but nothing real. His father comes out in the fullness of love and entreats him. “And he, answering, said to his father,” with that kind of pious, or rather impious, indignation against divine love, which belongs to and does not shock the natural mind, “Lo, these many years do I serve thee, [hollow and wretched service!] neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment, [the unhappy sinner had no sense of sin!] and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends.” Thus he was bold enough to judge the father as the self-righteous shrinks not from judging God. To the thought of the unbeliever He is hard and exacting. There is utter blindness as to all the favors of God, total insensibility of heart as well as conscience. “But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.” There is manifest dislike of grace and its ways. He does not call the prodigal his brother, but tauntingly “thy son.” And though it was what the father had given, he calls it “thy living,” in every case putting the worst aspect forward.

Truly the patience of God is as wondrous as His love. Hence the father perseveres: “And he said unto him, Son [for nothing can exceed the tender mercy of the father, even to the unthankful and the evil, the ungrateful and rebellious son], thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.” It was just the place of the Jew under law. But it is the same position that every unconverted man in Christendom takes who is endeavoring to walk after the flesh religiously. It is just so that the natural man in these lands thinks and speaks. And no doubt the Jews had the chief place and indeed the only place that God claimed in this earth. All Other countries God had given to the children of men, but His land He had reserved for Israel. He had brought them to Himself through redemption of an outward sort and put them under law. The same principle is true of any self-righteous man who is in his way endeavoring to be good and serve God, but insensible to the truth that it is mercy that he wants and delivering grace. “It was meet that we should make merry and be glad.” Wonderful thought! God Himself delighting in the joy of grace and putting Himself in it along with others. “Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

Notice again, “For this thy brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.” “Thy brother” is to be observed. God is not in any way disposed to allow the denial of proper relationship, Hence one of the sins that will draw out the last judgments of the Jews is not merely their base ingratitude toward God, but also their hatred of the grace He is showing to the poor Gentiles in their wretchedness and sin. This we find strongly put by the Apostle Paul: “Forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost.” (1 Thess. 2:16.) They cannot endure that others, dogs of the Gentiles, should hear the gospel of grace, which their pride of law induced them to despise for themselves.

Notes on Luke, Luke 15:8-10, Notes on

To my mind it is impossible to avoid the conviction that these parables have a root in God Himself as well as a reference to His operations on the heart of man. As we saw that the first is a most clear prefiguration of Christ's work (the Shepherd being the well-known figure that He Himself adopted to set forth His interest and His grace for those that need Him), so also in the last parable there cannot be a question that the father sets forth God Himself in the relationship that He establishes by grace with the returning prodigal. There is also another sense of that relationship with the elder son, whose self-righteousness was so much the more glaring because of his want or respect and love for such a father, though known no doubt on a lower ground.

But if this be so, how can we avoid the conviction that the intermediate parable has a similar connection and that the woman has a propriety and a peculiar fitness, just as much as the shepherd and the father? If therefore the shepherd represents the work of the Son of God come as Son of man to seek and to save that which was lost, and if the father shows the relationship in which God reveals Himself to him that is brought back to Him and that learns his love within the house, we cannot doubt that the woman must set forth the ways of God working by His Spirit. We know that the Spirit, now particularly deigns, not only to act in man, but also in the Church, and this may account for the fact of the figure of the woman, a woman being habitually used to set forth the Church of God. However this may be, that in some form or another under the woman is set forth the activity of the Spirit of God cannot be questioned. So we shall find that all the details of the parable fit in with this view.

“Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle and sweep the house and seek diligently till she find it?” Now we find the lost creature is represented, not by a sheep, which, if it has life of a certain sort, has it only to go astray; not by a man who is at last, after having perverted all that God gave him, brought into intelligent enjoyment of God; but in this parable the lost piece of money is an inanimate thing, and this is most fitted to express what a lost sinner is in the mind of the Spirit of God. He not only slipped aside, though capable of being the object of a new action by grace outside self to find him; but meanwhile the soul is but a dead thing spiritually, with no more power to return than the missing piece of silver. The propriety therefore of this coin being used to represent the sinner where there is evidently not the slightest power to go back to God, where it is utterly helpless, where only the Holy Ghost can avail, is

manifest. But the woman did not so easily reconcile herself to the loss of her piece of silver. She lights a candle, sweeps the house, and seeks diligently till she find it. The candle clearly sets forth the testimony of the word of God; and this it is particularly in the use of the Spirit of God. The Lord Jesus Himself and God as such are thus spoken of. But it is the Spirit alone who, as we know, brings it home to the heart in conscience or peace, when we are brought to God. The Spirit has the character of agency very peculiarly, and in this agency employs the word. The candle therefore is said here to be lit. But that is not all. The woman sweeps the house and searches diligently till she finds it. There is painstaking love, the removal of obstacles, minute working and searching. Do we not know that this is pre-eminently the part God's Spirit is wont to take? Do we not remember when truth was powerless to reach us? The Lord Jesus is rather the suffering Savior; His mighty work assumes that form. The Holy Spirit of God is the active agent in the soul. The Father freely gave according to His infinite love and counsels. Having in Himself the deep enjoyment of love, He would bring others, in spite of their sins, to be righteously without them, in order to make themselves happy in the enjoyment of Himself. But the Spirit of God, just as beautifully, engages Himself in activity of effort and ceaseless painstaking, till the lost thing is found.

“And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbors together, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I had lost.” In every case, whether it be the Son, or the Father, or the Holy Ghost, there is communion. We know that our communion is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ; but it cannot be less familiar to the believer that there is the communion of the Holy Ghost. This is what appears to be set forth here at the close of the second parable: the spreading of universal joy among those who enter into the mind of God. “She calleth together her friends and neighbors, saying, Rejoice with me.” Thus on all sides is real delight, every person of the Godhead having His own appropriate place and part in the wonderful work of redemption, but, further, deep divine joy in the result of redemption. “Likewise, I say unto you, There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.” It is not here generally in heaven, but joy in the presence of the angels of God. They enter into it. They may not have the same immediate concern in it, but it is in their presence; and they delight in it ungrudgingly and unjealously without being the parties to derive direct or personal results from it. Their joy is in what God delights in, and hence in what He is to the creatures of God. What a new scene of enjoyment, joy among those who had been lost to God, and enemies to God! “There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”

Notes on Luke, Luke 15:1-7, Notes on

In the latter part of chapter 14 we saw the Lord's terms, if I may so say, to the multitude that was following Him. There He laid down that, except a man came to Him, hating father and mother, wife and children, brethren and sisters, and even his own life, he could not be His disciple. “And whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after me cannot be my disciple.” Thus first He insists on a thorough break with nature, and next that this shall continue. Hence in His illustrations He sets forth the need of purpose and the danger of undertaking such a business. A man is sure, otherwise, to leave the work undone. And how would it fare if a king with double your forces should come against you? The moral of all this is that man is insufficient, and that God alone can enable a man to quit the world for Christ and to keep following after Christ. The worst of all is to renounce Him after bearing such a name—salt that has lost its savor.

Nevertheless His words drew to Him the outcast and degraded, too wretched not to feel and own their need. The publicans and sinners, instead of bearing a repulse, came near, immensely attracted, to hear what they felt to be the truth, and what conscience bowed to, though they had never heard it before. They heard indeed that which they could not but perceive leveled the pretensions of proud men. For the Pharisees and scribes had no notion of following Jesus any more than of coming to Him. They deified self in the name of God. It was their own tradition they valued; and if they seemed to make much of the law, it was not because it was of God, but because it was given to their fathers and identified with their system. Their religion was a settled setting up of self—this was their idol. Hence they murmured at the grace of Christ toward the wretched. For the ways of Christ, like His doctrine, leveled all and showed, according to the subsequent language of the Apostle Paul, that there is no difference. No doubt the man that is in quest of his own passions and pleasures will neither go to Christ nor follow after Him: still less will be who has got a religion of his own on which he plumes himself. Grace goes down to the common level of ruin that sin has already made. It addresses man according to the truth; and the truth is that all are lost. And where is the sense of talking of differences if people are lost? How blind to be classifying among those who are cast into perdition! To be there at all is the awful thing—not the shades of distinction in ways or character that may be found among those who are there. The tremendous fact is that, having all equally sinned against God and lost heaven, they are all equally consigned to hell.

But there is that also in the sayings of the Pharisees and scribes which skews that they too felt the point of the truth and that what they resented most was grace. For they murmured saying, “This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them.” Indeed He does; it is His boast. It is the going out of divine love to receive sinners. And it was His grace as a man that deigned to eat with them. Had He not done so, with whom could He have eaten at all? But in truth, if He deigned to eat with men, He did not choose His company. He had come down and been manifested in the flesh expressly to manifest the grace of God; and, if so, He received sinners and ate with them.

The Lord answers in a parable—indeed in three. But the first of them is that which we will look at now. He puts the case of a man—of themselves—having a hundred sheep. “If he lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he find it?” He appeals to them: not one of them but would go after his own lost sheep and seek to recover it. With us indeed it is not a question here of our going in quest of Christ, but of the man Christ Jesus, the good Shepherd, going after us—that which was lost. Supposing a man had ninety-nine that did not so urgently call on his energetic efforts, he can leave the sheep that abide in comparative safety. The one that is in danger is that which draws out his love until he find it. “And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders rejoicing.” It is evidently the work of the Lord Jesus that is set forth here. Who can fail to recognize in it the mighty manifestation of divine love which characterized Jesus? It was He that came, He that undertook the labor; it was His to endure the suffering unto death, even the death of the cross; it was He that found and saves the lost sheep; it is He that lays it on His shoulders rejoicing. Whose joy can compare with His? No doubt the sheep does reap the benefit; yet assuredly it was not the sheep that sought the Shepherd but the Shepherd the sheep. It was not the sheep that clambered on His shoulders, but He that laid it there with His own hand. And who shall pluck it thence? It was all His work. It was the sheep that strayed; and, the longer it was left to itself, the farther it got away from the Shepherd. It was the work of the Lord Jesus then both to seek and to save.

But further, he has His joy in it, though it goes forth far beyond the object of His care. “When he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, “Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.” It is altogether to forget the fullness of love that there is in God and in Christ Jesus our Lord, to suppose that it is merely a question of the sinner's need to be saved or his joy when he is. There is a far deeper joy; and this is the foundation of all proper worship. In fact our joy is not the mere sense of our own personal deliverance, but our appreciation of His delight in delivering us, His joy in our salvation. This is communion, and there can be no worship in the Spirit without it. And such seems to be the bearing of what is figuratively set forth in the parable as described at the close. “He calleth together his friends and neighbors, saying unto them, Rejoice with me for I have found my sheep which was lost.”

Thus the heart of man that feels the comfort of recovering what belongs to him could apprehend in some measure how God has joy in saving the lost. At any rate, Christ appeals to the one to vindicate the other. “I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance.” But man as such does not rejoice when his fellow turns in sorrow and self-judgment to God. This is not the feeling of the earth where sin and selfishness reign; but assuredly it is the mind of heaven. What is joy there over the repenting sinner! Angels sang at the good news of grace to Israel and to man above all. And so they do rejoice still, as we may fairly gather from the later words of our Lord Jesus. Here it is more general. The manifold wisdom of God in the Church is the continual object and witness to the principalities and powers in heavenly places; the Lord here gives us the assurance that a repentant sinner gives the keynote of joy on high. There are no murmurers there; it is universal delight in love. Is it so with us? Yet we have a new nature not less but more capable of appreciating the joy of grace, not to speak of ourselves knowing the need of a sinner and the mercy of God's deliverance in Christ as no angel can.

Remark in the last place that it is joy “over one sinner that repenteth,” not exactly over his salvation. It is joy over a soul brought to confess its sin and judge itself and vindicate God. We are apt to be more occupied with the deliverance from imminent danger. In short we are apt to feel for the human side far more than we enter into God's moral glory or His grace. The joy in heaven is over the repenting sinner.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Lost Son

Luke 15:11-32

The Savior adds a third parable to complete as well as confirm the truth of God's grace in saving the lost who repent. The first set out the heedless active straying of the sinner; the" second, his insensible dead state till the Spirit works through the living word; the third uses the figure, not of a sheep or a coin, but of a man to point the fact of an inward work in the conscience, and of the reception the returning soul finds in the Father's love and the privileges of grace.

" And he said, A certain man had two sons; and the younger of them said to the father, Father, give me the share of the property that falleth to me. And he divided to them the means of living. And after not many days the younger son gathered all together, and went abroad into a far country, and there wasted his property by dissolute living. And when he squandered all, there arose a mighty famine in that country; and he began to be in want. And he went and joined himself to one of the citizens of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine; and he longed to fill his belly with the husks which the swine were eating; and no one gave him. But coming unto himself he said, How many hirelings of my father's have abundance of bread, and I perish here with hunger 1 I will arise and go unto my father and will say to him, Father, I sinned against heaven and before thee; I am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hirelings. And he arose and came unto his father. But while he was yet a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him much. And the son said to him, Father, I sinned against heaven and before thee; I am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said unto his bondmen, Bring out the best robe and put [it] on him; and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fatted calf, kill [it], and let us eat and make merry; because this my son was dead and came to life again, he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry " (vers. 11-24).

Impossible to conceive a sketch more graphically true. The younger son indicates very emphatically the sinner's path from his start in self-will and independency to open profligacy and the depths of degradation. Such were " some of you " even very far; such were most in a measure. We shall hear of another form of sin at least as evil before we have done. But this " far country " knows what extreme famine is. " No one gave him." But as the wasteful feel the pressure of dire want, so that even swine's fare becomes desirable, God turns all for good in His grace.

O my reader, have you known such an experience? Have you ever tried to shake off parental authority, especially where pious? Have you, when you could, plunged into the pleasures of sin, the more eagerly because you were debarred under a father or a mother's eye? Have you fallen into the depths of immorality, and been " almost in all evil? " And in your misery have you learned what the world feels toward one who has lost all? " And no one gave him." What I none of those who helped to drain the once full purse? No, not one. So the Lord describes the lost son. Are you like him in sin and misery? May you be also in repentance. For coming to himself he saw the folly, evil, and ruin of his life. His mind is made up. He must clear his burdened conscience, and confess his iniquity. He will go to the One before Whom he had sinned, and have all out with Him, to His vindication and to his own shame.

The terror of the Lord may alarm, but the goodness of God leads to repentance as 'here and always. It produces true self-judgment in His sight. But whatever the hope of mercy that draws, spite of shame and self-loathing and grief at one's own sin, the grace of God much more exceeds. " While he was yet a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with pity and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him much. And the son said to him, Father, I sinned against heaven and before thee; I am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his bondmen, Bring out the best robe and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fatted calf, kill it; and let us eat and make merry; because this my son was dead' and came to life again; he was lost and is found. And they began to be merry."

How incomparable is God's grace! With slow and sad steps came the prodigal, hope mingling with shame and many searchings of heart, in the rags that told the tale of ruin to the uttermost. Not so the father, who saw him a long way off, but moved with pity, ran, fell on his neck, and covered him with kisses just as he was. What was the impression made by such love? If ever such a vile son, certainly there never was such a father. The son speaks out his conscience, but not " make me as one of thy hirelings ": the father's love arrests this. Nor was it after all the humility of grace, but rather of law, drawing inferences from his past misconduct.

But in the gospel it is a question of God's love, giving Christ and resting on what is due to Him and His work, before which the sinner's evil vanishes. " Jesus was found alone," the ground of all blessing. Therefore is it God's righteousness, not man's. The best robe is brought out and put on the repentant prodigal, a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. Beyond all re-instatement, the lost son now found is blessed and honored as never before. He put on Christ, not Adam even unfallen; he became God's righteousness in Him. He feasts, and not he only but all that are of God on the fatted calf; yea God Himself rejoices in it with a joy proper to Himself and far deeper than that of all the rest put together.

In the elder son the Lord vividly portrays the self-righteous, the murmurers against grace such as the Pharisees and scribes; and they are many in every age, especially where scripture is current and men boast of religion. As he is represented returning from the fields and approaching the house, the music and dancing there struck his ear offensively, when he learned from a servant that it was his father's joy over his returned brother (25-27). He was angry and would not go in (28). And when his father went out and entreated (for what will not grace do?), he answers with self-complacency that insulted his father and the object of his compassion as much as it exalted himself. " Lo these many years do I slave for thee, and never transgressed thy commandments; yet never didst thou give me a kid to make merry with my friends. But when this thy son came that devoured thy living with harlots, thou killedst for him the fatted calf " (29, 30). What an answer of patient love the father's! " Child, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine. It was meet that we should make merry and be glad; for this thy brother was dead and came to life again, was lost and is found " (31, 32). It is the day of grace, not judgment. He who despises grace will be judged another day.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Lost Sheep

Luke 15:3-7

Grace, the grace of God, is hateful to man's pride. The self-righteous take offense. What is the good of their decorous behavior, of their prayers at home, of their public devotions, if they be no better than loose and open sinners? Yet the Lord (Matt. 21:31) solemnly assured the chief priests and the elders of the people, who built on their religious character, that the tax-gatherers and the harlots go into the kingdom before them. They are ready to repent and believe. So here the tax-gatherers and the sinners draw near to hear the glad tidings, while the Pharisees and the scribes kept murmuring, He receiveth sinners and eateth with them.

Yes, it was true; nor was He ashamed of divine love to the lost, but gloried in it, and vindicates it against all cavilers. Is God to save nobody? If He save, it can only be by His grace through faith. Let us hear the Son plead His God and Father's title to save sinners.

" And he spoke this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having a hundred sheep and having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness, and go after that which was lost until he find it? And having found he layeth [it] on his shoulders rejoicing, and, when come to the house, he calleth together the friends and the neighbors, saying to them, Rejoice with me, for I found my sheep that was lost. I say to you, that thus joy shall be in heaven over one sinner repenting, [more] than over ninety nine righteous, such as have no need of repentance " (vers. 3-7).

Man, selfish man, is not so indifferent about his lost sheep, as he thinks God to be about a sinner. A bad conscience makes him doubt God's love, still more does bad religion. The Lord Jesus alone represents God truly and perfectly. There He was in their midst the Savior of sinners, the Son of man come to seek and save that which was lost. Did He not proclaim it from the first in the synagogue at Nazareth? Did not the prophet Isaiah predict seven centuries before, that Jehovah's Spirit should be on Him Whom He` anointed to evangelize the poor, to preach deliverance to captives, and sight to blind? The miracles of His ministerial life were for the most part signs of His grace to the guilty and wretched; for this His death in atonement would give the ground of God's righteousness; as all proved His unfathomable love for us when powerless and ungodly.

He, the Lord of glory, pursued the wandering sheep till He found it. What did it not cost Him? Teaching the disciples, weaning them from Jewish elements, showing them heavenly things, forming their hearts according to God, exercising their perception to distinguish good and evil, were all blessed to the ninety nine in the wilderness; but what about the lost one? The Good Shepherd leaves the rest safe, in quest of the stray sheep. After it He goes in earnest love, as if He had none else; and having found it, He lays it on His shoulders rejoicing; and when come to the house He calls together the friends and the neighbors, that they may rejoice with Him over the lost one found. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. By His stripes were we healed. For we were as sheep going astray. If we returned, as we can now say, it is only because the Shepherd and Bishop of souls came to seek and save us.

The mere idea never dawned on Pagans of old, north, south, east or west. They admitted sympathy between God and His faithful. worshippers; but what must befall the unfaithful? What would make and keep faithful? Their gods, on their own showing, had lusts and passions, evil demons self-evidently, and deserving punishment like their adorers. The true God declared Himself in Jesus, Who came to bring God truly known into the world, and to put sin out of it, as He surely will in its season. As God is light and love, so did the Lord prove Himself to be, Whom none could convict of sin, Who died for sinners, suffered for their sins, Just for unjust, that He might bring us to God. Yes, He is the true God, and life eternal.

Why then stay longer? Are you not away from God? Are you fit for His presence? If you know you are not, what is to fit you? Christ is the way, and the only way, to the Father. But what of your sins? He, Who came in love to reconcile you to God, took the load on Himself; He alone could bear it, and bear it away forever. And God in the scriptures calls you to believe on the Lord Jesus, His Son, your Savior. God raised from the dead Him Who died for sins and sinners: does not this give you confidence?

You hesitate. Why? Do you love darkness rather than light? Alas! is it not because your works are evil, and your heart is proud, and you therefore hate the light which makes all manifest? Hear then His warning word. You cannot escape the resurrection of the unjust; you cannot escape the Judge of quick and dead. Jesus, Whom you now refuse as Savior, will judge those works of which you now boast; Jesus will prove their worthlessness to your everlasting shame, when He sits on the great white throne. What thenceforward must be your portion, if you reject Him now? " He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). May you now hear and live.

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES. James 3:5, 6.

Many there are in all ages disposed to take account of nothing but deeds. Freedom in speech seems a necessary prerogative of a man, and its excess of all things most venial. Far different was our Lord's estimate of words (Matt. 12), which yet more than deeds express the feelings and bent of the inner man. And similar is the language of His servant here, couched in terse, severe, highly figurative, but all the more unsparing, terms. " So also the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. See how large a wood how little a fire kindleth! And the tongue is fire, the world of iniquity; the tongue cometh to be in our members that which defileth the whole body, and setteth in a blaze the course [lit. wheel] of nature, and is set in a blaze by gehenna " (vers. 5, 6).

That the tongue should be physically diminutive only gives the more vividness to its capacity for mischief beyond reckoning or measure. Who can conceive the destructive effects of an evil word? Yet the tongue, little as it is, boasts habitually and also great things; and is so much the more readily enticed to persevere and grow bolder, if sin is limited to deeds of the body. It may be observed that the word (here as generally translated " wood " or " forest ") is often in philosophical writings used to express "matter," and by historians or others, like " materia " in Latin authors, the stuff or material of anything, timber, &c. The A. V. had ground for its rendering, even if the preponderance lean to that view which is presented here.

How energetic is the opening of ver. 6! " The tongue is fire." It is not only that a mighty conflagration ensues from an apparently trivial spark; but the tongue itself is " fire " morally. However free from open acts of unrighteousness he may be who gives it loose rein without God before his eyes, it is without going farther " the world of iniquity." He Whose ears are open to the cry of the righteous does not fail to mark unbridled license of speech, which shrinks not from any imputation, however unjust, that ill-will can dictate.

The best witnesses, both MSS. and Vv., omit the " thus " which smooths the way for the second time "the tongue" is introduced. It is most forcible as it stands simply. " The tongue cometh to be in our members that which defileth the whole body," and this is a sense which, prevailing in the best authors so that no detailed justification is necessary, seems to suit the clause, better than the bare " is " of the A. V. or " is constituted " as it frequently means. Here it is liable to give the erroneous notion of being divinely arranged to so evil an end; which is a thought impossible to a good conscience and wholly opposed to the truth. It is through the fall, and the self will or lawlessness which characterizes sin, that the tongue comes thus to be such a burning power of evil in the members. It is the defiler of the whole body, for there is no limit to its unrighteousness; "the world of iniquity," deeming itself to have immunity as long as it only injures in word.

But the latter clauses both enlarge the sphere of the evil, and deepen our sense of its source to the highest degree. For we are next told that " it setteth in a blaze the course of nature, and is set on a blaze by hell." The wheel or course of nature extends far beyond the whole body; and such is the inflammatory range for the malignant tongue. What then must be the spring? It is, as we lastly hear, " set on a blaze by hell." The evil one is a murderer as well as a liar; and unceasing antagonism to Christ in both respects is its flagrant proof.

Notes on Luke, Luke 14:15-35, Notes on

It was an unwonted sound to man. The evidently divine grace of the Lord acted on the spirit of one that sat at meat with Him, who, hearing that which was far more suitable to heaven than ever was as yet seen carried out on the earth, said, “Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God.” Our Lord then proves that this is a great mistake as far as concerns man's readiness to answer the grace of God. Hence He puts the case in the following parable: “A certain man made a great supper and bade many.” There was no lack of condescension and goodness to win man on God's part. His heart went out to any. He invited according to His own largeness of mercy and grace. “And he sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come, for all things are now ready.” This Gospel, like Paul's epistles, shows that God even in His grace does not forsake, in the first instance, prescribed order. So Paul, when he went to any place, went first to the synagogue; and in explaining the gospel in the epistle to the Romans, says, “To the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.”

Though God has no respect of persons, He nevertheless does heed the ways that He has Himself established. This makes so much the less excusable the lack of faith on the part of the Jew. God never fails—man always. Favored man only makes the greater show of his own unbelief. Here the message to them that were bidden was, “Come, for all things are now ready.” Such is the invitation of grace. The law makes man the prominent and responsible agent; it is man that is to do this, and, yet more, man that must not do that. Man therein is commanded to love God with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his strength, and with all his mind. But the commandment, just as it is, is wholly unavailing, because in this case man is a sinner and loveless. No law ever produced or called out love. It may demand but cannot create love; it is not within the nature or power of law to do so. God knew this perfectly; and in the gospel He becomes Himself the Great Agent. It is He that loves, and who gives according to the strength of that love in sending His only begotten Son with eternal life in Him—yea, also to die in expiation for sin. Law demonstrated that man though responsible had no power to perform. He was incapable of doing God's will because of sin; but his pride was such that he did not, would not, feel his own incapability, or its cause. Were he willing to confess it, God would have shown him grace. But man felt no need of grace any more than his own guilt and powerlessness to meet law. So he slights the call to come, though all things are now ready.

“And they all (says the Lord Jesus), with one consent, began to make excuse.” No doubt these were the Jews—the persons who were bidden. “The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them; I pray thee have me excused.” Not that these things were in themselves wrong; they are the ordinary duties of men. It is not a person who is too drunk to come, or one living in misery in consequence of his grossness, like the prodigal son; but these might be decent respectable men. They were engrossed in their own things, they had no time for the supper of grace. God invites them, having prepared all things for them; but they were each so pre-occupied that none had heart or care for God's invitation. Is not this a true picture of the condition of man? yea, of man who has the Bible? of Christendom no less than Judea? It is an unbelieving excuse founded on alleged duties, certainly on present material interests. But what blindness! Does eternity raise no questions? Not to speak of judgment and its awful issues, has heaven no interest in man's eyes? If Christ or God be nothing, is it nothing to be lost or to be saved?

These are evidently serious questions, but man goes off without the moral courage to seek an answer from God. Here those bidden despised His mercy and grace, as they felt no need of it for their own souls. They lived only for the present. They blotted out all that is really admirable

in man according to God's grace. They were living only for nature in its lowest wants—the providing what is necessary for food or for pleasure. The commonest creature of God, a bird or a fly does as much; the meanest insect not only provides food, but also enjoys itself. Does boastful man by sin degrade himself to be in profession no better than a butterfly, in practice far worse? “Another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.” He did not even say, “I pray thee have me excused.” His wife was an excellent reason in his eyes for refusing God's invitation. It was a question of a family in this world, not of God hereafter. It is clear that the real root of all unbelief is the absence of sense of sin, and no credit given to God. There is no sense of what God is, either in His claims or in His grace.

Again, “So that servant came, and shewed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.” Such is the urgent message of grace, when the proud refused and God presses it on the most despised. Still we have before us the streets and lanes of the city. I think the Lord had Jerusalem as yet in view, though not put forward distinctly. At any rate, it was that which was orderly and settled in the world: only the despised and the wretched are now the express objects of the invitation. The busy great had slighted it—the lawyers and scribes, the teachers and Pharisees, were indifferent if not opposed. Henceforth it becomes a question of publicans and sinners, or anybody that was willing however wretched. “And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded; and yet there is room.” Then comes a third message. “The lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in that my house may be filled.” Thus we have the clear progress of the gospel among the Gentiles; and this too with the strong earnestness of divine mercy. “Compel them to come in that my house may be filled, For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden” (none of those that had the promises, but trifled with them when they were accomplished) “shall taste of my supper.”

Thus the whole case is brought before us, but with remarkable differences from the view given in Matt. 22. There it is much more dispensational. Hence it is “the kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king which made a marriage for his son.” All savors of this: the king, the king's son, the marriage feast—not merely a feast, and again the messages and His action attest it. The first mission there represents the call during Christ's ministry on earth; the second was when the fatlings were killed, that is, the work was done. This is followed by the judgment that fell upon those who despised the gospel message and maltreated the servants. “The king was wroth and sent forth his armies and destroyed those murderers and burned up their cities.” There is not a word about this in Luke. It was well that it should be brought forward in a gospel that was intended for the warning as well as the winning of the Jew. And there only was it written. The destruction of Jerusalem befell the Jews because of their rejection of Christ and of the Holy Ghost in the preaching of the apostles finally. Again, it is only in Matthew that we have the case of the man that was present without a wedding garment, setting forth the advantage that an unbelieving man would take of the gospel in Christendom, where we have the corruption of those who bear the name of the Lord, and their presumptuous pretension to be Christians without the slightest reality, without a real putting on of Christ. Need I say how common that is in Christendom? All this is left out in Luke, who confines himself to the moral dealings of God.

On the Lord's departure great multitudes go with Him, to whom He turns with the words, “If any man come to me, and 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.” They might have thought that at any rate they would treat the Lord better than His message—so little does man know of himself. The Lord would not permit that the multitude, then following Him, should flatter themselves that they at least were willing to partake of the supper, that they were incapable of treating God with the contempt described in the parable. So the Lord tells them what following Himself involves. The disciple must follow Christ so simply and decidedly that it would seem to other eyes a complete neglect of natural ties, and an indifference to the nearest and strongest claims of kin. Not that the Lord calls for want of affection; but so it might and must look to those who are left behind in His name. The attractive power of grace must be greater than all natural fetters, or any other claims of whatsoever kind, over him who would be His disciple. And more than this; it is a question of bearing one's cross and going after Him. “Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.” It is not enough to come to Him at first, but we must follow Him day by day. Whoever does not this cannot be His disciple. Thus in verse 26 we see the forsaking of all for Christ; and in verse 27 the following Christ with pain and suffering and going on in it.

Again, the Lord does not hide the difficulties of the way, but sets them out in two comparisons. The first is of a man that intended to build a tower, who had the folly not to count the cost before beginning. So it would be with souls now. Undoubtedly it is a great thing to follow Jesus to heaven, but then it costs something in this world. It is not all joy; but it is well and wise to look at the other side also. Then the Lord gives a further comparison. It is like a king going to war with one who has twice as many forces. Unless I am well backed up, it is impossible for me to resist him who comes against me with twice my array; much less can I make head against him. The inevitable consequence of not having God for us is, that when the enemy is a great way off, we have to send an ambassage and desire conditions of peace. But is it not peace with Satan, and everlasting ruin? “So likewise, whosoever he be of you, that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” A man should be prepared for the worst that man and Satan can do. It is always true, though not always apparent; but scripture cannot be broken, and in the course of a disciple's experience, a time comes when he is thus tried one way or another. It is well therefore to look all thoroughly in the face; but then to refuse Jesus and His call to follow, not to be His disciple, is to be lost forever.

The Lord closes all with another familiar allusion of everyday life. “Salt is good; but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be seasoned?” There is shown the danger of what begins well turning out ill. What is there in the world so useless as salt when it has lost the one property for which it is valued? “It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill, but men cast it out.” It is worse than useless for any other purpose. So with the disciple who ceases to be Christ's disciple. He is not suited for the world's purposes, and he has forsaken God's. He has too much light or knowledge for entering into the vanities and sins of the world, and he has no enjoyment of grace and truth to keep him in the path of Christ. The expression, “men cast it out” is perhaps too precise. It has a virtually indefinite meaning: “they cast it out,” i.e., it is cast out, without saying by whom. Savorless salt becomes an object of contempt and judgment. “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear;” how solemn the call to conscience!

Notes on Luke, Luke 14:1-14, Notes on

The last chapter had closed with the setting aside of the Jew and the judgment of Jerusalem. We have now the moral principles involved set forth in chapter 14. The Lord was asked to “the house of one of the chief Pharisees to eat bread on the sabbath day.” One might have expected, if there was anything holy or any appreciation of grace, now was the time for it. But not so. They watched Him. They, ignorant of

God, looked for evil desired evil. God was in none of their thoughts, nor His grace. Yet these were the men who most of all piqued themselves upon their nice observance of the sabbath day.

But grace will not stay its work or withhold the truth to please men: Jesus was there to make known God and do His will. “And, behold there was a certain man before him which had the dropsy.” No religious forms can shut out the ruin that is in the world through sin, and our Lord, filled with the good that was in His heart, answers their thoughts before they uttered them, speaking to the lawyers and Pharisees with the question, “Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath?” His question was an answer to their evil judgments. It was impossible to deny it. Hardened as man was and habituated to evil, he could not say that it was unlawful to heal on the sabbath day. Yet they really wished that it should be so, and, as we know, made it repeatedly a ground of the most serious accusation against the Lord. However here He challenges those that were ostensibly the wisest and most righteous in Israel, the lawyers and Pharisees; but “they held their peace.” The Lord then takes the dropsical man, heals him, and lets him go. Then he answers them further by the question: “Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?” This is a little different from his reply to the ruler of the synagogue in the chapter before. There it was more the need of the animal, the ordinary supply of his wants. But here it is a more urgent case. It was not simply that the animal needed watering and must be led to it, but “which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?” It was lawful therefore to look after the good of an animal on that day. They proved it when their own interests were concerned. God had His interests and love: therefore was Jesus in this world, therefore was He in the Pharisee's house. He had meat to eat that they knew not of. It was not the Pharisee's bread, but to do the will of His Father. In healing the dropsical man He was glorifying His Father. He was boldly acting upon that which even they durst not deny—the right of healing on the sabbath day. If they could relieve on that day their animals from their pain or danger, what title had they to dispute God's right to heal the miserable among men, among Israel?

“And they could not answer him again to these things.” How unanswerably good is the grace and truth of God!

But it is plain that the heart of Israel was sick and that this very scene showed how much they needed to be healed. But they knew it not. They were hardened against the Holy One that could do them good. They were maliciously watching Him, instead of presenting themselves in their misery that He might heal them.

But the Lord in the next scene puts forth “a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms.” (Ver. 7.) It is not only that there is a hindrance of good to others, on the part of those who have no sense of need themselves, but there is a universal desire of self-exaltation. The law did not hinder this: it can only condemn, and that too for the most part, what the natural conscience condemns. But Christ here brings in the light of God's grace, of divine love in an evil world as contrasted with human selfishness. He marked how those that were guests chose out the chief rooms. They sought for themselves, they sought the best. But “when thou art bidden,” says He who was Himself the perfect pattern of love and humility— “when thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room, lest a more honorable man than thou be bidden of him. And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room.” (Ver. 8, 9.) Assuredly it would be so with Israel themselves. They had had the outward call of God, they had chosen the chief seats and now they were going to lose all place and nation. Jesus was in the fullest contrast with them. He went down to the lowest room, He took it in love for God's glory; and certainly there is One that will say for Him, Give this man place. Clearly, however, it is an exhortation for every heart and more particularly for those who heed the call of God.

Then comes a more positive word. “When thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room” —He had done so Himself— “that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher.” He must take the form of a servant, was found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name.” As He says here, “Then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased: and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” (Ver. 10, 11.) They are universal principles of God: the one true of Christ and of all that are Christ's; as the other is of the spirit of man. The first Adam sought to exalt himself, but only fell through the deceit of Satan. The Second man humbled Himself and is set above all principality, and power, and might.

Then we find, further, it is not a question only of guests but of a host: He has a word for every man. God looks for love in this world, and this too apart from nature. His love is not for one's friends or family alone; it is not on this principle at all. “When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbors; lest they also bid thee again and a recompense be made thee.” (Ver. 12.) A witness for Christ is marked by that which is supernatural. There is no testimony to His name in merely natural kindness or family affection, but where there is love without a human motive or any hope of recompense, there is a testimony to Him. It is exactly so that God is doing now in the gospel, and we are called to be imitators of God. It is not meant to be merely in making a feast or a supper; but that grace should stamp its character on all our Christian life. The whole time of the gospel call, as we shall see farther on, is compared to a feast to which the activity of love is gathering in from the miserable of this world.

Hence, the Lord adds, “When thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee.” How divinely fine, yet how different from the world and its social order out of which the Christian is called! If we thus act in unselfish self-sacrificing love, God will surely recompense according to all His resources and His nature. This will be at the resurrection of the just, the great and final scene when all that are severed from the world will be seen apart from it, when human selfishness will have disappeared forever, when they that are Christ's will reign in life by one, Christ Jesus. Anything short of this is not the exercise of the life of Christ, but of our nature in this world; and this is precisely what has no place at the resurrection of the just. (Ver. 13, 14.)

The Lord speaks here of a special resurrection, in which the unjust have no part. Not that these too do not come forth from their graves; for indeed they must rise for judgment. But our text speaks of the resurrection of life in which none can be but those who are just by the grace of God—justified no doubt, but also just—those that practiced the good things, in contrast with those that did the evil. Other scriptures prove that these two resurrections differ in time as decidedly as in character; and the great New Testament prophecy determines that more than a thousand years separate the one from the other, though the effects for each never pass away. It is manifest also that only the resurrection of the just admits of recompense. For the unjust there can be but righteous retribution.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Dropsical Man Cured

Luke 14:1-6

It is plain that the Spirit is in this context setting out the moral ruin of men who flattered themselves, as far as possible from believing that the kingdom of God was to be taken from them, and given to such as should bring forth the fruits thereof. The various incidents of the chapter bring to light man in his evil confronted by the grace of God in Christ. So it is in the opening scene.

" And it came to pass, when he went into the house of a certain one of the rulers of the Pharisees to eat bread on a sabbath, that they were watching him. And, behold, there was a certain dropsical man before him. And Jesus answering spoke unto the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath, or not? But they were quiet. And he took, healed, and let him go. And [answering] he said unto them, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a well, and will not straightway draw him up on the sabbath day? And they were unable to answer again unto these things" (Luke 14:1-6).

Neither love nor truth animated these religious chiefs. Under the cover of hospitality, they were hostile. They sought evil, but only proved it in their own The dropsical man there present gave the Lord occasion to assert God's title to do good.

Had not Jehovah said before the law, " If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of Jehovah thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his eyes, wilt give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have put upon the Egyptians; for I am Jehovah that healeth thee " (Ex. 15:26). Yet what was the witness of the dropsical man before the Lord and before them? And what meant all manner of disease and of sickness in the land of Israel, as it were crowding round Him to be healed? And why from all Syria brought they all that were sick, suffering under various distempers and torments, and those possessed by demons, with lunatics and paralytics It was not Jehovah-Rophi who had failed, but man generally and Israel in particular. If the sabbath was a sign between Him and them, how came it, in shining, to disclose such misery and suffering? Why with an object before all eyes to draw out pity and humiliation, were these chiefs, Pharisees, doctors of the law, blind to His glory Who was the Son of God, blind to His grace Who went about doing good and healing all that were overpowered by the devil, for God was with Him? Yea, God was in Him, reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning to them their offenses; and they were watching Him with eyes fuller of hatred to Him than to the Gentiles they most despised! Was this then their sabbath honor?

The sabbath was a precious sign from the beginning, and, filling the very center of the law, the sure pledge of what God would accomplish in due time. But what of man's ways before the law, and under the law? What had he been to God during all the six days? What were his works before Him, and what his life? Did he love Jehovah with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might? Did not the presence of His Son, a man among men, prove the very reverse? Alas! man, sinful man, cannot enter God's rest. His works are evil. There is judgment, not rest, for him; death, and judgment.

The Lord therefore made a special point of healing on a sabbath. All the Gospels attest it, and repeatedly (Matt. 12:9; Mark 1:21; 3:1; Luke 13:10; John 5:9; 9:14). Here, as in chap. 8 cases are special to Luke as displaying divine grace, hateful to the self-righteous. The incurably sick man was the true testimony to man's state. Christ answers the selfish and unbelieving rancor of their hearts by His question. They were abashed and afraid to speak; but their will remained unbroken. And He laid hold of the man, who had not even appealed to Him (that the grace of God might all the more appear), healed him, and let him go. But He added a withering word to those hard and self-complacent sinners, " Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a well, and will not straightway draw him up on the sabbath day "? This was notorious. And had God no interest in healing a sufferer or in saving a sinner? This they virtually denied, and hated Him Who came to give it effect.

And you, dear reader, if you believe not on Him, are in worse case than the dropsical man. Are you not a lost soul? Face your actual state before God; do not palliate; do not forget. In vain the medicine-man; in vain yourself or others; in vain, the saints, the angels, or the virgin. But " the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." So He said Who is the truth. It is God's word; believe Him, and receive the blessing, even peace and joy in believing. Own the truth of your sins: this is repentance. Own the truth of His grace; this is faith. It is the way of Christ to the Father; and there is no other way from God and to God for a sinner.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Great Supper

Luke 14:16-24

Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God, said one to the Lord. Far different is the real thought, as was shown in the parable. Grace is repulsive to nature; man shrinks from God and slights His call.

" A certain man was making a great supper, and bade many; and he sent forth his bondman at supper-time to say to those that were bidden, Come, for things are now ready. And they all at once began to excuse themselves. The first said to him, I bought land and must go out to see it; I pray thee, have me excused. And another said, I bought five yoke of oxen, and I am on my way to prove them; I pray thee, have me excused. And another said, I married a wife, and on this account cannot come. And the bondman when he came up reported these things to his master. Then the house-master in anger said to his bondman, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring here the poor and maimed and blind and lame. And the bondman said, Sir, What thou didst command is done, and yet there is room. And the lord said to the bondman, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel [them] to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say to you, that none of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper " (vers. 16-24).

The corresponding, though scarcely the same, parable in Matt. 22:2-14 is a likeness of the kingdom of the heavens, which gives prominence to the wedding feast for the king's son, to the dispensational difference of the Jews, and to the judgment that befell their city. Here man's moral roots are more laid bare; and where sin abounded, grace surpassed.

There was no harm in buying land, in acquiring oxen, or in marrying a wife. The evil lay in pleading these things, or any else, to set aside the call of God. The heart is at fault, which makes present interests or even duties a reason for putting God off and neglecting so great salvation. Have you, my reader, no object or pursuit, which stands between you and the knowledge of God and His Son which is life eternal? Be not

deceived. Sin gives Satan the means of blinding every soul to the light of God's glory in the face of Jesus Christ, as well as to his own ruin and exposure to the Gehenna of fire, where one's worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched. Your peril is extreme.

God in the gospel meets you in your need and guilt and danger. He asks nothing, He gives all things; and they are now ready. He provides a great supper; He invites freely. Oh, begin not once more to excuse yourself. Too long have you turned aside. Why should you die in your sins, lost forever? The Son of man expressly came to save the lost. But it is through faith..

Those who first had the invitation valued what was before them, forgot God's judgment for eternity. The Lord recorded their folly that you might fear God -the beginning of wisdom-that you might hear and live. He would give you another life, which is only in Himself, life eternal; and this life in Him loves the will of God, as it refuses the baits and bribes of the enemy. It begins with faith-obedience, and is sanctified by the Spirit to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Thus one becomes a child of obedience instead of fashioning oneself according to the former lusts in one's ignorance. The call of God is paramount. He calls one to receive His grace in Christ. This is His commandment that we believe the name of His Son Jesus Christ. The first of rights is that God should have His rights; and He commands us to believe on the Lord Jesus.

See the activity of God's love. He is not content with gathering in the poor and maimed and blind and lame from the streets and lanes of the city. He will have His bondman go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them in importunate earnestness to come in. He insists that His house be filled. What a God is ours A just God and a Savior He is assuredly. Why then trifle, when all blessing is proffered in Christ, when all is and must be ruin where He is refused? For does He not say to you, that none of those that were bidden shall taste of His supper? Are you not bidden? Come, then; for He welcomes in the name of His Son. Come without delay-dangerous everywhere, most of all in presence of your sin and of God's everlasting judgment. Now it is all grace, grace reigning through righteousness unto life eternal by Jesus Christ our Lord. Practical love follows, and practical obedience. It is the. first step that weighs. That it might be open to you, it cost the Savior all in unfathomable humiliation and the sacrifice of Himself for you and your sins. Oh, put off no more, but believe and be blessed in and with Him!

In vain men talk of a larger hope. There is no Savior but Christ, nor any way to the Father but Himself by faith. For not to believe is to give very deep insult to God and to His Son. There is another evil yet worse; the abuse of His grace, the attaching of indulged lusts and passions, of unjudged pollution of flesh and spirit, to that worthy Name. Should such men taste of His supper?

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Host

The Son of God was the true Light, Who, coming into the world, casts light on every man. It is not that all are enlightened by Him, but that He set each in the light. So here He lays bare alike guest and host. High and low, Jew or Gentile, Pharisee or Sadducee, priest or philosopher, were far from God; according as it is written, There is not a righteous man, not even one; nor he that understandeth; there is not one that seeketh after God: there is no fear of God before their eyes. If the law spoke thus of Israel, as it did, much more palpably did it apply to the heathen with their religious abominations and their unspeakable demoralizations; that every mouth might be stopped and all the world be under judgment to God.

Man seeks his own things and his own will; nor is anything pleasanter to the natural man than to exalt himself. The Lord Jesus brings before us from first to last a mind wholly different. " For ye know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich " (2 Cor. 8:9).

Such was the mind in Him and in all its perfection only there. But it is the mind God would have in His own now; and thus it was Christ spoke as we have here. It is an entire reversal of human thoughts generally, of Jewish feeling in particular. Settled down in the earth as it is, men seek present pleasure, worldly honor, earthly advantages. What did this age give Christ? A manger when born, nowhere to lay His head, and a cross to die on. What does Christ give to him that believes? Eternal life, and everlasting redemption. Life was in Him; and He gives it in Himself. Redemption He obtained by His death, and we have it in Him through His blood, the forgiveness of offenses. Hearing His word, and believing Him Who sent Jesus, we are thus doubly blessed. Our evil He takes away, and His good He freely imparts forever.

Thus believing we can profit by all He was and all He says. He has laid the ax to the root of the tree of self-seeking, and shown the blessing of humbling ourselves in a world quite out of course, in plain denial of a nature that seeks to be upper most. Here He opens out the beauty of unselfishness in faith, love being the spring, glory the recompence and rest.

" And he said also to him that had invited him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends nor thy brethren, nor thy kinsmen nor rich neighbors; lest haply they also invite thee in return, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, invite poor, crippled, lame, blind; and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed in the resurrection of the just " (vers. 12-14).

" It is more blessed to give than to receive," as He Himself not only said but acted on, Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by demons. If we have not that power, as things have long been, we are called to walk, as He walked, in love, and in distinct testimony of separateness to God from the pride of the world and the selfishness of the first man. Hence His exhortation would form our hearts for His path here below, instead of walking as men according to public opinion, which is just the spirit and course of the age. For if we are His, we are " heavenly " even now (1 Cor. 15:48, 49); as we are destined by grace to bear the image of the Heavenly at His coming.

Let our hearts then go forth to welcome the despised and suffering here below, and to show " the kindness of God " to poor, crippled, lame, blind. And the more too, in order to win their ear through the heart to hear of Him Who alone can take away the guilt and power of sin for eternity, Who alone brings through faith in Himself into the place of sons of God even now. Thus is the believer blessed himself; and those who, touched by unworldly love, receive the Savior by believing on His name. And both will have their portion, when He comes, " in the resurrection of the just."

For scripture never speaks of one common, simultaneous, and indiscriminate resurrection. There shall indeed be a resurrection of both just and unjust. But God's word is clear and positive that the resurrection of the just differs not more in character and consequence than in time

from that of the unjust. Hence the Lord calls the former a resurrection of life, the latter a resurrection of judgment (John 5:29): the one for such as have believed on Him and done good; the other for those

that, dishonoring both the Son and the Father, only did ill, and are judged accordingly. In the great prophecy of the Revelation (20:4-15), we find the gap, which severs these two resurrections, to be that special reign with Christ which follows the resurrection of life before the resurrection of judgment.

How is it then with you, dear reader? Had you in your own person spiritually all the disabilities of the poor, crippled, lame, and blind, you are none the less welcome to God's feast, to the glad tidings of His grace. Listen not to the tempter, but to the Savior. Put not off His call. You are really worse than if yourself had all these bodily ailments together and with no means to alleviate them. For what state can be so awful as that of a lost sinner? And is not this actually yours? He Himself is express that He came to seek and save such. Oh, receive Him now! God's word warrants you. It is the only way a lost sinner can please Him. Doing good will follow here below, and the resurrection of the just at Christ's coming (1 Cor. 15:23). Fear not, but believe God, Who has no purpose so dear to Him as the honor of His Son. Oh, no longer dishonor Him, the Son of His love, the Savior of the lost

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Guests

It is beautiful and blessed to mark how our Lord turns the least things of daily life to everlasting account. This we find in all the Gospels, in none more than in that of Luke; whose design under the power of the Spirit was to contrast the God of grace with fallen selfish man, that through the faith of Christ and His work he might be saved and walk accordingly. Thus it is that the Lord spoke a parable unto those that were invited i.e. as guests, noticing how they chose out the first places (ver. 7).

" When thou art invited by anyone unto a wedding, recline not in the first place, lest perhaps a more honorable than thee be invited by him, and he that invited him and thee shall come and say to thee, Give this [man] place, and then thou begin with shame to take the last place. But when thou hast been invited, go, put thyself down in the last place, that when he who hath invited thee come, he may say to thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have glory in presence of all that recline with thee. For everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted " (vers. 8-11).

It is a world of evil, and man is fallen under sin and Satan, which gives occasion to grace and its ways, as God was then displaying in Christ. This tests the heart, which naturally seeks its own things, honor or power, ease or pleasure, money therefore as the means of gratifying self, whatever may be its direction. Here it was present honor that men coveted: and it is as true now as then. The true Light, coming into the world, laid every man bare.

But He has done infinitely more. He, the Lord of lords, and King of kings, was the faithful witness, the living exemplar of all He taught, of all that pleased the Father. Who ever took the last place as He? If born in Bethlehem David's city, to mark prophetically the " ruler in Israel," none the less was He the One " Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." Yet was He to be smitten with a rod upon the cheek (Mic. 5:1, 2), as He was born in a manger, because there was no room for such in the inn (Luke 2:7). As the parents fled with Him into Egypt from the face of the destroying king, so did they return with Him to dwell, not only in Galilee the despised, but in its most despised Nazareth; so that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene.

So it was throughout the days of His flesh. Son of the highest, and subsisting in the form of God, He did not esteem it a thing to be grasped to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself. He did not and could not divest Himself of deity, but He did of glory, taking a bondman's form, having come in the likeness of men. And who ever humbled Himself as He did unswervingly? Who but He could say, and say with absolute truth, " Lo, I am come to do Thy will, O God? " Others, His servants may have done miracles as mighty, or, as He said, " Greater works than these; " but He and He alone never did His own will, always the Father's. And this is the perfect moral place of man which He took and kept to God's glory.

But more even than this had to be if God were to be glorified about sin, if men were to be saved through faith from their sins? Would He stoop down to a depth unfathomable and bear the divine judgment of evil, so that the guilty might by grace be freed? Therefore it was that having been found in figure as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, death of the cross. Him Who knew no sin God made sin for you, that you might be made God's righteousness in Christ. It was God's perfect way: no other could avail.

Do you believe this, poor soul, miserable in the sense of your guilt, weary under sin's intolerable load, despairing haply of efforts to do the law of God? Not thus, never thus, can you come to God. He waits to be gracious, He can save to the uttermost; He gives all you need without money and without price, but only through your believing on Jesus, Who only is the way, and the truth, and the life; and He is the propitiation for our sins. How could it be otherwise? Did not the prophet say (seeing the great prediction as though come, seven centuries before the great fulfillment), " All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and Jehovah hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all " (Isa. 53:6).

Believe God's call on you to doubt in yourself, to hear Christ's word (for the law can only condemn a sinner), and believe Him that sent Jesus in love as a Savior. And what is His message to you? " Verily, Verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath life eternal, and cometh not into judgment, but is passed out of death into life" (John 5:24). The bold unbeliever braves the word of God and refuses to humble himself; the serious unbeliever tries to do better, trusting himself and his powers. The true believer owns himself lost, and finds Christ a Savior in deed and in truth. Oh! look to Him and live.

To the believer Christ is life as well as propitiation; and because He lives, we shall live also. He is our life now while we are on earth. Thus only do we live to God; and we are called all through to have Him as our object, and way, our motive, strength, and end. The apostle knew, and, walking thus, could say, To me to live is Christ (Phil. 1:21). Obedience, as He obeyed, is what the believer is sanctified to, in that humility which is content to be nothing in the world as it is. Christ took the last place. Let us who love Him seek to be as near that place as grace enables each.

In the regeneration He will say to each of His own, Friend, go up higher. Then shall the poor and despised apostles sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Then shall they that are Christ's, risen from the dead, reign with Him. The Corinthians sought to reign now, as do most in Christendom. But they were humbled, and by grace humbled themselves. Profit by that lesson; and God will exalt you in due time.

Bible Treasury: Volume N1, Uprising of the House Master, The

Luke 13:25-30

Do you believe these plain words of the Savior? Do you, my dear reader, believe that the time is short, the. Lord at hand, and the solemn change impends from grace to judgment? The scripture before us is but one of many like warnings. The day of grace will close with the “falling away,” the apostacy. When once the House-master will have risen up and barred the door, how appalling to stand without and knock in vain! Did it ever come home that this might be your own case? Evade it not.

The appeal arose out of the question, Are those to be saved few? The prophets had intimated such a remnant in terms as searching as they were repulsive to Jewish feeling. The Lord's words are a direct dealing with conscience. “Strive earnestly to enter through the narrow door; for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and shall not be able.” Men are ready enough to do or suffer much for salvation. They welcome a means which allows of their efforts if not deserts. But “ye must be born anew” is hateful, unless it be within their ability to hinge it on an ordinance, which works without bringing the soul into the presence of God. This is what men naturally dread and shirk. They refuse to face God about their sins. Anything but the repentance which accompanies believing Him that sent Jesus. For He treats man, moral or not, as alike lost, and insists that salvation is in none other than Him Whom man despised and crucified. “For neither is there any other name under heaven that is given among men whereby we must be saved.” It is therefore by grace through faith; and this not of ourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works that none might boast. Hence strive earnestly to enter through the narrow door of being begotten by the word of truth. Entrance by any other way, however attractive, is vain and ruinous.

Thereon the Lord intimates the certainty that at an unexpected moment the Master of the house will close the gospel call. “When once the house-master hath risen up and shut the door, and ye shall begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, open to us; and he answering shall say to you, I know you not whence ye are; then shall ye begin to say, We did eat and drink in thy presence, and thou didst teach in our streets; and he shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but yourselves cast out. And they shall come from east and west, and from north and south, and shall recline in the kingdom of God. And behold, there are last who shall be first, and there are first who shall be last” (vers. 25-30).

It is the rejection of Christ that tests souls; Christ in humiliation is the stumbling stone. So it was for the Jew then; so it is at bottom now for others. Yet is it thus that He has both glorified God and made propitiation for our sins. Christ crucified is to Jews a stumbling-block and to Gentiles foolishness; but to the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is God's power and God's wisdom. There could be no gospel of grace without righteousness. Yet scripture is clear that it is not in the sinner to whom the gospel is preached. For “there is none righteous, no, not one.” Hence the gospel is God's righteousness, not man's; and its ground is the redemption that is in Christ. And His righteousness is unto all, that they might hear the glad news, and upon all those who believe, that they might know themselves justified by faith.

But this is not all the truth. He, the Lord Jesus—He will appear in glory to judge the habitable earth. In vain will men in that day say, Lord, open to us. He who now calls in love will sentence the guilty. He will say, I know you not whence ye are.

For had they heard the word in faith, they had received, not only pardon and peace, but life in Christ. And His life is the only and the sure source of the fruit of righteousness which is by Him to God's glory and praise. Not receiving Christ to life eternal men are but “workers of iniquity,” the baptized no less than the circumcised, the Mahometan quite as much as heathen. Past privileges are pleaded to no purpose. “We did eat and drink in thy presence, and thou didst teach in our streets.” Neglected opportunities, slighted mercies, only aggravate guilt. He shall say in reply, “I tell you, I know not whence ye are: depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.” To the wicked, Gentile, Jew, or of Christendom, there is no peace: least of all to those who have heard most.

There indeed shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth, when in the kingdom the unbelieving Jews see their boasted fathers and prophets, but themselves cast out. But there is deep cheer for the despised Gentiles. For the Lord adds, “And they shall come from the east and west and from the north and south, and they shall recline in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last who shall be first, and there are first who shall be last.” Do you say, how terrible and true of unbelieving Israel, how blessedly true of the Gentiles who believe? What will it be for you who have heard the gospel, and neglected so great salvation? What possible hope can be in that day! But blessing in faith there is now and ever.

Bible Treasury: Volume N1, What Is God's Kingdom Like?

THE kingdom of God is no secret hid in Himself. It is a purpose revealed of old in His word. When Moses and the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea which covered Pharaoh's host, they sang, “Jehovah will reign forever.” But this, like everything else under the law, for the present failed through their sins. At length they rejected Jehovah's reign, desiring a king “like all the nations.” Saul their choice was their sorrow and shame; but God in pity gave them David and Solomon. Even then all was but provisional, and at best but a type of God's Son, the true King, Who alone will make good His throne on the holy hill of Zion.

When the Lord Jesus presented Himself to the Jews, they proved their evil estate by denying and crucifying Him, as their prophets had foreshown. And He Who knew all beforehand told them that they should not see Him henceforth till they should say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of Jehovah. But they surely will, and He will build up Zion, appearing in His glory. So the nations shall fear Him, and all the kings

of the earth His glory. This will be the kingdom in the manifest sense, to which all the prophets gave witness, postponed as yet through Israel's unbelief. When their heart shall turn to the Lord, the veil is taken away; to this day alas! it remains unremoved.

Meanwhile the Lord in His ministry here below announced the mystery or secret of the kingdom of. God (Mark 4:11), while the King, rejected on earth, is absent on high. The consequence is that divine power is not manifested in the removal of Satan and the putting down of all the enemies; it works spiritually in those that believe, whilst a vast system of mere profession grows up and spreads to a certain extent here below. This last and by the Jews wholly unexpected result is what our evangelist was inspired to set out in our Lord's two comparisons.

“And he said, To what is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I liken it? It is like a grain of mustard which a man took and cast into his garden; and it grew and became a great tree, and the birds of heaven lodged in its branches. And again he said, To what shall I liken the kingdom of God? It is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal until the whole was leavened” (vers. 18-21).

The moral design of our Gospel is well illustrated by the peculiar introduction of the two parables at this point. No intimation marks that they were then uttered. The first Gospel gives them in their place where the seven parables disclose the kingdom of the heavens, or rather its mysteries, as a complete whole. The parable of the Sower is separated from them and given in connection with His own ministry in chap. 8.; the others of Matt. 13 Luke does not at all record. Here the object is to enforce the solemn lesson of what man is in presence of “all the glorious things that were done by him” [the Lord] Adversaries might be put to shame; and all the crowd might rejoice. But man is the same as ever, and turns all to vanity and self-exaltation. Christendom with better privileges is not really better than Israel. “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” “Ye must be born again.” “If any one be in Christ, [there is] a new creation: the old things are passed away; behold, new things are come. And all things are of God who reconciled us to himself through Christ.” What are outward changes in His eyes? Yet man, professing man, without life in Christ, can show or effect nothing more.

As the Lord described, such has been the course of God's kingdom. In chap. 8. Luke tells us of the very different work wrought by the seed that figures the word of God. Even so it does not by any means produce in result what the Sower desired. For the enemy is not yet dislodged from his bad eminence, and he avails himself of both the flesh and the world to spoil and hinder, besides his own destructive wiles. Still grace gives effect in good ground, and fruit is borne a hundredfold.

But in the parable of the mustard seed which a man east into his garden, we hear of the lofty growth from the lowly beginning of what bore the Lord's name here below. The symbol of a tree is taken, and of one that from a very little shot up to give shelter to the birds of the sky. So earthly potentates as the kings of Egypt and Assyria are described by Ezekiel, and the king of Babylon by Daniel; only that here stress is laid on the incongruity of what was originally small with its towering development in time. None can deny either fact in Christendom. As the philosophic Guizot says in his Lect. ii. on Civilization, “It was the church with its institutions, its magistrates, its power, which strove triumphantly against the internal dissolution which convulsed the empire, and against barbarity; which subdued the barbarians themselves, and became the link, the medium, the principle of civilization, as between the Roman and barbarian worlds.” What a mighty factor on earth the little flock became!

In the parable of the leaven, it is not the rise of earthly power out of what was originally despised, but the spread of doctrine till a given sphere was permeated. In it the creed-work of Christendom is portrayed. There is no thought of vital energy, only of a certain quantum assimilated by doctrine. Certainly grace in power is never so symbolized but doctrine such as that of Pharisees, Sadducees, or Herodians. Of this the natural mind is capable. The creed of Christendom, truth even, might be held, and held firmly, without faith and in unrighteousness (Rom. 1). The action of the Holy Spirit appears in neither comparison.

O my reader, hear the word of God. Receive Christ, Who alone is the Savior and gives life eternal. It is “of faith that it might be according to grace.” Ordinances may figure truth but cannot save. On the ground of works you are lost; but Jesus is Lord and Savior. “Ye are saved by grace through faith; and this not of yourselves [which some might have thought]; it is God's gift; not of works that none might boast.” Jesus is the way, the sole and sure way, to the Father. Look to Him only, and call on Him. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich to all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. The word of truth is the gospel of salvation to the believer.

Bible Treasury: Volume N1, Fruitless Fig Tree, The

Luke 13:6-9

MEN are apt to dwell on shocking events, and to measure the guilt of the victims accordingly. So it was when the Lord warned of the crisis for the Jewish people which His presence could not but bring about. For He was there in the testimony of the truth and in the humiliation of grace, not yet in the power and glory of the Kingdom; He was there for faith to receive, but for unbelief to refuse or despise. If rejection unto death was before Him, they were on the way to the sure dealings of God in judgment. Then it was that some reported to Him the tragic end of the Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices. But our Lord in answer corrects their own thought of exceptional guilt in that case, and solemnly warns them that, except they repented, they should all perish in the same way. Nay more, He points to the eighteen men, not slain by an unfeeling and truculent Roman, on whom the tower of Siloam fell. Yet were they debtors beyond all the men in Jerusalem? On the contrary He repeats, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” This is God's voice to sinful man in the present disorder of the world. Man is no competent judge of the tangled scene; but he is loudly called through such events to judge himself before God, in short to repent. And the Lord gives the call divine force: “except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”

O my reader, except you repent, worse impends over you than what befell those then occupied with passing sorrows. How often their blood was mingled afterward with their sacrifices by their own infuriate zealots! Gorse, far worse, impends over you than when the burning ruins of the temple buried its multitudes, who vainly trusted the sanctuary instead of repenting of their sins. For what is any judgment in providence compared with the everlasting judgment of God? And what is more inevitable for man? “It is appointed to men once to die, but after this, judgment.” How unutterably appalling for the unrepentant! For it surely means no less than everlasting destruction.

The Lord adds a parable also to enforce the truth. “A certain one had a fig-tree, planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, Behold, three years I come seeking fruit on the fig-tree and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? But be answering saith to him, Sir, let it alone this year also, until I shall dig about it and put manure. And if it produceth fruit thenceforth, —; but if not, thou shalt cut it down” (vers. 6-9).

Can any doubt be that the Lord has in view the elect nation planted, not casually, but in His vineyard, with every advantage of site and of care? But no fruit was found. Of this there was more than adequate witness. For three years it is waited on for fruit, but there is none. It was worse than useless. It was a nuisance. Cut it down, said the owner. But He Who felt for God's rights and called the guilty to repent felt also compassion for man, and urges the plea, “Let it alone this year also.” New and final measures were to be taken. “If it shall produce fruit thenceforth, —; but if not, thou shalt cut it down.”

Alas! we know the issue. No wonder the Lord leaves a blank. What had He not done? What had He not suffered? Even on the cross He cried, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” But as they bore no fruit—nothing but leaves, so they in their pride should not be forgiven, rejecting every proof of their need and guilt. Hence they have lost not only their place as a nation but their religious status. The fig-tree is withered away. It was the people under law; never more shall there be fruit of it forever. Thank God, there will be a generation to come; and it will believe in Him. That generation, not this, will repent. That generation, not this, will say, Blessed be He that cometh in the name of Jehovah. His blood will wash them from their sins, instead of being as now a curse on them and their children. And He will write His laws in their minds, as He will give them to their hearts, never remembering more their sins and their lawlessnesses. For it is the new covenant of God's grace, not of man's works only to show them worthless and evil.

Meanwhile God is sending His glad tidings to you; to Gentile as well as Jew; yea now to the Gentiles emphatically, for it is the day of grace. He now enjoins men that they should all everywhere repent. Oh! hear the call and own yourself lost that you may receive the Savior. This He is to the uttermost now toward all that repent. How would it be with you if He were come to judge the habitable earth in righteousness? How could you stand before the Judge? It is now His call that you repent. He waits to be gracious to you in all your ruin and to save you from your sins. He can afford and loves to do it, for His blood cleanseth from every sin.

Notes on Luke, Luke 13:31-35, Notes on

Scripture is very careful to press the respect and obedience which are due to authority, but it is not a Christian's work to occupy himself with settling questions of the earth. He has nothing to do with the ways and means whereby kings or other governors have reached their place of authority. There may have been wars, and revolutions, and all sorts of questionable means for them to arrive at such exaltation. What he has to do is to obey, as a matter of fact, those who are in authority. “Let every soul be subject unto higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.” Scripture does not attach obedience to the powers that ought to be, but to “the powers that be.” No doubt this may expose to danger where a revolutionary leader usurps the authority for a season; but God will care for results, and the duty of the Christian remains simple and sure. He obeys the powers that be. Notwithstanding all obedience in man has its limits. There are cases where the Christian is bound, I do not say to be disobedient, still less to set up his own authority (which is never his duty), but “to obey God rather than men.” Where earthly authority demands sin against God, for instance where a government interferes with and forbids the stewardship of the believer in proclaiming the name of Christ, it is evident that it is a question of a lower authority setting aside the highest. Consequently the principle of obedience to which the Christian is bound forbids his being swayed by what is of man to abandon what he knows to be the will of God.

Take again a peremptory call on a Christian to fight the battles of his country. If he knows his calling, can he join Christ's name with such unholy strife? If right for one side, it is right for another, or the Christian becomes a judge instead of a pilgrim, and the name of the Lord would be thus compromised by brethren on opposite sides, each bound to imbrue their hands in one another's blood, each instruments of hurrying to perdition souls ripening in sins. Is this Christ? Is it grace? It may suit the flesh and the world; but it is in vain to plead the word of God to justify a Christian's finding himself engaged in such work. Will any one dare to call human butchery, at the command of the powers that be, Christ's service? The true reason why people fail to see here is, either a fleshly mind, or an unworthy shrinking from the consequences. They prefer to kill another to please the world, rather than to be killed themselves to please Christ. But they should not ask or expect Christian sympathy with their unbelief or worldly-mindedness. To sympathize with such is to share their failure in testimony to Christ. To deplore the thing while doing it does not mend matters, but is rather an unwitting testimony of our own lips against our own ways.

In short, the divine rule is what our Lord Himself laid down with admirable wisdom and perfect truth. “Render unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.” This alone gives us the true standard of the path of Christ through a world of evil and snares. He Himself seems to act on the same principle here. “The same day there came certain of the Pharisees, saying unto him, Get thee out and depart hence, for Herod will kill thee.” (Ver. 31.) The Lord knew better. He knew that, bad as Herod might be, the Pharisees were no better, and that their profession of interest in caring for His person was hypocritical. Whether Herod had made use of this or not, He was not going to be influenced by any such suggestions direct or indirect from the enemy. He had His work to do for His Father. As the child, we have seen in this gospel, He must be about His Father's business. It was not otherwise when the anxiety of His mother was expressed to Him at a later day before His public work. So now the Lord said to the Pharisees, “Go ye and tell that fox.”

There is no hiding the truth of things where there is an attempt at interference with the will of God. The cunning that wrought to hinder the Lord's testimony for God was vain. He saw through it all and does not scruple to speak plainly out. “Go ye and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out demons, and I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.” The Lord was then evidently the vessel of the power of God on earth. The gracious work which He was doing showed man's folly in seeking to hinder God. “Behold, I cast out demons.” Not all the power or authority of the world could have done such deeds as these. This was paramount to every consideration: He was here to do the will of God and finish His work.

It was in vain therefore for Pharisees or Herod, under false pretensions, to draw Him aside and thus interrupt the execution of His task. He was obeying God rather than men. He came to do the will of Him who sent Him, and at all cost this must be done. “I do cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.” The work was in hand and assuredly should be done. The Lord, having finished His course,

entered into a new position for man through death and resurrection into heavenly glory. “Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following.” He knew better too than that any power of man would be permitted to stop Him till His work was completed. He knew beforehand and thoroughly that Jerusalem was the place where He must suffer, and that Pharisees were to play a far more important part in His suffering unto death than even Herod. Man does not know himself. Christ the truth declares it, and shows that it was all known to Him. There is nothing like a single eye, even in man, to see clearly; and Christ was the true light that made all things manifest.

“It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem.” Their anxiety therefore was a mere pretense. The Lord had His work to do, and devotes Himself to it till it is done. From the beginning and all through He shows clearly as here that He knew where His rejection was to be. We gather this clearly from a previous chapter, where we are told that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and this too when the time was come that He should be received up. He looks onward to His being perfected. He knew right well the pathway through which this lay. It was through death and resurrection. So here; it might be the perishing of the great prophet in Jerusalem, but it was the receiving up of the Lord of glory, now man after accomplishing redemption, into that glory from which He came. The Lord therefore remains perfectly master of the position.

But there is more than this. He was free in His love. Not all the cunning of Herod, nor all the hypocrisy of the Pharisees could turn aside the grace that filled His heart—grace even to those who loved Him not. If His servant could say that, though the more abundantly he loved the less he was loved, how much more fully true is it of the master! The disciple was like his master; but the Master was infinitely perfect. And so love fills His heart as now He utters these solemn words over Jerusalem, guilty of all the blood of the witnesses of God from Abel downwards. He has His own cross before Him; yet He says, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee: how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not.” He was then more than a prophet—the Lord Jehovah. He was one competent to gather; and He had a love that proved its divine spring, source, and character by His willingness often to have gathered the children of Jerusalem together. He could have been their shield and exceeding great reward, but they would not. There is no blessing that the will of man cannot shut its eyes to and reject. Flesh can never see aright, because it is always selfish. It does not see God, and consequently misses all that is really good for itself. Man is most of all his own enemy when He is God's enemy; but of all enemies, which are so deadly as religious enemies? as those whose hearts are far from God, though they draw near with their lips and have the place of the highest religious privilege? Such was Jerusalem. They had had the prophets, but they killed them. They had had messengers sent from God to them unweariedly, but they stoned them. And now that He who was the great prophet, Messiah, Jehovah Himself was in their midst in divine love, what would they not do to Him? There was no death too ignominious for Him. “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” It was their own ruin, when they thought and meant it to be His. But love rises over every hindrance. It is impossible that grace should be defeated in the end for its own purposes. Therefore, He adds, “Verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see me [this was judgment, ‘Ye shall not see me'], until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord” —this is grace. He comes in glory, but in the perfect display of that love which had suffered for them and from them and which will not fail in the end by this very suffering to ensure their eternal blessing.

Notes on Luke, Luke 13:23-30, Notes on

Those who had the chief place and power in Israel the Lord had convicted, under pretense of jealousy for law, of utter hypocrisy and hatred of grace even to the seed of Abraham. Under the parables of the mustard seed and the leaven, He had shown what would be the outward form of the kingdom during His rejection. But this does not hinder His going on for the present with His labor of love. “He went through the cities and villages, teaching, and journeying toward Jerusalem.” He knew right well what was to befall Him there, as indeed is expressly stated at the end of this chapter. One now says to Him, “Lord, are there few that be saved?” Are those that shall be saved (the remnant and those destined to salvation) few? The Lord does not gratify such curiosity, but at once speaks to the conscience of him who inquired. Take care that you stand right with God. “Strive to enter into the strait gate, for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in and shall not be able.” It is not, as is sometimes thought, so much a question between “seeking” and “striving.” This would throw the stress upon man, and the difference of his state; though it is true that conversion means a mighty change and that where the Spirit of God works in grace, there must needs be a real earnestness of purpose given. But the true point is that people must “strive to enter in through the strait gate.” The strait gate means conversion to God through faith and repentance. It is a person who is not content with being an Israelite, but feels the need of being born again and for it looks to God who uses the Lord Jesus as the way. This is to “strive to enter in the strait gate.” “There are many,” He says,” who will endeavor to enter in and shall not be able.” This does not mean that they would seek to enter in by the strait gate; for, if they did so, it would be all right. But they seek to get the blessing of the kingdom without being born of God; they would like to have all the privileges promised to Israel without being born of water and the Spirit. This is impossible. “Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” For if they enter, it must be through the strait gate of being born anew.

“When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us, and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are.” The Lord takes this position outside them through His rejection; they rejected Him and He has no alternative but for the time to reject them, unless God would be a party to the dishonor of His own Son. But whatever be His grace (and He will be most gracious), God shows His complacency in Christ and His resentment at those who, though taking the highest ground of their own merits, proved their unrighteousness, and unbelief, and rebellion against God when He displayed Himself in love and goodness in the Lord Jesus.

“When once the master of the house is risen up, and has shut to the door” —it would be quite unavailing for the Jews to plead that Jesus had come into their midst, that the Messiah had been in their streets, “that they had eaten and drunk in his presence,” and He had taught in their streets. This was what most evidenced their guilt. He had been there, and they would not have Him. He had taught in their streets, but they had despised and rejected Him, even more than the Gentiles. They had insisted upon His crucifixion when the most hard-hearted of Gentile governors had wished His acquittal.

It is always so. Religious privilege, when misused and abandoned, leaves those who had it worse than before, worse than those who have never had it. Messiah therefore shall say to them, “I tell you, I know not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.” God could not have mere forms: there must be what suits His nature. This is invariably proved true, when the light of God shines. The gospel does not

mean that God now sanctions what is contrary to Himself. Even in remitting sin through faith He meets what is opposed to Himself, but produces what is according to Himself by His own grace. But He always holds to His own principle, that it is those who “by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory, and honor, and incorruptibility,” that have eternal life, and none others. Those “who by patient continuance in well doing” please Him are to be with Him, and none but they. How this patient continuance in well doing is produced is another matter, and how souls are awakened to seek after it. Certainly it is not from themselves, but from God. Conversion essentially consists in distrust of self and turning to God. This the Jews had not, and, in spite of all their high pretensions to religion, they were only workers of iniquity. “There” —not among the heathen— “shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out.” But this is not all—the picture would not be complete if they did not see others brought in too. It is not only the Jews shut out from their fathers, when the time of glory comes; but others “shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south” —that is, the widest ingathering of the Gentiles— “and shall sit down in the kingdom of God.” Thus it was manifest that “there are last which shall be first.” Such were the Gentiles; they were called by grace to be first. And “there are first which shall be last.” Such were the Jews. They had held the earliest and chief place in the calling of God; but they renounced it for self-righteousness and rejected their Messiah accordingly. The Gentiles would now hear, when the natural children, we may say, of the kingdom shall be thrust out. Grace would conquer where flesh and law had utterly failed, reaping woe to themselves as much as dishonoring God.

Notes on Luke, Luke 13:10-22, Notes on

Although the Lord showed the impending fate of the Jews because of their uselessly cumbering the ground, He did not the less teach in their synagogues on the sabbath day. It was still the term of patience; and, further, grace was in no way hindered from acting individually. “And, behold, there was a woman, which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself.” She did not seek the gracious power of Jesus, but when He saw her, “he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity.” Not satisfied with this, He laid His hands upon her. There was far more grace in acting thus than in simply curing her by a word. He could have done the one as easily as the other.

But grace, though it tenderly stoops to the wretched, does not accommodate itself to the obstinate unbelief of men, more particularly of men who make a show of their religion, but who have nothing real in the sight of God. Christ cured her on the sabbath and in face of the congregation, knowing it would provoke the enmity of the ruler of the synagogue. There is no use in striving to keep fair terms with men who profess to be the friends, but are really the enemies, of God. “And immediately she was made straight and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day.” Now had he for a moment reflected, he would have seen the folly and wickedness of his affectedly pious indignation; he would have seen that he was fighting against God. But passion in religious matters never reflects; and, being wholly apart from true faith, it is apt to be governed by present interests. So this man, little suspecting that he was carrying on war with God to his own eternal ruin, turns to the people with the words, “There are six days in which men ought to work; in them, therefore, come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.” Vain and wicked man, that presumed to lay down the law to God! He was far from keeping the law himself, yet ventured to give law to Him who was not more truly man than God. God is not to work on His own sabbath day! But as the Lord told the Jews in the Gospel of John, it is a folly to suppose that God, in presence of such a world, of man and Israel as they are, is keeping the sabbath. Morally speaking, He could not do so. His love would not permit Him to rest when the earth and human kind are full of sin, wickedness, and misery. Accordingly grace led both the Father and the Son to work for poor guilty man. “My Father worketh hitherto and I work.” The Jews might be keeping their sabbaths in pride; but God was working for man! Alas! the world has as little sense of the holiness as of the love of God; and so the Lord here answers the ruler with stern rebuke. “Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall and lead him away to watering?” He does not take His text from the Father, as in the Gospel of John, but from men's own acknowledged ways; what even natural conscience feels to be right, what no legalism can blot out from the heart of man. Luke is the great moralist of the gospels. It would be cruel towards the poor brute to withhold its necessary provender or drink because of the sabbath day; and if it would be a mistake of God's mind so to treat one's ox or ass to keep it from what is necessary to its refreshment in natural life, how much more was it not worthy of God to relieve in grace a victim of Satan's power? “Ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?” He puts it on the double ground of relationship to Abraham, God's friend, and of subjection to the insulting power of the enemy. A daughter of Abraham, she ought surely to have in their eyes an additional claim, and no less because Satan had bound her for so long a time. It was plain therefore that the ruler under the pretense of high respect for God's institutions was in truth a satellite of Satan. If true-hearted, he would have rejoiced at the expulsion of that spirit of infirmity by which the woman had been so long bound. The people felt the truth of what Jesus said as well as the grace of His deed. “When he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed, and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.” Even the open opposers, if not won, were ashamed; but all the people rejoiced, for they at least have a sense of their need and are more free to acknowledge what is good and true. There may not have been power, and there is not without faith, to receive the truth in the love of it (for the heart is alienated from God); but they hailed with joy the divine power that rescued the miserable. Where there is divinely given faith. I doubt that the first action of the Spirit of God is joy. The entrance of the word gives light, and discovers what is within of sin, and guilt, and ruin. But, even without being converted, people who have no particular animosity against the truth presented in Christ and who feel the value of light nowhere else to be seen, may well rejoice. They are not broken down in the sense of their own evil, they are not brought to God, but they rejoice in what is come to men, owning the evident and excellent hand of God, and feeling the difference between Christ, however little seen, and the parchment divinity of the ruler of a synagogue. “All the people rejoiced for the glorious things that were done by him.”

Then the Lord is brought in by our evangelist, as comparing the kingdom of God to “a grain of mustard seed, which a man took and cast into his garden.” The kingdom of God was not yet coming in that power and glory in which all adversaries should be destroyed. The essential feature of it, evident to every eye which beheld Christ as its actual witness, was the power of God in lowliness displayed in His own humiliation; it was in no way a king governing with external majesty, but a man who takes a grain of mustard seed, a very little germ indeed, and casts it into his garden, where it grows and waxes a great tree; so that the fowls of the air would lodge in its branches. The Lord has before His eye the rising up of a vast worldly power which Christendom should become from the very little beginning planted by Himself then present. Such is the first view that is here given by our Lord. People were premature in rejoicing for all the glorious things that were done by

Him, if they counted on a mighty deliverance and kingdom just yet. This would be the result in due time at His coming again, and man would try to found it on what He has already done. No doubt there would be deeper things underneath; but He speaks now of what would be before all the people, before men's eyes. It is Christendom commencing as a little seed in the world and becoming such a power that even the very adversaries themselves should find grateful shelter there. But it is not yet the time for the kingdom of God to come in power and glory. There is divine power dealing by the Spirit with individual souls, but not at all in the direct public government of the world. Christianity would grow into an outward system of power, but not such as to expel scandals and those that practice lawlessness.

Far different is the state of things now. Christendom is become a worldly system, just as much as Mohammedanism or Judaism. It is become an active worldly power in the center of civilization; and not a few among those of chief influence in nominal Christianity are the enemies of God and His truth.

But, besides the outward power, our Lord compares the kingdom to “leaven which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till the whole was leavened.” The man is the figure of the agent in what is done publicly, the woman of the resulting condition in what is done hiddenly. Hence Babylon is compared to the woman in Revelation. There is the spread of doctrine, of creed, of a mere verbal confession which does not suppose faith. It is not only that there is that which rising from the least beginning becomes a great and towering power in the earth; but there is also a doctrinal system spread over a defined space (Christendom) which affects men's minds and feelings. This is compared to leaven; and leaven in scripture is never the symbol of what is good. The leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees was their doctrine, which differed in each but was far from good.

Here the leaven was hid in the three measures of meal till the whole was leavened. It does not mean all the world becoming Christian—a vain and groundless inference, opposed to many plain scriptures which treat of this subject expressly. There is a very small part of the world even nominally Christian; a much larger part consists of Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and of Heathenism. We bear of “three measures,” a certain definite space of the world which God has permitted to be influenced by nominally Christian doctrine—a witness even more than enough.

Thus the spread of Christendom, as a political power, is set forth by the tree, and the spread of the doctrine, of Christian dogma, is shown by the leavening of these three measures. Both these things have taken place, and there is nothing in either to hinder the coming of the Lord on the plea that these scriptures have not been fulfilled. Christendom is long become a great power in the earth, and has spread its doctrine within extensive limits. What sort of doctrine it is, and what sort of power, scripture elsewhere at least does not leave doubtful; but the object here is not so much to show the character of its power or the quality of the doctrine, as to imply the height of pride to which it would grow, and its prevalence over a defined space. The fact is, that from a little beginning it becomes great in the earth, and is also accompanied by a certain spread of doctrine over a limited area. There is no trace whatever in these parables of the coming millennium or reign of righteousness where evil is put down. It is rather this age where evil insinuates itself and reaches the highest places under the protection of Christendom along with the spread of a mere creed without life or the power of the Spirit. How truly both have been and are before all eyes!

Notes on Luke, Luke 13:1-9, Notes on

THE Lord pursues what occupied Him at the close of the last chapter. He is laying bare before them the crisis that was now approaching for Israel. He was the truth, manifesting the reality of things on earth—for instance, of the Jewish people in the sight of God underneath all religious forms. Nothing eluded Him and He reveals all that was needful to man. It has not the high character of the truth in John as the revelation of what was in Himself, what God was as displayed in the Word made flesh; but it is equally necessary in its place. According to the general tone of Luke, there is moral dealing with men and here with Israel.

“There were present at that season some that told him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.” The cruel and hardhearted governor had dealt with excessive unfeelingness and had shown his contempt of the Galileans. This furnished a subject for conversation: it was a judgment. They could more easily speak of it as it was a question of Galileans whom the men of Jerusalem were apt to despise. But the Lord answers them showing that the time for the kind of discriminative dealing which was in their minds was not really arrived. It will be so in the millennium, but it is not and could not come while the Messiah was in humiliation, a sufferer, sent to die by the same governor who so unworthily used those Galileans, yea, by those highest in Jerusalem whose sin was yet greater. Sent not to have His blood mingled with sacrifices, but to be Himself the sacrifice for sinners, in the infinite grace of God to all, beginning with Jerusalem. “And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” The Lord makes it an appeal to their own conscience, and shows that the light of Himself on earth reveals the deplorable state of all men without exception, and, if there be a difference, the exceeding guilt of the Jew in particular. They should all perish except they repented.

He does not here speak of believing, though no doubt it is implied and goes along with faith; but repenting brings in the thought of their sin and their want of all right moral judgment of it. On this He insists, but He does more; He brings forward a case calculated to arrest and search their consciences. They had spoken of Galileans; He reminds them of some nearer home in like case—men of Jerusalem, eighteen of whom had some time ago perished from a tower in Siloam that fell upon them. The Lord accordingly asks them, “Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” It is not so grave before God, nor so near to man's danger or best interests that a special disaster had occurred to Galileans, or to men of Jerusalem. What Jesus shows is the inevitable ruin of all that do not repent. This is characteristic of Christianity. It is the most separative of all things. It severs even out of Israel to God by the judgment of sin as it is and the knowledge of His grace; but at the same time it is the most comprehensive testimony possible. Not only does it go out to all nations to gather from them and put believers on equal privileges whether Jew or Gentile; but it is no less profound than universal, inasmuch as it shows both what God is towards every child of man, and what He is to none but His own children. Indeed it is a revelation of God in Christ both for the Church, and in His connection with the whole universe. He is the God and Father of all, “who is above all and through all and in you all;” though this will in no way hinder the destruction of all men who do not repent. Christ, come in humiliation to redeem from sin to God, alone reveals things as they are.

The Lord adds a parable also. “A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none: cut it down: why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.” This manifests, on a still larger scale, a similar truth; it adds the grounds on which they were so peculiarly responsible. The fig tree was planted in his vineyard and be came and sought fruit on it and found none, and he says “Cut it down: why cumbereth it the ground?” So far from security, nothing could be more critical than the condition of Israel now. It was not for them to be coolly speculating about Galileans and forgetting men of Jerusalem; for the thoughts of men are always partial and self-deceptive. The Lord then does not merely bring in counter-facts, but shows in a parabolic form their moral history and what was impending from God. It was only through His intervention and intercession that God was willing to bear with Israel. “Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none.” There was the most ample testimony rendered—more than enough—these three years. “Cut it down: why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.” This was what awaited Israel. The Lord was giving them a last opportunity, as far as His ministry was concerned. We know well that, whatever His pains, whatever the means used, all was vain for the time and that generation. They did not bear fruit; they rejected Himself. “After that thou shalt cut it down.” And so it was. Israel has disappeared from its place of testimony: the fig tree, the emblem of their national existence, is cut down, and withered away. Not but that God can renew them on a different principle. Grace will interfere and bring in this Messiah for the generation to come; but their national position under the law, even in the feeble condition of a remnant from Babylon, is completely blotted out from their land. The fig tree is cut down; so the Lord told them it would be, and so it is.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Woman With a Spirit of Infirmity

Luke 13:10-17

This is a miracle which fell to Luke alone to record; and it sets before us the Man Who was Jehovah's fellow accomplishing His mission of grace in the midst of a race not only indifferent or hostile to God but hypocritical. Their perverse iniquity leads on those who ought to be intercessors to become adversaries.

" And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And, behold, a woman having a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and she was bowed together and wholly unable to hold her head up. And Jesus, seeing her, addressed and said to her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands upon her; and immediately she was made straight, and was glorifying God. But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus healed on the sabbath, said in answer to the crowd, There are six days in which one ought to work; in these therefore come and be healed, and not on the day of the sabbath. The Lord therefore answered him and said, Hypocrites! doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall and leading it away water [it]? And this [woman], Abraham's daughter as she is, whom Satan bound, behold, eighteen years, ought she not to be loosed from this bond on the day of the sabbath? And as he said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed; and all the crowd rejoiced at all the glorious things that were being done by him " (vers 10-17).

The sabbath had often furnished occasion to prove the evil state of the people, especially of those in repute among men, as in Luke 6:2, 7, and 11. Here the Holy Spirit introduces the grace of our Lord, where the context tells of God's moral judgment of Israel, tested and aggravated by His presence, Who went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil. But what was God and His grace to such as sought no glory but their own? They were only provoked by a love which condemned their ungodly self-seeking. Their heart was far from Him, and its deceits were veiled from themselves by religious forms. It is not the righteous, still less the self-righteous, but sinners whom our Savior calls.

While teaching in a synagogue one sabbath, the Lord beheld a woman, so long bowed down that she could not look up, and yet coming to hear God's word. Without an appeal from her or any other, He addressed her with words of wonder-working compassion. " Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity." Not content with what had fully sufficed, " He laid his hands upon her; and immediately she was made straight, and was glorifying God." He had vanquished the strong one, and would take from him all his panoply wherein he trusted, and would divide his spoils. The Lord was entitled to proclaim release to the captives, and to set at liberty those who were bound.

The ruler of the synagogue, instead of owning and blessing God for His manifested goodness and power, was " indignant," hating the grace which he could not deny, and thus proving himself to be under a deeper slavery to Satan than the delivered woman. His wickedness was all the worse for the zeal, in his answer to the crowd, he affected for the sabbath. " There are six days in which one ought to work; in these therefore come and be healed, and not on the day of the sabbath." It was God Who had wrought in and by His Son; and would he shut one out from His mercy on that day? to say nothing of her lying in the bitter bondage of the enemy so many years.

" The Lord therefore answered him and said, Ye hypocrites! [for he had not a few who shared his half-hearted unbelief] doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead it off to watering? and this [woman], Abraham's daughter as she is, whom Satan bound, behold, eighteen years, ought she not to be loosed from this bond on the day of the sabbath?" It was irresistible for the conscience; and hearts were gladdened by grace as evident as the truth. " All his adversaries were ashamed; and all the crowd rejoiced at all the glorious things that were being done by him."

He, the Lord, has done a far greater and more enduring work. He has given His life a ransom for many. He has suffered once for sins, Just for unjust, to bring you to God, Who points you to Him for a greater deliverance, even redemption for the body with glory on high. Acknowledge then your desperate need; for you too are so bowed down by Satan through your iniquities, that you cannot truly look up. To your guilt and misery add not the hypocrisy of pleading religious obligations, when God proclaims in your ears the glad tidings of His Son, the Rescuer from the wrath to come. Neither working on the six days, nor rest on the seventh, can efface your sins; nor can the synagogue avail, nor saints or Virgin more than yourself, but " Jesus only." He is the " one Mediator between God and men " (1 Tim. 2:5). " Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved, thou and thy house " (Acts 16:31). " In none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven that is given among men, wherein we must be saved." So said Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit to the rulers of the people and 'elders (Acts 4:12). So say not those who falsely claim to be his successors or their abettors.

How does the Lord deliver His own from the power of tradition and every other source of attraction for the heart? He opens out the communications of His own mind, and casts the light of the future on the present. How often worldliness unjudged in a Christian's heart betrays itself by want of relish for God's unfolding of what He is going to do! How can I enjoy the coming of the Lord if it is to throw down much that I am seeking to build up in the world? A man, for instance, may be trying to keep or gain a status by his ability, and hoping that his sons may outstrip himself by the superior advantages they enjoy. On some such idea is founded all human greatness; it is "the world," in fact. Christ's coming again is a truth which demolishes the whole fabric; because, if we really look for His coming as that which may be from day to day—if we realize that we are set like servants at the door with the handle in hand, waiting for Him to knock (we know not how soon), and desiring to open to Him immediately ("Blessed are those servants")-if such is our attitude, how can we have time or heart for that which occupies the busy Christ forgetting world?

Moreover, we are not of the world, even as Christ is not; and as for means and agents to carry on its plans, the world will never be in lack of men to do its work. But we have a higher business, and it is beneath us to seek the honors of the world that rejects our Lord. Let our outward position be ever so menial or trying, what so glorious as in it to serve our Lord Christ? And He is coming.

In the cross we see Christ humbling Himself—the only One of all greatness stooping low to save my soul-the only One who commands all, becoming the Servant of all. A person cannot receive the truth

of the cross without having in measure his walk in accord with the spirit of it. Yet how much saints of God regard the cross, not so much as that by which the world is crucified unto them and they unto the world, but rather as the remedy by which they are set free from fear, to make themselves a comfortable place in the world! The Christian ought to be the happiest of men; but his happiness should consist in what he knows is his portion in and with Christian Meanwhile our service and obedience are to be formed according to the spirit of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: 18. The Wicked Servant

Luke 12:45-48

INSTRUCTIVE and solemn is the picture which the Lord draws of the servant in verses 45. 46, rendered still more full and precise in verses 47, 48, when a notable difference comes to light.

When our Lord announced His departure to the Father’s house, and the mission of another Advocate, the Holy Spirit to be in and with the disciples, He was no less distinct in promising His own coming again to receive them unto Himself, for the same place as Himself on high. And when gazing into heaven after their ascending Master, they were told by unimpeachable testimony that He should thus come as they had seen Him go. There is no doubt that in apostolic times the church walked in this hope, and that the mouths of preachers and teachers then spoke of it out of the abundance of their heart. Yet none ever regarded it as a question of date, any more than the Lord Who revealed it as a simple and pure and constant hope from His love to their love. And this difference is the more striking, because, the day of His appearing, which in due time follows His coming for His heavenly saints, is associated with prophecy and its judgments and signs in both the Old Testament and the New.

Hence the earnestness with which the apostle taught the converts, like those in Thessalonica from their first start, to await God’s Son from the heavens, whom He raised from the dead, Jesus our deliverer from the coming wrath (1 Thess. 1:10). Not only did He write of His coming with all His saints in 1 Thess. 3:13, but of His coming for them to raise and change them, as a necessarily antecedent action in ch. 4:12-17. He does much more; for he identifies himself and all saints with it as their proximate hope by saying, not “they” as at a distant future, but “we, the living, that survive” (in contrast with those meanwhile “put to sleep by Jesus”) until the coming (or presence) of the Lord, shall not precede those put to sleep. Both were to be caught up together. The aim of the Spirit of truth, Who knew the end from the beginning, and expressly gave the message “in the word of the Lord,” was to put the hope ever before the heart, trade sure of its fruition, but by set purpose not sure when, so that all the saints might be always looking for it. It was impossible otherwise to have the hope common, constant, and living. Infidels and those under their influence mock, as if it was the apostle’s error, at that which was really the perfect wisdom of God in giving “one hope,” which never did nor can pass away till His coming shall be its crown.

In the parable the Lord points out from the first that putting off the hope would betray the evil heart of unbelief, the root of other evils.

“But if that bondman say in his heart, My lord delayeth to come, and shall begin to beat the men-servants and the maid-servants, and to eat and drink and be drunken, the lord of that servant will have come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour that he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder and set his portion with the unfaithful” (verses 45, 46).

It is not a doctrinal mistake (though this is not a slight thing with God’s word and Spirit to direct aright), but the far more serious aberration of the “heart,” which is too easy where this doctrine may be held. How sad the soul’s state where Christ’s coming is unwelcome; and the bondman does what his heart likes! Thus is the separative power of the hope lost, and its attraction to Him Who is coming and His word. Violence ensues towards his fellows, who become disagreeable, as the world with its enjoyments become pleasant company. Can any words more graphically sketch Christendom’s practical ruin, of which the first symptom was the heart’s plea, My Lord delayeth His coming? This will not hinder but rather hasten His coming unexpectedly, Who will punish his disloyalty and assign his portion with the faithless, notwithstanding all his boast of Christian privileges.

In the verses that follow, the Lord rules, that sad as the heathen’s case may be in the day that hastens, incomparably worse is the Christian professor’s. “And that bondman who knew his own lord’s will and made not ready nor did his will, shall be beaten with many [stripes]; but he

who knew [it] not and did things worthy of stripes shall be beaten with few. And to every one to whom much has been given, much shall be required of him; and to whom they commit much, of him they will ask the more" (verses 47, 48).

O my reader, forget not that you have an open Bible, her the gospel, are sometimes troubled when you think of your sins and feel ashamed because you shrink from confessing the Lord's name, as much as you love the world and the things of the world. "The end of those things is death;" after which comes judgment. How will your guilt and the madness of your unbelief seem then when it is too late? Oh, turn not away from Him that speaks from heaven of His cleansing blood, Whose voice will soon shake earth and heaven also. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." His grace now is as sure to the believer, as His judgment will be shortly terrible for the unbeliever. God is not mocked.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: 17. Working for the Lord

Luke 12:41-44

CHRIST is the fullest test for every soul of man, for sinner or for saint. He is the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but through Him; as he that has seen Him, the Son, has seen the Father. For no one has seen God at any time: the only begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father—He has declared Him. All blessing for the sinner turns on receiving the Savior. He only is the propitiation for our sins, as He alone gives the believer life eternal.

So also Christ makes manifest the practical difference between one believer and another. Thus of the two sisters with their brother, whom Jesus loved, Mary was shown to have chosen the good part which should not be taken from her; whereas Martha chose rather that much serving which distracted her, and made her grumble because her sister sat down at His feet, listening to His word.

Not otherwise is it here in the Lord's estimate of waiting for Him with working for Him. Undoubtedly the believer is called to do both. But we readily let slip His mind, and are apt to prefer what gives us importance to what pleases Him most. Now the lack of being filled with the sense of His glory and His grace weakens and injures our service; because it exposes us to the ways, if not devices, of our own activity, instead of dependence on Him and subjection to His word.

Hence our Lord draws the twofold picture of blessedness in this chapter. (1) "Blessed are those bondmen whom the Lord on coming shall find watching: verily I say to you, that he will gird himself and make them recline at table, and coming up will serve them" (ver. 37). And He repeats their blessedness in the following verse. What immense grace on His part! It was love that wrought thus mightily. It was His love that created theirs; His that was seen by faith to be so great in One so glorious that formed and fed theirs, and drew them out in waiting for Him as their chiefest, dearest, and constant hope. At His coming He will not forget their loving and worshipping hearts. He will show in the day of His glory His appreciation of their longing for Him, while others expended it more or less on other objects. It will be His joy, never ceasing His service of love even in glory, to pay them especial honor, girding Himself to serve them.

(2) But there is more than this, though not so near His heart nor so high morally. For when Peter said, "Lord, sayest thou this parable to us or also to all?" the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise steward whom his lord will set over his household to give them the portion of food in season? Blessed is that bondman whom his lord on coming shall find doing thus: verily I say unto you, that he will set him over all that he hath" (vers. 41-44). Here it is working as distinguished from waiting or watching. It is doing Him service, rather than the eyes of the heart fixed on His coming. His interests may be cared for with zeal, His work done faithfully and with intelligence. Sinners are sought earnestly that they may be saved; saints are loved and tended because they are precious to Him. Neither is the Lord unmindful of the service; nor is God unrighteous to forget the work. For that bondman whom the Lord on coming shall find so doing, He will set over all that He has. And has He not pledged Himself so to act, Who is Heir of all things? The servant shall share in the display of His Lord's glory, if he serve faithfully now in the day He is slighted.

Yet great and glorious as will be the day of recompence, and the requital worthy of Him Who is now served, however weakly in the face of the world which crucified the Lord of glory, what are such returns, wondrous as they shall be, compared to the inner scene of His love Then, according to the graphic figure, He will make them recline in the Father's house and serve them in that loving service that has no end. When Christ our life shall be manifested, then shall we also with Him be manifested in glory. All the world will see and know it. But it is a deeper thing to enjoy His personal love and honor in a way beyond all creature thought and the world's ken, as He here promises to the bondmen who wait and watch for Him.

O my reader, how is it with you as you read these lines You may not be conscious of enmity to the Lord Jesus. But are you a confessor of His name? Are you following Him openly as well as believing in Him? Remember the ruler so moral from his youth, who could bear neither to part with his large possessions, nor to follow Christ. It is indeed impossible with men, but not with God, as the Lord said; for all things are possible with God. And what has He done for you and your salvation?—given His own Son to become a man, and a bondman, and a sacrifice that you by faith may lay your hand on that all-efficacious Burnt-Offering. "And it shall be accepted for you to make atonement for you." For nothing less than this, but even more, does the gospel of God present to you in His name.

Fear not therefore if you draw near in that Name of Jesus which is above every name; fear not; only believe. You cannot make too much of the one Mediator between God and man. God will honor your drawing on His infinite grace, if you draw in the name of the Lord Jesus. The Son of God became man, Christ Jesus, and gave Himself a ransom for all; and the Holy Spirit in the gospel proclaims it now that you may believe in the Lord Jesus and be saved. This is God's testimony in the good news, and these are its own times. The night comes when none can work and none can hear, when those that refuse to hear must perish. If it be so with you, it is your own sin. God sent His only-begotten Son that you might not perish but have life eternal. Oh! hear His word that you may believe and be saved.

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Gospel Words, Gospel Words: 16. Waiting for the Lord

Luke 12:35-38

THROUGHOUT this chapter the Lord is withdrawing His disciples, now that His rejection proceeded and His departure approached, from their thoughts and ways as Jews. This is ever wholesome, for it grounds the believer in Christianity, which nature and the world resist. But then it was absolutely requisite and of the highest value that they should be weaned from the old weak and beggarly elements, to learn, enjoy, and live the new thing. It is not the power of Messiah present and governing here below, hut God's word and Spirit. Hence the unseen and eternal things are revealed; hence confession of the truth, of the rejected One, is imperative, as God only is to be feared, and the danger is of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Only the gracious Lord encourages the faith that owns Him by the very things which terrify unbelief. Earthly justice is not His care now; nor should earthly care be theirs. What was the portion of the rich man that forgot his soul?

The disciples are called to confide in Him who feeds the ravens, and clothes the lilies and the grass, with a glory beyond Solomon's. Why then should they be anxious like the nations of the world? Their Father knows their bodily wants, and adds these things to such as seek His kingdom, Moreover He would have them of good courage for was it not His delight to give them the kingdom? Hence, far from covetousness, they were called to be kings now in superiority to money. The world was no more their quest, but to use it things in unselfish love. This is to make for themselves an unfailing treasure in the heavens, when also their heart was to be. And thus in practice they become heavenly. "Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning, and ye like men awaiting their own lord, when he may return from the wedding, that, when he cometh and knocketh, they may immediately open to him. Blessed are those bondmen whom the lord on coming shall find watching! Verily I say to you, that he will gird himself, and make them recline at table, and come up and serve them. And if he come in the second watch, and in the third, and find them so, blessed are they!" (vers. 35-38.)

Here then beyond just question the Lord lays down the attitude of the Christian. Is it yours? He Himself is the test beyond all else. It is not consistent with faith to be worried with anxiety about the things that perish. It is well to be of good cheer, knowing His love and His purpose of glory for the little flock, tried and exposed as it now is. But to be like men that wait for their own lord is a still more positive and decisive test. It presupposes in a personal way faith working by love. Their treasure is in the heavens where He is. They love Him, because He first loved them. They do not forget Him in His absence; they are not merely occupied with their work, for indeed their loins were girt about and their lamps burning, but themselves awaiting their own Lord. Nor again were they discussing dates, nor on the lookout for political change, nor yet with eyes fixed on signs in the sun, moon, and stars. The Christian watches for Christ. He, his life, his righteousness, his Savior, his Lord, is gone with the promise of coming to receive him to Himself, one knows not how soon. And He has sent His last message since that He is coming quickly.

Therefore would we not doubt but wait, content with His word Who is the Truth, and the Faithful and True Witness. Long as it may seem, He is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, "but is longsuffering toward you, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." As He is waiting, so should we be; and thus we keep the word of His patience, but assure our hearts in the bright hope. Is He not worthy? is not the hope well worth the while? and is it not deep consolation that meanwhile many hear His voice, believe in His name, and with us wait for Him?

O my reader, if it be not so with you, where are you, and what? You well know whether you are waiting for the Lord Jesus; yea others, even the world, can in fair measure judge whether this is your habitual attitude. The Lord recognizes no other object of hope in His own. This is also the chief responsibility as His bondmen. Be assured that other duties will be done all the better, because this has the first and constant place. Read all the N.T. and see if this hope be not bound up with every joy and sorrow, with the walk and work and worship of the Christian, who found in Him the object of faith when he was a lost sinner, and now as a saint has none other as his hope. If you believe in Him, be not untrue to Him as your hope, but judge yourself in everything that hinders your waiting for Him day by day.

If you have no faith in Him, how sad is your estate! Perhaps you are so beguiled by the spirit of the age growingly infidel, as to deny His glory as the Son of God and His humiliation as the Son of man. Perhaps you deny His resurrection, if not His death, yea the death of the cross. You deny all this at your peril; and your peril is everlasting punishment. For it is folly to suppose that, if the Son of God came to be propitiation for our sins, God did not give adequate proof to make mankind responsible to receive Him, and verily, fatally, guilty in rejecting Him. To reject a divine Person, Who in infinite love deigned to die in order to save you and me by faith from judgment, cannot be a secondary thing. It is the truth that God now testifies to all in the gospel, which bears the self-evidence of His holy love as no pretended sacred book does comparably. It has been proved to the peace and joy and salvation of millions as guilty and incredulous as you. Why then be so careless, so mad, so wicked as to fight more against God, and turn His message of mercy, because refused, into a sentence of condemnation righteous and everlasting? Receiving the Lord Jesus by faith, you are entitled by God's grace to salvation, and can then welcome His coming with love and delight and triumph. You can then join those that are waiting for Him, that, when He knocks, you may open to Him immediately.

Job 38:7 appears to express poetically the joy of the orbs of heaven when first ushered in as the hosts of heaven, with the audible acclaim of the angels, who in this book as in Genesis are called God's sons.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: 15. The Rich Fool

Luke 12:16-21

CHRIST puts before the disciples the consequences of Jewish unbelief. The light of God's testimony shines only the brighter. He is the Son of Man as well as the Messiah, and His rejection by the old people of God but opens the door of grace through His death to all the nations of mankind. Here He warns of not Sadducean evil only but of Pharisaic: their leaven was hypocrisy. But as God is light, so everything covered up shall be revealed.

Such is Christ and Christianity. The veil is rent, and the blood of Christ brings the believer to God, Who alone, not man, is to be feared. And the Son of man is the test. Him who shall confess Him before men will the Son confess also before the angels. For now it is not a question of the

earth, but of hell (Gehenna) and of heaven, of things eternal, not seen and temporal. And the testimony of the Holy Spirit is final: he that blasphemes Him shall not be forgiven. The Holy Spirit deigns to teach the believer; no matter what the emergency, he need not be anxious: the Holy Spirit suffices (vers. 1-12).

Another root of evil is now laid bare thoroughly covetousness. “Teacher (said one), speak to my brother to divide the inheritance with me. But he said to him, Man, who constituted Me a judge or divider over you?” This the Lord will be in the most glorious way when He comes in His kingdom. It was therefore no unreasonable wish for one, who if he owned Him as Messiah, had no perception of the change His rejection brings. It was in no way for the rejected Messiah to divide earthly. inheritances. “And he said to them, See and keep yourselves from covetousness; for, while one may have abundance, his life is not in his possessions. And he spoke a parable unto them, saying, The land of a certain rich man bore fruitfully. And he reasoned in himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have not where to gather my crops? And he said, This will I do: I will take down my granaries, and build greater; and there will I gather all my produce and my good things. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast many good things laid up for many years: rest, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said to him, Fool, this night is thy soul required of thee; and whose shall be what thou didst prepare? Thus [is] he that treasureth up for himself, and [is] not rich toward God” (vers. 13-21).

Are not these evils rife now in Christendom? Do not both abound in what we are apt to think the most favored lands on earth? Who can deny their sanctioned prevalence among the Anglo-Saxon race? Where are they more unblushing than in England and America? What is a fair show in the flesh but hypocrisy, not merely in Establishments here or there, but quite as really in the dissenting societies? Where is not the influence of money dominant? Where is “the unrighteous mammon” so much discussed, so earnestly sought, and, as far as given, so glaringly vaunted? Money is treated even by pious men as the sinews of the gospel; just as the world counts it the sinews of war. The entire system of religious societies rests on the pillars of gold and silver. Never was there so deep and open and general an affront put on the Holy Spirit; never did Christian effort rest on so debasing a foundation. Never were souls encouraged so distinctly to make money insatiably that they may give more liberally. In this gold and gain hunting day are not Christians as assiduous and eager to heap up wealth as the sons of this age? And if they spend on themselves and their families, who reproves worldliness, if there be fairly large gifts for the chapel and the societies, for Bibles, for Tracts, and for Missions, to enumerate no more?

Here the Lord presents the picture of an everyday reality. Covetousness implies no dishonesty, and is not even hard or sharp dealing, being no more than the desire of more: the very spring of modern effort, the motive of bettering himself commended to all from the mechanic to the millionaire. Thus the creature becomes the object, not God; and therefore is covetousness declared to be idolatry. It is man looking down, not up in dependence on God. The rich man was not content, but high-minded and trusted not in God but in the certainty of what is most uncertain. Rich in good works he was not, nor liberal in distributing, nor grateful for the abundance which he had, nor disposed to communicate. He aspired after greater things and planned for nothing but his own ease and enjoyment, as if he had a lease forever. God was in none of his thoughts, but read them all. When the rich man called on his soul to be merry over the many goods laid up for many years, the summons came: “Fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.”

O my reader, rich or poor, is this your folly? For it may be in hope, yet more frequently than in possession; and God is not mocked. Many a rich man perishes in his selfish ease; many would-be rich fall into temptation and a snare, into unwise and hurtful lusts which plunge them into destruction and ruin. Oh! look to Him Who, being rich, for our sakes became poor, that we by His poverty might be enriched. The abiding riches of glory we, changed into His likeness, shall receive and use aright. The riches of His grace He offers you now in His redemption. Despise not them nor Him; for this is to brave or court perdition. Confess your true place as a lost sinner before God, that He may give the salvation of your soul now by the faith of Christ, and by-and-by the salvation of your body at His coming.

Notes on Luke, Luke 12:49-59, Notes on

We have seen the Lord's coming as the object of their heart's affection and consequent expectation for the rewarder of service. As the judge of those who have wrought on earth, He will deal righteously according to their respective privileges.

But the Lord now speaks of the effect of His actual presence then. “I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I if it be already kindled?” This is in no way the purpose of His love, but the effect of His presence. He could not but deal as a discoverer of man's state. Fire is the constant symbol of divine judgment, and this was morally true even then. He came to save; but, if rejected, it was really the kindling of a fire. This in no way contradicts the great truth of His intrinsic grace. He says, “But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” He Himself was about to go through the deepest suffering, and this because of the necessary antagonism of God's character to sin, which was not yet judged. It was about to be judged in the person of Christ, absolutely without sin, yet made sin by God on the cross. In devoted love, glorifying God, He would be a sacrifice for sin. This was the baptism with which He was to be baptized, and till this was done, the Lord, as He says here, was straitened. Whatever might be His love, it could not yet flow out in all its fullness. There were barriers among men, and there was beyond all these a hindrance on the side of God's glory. His character, amply displayed in good during Christ's life, had not yet been vindicated as to evil. But in and from His death we find no limits to the proclamation of divine love. Before that it was more promise within the limits of Israel, not without hints of mercy beyond it. God would be true and faithful to His word, whatever the state of Israel, but He could not send out freely to the Samaritans, and to the world in general before the cross. After the cross this is exactly what He does. The Lord therefore was straitened till this was accomplished.

Hence, again, they must not be surprised if, man being what he is, Christ's presence produced conflict, opposition, if men were stirred up into jealousies and envies, hatred, arid enmity. All these things became manifest in those in whom it had not been seen before. People might have gone on quietly, but Jesus always puts the heart to the test; and if there be not faith, no man knows what he may not do, whenever the truth (as Jesus is) puts him to the proof. “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth?” Undoubtedly such will be the effect of His reign by and by, but it is far from being the case now, where good has to make its way and skew itself in the midst of evil which is in power. We must always remember that this is an essential characteristic of the time when Jesus was on earth; and it is so still. As far as the world is concerned, evil is in power: good therefore has to maintain itself by faith in conflict with it and superiority over it. It is not that good loves conflict, but that evil will oppose what is good, and consequently suffering there must be. “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth?

I tell you, Nay; but rather division: for from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three."

This state of moral rupture is simply the result of Christ's coming to the world, as it is man in a state of alienation and opposition, more particularly man with religious privileges, who cannot bear to have all his imaginary good sentenced to death. Therefore the Jews were ever more hostile than Gentiles. The latter could not but see their vanities judged by that which carried its own evidence of light and love along with it; but the Jews had what was really of God, only preparatory however and pointing onward to Him, who was now come, and whom they would not have, but rejected utterly. In that rejection the baptism spoken of was accomplished, and sin was judged, and God now can be righteous in justifying him who believes, and this solely on the ground of atonement for proved convicted sin. This alas! was the last thing a Jew was willing to admit. He would not own that he needed redemption as much as a Gentile, and that a Jew no less than a Gentile must enter the kingdom by being born again. Hence division in families, in no way because the grace of Christ in itself promotes discord, but because man's evil fights against the truth which puts it in the light, and man's hatred refuses the love of which it does not feel the need.

Hence, we come to yet fuller particulars. "The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law." The nearest relationships, sex, age, or youth made no difference. As grace works freely according to the sovereign will of God, so man's hatred is indiscriminate, and in the most unlikely quarters. The Lord is alluding to the prophecy of Micah, who describes in similar terms the worst evil of the last days. (Chap. 7:6.) It is solemn to find therefore that, before the days spoken of by the prophet arrive, the evil was itself now come, and that the presence of divine love in the person of Jesus provokes it. This could not be if men were not thoroughly bad: but Jesus is the truth, and therefore brings all things to a head.

In the next verses he appeals to the people and convicts them of the greatest moral blindness. "He said also to the people, When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time?" Men are good enough judges of the signs of the weather; they were sufficiently shrewd in forming a judgment as to the present in what they saw; but they utterly failed in what most of all becomes a man—judgment of what is morally above him, judgment of what touches him most closely in his relationship to God, judgment in what concerns his eternal future. In these things they utterly failed, they were hypocrites. Their love of evil, cloaked with a veil of fair religious appearance, made them blind, their love of their own interests made them sharp in discerning and practiced in the pursuit of present things. They utterly failed in conscience; and so the Lord goes on to reproach them. It was not only that they were blind as to the signs that God gave outside themselves; but why did they not even of themselves, as it is said here, judge what was right? This is peculiar to Luke. Matthew speaks of the external signs God was pleased to give them, but they had no eyes for them. Luke alone speaks of the responsibility of judging from themselves, and not merely from what was vouchsafed outside them. The truth is that all was internally wrong with themselves: therefore they did not judge what was right.

The Lord hence concludes this part of His discourse with a warning of their actual position. "When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite." Israel were on their trial now, they were in the way. There was an opportunity of being delivered: would they refuse? Would they throw all away? They might depend upon it, if there was not diligence to avail themselves of what God was now granting them; in the presence of Jesus, justice must take its course; and if so, they must be dragged to the judge, and the judge most assuredly would deliver them to the officer, and the officer would cast them into prison. The result would be that they should in no wise depart thence, till they had paid the very last mite. And such in point of fact has been the history of the Jews. They are in prison still, and out of this condition they will never be delivered until the whole debt is paid in the retributive dealings of God, when the Lord will say that Jerusalem has received from His hand double for all her sins, He will not allow her therefore to suffer more. His mercy will undertake her cause in the last day. His hand accomplishing at length what His mouth promised from the first.

Notes on Luke, Luke 12:41-48, Notes on

IN the preceding verses our Lord presented His coming as claiming the affections of the saints and dealing with their moral state. Their loins were to be girded about, their lights burning, themselves like unto men waiting for their Lord. For, their treasure being in the heavens, their hearts would be there also. This connects itself too with immediate readiness in receiving Himself, that "when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately." It is the blessedness of watching for Christ, with its infinite joy in result. "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."

If He does tarry, and the heart that loves Him finds it long and has need of patience, it is well worth waiting for Him whatever the delay. "And if he shall come in the second watch or come in the third watch and find them so, blessed are those servants." At the same time it is important to add the aspect of His coming for the conscience. The return from the wedding does not present this. But "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." Present ease and unwatchfulness in such a world as this always make the return of the Lord to be more or less unwelcome. The only right place for love or conscience is the attitude of watching for Him. "Be ye therefore ready also, for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not."

"Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household to give them their portion of meat in due season?" Now here again appears another aspect. It is the position of one called to be faithful and wise as a steward. It is one whose duty it is, ruling over the master's household, to give their meat in due season, a grave and honorable work. Still it has not necessarily the intimacy of personal affection, which the continual watching for Him supposes. Man, no doubt, thinks very differently; but we are hearing the word of the Lord, and His word ever judges and was meant to judge the thoughts of men. Accordingly there is a difference in the result. "Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing. Of a truth I say unto you that he will make him ruler over all that he hath." It is not the return of His love so much as the post of honor in His kingdom. "Blessed" indeed are both; but the heart ought to need little light to discern which is the better

of the two. May we answer His love and be true to His trust, and know both blessednesses as our portion when He comes again!

Undoubtedly much was left here as elsewhere to be filled up by the Spirit of God. Our Lord had many things to say, but His disciples could not bear them all then. The accomplishment of redemption, the fall of Israel definitively for the time, the call of the Gentiles, and above all, the revelation of “the mystery,” had an immense influence in giving development to the truth of the Lord's return. Nevertheless, it is deeply interesting to notice how admirably the words of the Lord on this occasion present that truth in its two main aspects of grace and responsibility. On these however I do not dwell, because the scripture before us does not enter into detail. It is enough to point out the general truth—a truth, be assured, of great importance to seize in its principles and in its practical consequences.

The Lord next looks at the vast scene of profession, and shows us in a few solemn words how it will be affected by His return. Christendom and man at large will assuredly be judged then, for we are not here looking at the judgment of the great white throne; it is the judgment of the quick, not yet of the dead—a judgment too much forgotten, not only by the careless but by those who exercise the largest influence in the religious world. Judaism always tended to swamp the final judgment by bringing into exclusive prominence the judgment of the world when the nations shall be put down, and Israel, bumbled by grace, at length shall bear to be exalted to their promised supremacy under Messiah and the new covenant. But Christendom forgets the judgment of the quick, and its forgetfulness of it is no small part of Satan's device to ruin the testimony of Christ. Not only is the truth of His coming lost as a practical joy for the heart, and as a solemn test for the work, but the bare fact itself is disallowed by confounding that day with the judgment of the dead.

The unbelief of man however will not nullify but rather prove the value of the warning of the Lord. “But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”

How exact the sketch, save indeed that the ruins of Christendom have brought out added horrors to what is depicted here, no less than the epistles furnished the fuller display of the truth of Christ's coming. And these horrors are given us at length in such scriptures as 2 Thessalonians; 1 and 2 Timothy; Rev. 17; 19.

We see that Christendom having taken the place of Christian privilege will be judged accordingly. It is “that servant.” Having no heart nor faith in Christ's coming, men were willing that it should be deferred. The heart was rather relieved than made sick through a hope deferred that was no hope. They said in their heart “my lord delayeth his coming.” The wish was parent to the thought; and in such a state of feeling circumstances will readily be found to justify it. But the moral consequences are soon seen. With Christ's coming no longer before the eye, that servant ere long began “to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink and to be drunken.” The spirit of haughty assumption and intolerance was developed on the one hand, and a demoralizing intercourse with the world on the other. “But the lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and shall cut him in two, and appoint him a part with the unbelievers.” Whatever its profession, the heart of Christendom in that day will be proved to be infidel. No disguises of creed or rite, no activity, nor zeal, will shield it from the just judgment of the Lord at His coming.

Nevertheless the Lord is always just, and in that day there will be a marked difference in His dealings with the quick, as He says here. For the servant who “knew his lord's will, and had not prepared himself nor done it, shall be beaten with many stripes;” whereas be who knew it not yet was guilty, though he will not escape, will be beaten with few stripes. The less favored heathen therefore will not fare so ill in that day as she who sits as a queen with a vain presumption that she will 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.” For it is a fixed thing with Him that where much has been given much shall be required, as even man's conscience and practice confess every day: “For to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.”

Notes on Luke, Luke 12:31-40, Notes on

The instruction previously given was rather negative motives to avoid the ways and objects of the Gentiles, because of their confiding in their Father's care. And now we have more directly positive instruction. “But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you.” As usual, Luke gives us the moral force of things. “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink,” as the apostle says, “but righteousness, and peace, and joy, in the Holy Ghost.” They were to desire and pursue what God Himself was about to bring in, what manifests His power in contrast with man's weakness. And so seeking, all other things—all that is needed for this life—all the things that mail makes to be so important, should be added unto them. God assuredly takes care of His own. If we seek His things, He does not forget ours, He could not, would not, overlook our need day by day.

Further (ver. 32), they are not to fear, although a little flock. Their strength did not at all rest on numbers or resources of an earthly kind, but on a most simple and blessed principle it was their Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom. He had delight in it, it was His complacency. This could not fail: why should they fear? Far from it, they are told to sell what they had. “Sell that ye have, and give alms.” All that would manifest love flowing out to the needy became them. It was their Father's way with them who were once poor indeed, and they were to keep up the family character. They might, it is true, provide bags; but they were to be such as waxed not old, such as heavenly treasure demands. They were not to be of an earthly kind, but rich toward God, “a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth.” There is nothing forgotten: God is not unrighteous to forget your work of faith and labor of love; and what is of importance too, there is no disappointment with the treasure, no thief approaches it on the one hand, no moth corrupts on the other, “for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” The object was, that their heart should be settled on things above, and it would be so if their treasure was there. A man is always determined by what he seeks, by his objects. If he sets his heart upon a degrading object, he is degraded; if upon that which is noble and generous, his character is morally elevated. If therefore he is attracted by Christ who is at the right hand of God, if heavenly treasure is before his eyes, his heart follows his treasure, he is taken entirely above the power of present things, which cannot more drag him down.

Is it too much to say that there is nothing of such moment for the disciple? If he has Christ, it is of all consequence he should see Christ where He is, and the things of Christ, where He sits at the right hand of God. Only to look at Christ on earth would falsify a Christian. Assuredly He is and must be an infinitely blessed object wherever He is, nor is it that there would be no worthy effect of thus looking at Christ. But we must bear in mind that Christ here below was under law, and connected with Judaism, with its temple, rites, and priesthood; that as yet the great question of redemption was not decided, sin was not judged, evil was not put away; that the world was not given up as hopelessly bad, nor, consequently, was man. Whoever therefore merely looks at Christ as He was here below, shuts himself out from the great truth that all these things are questions already decided; that the world is judged before God, the earth under sentence, heaven opened, redemption accomplished and sin put away. The soul who looks at Christ on earth is not only shut out from all the distinctive truths of Christianity, but is plunged into a state of uncertainty; whereas all under the gospel ought to be clearly seen and settled. The mighty work of redemption does not remain to be accomplished. This is one reason why the mass of Christians who look at Christ thus are necessarily of doubtful mind, and count assurance to be presumption. The spiritual character is formed accordingly. But our Lord Himself tells us to have “a treasure in the heavens that faileth not,” “for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” He wished to have them heavenly; and in practice there is no other way than seeing and knowing and possessing, in the true sense, our treasure in the heavens. If so, the heart is there also.

But there is another thing too. It is good to have before us the object that is before God. It is good to have an object, a true object, that calls one out into a state of patience and expectation. We cannot do without the power of hope; if we have not the true object, we shall have false ones. “Let your loins” therefore He says, “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 do not take this expression about returning from the wedding as prophetic, but rather as moral, in accordance with the habitual style of Luke. It is certainly intended to present no aspect of judgment but of joy, and it is therefore an allusion to the well-known facts constantly before their eyes, a figure taken from them. They were to be waiting for their Lord, not in a judicial point of view, but as One who returns from a wedding that when He comes and knocks they may open unto Him immediately. This is another grand point, not only, that He is associated with joy, but that they should be free from all earthly encumbrance, so that, the moment the Lord knocks according to the figure, they or may open to Him immediately—without distraction having to get ready. Their hearts are waiting for Him, for their Lord; they love Him, they are waiting for Him. He knocks, and they open to Him immediately. Such is the normal position of the Christian, as waiting for Christ the only true object of hope. “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.” Here their blessing as waiting for Him is shown. We shall find another blessing a little later on; but the blessing here is the watching—not so much working as watching. That is, it is not so much occupation with others as watching for Him, and assuredly this is of some importance to feel. Watching takes precedence even of working. There is no doubt that working has no small value and that the Lord will remember it and reward it, but watching is far more bound up with His person and with His love. Hence it is said “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.” All the activity of His love is shown, and His gracious condescension. “And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants.” There is intentness therefore upon it. It is not vague; it is sustained; it is carried through the night. They are looking for Him from first to last—“Blessed are those servants.” “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. Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not.” It is not the Messiah taking the throne of His father David, but the rejected Son of man who is coming in glory; and blessed are those who are thus waiting and watching for Him. “Be ye therefore ready also.”

Notes on Luke, Luke 12:13-30, Notes on

The rejection of Christ leads to an important change, both in His position and in what men would find in and from Him. A Jew would naturally have looked to the Messiah as the judge of every vexed question. Even he who valued the Lord Jesus for His unblemished ways and holy conversation might well seek His aid. But it is here shown that His rejection by man changes everything. One cannot reason abstractedly therefore from what the Messiah was as such; we must take into account the fact of the state of man towards Him and God's action thereon. The cross of Christ, which was to be the fruit and measure of the rejection of the Lord, would have in its train consequences immense, and of all possible difference from what had gone before; and this not only on man's part, but on God's.

Hence, when one of the company said to Him, “Master speak, to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me,” the Lord answers, “Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?” He was not come to judge. The rejection of Christ leads into that infinite salvation He has wrought, in view of which He declines the settlement of human disputes. He was not come for earthly purposes, but for heavenly. Had He been received by men, He would undoubtedly have divided inheritances here below; but, as they were, He was no judge or divider over men or their affairs here below. But Luke, as is his manner and habit, presents the Lord immediately looking at the moral side of the matter, as indeed the rejection of Christ does lead into the deepest manifestation and understanding of the heart.

The Lord therefore addresses the company on a broader ground. “He said unto them, Take heed and beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” This anxiety for Christ's help to settle questions flows from the heart's desire of something that one has not here below. Maintenance of position is here judged, eagerness after earthly righteousness is exposed” beware of covetousness.” The rejection of Christ and the revelation of heavenly things led into the true path of faith, of confiding in God for whatever He gives, of trusting, not man but Him, for all difficulties, of contentedness with such things as we have. God arranges all to faith. Nor is this the whole matter. The heart has to be watched. “Beware of covetousness, for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.” And this too He illustrates, as well as its awful end. There is exceeding selfishness, folly, and danger in what might seem to be earthly prudence. Hear the next words of the Lord. “He spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?” Clearly this man counted that the prime good lay in the abundance of the things that he possessed. His desire was to employ what he had so as to get and keep more of present things.

Systematic selfishness was there, not the reckoning of faith either in its self-sacrifices of suffering or in its active and generous devotedness. There was no eye upon the future outside this world. All was in present life. It is not that the rich fool made a bad use of what he had

according to human judgment, not that he was immoral, but his action did not go beyond gratifying his desire of ever-growing abundance. “He said, This will I do, I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.”

This conduct stands in marked contrast with what the Lord afterward brings into prominence in chapter 16, where is seen the sacrifice of the present for the future, and that such only are received into everlasting habitations. It is not the means of deliverance from hell, but the character of all who go to heaven. So far they resemble the steward in the parable, whom the lord commended, not for his injustice, but for his wisdom. He sacrificed present interests, his master's goods, in order to secure the future. The rich proprietor here, on the contrary, is ever casting down his barns and building greater, in order the better to secure all his fruits and increase his goods. His sole and entire thought was for this present life which, he assumed, would go on unchangeably. The steward looked out for the reverse that was at hand, and acted accordingly. May we feel ourselves stewards in what men would call our own and act with no less prudence. It was not so with him who says to himself, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease; eat, drink, and be merry.” There was both self-satisfaction in what he possessed, and withal the desire for a long enjoyment of present ease. It was the practical Sadduceanism of unbelief. “But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?”

He never considered this. God was not in all his thoughts. He had reduced his soul to the merest slavery of the body, instead of keeping under the body, that it might be the servant of the soul, and God the master of both. But no: God was in none of his thoughts; yet God said to him, “Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?” He had looked onward for an uninterrupted prosperity in the world. “This night!” Little did he think it. “This night thy soul shall be required of thee So is he that layette up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.” Riches before God cannot be without what men shortsightedly count impoverishment of self, using what we have not for ourselves but for others. Only such are rich toward God, be their means great or small. If their means are small, they are nevertheless large enough to let them think of others in love and provide for wants greater than their own: if their means are great, their responsibilities are so much the greater. But in every case the gathering up is not for self, but for the service of grace; and this can only be by bringing God into the matter. Such only are rich toward God. Laying up treasure for oneself is the hard labor of self and the unbelief that reserves for a long dream of enjoyment which the Lord suddenly interrupts.

Then the disciples are addressed, and the Lord accordingly rises in the character of His appeal. The other was a warning for men, but for the disciples there was a new path opening. “And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat and the body is more than raiment.” That is, be not anxious for your life, what ye shall eat, or what put on. This was a great advance in the instruction given to souls—a guard against anxiety, which depends on faith in God. The Lord gives them an instance from the birds around them. “Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them.” God's care condescended to watch over even an unclean bird like a raven. “How much more are ye better than the fowls?”

But we have more than this: the utter powerlessness of man, in what most nearly concerns him, is brought out with matchless beauty and truth. “Which of you, with taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?” What concerns the body is least. “Why take ye thought for the rest?” Then we are given a still more graphic instance from the flowers of the field. “Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not.” God's care of the vegetable, no less than the animal, world affords striking and familiar proofs which cannot be gainsaid. “They toil not, they spin not.” The ravens might seem to do somewhat; but as to the lilies, what can they do? “They toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” This was not said as to the ravens. “If God then so clothe the grass, which is to-day in the field, and to-morrow is cast into the oven” —the meanest thing as it were that He has made in the vegetable kingdom, that which is both common and transient—“how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?” The one, therefore, the ravens, rebuked their care for their food, and the lilies their care for their clothing. “If then God so clothe the grass how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?” Hence they were to beware of resembling the nations of the world, which know not God. “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.” They were without God. “And your Father [not only God, but your Father] knoweth that ye have need of these things.” He advances now until He puts the disciples into the enjoyment of their own relationship with a Father who cared perfectly for them, and could fail in nothing towards them. The God who watched over the ravens and the lilies—their Father—would surely care for them. He knows that we have need of these things, and would be trusted by us.

Notes on Luke, Luke 12:1-12, Notes on

We have seen the favored nation set aside, and judgment awaiting “this generation,” not glory, and the woes upon those classes among them that stood highest in public estimation, who indeed were now the manifest adversaries of the Messiah. Our chapter opens with the Lord's warning to the multitude who were crowding around Him, to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy.

Accordingly we find the Lord showing that a new testimony was to be formed, not governed by law, but by the light of God. “For there is nothing covered which shall not be revealed, neither hid that shall not be known.” And this testimony, as it was in the light, so also it was to be spread abroad. There was to be nothing hidden, nothing kept silent now. With this entirely falls in the teaching of the Apostle Paul—that now, on the rejection of Israel, God has brought to light the “mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.” The same thing is true morally. The heart is laid bare, nature is judged, all now is brought into the light of God. “Therefore, whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.”

This is of all-importance, and extremely solemn. Even now God is forming souls in the light as that which puts them to the test. His own moral nature that detects everything inconsistent with itself. This shows us what a wonderful character Christianity has morally as well as doctrinally. Under the law it was not so; there were many things allowed because of the hardness of their hearts. The veil was not yet rent. God had not brought out His own absolute nature made relative in Christ to judge man by. There was no proper revelation of God Himself under the law, though many revelations from Him. There were commands, there were promises, there were prophecies when things failed; but Jesus is the manifestation of God. Even as He is the only begotten Son, He is the true light that; now shines; and such also is the

atmosphere which the Christian breathes. We walk in the light even as God is in the light. This was altogether new doctrine, especially for the Pharisees to hear. They were characterized by a fair appearance before men, which was hypocrisy in the sight of God. The multitude were warned that an end was coming to all this. Not only will the day of judgment make it manifest, but faith anticipates that day. And now faith is come. Christianity is not of law but of faith; and Christianity alone, both as a question of light and of love, goes forth energetically. Everywhere is the gospel to be preached, to every creature. Christ's word is to be proclaimed to all nations. The law was given to Israel.

But there is another consideration also, that now it is not the intervention of present earthly judgments, but the fear of God whose eternal judgment is revealed for those who despise His word. “I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.” The law displayed earthly dealings: now wrath is revealed from heaven, and this wrath has eternal consequences. It is not merely the setting aside of man's wrath, nor the instructive lesson of all in a chosen nation on the earth; but the certainty that body and soul must be cast into hell. This will be proved true presently for those who are found alive in opposition to God and rejection of His final testimony; and it will be true also at the close of the kingdom for those who had died in their sins since the world began. Then God will show how truly He is the One to be feared; for the hypocrisy of the Pharisees had its root in the fear of man. They did not fear God. They would stand well with men, especially in the way of religious reputation: is this the true fear of God “Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.” By redemption we are brought to God. Christianity essentially supposes the putting the soul in the presence of the unseen and eternal. “I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.”

But then the Lord brings in motives of comfort, as these were of warning. The present light of God and the future judgment of God were solemn considerations for any soul of man; but now comes in the comfort of His present care and future reward. “Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?” What infinite care of God that can descend to the least thing, that man despises most! How much more then His care for those that are His witnesses! For now, on the setting aside of the Jewish nation, a fresh body of men to testify for Christ was to be formed, the very hairs of whose head would be numbered. There is nothing that more strengthens one that is bearing witness for the truth than the consciousness of God's love, and than the least one or thing that pertains to him is of interest to God. “But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows.”

No present consciousness, however, of goodness, would be sufficient to maintain a soul now as in presence of evil. And God does not set aside the evil, but gives spiritual power to endure; He sends a testimony that utterly condemns the evil, and vouchsafes power to bear. Power is now in suffering for righteousness' or Christ's sake, not in reforming the world; it does not consist in judgment of the world's evil. God alone is competent for this, and He will set aside and judge finally instead of reforming. But, besides all that, the soul needs the comfort of the time when it shall be completely taken out of the power of evil; and the future prospect is bright before us. “Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God; but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.” Both faithfulness and unfaithfulness bear their consequences in the day of glory. “And whosoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.” This had been proved. Who spoke more against Him than Saul of Tarsus? Who was a more blessed proof and witness of forgiveness than he was? So it will be even with the nation. If “this generation” must suffer, are suffering them now, and are yet to suffer them, still the nation will be forgiven in the end. “But unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost it shall not be forgiven.” Such is the fate of “this generation.” They would reject not only Christ Himself, but the further testimony which, we have seen, it is the object of the Spirit of God to bring before us in this chapter. Now we have a most important element of this new thing. Not only was there light and truthfulness, not only the energy that went out in proclamation and the preservative care of God now, with future reward by and by; but, besides all, there is the power of the Holy Ghost. This makes it unspeakably grave. “Unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.” What an issue! On the other hand, to the believer what a gracious support! What earnestness also and exercise of love in giving their message must there be in realizing that, in a certain sense, it is worse to reject the testimony now that the Holy Ghost is given than when even the Lord Himself was here below! For the Holy Ghost bears witness not only of Christ, but of His accomplished redemption and His cross. Then he that rejects the fullest mercy of God, when He has completely put away sin by the sacrifice of His Son, shows himself utterly insensible both to his sin and to God's grace as well as to the glory of Christ. All this the Holy Ghost now brings out without a cloud. Hence to blaspheme Him is irretrievable. “Unto him that blasphemeth against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven.”

But the Holy Ghost does not merely act in thus putting so solemn a seal on the testimony; He is also a positive power for him that is engaged in the testimony. “And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.” For when the Spirit should be given, there would be no setting aside the evil in the world: this as we know goes on worse and worse. Accordingly, when they should be brought before the powers of the world, “Take ye no thought,” the Lord says unto them, “how or what thing ye shall answer or what ye shall say.” The spirit of absolute dependence upon God is shown us here. “The Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say.” This completes the first part of the chapter and shows us the power of the testimony, and thus the danger of those that reject it, and the encouragement of those that are rendering it.

Bible Treasury: Volume N6, Gathering or Scattering

“HE that is not with me is against me and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.” It is always an important question for the servant of Christ to put to himself, if not next to others, Am I doing the will of my Master? The first manifestation of the divine life in the heart of Saul of Tarsus, was to put him in the place of obedience through faith in Christ, and to subject the once stern self-righteous Pharisee to the will of another. Hitherto his own thoughts had been a sufficient guide to him for persecuting the disciples of the Lord Jesus. He verily thought that he was doing God service; as Naaman had been governed by his own thoughts in regard to his desired cleansing from his leprosy (2 Kings 5:11). Now it was, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” And the answer, “It shall be told thee,” left no room for the exercise of his own will in service to his new Master.

As neutrality is impossible in the things of God, so independence cannot be allowed in the servant of Christ. It necessarily follows that a spiritual discernment of the Lord's mind is of the last importance. To have an understanding of the divine objects brings increased

responsibility to the one who knows and a heavier judgment if disobedient; while a faithful exercise of the gift bestowed brings increased blessing. “To him that hath shall more be given.” If we could divest ourselves of conventionalism and of the natural and traditional thoughts of men about God and Christianity, or what men call religion, we should find it far easier to understand the teaching of the Lord Jesus in the Gospel of Luke than we do. It is God Himself visiting His people in grace, and Christ the minister of grace to us in the spirit of lowliness and constant dependence upon God, which so well becomes a true man of God. A multitude of the heavenly host are presented to us, giving expression to their unbounded delight in the hearing of the shepherds (chap. 2:8-14), as the world can find no room for the First-born Son of God and Son of Man; while Imperialism only takes official record of the child's birth as of any other. The world's ignorance of, and complete indifference to, the purposes of God are thus fully manifested. Thus it is made clear that man is guilty, lost, and dead, yet all the while religious; and this last condition prevents him from profiting by grace, as Luke 15 demonstrates. The Lord Jesus, God's faithful Messenger of grace, finds difficulties accumulate in His pathway, so casting Him upon God in prayer, as in the beginning of this chapter. For man's religious position cannot be acknowledged; it is a false one for a sinner till born of God.

Even the disciples themselves confess their ignorance as to the right and suitable way of approach to God, and the Lord graciously instructs them; for they at least by grace believed and were upright (vers. 1-14). But this is not all: we may not stop at the supply of our own need; we are encouraged to go to God about others. The prayer “Give us” has been answered, one's personal need has been satisfied, but the circumstances of “a friend of mine in his journey” together with my own poverty and incapacity to help him, are pressing heavily upon my spirit, inducing earnestness, importunity, continuing instant in prayer, and the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man is answered. There may be apparent indifference, as Elijah experienced on Mount Carmel (“Go again seven times”); but it is only apparent. Human friendship may indeed break down when too much strain is put upon it. God is honored when thus counted upon, although indeed in infinite wisdom far beyond that of any earthly parent (vers. 9-13). But in truth a dumb spirit has taken possession of the heart of man: he has no voice for God either for prayer or praise (ver.14). God was in Christ in power for man's deliverance from bondage to the “strong man armed,” as well as in a fullness of grace which could bless abundantly. But pride and hatred closed up every avenue to the heart of man that he might not receive the love which Christ brought, and sealed his lips against the confession of need or praise for good received. It was here that the religious man showed how fully he was under the power of Satan by openly blaspheming the Holy Ghost, for, then as now, manifestly the Spirit was the only power which could make the grace of God effectual for man's blessing.

The Lord Jesus in His ministry used every argument calculated to impress sinners with a sense of the reality of that grace of which He was the fullness and channel; and to move them by faith to profit by it, telling them that “they ought always to pray and not to faint.” There was the fullest encouragement to do so; but man was disinclined for this, and would rather take the place of a worshipper, however false, thanking God for something as to his condition which was really a denial of the truth (“God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men”). Such being the case, Christ's real work was gathering saints and not dispensing the blessings of grace that man might continue to claim them in his natural condition.

Many have thought and said that if only they had sufficient wealth, and authority, they could make the world a paradise and every creature happy, by dealing with the circumstances which are the fruit of sin. But this would leave God's nature, His holiness, His righteousness, and His love, unknown, the conscience untouched and unpurged, and would not truly draw the sinner to God. Had the fullness of the Father's house only been intellectually conveyed to the prodigal in the far country, he would never have thought of returning. Of course man has lost much, everything in fact; but God has concerned Himself about His own loss of the world, and especially of man in it. Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; and He will, with the necessarily awful but revealed exception of the lake of fire, eventually re-establish God's authority and judgment of evil, “that God may be all in all.”

What He is doing in the meantime is calling and receiving sinners and by His Spirit gathering to His name. This is far better than effecting an outward reformation, yet leaving the sinner in his old place of distance in the far country. The Lord Jesus was “minister of circumcision,” sent unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel, that they might be gathered; as it had been the object of prophetic testimony in the O. T. dispensation. The presentation of Christ to the people and His utter rejection proved that unbelieving Israel would not be gathered (“How often would I have gathered thy children together... and ye would not” (Matt. 23:37)! The failure of Messiah's mission God foreknew; and it is fully acknowledged from Isa. 49:4, and onward. But Jehovah's answer discloses those counsels and purposes which are having their full accomplishment in the calling out from Jews and Gentiles into the church in this acceptable time; only for this, the heavenly glory of Christ is necessary. “Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of Jehovah.” This remarkable prophecy shows us the exact order of events as recorded in the N.T. i.e. the temporary failure of Christ's mission to Israel; a suffering and rejected Messiah, received and glorified in heaven, made to be God's salvation unto the ends of the earth. Here then is the divine center for all. “I, if I be lifted up (rejected) from the earth, will draw all unto Me” (John 12:32).

We see this gathering to Christ Himself in many places in the four Gospels, but especially in the Gospel of John where the necessary presentation of Christ to the earthly people is shown to be a failure from the first. “He came unto His own things and His own people received Him not.” But from the time that Christ took His seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high, the Holy Spirit was given to effectuate this. There is nothing else in the mind of God as to blessing for man, but this gathering to Christ. If He were not God, it would derogate from God; yet is He man also there, as here, in wondrous grace and truth. He alone is God's center of unity, Head to the church over all things. The Holy Spirit sent by the Father and the Son is now occupying Himself upon earth, not only for the gospel, but to accomplish the Father's purpose for the glory of the Son; viz., “that for the dispensation of the fullness of the seasons He might gather together in one all things in the Christ” (Eph. 1:10). At His coming it will be in displayed glory before all creation; now it is only He exalted above as “head over all things to the church,” and here known only to faith.

In a day of religious activity, when many schemes are afloat for the promotion of revivals and the awakening of religious enthusiasm, this divine purpose may be easily lost sight of, and Christian workers may become quite satisfied with creature blessing, for spiritual and social reformation, On the other hand where the truth is known and professed and its importance recognized, there may be a sad and inexcusable deficiency of love to Christ and to those that are His, as well as of evangelistic zeal, so that the privilege attaching to the servant of gathering with Christ is grievously if not idly surrendered. True knowledge of revealed truth may degenerate into doctrinal pride and self-complacency nauseous to Christ (Rev. 3:16), while zeal without knowledge will make the sinner's blessing the end and object of our service instead of Christ's glory. No company of Christians, however gifted and intelligent, could rightly say “He that gathereth not with us scattereth” —which was John's thought in Luke 9:49, 50. But this word of the Lord Jesus challenges every one of His servants to-day, “He that gathereth not with

Me scattereth.”

Bible Treasury: Volume N1, Blasphemy of God's Power in Christ

Luke 11:14-26

The casting out of unclean spirits or demons has a great place in the synoptic Gospels, and most justly. It fell to the fourth Gospel rather to set out the positiveness of life eternal in Christ and of the Holy Spirit to be sent in His name on His departure. In the Gospel of Mark it is the first miracle recorded, and it often reappears and with no little detail. Our Gospel begins His ministry characteristically with His words of grace to man, and if His own would not hear, to the Gentile; for grace is sovereign. But the special power of Satan over man (never so manifest as when Jesus was here) immediately follows, as we may readily see the prominent place it has also in Matthew's Gospel.

But Christ's power in expelling demons drew out man's hatred and blasphemy. “Through Beelzebub, the prince of the demons, he casteth out demons,” said some; as others tempting sought from Him a sign out of heaven. The folly and wickedness of such an imputation the Lord proved at once. Not only would Satan be at war with himself, but their own sons who cast out demons reproved them. Yet in their case it was rare, in His constant and unfailing, the witness that, if the display of God's kingdom in power and glory is not yet, that kingdom had come upon them in His person. Alas! the old sentence was renewed only more stringently: their heart grown fat, their ears heavy, their eyes closed as asleep, lest they should be converted, and healed of God.

Thereon the Lord states first the case of God's gracious power in Him, next the consequence of unbelief in them.

“When the strong one in arms keepeth his own court, his goods are in peace; but when the stronger than he cometh upon and conquereth him, he taketh away his panoply on which he relied and divideth his spoils” (vers. 21,22).

This the Lord was then doing before all eyes in the land. The acceptable year of Jehovah was manifest, not yet to all the world, but in Him Who in the wilderness had vanquished Satan in simple obedience and by the written word. This is the moral power of the Spirit in man; and the Lord was the blessed witness of it in perfection. This was followed by the powers of the age to come, manifestations then of that energy which will wholly deliver the coming age from the enemy. Long had the strong exercised his baneful, blasting influence, long were his goods in peace. Now the stronger than he was come and had conquered him. His power was broken before the Seed of the woman; he could no longer retain his possessions. Demons, were they a legion, were cast out. Blind saw, lame walked, lepers were cleansed, deaf heard, dumb spoke, and dead were raised.

It is true that the devil was not yet crushed, and had departed from Him but for a season. He had sought in vain to draw Him out of the path of obedience; he would return to kill Him in it. But this would only turn to a greater victory for God and man, not merely over “his goods” in the present, but in the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the whole world. The question of guilt and evil in the face of judgment and eternity would then be solved as it now is in the precious blood and death and resurrection of Him Who sits at God's right hand in glory.

Still the victory already gained was great, and the ground of confidence for all that would follow in its time, and the wondrous way of God in the cross. If, as Luke says, some from among the crowd, blasphemed; if, as Matthew says, the Pharisees did, and, as Mark says, the scribes, all together show that the Jews did high and low, religious and learned emphatically, to their common and utter ruin. But the Lord points out the crisis for faith. When the worst unbelief works, it is just the moment for bold openness of faith. “He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth” (ver. 23). With this standard the believer too wins the victory. The middle way here is a delusion. Christ alone is worthy of all trust. Neutrality here is fatal. To be with Him is imperative; to gather save with Him is scattering, however fair man's promise or the appearance for the moment.

How is it with you, my reader? “I am (said He) the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.” “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath life eternal.” Dread then above all things not to be with Him. If you are not with Him, you are against Him. Any or every other companion fails to be a security: Christ alone is so.

And He is the True God and eternal life, so gathering with Him alone stands, and is acceptable to God. All that embraces or seeks the world bears on itself the brand of the enemy, and is in no way of the Father. Nay more, there is no gathering of saints that pleases God, unless Christ be the test and the center. And the claim of infallibility for any man but Him Who is God is most daring sin against God, and a most manifest antichrist, denying the Father and the Son, however secure such think themselves.

What then is the consequence? “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he goeth through dry places seeking rest; and finding none he saith, I will return to my house whence I came out. And having come he findeth it swept and adorned. Then he goeth his way and taketh seven other spirits worse than himself; and entering in they dwell there; and the last of that man [is] worse than the first” (vers. 24-26).

It is the falling away, the apostasy followed by the man of sin. The unclean spirit of idolatry among the Jews was the precursor and moral cause of the captivity in Babylon. Since then the Jews have been generally free of that evil, conspicuously so after the Maccabees prevailed. But they no less peremptorily rejected Jesus the Messiah. They were against Him, and, instead of gathering, scattered and were scattered as never before nor so long. And they are still “empty,” as Matthew says, empty of the power of God. What avails then to be swept and adorned? The old unclean idolatrous spirit will surely return, with the sevenfold power of the enemy; and how awful the end for the many! A remnant who will then be with Jesus will be graciously owned as His own, and they with Him will be the center for the gathered peoples of the earth.

In Luke the Holy Spirit does not confine its bearing to “that generation,” but widens it to “man.” And the end of the individuals and the nations of Christendom will be no better. For God is not mocked. They have not continued in God's goodness and must also be cut off. They are largely idolatrous already, and this will grow to greater ungodliness, to the apostasy and the man of sin for them as for the unbelieving Jews.

Oh! then receive Christ, and the love of the truth that you may be saved, while the door stands open and God calls you to believe in His Son.

Luke 11:5-13

THE Holy Spirit at this point in the Gospel of Luke brings together, as is His manner frequently, two things which may have been by no means near historically, to illustrate a great moral truth. The value of the divine word, and of prayer. The one closes chap. 10., the other opens chap. 11.

Of His own will God the Father begot us with the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of His creatures (James 1:18). So Peter in his First Epistle (chap. 1:22) speaks of our having purified our souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit, being born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible, by the word of God which liveth and abideth forever. “And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.” Wherefore as newborn babes, we are exhorted, laying aside evil of word, deed, and spirit, to desire the sincere milk of the word that we may grow thereby unto salvation, the salvation ready to be revealed at Christ's appearing. The same word of God that quickened us who believe, nourishes, strengthens, and guards our souls. Paul teaches the same truth.

Faith is by hearing and hearing by the word of God (Rom. 10:17). “In Christ Jesus I have begotten you by the gospel” (1 Cor. 1), not by baptism, for he had baptized very few, but by the gospel which they received of him and he preached to them. It was the word which corrected their faults and restored their souls, as we see in 2 Corinthians For Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, to a sure and glorious end. Nor is John a whit less explicit; for he shows us the disciples already clean because of the word Christ had spoken to them (chap. xv.). They are sanctified through the truth, which the word is (chap. 17.).

But when we have received the word as Mary did in the love of it, and at the feet of Jesus, we none the less but the more need prayer to walk worthily of God, Who called us to His kingdom and glory. And so we find the Lord, as He is seen continually in prayer, teaching His disciples to pray. For the life we receive in Him, as it is of God, so lives in dependence on Him habitually and in obedience of His will made known in His word. Man, as our Lord cited to the tempter, shall not live by bread alone but by every word of God. My meat, said He to the disciples, is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work; and again, As the living Father sent Me and I live (not merely “by” but) on account of the Father; so he that eateth Me, as every true Christian does, even he shall live on account of Me. Christ thus becomes the believer's object and motive. None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live to the Lord; and whether we die, we die to the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord's (Rom. 14). And He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live to themselves, but to Him Who died for them and rose again (2 Cor. 5).

Hence the great apostle lays down that every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God, and prayer (1 Tim. 4:4, 5). The word here used goes, no doubt, beyond the ordinary word for prayer and implies that intercourse which is now open to us with God by redemption, and encourages us in all intercession because of the access we have into the grace wherein we stand. But it is thoroughly prayer to God in a way that is as full as it is free which His love sanctions, now that His righteousness is manifested, the word expressing what comes from Him, as prayer what goes up to Him, in the life of faith.

On the details of the prayer here given, and yet more fully in the Gospel of Matthew, we need say little beyond noticing the efforts of unbelief to assimilate them. Each is perfect for the purpose of God where they are given, the shorter one for Gentile instruction no less than the longer for believers of the circumcision. The petition for the earth is here omitted, as also about that power of evil which the Jew must know peculiarly to mark the time which precedes their deliverance and blessing at the end.

But what a stimulus the Lord here adds! “And he said to them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go to him at midnight, and say to him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot rise and give thee. I say to you, though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth” (verses 5-8).

Truly the Savior needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man. As really man as Adam, He was always and perfectly above all the taint of fallen humanity, “the born holy Thing.” Not only He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth, but in Him, it could be and is said absolutely, is no sin. And He knew what is in God, for God He was and is forever. He was thoroughly aware of man's reluctance to draw near to God, and his indisposition to expect good from God. Man is not a giver himself, least of all does he feel that God gives continually and abundantly in the natural sphere of man's wants. But that God should give His best, the Son of His love, to deliver him from evil and from judgment, to blot out his sins, to give him life eternal, so exceeds all that is in his own heart and all that his conscience justly needs, that he cannot, will not, believe it, even though God has sent the most complete and solemn testimony in the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ His Son. He is averse to the glad tidings, because it makes nothing of man, everything of God's own goodness in Christ. If it were only a rite or an institution of mysterious efficacy by man and for man, this he could understand; something done for him if not by himself by another, this he could trust, especially if many others accepted the same way. But to own himself only evil, God alone good, most and best of all in giving His Only-begotten that he might live and have Him as propitiation for his sins, this indeed is God's love beyond creature thought, yet the very love we are called to believe in the gospel.

In early days a great persecutor had it revealed to and in him, as he was given to see the glorified Lord and to hear the words of His mouth. What was the immediate effect? “Behold, he prayeth.” And so it ever is. Faith in Him leads into new relationships and creates new wants; while the old man is still there, though judicially condemned in the cross and calling for vigilant self-judgment in the practice of every hour here below. But the believer not only was justified by faith and has peace through our Lord Jesus Christ; through Him he possesses access by faith into this grace wherein we stand. No doubt he is called to praise and give thanks continually, but to pray in his weakness and exposure to a world of evil and a sleepless subtle foe. As prayer is due to our God and Father, so is it most necessary for His children. And the Lord illustrates it even from man, evil as he is, and though appealing at midnight, when difficulties were greatest. Yet then, where the want was urgent, and without any resource to meet it, a mere man does not fail to rise and give, not for friendship alas! but because of importunity.

How much more should the believer count on God! “Ask and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened. For every one that asketh receiveth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” God giveth to all life and breath and all things; it is His nature.

Relationship only adds to this. “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if [he ask] a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he give him a scorpion?” An enemy might, but God is the truest of friends, a Father as none else approaches. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall the Father who [is] of heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him” (vers. 11-13)?

The Lord has in view His own in their new wants and awaiting their special privilege. The Spirit, though ever working in the family of faith, was to be given, as the Son was already; the Son for sinners, the Spirit to saints. The disciples were awaiting the promise of the Father and received the Spirit at Pentecost, when Peter laid down the terms, “Repent, and be baptized each of you on the name of Jesus Christ for remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38). No wonder that they continued steadfastly, as in other holy functions, so “in prayers,” fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Notes on Luke, Luke 11:37-54, Notes on

WHAT follows is of a very different character from that which we had before. It is not now the setting aside of Jewish expectations for the word of God, which the Holy Spirit makes efficacious by judging self, and thus the eye is made single and the whole body full of light. There is no substitution here of God's word and spiritual blessing for the Messiah; and all the natural mercies and external glory that Israel looked for then and shall look for by and by. Now it is the moral judgment of Israel in their present state; and for this occasion was given, by a certain Pharisee asking the Lord to dine with him. He goes at once. He in no way chooses what was pleasing to Himself. As He entered into the house of a publican, and refused none of the company there, so also He declines not to seat Himself at table with a Pharisee. When He went into the tax-gatherer's house, the wonder was how He could eat with sinners; the wonder with the Pharisee now is, “that he had not first washed before dinner.” Such was their religion. Yet the truth, on the face of things, is that washing is for those that are unclean: He that was pure and holy did not need it. The Pharisee therefore condemns himself doubly. There is a vague sense that he needed cleansing. He shows also his blindness to the personal glory of the Lord Jesus, the only One that needed nothing from without—the Holy One of Israel, the Holy One of God.

The Lord takes this accordingly as the ground of appeal. He “said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.” Their religion, all protest to the contrary notwithstanding, was essentially of the outside; and, far from being clean, they were full of plunder and wickedness, plundering others and wicked themselves. Although they had the highest reputation among the people, the Lord pronounces them fools; and what His word censures now His judgment will act on by and by. The judgment of God is always according to the word of God. What is condemned by the word of God now will certainly be condemned by the Lord Jesus when He takes the judicial throne. But it was the same God that made both the outside and the inside. “Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?” They had forgotten Him; they were anxious only for what was seen of men. The Lord looks upon the heart. They did not think of this. Unbelief is always blind, and fixes, if there be a difference, on things the least important. The reason is manifest: it seeks the praise of men and not that of God. The Lord Jesus however bids them “rather give alms of such things as ye have: and, behold, all things are clean unto you.” He knew well that a Pharisee would do nothing less than this—that intense selfishness characterized the whole party. They were faithless and covetous. Him whom God gave they despised; what they had they kept for themselves. All things therefore were unclean to them.

But there is much more than this. The Lord pronounces successive woes upon them for their zeal about trifles, their love of religious distinction, and their hypocrisy. “Woe unto you, Pharisees! for [beginning with that which was seemingly the least evil] ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.” It was really the same root of self, fallen human nature under a religious veil. Why did they thus seek to be distinguished from others? Others gave tithes honestly due to God; the Pharisees laid hold of the most minute points which did not cost much and gave themselves credit in the eyes of men not wiser than themselves, but they slighted judgment and the love of God. Righteousness is a due sense of our relationship to God and man; of it they had no adequate measure whatever before them. The love of God was the last thing that came before or from their hearts. “These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.” Let them value their infinitesimals, if they would, but let them not neglect the greatest duties.

But it was not merely this God-dishonoring pettiness. “Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.” Now we come not so much to personal conduct and pretension to the strictest conscientiousness, but to their love of public reputation for sanctity and of honor in the religious world.

Another ground detected was lower still. “Woe unto you, scribes, and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.” Now they are put with the scribes—people learned in the law, who had the character of being the most punctilious in their conduct: both are alike treated as hypocrites—as sepulchers which appear not. Unremoved death, all uncleanness and corruption, was under these fair-seeming religionists.

One of the lawyers was offended “and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also.” Then the Lord answers them, “Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers.” They were notorious for their contempt of the very people from whom they derived their importance. It is an easy thing to lay burdens upon others; it is hard to bear them. Christianity is the exact opposite of this. Christ comes down first of all and takes the sorest of all burdens, the judgment of our sin and guilt, our condemnation from God; then He leaves us, under the gospel, without that burden. It is true that, till He comes again, we are groaning in the body, waiting not uncertainly but in confidence for Christ to change us even into the likeness of His glorious body. Hence it is that the practical exorcise of Christianity is in liberty and joy. No doubt grace brings with it the highest obligations, but they are those of men who are free and who use their liberty for the One whom they love. It was not so with these doctors of the law. They laid burdens upon men that were grievous to be borne, but they themselves did not touch the burdens with one of their fingers. It is only grace that enables one to manifest what the law required. The doctors of the law were precisely those who showed the least conscience. They thundered the law at others; they did not subject themselves to any of its precepts, except where it suited them. It is grace which purifies the

conscience by faith and strengthens it in the will of God.

But if they did not touch any of the burdens that they laid on others, they built the sepulchers of the prophets. This sounded well and holy. What could be more laudable than that they should honor the ancient sufferers and prophets by building their sepulchers? It was really the spirit of the world. First of all they proved that they were the successors of those that killed them, not the successors of the martyrs but of their murderers. Although it seemed the opposite of what their fathers had done, it was the same love of the world which then slew the martyrs in that day, and now led men to build their sepulchers in order to make religious capital out of this pious honor. They would fain have the halo that surrounded those men of God thereby to shine upon themselves. It was the love of the world that made the fathers slay them; and the love of the world it was that led their sons to build these sepulchers over them. There was of course nothing of Christ in those that persecuted the martyrs. Was there a whit more in these men bent on empty self-glorification under cover of the righteous victims of old? Therefore, says the Lord, “Ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchers.” And to prove that they were the lineal successors of the murderers of the old martyrs, the Lord adds, “Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute.” It is expressly put as the wisdom of God, because it is not what would appear to man. The builders of the sepulchers of the sufferers might seem to be the farthest removed from the persecuting violence of the fathers; but not so. The contrary would soon appear. God would test them soon by sending prophets and apostles, some of whom they would slay, and some they would persecute, getting rid of them all in one way or another, “That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation.” This is a searching and solemn principle. Man fails from the first, and God pronounces on it. But it is always the last who is the most guilty, because the cases of former slaying of the prophets ought to have aroused their consciences. Their building of sepulchers for the saints whom their fathers slew proved that they knew how wrong it was. But the heart was unchanged; and hence a similar testimony produced no less results, but more evil. God's testimony at the present day arouses quite as much hatred as His warnings of old. Hence, little as the Jews thought it (for they had been long without prophets), now that the truth was sent out in power, the same murderous spirit would be manifested, and God would hold the people guilty of all the blood that had been shed from the foundation of the world. Instead of using the example of their fathers to deter them, they followed their guilty footsteps. They were more guilty, because they despised so solemn a warning.

So it will be in the latter day. There will be a violent outbreak against the witnesses of Jesus whose blood will be shed like water—a persecution all the more guilty, because men will have known it before hand, they will have owned the guilt of those who did it, and yet they will fall into the same rut themselves. Alas! unbelief is most of all blind to self.

The Lord pronounces finally one more woe. “Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves and them that were entering in ye hindered.” So they were doing then as others at this present time. Wisdom was there, truth was there, Christ was there: all that the doctors of the law did was to hinder people from profiting by it, in order to maintain their own importance. “And as he said these things unto them, the scribes and the Pharisees began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things.” They wanted Him to commit Himself—that the Lord might utter something for which they could drag Him to their tribunal, “laying wait for him and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him.” Their hearts were filled not only with plunder, but with wickedness that would take the shape of violence against the truth and those who bore it, just like their fathers. The first Adam is never changed for the better: he is only evil continually: the more good is shown him, the more evil he proves himself to be.

Notes on Luke, Luke 11:27-36, Notes on

The power that delivers a man's body, in this respect breaking the thralldom of Satan, however true, is eclipsed by that which is still more precious. Nevertheless men could not but feel the homage that was due to power, and this so beneficent. “And it came to pass as he spice these things, a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him, Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.” This gave the Lord occasion to show what was far better. “But he said, Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.” Without denying the value of divine power in such a world as this, yet, said our Lord, “rather blessed are they that bear the word of God and keep it.” The goodness of God shown in nature, for which (though not alone) the Jews were called to wait, would give place to a superior order of blessing. The very badness of the world's state and of men upon it is the occasion for God to bring in what never passes away, and is destined to endure when the world is gone. There is nothing here below that introduces the eternal like the word of God. Power, even were it as great as that which Jesus wielded over man or the enemy, is but for a time in its effects; but “he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.” And “he that believeth hath everlasting life.” “Rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.” The word of God is the link between man on earth and God above; it is the seed of the incorruptible life, “which liveth and abideth forever.”

Accordingly here again man is put to the proof. He had been already tested by power, and he that could impute that which cast out Satan to Satan himself was self-condemned. It would make Satan more foolish than the most foolish man; for it is a universal principle that a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. Can it be thought that Satan deliberately destroys his own kingdom and himself? Is he really suicidal? The Jews then show to what they were fallen when they imputed to Satan the power that cast out demons.

And now what became of the Jews who heard the word of God and did not keep it? Nothing more terrible.

“When the people,” therefore, “were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it but the sign of Jonas the prophet.” Instead of keeping the word of God, they were seeking outward tokens. They wanted something visible to their senses, an object tangible in their midst, not only present but earthly and suited to the world. “But there shall no sign be given it but the sign of Jonas the prophet.” The allusion is to one who prophesied in Israel, but who was sent to the Gentiles—to the Ninevites. “For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation.” He too the rejected Messiah would take the place of Son of man, despised and rejected of men.

But more than this: a queen of the south and men of Nineveh are brought before us in another way to condemn the Jews of that day. “A queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.” This showed her earnestness of purpose to bear the

wisdom of Solomon. The wise and wealthy son of David was not the vessel of the word of God in his ordinary speech as the Lord Jesus was: yet she came without a single miracle to attract her, without a sign to guide or confirm, and heard the wisdom of Solomon: “and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.” Then, again, men of Nineveh themselves, that great city which had been given up to destruction at last—“men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it, for they repented at the preaching of Jonas.” They were willing to own their own evil, their sinfulness, their forgetful ignorance of God, and this at the preaching of Jonas—a prophet comparatively unfaithful, who strove to escape from the mission on which God sent him: “and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.” But where were the men of this generation, and what? Did they repent? No more did they repent than they chewed what was seen in a queen of the south—earnestness of heart in listening to the wise man of her day. Thus there was a double testimony against them; Gentiles, high or low, at one time or another, rose up to condemn the men of Jerusalem.

Then the Lord brings out another truth, namely, that the fault lay not in the want of signs any more than in the display of power (for we have seen the contrary), but in the state of the heart. That is the only reason why man does not rejoice in, or keep, the word of God; it is because his heart is not right with God. No person would prefer darkness to light or pleasure to the word of God unless the heart were wrong. “No man when he hath lighted a candle putteth it in a secret place, neither under the bushel (or corn-measure), but on the lampstand, that they which enter in may see the light.” So it was in the ways of God. There was no defect in His presentation.

The Light was come, and God set it in a due and commanding position, that all who saw it might be profited. Never was there one that held forth the light of God as Jesus did. He never wavered, for He was the holy One, the undefiled, separate from sinners. There was no fault therefore to be found with the medium; Jesus not only chewed perfect light in what He said, but was it in Himself. All was perfection in Him; yet how had men treated it? Alas! there are other conditions necessary. “The lamp of the body is thine eye: therefore, when thine eye is single, thy own body also is light; but when it is evil, thy body also is dark.” Here we reach so far what man is. It is not here as in John, that Christ is the Light; there we see His personal glory.

But Luke always brings in man's state, or moral condition. “The lamp of thy body is the eye.” Light alone outside does not enable a man to see. If the eye, physically, is powerless, the light makes no impression. As in John the light may be ever so true, but according to Luke the eye also enters the account; and by nature it is evil and only so. It is not only Christ as light that is wanted. Eyes to see must be given; its actual state must be considered. “Therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is light.” It is a question here of moral purpose. If there be no object to divide the heart's attention; if Christ fills the field of vision, the whole body is light. “But when thine eye is evil, thy body also is dark.” And is there not evil in looking to other objects from Christ, in turning away from the only One that is worthy? “When thine eye is evil, thy body also is dark. Take heed therefore that the light that is in thee be not darkness.” What darkness is comparable to it? This is moral darkness, and fatal to the soul which can see nothing in Christ, or if it seem to see, it is evidently indifferent to Christ, indifferent not to one's own soul alone, but to the eternal truth of God. The eye is evil, the body therefore is dark indeed.

“Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.” Such is the end of a carelessness and unfaithfulness to truth. This was becoming the confirmed history of Israel. They bad, as compared with the Gentiles, possessed divine light; but “Take heed that the light which is in thee be not darkness.” It was to the last degree becoming their fixed state. They were first indifferent to Christ; finally, they would reject Him to the uttermost—then it would be the darkness of death. “If thy whole body therefore is light, not having any part dark, the whole shall be light, as when the lamp lighteth thee with its brightness.” Thus when one has light for oneself, it becomes the means of light for others. In divine things you cannot separate power from testimony to the glory of God for others.

Notes on Luke, Luke 11:14-26, Notes on

There is great care in this gospel to show the connection of Satan with men; just as we have seen the privilege of the believer in the possession of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God is the power of communion for the new man, for those that are born of God. So Satan is pleased to fill with the power of the demon the old nature of man, in certain cases where God permits him; and the Lord shows the link between the demon and the sickness, weakness, or other malady of body or mind, as we find here of the dumb man: “And he was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And it came to pass, when the devil was gone out, the dumb spake; and the people wondered.” It is evident from this that what produced the lack of speech was not physical infirmity, but the demon that dwelt in the man. Directly the demon left, he that had been dumb spake. What the Lord was occupied with here below was in giving a specimen of that which will characterize the world to come. The powers that He exercised, as others afterward in virtue of His name, were “the powers of the world [or age] to come,” as they are called in Hebrews. The millennial age will thus be the full display of the defeat of Satan, to the glory of God, and this in and by man. The Lord's curing of bodily diseases, and casting out of demons, was a partial exhibition of what will be public and universal in that day.

“The people wondered” on this occasion; but the spirit of unbelief is stronger than the power of evidences. Hence, “some of them said, He casteth out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils.” We must distinguish between the instruments of Satan's power, and the devil himself. The word “devils” confounds the two things. It would be better to say “demons.” “He casteth out demons through Beelzebub the chief of the demons.” Others did not go quite so far as this; but still, “tempting, they sought of him a sign from heaven.” Satan does not lead all in the same way, but he suits his action to the flesh of each. Some men are violent in their unbelief, while others are more religious. Some “tempting him, sought of him a sign from heaven.” They were not content with what God had given, though there could be no external proof more convincing than the expulsion of Satan's power. Hence this was strongly marked at the starting-point of the Lord's ministry in this gospel as well as Mark's. So it was throughout. The Lord, answering their unbelieving thoughts, says, “Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and a house divided against a house falleth.” It would be suicidal for Satan to undermine his own influence. “If Satan also be divided against himself, how shall his kingdom stand? because ye say that I cast out devils (demons) through Beelzebub.”

But there is more to be noticed. God had before this occasionally given power to Jews to cast out demons. Faith is always honored of God; and on the darkest day the Lord did not fail to keep up as it were the holy fire, that His light should not absolutely go out on the earth. “And if I by Beelzebub cast out demons, by whom do your sons cast them out? therefore shall they be your judges.” No unbelief on their part ever irritated the Lord. Far from this, He could calmly acknowledge what had been of God among them, though this in no way hindered them from denying God Himself present among men. “But if I with the finger of God cast out demons, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you.”

This is an expression of no small importance, “the kingdom of God is come upon you.” In another sense it might be said that the kingdom of God was nigh. Here it is said to be come, because Christ was there. Christ brought, as it were, the kingdom of God in His own person. All others require the kingdom of God to come, for them to be in the kingdom; but Christ, being a divine person, brought that kingdom in Himself, displaying it by His own power, manifestly such by the overthrow of Satan, by casting out demons. And yet man was blind, more guiltily so than the poor soul before us was, who could not through his dumbness speak the praises of God. For here, when God had proved His power, they were as blind as ever, they could not see God in it or rather in Jesus.

When the kingdom of heaven is spoken of, it is never said to be come. It could not be said according to scripture phrase, the kingdom of heaven is come unto you. Thus “the kingdom of heaven” and “the kingdom of God” are not quite identical. They agree so far that what in one gospel is called the kingdom of heaven is called in another gospel the kingdom of God. Matthew alone speaks of “the kingdom of heaven,” as Mark, Luke, and John do of “the kingdom of God.” But what is in Matthew called “kingdom of heaven” is called in the other gospels “kingdom of God,” of which last Matthew himself speaks in a few passages. The difference is this; that the kingdom of heaven always supposes a change of dispensation consequent on the Savior's having taken His place above. He may by and by bring His power below, but He must have come from heaven to bring in the kingdom of heaven. Hence in the future to establish it in power and glory, it is the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven who receives that kingdom and makes it good over all the earth.

The kingdom of heaven never means heaven itself; but rather the rule of the heavens over the earth. When the actual departure on high of the Lord Jesus is spoken of it is always said to be into heaven, and not into the kingdom of heaven. When the Lord then was here below, and manifested His power over Satan, it was the kingdom of God: it could be so called because the king—the power of God—was there. So here in this place He, by the power of God casting out demons, proved that the kingdom of God was come. What better proof could be asked? Man was totally insufficient for such a work; others might have done so in special answer to prayer. God is always superior to the devil, and it was important that He should prove this from time to time in expelling demons by the sons of Israel who possessed the place of relationship to God that no other people had. But in the Lord's case it was not occasional, exceptional, or partial, but uniform and universal: even where the disciples themselves using His name failed to cast them out, He always did it with a word. The kingdom of God therefore was come as a witness of His power, not yet as a state and sphere of manifestation. Both morally and in power the kingdom of God was come in Him who bound the strong man and stripped him of his goods.

And this leads me to another remark. The apostle Paul frequently speaks of the kingdom of God, not as a dispensation, but as a moral display. He says that “the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” He says too that “the kingdom of God is not in word but in power.” You could not say “the kingdom of heaven” in these cases. Thus we see the reason why Luke particularly can speak of the kingdom of God, for he is the evangelist that dwells on the moral side more than any other. Hence too there is a stronger link between his language and that of Paul than any other two writers of the New Testament.

Then the Lord introduces a remarkable figure. “When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armor wherein he trusted and divideth his spoils.” This was going on then. If Satan was the strong man in the figure, Jesus was now stripping him of his goods and dividing his spoils. The whole ministry of Jesus was the evidence of a power superior to Satan in the world. It is true that this did not deliver, because it did not touch the judgment of God. It was present and not eternal deliverance. It was the overthrow of Satan, not the satisfaction of God. Sin could not yet have been abolished, and judgment must still have remained. No grace, nor power, nor ministry can take away sin, nothing but the sacrifice of Himself. That infinitely deeper question was behind, and was settled not in the life of Jesus, but in His atoning death on the cross. Here He merely speaks of the power then present by a living Christ, which did deliver men from the oppression of Satan, as far as this life was concerned in the world; but not for eternity, not before God. This side of the cross, the victorious power of Christ over Satan in this life, for the earth, has been greatly forgotten in Christendom; and the more so because they bring in the living power of Christ to supplement His death for righteousness and atonement. They have made both life and death necessary for settling the question of a guilty soul for eternity. Consequently they have in practice seen little more than this, forgetting the power of Satan on the one hand, and the power of the Spirit on the other, except in a superstitious way, which only brings the truth into disrepute. These antagonistic realities have been lost sight of; and the grand witness is overlooked that the Lord was giving of a future deliverance of man from Satan's power when His kingdom will be, not merely in the Spirit's power, but in manifestation. All this has well nigh dropped out of Christendom. The Jews were feeble about eternal deliverance, but held fast the hope of the kingdom, of blessing in the earth and world by the Messiah, when the power of the serpent would be evidently broken.

Then we find a most solemn principle in verse 23. “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth.” The presence of Christ brought this out, and more particularly when He was being rejected. When Christ was acceptable, there was no moral test; but when public opinion was universally against Him, and it was evident that to follow Christ was to be slighted by the great and wise, then it proved the strongest criterion. So the Lord now says, “He that is not with me is against me.” If I am not with Him, I am against Him. The more He is rejected, the more I must throw in my lot with Him. And this is a test not only for one's person, but also for one's work, as it is added here, “He that gathereth not with me scattereth."The first is more particularly true for the unconverted man, and the second for the converted who is worldly in his work. A man might himself be really with Christ, but yet in his labors he might build or prop up what is of the world. Such a person, no matter what the apparent effects may be, may become the most popular of preachers, and produce wide-spread effects, philanthropic and religions; but “he that gathereth not with me scattereth,” says the Lord. There is no scattering so real in the sight of God as the gathering of Christians on false principles. It is worse than if they were not gathered at all. There is a deeper hindrance to the truth, because there is a spirit of party and denomination that is necessarily hostile to Christ. A false gathering-point substitutes another center for Christ, and consequently makes greater confusion. “He that gathereth not with me scattereth.”

Then we find the picture of the unclean spirit, that is, the spirit of idolatry. It had once possessed the Jewish nation; but here it is applied in the case, not merely of a nation, but of an individual. It acquires a more moral shape than in the Gospel of Matthew, where it is dispensational. “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out.” A person might, through evidence and convictions of one sort or another profess to follow Christ, and be outwardly with Him. But the mere absence of outward evil will never bring a soul to God. God Himself must be known, and Jesus Himself received, not merely the unclean spirit be gone out. A man may leave off evil of a gross kind, he may give up false religion, or, as in this case, idolatry; but all this does not consecrate a man. It is the presence of God in possession of a soul—it is the having a new nature, and not merely the

absence of this or that evil—that determines the matter. The unclean spirit can return to the house unless it is already occupied by the power of God's Spirit, which alone effectually shuts Satan out. “And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished.” No doubt, as compared with heathenism there is the absence of much that is abominable and offensive. Christian truth is owned; and the unclean spirit, therefore, finds the house, when he returns, swept and garnished. This will be true in Christendom, as it may be also in an individual. After a person has through the outward influence of Christ laid aside evil, the power of Satan gathers fresh fuel; and the man falls into worse evil than if he had never professed His name at all. It is not a simple return to what he was, nor merely that the old evil re-asserts its energy, but there is a fresh and complete torrent of evil, a new and worse power of the enemy, that takes possession of the soul; and “the last state of that man is worse than the first.” An apostate is the most hopeless of all evil men. So it will be with the Jew and so with Christendom; it is the same thing with any man at any time in these circumstances. There is nothing for anyone except cleaving to the name of the Lord. Nor is it only a question of glorifying the Lord but of positive necessity for his own soul.

Notes on Luke, Luke 11:5-13, Notes on

The Lord here enforces prayer, and this on considerations drawn (as often in Luke) from the human heart, as showing still more powerfully what God feels in answer to the earnestness of men.

“He said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as be needeth.” The time may seem ever so inopportune, but although a man may not for friendship's sake listen to him who requests the loan of bread, he would rather rise and give than expose himself to trouble. Every one knows that such is apt to be the way of a man with the neighbor who is bold enough to press. He might be ever so much annoyed at the importunate suitor, but still to avoid the trouble of a continued appeal at his door, he yields. At least such is an ordinary case: “Because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.”

If such is the way of selfish ease-loving man, how much more will the God of all grace hearken to those who cry to Him? He is not weary; He never slumbers nor sleeps; He is full of goodness and compassionate care. “I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” —an evident climax, all tending to urgency of supplication before God: not as if God needed it, but man does; and God values the earnestness of man's heart, although His own is open to the cry of want or distress from the very first. But we know that there are hindrances from other causes, and that the Lord has Himself told us of a kind (speaking of evil spirits) that goes not forth but by prayer and fasting. There we have the highest degree of the soul's abstraction from all else, giving itself up to God's power in order to defeat the devil. “For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.” There is always in Luke not only an appeal to the feelings of the heart, and man's own concession of what even he would do in order to illustrate the ways of God, infinitely more admirable and excellent, but there is also a comprehensiveness which goes far beyond the narrow bounds of Israel. “Every one that asketh receiveth.” Thus we have here the call to importunity of prayer, and the certainty of God's answer.

But this is again enforced on the ground of the relationship of a child with a father. “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?” How contrary to the feelings of a parent, to mock when he affects to give! to give what is injurious instead of what is good! Impossible that a father, speaking now ordinarily of any father, would be guilty of such ways. “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” In the Gospel of Matthew it is “Give good things to them that ask him.”

But Luke goes farther, and shows us not, it is true, the person of the Comforter, as in the Gospel of John, but certainly the Holy Spirit as characterizing the gift of the Father's love to those who ask Him. For we must remember that the disciples had not yet the Holy Spirit. They were born of the Spirit, but this is a very different thing from enjoying the gift of the Spirit. To have the Holy Ghost given is over and above conversion or new birth; it is not life, but power; a privilege superadded to the possession of the new nature, and the chief or only means of enjoying God according to all the instincts of that nature, and consequently of entering into His wisdom in the word of God. This is the richest distinctive gift of Christianity on earth, as Christ on high, the Head to whom we are united as His body, is the main heavenly characteristic. Neither of these privileges was true as yet; no one had ever enjoyed them since the beginning of the world. The disciples were told then and encouraged to ask their heavenly Father, who would surely give the Holy Spirit to those who asked Him. The disciples accordingly continued in prayer, as we know from Acts 1; so that even after the Lord died and rose they had not received the Holy Spirit according to this word; they were still expecting. Yet they had received the Spirit as life more abundantly, as the power of His resurrection life; but the gift of the Spirit is something more. It was the indwelling of the Spirit of God, who would also act in various gifts in the members and, above all, in baptizing them into one body. All this was accomplished, but not before Pentecost. They were therefore to ask their heavenly Father, and so they did; and the Holy Spirit of promise was given according to the Savior's word.

There may be cases still, I cannot but think, where it would be right thus to ask our Father. This would be where souls are, like the disciples, converted, but who have not yet submitted to the righteousness of God—who do not yet consciously rest on redemption. In such a state it would be hazardous to say they had received the Holy Ghost while they do not enjoy peace with God. When there is a simple rest by faith on the great work of the Lord Jesus, and not merely faith in His person, then the Holy Ghost is given. Where the blood was put the oil followed, according to the types of Leviticus.

Notes on Luke, Luke 11:1-4, Notes on

But blessed as receiving Jesus by faith may be, and sitting at His feet in the delight of love to hear from Him more and more, prayer must not be forgotten. It has an incalculable value for us here below. It is in this world that we pray. Worship is the outgoing of the heart in heaven. Not

that worship for us now is not true, for it is the greatest privilege into which the Christian is brought while on earth. A Christian thus anticipates the mind and employment of heaven. He will still be a worshipper when glorified; but he is a worshipper here, for the hour “now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him.”

Nevertheless, before the soul can worship in anything that could be said to be the power of the Spirit, prayer is the early and habitual resource day by day; and after Christian worship is entered into, real prayer abides and always must be for our wants and desires here below.

The disciples felt their need of prayer. They were stirred up to it by the fact that John taught his disciples to pray. They were born of God; but for all that, they lacked power for prayer, their souls were feeble in it. “And it came to pass that as he was praying in a certain place.” No one was so prayerful, so dependent on His God and Father as Jesus; nor does any evangelist present this so much as Luke, nor consequently under so many different circumstances. “When he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, [Our] Father [which art in heaven], Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. [Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.] Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation [; but deliver us from evil].” (Ver. 1-4.)

I fully believe that this is the same prayer substantially that we have in Matthew, at the very same time and place. Luke does not adhere to the mere historic sequence of events any more than Matthew. But there is this difference in the way in which Luke and Matthew relate facts or instructions of the Lord: Matthew puts what our Lord says in a certain dispensational order, leaving out the occasions that drew them forth; Luke puts His instructions in their moral order with the facts they illustrate. Thus Luke introduces prayer at this point, after hearing the word of Jesus; because the divine word is what brings the knowledge of Jesus into the soul, as prayer is the outgoing of heart to Him who has given and shown us mercy and revealed it to us in His word. A man must believe before he prays. “How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?” None can believe without the word of God; but when one has received the word of God, if it be only to plow up the conscience and attract the heart, one prays.

Thus the disciples at this time feel their need of prayer and the Lord teaches them how to pray. The Lord did not give them prayers suitable to the new position and circumstances they would be brought into after redemption. If He had descanted in prayer about the church, the body of Christ, or the working of the Spirit by the members of that body, it would have been utterly unintelligible to them. The prayers that we have of Paul afterward could not have suited the condition of the disciples then, because they were not yet in any such standing. The conduct that would suit a married woman with her husband, &c., would be unbecoming in one who was still unmarried. For a woman who is only affianced to be praying about the children she was going to have when she might never have any, or about the household when the wedding-day might never come, would be most evidently out of season. The Lord Jesus perfectly suited what He said to the condition and circumstances of those whom He addressed. The disciples had not received, though quickened of the Holy Ghost, the indwelling Spirit in the way they were going to have Him; consequently they could not pray as on that ground. It is a blunder to suppose that the gift of the Holy Ghost is conversion. When the Lord Jesus went to heaven, He sent down the Holy Ghost. The saints of the Old Testament were converted, but they had not the Holy Ghost as all have who rest on redemption since Pentecost. The disciples wanted to know how to pray, and the Lord gave them a prayer suited to their then circumstances. Only the Spirit of God has given a difference between the form in Matthew and in Luke. One is as divinely inspired as the other; nothing can be more perfect than both are. The Gospels are absolutely perfect, each for its own object, and we need them all. The difference of their design affects the prayer, as it does everything else.

Our Lord then directs the disciples to their Father. This is the first and very significant word of the prayer. When believers in addressing God now use the titles of Jehovah or Almighty God, do they not forget that they are Christians? When God was intelligently addressed as Almighty, it was in the days of Abraham and the patriarchs. They were the days of promise. Afterward, when the nation of Israel was called out and put under law, it was as Jehovah-God that He was known. Now it is as Father that the Christian knows Him. (See 2 Cor. 6) Luke says simply, “Father” (not “Our Father which art in heaven,” as Matthew has it).

The first petition is, “Hallowed be thy name.” The desire is that in every case the heart might make God its object; as we hear in James, “the wisdom that cometh down from above is first pure, then peaceable.” It first judges by God, and seeks the glory of God. “Hallowed be thy name.” Such is and ought to be the prime desire of the renewed mind, that the Father's name should be sanctified in everything. All else must yield to this. “Hallowed be thy name.”

The next petition is that His kingdom should come. It is not the kingdom of the Son of man, the kingdom of Christ, that is spoken of here, but the Father's kingdom. It is not My kingdom come, but “thy kingdom come.” The Father's kingdom is distinguished from the Son of man's kingdom. It is the sphere in which the heavenly saints will shine as the sun. The Son of man's kingdom is the sphere in which all people, nations, and languages shall serve Him, and out of which the angels of His power shall cast all scandals. (Matt. 13) Heaven and earth will be both put under the Lord Jesus when He comes, and both will constitute the kingdom of God. But the Father's kingdom is the upper department, and the Son of man's kingdom is the lower one. (Compare John 3:3, 12.) The Lord teaches them to pray for the Father's kingdom. This is blessed and perfect. The Son would teach the children of the Father to wait with reverence and delight for the Father's glory. This was the animating spring of every thought and feeling of His own heart. But the Father's kingdom is not all the scene of glory.

Hence He adds elsewhere, “Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth.” Though left out of Luke by excellent authority, it is undoubtedly read in the Gospel of Matthew, because the future kingdom will bring in the earth as well as heaven. This confirms the distinction between the Father's kingdom and the Son's. Not merely shall heaven be blessed, but the earth. All is to be made subject in fact as all is put under His feet in title. The will of God is that all should bow to the Son, and that the crucified One should be exalted. The Son loved to exalt and did exalt the Father at all cost; the Father will accomplish His purpose that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Then comes a petition expressive of dependence on God for our ordinary need. “Give us day by day our daily bread.” It takes up the pure and simple need of the body. The word “daily” is a very imperfect expression in English of the original term. really means our “sufficient” bread, (seemingly a word expressly formed for this idea in contrast with superfluity). One cannot without slighting the wisdom of the Lord ask for more than sufficiency. One ought not to look for more even from the Lord of heaven and earth. He bids me ask for bread enough for each day's wants. Yet is it thoroughly the spirit of the One who, after He had fed five thousand men with the five loaves and the two fishes, bade the disciples gather up the fragments which remained that nothing might be lost. And then and thus twelve baskets were in fact filled. How

easy it might have seemed for Him by whom all was supplied to have exerted His power afresh! He would not have one atom to be thrown away because He had unlimited power. What a lesson for us!

Next comes the need of the soul. “Forgive us our sins.” It is not merely “our debts” (as in Matt. 6): a Jew would understand this; but Luke, writing particularly for Gentiles, tells the disciples to say, “Forgive us our sins.” This does not refer to a sinner's forgiveness, when he first comes to the knowledge of the Lord, but to the disciple under the daily government of his Father. How misleading then it is to make an unconverted person take the ground of asking forgiveness like a child of God! Under the gospel the way for the unconverted to receive the remission of sins is by faith in the blood of Jesus, by receiving the gospel itself. The common use of it is to confound all truth by mixing up all, the world and children of God, as if they were alike disciples drawing near and asking forgiveness for their daily sins. The forgiveness of a child is all that is spoken of here, the removal of what hinders communion, not that which the gospel publishes to the most guilty that believe in the Savior and Lord, but the daily pardon which the believer needs. It is therefore the habitual need of the soul, just as the daily bread was that of the body. “For we also forgive every one that is indebted to us.” This is remarkable, because it evidently supposes one who has a forgiving spirit already, and no one is so really except he who is forgiven by the grace of God. And God does hold His children to this. How can a man who does not forgive another pretend to enjoy the forgiveness of his own sins before God? There is a righteous government on our Father's part, and the particular sin which grieves the Lord is not forgiven till we confess it to Him. “If ye do not forgive,” says our Lord in Mark 11, “neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.” It is the cherishing a spirit entirely antagonistic to the Spirit of the Lord. If there were a child in a family going on in a course of self-will, there would be a bar for the time to mutual good feeling. So with God our Father; if there were a persistently bad spirit towards another, so long the Father does not forgive as a question of communion and of daily intercourse with Himself. It ruins the intelligence of scripture to make it all a question of eternity. In the Epistles of the New Testament the remedy or duty in such circumstances takes the form, not so much of asking forgiveness, but of confession, which goes far deeper. To ask for forgiveness is easy enough and quickly done (as you may learn from your child); to confess one's fault in all its gravity is a very humiliating process, and if not with a view to forgiveness and the restoration of communion, it is a mockery of God. To confess, to judge oneself, is therefore far beyond asking forgiveness.

The last clause here should be, “and lead us not into temptation,” The heart, knowing its own weakness, does spread its desire before the Lord; it feels the need of being kept, not of being put to the proof. “Deliver us from evil” is left out in the most ancient copies. The only right and true way of understanding the mind of God and the best homage to scripture is always and only to cleave to that which is undoubtedly of Himself. This is not to take away anything from scripture; it is to lay aside what is not scripture. We have these words quite rightly in Matthew besides: we gain by their omission here instead of losing. The question arises, Why should it be given in Matthew and omitted here? “Deliver us from evil” refers, I believe, to the evil one and the exhibition of his power, which a Jew ought always to have before him, that tremendous hour which will be allowed as a final retribution on the nation, before they are delivered for the reign of Christ. As Luke had the Gentiles in view, this was naturally and wisely left out. Deliverance from this scourge would have been less felt by them, and hardly intelligible; as the earthly millennial portion disappears for a similar reason. What is general and moral abides here.

An Exposition of the Gospel of Luke, Luke 10:1-37

251/1THE mission of the seventy252 is peculiar to Luke. It has in itself a character of grace about it, though really on its rejection the harbinger of imminent judgment to Israel. All things are now made manifest since the transfiguration of the Lord. The former mission preceded that great event and is given elsewhere; but Luke adds the mission of the seventy. His death, His suffering, His rejection have all been fully announced, and accordingly His departure from the world, because of the inability of Israel or even of the disciples to profit by His presence in Israel, and then judgment of all the forms of human nature in hindering the following of Christ or His service. That we have had. Now as concluding the testimony to Israel, this new mission is sent out to announce not only before the revelation of His rejection, but since it, the kingdom of God.

“After these things the Lord appointed seventy2 others also, and sent them two and two253 before his face into every city and place where he himself was about to come.”254 The Lord’s heart felt for the people as He said, “The harvest indeed.255 [is] great, but the workmen few.” Now there are more laborers raised up by far as the pressure of the need was before His soul. “Supplicate therefore the Lord of the harvest.” Nevertheless He was encouraging prayer, because before He tells them to pray He is Himself appointing these seventy to go forth. He was the Lord of the harvest. At the same time He warns them what they were to expect. “Go: behold, I3 send you forth as lambs among wolves.”

He well knew, and they were to know, what man was, even in Israel. Flesh was completely judged. The Jews are no longer regarded as the lost sheep of Israel, but as wolves with themselves to prey on as lambs.

But there is another thing. While they were thus seat forth in a spirit of grace, exposed to the evil of man, they were to go with the full consciousness of His glory. “Carry neither purse [pouch] nor wallet, nor shoes, and salute no one on the way.”256 The danger was imminent, the duty was urgent. There was no need of preparation and resources from without; they were entitled to count on the power of His name providing for them in Israel; for He was the King, let men reject as they might. So, on the other hand, there was no time for salutation. Such courtesy is all very well for the earth and for the present time; but eternity was coming more and more distinctly before the minds of the servants as it was fully before the Lord. “Salute no one on the way.” Deeper interests were at stake, and everything that would occupy their minds with that which might be dispensed with was only a hindrance.

“And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace to this house.” Thus there was the full word of grace sent forth to them. At the same time, so much, the worse for those who rejected it. Nevertheless the peace should turn to them again. It was not war; they had nothing to do with that. “If4 a son of peace257 be there, your peace shall rest upon it: but if not, it shall turn to you again.” Peace rejected was returned to themselves. “And in the same house abide, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the laborer is worthy of his hire.”258 There was to be no covetousness, no self-seeking; but, casting themselves upon their allegiance of heart to the Messiah, they were to take such things as were given. While the Messiah acknowledges the worthiness of the laborer, the laborer is worthy of his hire. Those who were of Him would feel it and own it. They were not to go from house to house. This would be derogatory to His glory because it might be charged with a seeming indulgence of self-seeking. The grand point was the solemn claim of the Lord Jesus in Israel.

“And into whatsoever city ye may enter, and they receive you, eat what is set before you:259 and heal the sick in it, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” There was no want of power, but the word was, “The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” This they were to say to them. It was not a question of miraculous exhibition to strike the mind or eye, or anything for present life merely, but “the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” “But into whatsoever city ye may have entered,5 and they do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, Even the dust of your city, which cleaveth260 to us on the feet6 we shake off against you.” Thus the rejection of this mission would be most serious, and the very measure of grace out of which it springs would make unbelief the more perilous, and the judgment of it more peremptory. “Even the dust of your city, which cleaveth to us on the feet we shake off against you: but know this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh.”7 It would not alter the truth. They might reject, but the kingdom of God had come nigh unto them.

“I say8 unto you, that it shall be snore tolerable for Sodom in that day than for that city. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the works of power which have taken place in you had taken place in Tyre and Sidon, they had long ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which hast been raised up to heaven, shalt be brought down9 even to Hades.” This is a solemn principle much too easily and too often forgotten. People are apt to pity the heathen and to think of distant lands; but while it is well for those who are thoroughly rejoicing in the Lord to feel for those who want Him, there cannot be a greater delusion than to suppose that when the judgment comes, men as such will be better off, e.g., in England than they are in Tartary. No doubt, wherever there is faith in a rejected Christ, it will bring into heavenly glory; but the rejection of Christ when He was on earth, or now that He is in heaven, is fatal. More particularly the rejection of a heavenly Christ is ruinous; even then the Lord could say, “It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you.” Not that Israel was not privileged; but privileges despised or misused bring only a deeper perdition upon those who reject or pervert them.

Therefore it is that these cities rise up before the Lord. It was bad enough for the cities Chorazin and Bethsaida, inasmuch as there had been mighty works done in them and they had not listened, and the Lord said, “If the works of power which have taken place in you had taken place in Tyre and Sidon, they had long ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.” Israel were more guilty than the heathen, and the Israel of Christ’s day peculiarly so. No heathen had ever listened to such a testimony. To refuse the Word of God is to expose to the judgment of God. “it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the judgment than for you.” And if there was one city that had even greater advantages than these, it was Capernaum, which is called His own city,10 where He was pleased to live and labor. And what as to it? “And thou, Capernaum, which hast been raised up to heaven, shalt be brought down even to Hades” — a still more awful judgment.

But it would not be a light thing now for those who rejected the disciples any more than for those who rejected Himself. He adds, “I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for Sodom in that day than for that city.” Mark, not merely for Tyre and Sidon, but for Sodom. The Lord clothes the words of His disciples with a more awful judgment than His own, because the disciples were more liable to be despised than their Master. Men might take advantage of His disciples and say that they were only men of like passions with themselves, and had their faults, and so they had. But the question was, What was their testimony — their mission? and from whom? What were the blessings held out and what the penalties with which God menaced those who scorned them? They testified of God’s kingdom at hand. There was nothing really that had ever been presented to man to compare with this Others as prophets had borne witness of it, but avowedly from a distance; but now that it was at hand, to despise those who preached it would be to despise Jesus and God Himself, as to listen to them would be a true way of honoring Jesus.

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The seventy11 came back, when their mission was ended and their testimony given, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us through thy name.” This was a great witness to Messiah’s power. Men in Israel always looked, and of course especially the faithful, for the manifestation of Divine power through Messiah over Satan in the world. It was not so much God as such to act directly, as through man in Israel, the Seed of the woman, the Son of David. And now what a sign and a seal was given, seeing that not only did He cast out demons, but they, His servants, through His name, did the same! Nevertheless, the Lord marked this the more to be a conclusory mission to the people and land, and that His Messianic glory, the object of promise, however true, was in no way the great truth that was beginning to unfold itself. Heavenly things were about to come in through His rejection and death. “And he said to them, I beheld262 Satan as lightning262a fall262b out of heaven.” It was quite true. The exaltation of Satan through man’s fall was gone, as it were, before His eyes, and the Lord had the full vista of God’s counsel in sight, the total destruction of the enemy’s power. “I beheld Satan as lightning fall out of heaven.” But while this was true to the Lord’s vision who sees things that are not as though they were, suggested by His disciples’ casting demons out of men, there were things even better than these, though He fully owned what there was then. “Behold, I give12 unto you the power of treading upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall in any wise injure you.” He openly confirms what He had given. There was thus authority to trample upon the well-known symbols of Satan’s craft and torment for man, and over all the power of the enemy, whatever it might be. They were delivered from all calculated to injure; “nothing shall in any wise injure you.” They belonged to the Saviour. “Yet in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subjected to you; but rejoice rather13 that your names are written in the heavens.” To belong to heaven, to be called to that seat of Divine light and blessing, was a far greater prize: the rest was Satan’s power broken on the earth, a sample of the earthly kingdom, and the powers of the age to come. But a rejected Christ opens the door into the presence and glory of God. This was a matter of far more real and profound joy — that their names were written in heaven. To this the Jews were utterly blind, as man is still; for his cool assumption of heaven, as if it were a natural end for man, is even more evil and presumptuous. Present power and authority are great in his eyes; heavenly things are little, because they are distant and unseen. Nevertheless they are nigh to faith which beholds them, knowing that they are the great reality, and that present things are only the arena of sin and folly and distance from God. But the disciples must learn this; therefore the Lord would lead their hearts into this deeper joy: “but rejoice that your names are written in the heavens.” 263

“In the same hour Jesus14 rejoiced in spirit15 and said, I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth, that thou hast hid these things from wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes: yea, Father; for thus hath it been well-pleasing in thy sight.” Now in a legal state of things the wise and prudent have their importance. The law admits of angelic media, and supposes human administrators; it desires things in due order, regulated in a way that commends itself to men’s reason and conscience. But grace meets a ruined world when all this is set aside; and Jesus, rejected by those who boasted of the law, rejoices in the grace of God, and thanks Him as the Father, whom the law never revealed. He was Father in His own Divine relationship to the Son, entirely outside the ken of men or the scope of their thoughts or imaginings. The Jews who had the law never saw the reality of Divine relationship. It was dimly couched under various obscure forms and terms in the Old Testament. For all through God was a veiled One, dwelling in the thick darkness, not revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,

This comes out clearly in and through Jesus our Lord; as also light and incorruptibility comes to men through the Gospel, not through the law. In the law it was simply one God, the Jehovah-God of Israel, and He only behind the intricate barriers of the Levitical system. But the Gospel shows the veil rent, and, through Him who went down to the cross, the Father known by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Thus Christianity supposes the full revelation of the true God and the persons of the Godhead.264 Hence it was impossible to have a distinct or full, if any, knowledge of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost under the law. And it may be a question how far those who are in the spirit of the law enter into it fully now; they may be orthodox, and recognize the general certainty of it; but this is a very different thing from entering into and enjoying it practically as the known truth and blessing of the soul.

Our Lord Jesus, then, perfect in everything and with Divine knowledge of all, says, “I praise thee, Father, Lord of the heaven and of the earth, that thou hast hid these things from wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes: yea, Father; for thus hath it been well-pleasing in thy sight.” It was no longer a question of Israel and the land; neither are wisdom and prudence of account now. Things that are highly esteemed among men are judged as an abomination in the sight of God. He had revealed His mind unto babes. Clearly this was grace. There was no claim; and babes would have seemed the very last persons to whom God would have revealed what was beyond the wise and prudent, what the vulture’s eye had not seen. “Yea, Father; for thus hath it been well-pleasing in thy sight.” It was His pleasure; He took complacency in His own love. And grace does not find but makes objects proper to itself and for God’s glory. Grace Creates, the law does not. It does not give a nature capable of enjoying God, nor can it give an object, still less one worthy of God Himself to rest on; it can only press a claim on man from God. But grace does all this and more through Jesus, Who both gives us a nature capable of enjoying God and is also Himself the Object to be enjoyed.

Hear how He presents Himself even here: “All things have been delivered to me by my Father.” It is not now merely the land of Israel or the Jewish people, but “things”; the Son of man with all things handed up to Him — a higher glory even than dominion over all people and tongues (Dan. 7). It is the universe put under Him; and this because He is the Son of God. “All things have been delivered to me by my Father.” It is not merely the Ancient of Days giving the universal kingdom under the heaven to the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven; but the rejected Man an earth revealing Himself as the Son of God; the Son of man, who is in heaven, as is said elsewhere, to whom His Father has delivered all things. We see not yet all things put under Him. But He speaks of a far deeper blessing and glory than even this universal inheritance. “No one knoweth16 who the Son is, but the Father.” He is a Divine person — the glory of His person is unfathomable; it is for the Father alone to know and delight in, though for us to know it unknown. No man knoweth; indeed, it is not merely no man, but “no man knoweth17 who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son is pleased to reveal [him].” It is clear that none but the Son knows of Himself the Father. But it is not merely true that the Son knows the Father, for He reveals Him to others — “he to whomsoever the Son is pleased to reveal [him].” This is Christianity; and to lead on the Souls of the disciples from their Jewish expectations to the heavenly and Divine truths of Christianity is the object of the Lord Jesus henceforth, as of the Spirit afterward. It is remarkable that it is said “no one knoweth who the Son is, but the Father,” but it is not added lie to whom He will reveal Him. Thus God envelops the Lord Jesus as it were with a Divine guard against Joh. 3:13. the prying curiosity of the creature; and if the Son humbled Himself in grace to man, God forbids that man should approach that, as it were, holy ground. Not even with unsandaled feet can he tread there. God reserves the knowledge of the Son for Himself; He alone really penetrates the mystery of the Only-begotten, The Son does reveal the Father; but man’s mind always breaks itself to pieces when he attempts to unravel the insoluble enigma of Christ’s personal glory. All that the saint can do is to believe and worship. No man knows the Son but the Father. On the other hand, it is our deepest comfort that the Son not only knows the Father but reveals Him. The revelation of the Father in and by the Son is the joy and rest of faith. It is true even of the babes. The little children (), and not merely the young men and the Father (1 John 2:14); and this falls in with these unspeakably blessed words of our Lord in Luke 10: “And having turned to the disciples, privately he said, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see. For I say unto you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye behold, and did not see [them]; and to hear the things which ye behold, and did not hear [them].”18 Thus the Lord Jesus, while He is preparing them for greater things, fully owns the blessedness of the present.266a

The immense change from law to grace was set forth remarkably in the incident which now follows; and the more so, because the law was now directly introduced in order to show what man was under it, and that there is nothing which really fulfills the law but grace. Those who have only the law before them never accomplish it; they only talk about it, and would cover their self-condemnation by despising others if they could. Those who are under grace are the only persons who do fulfill it (Rom. 8:3, 4); but they do a great deal more. They understand what is suitable to grace, while in them the righteousness of the law is fulfilled.

“And behold, a certain lawyer stood up tempting him, and saying. Teacher, having done that, shall I inherit life eternal?” He did not ask, “What shall I do to be saved?” The law neither supposes the ruin of a sinner nor proposes salvation. It cannot but address itself to man’s competency, if he has any. The law is directed to those who assume that man can do what God requires; and consequently it is on God’s part a command or that which is due to Him, what He cannot but ask if they take such a ground with Him. The measure of duty which God proposes to man who thinks himself capable of doing it is the law.267

The lawyer accordingly asks Him as a teacher, what he is to do “to inherit life eternal.” The poor brokenhearted jailer at Philippi asked a far different question, and one more befitting a sinner — what he should do to be saved. The lawyer was not in earnest; he was a mere theorist. It was a subject for a discourse or argument. There was no his soul, no sense of his own condition or of what God is. “What shall I do to inherit life eternal?”267a The Lord answers him, “What is written in the law? how readest thou?” because, when he took this ground of doing something to inherit eternal life, he had betaken himself really to the law. Thus the Lord in His wisdom answers the fool according to his folly. A fool thinks he can keep the law, and that this is the way to inherit eternal life. The Lord accordingly says, “What is written in the law? how readest thou?” because he is going to convict him of the utter futility of all efforts on that ground. “But he, answering, said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with19 all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and, with all thine understanding.” That is, the whole man must love the Lord our God inwardly as well as outwardly, “and thy neighbor as thyself.” This was excellent as a statement of duty: nothing could be better;268 but how had he done it? and what hope was there for his soul on any such footing; as this? If he took the ground of doing something to inherit eternal life, this must be the way. He was wrong in the very starting-point of his soul, wrong in what he thought about this great concernment, because he was wrong about God; and indeed he that is wrong about himself must be wrong about God. The great fundamental difference of a soul taught of God is this, that, conscious of his own sinfulness, he look, to God and to His way of being delivered out of it; whereas a mere natural man in general hopes to be able to do something himself for God, so as to put Him under a kind of obligation of giving eternal life. Human thought always denies God’s grace, as it denies its own sinfulness and need of grace. However, the

answer was all right on that ground, and the Lord says to him to this effect, “Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.” But he was dead. Now, the law never deals with the man as deed end therefore in Old Testament times there never was such a thing brought out as morel death. We never find a hint that this was known in the law or even the prophets. But in the Gospels and Epistles man is treated as dead and as wanting eternal life, which the Son of God alone can give; and He gives it, not by law but by grace — two totally opposite principles. Therefore it is by faith that it alight he by grace: whereas the law appeals to that human ability of which man is proud. He deems himself competent to do the will of God and thus to live. The Lord answered him, “This do, and thou shalt live,” but there is where he was wrong. He could not do it, and on that ground therefore he could not live. He was dead, though he did not know it himself morally dead while he lived.

“But he, desirous of justifying20 himself,” not to justify God but himself, “said to Jesus, And who is my neighbor?”270 This is the constant resource of a heart that is not obedient. It makes difficulties and starts objections. “Who is my neighbor?” One would have thought this a very simple question to decide, who one’s neighbor was, but the plainest things are just those which the disobedient heart is prone to overlook. Had he entered into the obedience of Jesus (1 Peter 1:2) he would not have needed to ask the Lord; he would have known himself. He and all must be taught by a parable. “A certain man descended from Jerusalem to Jericho.” This is just the course of man. From the place of blessing, Jerusalem, he goes down to that of the curse, Jericho, and there of course falls among thieves. Such is the world. Having no real unselfish love, it does not give, but violently takes where and what it can. He “fell into [the hands of] robbers, who also, having stripped him and inflicted wounds, went away, leaving him in a half-dead state.” This is just the world. “And a certain priest happened271 to go down that way, and, seeing him, passed on to the opposite side.” There was no kindness, no purpose of love in his heart — only a concurrence of regrettable circumstances for the poor man: it was not the priest’s matter. There was no grace active there, and so the priest this highest expression of the Yaw of God, goes that way, “and meeting him, he passed on to the opposite side.” He did not know who his neighbor was any more thou the lawyer: self always blinds. Surely he ought to have known; but the law never gives right motives. It claims right conduct from those who have not right motives, in order to show that they are thoroughly and inwardly wrong. By the law is the knowledge of sin; it is never the power of holiness. The law is said to be the strength of sin. It simply shows a man his duty, but convicts him that he does not practice it. So with the Levite. “And in like manner also a Levite, being at the spot, came and looked [at him], and passed on the opposite side.” He was next the priest in point of position, according to the law; but lie looked on the man and did not recognize his neighbor any more than the priest. He too passed by on the other side. “But a certain Samaritan,” who had nothing to do with the law at all, “journeying, came to him; and, seeing [him],21 was moved with compassion,272 and came up, and bound up his wounds, pouring in273 oil and wine,” There was grace before his eyes which bed won his heart, and accordingly at once finds out his neighbor. Love sees clearly, whatever the heathens may dream. The law merely speaks of his neighbor to a man without heart, who has not ears to hear or eyes to see his neighbor; but grace gives eyes, and ears, and heart. The Samaritan accordingly, when he seeks him, seeks him with the suited provision of grace for the future as well as the present. “He put him on his own beast, and took him to [the] inn, and took care of him.” Thus the righteousness of the law was fulfilled in him who walked not after the flesh but after the Spirit. This was precisely the way of grace. It was so that God sent His Son in quest of those who were fallen among thieves, who were more than half dead. They were wholly dead; and the Son of God gave not only all that He had, but Himself. He far exceeded all that man or a creature could do. Only God could so humble Himself and so love; only He could work suitably to His humiliation and His love. And not only does this Samaritan do all the good he can, but he takes measures that when he himself goes away, the needy one shall be taken care of adequately. “And on the morrow [as he left],22 taking out two denaria he gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him,23 Take care of him, and whatever thou shalt expend more, I will render to thee on my coming back.” It is the provision of grace which not only furnishes the blessing with all freeness, but secures, it fully when the giver is no longer here. And Jesus will repay when He comes again. He took care Himself of the sinner when He was in the world. He takes care of him now that he is brought in as His sole charge; and when He comes again, all will be repaid274 “Which [now]24 of these three seems to thee was275 neighbor [had been neighbor] to him that fell into [the, hands of] the robbers? And he said” — even this lawyer, because man has a conscience — “he that showed him mercy.” Consequently it is not law that can avail. The great transition, then, is made plain to all who hear. Mercy and mercy alone, can suit a lost man; but mercy is distasteful because it exalts God; whereas law is used by man to exalt himself and his capacity. It is only when we believe our own ruin, perhaps, after efforts under law, that mercy first saves our souls and then opens our eyes and makes us see a neighbor in each needy soul, without asking who he is. Mercy makes us feel every one that wants our help and compassion to be our neighbor; whereas the spirit of legalism contents itself with asking, “Who is my neighbor?” Without Christ, law merely acts upon the natural man; though it shows a man his duty, it never gives him power or heart to do it. The spirit of grace alone gives Divine motive and power. “What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh,” etc.25 Grace has shone in Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost works according to the same grace in those who have received Jesus, who are not under law but under grace.276

Endnotes

251 Some Judean ministry seems to be recorded in chapter 10-13:21. As to this, see Professor Briggs’ book, “New Light, etc.” (Cf. note 53 on John.) It becomes most apparent as we reach verse 38, which, with the four following verses, will be taken in connection with chapter 11.

252 Verse 1.— “Seventy.” Luke was supposed by some of old to have been one of them (see note 2). References for that view could be found in Hahn’s commentary, etc. The number has been variously taken as referring to the supposed number of nations at the time; to the seventy elders of the Jewish polity (Num. 15:16); and, by “Catholic” minded people (cf. the full college of seventy Roman Cardinals), to the elders of the primitive Church.

As to the reading “seventy-two,” see curious explanation of how the “conflation” may have arisen in Abbott, “Clue: A Guide through Greek to Hebrew Scripture,” p. 137f.

253 “Two and two,” cf. Mark 6:7 of the Twelve. Critics, as their manner is, imagine that Luke is following two different reports of the same mission (cf. 9:1-6); but you find them at other times saying that our Evangelist discards a report of some miracle or saying as a “doublet.” So crooked are the ways of some writers that with them caprice runs riot.

254 “Every city and place... come.” Carpenter treats this as an allegory: he would have it that no earthly visit is meant, but the advent of the glorified Messiah, as the Kingdom should spread among the Gentiles by the disciples’ preaching. Cf. verse 16. Such is part of what the Expositor has elsewhere described as “the mythology of the nineteenth century.”

255 Verse 2.— “Indeed.” The R.V. at Matt. 9:27 retains the “truly” of A.V., but drops it here, although the Greek is the same ( ).

See Augustine's "Sermons on the New Testament," vol. i., p. 401.

256 Verse 4.— "Salute no man," i.e., abstain from that which, in the East (cf. 2 Kings 4:29), is a prolonged ceremony. Ryle, "The man of God ought to have no leisure for any work but that of His Master." Cf. Prayer Book of British Jews, p. 186. Different counsel seems to be given now to the clergy by some diocesans.

257 Verse 6.— "Son of peace." Cf. "child of wisdom" (wrath), "son of perdition" (death).

The may grammatically mean "him," and was so taken in the Latin.

For the last words of this verse, of Ps. 35:13.

258 Verse 7.— "The workman is worthy of his hire" (Matthew: "food"). Cf. 1 Cor. 9:14 and 1 Tim. 5: 18. The Expositor, after Lewin (i. 393), with whom Bishop Hervey agreed, was of opinion that the Apostle in the passages named quoted this Gospel ("God's Inspiration, etc.," p. 18). Color may be given to this view by the mention of Luke in the same connection as the "parchments" (2 Tim. 4:11-13). As to 1 Cor. cf. Hausrath ("New Testament Times," 3:70). Salmon thought that the words in 1 Tim. may have been heard by Paul from Luke's lips at a weekly church meeting. B. Weiss supposes that the words were known to Timothy as a familiar saying of the Lord. H. Holtzmann's view was that the Evangelist derived them from the Apostle (Introduction, p. 401). The simple truth seems to be that it was a current Jewish proverb, derived from Deut. 24:14f.

259 Verse 8.—Cf. 1 Cor. 10:27, Ecclesiasticus 31:16.

260 Verse 11.—The word , "cleave," is frequent in Luke's writing's: see 15:15, and Acts 5: 13, 9:26, 11:23, and 17:34. Paul uses it in 1 Cor. 6:17.

261 Verse 16.— "He that hears you hears Me." Cf. John 16:25, 17:20.

The teaching of the "historical Jesus" is partly incomprehensible without the Apostolic interpretation. The Catholic Catechism, No. 228, resorts to the words.

262 Verse 18.— "I beheld." Cf. Luke's use of , as here, in Acts 17:16. That which the sets before us is not visionary (H. Holtzman), by intuitive, Divine knowledge (Meyer, Schanz, Weiss, Hahn).

262a "As lightning." Of Matt. 24:27.

262b "Fall," . All Germans seem to translate it as our A.V. The Revs, "fallen," after Bishop Basil Jones, etc., a rendering criticized by Evans, wh explains thus: "Satan fell. I was there looking on." J. H. Moulton. " watched him fall" ("Prolegomena.," p. 134; cf. Goodwin, "Moods and Tenses," § 148). "Fallen" suits alone, as in Rev. 9:1. Failing, again would be . The form used here is, of course, the instantaneous, momentary aorist participle; which sets forth the act as a whole, not as in progress contrast "rising" (R.V.) in 12:54.

It is "prophetic" (Godet); that is, anticipatory, see John 12:31; Rev. 12:10. Wellhausen's reference to Isa. 14:12 f., of course, connects itself with the fourth verse of Rev. 22. The Sura 72 in the Qoran, which speaks of ejection of demons from heaven by meteors, does but caricature Old Testament predictions with the substitution of Mohammed for our Lord. The real phenomenon will be fulfilled before the great Tribulation, and is distinct from that of Matt. 24:29 (Mark 13:25), which will precede the time of stress. The Fathers' view, represented in modern times by Cornelius a Lapide was that it refers to the time when Satan first sinned: so B. W. Newton in his "Thoughts on the Apocalypse," p. 249; but see Trench, "Studies," pp. 227-230. It is not a fact accomplished; as Bruce states the matter.

263 Verse 20.— "Names written, etc." Cf. Exod. 32:32; Ps. 69:28, besides Rev. 3:4f — the Assembly's roll at Sardis, and its confirmation or otherwise in heaven. Of Matt. 5:12, noting like connection of the word "rejoice."

264 Verse 21f. For the Lord's requirement of faith in His Person, of Matt. 11:25ff. These twin passages, awkward for critics, those have to face who can but talk of "Christological development from Paul to the Fourth Gospel" (alt. "Son of God" in "Encyclopedia Biblica"). The fertility of imagination displayed by some is very unedifying. The background of the pre-existence of JESUS (Horner: see on 7:35) makes itself felt here, and must, accordingly, be explained away!

On Harnack's apparent misreading of the Lord's words here, Sweet remarks: "It is His Sonship which enables Him to know, not knowledge which makes Him the Son" ("Studies," p. 79f.). For the unique Sonship, cf. 2 John 3, "the Son of the Father," words which admit of only one interpretation.

265 The traditional reading, in every source of evidence ordinarily credible, is "knows" (Matt.,). Schmiedel (art. "John son of Zebedee," in "Encyclopedia Biblica," col. 2527) emphasizes the aorist , which emerges in a few Patristic quotations: something that came about at a definite moment of time, within the period of the earthly life of the Lord. The subject has been discussed by Harnack, "Sayings," pp. 19 and 196 ff., where references will be found to Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Tertullian, etc. For the use made by Marcion of these passages in the Gospels, see Burkitt, p, 308.

Will the "advanced" writers accept the Patristic reading (instead of) in John 1:3? A thousand times, No! And yet, that variant is of like character to this from a purely scientific point of view.

Harnack observes that Luke could only have here quitted the words of Matt. 11:28-30. But, speaking of the manner of critics, would our Evangelist's first readers have understood the "yoke" there spoken of, which is a Jewish Conceptions (Acts 15:10)? Cf. Edersheim, "Life of Jesus, &c.," vol. ii., p. 142f. and Morris Joseph's work, "Judaism, as Creed and Life" (1903).

266 Blass has discarded the seven last words of verse 22 on the scanty evidence of "D" and three Old Latin copies. In words are unquestioned in Matthew.

266a Verse 23 f—See Sermons of Chas. Simon, ("Works," xii. p. 418) and of H. P. Liddon in Allenson's reprint of selected series (No. X.).

267 Verse 25. — “Lawyer.” As to the class of scribes, see Neander, pp. 269, 401, and note below on 11: 45. The “tempting” was, of course, to test the Lord’s orthodoxy (Stock).

267a “Everlasting” (). Of the use of this in the Old Testament, Isa. 45:17 is a typical passage. In Luke it always has a future reference; whilst , “age,” is used for all three forms of time. As bearing on the lawyer’s question, cf. Prov. 4:13 and 1 Tim. 6:12.

268 Verse 27. — See the Sitcom in the liturgy for both morning and evening of the Jewish Prayer Book.

The scribes had decided that the chief commandment was enshrined in Lev. 19:18.

The Old Testament original of Deut. 6:5 speaks of man in his threefold nature — “might” standing for “spirit” (energy): cf. note above on 1:46.

On equal love of Neighbor and self, see Murray, “Christian Ethics,” pp. 27.32. Luther preached from verses 23-27 on the “Difference between the Law and the Gospel” (“Sermons,” p. 436).

Two of Bishop Butler’s sermons were upon the Love of God and the Love of Our Neighbor respectively.

269 Verse 29. — The aorist means: to keep up for the nonce his reputation for righteousness; whilst the present would mean: to acquire standing justification.

270 “Neighbor”: cf. Lev. 19:18, “children of thy people.”

See D. L. Moody’s Gospel address on “Who is my Neighbor?”

271 Verse 31. — “Happened.” The phrase may be rendered “by a coincidence.”

272 Verse 33. — “The story is full of tender touches by One who had lately been repulsed from a Samaritan village” (Lindsay).

273 Verse 34. — Wellhausen curiously remarks: “In wounds oil is applied, but not oil and wine.” The “pouring in” oil or over () means for massage, as now amongst Arabs; the wine, to staunch bleeding. For a quotation from Shabbnath, regarding their use in circumcision, see Farrar, in Excursus.

274 Verse 35. — Cf. the Book of Enoch, 40:5 (part of the Similitudes, 38. — 70.).

275 Verse 36. — “Was,” or “proved” (R.V.), for .

276 Verse 37. — “Showed”: lit. “did” (), a Hebraism peculiar to Luke in the New Testament. Cf. 1:72a; Acts 14:27, 15:4. It is taken from the LXX.

The words “do likewise” ground Jülicher’s classification of this among the “exemplary parables” (note 196).

Spurgeon’s Sermons, 473, 1360, are on this section of the Gospel.

For the allegorical interpretation as it has by different writers been worked out in detail, see the notes of Alford or Ryle.

Admirers of Buddhist Ethics compare with this parable the story by P. Carus, entitled “Karma,” so highly appreciated by Tolstoi.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: 14. The Samaritan and His Neighbour

Luke 10:30-37

This parable is the Lord’s answer to the lawyer’s question. And who is my neighbor? A conscience not at ease finds difficulties; the heart that is animated by love answers at once, because it finds none. Every sorrow or need makes an appeal to it, and never in vain. Flesh under law being self-occupied, has neither room nor time for others.

“A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, who, having stripped and beaten him, departed, leaving him half dead. And by coincidence a certain priest was going down by that way; and on seeing him passed on the other side. And likewise also a Levite, when he came to the place and saw, passed on the other side. But a certain Samaritan on journey came to him, and when he saw him was moved with compassion, and came up and bound his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and setting him on his own beast he brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow he took out and gave two denaries to the inn-keeper, and said to him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou shalt spend more, I at my coming back will repay thee. Which of these three, seemeth to thee to have been neighbor of him that fell among the robbers? And he said, He that showed him mercy. And Jesus said to him, Go and do thou likewise” (vers. 30-37).

Grace and truth in Christ changed all. It was not only from earth to heaven now acting on souls who believed, but love that raised above our own things, imitating God, as the Apostle puts it, like dear children, Christ Himself the motive and power no less than pattern.

Man’s sad lot is graphically shown in him who was going down from the place of religious privilege and pride to that of the curse, and fell in with robbers who took his all and beat him, leaving him half dead. Earthly priesthood, and earthly ministry, wholly failed. Only the despised One availed; and none was more despised or hated than a Samaritan, unless it were the One Who exceeds all comparisons. He on His errand of love, far from passing by and shutting up His inmost feelings of compassion, came up and bandaged the wounds, pouring on soothing and cleansing grace, dismounted to raise up the wretched one now comforted, and took him under His care. Doubtless it is the Lord’s congenial sketch of practical grace for the lawyer’s help; but it is the shadow of His own path day by day, and far indeed from exhausting or even describing what was deepest in His work.

Nor is His love satisfied with thoughtful beneficence for the present; He charges himself with the future in terms all the more striking, because the figure is homely. How full and transcendent is the love which is not bounded by ties of flesh or obligations of earthly duty, but flows from a divine and eternal spring from within, and only finds objects of need without to act on, no person too repulsive, no need beyond the resources of grace. “And on the morrow He took out and gave two denaries to the inn-keeper, and said to him, Take care of him, and whatever thou shalt spend more, I at my coming back will repay thee.” Yes, His provision while absent is adequate, whatever the unbelief may think of it as of Him; and when He returns, what repayment where He is trusted! What forfeits, where He is scorned! Even the lawyer could not but feel the appeal, and own the superiority of that mercy which the Lord depicted and exemplified. If he ever did in like manner, it must have been through the faith that received the Savior and realized the truth and love of God in Him.

God Himself is now acting on such love, though shown in a way infinitely more profound in giving His own Son up to compassionate, save, and bless the powerless and ungodly. It is no question of a claim but of ruin in man and of grace in Himself: only the work of Christ makes it righteous in God, and us righteous in Christ. Such is the efficacy of His death on the cross.

How does it affect you, dear reader? It finds you a lost and rebellious sinner. Such you have been really, whoever you are and whatever you may have seemed to yourself or other men. You may have sought and provided a religious veil; but it is of no more value in God’s eye than the web the spider weaves. Their webs, says the prophet, shall not become garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their works; their works are works of iniquity, and the act of violence is in their hands. For none are prouder or more bitter than natural men under a veil of religion. The way of peace they know not, and there is no judgment in their goings. They have made their paths crooked: whoso goeth therein knoweth not peace.

All depends for efficacy on Christ alone. He it is Who brings God to man and man to God; but it is vain for me or you or any that hear the gospel unless we believe on Him. This is to submit to the righteousness of God, Who is ever found in His grace, by him who truly owns his sins in the faith of Christ. Oh, fellow sinner, dare to be thorough in confessing what you have done and are at the feet of Jesus Who never rejects one that comes confiding in the call of God. It is what God delights in; it is to vindicate Him and honor His dishonored Son, the all-worthy One, in the face of every foe, and of all our own sins and unbelief. Do not drop this call to your soul. You cannot pretend that you do not need the Savior; or that you are now pleasing God Who summons you to believe in Him. Turn to Him therefore at once, and confess your guilt and evil, but doubt not His grace. Look not away till you rest on Him and His precious blood which cleanses from every sin.

Notes on Luke, Luke 10:38-42, Notes on

We here enter upon a new section of the gospel. The Spirit of God sets before us, speaking now generally, two things: first, the unspeakable value of the word of God, and more particularly of the word of Jesus; secondly, as we shall see another time, the place and exceeding importance for the soul of prayer. But then there are many things to be considered in connection with each of these topics, of which we shall only now look at the first. There is a moral comparison between the two sisters who loved the Lord. She that chose the better portion was the one whose heart clung most to the word as a link between the soul and God. As we all know, it is by the word of truth that any are begotten of God, for it is the seed of incorruptible life, that word which liveth and abideth forever. But then it is much more than that. It is the means of growth, of cleansing the way, of enjoying God, and consequently of spiritual blessing day by day: this was made very apparent in the difference between Martha and Mary. They were sisters in the flesh, believers both of them, loved of Jesus. Nevertheless, difference there was; and the main cause and evidence of it between the two was the superior value that Mary had for the word of Jesus. The word of God has a formative power over the mind and affections, and she is proved to be the one who most prizes the Lord, and who most really and in the truest communion serves him who has the deepest value for his word. This we find as a general principle elsewhere in scripture (“this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments"), and particularly in john 14, “if a man love me, he will keep my words;” but here it comes out practically in the case of Martha and Mary. “a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.” she fully owned him to be the messiah. There was faith of God's giving in Martha's heart; but it saw no more in him than simply the messiah. Her faith did not go farther. “and she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word.”

Mary is not characterized by such a reception of the Lord, by loving attentions and hospitality, though founded, no doubt, upon a growing out of faith. “Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard his word.” Some might suppose this to be a far less proof of love; but to Jesus it was incomparably the more acceptable of the two. Martha did honor to Jesus as a believing righteous Jew might; she owned herself subject, Himself as King, and was as happy as her faith would admit of in thus receiving the Lord to her house in the day of His humiliation; but her sister sat at His feet and heard His word. In her case it was not so much what she did for the Lord; but she had such a sense of His greatness and love that her one point was to sit at His feet (an attitude of far deeper humiliation than Martha ever took) with the consciousness of the divine fullness there was in Him for her. She heard His word; but Martha “was cumbered about much serving.” How many there are who are fond of serving the Lord, but are much more full of their own doings for Him than of what He is to them as well as in Himself! This deceives many. They measure faith by their round of bustle and activity. But in truth this always has a great deal of self in it. When true humility animates, there may be much done, but there is little noise. Mary sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word.

“But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she come and help me.” Thus not only was there a large spice of self-importance in Martha, but, as usual, she felt herself constantly slighted and incommoded by others. The spirit of egoism measures by itself, and cannot appreciate a love which is deeper than its own, and which issues in ways and forms which have no beauty in its eyes. Therefore Mary, instead of being an object of complacency to Martha, troubled her: Why did Mary not help her? Martha's thoughts circled round herself. Had she been thinking of Jesus, she would not have dictated to Him any more than have complained of Mary. “Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me.” What want of love and lowliness! She does not even leave it to the Lord to direct. Self is always captious as well as important, and as swift to impute to others as to arrogate to itself what is unbecoming. “Bid her therefore that she help me.” She forgets that she was but the servant of the Lord. Who was she to wish to control Him? Martha was full of zeal, but of her own ways (not to say her own will) in serving Christ.

Jesus, however, answers with the dignity that was proper to Him, and the love that always sees true to its mark (for there is nothing that gives such a single eye as genuine affection), but which at the same time vindicates the true-hearted before those who misunderstand them. He loved them both indeed, and says in reply, “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.” He deals first of all with herself. She ought not to have been thus anxious and careworn. Martha did not know what Paul knew so well. “This one thing I do.” There was never a man with such multitudinous occupations as the apostle; there was never another with such a heart for the Church. And yet he could happily employ his hands in making tents, because he would not be burdensome, though he had a right to be so as an apostle of Christ. What was it that carried him through all his unexampled toil and suffering, undistracted and happy? The reason was that one person, the only worthy object, filled and governed his heart. This made him thoroughly happy in the midst of the deepest afflictions. This “one thing” is precisely what is needful for the child of God, and the very thing that Martha practically had not. It was not that she did not believe in the Lord; but she had her own thoughts too. Nature was strong. Jewish feeling and tradition held their ground; all these things wrought actively in her mind; and to such a person, receiving the Lord Jesus was not only a question of doing Him honor, but herself too. In such cases self always, more or less, mingles even with the desire to show present respect to Jesus.

“But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, Which shall not be taken away from her.” There is nothing like it. That good part is prizing Christ and His word, not thinking what Mary could do for the Lord, but what the Lord could do for Mary. To receive all for her soul from the Lord, instead of receiving Him into her house, was before Mary's soul. This was the one thing needful—it was Christ Himself. He is all, and Mary felt this. That “good part shall not be taken away from her” —it is eternal. Martha's honors passed away; they were shortly about to end, for soon Jesus would not be known after the flesh; but must be known, if at all, in a higher glory than that of the Messiah. Soon, therefore, the possibility of receiving Him with a hospitable heart could not be Martha's portion; for at His cross it would necessarily be cut short and disappear. But Mary's position of lowly faith in hearing His word could be always. Even in heaven the essence of it will not be lost. Communion with Jesus, delight in Jesus, humility of heart before Jesus, will always be true; it is the part of real devotedness and of the deepest love. Great as faith and hope may be (and their value cannot be over-estimated on earth), still, after all, love is that which abides forever; and love now is in proportion to the power of faith and hope. All these things were incomparably richer and stronger in Mary's heart than in Martha's, and this because Christ filled her heart—this one thing that is needful.

Notes on Luke, Luke 10:25-37, Notes on

The immense change from law to grace was set forth remarkably in the incident which now follows; and the more so, because the law was now directly introduced in order to show what man was under it, and that there is nothing which really fulfills the law but grace. Those that have only the law before them never accomplish it; they only talk about it, and would cover their self-condemnation by despising others if they could. Those that are under grace are the only persons who do fulfill it (Rom. 8:3, 4); but they do a great deal more. They understand what is suitable to grace, while in them the righteousness of the law is fulfilled.

“And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” He did not ask, “What shall I do to be saved?” The law neither supposes the ruin of a sinner nor proposes salvation. It cannot but address itself to man's competency, if he has any. The law is directed to those who assume that man can do what God requires; and consequently it is on God's part a command of that which is due to Him, what He cannot but ask if they take such a ground with Him. The measure of duty which God proposes to man who thinks himself capable of doing it is the law.

The lawyer accordingly asks Him as a teacher, what he is to do “to inherit eternal life.” The poor broken-hearted jailer at Philippi asked a far different question, and one more befitting a sinner—what he should do to be saved. The lawyer was not in earnest; he was a mere theorist. It was a subject for a discourse or argument. There was no real concern about his soul, no sense of his own condition or of what God is. “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” The Lord answers him, “What is written in the law? how readest thou?” because, when he took this ground of doing something to inherit eternal life, he had betaken himself really to the law. Thus the Lord in His wisdom answers the fool according to his folly. A fool thinks he can keep the law, and that this is the way to inherit eternal life. The Lord accordingly says, “What is written in the law? how readest thou?” because he is going to convict him of the utter futility of all efforts on that ground. “And he, answering, said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.” That is, the whole man must love the Lord our God, inwardly as well as outwardly, “and thy neighbor as thyself.” This was excellent as a statement of duty: nothing could be better; but how had he done it? and what hope was there for his soul on any such footing as this? If he took the ground of doing something to inherit eternal life, this must be the way. He was wrong in the very starting-point of his soul, wrong in what he thought about this great concernment, because he was wrong about God; and indeed he that is wrong about himself must be wrong about God. The great fundamental difference of a soul taught of God is this, that, conscious of his own sinfulness, he looks to God and to His way of being delivered out of it; whereas a mere natural man in general hopes to be able to do something himself for God, so as to put Him under a kind of obligation of giving eternal life. Human thought always denies God's grace, as it denies its own sinfulness and need of grace. However the answer was all right on that ground, and the Lord says to him to this effect, “Thou hast answered right; this do and thou shalt live.” But he was dead. Now the law never deals with the man as dead, and therefore in Old Testament times there never was such a thing brought out as moral death. We never find a hint that this was known in the law or even the prophets. But in the Gospels and Epistles man is treated as dead and as wanting eternal life, which the Son of God alone can give; and He gives it not by law but by grace—two totally opposed principles. Therefore it is by faith that it might be by grace; whereas the law appeals to that human ability, of which man is proud. He deems himself competent to do the will of God and thus to live. The Lord answered him, “This do and thou shalt live,” but there is where he was wrong. He could not do it, and on that ground therefore he could not live. He was dead though he did not know it himself, morally dead while he lived. “But he, willing to justify himself,” not to justify God but himself, “said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor?” This is the constant resource of a heart that is not obedient. It makes difficulties and starts objections. “Who is my neighbor?” One would have thought this a very simple question to decide, who one's neighbor was, but the plainest things are just those which the disobedient heart is prone to overlook. Had he entered into the obedience of Jesus (1 Peter 1:2) he would not have needed to ask the Lord; he would have known himself. He and all must be taught by a parable. “A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho.” This is just the course of man. From the place of blessing, Jerusalem, he goes down to that of the curse, Jericho, and there of course falls among thieves. Such is the world. Having no real unselfish love, it does not give, but violently takes where and what it can. He “fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving

him half dead.” This is just the world. “And by chance there came down a certain priest that way, and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.” There was no kindness, no purpose of love in his heart—only a concurrence of regrettable circumstances for the poor man: it was not the priest's matter. There was no grace active there, and so the priest, this highest expression of the law of God, goes that way, “and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.” He did not know who his neighbor was any more than the lawyer: self always blinds. Surely he ought to have known; but the law never gives right motives. It claims right conduct from those who have not right motives, in order to show that they are thoroughly and inwardly wrong. By the law is the knowledge of sin; it is never the power of holiness. The law is said to be the strength of sin. It simply shows a man his duty, but convicts him that he does not practice it. So with the Levite. “Likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.” He was next the priest in point of position, according to the law; but he looks on the man and does not recognize his neighbor any more than the priest. He too passed by on the other side. “But a certain Samaritan,” who had nothing to do with the law at all, “as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him he had compassion on him, and went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine.” There was grace before his eyes which had won his heart, and accordingly be at once finds out his neighbor. Love sees clearly, whatever the heathens may dream. The law merely speaks of his neighbor to a man without heart, who has not ears to hear or eyes to see his neighbor; but grace gives eyes, and ears, and heart. The Samaritan accordingly, when he sees him, seeks him with the suited provision of grace for the future as well as the present. “He set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.” Thus the righteousness of the law was fulfilled in him who walked not after the flesh but after the Spirit. This was precisely the way of grace. It was so that God sent His Son in quest of those who were fallen among thieves, who were more than half dead. They were wholly dead; and the Son of God gave not only all that He had but Himself. He far exceeded all that man or a creature could do. Only God could so humble Himself and so love; only He could work suitably to His humiliation and His love. And not only does this Samaritan do all the good he can, but he takes measures that when he himself goes away, the needy one shall be taken care of adequately. “And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.” It is the provision of grace which not only furnishes the blessing with all freeness, but secures it fully when the giver is no longer here. And Jesus will repay when He comes again. He took care Himself of the sinner when He was in the world. He takes care of him now that he is brought in at His sole charge; and when He comes again, all will be repaid. “Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among thieves? And he said” —even this lawyer, because man has a conscience— “He that shewed mercy on him.” Consequently it is not law that can avail. The great transition then is made plain to all who hear. Mercy, and mercy alone, can suit a lost man; but mercy is distasteful because it exalts God; whereas law is used by man to exalt himself and his capacity. It is only when we believe our own ruin, perhaps after efforts under law, that mercy first saves our souls and then opens our eyes and makes us see a neighbor in each needy soul, without asking Who is he? Mercy makes us feel every one that wants our help and compassion to be our neighbor; whereas the spirit of legalism contents itself with asking, “Who is my neighbor?” Without Christ, law merely acts upon the natural man; though it shows a man his duty, it never gives him power or heart to do it. The spirit of grace alone gives divine motive and power. “What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh,” &c. Grace has shone in Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost works according to the same grace in those who have received Jesus, who are not under law but under grace.

Notes on Luke, Luke 10:17-24, Notes on

The seventy come back, when their mission was ended and their testimony given, saying, “Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.” This was a great witness of Messiah's power. Men in Israel always looked, and of course especially the faithful, for the manifestation of divine power through Messiah over Satan in the world. It was not so much God as such to act directly, as through man in Israel, the Seed of the woman, the Son of David. And now what a sign and seal was given, seeing that not only did He cast out demons, but they, His servants, through His name did the same! Nevertheless, the Lord marked this the more to be a conclusory mission to the people and land, and that His Messianic glory, the object of promise, however true, was in no way the great truth that was beginning to unfold itself. Heavenly things were about to come in through His rejection and death. Therefore says He unto them, “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” It was quite true. The exaltation of Satan through man's fall was gone as it were before His eyes, and the Lord had the full vista of God's counsels in sight, the total destruction of the enemy's power. “I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” But while this was true to the Lord's vision who sees things that are not as though they were, suggested by His disciples' casting demons out of men; there were things even better than these, though He fully owned what there was then. “Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” He openly confirms what He had given. There was thus authority to trample upon the well-known symbols of Satan's craft and torment for man, and over all the power of the enemy, whatever it might be. They were delivered from all calculated to injure; “nothing shall by any means hurt you.” They belonged to the Savior. “Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” To belong to heaven, to be called to that seat of divine light and blessing, was a far greater prize: the rest was Satan's power broken on the earth, a sample of the earthly kingdom, and the powers of the age to come. But a rejected Christ opens the door into the presence and glory of God. This was a matter of far more real and profound joy—that their names were written in heaven. To this the Jews were utterly blind, as man is still; for his cool assumption of heaven, as if it were a natural end for man, is even more evil and presumptuous. Present power and authority are great in his eyes; heavenly things are little, because they are distant and unseen. Nevertheless they are nigh to faith which beholds them, knowing that they are the great reality, and that present things are only the arena of sin and folly and distance from God. But the disciples must learn this; therefore the Lord would lead their hearts into this deeper joy: “rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.”

“In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” Now in a legal state of things the wise and prudent have their importance. The law admits of angelic media, and supposes human administrators; it desires things in due order, regulated in a way that commends itself to men's reason and conscience. But grace meets a ruined world when all this is set aside; and Jesus, rejected by those who boasted of the law, rejoices in the grace of God, and thanks Him as the Father, whom the law never revealed. He was Father in His own divine relationship to the Son, entirely outside the ken of men or the scope of their thoughts or imaginings. The Jews who had the law never saw the reality of divine relationship. It was dimly couched under various obscure forms and terms in the Old Testament. For all through God was a veiled One, dwelling in the thick darkness, not revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This is come out clearly in and through Jesus our Lord; as also light and incorruptibility for men through the gospel, not through the law. In the law it was simply one

God, the Jehovah-God of Israel, and He only behind the intricate barriers of the Levitical system. But the gospel shows the veil rent, and, through Him who went down to the cross, the Father known by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Thus Christianity supposes the full revelation of the true God and the persons of the Godhead. Hence it was impossible to have a distinct or full, if any, knowledge of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost under the law. And it may be a question how far those who are in the spirit of the law enter into it fully now; they may be orthodox, and recognize the general certainty of it; but this is a very different thing from entering into and enjoying it practically as the known truth and blessing of the soul.

Our Lord Jesus then, perfect in everything and with divine knowledge of all, says, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast bid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.” It was no longer a question of Israel and the land; neither are wisdom and prudence of account now. Things that are highly esteemed among men are judged as an abomination in the sight of God. He had revealed His mind unto babes. Clearly this was grace. There was no claim; and babes would have seemed the very last persons to whom God would have revealed what was beyond the wise and prudent, what the vulture's eye had not seen. “Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.” It was His pleasure, He took complacency in His own love. And grace does not find but makes objects proper to itself and for God's glory.

Grace creates, the law does not. It does not give a nature capable of enjoying God, nor can it give an object, still less one worthy of God Himself to rest on; it can only press a claim on man from God. But grace does all this and more through Jesus, who both gives us a nature capable of enjoying God and is also Himself the object to be enjoyed.

Hear how He presents Himself even here: “All things are delivered to me of my Father.” It is not now merely the land of Israel or the Jewish people, but “all things;” the Son of man with all things handed up to Him—a higher glory even than dominion over all peoples and tongues. (Dan. 7) It is the universe put under Him; and this because He is the Son of God. “All things are delivered to me of my Father.” It is not merely the Ancient of days giving the universal kingdom under the heaven to the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven; but the rejected man on earth, revealing Himself as the Son of God, the Son of man, who is in heaven, as is said elsewhere, to whom His Father has delivered all things. We see not yet all things put under Him. But He speaks of a far deeper blessing and glory than even this universal inheritance. “No man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father.” He is a divine person—the glory of His person is unfathomable; it is for the Father alone to know and delight in, though for us to know it unknown. No man knoweth; indeed it is not merely no man, but “no one knoweth who the Son is, but the Father: and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him.” It is clear that none but the Son knows of Himself the Father. But it is not merely true that the Son knows the Father, for He reveals Him to others— “he to whom the Son will reveal him.” This is Christianity; and to lead on the souls of the disciples from their Jewish expectations to the heavenly and divine truths of Christianity is the object of the Lord Jesus henceforth, as of the Spirit afterward. It is remarkable that it is said, “no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father,” but it is not added he to whom He will reveal Him. Thus God envelops the Lord Jesus as it were with a divine guard against the prying curiosity of the creature; and if the Son humbled Himself in grace to man, God forbids that man should approach that, as it were, holy ground. Not even with unsandaled feet can he tread there. God reserves the knowledge of the Son for Himself; He alone really penetrates the mystery of the Only-begotten. The Son does reveal the Father; but man's mind always breaks itself to pieces when he attempts to unravel the insoluble enigma of Christ's personal glory. All that the saint can do is to believe and worship. No man knows the Son but the Father. On the other hand it is our deepest comfort that the Son not only knows the Father but reveals Him. The revelation of the Father in and by the Son is the joy and rest of faith. It is true even of the babes. The little children () and not merely the young men and the fathers, know the Father (1 John 2); and this falls in with these unspeakably blessed words of our Lord in Luke a. “And he turned him unto his disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see: for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.” Thus, the Lord Jesus, while He is preparing them for greater things, fully owns the blessedness of the present.

Notes on Luke, Luke 10:1-16, Notes on

The mission of the seventy is peculiar to Luke. It has in itself a character of grace about it, though really on its rejection the harbinger of imminent judgment to Israel. all things are now made manifest since the transfiguration of the Lord. The former mission preceded that great event and is given elsewhere; but Luke adds the mission of the seventy. His death, His suffering, His rejection have all been fully announced, and accordingly His departure from the world, because of the inability of Israel or even of the disciples to profit by His presence in Israel, and then judgment of all the forms of human nature in hindering the following of Christ or His service. That we have had. Now as concluding the testimony to Israel, this new mission is sent out to announce not only before the revelation of His rejection, but since it, the kingdom of God.

“After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also and sent them two and two before his face, into every city and place whither he himself would come.” The Lord's heart felt for the people as He said, “The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few.” Now there are more laborers raised up by far as the pressure of the need was before His soul. “Pray ye therefore, the Lord of the harvest.” Nevertheless He was encouraging prayer, because before He told them to pray He is Himself appointing these seventy to go forth. He was the Lord of the harvest. At the same time He warns them what they were to expect. “Go your ways, behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.” He well knew, and they were to know, what man was, even in Israel. Flesh was completely judged. The Jews are no longer regarded as the lost sheep of Israel, but as wolves with themselves to prey on as lambs.

But there is another thing. While they were thus sent forth in a spirit of grace, exposed to the evil of man, they were to go with the full consciousness of His glory. “Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes, and salute no man by the way.” The danger was imminent, the duty was urgent. There was no need of preparation and resources from without; they were entitled to count on the power of His name providing for them in Israel; for He was the King, let men reject as they might. So on the other hand, there was no time for salutation. Such courtesy is all very well for the earth and for the present time; but eternity was coming more and more distinctly before the minds of the servants as it was fully before the Lord. “Salute no man by the way.” Deeper interests were at stake, and everything that would occupy with that which might be dispensed with was only a hindrance.

“And into whatsoever house ye enter, first say, Peace be to this house.” Thus there was the full word of grace sent forth to them. At the same time so much the worse for those who rejected it. Nevertheless the peace should turn to them again. It was not war; they had nothing to do with that. “If the son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon it: if not, it shall turn to you again.” Peace rejected was returned to themselves. “And in the same house remain, eating and drinking such things as they give: for the laborer is worthy of his hire.” There was to be no covetousness, no self-seeking; but, casting themselves upon their allegiance of heart to the Messiah, they were to take such things as were given. While the Messiah acknowledges the worthiness of the laborer, the laborer is worthy of his hire. Those that were of Him would feel it and own it. They were not to go from house to house. This would be derogatory to His glory because it might be charged with a seeming indulgence of self-seeking. The grand point was the solemn claim of the Lord Jesus in Israel.

“And into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you: and heal the sick that are therein, and say unto them, The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” There was no want of power, but the word was, “The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” This they were to say to them. It was not a question of miraculous exhibition to strike the mind or eye, or anything for present life merely, but “the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” “But into whatsoever city ye enter, and they receive you not, go your ways out into the streets of the same, and say, Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you.” Thus the rejection of this mission would be most serious, and the very measure of grace out of which it springs would make unbelief the more perilous, and the judgment of it more peremptory. “Even the very dust of your city, which cleaveth on us, we do wipe off against you: notwithstanding be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” It would not alter the truth. They might reject, but the kingdom of God bad come nigh unto them.

“But I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom, than for that city. Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works had been done in Tire and Sidon, which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. But it shall be more tolerable for Tire and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.” This is a solemn principle much too easily and too often forgotten. People are apt to pity the heathen and to think of distant lands; but while it is well for those who are thoroughly rejoicing in the Lord to feel for those who want Him, there cannot be a greater delusion than to suppose that when the judgment comes, men as such will be better off, e.g., in England than they are in Tartary. No doubt, wherever there is faith in a rejected Christ, it will bring into heavenly glory; but the rejection of Christ when He was on earth, or now that He is in heaven, is fatal. More particularly the rejection of a heavenly Christ is ruinous; even then the Lord could say it should be more tolerable for Tire and Sidon at the judgment than for you. Not that Israel was not privileged; but privileges despised or misused bring only a deeper perdition upon those who reject or pervert them.

Therefore it is that these cities rise up before the Lord. It was bad enough for the cities Chorazin and Bethsaida, inasmuch as there had been mighty works done in them and they had not listened, and the Lord said, “If the mighty works had been done in Tire and Sidon which have been done in you, they had a great while ago repented, sitting in sackcloth and ashes.” Israel were more guilty than the heathen, and the Israel of Christ's day peculiarly so. No heathen had ever listened to such a testimony. To refuse the word of God is to expose to the judgment of God. “It shall be more tolerable for Tire and Sidon at the judgment than for you.” And if there was one city that had even greater advantages than these, it was Capernaum, which is called His own city, where He was pleased to live and labor. And what as to it? “And thou Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven shalt be thrust down to hell” —a still more awful judgment.

But it would not be a light thing now for those who rejected the disciples any more than for those who rejected Himself. He adds, “I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom than for that city.” Mark, not merely for Tire and Sidon, but for Sodom. The Lord clothes the words of His disciples with a more awful judgment than His own, because the disciples were more liable to be despised than their Master. Men might take advantage of His disciples and say that they were only men of like passions with themselves, and had their faults, and so they had. But the question was, What was their testimony—their mission? and from whom? What were the blessings held out and what the penalties with which God menaced those who scorned them? They testified of God's kingdom at hand. There was nothing really that had ever been presented to man to compare with this. Others as prophets had borne witness of it, but avowedly from a distance; but now that it was at hand, to despise those who preached it would be to despise Jesus and God Himself, as to listen to them would be a true way of honoring Jesus.

“He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me.” It was contempt of God Himself, and this in all the painstaking of grace and loving desire that His people should possess the truth. It is still worse now where mankind refuse the gospel, because its message is the revelation not only of the kingdom, but of the grace of God that brings salvation. To put it away from the soul is to insult God in the depths of His love, and knowingly to reject His mercy for eternity. For now it is a question of heaven and hell; of eternity with God or away from Him. All depends upon receiving Christ, and the testimony that He sends. The principle of this was begun now in the mission of the disciples, although literally it was addressed to Israel in view of the kingdom. Still deeper things begin to manifest themselves; and whether it be then or now, to reject His testimony, by whomsoever it may be brought, is to reject Himself and God.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Door

John 10:7-10

IN the previous verses our Lord speaks of Himself as the Shepherd of the sheep entering the fold of Israel by the door or God-appointed means.

Here, for the best reasons and the fuller display of the grace and truth which came by Him, He presents Himself as the Door of the sheep, rather than of the fold.

" Jesus therefore said to them again, Verily, verily, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All as many as came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: through me if any one enter, he shall be saved, and he shall go in and shall go out, and he• shall find pasture. The thief cometh not but that he may steal and slay and destroy; I came that they might have life, and have [it] abundantly " (vers. 7-10).

The fold is here left aside. What could Judaism avail for the saints any more than sinners? Christ is the door of the sheep. They might be cast out like the blind man whom He caused to see. Where were they to turn, and whither go? " I am the door of the sheep." He is the entrance to the new and abiding blessings of God for His own, the entrance to the God that blessed them, yea, to the Father, as they learn in due time. He is the object of faith now more clearly than ever; as He had been truly, if dimly, since sin came into the world. All believers looked to Him that was coming, the Messiah; but now He is revealed as incomparably more.

Had any claimed the sheep? " All as many as came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them." For God protects His own. They might boast and say that they were somebody, like Theudas; they might draw after them a people in revolt like Judas of Galilee. But they were thieves and robbers; and none followed whom the Son made free, only Abraham's seed but not his children.

In ver. 9 He describes Himself in fewer words which convey far more, " I am the door." It is not merely " of the sheep "; it is for any. " I am the door: through me if any one enter, he shall be saved, and he shall go in and shall go out, and he shall find pasture." Can words be more precise or more full? Can blessing for a needy soul be more suited, rich, and secure? He is the door absolutely, away from all evil into all good.

It is Christianity in contrast with Judaism or any other earthly religion. To enter through the door is to believe on Jesus the Son of God. He that does is on His word assured of salvation; " he shall be saved." This, mark it well, is given to him that enters through Christ. No such assurance attends another than the Son of God. He is the Savior, and none else. The church consists of the saved, but cannot save: only Christ can and does. A false church may set up to save; the true church repudiates such a pretension as a lie and a blasphemy. She is but the body, He is the Head; she is the bride, He the Bridegroom. She, being true, is jealous of His honor; she rejects with horror all thought of setting herself in His place as of Satan. She has the Spirit now, as He had when here; but the Spirit does not glorify her but Him. All her privileges are in virtue of Him, and are rightly turned but to His praise.

Salvation then, as it is of God's grace, is through Christ. " Through me if any one enter, he shall be saved." It is not for the Jew only but for the Gentile also; it is for " any one." But he must enter through Christ. Through Me if any one enter, he shall be saved. He may be baptized and be lost; he may take the Lord's Supper, and be lost. If any one enter through Christ, he shall be saved. This He declares; and His words shall endure when heaven and earth pass away.

O my reader, do you believe His words? Do you believe on Himself? Unless He were what He is, unless He were Who He is, neither you nor any other sinner could be saved. But being the Son and becoming the sacrifice for sin, salvation is now open to the poorest of sinners who believes on Him. " Through me if any one enter, he shall be saved." He is the door; and He tells you so. Have you heard Him and entered? Have you taken Him at His word? This is to believe. Do you then believe on the Son of God?

Nor is salvation all that He is now giving. He gives liberty: or as He says here of " any one " that enters through Him, " he shall go in and shall go out." It is in contrast with the penned-up condition of the sheep under Judaism. The law genders bondage; it could not confer freedom. Only the truth, the Son, makes free; and " if the Son therefore makes you free, ye shall be free indeed." So here " he shall go in and shall go out." This is divine emancipation, to us without money or price, to God at the cost of His Son.

There is yet more. For we need now, not salvation nor freedom only, but food; and this He next guarantees. He that enters through Christ " shall find pasture." As He had before taught, the best food is Himself not incarnate only, but dead for us, so that by faith we eat His flesh and drink His blood. This is what most nourishes_ the soul, communion with His death.

O my reader, turn not a deaf ear to God's glad tidings. Fear to treat such a Savior with indifference. Beware of putting off to a more convenient season. God is not mocked. To slight God's law was bad; to neglect His gospel is a great deal worse. The enemy is busy and near. " The thief cometh not but to steal and slay and destroy." This Satan loves, and his servants are many. " I came," says the Lord, " that they [believers] might have life, and have it abundantly." Here He makes a brief transition to His death and resurrection, that the saved might enjoy life, as they do now, in the power of His resurrection.

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