# Matthew - Commentaries by William Kelly

Bible Treasury: Volume 20, Healing of the Blind in the House, The

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Matthew 9:27-31

Healing of the blind was a marked work of the divine Messiah. So Isaiah predicted in his earlier announcement (chap. 35:5): “Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened"; nor was it otherwise in his yet more personal anticipation later (chap. 42:7; 61:1). So in the synagogue of Nazareth the Messiah applied the last scripture to His own service. “To-day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” Without doubt we are justified in giving the largest scope to the language employed; but the figurative in no way supersedes the literal.

Nor was there any act more characteristic of Messiah than giving the blind to see; as the testimony to His Sonship was rendered by His raising dead men (Rom. 1:4), most of all in raising Himself from the grave, after the Jews crucified and slew Him by hand of lawless men. Many a wonder had been wrought in days of old by Moses and Joshua, by Elijah and Elisha, and others; but never do we read of eyes given to a single blind man before His advent; so that the Jews justly regarded it as a special sign of the Anointed of Jehovah.

The present miracle is also peculiar to the first Gospel. There are two blind men specified: a fact which made it very suitable to him who was inspired to testify of Jehovah-Messiah to the circumcision. For it was a well-established maxim of the law for them to look for at least two witnesses. Hence the mention of the two demoniacs in Matthew's account of the last fact in chap. 8; whereas for Mark and Luke it sufficed to dwell on the more striking of the two (Mark 5, Luke 8). A similar principle applies also to the two blind whom Matthew shows healed at Jericho (chap. 20:29-34: compare Mark 10 and Luke 18).

As the Lord then was quitting the scene of raising up the Jewish ruler's daughter, two blind men followed him, crying aloud and saying, Have mercy on us, Son of David. Even Mark and Luke record the like appeal in their account of a similar miracle at the close. In all cases it strikingly attests that He was owned as the Messiah, pre-eminently that Son of David Who alone could avail those so afflicted. Thus they could with assurance appeal to Him on the ground of plain and positive warrant of scripture— “Have mercy on us, Son of David.”

Even the Jewish leper of chap. 8 made no such appeal; still less the centurion, as recorded next. Nor do we find it in the general account of the healed, any more than the particular case of Peter's mother-in-law in the same chapter. The call of those imperiled in the boat during the tempest on the lake was, “Lord, save us: we perish.” When the demoniacs cried out, it was “What have we to do with thee, Son of God? It was not the paralytic that cried to the Lord (chap. 9), but Jesus (seeing their faith) said to him, Child, be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven. Even Jairus did not so address Him on Whom he counted for his dying daughter; nor of course did the woman who only approached behind and touched the fringe of His garment.

On the other hand in Matt. 15:22-28 we have the converse, so full of instruction in the ways of God. The Canaanitish woman, real as her faith was, failed to receive the answer she sought or indeed any at all because at first she called amiss. The grace of the Son of David to the distressed of His beloved people is a clear and blessed encouragement for a Jew; but what had a Canaanite to expect from Him? When He brings in the power of His kingdom by-and-by, it will not be as it was in the day of His humiliation, and as it had been ever since the entrance of Abram. “The Canaanite was then in the land” (Gen. 12:6); “the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land” (Gen. 13:7). Even Judah in the days of Joshua failed to purge his portion of that accursed race: those of the hill country were driven out, but not those of the valley. And so it was for others yet less. But the sad issue to their ruin was that the children of Israel dwelt among the Canaanites,” etc. (Judges 3:5).

When the kingdom by-and-by is in Messiah's hand, “there shall be no more a Canaanite in the house of Jehovah of hosts” (Zech. 14:21). Was it then hopeless for the woman of Canaan? By no means; but He answered her not a word, when she cried substantially as the blind men, On that ground judgment for the Canaanite is predicted rather than mercy; and the disciples had nothing better to say than “Send her away, for she crieth out after us.” This the gracious Lord did answer with a word that cheered her tried spirit. “I was not sent (said He) but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Therefore there was an answer to the blind who so cried out, and none for her as yet; for she was not only a Gentile but of a race specially cursed (Gen. 9:25). She drops accordingly a claim of relationship valid for the most wretched of Israel, but wholly void for her, and paid homage, saying, Lord, help me. Then He answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs. The truth fully burst on her, and she submitted to it. Her faith, already real, threw off its hindrance and became great. She abandons claim, for she had none; she confesses sovereign grace, and receives the blessing at once. She said, Yea, Lord; for even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their master's table. Then the Lord answered her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt.

This helps to give the emphasis of the miracle in our chapter. And when the Lord came into the house, the blind came to Him, and He said, Believe ye that I am able to do this? and they say in reply, Yea, Lord, So it was in that day, and so it will be for the people by-and-by. Jehovah will bring the blind with a deeper blindness by a way that they know not. In paths that they know not will He lead them, when He will make darkness light before them, and crooked places straight. In the day that is coming the blind will look to Jehovah-Jesus that they may see; as we see a little earnest of it in the two who followed into the house, and confessed their faith. How graciously Messiah touched their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it to you! And their eyes were opened.

Has this no echo of comfort and blessing for you, my reader? Granted that you have eyes to see naturally; but your lack is of the deepest. You see not Jesus for your soul, nor believe in Him. If you too are Gentiles, the gospel is expressly sent to you to open your eyes, and turn you from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. This is much more and better even than the boon the Messiah gave the blind Israelites. It is the fruit of yet richer grace and of His own unfathomable sufferings. It is what the love of God sends to the poorest of sinners

through the redemption that is in Christ. How blessed to see the Son and to believe in Him, and have eternal redemption! May it be your portion now through faith I For this cause is it of faith that it may be according to grace. It is not your righteousness, for then it were of works; it is God's righteousness founded on the redemption of Christ, unto all, and upon all that believe.

Bible Treasury: Volume 20, Daughter of Jairus Raised, The

Matthew 9, Mark 5, Luke 8

A great request was now laid at the feet of Jesus. The petitioner was Jairus ruler of the synagogue. His daughter, a maiden of twelve years, was dying. “But come” said her father, “lay Thy hand upon her and she shall live.” Nor did our meek Master turn a deaf ear, but arose and followed him.

The dying maiden was a striking type of the daughter of Zion, for whose sake Messiah was here. And the Jewish ruler expressed his faith in engaging His gracious presence and power to restore his daughter at the last gasp.

On the way the woman with a bloody flux for twelve years touched His garment and was healed. And the Lord not only yielded to her deed, but drew her out from her hiding, and sealed her faith and confession with His open approval to her better blessing. It is not otherwise with the Lord now, as we have proved who have gone to Him in our depth of need in this interval, since He came as Messiah to be sought by Israel, and before He reaches the daughter of His people, not sick only but dead. Grace has met us to the uttermost, not merely immediate healing for such as have touched Him on His way, but clearance away of all fear and doubt that we might taste how gracious He is and rest in peace through His word.

Yet this created a delay which must have tried most severely the importunate Jairus. And while the Lord was yet speaking to the healed woman, one comes from the ruler's house saying, Thy daughter is dead: trouble not the teacher. But an answer was given to nourish his drooping faith, Fear not; only believe, and she shall be made well.

So it will be in the day that hastens. Unbelief will do its deadly work among the mass of the Jews. But the desperate condition of the chosen people will draw down the action of grace; and faith will, according to God's word, look to Him that loves to heal, and to Him that smote to bind up; and He will in due time raise them up and cause them to live before Him. Whether it be the long and desperately tried woman or the maid of Israel, faith alone enjoys the blessing. And justly so; for faith renounces all dependence on self and honors God and His Son, giving credit for love as great as the power, and Christ's word as unfailing as either. Faith therefore purifies the heart, as well as relieves and assures it.

Here the Lord, when come to the house, suffered none to enter save chosen witnesses, Peter, James, and John, with the father and mother of the maiden. As for all the rest who were weeping and bewailing, He put them out when they derided His saying, “Weep not: she is not dead but sleepeth.” They believed their senses, not His word; and the scornful shall not see the blessing. But He took hold of her hand and called, saying, Maiden, arise. Then her spirit returned (for it was gone), and she rose up immediately; and He directed food to be given her. So in due time will the same Lord raise up the people from the valley of dry bones, as the prophets assure us, no matter how many say, Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost: we are clean cut off. As Jehovah hath spoken, He will perform; and in that day shall it be known through all the earth.

Quickening was no strain on the Lord of glory. It belonged to the Son as to the Father; and now that the Son was here a man to do His will, the Father gave Him to have life in Himself, showing Him all things that Himself doeth. Of these none was more characteristic than awakening the dead and quickening them. His dignified calm is remarkable here as on all such occasions. He took the dead child by the hand, and called; and she arose immediately. He graciously thought of her bodily need, which at such a moment even parents might not unnaturally overlook. Truly “He hath done all things well,” and as none other; though many another did like works or even greater in His name, which exalts Him as much or more than if He had done them all Himself.

And has this tale of the Holy Spirit no bearing on you who read these lines—dead to God while you live? Nay, it was written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His name (John 20:31). How many have heard His voice, since He was here, in the written word! For the hour now is (John 5:25), as the Lord so solemnly avers, that souls hearing Him may not come into judgment but pass out of death into life.

Leave not such an issue uncertain. You might well despair if it turned on you, as men fancy in the pride and impenitence of their hearts. But the life you need is wholly and solely in the Son of God; and God is calling you to believe that Jesus is He, and that He gives eternal life to every believer on Him through His word.

It is “the dead” who are now called to hear; and they that hear, the Savior assures us, shall live. Clearly they are not dead physically, but in trespasses and sins; and they are called to hear Him and live. For life is not in the first man whether profane or religious; it is in the Second; and faith by grace receives it. For such a boon, morality is as vain as ordinances. Those that live do live to God, and honor His institutions; but believers guided by God's word and Spirit testify to Christ as their life, and reject every other dependence as a destructive error and a cheat. He is the way, the truth, and the life, as He Himself declared; and so it is in John 5 with His “verily, verily.” Woe is his who despises Him or sets up a rival in His stead. “Whosoever denieth the Son hath not the Father; he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.” And this is the promise that He hath promised us, even eternal life! It is far better than to be raised to natural life as Jairus' daughter was, though He Who raised her is the same Who quickens those who believe now, and Israel from the dust of death by-and by. Fear not; only believe.

Bible Treasury: Volume 20, Woman Healed and Sent Away in Peace, The

Here we have a living picture of a soul smitten incurably for man, every effort fruitless, all medicine and physicians in vain, her resources spent, herself nothing bettered but rather grown worse.

But faith cometh by hearing; and, having heard of Jesus, she carne in the crowd behind, and touched His garment, or, as Matthew and Luke say, its hem. Faith is always sure of the Savior; it may have as feeble knowledge of itself as of Him, but it does not doubt in Whom the virtue lies. Much remains to be learned and corrected, but it goes straight to its object. For she said, If I but touch His clothes, I shall be made whole. And faith does not fail to receive its answer through grace. Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she knew in her body that she was healed of the scourge.

But the Lord knew the whole case better still, and meant for her no half blessing. She did not question His power; she seems to have connected it in her mind with His person and surroundings physically. She must learn that His soul acted with it, that His mind and heart were engaged in the blessing. It was not a charm, as heathenism made it in thought; nor was it even dependent on His bodily presence, as Jews were apt to conclude. He Who had deigned to become the Servant of divine love, in a world where sin reigned and had wrought fell ruin, would show her the kindness of God.

Touching the hem of His garment stealthily, she would, if the case had been left there, have ever felt that it was underhand and surreptitious. She did not as yet know God, though availing herself of Messiah's healing energy. The Lord could not in his grace consent to so partial a mercy. He is entitled, and He loves, to bless fully all whom He blesses at all; and “him that cometh to Me,” said He elsewhere, “I will in no wise cast out.” So fully did He come as a servant, that He was here only to do the Father's will, not His own. Whosoever came, He received. And the full blessing He gave from first to last; He would lose nothing, but raise up at the last day.

So even at this day He not only forgives transgression, and covers sin, and imputes no iniquity, but takes guile from the spirit. This the healed woman needed; this the Lord gave. So immediately perceiving in Himself the power from Himself gone forth, He turned round in the crowd and said, Who touched my clothes? The disciples, as so commonly, misunderstood; and Peter, with the rest, talked of the crowds hemming Him with their pressure. But the Lord alone knew in the highest way, that a certain one did touch Him; and He looked about to see who had done this. It was not that He could not have named her, but to give her opportunity to confess the truth. How little she knew the grace that filled Him! For frightened and trembling, conscious of what had been done upon her, she came, and fell down before Him, and told Him all the truth. How little she knew that such was the condition of her better blessing! And He said to her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole: go away in peace, and be well of thy scourge. How transporting to her as yet confused and anxious spirit! What solid abiding comfort for her to be thus in His presence, and to have all out before Him, and to know Him more than confirming all she had got, with a message of peace unfailing for all chat is to come!

Such is the Lord to every need that is brought to Hine; such is He roost of all to that deepest need, which demanded not power only but propitiation in His suffering to the uttermost, the death of the cross. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever. As He does not change, among human shiftings and men's various and strange doctrines, so neither dues His power, nor His love. But to be blessed fully we must meet Him face to face, and know from His own lips grace given to us. It was an immense mercy to have the mischief stayed, the living death arrested; but how touch more to hear His voice banishing all fear and sending her forth in peace, as we pass through a world of strife, and spite of a fallen nature which ever tends to pleasures that war in our members

There may he crowds around the Lord. He is not occupied with them, but passing through. The touch of faith, however uninformed or feeble, arrests Him at once. But a blessing, though immediate and rich, is not enough to satisfy him. The Blesser will be known, that faith may have a blessing, good measure, pressed down, shaken up, and running over: so does God give, not man. If it is for His glory that all be clear and confessed, it is also the condition of peace by faith. When silence is kept, the bones wax old through roaring all the day long, and the Lord's hand is heavy night as well as day, so that moisture is changed into summer's drought. But peace is known, when one's sin is acknowledged to Him; this cannot be while one's iniquity is hid. “I said, I will confess my transgressions to the LORD; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” So it was, so it is, so it must be, as long as grace brings sinners to God. Nature is all wrong in fearing that the Lord begrudges blessing, and the fullest, and forever. It is no question of our merits who have but sins and death and wrath as we are naturally. It is His grace that saves; and His grace would have us to know that He makes salvation assured with all His heart.

Bible Treasury: Volume 20, Paralytic Healed, The

Matt. 9, Mark 2, Luke 5

THE new and precious feature which betrays itself at the point in this narrative of Matthew is the growing opposition and hatred of the religious leaders toward the Lord. It is not, as in chap. 8., a certain scribe ignorant of himself and self-confident who proposes to follow Him whithersoever He may go. In chap. 9. the scribes begin with saying within themselves, This man blasphemeth; and the Pharisees end with their own blasphemy—that it was in virtue of the prince of the demons He was casting out the demons. Through the darkening unbelief the Lord gives His blessed and blessing testimony.

The first incident recorded is the cure of the paralytic as He was speaking the word to a crowd at home in His own city—Capernaum. This malady aptly sets forth the effect of sin in destroying power; as leprosy in its unclean taint before God or man. The occasion was the house filled even beyond the door, as Mark tells us; which accounts for the difficulty the four bearers had of getting near. Eastern buildings, however, furnished easy access to the roof; and this they uncovered, and let down the sick man on his pallet through the tiles, as Luke tells us. The Lord saw their faith and says to the paralytic “son” (or “child” rather), “Thy sins be forgiven.”

It was indeed a startling word; and so it was meant to be. The Lord laid bare the root of the evil, and dealt with it at once fundamentally. He alone could thus speak. Not even an apostle approaches its force. It was proper to Him Who was alike Jehovah and Son of Man. The men learned in the law were shocked. They unbelievingly reasoned in their hearts to His dishonor; but He, the ordained Judge of quick and dead, read their hearts as He does, those of all, and answered their unuttered and evil reasoning by the question— “Which is easier, to say, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power (or, authority) on earth to forgive sins (He

saith to the paralytic), Arise, and take up thy bed, and go to thy house." And so the man did immediately before them all. And the crowds at least were filled with fear and said, We have seen strange things to-day.

Let me plead with you who have sins and cannot avoid foreboding of judgment. Why should not you take hold of such words of divine grace? They are for every soul of man that believes. They were not limited to that age or race or land. They are written in the imperishable word of God, for guilty men wherever they be who hear, that they may believe and be saved. Therefore did He come not yet to judge, but to say still, Thy sins are forgiven. Miracles may cease; but the love never fails which forgives sins to every needy sinner that believes. And if Jews reject, it but gives the opportunity to open the door freely to the Gentile, far and wide. Is God of Jews only? Is He not of Gentiles also? Yea, writes the inspired Hebrew of Hebrews, of Gentiles also. Fear not then, but believe.

"The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins." This the scribes learned in the law did not believe; for they knew not Him, nor the God Who sent Him They would not have disputed that God forgive sins. They rebelled against the Lord's exercise of any such authority. He claimed it as Son of man, exercised it on behalf of the paralytic, and gave Him immediate powers to rise take up his couch, and walk, before their eyes, as His disproof of their evil doubts, His witness outwardly of that precious boon. He had overcome Satan for this life and was dividing his spoils.

But more: Christ has accomplished redemption since. He took His seat on the right hand of the Majesty on high when He had made purification of sins. Risen from the dead, He has told us that all power (or authority) has been given to Him in heaven and on earth. He has vanquished finally; He has borne God's judgment of sin on the cross; He has borne our sins in His own body on the tree. Is there not all the more urgent ground for you to believe, and all the deeper encouragement for you to confide? He has sent out His servants expressly into all the world, and told them to preach the gospel or glad tidings to the whole creation. But He solemnly warns that he that disbelieves shall be condemned (or damned).

Oh, deceive not your soul, nor slight the Savior Who is the Lord of glory. If He humbled Himself to become not only man but a sacrifice to God for sin, is there not the best of all grounds for you to bow, and bless and worship Him, even as the Father Who gave Him? And how many, once unbelievers, have become the most devoted of His servants like Saul of Tarsus, afterward the great apostle? Be not like the proud scribes or bitter Pharisees, who trusted themselves, rejected Him, and perished everlastingly.

Power to walk aright and glorify God is inseparable from knowing your sins forgiven. Till you believe the gospel, you are as powerless as the paralytic was on his couch. When you have redemption in Him through His blood, the forgiveness of your offenses, you can enjoy God's love in Christ, His counsels and His ways; and the Holy Spirit will strengthen you to walk worthily of Him, and of the calling wherewith you were called. Ability to walk as a Christian follows faith in Christ and His grace in forgiveness. They reverse God's way and Christ's word whose effort is so to walk as to be forgiven. It is all vain, because it is self and unbelief: a flame of their own kindling.

And this shall they have of God's hand: they shall lie down in sorrow.

See then that ye look to Him, Who, if He is exalted now, is still the Savior. For God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. If you believe not, you will assuredly be judged by Him and lost forever. So His word declares plainly.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Demoniac Mute

Matt. 9:32-34

This chapter as a whole shows us not only divine power in goodness displayed in Jesus as in chap. 8; but how it was received by those who had religious reputation among the Jews. The more He wrought in grace, the less acceptable was the Messiah. Did He forgive the sins of the paralytic? Scribes within themselves resented it as blasphemy. But He who read their hearts answered their wicked unbelief by bidding the man arise, take up his couch, and retire to his house.

So the call of the tax-gatherer to follow Him, and the defense of the disciples to the fault-finding followers of John and the Pharisees, vindicated God's grace. New wine needs new skins. The condition of God's ancient people was, like that of the ruler's daughter, one of death; but He Who went to raise her up, and at length did so, was open to the touch of faith which got healing at once. Two blind men that appealed to His mercy as Son of David received their sight at His hand and word. These were but samples of what He could and would do for Israel, if there had been faith; but the leaders were increasingly hostile, whatever might be the marvel of the crowds, and His fame spread in all that land.

There remained a final proof. " But as these were going out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed by a demon. And the demon having been cast out, the dumb spoke; and the crowds wondered, saying, It was never seen thus in Israel. But the Pharisees said, He casteth out the demons by [or, in the power of] the prince of the demons " (vers. 32-34).

Nothing slackened the gracious dealing of our Lord, so long as the door was open. The blind who now saw were no sooner going out, than men brought to him a man not only dumb but a demoniac. Luke 11:14 presents the awful peculiarity of the case yet more precisely: " And he was casting out a demon, and it was dumb." It was not simply the human infirmity: a dumb demon possessed the man. This made it altogether beyond ordinary resource. A spirit evil or good has power that man cannot resist. As with the unhappy man, so with the unhappy people and especially their religious chiefs. At length the people had not a true word to utter of their divine Messiah. His great grace, and their great need, drew out first from the leaders the imputation of blasphemy. Now it reaches a lower depth still opening to devour them. For what can be more heinous than to impute to the Holy One the power of the wicked one? Blasphemers themselves they charge blasphemy against Him, and under Satan's power they impute it to the energy of the prince of demons that He cast out the demons.

Before they were carried to Babylon, Israel had totally failed as Jehovah's servant. Their witness was not to Him but to graven and molten images, to which they said, Ye are our gods. Who so blind and deaf as they to whom Jehovah had laid bare His mighty arm and from the heavens made them hear His voice as no other people ever did? And therefore Jehovah gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers. Now

they had Jehovah Messiah present in their midst in the power of beneficent goodness, and in a grace which anticipated the kingdom; and their alienation became yet more deadly. The same unbelief which sought after strange gods (only not nonentities because they were demons), rejected and blasphemed their Anointed, Who was in truth Jehovah. Where not thus active, the people were just as the demoniac mute. Under the power of the enemy they were dumb for Him Whose praise fills the heavens as it will the earth and all the creation.

How is it with you, dear reader? Are you confessing with your mouth the Lord Jesus? Blessed is it, when also the heart believes on Him to righteousness; for then, and not otherwise, is confession made to salvation. He Who created man is Lord and Redeemer. God calls you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus shall you be saved—thus only; for there is none other name under heaven to save. Other refuge is vain. Other means are a snare and a lie. He is the true God, and eternal life. For the sinner, under Satan's power, only He can avail; but He avails at once and unfailingly. It is true that He is not here, but risen. It is true that the Jews slew Him, hanging Him on a tree; but God exalted Him by His right hand as Leader and Savior, accepting His death as sacrifice, the only efficacious sacrifice, for sins. The grace now shown exceeds; it reigns through righteousness unto life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Do you speak of your subjection to Satan's power? Looking to Jesus, life is given. He also Himself likewise took part in blood and flesh, that through death He might annul him that hath the might of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who in fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. In His name, then, resist the devil; and he will flee from you. He is a conquered enemy through Him Who bore your sins and brings you every spiritual good.

Believing in Him, how immense is the change! As living stones, you are being built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood (which Aaron's sons were only in outward form), to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. What is the worth to God now of sheep or oxen? of incense, or of first-fruits? All such things had their place before He came Who makes us to see that they are no more than the beggarly elements of the world, and that the body is of Christ. The Christian is a true worshipper, he only. They all can worship the Father in spirit and truth in the hour that now is. The multitude keeping holiday, without knowing the Father, without faith in the truth, without having the Spirit, are spurious and in the dark. The true worshippers the Father seeks at this time, who must worship God in spirit and truth, for they alone walk in the light as He is in the light. Assuredly they are no longer dumb. Does any among them suffer evil? Let him pray. Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise. May this be your lot! Grace alone can make it yours, the saving grace of God which appeared in our Lord Jesus, and blesses through faith in Him.

Bible Treasury: Volume 20, Demoniac Delivered, The

Matt. 8, Mark 5:1-20, Luke 8

There are two very different forms in which the enemy of God and man works: one which may be called extraordinary; the other far more common. It is thus for evil with the spirit that operates in the sons of disobedience, as the Holy Spirit does for good in children of obedience. The history in which the demoniac plays so conspicuous a part illustrates both. The second Gospel enters into affecting details of the man's hopeless misery, and of the Savior's gracious power; as the first is more general in the display of a present Jehovah-Messiah, taking notice of a second victim as is usual throughout (Matt. 8:28; 9:27; 20:30), the least adequate testimony to Israel. Mark and Luke graphically bring before us the more notable of the demoniacs. When the Savior was here, it would seem that Satan put forth his malignant power beyond all example. But a stronger than he was here to overcome him, take from him his whole armor wherein he trusted, and divide his spoils.

Immediately, on the Lord's quitting the ship from Capernaum to the other side of the lake, there met Him a man with an unclean spirit who had his dwelling in the tombs. None could bind him, not even with chains. Often as he had been bound with fetters and chains, the chains were rent asunder by him and the fetters shattered; and none had strength to subdue him. Continually by night and day in the tombs and in the mountains was he crying and cutting himself with stones. What a depth of unspeakably wretched and appalling degradation! Matthew adds the fierceness and danger to others; Luke, that for a long time he had worn no clothes.

The sight of the Lord Jesus even from afar arrested him, so that he ran and paid Him homage, and with a loud voice cried, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure Thee by God, torment me not. For the Lord said, Come forth, unclean spirit, out of the man. Nor was this all: He asked him, What is thy name? and got the answer, My name is Legion, for we are many. There is a fact outside human ken, on the evil side of the spiritual world, beyond measure horrible: a man with such a host of evil spirits in him as could justify the well-known name of a Roman battalion, and a man with a personal consciousness, yet also merging his personality in theirs!—Legion, for we are many!

But mighty as a spirit is, and especially when in such multitudinous and tyrannical force of evil, demons have no skeptical hardihood. They believe and shudder (James 2:19). Therefore did they beseech that He would not command them to depart into the abyss; for their sure doom was before their eyes; and they knew that when He reigns, they will be cast there, which they dreaded even now. Art Thou come hither to torment us before the time? is the cry in the first Gospel. So, when they begged to enter a great herd of swine feeding on the mountain side, the Lord gave them leave; and the swine, about two thousand, no sooner received the unclean spirits, than they rushed down the steep and were choked in the sea. It was the witness, to all that believe scripture, of the Lord's delivering power on the one hand and of Satan's destructive energy on the other. It is idle here, as everywhere, to confound possession by demons with either lunacy or disease. Either or both might be also, or neither be, and yet that possession of evil spirits. The reality was thus transparent. The effect on the swine made the objective fact undeniably plain, and the suggestion of a physical or mental derangement inexcusably false.

Nor does the Lord, to Whom all belongs below as on high, need the apology of man to justify His permission, any more than for the sickness and death, the plague and the famine, the tempest and the earthquake, which He employs providentially in this fallen world. To what purposes of grace does He not turn every one of these inflictions for such as hear His word! So doubtless it was then whether Jews or Gentiles owned the swine.

And here we face the more ordinary working of Satan's power. For when the swine-herds reported all, the whole city came to meet the Savior and besought Him to depart out of their borders! They saw the possessed that had the legion sitting, clothed, and sensible; and they were

afraid, not of Satan but of the Savior! The witnesses related what explained all as to the demoniac and the swine; but all the people round about began to beseech Him to depart!

Such is man under Satan's power ever at work, if not so terrific in appearance far more dangerous than the maddening possession in its intensest form; and none is recorded beyond Legion's. Yet his presence never so acted on their fears, as the proof of the Savior's beneficent power.

O my readers, are you under the same fatal spell? Do you dread to approach the Lord of all, the Savior for eternity of all who believe? is it Jesus you dread in your soul? Is it from His grace that you shrink back, lest you should be saved now? Consider your most perilous condition. You are slaves of Satan, children of wrath, enemies of God. What must follow as you are? Death, and judgment. So it is laid up for men as they are. Without faith on your part, baptism and the Lord's Supper, blessed as they are to faith, only aggravate your guilt. There is no Savior but the Lord Jesus, Who, once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to those that wait for Him unto salvation (in contrast with judgment, as He died a sacrifice for their sins).

Not such was the state of the delivered demoniac, who besought Him that he might be with Him. But becoming as the desire might be, the Lord had work for him to do, before that first love is gratified as it surely will be in due season: “Go to thy house unto thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee and showed thee mercy.” And he went his way and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus did for him. And he did right, though all were wondering.

Alas! wonder is not faith. Let it not be your lot to fall short of the demoniac. Delivered from the oppressive power of Satan, he was to bear witness of the gracious power of the Lord, even Jesus, shown to himself. But was it not by the hearing to produce faith in souls exposed to Satan in other ways? May you be delivered from the snare that would bid the Lord Jesus to depart. The day is fast approaching when He as King shall sit on the throne of His glory, and say to the faithless nations gathered before Him, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels.

Bible Treasury: Volume 20, Tempest and Unbelief Rebuked, The

Matt. 8, Mark 4, Luke 8

HERE is another manifestation of divine power and goodness in the Lord Jesus here. below. Matthew wished to take it out of its historic place, after the parables of chap. 13. were uttered, for that express purpose; or rather the Spirit Who employed him, if one may so say reverently.

“And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves; but he was asleep. And the disciples came to him and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish” (Matt. 8:23-25).

Thus did the gracious Lord test the faith of His followers, that they might confide in His supremacy over all need, His concern for them in all dangers and difficulties. Was not He with them Whom God had sent to save? Was not the Reconciler not only of all believers but of all the universe, in the ship? He, Who was come to lay the basis the new creation and everlasting glory? It He could not perish Who was here to rescue from everlasting destruction all that look to Him in faith, how weak and unworthy to wrong His love as if He would leave them to perish? Yet appearances were allowed to prove their hearts. The sudden violent squall, the sea raging, the little ship or boat on which they had gone aboard, the waves beating in so that the ship was already filled, the Lord asleep (not on a pillow but the boat-cushion)!

It was assuredly perilous increasingly, with but one ground of confidence: Jesus was there. But this to faith should have been everything; and it would have been, had they looked away from the wind, sea, and all else, to Him. When they woke him, it was but with the appeal, “Lord, save us: we perish.” Even on the resurrection day they were yet more sad and despairing, if not blinded by alarm, because He had bowed to death and suffered on the cross; and He had then to reproach them as senseless and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets spoke. He, despised and rejected of men, had only to speak the word, and the elements least controllable by man obeyed His voice, Who stooped so low in love, yet was their Creator. “And He arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still; and the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.” But He said also, “Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith”?

Sinner, or saint, what a word of truth to both! No doubt there is a difference immense, between him that believes and the unbeliever, for the one is in the hand of the Father and the Son; the other lies like the whole world in the wicked one. Yet the unbelief which in the latter resists the Holy Spirit fatally, so far as it works, dishonors the Lord and injures the believer; and scripture abounds with proofs of both, that each may respectively be warned. It was certainly fear that prompted the importunate repetition which Luke records (chap. 8:24), “Master, Master, we perish.” The disciples soon learned the vanity of their alarm when He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water; though they to the end of the earthly pilgrimage need to look earnestly to Him, as His love values it, and it is due to His glory. And if a rebuke to unbelief, how strengthening to the heart when we learn afresh His faithful and effectual intervention, whatever the manner of it!

But is this nothing to you, who are perishing in sins and unbelief? The Creator of all things did not become a man save to glorify God and to bless man, as blessing could only be thus; and by nothing short of death, the death of the cross. His incarnation was not only to manifest Him in life, solely doing God's will, as it never had been on earth before, but to suffer for sins in the body God prepared for Him, that sins might be taken away by the all-sufficient sacrifice, and that believers might be sanctified, yea, perfected forever. For this Heb. 10. declares to be the fruit, of the Savior's work.

And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us. Whatever may be the good things in store for Israel when they repent and look in faith unto their pierced Messiah, the good tidings are now sent by God to any sinner, Jew or Gentile. Oh, take the place of truth, and own to God your sins and ruin, that you may not come into judgment. For His judgment (and the Lord Jesus is the Judge) is holy and righteous, and therefore must be utterly destructive of the guilty. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house (Acts 16:31). He is the object of faith set before any and all by God, that whosoever believeth may not perish, but nave everlasting life (John 3.).

Listen not to the wiles of the devil, who whispers that you are taking away from God's honor by looking to His Son, the Lord Jesus. Not so; for “he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also,” and “whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father” (1 John 2). And this is the reason why “the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son;” that all men might honor Him as the Father (John 5). Those who believe honor Him now, and have eternal life in Him, and by grace walk accordingly; but all who now dishonor the Son, by refusing His word and disbelieving. Him Who sent Him, must be raised to a resurrection of judgment which will compel them to honor Him in the solemn endless day of their everlasting ruin. So He declares Who is the way, and the truth, and the life. Sin no more against God and your own souls; but believe on Him Who by the grace of God tasted death for every one. “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, Christ Jesus a man, who gave Himself a ransom for all to be testified in due times “; and so He is to you now, that you may no longer neglect so great salvation, but believe on Him to the saving of your soul.

Bible Treasury: Volume 20, Gentile Centurion and His Servant, The

Matt. 8:5-13; Luke 7:2-10.

IN the first Gospel the leper is set immediately before the Centurion, to mark the grace at hand for the Gentile when the defiled people should reject the Messiah. So the Gospel shows from its beginning to its end. Hence it is that in its account of the Centurion (not in the corresponding narrative of Luke), the Lord declares that many should come from east and west and share the feast with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, whilst the sons of the kingdom, their seed, should be cast forth into the outer darkness with its unspeakable anguish.

In the third Gospel, which has a moral object rather than dispensational, the Holy Spirit led to placing the forgiven paralytic after the healed leper (Luke 5:13, 14, and 18-25): the two striking pictures of sin as needing divine grace to cleanse, and the known remission of sins for power to walk and serve aright. Here too, the case of the Centurion is given in its actual place, which equally fell in with the scope of the Gospel. The Lord had laid down for His disciples in a large way and wholly above human thought or feeling that blessedness which He knew in its perfection which grace calls to and forms. Hence it is no question here of scribes and Pharisees, or of those of old time, He urges the principle of God's kingdom in words which leave the Jew out of sight and instruct the man of God where and when ever he may be.

The faith of the Gentile Centurion follows, with a detail of similar propriety. His bondman was dear, yea precious, to him, but sick and about to die. Yet the Centurion did not present himself to the Lord. He came to Him only, as those are said to do themselves what they do by others. He was no heathen; he honored the Jew, low as they were, because God chose them and entrusted them with His oracles, the scriptures. Therefore did he (a rare thing in a Roman officer) love their nation, as he even built them their synagogue. And so he sent to the Lord elders of that people, who besought Him earnestly on the behalf of one so worthy in their eyes (as rare a thing in a Jewish elder).

But when the Lord was not far from the house, the Centurion sent friends to Him, saying, Lord, trouble not Thyself, for I am not worthy (adequate or qualified) that Thou shouldst come under my roof. The very grace of the Lord, which offered to come and heal the servant, awoke a deeper sense of the Lord and of himself in his heart. This was a morally right feeling in the Centurion toward One Whom he could not but regard as possessed of divine power and title; as the elders were right in their sense of the Gentile's worth and religious feeling. He was in truth a believer. This made him humble as well as reverent. He recognized in Jesus what made himself nothing, yet what encouraged him to lay at His feet his appeal for a dying slave; and this first through Jewish elders, then through friends; for what was he himself to be accounted of? Whereas He, the Lord, has but to say by a word, and his servant shall be healed. He too, a man set under authority, had soldiers under him, and says, to one Go, and he goes, to another Come, and he comes, and to his servant Do this, and he does it.

Can we wonder that the gracious Lord wondered? It was faith simple and strong, the fruit of divine grace. The word of God, for this was read and heard in the synagogue, acquainted the Centurion with God's nature and ways, as none of the Jews learned who listened with no such sense of need but claiming a monopoly of possession. Not even in Israel, the Lord said, had He found so great faith.

Those who were sent returned and found the sick man in sound health.

How is it with you who read these words? If not born of God, you are in the evil and darkness of the fall, and all the more guilty because you have heard not the law only, but the gospel from your tenderest years. Yet you have lived as if you were not a lost sinner, as if God were not a Savior, as if Christ who died for sinners was not ordained Judge of quick and dead, most of all to be dreaded by those who hear but neglect so great salvation. You are in a worse and more dangerous case than the sick slave of the Centurion. Only the breath of your nostrils severs you from death, the forerunner of the second death, the lake of fire forever. Oh! weigh the tale written to save—written by the Holy Spirit to save—a slave of sin. Christ speaks in it to you who read or hear. For Him to speak by a word is ample to save the soul that believes. And He has said many words to give you confidence notwithstanding your many sins. He gives healing, life, pardon, peace, and power. He gives all things worthy of God, all needed by man. But beware of doubting, beware of deferring. The “convenient time” never comes. Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. If you put off, beware lest you perish.

Bible Treasury: Volume 20, Jewish Leper, The

IN the first of the Gospels this is the earliest miracle given in detail: a suited testimony of Messiah to His people, a testimony that He was Jehovah in their midst acting in power and grace. Indeed even here the account is brief. The fact is in some respects all the more significant. The real state spiritually of the chosen people was no better in God's sight. The law had singled out leprosy as the standing sign of uncleanness and exclusion from His presence. Hence the more manifest was grace toward the Gentile in the action of the prophet of old, when Israel was sinking down more and more into apostacy.

But now a greater than Elisha was here. Immanuel was on earth, in the land; and this unhappy Jew prostrates himself before Him, and makes his appeal: “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.” The chosen people were morally what he was physically; but they knew it no more than they bowed to His glory. But it will dawn on the remnant by-and-by, when they shall say, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of

Jehovah.” “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.” Far different was it in the day of Messiah's visitation.

Even the leper, who did pay Him homage then, feebly apprehended the grace that was in Him “Lord, if Thou wilt.” Why question? Why doubt? Wherefore was He come, and come Himself, the Holy One, to dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips? A man, yet the King, Jehovah of Hosts! If the eyes of the blind were to be opened, and the ears of the deaf to be unstopped, and the lame to leap as a hart (and prophecy had bound up this and more with the advent of Messiah) was the leper to be an exception? Was he without the pale of mercy? The leper, abject as he was, acknowledged His power without hesitation.

But grace rises over all difficulty and applies the power to the need, however desperate; and here Luke lets us know, suitably to his own character, that the man was “full of leprosy.” But if faith was small, grace comes forth in its own immensity. “And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him.”

It was not always thus that the Lord wrought in cleansing lepers. When the ten met Him, as we hear in Luke 17, they stood afar off, and the Lord cleansed all, but touched none of them. Here we have the beautiful sign of His mercy toward Israel another day, when He will bless them with His gracious presence and heal all their diseases, as He will forgive all their iniquities.

Now, present in humiliation, His glory could not be hid. Had He been merely man under the law, there was no license to touch the leper. Jehovah Messiah was there; and however He might stoop in love, He could not deny Himself. He and He alone could touch the leper, not only undefiled, but banishing the leprosy. How manifestly it was God in Christ winning the overwhelmed heart, and blending power with grace in a way beyond all human thought! Mark tells us that He was “moved with compassion “; and indeed the act was exactly suited to express it.

But He added words, recorded in all three Gospels, of the utmost weight— “I will; be thou clean.” None on earth but He was free so to speak. His Person gave Him the right. He, Who could truly say “I am,” was entitled to say “I will.” In every other born of woman it would have been not only presumption but sin. He could say these words Who does say in John 8, “Before Abraham was, I am.” “Be thou clean” was immediately followed with power that could not be disputed. “Immediately” the man's leprosy was cleansed. The Lord Jesus spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.

It was but a sample; and, as the Lord enjoins, “for a testimony unto them.” Therefore Jesus said unto the leper, “See thou tell no man, but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded.” A greater work was needed for man before God. A deeper want than any created by disease, however fatal, lay upon Israel; but this was “for a testimony unto them.” To show himself to the priest ought to have raised the question there, if his lips kept knowledge, or if his heart sought it, Who has healed him? It would have drawn out the answer from faith; Jehovah is here; Jehovah has healed him. For no one knew better than the priest that man is powerless here; and the law has no provision for healing leprosy, only directions for cleansing ritually him who is already healed.

Alas! like people, like priest; all were unbelieving then, save the little remnant which heard the Good Shepherd's voice and followed Him. How is it with my reader? The Gentile professor, though christened, if this be all, is no less a leper in God's sight than the Jew; and the outward bearing of the Lord's name cannot bring to God without living faith. Nay, to possess externally was and is a great danger for the flesh, which goes asleep under privileges now as Israel did of old.

Oh, listen to His voice, that speaks still from heaven, and assuredly with no less power than to the Jewish leper. Why is the tale recorded so fully, if it be not a multiplied witness, that you should believe on Him? Your case is no less desperate than the leper's. But the Savior and His word are the same forever if your faith may be as small, your appeal as hesitating, as his was of whom we read. The grace of the Lord Jesus meets faith however little and weak, and acts according to God's glory. May you then hear and live!

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: as Having Authority

From first to last of the word of righteousness on the mountain, the Lord had spoken as none but a divine person was entitled to do.

" And it came to pass, when Jesus concluded these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his doctrine, for he was teaching them as having authority, and not as their scribes."

The Lord, alone on earth, was qualified to speak with authority peculiar to Himself. Beyond all others He knew what was in man (John 2:25): He alone here below knew what was in God (John 3:11). On one side He is the Man whom God raised from out of dead men, marked out by God as judge of living and dead, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts. On the other hand no one hath seen God at any time, the Only-begotten Son that is in the bosom of the Father—He declared Him. He is thus in every way qualified to speak with authority; yet who so lowly?

But the Jews were used, now that the Prophets of Jehovah for four centuries had ceased, to lean on their rabbis. Indeed they had shown the same unbelief in the days of prophets of the highest character; as Isaiah bears witness (29:13). It was with them in Israel, as afterward in Christendom, a sea of uncertainty, and a conflict of learned or rash opinions. How could it be otherwise when they were thus cheated to give up God's word for man's ideas? So our Lord cites this very oracle in His day, " In vain they do worship me, teaching as doctrines men's precepts."

But not so the Lord Himself as He sat on the mount, and taught the disciples, within the hearing of the crowds. This Matthew was inspired to present continuously and in orderly relation for permanent use. He began with the characters, the blessed characters, of such as enter the kingdom of the heavens. Four are righteous, three gracious, each class with its consequent persecution, as being in the age where evil still runs on (chap. 5:3-12). Their position follows, righteous and gracious, toward those outside (13-16).

Then from ver. 17 to the end of the chapter He proceeds to show that far from coming to make void the law or the prophets, He was here to give the fullness of God's mind therein, the light of the kingdom before it is established in any for those who bow to Him. The unbelieving and unsubject shall not enter on the new privileges. Not a tittle should in any way pass from the law till all come to pass. To enter the kingdom a

real and inward righteousness, of which Christ is the perfection, must be, far exceeding that of the scribes and Pharisees.

Next He goes farther, not merely " for verily I say to you " (18) and " for I say to you " (20) but with all the emphasis of superior divine light, worthy of God's Son, " Ye heard that it was said to the ancients, Thou shalt not kill... But I say to you" (21-26), and "ye heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you " (27 -30); and incomparably more searching commandments are applied to the law's prohibition of violence and corruption only in their extreme forms.

After that the Lord deals with divorce, and oath in ordinary converse (not judicial), putting all in the same highest place of God's light, with no allowance of human weakness (vers. 31-37). These were matters of righteousness.

In what follows He looks at the higher and deeper claims of grace. Instead of retaliation as in the law of " eye for eye and tooth for tooth," we hear "But I say to you, not to resist evil," &c. (38-42); and instead of " Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy," He urges "But I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father that is in the heavens," to the point of your being perfect (i.e. in grace), as your heavenly Father is to evil and good, just and unjust (43-48).

In chap. 6 He points out the true spirit of the life in alms, prayer, and fasting toward God (their Father that is seen in secret before them) (1-10); again in calm confidence above the world's anxiety in ordinary things (19-34): righteousness and grace are here also.

Lastly, in chap. 7 He guards against evil thoughts of brethren, and communion with the unclean world; and He counsels confiding dependence on their Father, acting toward others as they desired from them, and holding to the narrow gate and the straitened way (1-14). He solemnly warns against false prophets, whose fruits betray them notwithstanding their fair speech (15-20). The vanity of profession without vital reality is pressed even where service and gift are pleaded. It is finally compared to the folly of building on the sand, instead of on the rock of genuine obedience to Christ's words (21-27).

To any anxious soul let me say, Do not mistake. The Lord is not here showing how the sinner is to get pardon and peace. He is teaching His disciples how they are to walk and please their Father. Confusion here denies salvation by grace, is itself mere error, and can only endanger and ruin souls.

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Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Bare Profession Worthless

The Lord here delivers a most salutary warning, to which the new things of the kingdom gave occasion. For while the truth which came through Him is as precious as it is characteristic, it of necessity left the door open for mental activity and spurious profession in ways which could not under the law be addressed to Israel. " Now we know that, whatsoever things the law saith, it speaketh to those in (or, under) the law." The truth, Christ, on His coming into the world which knew Him not, casts His light upon every man, and places all that have it under deep and direct responsibility. But it is also capable of being abused widely and variously by a false pretension more or less willing, yet ever inexcusable.

This the Lord meets in these verses with emphatic clearness and solemnity.

" Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he that doeth the will of my Father that is in the heavens. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many works of power? And then will I avow to them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work lawlessness " (Matt. 7:21-23).

The sense of entering into the kingdom of the heavens here is fixed to its glorious estate, not only by " in that day " in the following verse, but by the Lord's application of it in chap. viii. 11, where its citizens sit in it with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. It is the more important to note; because His rejection (which soon began to appear) brought in its " mysteries " as in Matt. 13, during which He sits on high upon the Father's throne, and the kingdom applies to the anomalous state, as in the field or world wherein He sowed wheat and the devil darnel to ruin as a whole. This is the present mixture of Christendom while the Lord is absent above, during which any one can say " Lord " in vain, and wheat and darnel grow together till the harvest time, and the glory come by judgment.

The essential thing is doing the will of His Father which Christ was revealing. As He said in John 5:24, where life eternal was in question, " Verily, verily, I say to you, He that heareth my word, and believeth him that sent me, hath life eternal." These are the persons who, having done the good things as possessed of life now, rise for the resurrection of life (ver. 28). Equally peremptory is the Lord's word here. No profession without corresponding course of life can avail; nothing less or other than doing His heavenly Father's will. And who so competent to reveal as the Son, who left (as He tells us in John 16:12, 13) many things, beyond hearing then, for the Holy Spirit to announce when He came?

It is clear that, as in the entire discourse, not a word is said about the new birth, still less redemption. The Lord is not here preaching to sinners how they were to be saved; He is teaching His disciples how to walk before the Father that is in the heavens. How does He view that vague and multitudinous profession, which is a burlesque of Christianity, though now so popular, on the one hand through histrionic ceremonies and gaudy shows and religious fables, and on the other through appeals to the intellect and to the imagination by oratory or reasoning. There may be seeming devoutness and profuse earnestness; but without living faith in Christ, neither is God known nor is self judged. The Lord insists on true obedience.

O my fellow-sinner, how can you obey a far fuller standard than the law, as long as you are dead in your offenses and sins? Are you not by nature children of wrath (Eph. 2)? For we are saved (nobody else), as the apostle adds, by grace through faith. A rite is wholly unavailing. And faith is God's gift; it is not of works, as rash men pretend: else man could and would boast. Faithful is the word, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15). O then repent and believe the gospel.

How overwhelming is the Lord's warning! " Many shall say to Me in that day (and it is at hand), Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by Thy name, and by Thy name cast out demons, and by Thy name do many works of power? And I will say (not even you once knew Me, but) " I never knew you." Compare Heb. 6:4-8. No gift of power is a sign of life eternal, not even the edifying gift of prophesying. A man might be an apostle of Christ, but not a child of God. " Ye must be born anew," begotten by the word of truth; which Judas never was. Outwardly near, he was really far off, not only a stranger in heart but an enemy. And so we read here of crowds not like Judas, deceived as well as deceivers, " Then will I avow to them, I never knew you."

So indeed it is and must he, where men enjoy the greatest outward privileges, and remain without faith working through love. But it is faith, not founded on evidence, nor on tradition, nor dependent on a dying priest or a dead ordinance or a self-asserting church, but given of God's grace that you may become God's son and Christ's bondman, though just as surely a member of His body. Thus only can you walk in obedience of the Father's word and will, till Christ comes or you depart to be with Him, waiting with Him as well as for Him till then.

And those who do not so believe, whatever their claims now, whatever their pretension to order, office, Tower or authority, must assuredly hear in that day the just and irrevocable sentence, " Depart from Me, ye that work lawlessness." May grace work and win now, giving an ear to hear the voice of Jesus to the saving of the soul, and delivering from the delusion that christening quickens souls, or exempts them from the condition of being lost and the need of being born anew.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Fruits

The disciple is here cautioned. It is not only against trusting himself, that he may be dependent on his Father, and earnest in prayer that looks for an answer of grace. He has to pass through a scene haunted by the subtle emissaries of the unseen enemy; and the greater their pretension, the more are they to be shunned. The Lord would not have His own deceived and led astray.

" But beware of false prophets, which come unto you in sheep's clothing but within are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall them recognize. Do they gather from thorns a grape bunch or from thistles figs? So every good tree produceth good fruits, but the worthless tree produceth bad fruits. A good tree cannot produce bad fruits, nor a worthless tree produce good fruits. Every tree that produceth not good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire. Therefore at least by their fruits ye shall recognize them well "

Every reader of the o. t. may learn the destructive part by the false prophets who followed like a dark shadow the holy men whom the Holy Spirit inspired, and took up popular cries to oppose the warnings of God as evil became more rampant. There is no less danger now, as Peter particularly insists under the gospel; not to say that there is so much the more when good men pretend not to inspiration and are no longer invested with miraculous vouchers, but press only the word. in the Spirit. And so it will be again for the godly remnant in the last days when, the heavenly ones being caught up, it becomes a question of that land and people.

But the Lord's warning is of living value now also, as we hear in the worst and deceptive form (1 John 2:18-23; 4:1-6 John 7-11). What believer does not know of the boldest antagonism to the truth? What Christian has not tasted bitter grief in seeing saints of God deluded by the sheerest clap-trap? Yea, even conniving, for alleged peace, unity, or testimony, at the denial of Christ's Person?

They who love Christ do well to beware of false prophets, who are such as come unto them in the garb of sheep, but within are ravening wolves. They may cultivate sanctimoniousness and pretend to devotion, but are under the dominion of a mightier foe than themselves, and filled with the keenest zeal to deprive the Christian of a true Christ, of life eternal possessed, of present standing as God's righteousness in Christ, of association with Him in and for heavenly glory. Are not such truly ravening wolves? What remains, if the disciple lose all the treasure distinctive of Christianity?

" By their fruits ye shall recognize them." Do they exalt Him who humbled Himself? Do they confess His incomprehensible being, God and man in one Person? Do they proclaim His grace and truth? Do they follow Christ in absolute subjection to scripture? Do they own it, as the invaluable standard, and the sure communication, of God's mind by His Spirit? Is the believer established? Is the sinner won and delivered? Or are minds filled with ideas which but inflate the spirit, inspire self-complacency, and end in death? For these are practical effects which test what men teach, and which are legible enough to simple souls little versed in scriptural truth, and still less in human subtleties. And thus the Lord safeguards the sheep in various ways.

There is another class of false prophets who more openly contradict the Lord, count scripture obsolete, or deny that it was ever more than Hebrew sages moralizing or romancing according to their genius. Hence they dare to say that the wide gate is all right, and the broad way safe; that the few are only sour, proud, and narrow, and that the many cannot but be welcome to the universal Father, Jehovah, Jove, or Lord, too good to be severe to His erring children. Here again for all who receive scripture as the expression of divine revelation and authority there is no lack of evidence for any one to recognize these false prophets from their fruits. For their love of the world, or indulgence of the flesh, is as plain as their apology for sin, slight of the Savior, and ignorance of the true God.

Good fruits are produced by neither the religious misbeliever or the profane unbeliever. How could it be? Do people gather a bunch of grapes from thorns or figs from thistles? Those who utter false oracles are trees which the Father never planted. It is the worthless tree producing bad fruits: whereas every good tree produces good fruits. Christ is the true vine; and they only who abide in Him are branches that bear good fruit.

O then, sinner, renounce yourself, and heed none who point to another than Christ. Were He not set forth openly, and did He not welcome you in perfect grace, your lot would be dismal indeed. But He Himself declares, " I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto myself " (John 12:32). On earth He, the Messiah, was not sent save to the lost sheep of Israel, though he and she who by grace discerned a higher glory were blessed according to their faith. But lifted up on the cross He is seen as the Son of man come to seek and save the lost, whoever and whatever they might be. He is the attractive center to draw all, however dark or distant, who own Him as Savior and themselves as guilty and ruined sinners. For on the cross He through death annulled him that has the might of death; on the cross He bore the judgment of sin and effected propitiation; on the cross His blood was shed that brings the defiled one perfectly cleansed nigh to God. O sinner, no longer hold out against a work thus provided and commended to you just as you are. Christ is the true God, and eternal life; and it is written, that you might

believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you might have life in His name.

Made a true and living branch of the Vine, you will bear the good fruits of that only good tree. Be humbled, but not in despair, if through allowance of flesh you bear unworthily. For you have still the flesh in you, but no excuse to let it out. For if you are Christ's, you died to sin, not to sins merely, but to that source of lust and will, the flesh; and such is the virtue of His death to law too, that even if a Jew you were made dead to that old husband and free to belong to Another, Who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit to God. The Holy Spirit directs your eye and heart to Christ; and He, as He produces nothing but good fruit, never fails him that looks to Himself. He is the way, the only way of life and holiness; and if you live by faith, it is now yours to say, "not I, but Christ that liveth in me." Then and then only, can you produce good fruits; as surely as " every tree that produceth not good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire."

Be not deceived then. Look to Christ believingly; and all will be well with your soul now, and evermore. Therefore at least by their fruits ye shall know those that uphold the ways of the Lord, and those that pervert.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Narrow Gate

The Lord here gives a warning of great practical value. Public opinion weighs much with the natural mind. It may be and often is right in material things: there men judge fairly well, and are awake to their interests. For the spirit of man that is in him knows the things of man. But it is not so in the things of God, where the carnal mind does not fail to display its inveterate enmity against Him to man's certain ruin if it sway. Therefore is it elsewhere written, There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, none that seeketh after God. All turned aside, together they become unprofitable, there is none doing good, no, not one (Rom. 3:10-12).

Hence the Lord says here, "Enter ye through the narrow gate; because wide [is] the gate, and broad the way that leadeth off unto destruction, and many are they that enter through it. Because narrow [is] the gate, and straitened the way that leadeth off unto life, and few are they that find it " (Matt. 7:13, 14).

Reader, how is it with you? Have you entered through the narrow gate of conversion to God? Have you repented toward God and believed on our Lord Jesus Christ? _Baptism is the divine and admirable sign of salvation; yet it never gave life, but rather represented remission of sins and death to sin for such as had life: if they had not life in Christ, its true meaning, as far as they were concerned, was their guilty and wretched inconsistency, to their utter condemnation far worse than if they had not been baptized to that excellent Name. Deceive not your own soul; be not deceived by others. The great apostle warned that in the last days grievous times should come, and evil men and impostors wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. But this trust in an ordinance is one of the oldest of errors, and revived of late with fresh audacity and large success, though the same apostle expressly denounced its vanity and danger in early days (1 Corinthians 10:1-11). For " our fathers," said he, "were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual drink... Howbeit with most of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness.... Now all these things happened to them as types, and were written for our admonition on whom the ends of the ages are come."

O unbeliever, will it assuage the horrors of everlasting fire that you followed the multitude in despising the word of the Lord and neglecting His great salvation? You cannot deny that what He says here is very plain; your conscience must own that it is true. It is of no avail to talk about the fate of Thibet sealed up against the light of the gospel, or to inquire what is to become of the heathen millions in darkest Africa, or in haughtier India and China, or anywhere else. You at any rate have the Bible, and may outwardly profess the Lord's name. You have often heard and perhaps read these words of Him who will surely judge living and dead; and the time hastens for it. When you stand and are manifested before Him, will you not be speechless, like him who might be christened but had no wedding garment? The numberless crowds of the lost will verify His words, but yield not a drop of water to cool your tongue in the torments of that day without an end, or even when you die impenitent now before it come. Masses and classes alike perish in their unbelief of Him and His word.

In fact it will only add unspeakably to your bitter self-reproach that the Lord gave you so distinct a signal of danger for time and eternity. You refused the narrow gate, because it admitted neither self-will, nor fleshly lust. You loved the wide gate and the broad way, because you set your heart on what you called liberty, seeking and doing what you liked in defiance of God's will. You stifled the conviction of your moral folly and incredulous madness by the abundance of your company high and low. The narrow gate was repulsive to you, because it compelled you to stoop to God, which your pride and your passions alike resented. You had in entering through it to meet God singly, and to face Him alone about your sins. Had you been in earnest, you would have seen that He is our Savior God, who desires that all men should be saved and come to acknowledgment of truth. And this is solely in Christ Who is the one Mediator of God and men, and gave Himself a ransom for all.

Therefore are you without excuse. And you are lost and must be condemned forever, above all your sins for this crowning sin that you reject Christ Who died for you, losing the ransom so precious to God and efficacious for man. 0 bethink yourself: believe the words of Him Who cannot lie, and in love uttered this warning that you might hear and live. For both gates are clearly set before you, and both ways, one unto life and the other unto perdition. Many are they that enter through the wide gate and tread the broad way. O beware; for I too was once your fellow-sinner, as infatuated as any other. But the Shepherd's voice reached my ear, my soul. May it pierce yours, that you may turn off from the broad way, as from a serpent, yea the old Serpent the Devil, and enter the narrow gate of Christ, the straitened way that leads off unto life. Few are they that find it. May you know this happiness now and evermore in the Savior.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Confidence in Our Father's Giving

Our Lord here encourages His disciples to count on the goodness of their Father for every want consistent with His will.

" Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask of him for a loaf, will give him a stone; and if he ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If therefore ye, being wicked, know to give good gifts to your children, how much

rather shall your Father that is in the heavens give good things to those that ask him? Therefore all things whatsoever ye desire that men should do to you, thus do ye also to them; for this is the law and the prophets " (Matt. 7:7-12).

It is not a shiner needing life and forgiveness of his sins, but saints directed to appeal to God and assured of their Father's answer of love, whatever their wants be. The Lord had already taught them to pray in chap. 6 as with alms and fasting, parts of saintly righteousness and due to His name and glory. Here He enforces it as the way in which all they need from above is to be given them. Hence perseverance and earnestness are incumbent. Asking will ensure receiving, yea to every one that asks; seeking will not be fruitless but shall find; and to the still more importunate the door will be opened, which is but shut to exercise faith. For there may be a matter of importance for the applicant to learn before the request can be granted, as with the Syrophenician woman, so earnest in supplicating the Lord to have pity on her, whose daughter was grievously possessed by a demon. Yet at first the Lord answered her not a word. She pleaded like a lost sheep of Israel's house; whereas she was a Greek, and had no right of promise with the Messiah; indeed she was a Canaanite, and thus under the curse. But when she drops His title as Son of David, and gathered from His answer to the disciples wherein her mistake lay, she did Him homage, saying, Lord, help me. On this He speaks out, It is not good to take the bread of the children, and cast it to the whelps. This did help her soul, for it led her to the secret of sovereign grace on which she at once threw herself, saying, Yea, Lord; for even the whelps eat of the crumbs which fall from the table of their masters. Then Jesus answering said to her, O woman, great is thy faith; be it done to thee as thou wilt. The door opened to her knock. She was deepened and cleared in her faith, as her daughter was healed from that hour.

The Lord also encourages His disciples through the affection which is implanted in a parent's heart. If their Father makes His sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on just and unjust, how does He feel toward His sons? His love surely goes out to them in every request that is for their good, and withholds only what their foolishness asked that must do them harm. Hence He says, Or what man of you, whom his son shall ask for a loaf, will he give him a stone? and if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? Who would not repudiate such mockery of a. son's hunger? Thence He draws the conclusive words for their hearts, If ye then, being wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father that is in the heavens give good things to those that ask Him?

The last verse goes into that which becomes the disciple with men, and lays down the simple but evidently sound principle, to do to others as we would have others do to us; and this too on no ground of human rights or natural benevolence, but of consistency with God's revealed will. "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, thus also do ye to them; for this is the law and the prophets."

Now let me ask you, dear reader, if you have not by faith the Son of God as your Savior, are you not conscious that these words are altogether beyond you? What is your state then now, and what must the end be? I call on you in the Lord's name that you perish not in your sins. The same Lord, who thus cheers His disciples and bids them ask freely, warns you that he who disbelieves (who is unsubject to) the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him. Go to God as you are, a poor sinner, in the Savior's name, and own your ruin and His grace, that you may be saved, and know it to your exceeding and everlasting joy; and then serve Him as your Lord, awaiting Him from heaven, for He is coming.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Judge Not That Ye Be Not Judged

There ought to be no question of the Lord's meaning here. No fault was more prevalent then or now. Censoriousness is not only the habitual bane of religious professors, but the snare to which true disciples are too prone. Gracious men who set their face in general against detraction are often bitter against what they themselves dislike, and thus slip into judging motives wrongly like others. He who is Judge of quick and dead discerns every heart, and enjoins what is comely and just on His followers. For this sin tends to hypocrisy; and what saint would regard such a thing lightly?

"Judge not that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye measure, it shall be measured to you. And why lookest thou on the mote that [is] in the eye of thy brother, but observest not the beam in thine eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote from thine eye; and, behold, the beam [is] in thine eye? Hypocrite, pull out first the beam out of thine eye, and then wilt thou see clearly to pull out the mote out of the eye of thy brother."

The indulgence in a hasty, severe, and suspicious spirit provokes reprisals, and such as wantonly impute evil to others in ignorance or unkindness do not fail to bring on themselves unsparing imputation. For here the Lord turns from the lack of confiding in our Father's care and love, and warns of our danger from many an unkind impression and expression. To surmise wrong motives is itself a wrong. It is natural for such as live in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another; and such once were we ourselves. But since the kindness and love to man of our Savior God appeared (no premium for our deserts), but according to His own mercy He saved us through washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which He poured on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, are we not bound by the family character, the new life relationship as children of God, sons of such a Father? Since redemption and the gift of the Spirit, more can be added now to what the Lord uttered then.

But He reminds us of what we easily forget. If others are a trial to us, are not we a trial to them? Are we not, unless walking according to the light, as dull to see our own faults as we are sharp to notice, and even imagine, wrongs in our brethren? How pungently the Lord puts the case that we may loathe ourselves! " And why lookest thou on the mote in the eye of thy brother, but observest not the beam in thine eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote from thine eye, and, behold, the beam is in thine eye?" The Shepherd and Bishop of our souls thus holily strips us of the mask which failure in self-judgment puts on. For if before God we discern not our own grievous shortcomings and sins, we do not know our brethren with anything like the same certainty and clearness. Love therefore and the fear of God call us each to deem others better than ourselves, judging ourselves for what we do know instead of others for what we know not and ought not to think. " Hypocrite," says the Lord with severe reproof, " pull out first the beam out of thine eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

Yet it is well to beware of the too common misuse of our Lord's warning. How often pious persons thereby deprecate any censure of their own position and any care against false doctrine, or evil associations, or responsibility for such discipline as scripture requires 1 But this is to fail in godliness; which assuredly covers not only personal conduct, but also public walk as members of Christ. The Corinthians were careless in this

way and others, which grace has turned to the profit, not only of them, but of " all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours." The apostle allows no excuse for carelessness congregationally any more than individually. There is no call to exercise discipline on the evildoers of the world; but Christians have the obligation of dealing with offenders in God's assembly. Paul, though absent, could not but judge that the wicked person should be excluded. It was due to Christ and His sacrifice. God must be vindicated Whose is the assembly. The saints were bound to clear themselves in the matter, taking up the offender's sin as their own; yet even here his ultimate good was sought, " that the spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." "Do not ye judge those that are within? But those without God judgeth. Put away the wicked [man] from among yourselves " (1 Cor. 5:3-13). Here we are commanded to judge.

The selfsame principle expressly applies to sins far less gross. Our thoughts and reasonings are to be discarded on the one hand; and on the other God's authority to be recognized and conclusive. Scripture too is plain, that, important as is right judgment of moral evil, the truth is yet more momentous; and this both because to slight and oppose it offends against the Giver, and it ruins those who thus err, whilst they have a fair appearance, instead of shocking men like immorality or unrighteousness.

Express injunction is also laid down, when the evil is of a more general and public character, as in 2 Tim. 2 " Howbeit the firm foundation of God standeth, having this seal, The Lord knoweth those that are his; and, Let everyone that nameth the Lord's name depart from unrighteousness. Now in a great house are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some for honor and some for dishonor. If one therefore purge himself out from these, he shall be a vessel for honor, sanctified, serviceable to the Master, prepared for every good work." There is thus no license to join in what God disapproves and demands us to judge. Conscience, a purged conscience, is exercised, and the heart all the more free to love fervently according to God.

But how is it with you, dear reader? If you are of the world and only bear the outward badge of Christianity, take the place of truth for your soul in God's sight. Jesus is the all-sufficient Savior of sinners, and He, the Lord of all, is rich and near to all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call on the Lord's name shall be saved. Righteousness and salvation are the portion assured by God to each that believes and confesses Him. If you received Christ, say not that you cannot tell who are His. How then can you love God's children, as Christ charged you to do? Even the unconverted know in a general way who are His, and who are not; how much more does every sober believer? He owns that, till born anew and brought to God by Christ's work, he was as evil as anyone; and, without pretending to judge the heart, he accepts those who confess the Lord and follow Him, as he himself does. Such is the judgment of true charity, not the indifference of unbelief which is of Satan.

The verse that follows itself shows whom we ought to judge. For we are to prove all things, holding fast the right. " Dogs " and "Swine" we are bound to discern and disown. " Give not the holy thing to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before the swine lest• they trample them with their feet, and turn and rend you." Nabal's family is not extinct, sons of Belial with whom a disciple cannot speak with impunity. Shamelessness and filth plainly tell what they are, and the folly of treating them as sheep of God's pasture. No doubt the grace of God can save such: but in all this discourse is not a word about redemption or saving sinners. ' All throughout consists of the characters which suit God, and must really be for His Kingdom. This is its design: and it is worthy of Christ, as the gospel is where this was the question.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Narrow and Wide Ways

The Lord sets before those who heard Him the energy requisite for entering the kingdom.

When man was unfallen, he had only to abide where Jehovah Elohim set him. A single restriction was laid on him as a test of the obedience that was due. He might freely eat of every other tree in paradise, pleasant to the sight and good for food; but the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was forbidden on pain of death. The divine Creator was also the moral Governor; and man, to abide blessed, must bow to His word in grateful subjection, assured that His will was good no less than wise. That He forbade was enough. To disobey Him was sin and death. And so man learned to his sorrow, shame, and ruin, when following the woman deceived by the serpent, he violated the plain commandment and fell.

Since then the race broke more and more into sin. Lawlessness prevailed; till at length Jehovah saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The end of all flesh came before God; for it was not only that all flesh had corrupted its way here below, but that the earth was filled with violence. Nor was it only Noah finding grace in Jehovah's eyes through faith, but a deliverance from the deluge was granted to him and his house, and a preservation of enough of the creatures in the ark to renew the post-diluvian earth. There the dispensed ways of God were to be displayed, man fully convicted after the most patient trial, and Himself revealed in His Son, but first on the ground of responsibility, till sovereign grace displace all evil, and righteousness reign to His glory; finally, when the kingdom closes, dwelling in holy power and peace and goodness when God is all in all.

Meanwhile, as the course of the world has ever been and is now more than ever man doing his own will and pleasing himself, the path of faith is ever in separation to God and His word. Christ is the One revealed by God and revealing Him in order to make this knowledge good in all who believe. All saints since sin came into the world looked to Him, and were lightened, and their faces shall never be confounded.

Since the Word became flesh and wrought redemption, grace abounds more exceedingly. Nor is it grace only, but this reigning through righteousness unto life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord. Remission of sins, yea, peace made through the blood of His cross, is preached to every creature; that whosoever believes may know himself made nigh in virtue of Christ's blood, God's workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God before prepared that we should walk in them.

Still there are difficulties, dangers, and enemies which each soul that heeds the call of God must face. He who is quickened is sanctified unto the obedience of Jesus Christ (1 Peter). The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can it be: and they that are in the flesh cannot please God. Such is man's moral bent in his very nature fallen as it is. Nor is this by any means all; for the friendship of the world (and what man has not sought it?) is enmity with God; and this so surely that whosoever would be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Then the power of Satan, the liar and murderer, is the most directly destructive of all. Who is sufficient for these things? It is, and must only be, of God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ.

But every natural influence here below is in Satan's hands, and as hostile to man as to God. Therefore the Lord says, " Come in through the narrow gate; because wide [is] the gate and broad the way that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that come in through it; because narrow [is] the gate and straitened the way, that leadeth to life, and few are they that find it " (Matt. 7:13, 14).

Follow the multitude, as it follows the wise according to the flesh, the mighty, and the noble, and you are lost. Public opinion may be well enough for things of this life; but it is never founded on God's word. This sets forth Christ and Him crucified, which to the perishing is foolishness, but to those that are saved the power of God, and His wisdom. So faith receives, and enjoys now, and is blessed forever. It hears Christ's word and believes God that sent Him. It distrusts and turns away from the world which cast Him out and crucified Him. It seeks not ease or pleasure for the flesh, but follows Him who was despised by the vain, and abhorred by the self-righteous, and loathed by such as sought their carnal desires. Hence it is and must be the narrow gate and the straitened way that leads unto life, and few there be that find it.

Those who trust self and the world naturally prefer the wide gate and the broad way. But beware, poor soul! Such is the way that leads to destruction. It may look fair now, yet what solace will it be then that many come in through that wide but fatal gate? The proud and the mean, the haughty and the servile, the highest and the lowest, the dissolute and the violent, the superstitious and the skeptical, the self-satisfied and the hypocritical enter through it into the broad road whose end is perdition. 0 my, fellow-sinners, hear Him who is Himself the way, ay the sole and sure way to the Father. Never did He refuse one that cast himself as a lost one on His grace and truth; never does He fail to guide aright each that calls on His name. He is the Savior of all that believe. His sheep hear His voice, and as He knows them, they follow Him; and He gives them life eternal, and they shall never perish, nor shall any one seize them out of His hand (John 10:27, 28).

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Prudent Builder and the Foolish

" Other foundation can no one lay than what is laid, which is Jesus Christ," says the apostle (1 Cor. 3:11). Have you Him as your foundation, dear reader? If it be of faith, you will not doubt of His sufficiency. " He is the Rock; His work is perfect; for all His ways are righteousness." So an Israelite could say of Jehovah; and Jesus is Jehovah. But He is more, and now more is revealed, especially since He the Word became flesh, and tabernacled among us, full of grace and truth. Nor this only: " Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world."

He is the One for your soul, for your guilt, for your sins. If the Son of God became the Lamb of God, and you believe on Him, surely you need not, you cannot rightly, question that He avails perfectly for you. Yea, you are bound, if you believe Who He is, to receive without hesitation what God's word declares He undertook and has done. The atoning work is done; it is not future for you; nor is it a-doing either, but is done; and its efficacy is perfect for every soul that believes God about Jesus, His Son. His blood cleanseth from all sin. You who say that you believe do God wrong, if you receive not His word and rest not with confidence on the foundation that is laid. There is none other: Jesus is the one foundation for lost sinners.

God commends His love to us, in that, we being still sinners, Christ died for us. Do we ask more? We being still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. We had nothing but sins: He gives all the good we want, having suffered for all the bad that was in us. Such is the Savior of sinners. None that is pretended even resembles Him. The Virgin mother needed Him for her soul, as did every other saint. All men need grace to save them through faith; for all are sinners. Neither angels nor the archangel can avail in any degree; they are but upheld by the word of His power. Nor will God save a sinner but through faith in His Son Who humbled Himself unto death, even the death of the cross, to glorify God and to suffer for sins, Just for unjust. Whoever denieth the Son hath not the Father either; he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also (1 John 2).

But in our text, which closes the sermon on the Mount, it is another truth: not redemption (which was not there the object) but the absolute necessity of obedience in all who call Jesus Lord. To say Lord, Lord, without doing His Father's will, is worthless. Many shall say in the future day of account, Have we not prophesied through Thy name, and through Thy name cast out demons, and through Thy name done many works of power? But He will answer, I never knew you: depart from Me, workers of lawlessness. It was hollow profession, whatever the works of power, which only aggravated the guilt and will add to the endless remorse. There was no life possessed in Christ, and consequently no obedience, to which every believer is sanctified (1 Peter 1:2). Without holiness none shall see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). The point is here that obedience is indispensable from each one that bears His name.

Hence the Lord concludes, " Whoever therefore heareth these my words and doeth them, I will liken him to a prudent man which built his house upon the rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and fell upon that house, and it fell not; for it had been founded upon the rock. And every one that heareth these my words, and doeth them not, shall be likened to a foolish man which built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew and fell upon that house, and it fell, and its fall was great " (Matt. 7:24-27).

It is not redemption only that sinful man needs, but life eternal. In Jesus only are both found, and the believer receives both. Many there are who profess His name, and boast of redemption in Him, the forgiveness of offenses, but never think of present life in Him. Alas they deceive themselves. To the defiled and unbelieving, whatever they profess, nothing is pure; but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works deny Him. They say, Lord, Lord; but they are false to His name. Had they believed, they would have had life in His game, and brought forth fruit of righteousness. But not having Christ as their life, they had no fruit unto holiness, and never grew because they had no true knowledge of God. Life, life eternal, as a present ground for serving God in obedience, is as essential as redemption. Woe is to such as have neither. Still more bitter is the woe of such as deny either: they are enemies of the truth.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: 101. Your Heavenly Father Knoweth

Matt. 6:31, 32

How wholesome, direct, and complete is the Lord’s rebuke of earthly care!

“Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat, or What shall we drink, or With what should we be clad? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things” (vers. 31, 32).

As the Lord began, so He closed, His charge to the saints against anxiety in the earthly life. He purposely presents the homely commonplace of daily fare and clothing. The birds of the sky He adduces as the witness of bounteous provision without solicitude, and the unequaled splendor of the lilies of the field, as a rebuke to troubled efforts after vain show. The sentiment and the phrase of vers. 26 and 31 are substantially alike; but in the latter He exchanges “ye” and “your” into the more tender and family expression “we.” Each is as it should be, and both make His word only the more touching as well as complete.

The poor as to the world are habitually burdened and distressed on both accounts in their daily and domestic life. But the noblest and the richest spend much time and thought on their food and attire; and the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, have their mortifications among the highest. And if, as things are, the majority of Christians are too much like others, it only confirms the wisdom and goodness of the Lord in deigning to say so much to elevate the motives and form the ways of His own according to the mind of God.

Yet there are a few here and there all over the earth who hear His words in this discourse as elsewhere, and seek to do them from the heart. Nor do they fail to find their blessed account in pleasing Him, apart from the world and its things, with happy deliverance from all its anxieties and selfishness. Is not this what the Lord here enjoins on all that bear His name? Do these lay His will to heart when temptation arises to settle down in earthly comfort if not luxury and show? Is this consistent with being pilgrims and strangers on the earth awaiting glory on high with Him?

No doubt it is what men of the world do, who mock at faithful stewardship as fanaticism, and ignore being not their own but bought with a price to glorify Him with their bodies. If not their lips, their life says, Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die; yet their constant study is to spin out their mortal life, with no real heart for the resurrection, no habitual joy nor practical value for Christ as their life. Is it not to “mind earthly things,” and to forget day by day that “our commonwealth is in the heavens, whence also we await the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior, who shall transform our body of humiliation into conformity to His body of glory according to the working of power which He hath even to subdue all things to Himself?” “For” as He says, “after all these things the Gentiles seek:” the contrast He seeks in His disciples. O let us too seek it in our ways for the little while, and thus help to impress it on such as wish to make the best of both worlds, a shameless motive and character for those who are Christ’s.

Are we then left without consolation or resource? Far from it. The Lord winds up with blessed cheer to such as seek to be faithful; “For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.” And is it not the Father’s pleasure to consider every need of every child? Who can pretend that He does not abound in all good things? or that He would not have us to confide in Him, not in ourselves? Be it yours to abjure self, and “cast all your care upon Him, for He careth about you.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Morrow

There is another fear that is apt to cause trouble, forecasting the trials of the morrow. How fertile is the heart, in creating difficulties, and forgetting our Father as a real and constant resource!

" Be not anxious therefore for the morrow; for the morrow will be anxious about itself: sufficient for the day [is] its evil."

The morrow is in God's hands, not in ours. And He gives us the place of sons, as well as of children, on a firmer ground than could be even when the Lord here addressed His disciples. As He said to the Father before His suffering, " I made known to them thy name and will make it known "; so too He did in the fullest way in His message through the Magdalene, " Go to my brethren, and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and my God and your God." The relationship rested now on the definite ground of His death and resurrection, wherein their sins were blotted out, and themselves in the same nearness to His Father and God, as well as to Himself, the Firstborn of many brethren.

The one awful difficulty, sin, was not only removed by His cross for the believer, but made in His death the occasion of glorifying God as He never was before and never needs to be again. His love and man's hatred met there for the triumph of good over evil to faith, as it shall be to sight when Christ takes His great power and reigns before every eye. There Satan was vanquished to faith, where he seemed to the natural eye absolute victor. There not only the outward, but yet more the religious, world disclosed to faith its hateful unrighteousness and its utter infamy. There the very disciples prove their worse than nothingness. There the righteous One suffered to the utmost that God might be just and justify all that believe, and that grace might send out the glad tidings even to all that do not believe. For God thereby clothes with the best robe the guilty, bankrupt, ragged prodigal who turns to Him in the faith of the Name, the name of Jesus.

Thus the work of Christ, and the present indwelling of the Holy Spirit consequent on it, set the new relationship in the clearest light and on the most solid footing which even God in Christ could give it. O what dependence on Him becomes such as know themselves thus blessed! What confidence in His love to us to-day and forever I Why then allow the least worry about to-morrow?

That men of the world should be troubled is natural. They know not God. Still less do they cry, Abba, Father. Their satisfaction is in their substance, their position, their pleasure. Their uneasiness is because all in this life hangs on a trembling balance, between their fellows whom they cannot trust, a life as uncertain as the wind, and a God whom they dread as their Judge, and with too good reason as they are.

But the child of God, why should he give way to anxiety about the morrow? He is entitled to happy boldness on his own part and assured love on His Father's to do His will today, whatever the trial. God is equally above tomorrow's anxiety, which he can cast on Him, if it come. Sufficient for the day is its evil. Christ is our burden-bearer. Through Him we more than conquer. If God be for us, who against us?

Some who read these words may be still in their sins, and not reconciled to God. If you cannot be contemplated in a warning to believers, you have an especial danger in putting off to the morrow the call of the gospel which God makes to you to-day. "Behold, now is an acceptable season, behold, now is a day of salvation." Delay will only increase your sins, and harden your heart to resist the Spirit to your imminent danger. Be not like the naughty and foolish child, so quick to say, I will never do it again; I will be good tomorrow. Be honest with God to-day,

and own the sin, and yourself a life-long sinner, and confess the Lord Jesus the only Savior, counting on God's grace to save you in His name. How many have put off to a morrow that never came So perilous is it not to own the sins to-day to Him who waits to be gracious, and can keep as truly as He forgives.

STEPHEN THE CHRISTIAN PROTO-MARTYR: APPEAL TO CONSCIENCE. Acts 7:61-53.

We can see from the use made of the prophet Isaiah respecting the temple, what an advance was made by Stephen, beyond the Twelve even as the spiritual precursor of the apostle Paul (dead in sins as he was then, and the avowed antagonist of Stephen). But how he speaks directly to the conscience of the Jews, exasperated by his trenchant application of the O. T.

"Stiffneckcd and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers, ye too. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand concerning the coming of the Righteous One; of whom ye now became betrayers and murderers, being such as received the law at angels' ordinances (or, injunctions), and kept [it] not " (vers. 51-53).

Loving and devoted even to death that his Jewish brethren might judge their sins and receive the grace of God in Christ, he thus delivered the most scathing summary of the people's sins from first to last. Yet he did not go beyond what all in whom God spoke, from Moses to Malachi, had testified here and there in their pleadings with them for the glory of Jehovah. With all their self-complacency they were " stiff-necked " in heart and ears. The outward sign in the flesh only made their total lack of its spiritual meaning more glaring. The flesh was strong instead of being judged as evil.

It was themselves who were resisting the Holy Spirit, " ye " pre-eminently. Without doubt, as already proved from Holy Writ, their fathers had so done: this ought to have been a warning to them. Alas! they also followed the same baneful course; and they did so " always." They had no just sense of God's grace in calling out Abram. They were like their ancestors who opposed Joseph and Moses. They broke the law, before it was deposited. They resembled the generation which had the tent of the testimony in the wilderness, but did homage to false gods. They boasted of the temple of Solomon, but rebelled against the Most High who is far above all that the hand makes. They killed the prophets who announced the Messiah; and in their own day they did worse than all before them by delivering up and murdering the Righteous One Himself.

It was no exceptional outbreak, but their habit. And so the Lord had told them in Matt. 12:31, 32. " Every sin and injurious speaking shall be forgiven to men; but speaking injuriously of the Spirit shall not be forgiven to men. And whosoever shall have spoken a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him; but whosoever shall speak against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this age nor in that which is to come." The evil and adulterous generation only waxed worse, after Christ's atoning work; so that when they spurned the gospel, nothing but judgment could be their portion; partially when the Romans under Titus took away both their place and their nation; fully under Antichrist, when the mass perish, and a believing remnant becomes a strong nation, the generation to come.

God's faithful grace had raised up true prophets in face of the many false, and those were persecuted by their fathers as faithless as themselves. Could they mention one who escaped that lot? And if any were more than usually gifted and privileged to announce beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, they were killed by their unrighteous ancestors who could not endure His coming to destroy them and their idols, with the corruptions in their train. Their rebellion against Jehovah and His anointed had only very recently culminated in their becoming, not those who say, Blessed be He that cometh in the name of Jehovah, but Crucify, Crucify Him, "of whom ye now became betrayers and murderers." Yet He was the Holy One who, as He drew near and saw the city just before, wept over it, saying, " If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong to thy peace! but now they are shut out from thine eyes. For days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall make a palisaded mound round about thee, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children in thee, and shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou knewest not the season of thy visitation."

And what was their glorying in the law but a vain and empty boast? They received it no doubt with the most solemn inauguration at Sinai. He shone forth from Paran, and He came from the holy myriads: from His right hand went forth a fiery law to them; or as Stephen said of their characteristic position, ye "received the law at angels' ordinances, and kept it not." A law that is not kept must only condemn the guilty. What blindness to brag of a law which they did not obey! But so it ever is, where man without faith in the Savior pretends to honor God.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Lilies of the Field

From the birds of the sky in vers. 26, 27, the Lord turns to the lilies of the field in vers. 28-30: a lesson against anxiety, the former in eating and drinking; the latter in raiment. Notoriously they comprise the two branches of ordinary living which so test the masses, not of mankind only, but of disciples, to whom He addressed Himself throughout His teaching on the mount. His disciples ought not to forget or distrust their heavenly Father by such doubts of His loving care over their daily wants.

" And why be anxious about a garment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow: they toil not nor spin; but I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. But if God so clothe the herbage of the field, that is to-day, and to-morrow is cast into an oven, [shall he] not much more [clothe] you, O little of faith? "

Here as He points, not to birds but to the flowers, He does not speak of sowing or reaping or storage, but of toiling and spinning: God cares for the birds without the one, and for the lilies without the other. Were not His children far more to their heavenly Father than either? Not only were they God's offspring as mankind universally are, but His children by grace through faith. It is not that sowing or reaping, toiling or spinning, might not be a duty, if they had to provide for themselves and their household, and could earn their supplies by these labors more readily than otherwise. Even in an unfallen world, Jehovah put Adam whom He had formed into the garden of Eden to till it and to guard it, when there was none to hire for the needful work, and he himself might happily employ his own hands.

Sin brought in sad change, not only for man's soul and body, but for the very ground on which he trod, as scripture plainly tells us. It was no longer easy and delightful work, but in toil or sorrow he must eat of it all the days of his life. And no wonder; since thorns also and thistles it should yield to him, only to be overcome by the sweat of his face in order to eat bread. If self will kick against the goad, it only aggravates the case; if the yoke (and it is not here grievous) be accepted, it is all the better for murmuring men. There is no deliverance from guilt and sin

but through faith in Christ, to whom the Holy Spirit bears witness, and by whom He gives power to the believer. But for children as yet unconverted as well as adults in the same state, occupation is a merciful help, against the dangers of idleness and indulgence of lust and passion. Even for the faithful it is good, as declining to work where the person is without means is bad: so much so, that the apostle curtly lays it down, that if a man likes not to work, neither let him eat. This prescription, if duly administered, would in general prove a salutary medicine, and without fail.

Such idlers, apt to be busy-bodies too, are comparatively rare; but not so those who trouble themselves about their clothes. What after being born of God, and now having redemption as well as life everlasting, and the Holy Spirit to take up our every need and difficulty, not only the Lord interceding for us, but the Father blessing who sent His only begotten Son to and for us when we had nothing but sins? And do souls so favored distress themselves perhaps about clothes, and possibly fine clothes, beyond what becomes a Christian man, woman, or child?

What a rebuke from the herbage of the field, as our Lord interprets it Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these lilies which, the more they are inspected and by the most powerful means, only the more eclipse the splendor of Israel's richest king. Yet that lavish beauty of form and color was but a carpet spread for the feet of the poorest Israelite on one day, and on another was fuel for an oven. And this end of its glory was far from being an offense to the Lord. He, who was above all jealous for His Father's honor in His work uses the double fact to judge nature's anxiety about earthly things (were they as the lilies ever so beautiful to the eye, yet utterly evanescent too), to banish doubts and distress and unworthy desires, and to establish the heart in confidence of His Father's present, perfect, and loving care.

It was not the least in His mind to occupy the disciples with the birds of the sky or the lilies of the field as objects of their care, though not a few may abuse His allusions. Nor did He mean by His calling their attention to them, that they should treat cynically what evinces His interest in all the works of God's hand and the creatures of His will. His aim is that the disciples, under His holy notice of the incomparable goodness of God toward that which is so little in His eyes, should rise up to the Father above them all, and be assured of the considerate and constant love He bears to His own. Are they not peculiar objects of His counsels before a world was founded, now of infinite grace in Himself who for them died and rose, and at His crowning of glory, above not only the mightiest potentates of earth but also the highest principalities in the heavens? Are we to share the anxiety of those who know not God? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things? No one was such a sufferer as Christ here below; yet who ever heard a complaint? and who can forget that, when rejected more and more where His mighty acts of goodness and His words of grace and truth still more wondrous were alike despised, and even He had to say, Woe, woe, at that season our Lord Jesus answering said, " I thank thee, Father,"... and " even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight"? So the prophetic Psa. 16 attributes to Him the confession, " The lines are fallen to me in pleasant places; yea I have a goodly heritage." And so the apostle, who had the fellowship of His sufferings, and knew afflictions, persecutions, and want of all things beyond any other, is the very one who rises superior to all circumstances, and declares that God affords us all things richly for enjoyment. May we follow, though alas! how distantly, in like faith!

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Birds of the Sky

The Lord appeals to the disciples, in view of the creature subjected to man, against personal anxiety. It is humbling but wholesome for them to draw lessons of dependence thence. And first, He points to the winged class, familiar everywhere to human eyes, as objects of divine care and dependent on His beneficent provision. How much more are not His own in their incomparably higher and nearer relationship to Him and how powerless too is their anxiety to effect relief!

" Look at the birds of the heavens, that they sow not, nor reap, nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not ye of much more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add one cubit to his stature? " (vers. 26, 27.)

The birds are of a large class and of immense variety; so much so that the famous Cuvier had to confess his dissent from all the scientific systems he had seen. Can any competent naturalist since deny that an adequately true arrangement still awaits its discoverer? He in his " Règne Animal " proposed six orders with far more numerous genera; Temminck, sixteen orders; Latreille, seven, with 252 genera. Though some few excellent observers as Willughby and Ray preceded and have followed since these distinguished French writers, there is no end as yet to that controversy.

But our Lord drew His invaluable lessons, not from the recondite secrets, still less from the uncertainties of the science, but from the patent and undeniable facts of God's creation and providence, which none but the perverse can cavil at even in this age when the whole creation groans together, but not without hope that deliverance shall come from on high. All disciples can therefore understand and feel what He meant, and they need. The birds neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your (not their) heavenly Father feeds them. They may share the consequences of a fallen world, as other animals, and man more than any, as being their head, a moral creature, and deeply to blame directly and indirectly. Nevertheless without means and without the least carking care, our heavenly Father feeds the birds, as the plain and beautiful and instructive rule.

Hence of old the Psalmist (104) celebrated Him that sent forth springs into the valleys, that run among the mountains, and not for man only, or for every beast of the field, and the wildest of them, but for the birds that utter their voices among the branches where a dead silence prevails, broken now and then by loud shrieks of anguish so different from their cheerful strains. The stately spreading cedars were planted not for man's use only, not for taste or pride, but for the birds also to make their nests, unless the taller firs suit some better still. Nor are the creatures of the sea great and wide overlooked. These all look unto Thee, that Thou mayest give them their food in its season: that Thou givest they gather. Thou openest Thy hand: they are filled with good. Thou hidest Thy face: they are troubled. Thou takest away their breath: they expire and return to their dust. Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit: they are created; and Thou renewest the face of the earth.

But here the Lord guards His own from anxious thoughts in their daily life. Sparrows, as He taught later, are cheap enough; yet as not one of them shall fall to the ground without our Father, so He preserves them and other birds great or small without foresight of their own.

If such creatures, the unclean as surely as the clean, are the habitual recipients of His beneficence, how much must His sons be?' It is an argument from the comparatively mean and distant to those whom grace deigns to bring into the nearest relationship with Himself. And the

Lord's aim is to impress on His disciples, so favored, the obligation of confiding in the love of their Father without a doubt or a fear. Why should they not, instead of yielding to the anxiety natural to such as either know not God at all like Gentiles, or own Him in an altogether lower way like the Jews?

It seems almost needless to say that the words afford not the least ground for those who alleged a discrepancy with Prov. 6:6-8. For the latter impresses the common duty of industry, and therefore reproves the sluggard from the text of the laborious ant. The former calls the believer to cherish faith's reliance on the Father's care, without an anxious thought. The one is as true as the other; but the latter goes deeper and rises higher because of the revelation of the Father's name to those who believe on the Son.

Then again a strange set of fanatics, both in rather early and in later days of Christendom, made abstinence from labor a counsel of perfection. They claimed to be in a peculiar degree men of prayer, and were called Euchites by those who condemned them. Their boast was neither to sow nor reap; but they could not escape the reproach that they liked the barn and to have it well filled. The germ of this selfishness showed itself among the Thessalonian saints. But it did not fail to receive immediate discouragement and a heavy blow from the apostle, who could appeal to his own work with his hands where it made for the Lord's glory. But he also ruled such a claim as unworthy of Him, and a dishonor to such as were ensnared in cheat. " Now we enjoin you, brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw from every brother [not rising to superior spirituality but] walking disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. For yourselves know that ye ought to imitate us, because we were not disorderly among you, nor did we eat bread of any one for naught, but with labor and toil working night and day, that we might not burden any of you. Not because we have not authority, but that we might give ourselves an example to you, that ye should imitate us. For even when we were with you, this we enjoined you that, if any one will not work, neither let him eat. For we hear of some walking among you disorderly, working not at all, but busy-bodies. Now such as those we enjoin and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ that working quietly they eat their own bread" (2 Thess. 3:6-12).

The question in ver. 27 exposes impressively the impotence of anxiety to add to our stature the familiar unit of measure. Yet many moderns incline to length of life, instead of " stature." But this is hardly the place to discuss such a question. The general sense at all events is clear to the simplest.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Birds of the Sky

How beyond measure sad is the state which our Lord here describes! How solemn the contrast with the eye being single, and the whole body full of light!

" But if thine eye be wicked, thy whole body will be dark. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great the darkness!"

We perceive that the Lord, as throughout all His words on the Mount, is not here occupied in any way with redemption, but with the need of a new nature and its proper internal effect on the one hand, or on the other with the moral evil, where one is not born of God. There is no possible apprehension of God's mind or will; where there is only the natural man. Such a one does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But the spiritual one discerns all things, and he is discerned by no one. Mental capacity and learning avail nothing save to conceal the awful void from oneself or from others who are carnal.

The " eye " is the index of the nature, not outwardly alone but inwardly. " But if thine eye be wicked, thy whole body will be dark," This is man's condition unless renewed by grace. In this all important respect the Jew, judged by the light in our Lord Jesus, was no better off than the Gentile. They loved not the disciples whom they saw, still less the God whom they saw not. Had they really loved Him that begot, they had also loved him that was begotten by Him. The Lord made this certain and manifest; for in Him was no sin, yet they reviled Him. Grace and truth came through Him, yet they east Him out as an eater and wine-bibber, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners, instead of recognizing the Son of man come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Hence said He to His disciples when nearing the end of His earthly course, " If the world hate you, ye know that it hath hated me before you. If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but because ye are not of the world, and I chose you out of the world, on this account the world hath hated you. Remember the word that I said to you, A bondman is not greater than his master. If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep your's also. But they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they know not him that sent me. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. He that hateth me, hateth my Father also. If I had not done among them the works which no other did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both me and my Father. But that the word written in their law might be glorified. They hated me without a cause " (John 15:18-25).

What comment could be more direct and simple on the wicked eye, and the whole body dark It is the awful and unremoved evil of the natural man; the mind of the flesh, which is not only death morally, but enmity against God, whose grace is unintelligible to it, no less than His righteousness by virtue of Christ's atoning death to justify the ungodly, if he believe on Him. The natural man's faith, if faith it is to be called, is to believe in himself, utterly blind to his iniquity and lawlessness and his total ruin before God.

The very fact that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning to them their offenses, adds, as the words of the Lord Himself prove, immeasurably to man's guilt.

Who so pitiful to failure, who so ready to forgive sins, if they be felt and confessed to Him? But the demonstration of the world's irremediable evil lies in the undeniable truth that, when God was in Christ reconciling it, it refused all reconciliation; when God rose above all offenses, it scorned the boon, buffeted the one who proffered and pressed it on their acceptance, spit a His face and crucified Him.

It was no use to make overtures to man. Who could conceive any so great as God had made in Christ. Man was irretrievably ruined. If the Jew boasted that he only was a light of those in darkness, could he deny that he was leader of the blind against the true light, and did his utmost to extinguish what condemned himself no less than the despised Gentile? If therefore the light that was in Israel was thus proved to be darkness, "how great the darkness "!

The only hope for lost man lay in the rejected and crucified Christ; and such was the unfailing grace of God, that His best came out when man did his worst. For Him who knew no sin He made sin for us (who believe), that we might become God's righteousness in Him. It is solely a question of the second man, the last Adam, who once for all—it was enough—suffered for sins, just for unjust, that He might bring us to God, cleansed from every sin by the blood of Jesus Christ His Son. It is God that justifies the believer, as He made Christ sin for us, that we might become His righteousness. What grace! what a salvation!

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Treasure and the Heart

The moral principle here laid down by our Lord calls for our deep and constant heed; and the more, because the flesh ever deceives, and struggles against it, to indulge itself under fair disguise and for reasons seemingly strong and excellent. But we walk by faith, not by sight, and only so rightly.

" For where thy treasure is, there thy heart will also be."

Where faith is not, a present object engages the heart, and becomes the treasure. It is self in one shape or another, whereby Satan is the master, and not God: what then must be the end for eternity? The most prevalent is what our Lord calls " filthy lucre "; for money is the readiest means of gain for gratifying carnal lusts. It may be the heart abandoned to the pleasures of sin for a season. Power again is the ambition of some, as fame is of others. Also it may take a religious direction as readily and more dangerously than a literary one, or for worldly honor. In such ways men perish, even where no grossness appears, but the nicest refinement.

Christ alone delivers and preserves from all such snares. He is given and sent by God to win the heart by His ineffable grace, adapting itself to our guilt and misery and worthlessness through sin, to save the vilest from his evil, to reconcile unto God, to be life as well as righteousness to him who had neither, to associate with heaven, and thus separate from the world not only in all that is evidently bad but in all that claims to be good or its best, that we should no longer live to ourselves, but to Him who for our sakes died and rose again. And as this is for the Father's glory, so is it by the Spirit's power who is here, sent forth now from heaven on and since Pentecost, to glorify Him who never sought His own will but at all cost that of God.

Christ is therefore the true treasure, and in and by Him the riches of God's grace, yea and far beyond all question of need, to the praise of the glory of His grace which will make us like Himself before Him, not only in nature but in relationship as far as this can be. But we have this treasure meanwhile in earthen vessels, that the exceeding greatness of the power may be of God and not from ourselves. " Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day. For our momentary light affliction worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Hence our Lord urges our not laying up for ourselves treasures upon the earth where moth and rust spoil, and where thieves dig through and steal; but to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust spoils, and where thieves do not dig through nor steal. " For where thy treasure is, there thy heart also will be " I The heart follows necessarily the object of its affection; and Christ, the treasure of the Christian, was not of the earth but comes from above, from heaven, and above all. " What He hath seen and heard, this He testifieth; and none receiveth His testimony. He that received His testimony set to his seal that God is true. For He whom God sent speaketh the words of God; for He giveth not the Spirit by measure. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things [to be] in His hand. He that believeth on the Son hath life eternal, but he that obeyeth not (or, is not subject to) the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him " (John 3:32-36).

It is not only then what the treasure is, but where that the Lord presses on our heed. And this truth of the treasure in heaven derives great accession and force from our Lord's ascending where He was before (John 6:62), no longer Son of God only as He came down, but Son of man as He is now also in heavenly glory. For this is the proper and full way in which the Christian knows Him. Wherefore we henceforth know no one according to flesh; but if even we have known Christ according to flesh, yet now we know [Him] no longer. So if any one [be] in Christ, [it is] a new creation.

To Christ glorified is the Christian united by the Spirit, now that he rests on redemption accomplished. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Only then and there could it be. Hence having died with Christ and being raised together with Him, we are exhorted to seek the things that are above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God, to set our mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For we died, and our life is hid with Christ in God. And we wait that, when Christ our life shall be manifested, we too shall then be manifested with Him in glory.

We may notice that in Luke 12 the connection of this truth expressed more broadly (" For where your treasure is, there your heart also will be "), is not only with the warning of the precariousness of all save a treasure in the heavens, but with the Lord's coming as a proximate hope. " Let your loins be girded about, and your lamps burning; and ye like men waiting for their own lord whenever he may leave the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh they may open to him immediately." It would be scarce possible to conceive words more clearly indicating the call to be constantly looking out for Him.

Altogether the aim is unmistakable if we are walking in the Spirit. We are now " heavenly " in title (1 Cor. 15:48, 49), and we expect on the surest authority to realize it even for our bodies at His coming. Let us see to it meanwhile to live, serve, walk, and worship, consistently with our faith and our hope. Nothing short of this is the Christianity of the N.T. when the many things were known which the disciples could not bear till they had redemption through His blood and the gift of the Spirit. When the Spirit was come from Him on high, He did not fail to guide them into all the truth.

Reader, beware of being deceived. If you are not a disciple of Christ, if not born of the Spirit, the Lord's exhortations are inapplicable to you: you are not yet one of His. Own your evil and guilty state before God. Own Him the only efficacious Savior, the Son of man come to seek and to save the lost. Then indeed such words as His to the disciples will be precious and blessed by grace to your soul. But you must be born anew, born of God, to receive and understand them. Beware of those who deify ordinances to Christ's disparagement, and their own vain

pride of a baseless office.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: A Forgiving Spirit

The Lord was not content with this impressive call for practical grace in the prayer prescribed to His disciples: " Forgive us our debts, as we also forgave our debtors." He immediately after follows it up with emphasis.

" For if ye forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you [yours]; but if ye forgive not men their offenses, neither will your Father forgive your offenses."

There is such confusion in Christendom as to the forgiveness of sins that the true force of the Lord's solemn words is lost for the most part. The vast majority have so hazy a view of eternal redemption that they fear to believe in the full and abiding efficacy of Christ's work. The glad news, or the gospel, of God is thus for them shorn of its power. They are no better off than a Jew who brought his offering, confessed his sin, and went away with the comfort that it was forgiven. As he had to offer often, so the ill-taught Christian talks of his need to be resprinkled again and again with that blood, though expressly said to be shed once for all.

What blindness, if we adduce nothing else, to the testimony of Heb. 10:1 The perfect sacrifice has caused the imperfect to cease. The worshippers once purged have no more conscience of sins; in plain contrast with the Levitical sacrifices, wherein is made year by year remembrance, as the Christian is entitled to remission of sins. Christ came to take away the temporary, and to establish the everlasting. Therefore, when He offered one sacrifice for sins, He forever [in continuity] sat down on God's right hand. He had done all perfectly to blot out the guilt of His friends (once His foes); and took His seat as its triumphant proof, from henceforth waiting till His enemies who reject Him and His work be set as footstool of His feet. Then He will come forth and tread them down in their open rebellion at the consummation of the age. But to the Christian the Holy Spirit testifies that their sins and their lawlessnesses God remembers no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no longer an offering for sin: everything of the kind is superseded and more than fulfilled in that of Christ.

But here faith fails, because God's word is not received in its own divine and conclusive authority; and thus are souls defrauded of peace and joy in believing; and entire devotedness to God is curtailed, bought as we are with a price so incalculable. This unbelief is helped on by confounding things that differ, like our text with that complete redemption which rests solely on Christ's cross. Still more when such blessed institutions of Christianity as baptism and the Lord's supper were made saving ordinances, not figuratively but intrinsically; and a clerical class was made necessary and of divine right to apply them with due effect to the laity: a figment which outdid the highest claims of Jewish priesthood, and in principle denies the gospel.

But while the Lord does not, here or in any part of His teaching on the Mount, refer to that redemption which He was to accomplish, He has a weighty lesson to enforce on His disciples in cultivating a spirit of grace. If the Jew in general could not rise above the law in its distance from God, the fear which made the very mediator full of trembling, and the readiness to denounce and curse which it engendered, grace is the atmosphere in which the Christian lives and flourishes. No doubt it is through righteousness; but withal it is grace reigning.

What was it that drew to the Lord Jesus even from John the Baptist? What was it that in spite of a legal environment at length blossomed and bore fruit so sweet in Peter and John and James and a noble army of martyrs and confessors? What was it that melted Paul's heart of steel and made him the most ardent and suffering witness to the world of Jesus Christ and Him crucified? What else could begin with the proudest, most self-satisfied, stiffnecked, and rebellious race, and transform them into the poor in spirit, the mourning, the meek, the hungering and thirsting after righteousness, yea the merciful, the pure in heart, the peace-makers, persecuted for righteousness' sake, and even for His sake, for whom the nation and its high priest judged crucifixion only His due, and so fulfilled the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets?

As it was the grace and truth which gave the disciples life, and would give it abundantly in the power of Christ's resurrection, so would follow that full and abiding remission which only His blood secures, and this uninterruptedly. But sin indulged does interrupt communion with our God and Father, and needs the advocacy of Christ to cleanse the feet thus defiled, by the washing of water by word. His blood retains intact its atoning virtue; but the word is applied by the Spirit in answer to Christ on high, and he that sinned repents in dust and ashes. For this is He that came through water and blood. We need and have both, and cannot do without the water from first to last, as we have had the blood once for all. Whoever ignores, or (still worse) denies, the twofold provision of grace, undermines redemption and muddles the truth of God.

Now the Lord specifies an unforgiving spirit as intolerable to our Father in His daily government of His sons. And no wonder. It is to go back from grace to law, from Christ to wretched self. Hence, as in the prayer, He urges grace toward those who may offend us ever so painfully, and love which He commends to our loyal and tender warning of its lack practically as hateful in His eyes. " For if ye forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your offenses."

O you who keep up your resentment, and brood over the offenses (often exaggerated if not imaginary) of others, beware. You, a Christian, if so, are in utter default of this characteristic duty, as unlike Christ as you can be. Need one say that you are as unhappy as you are hard? Is it nothing to your high spirit, degrading as this is to a Christian, that " your heavenly Father will not forgive you your offenses " Trifle not with so bad and proud a state, and no longer grieve the Holy Spirit of God who sealed you. Let not the sun set upon your wrath, nor give room for the devil.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Fasting

It remains for us to weigh our Lord's words on fasting, as the third part of His teaching on " righteousness " (not " alms ") in the first verse of the chapter. Prayer holds the intermediate place between alms and fasting, the pious and holy basis to guard the other two, binding them up with faith against formality.

" And when ye fast, be not gloomy-faced as the hypocrites; for they disguise their faces, so that they may appear to men fasting. Verily, I say to you, They have their reward. But thou while fasting anoint thy head, and wash thy face, so that thou mayest not appear to men fasting, but to thy Father that [is] in secret; and thy Father that seeth in secret will recompense thee."

The Lord does not so much enjoin fasting as bring it like prayer under the Christian principle of having to do with our Father in secret. It falls under the individual life of faith. Yet He undoubtedly sanctions and approves of it when so practiced; and this independently of the more open and united aim, such as we find in Acts 13:2, 3; 14:23. He also intimates its value for spiritual power. Pious men have ever felt and must feel its appropriateness in chastening the soul before God, where public or private need called for humiliation. But even in Mark 9:29 it is well to note that the two most ancient copies ignore " and fasting," as they with other authorities also the entire verse 21 of Matt. 17, nor is there a word corresponding in Luke 9 The apostle however who more than others was given to stand for liberty in Christ speaks (in 2 Cor. 6:5; 11:27) simply and piously of " fastings " and " fastings often " in his service, to the rebuke of that levity which the Corinthian assembly betrayed, and which characterizes modern Christianity, save where superstition and self-righteousness give it an artificial moment in very different eyes.

In Matt. 9:14, etc. the Lord shows its true place and time in answer to the disciples of John saying, " Why do we and the Pharisees often fast, but Thy disciples fast not? And Jesus said to them, Can the sons of the bride-chamber mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them; but days shall come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then will they fast." Neither those who were only disciples of John had any real appreciation of the Bridegroom's presence, nor still less the Pharisees filled with forms and self-righteousness. It was joy to the believing disciples of Jesus. Feeble as they were, they had left their all for Him, and they tasted a divine bliss in Him wholly unknown to the others, who were wholly unprepared for the awful purport to them and the Jews of His being taken away, little as the true disciples as yet comprehended that solemn approaching fact with its immense consequence. The joy of Messiah's presence made fasting altogether inappropriate. Those who tasted none of it were blind to Him whom God's grace had given and sent. Greater still would be their darkness, when the Bridegroom should be taken away. Then would those that believed and loved Him fast, both spiritually and literally.

It might not be like Jews accompanied by rending of garments or with sackcloth and ashes, but deeper communion with God's mind than could be known before the Holy Spirit came to make it good. And fasting among Christians is all the more striking because of the peace, joy, and boundless delight they have in the love of Christ, and fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Still if loyal to Christ we cannot but have the constant sense of His rejection, and of the judgment ever impending and certain to fall on the guilty world, and all the more because it pays Him the hollowest of lip homage. Yes, days are come when the Bridegroom thus ignominiously taken away is still absent, and fasting lends itself to mourners, whatever their even enhanced joy in being united to Him as members of His body, a privilege never dreamed of before, and the joy of grace in the revelation and active working of a Savior God to lost sinners, Gentile no less than Jew.

But Christendom perverted fasting, through vain philosophy, into a reflection on the creative glory of God. And abstinence from meats, which He created for thanksgiving, was early turned into human merit, and the lie of inherent evil in matter. Grace and truth through Jesus Christ were thus denied; and days of fasting were imposed, as ecclesiastical history records, first by custom, and afterward by legal sanction. In the second century, if not in the first, the fatal error also drawn from philosophy was in full swing not for their life and complete cleansing by His blood, but of a twofold rule, the one for the despised flock of God, the other for the spiritual superior; the one the Precepts for all sorts, the other the Counsels of Perfection for those who aspired to a higher life, which issued in asceticism and grew into monasticism. Who can wonder that God poured contempt on these unbelieving efforts to improve the first man, by letting the flesh with all this inflation break out into the grossest immorality on one side, and legendary falsehood against God on the other? But this too was just what was found with older Platonists and Pythagoreans, who taught that it was not only lawful but commendable to deceive and lie, for the sake of truth and piety. Hence, even in those early days the large harvest of forgeries which are coming to light in our days, the witness of the rapid departure from the Christianity taught by the inspired apostles, long before the papal system systematized it and enforced it on pain of death.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Vain Repetitions in Prayer

Having laid on the individual secrecy in prayer to the Father, the Lord widens here His injunction, and warns His disciples against a habit unworthy of Him, and of them too in so blessed a relationship, though it had to be still more deepened and elevated on His resurrection day, and in view of His ascension to heaven. It might be, as it was, a natural feeling which thus wrought even in heathen. The Lord looks for and inculcates what is supernatural.

" But when praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles; for they think that they shall be heard by their much speaking. Be not therefore likened to them; for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye beg of him." It is not a warning against a hypocritical spirit. Of this He spoke first, as they were Jews, a people responsible to observe God's law, but faithless for the most part, and the orthodox among them prone to high pretensions, moral as well as ceremonial, with a heart far from Him. Therefore He inculcated the value and duty of prayer to the Father in secret, as the contrast with the hollowness of prayer to be seen of men.

Notwithstanding His words, the evil grew till in the fifth century it reached its height of folly in Simeon a Syrian who at the last erected a pillar on which he might stand, elevated at first six cubits and at last forty. On the top was a space three feet in diameter, surrounded with a balustrade, and here he stood day and night in all weathers. During the night and till 9 a.m. he was supposed to be constantly in prayer, after stretching out his hands, and bowing so low as to touch his toes with his forehead. Someone who attempted to reckon these prostrations counted up no less than 1244. At nine he began to address the superstitious crowd below; for, strange to say, this religious mountebank not only heard and answered to such as were present, and wrote to the absent, but took on him the care of the churches and corresponded with the highest dignities in both church and state. As evening approached, he dropped these activities and resumed his repeated prayers as before. It is recorded that he partook of food but once a week, and never slept, thus spending with a coat and cap of sheepskin some seven and thirty years, and dying in the attitude of prayer in his sixty-ninth year. His scholar and chronicler Antony tells us that he went up after three days and that his dead body gave forth a sweet odor. So naturally allied is deceit to these quasi-spiritual shows.

But here our Lord reprehends a far more prevalent snare. " When praying use not vain repetitions, as the Gentiles." The words occur no where else in the New Testament, nor did the Seventy employ them in the Greek version of the O.T. Nor is par. found in any writing independently of ver. 7 till 500 years after Christ. There is therefore divergence of views as to its precise meaning. This is not the occasion for such a

discussion; and though it has been sought to derive what is peculiar from the Hebrew for " unadvisedly " or " rashly babbling," the context tends to support the Authorized Version.

It is quite unworthy of the Father, and even of His children thus to trifle in prayer. There are no doubt occasions for long persistence, as well as earnest repetition, in prayer. Our Lord Himself is the example of thus spending the night through, and of praying over and over again the same words. Neither of these special supplications could be reprehended in others where they are seasonable and requisite. But there is scarce any habit more common, even among believers, than lengthy utterances which are not prayers at all. For they express the individual's views sometimes of the discourse preceding, his own or some other's, sometimes of all he can muster of the varied circumstances of the church, or at least his own party, and of all the world outside. Occasionally if not often the one in the attitude and form of prayer forgets that he is speaking to his Father, and slips unwittingly into what sounds like teaching Him the doctrines which delight himself.

These things ought surely not to be. What reverence becomes one by grace entitled to say, Abba, Father I What deep sense of His majesty and holiness who has shown infinite mercy to such as deserved everlasting judgment! How often do we not fail, however favored we may be, in judging self and grieving the Holy Spirit! The royal preacher could say of old, " Be not rash with thy mouth, and set not thy heart to utter anything before God; for God is in the heavens, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few. For a dream cometh through a multitude of business, and a fool's voice through a multitude of words." How much deeper should be our humility whom, notwithstanding a far fuller sense of our evil and of His grace, He calls His children 1 How sad the inconsistency, if kept from Pharisaic hypocrisy, to drop into the inconsiderate foolish verbiage of Gentiles!

We are brought to God at an infinite cost. We are taught our utter vileness as well as our shameful sins. When we draw near to pray, ought we not to have the hallowing solemnizing effect in weighing our words, whatever the love that invites us into His presence? Then we may be without anxiety as to anything, but in everything make our requests known to Him by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving. He loves that we should confide in dependence on Him. Let us never forget that " our Father knoweth what things we have need of, before we beg of Him." To think that we shall gain a hearing by our much speaking is a dishonor to Him and even to us.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Prayer

It is the same principle with prayer as with alms. The disciple of Christ has nothing in common with the hypocrites, whatever they say or do, or do not. The Son has made known the Father's name to us, and made it known still more intimately and deeply, in association with Himself, on and since He rose from the dead. It was not only the wondrous message through Mary of Magdala, " I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God; " but that resurrection day at evening the Lord came and stood in the midst, and said to the disciples, Peace to you, showing them His hands and His side. Again He said " Peace to you: as the Father sent me forth, I also send you," and having said this He says to them, Receive [the] Holy Spirit; whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted to them; whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained.

Such is the added Christian privilege, even before the Pentecostal gift was conferred, and the special gift the apostles had as such, like prophets, teachers, &c. in their place. O what responsibility, not only to rejoice but to pray unceasingly, flows from such a relationship! and how apt are we to relax or forger! But if we are thus blessed and have in our measure and way such a mission, we have no place to covet; for we have Christ's. And we as His epistles know that we are called to walk in the faith of His grace that we may not shame Him before men. Having received His word, it is our constant call to pray, that, living in the Spirit, we may walk in the Spirit. And the Lord, alone perfect here and everywhere, impresses His principles on His own followers. He is their life in order that there might be an inward living relationship.

" But when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may appear to men. Verily I say to you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door pray to thy Father that is in secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret will recompense thee."

This secrecy is still easier, and no less essential in prayer, the most constant of all relative duties. Many saints find a great incentive with others in supplication; and this has its suited and weighty place, as the Lord elsewhere urges. But here as the habitual privilege and claim of relationship to our Father, how careful He is in bidding saints like us to " enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door pray to thy Father that is in secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret will requite thee." How delightfully simple, yet how deep and wise! It is just between the soul and God, and now His Father and our Father, as Christ knew Him and declared Him to us. Solemn and holy it is to meet our Father alone and expressly, as to everything of need, sorrow, or joy.

What a contrast with the arrangements that have prevailed in Christendom, which press formal prayers in a public building once, twice, or oftener in the day! When the Lord enjoined the united petitions as giving ground for an answer from above, it was a specific need as the context in Matt. 18 makes plain. But nothing superseded the normal habit of individual secrecy in prayer to our Father. And it will be the comforting resource of the godly remnant in days to come, as we may trust, when things arrive at such a pass that joint public prayer is impracticable. But now, when the world's feeling is too indifferent to punish or hinder open prayer, can anything give more weight when we come together in assembly than the cherishing of individual prayer in the shut chamber to our Father that sees in secret, as He will surely requite?

Now what can you say to this, dear friend as yet not born of God, but only God's offspring like the heathen Athenians or men of the world generally? Will you not own frankly that it sounds the most irksome bondage to you, and that you in no way pretend thus to live to God? Till you are sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus, knowing your sins blotted out by His blood, and yourselves brought nigh to God, you cannot freely cry, Abba Father. For mere profession, however requisite in the renewed soul, is offensive to God in those dead in sins, as we all were till we found life in Christ by faith. Then such prayer as this suits both our need and our blessing. For, though redeemed in soul, we as to our bodies await redemption at His coming, and meanwhile have to do with an evil world and a subtle foe on the watch to ensnare and defile us. Therefore do we need so to pray without ceasing.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Alms

The Lord takes for granted that His disciples would walk righteously before God in alms, prayer, and fasting. He is not satisfied with bidding such give to him that asks, as in the preceding chapter (42), and from him that would borrow not to turn away. It is by the grace of Christ in contrast with legal narrowness. Here we have the single motive of pleasing our Father that is in the heavens. Thus would their light shine in Christ as believed and confessed by them, not their righteousness be done before men to be seen of them, which is the object expressly forbidden. As in alms we have the needy and distressed of mankind directly brought before us, we have this followed up by prayer to our Father in the closet, fasting subjoined to set aside self-indulgence for the body and leave room for humiliation before Him: thus dealing with man, apostles, self and God, in ways suited to the Father revealed by the Son.

" When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be glorified by men. Verily I say to you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; so that thine alms may be secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret will repay thee."

It is not the habit of giving or lending in liberality of heart, unstintedly and unselfishly, but that merciful consideration of the wretched and suffering, which becomes those who serve God in a fallen world (James 1:27). Each duty has its place. Both adorn the teaching that is of our Savior God, as we are called to do in all things. Prudence may question, common sense hesitate; but faith acts on His word, and without faith it is impossible to please Him. It is no question of doing another's will, but of Christ's will.

In all cases the snare is ostentatious, doing our righteousness before men to be seen of them. Otherwise, says our Lord, ye have no reward of your Father that is in the heavens. He lays the utmost stress on the manner and the motive with which the act is done. Display in the doing of alms He compares to sounding a trumpet before the doer, and denounces it as what the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, within and without where people meet and pass. Can anything be conceived baser than a son of God playing a part to win the notice and approbation of men? How solemnly He adds, Verily I say to you, They have got their reward!

How elevating it is for the soul, in having to do with the relief of distress among men, to act in secret, and in the sight of the Father that seeth in secret as the One to repay! It is not enough to exclude other men. To bring Him in and in secret is essential to the purity of the case. It is He who is above all, and through all, and in us all; and the least of His gifts to us is what enables us to help the suffering and the needy. To leave Him out is the essence of unbelief. To bring Him in is what we as His children owe Him in love and honor, the witness of our dependence, of our gratitude, and of our loyal service.

We have only to look at the ways of men in Christendom, in order to learn where neglect of the Savior's teaching leads His disciples, and the influence of self, not only on the world but on the godly swayed by the spirit of the age. What notoriety! What emulation! What boasting or pride, and even ambition! What a contrast with Him who being rich for our sake became poor, that we by His poverty might be enriched And how striking that not in rich Corinth but in the poor churches of Macedonia, scripture tells us of the grace of God bestowed in this way; how in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their free-hearted liberality It was not even according as the apostle hoped, but beyond; and the secret of it was, that they gave themselves first to the Lord, and to us by God's will. Thus is genuineness of love proved.

But there is another invaluable word of the Lord as to this which calls for our heed. " But thou when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; so that thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret will repay thee." It is not only from others but from ourselves 'that such doings should be hidden. Self is a subtler evil than men. The action of grace is defiled and becomes a poison to me and a dishonor to God when I think of it with complacency. If rightly done, it was passed to our Father for His remembrance, not ours.

Here lay Job's failure, which no inflictions of Satan, nor unsympathy, nor yet suspicion, of friends even touched. He was a most gracious man, but he thought of it, and not of God only who wrought in Him. To this he must be and was brought: to boast only in God, judge himself, and submit with all his heart. Part of the lesson was that his left hand should not know what his right hand did. This on the contrary, up to the end of his appeal (Job 31), he knew only too well. But all was changed when, instead of looking at fruits of grace in himself, he saw God in very faithfulness withering up all self-satisfaction. " I had 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 42:6).

Thus we hear that even in alms the Father in secret must be the motive in order to make it acceptable to Him. The Lord insists on inward truth. O my fellow-sinner, how can this be while you are dead in trespasses and sins? "Ye must be born anew;" and life, this new life, is in Christ only. But He is the object of faith set for this purpose by God. "He that believeth hath life eternal;" and as Christ is the source, so is He the strength of that life. " I live; no longer I, but Christ liveth in me."

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Kingdom of God

The kingdom of the heavens is an expression derived apparently from Dan. 4:26. Its inauguration also is foreshewn in Dan. 7:13, 14; in 22 not only the Heir of all but the heavenly joint-heirs, and in 27 the " people " under the whole heaven to whom the chief dominion is given. Such will be the manifested kingdom when the Son of man comes with power and glory; and there will be earthly things and heavenly (John 3:12). But He came first as the great moral test in humiliation; and His rejection and cross brought out higher than earth through redemption therein accomplished. This too, refused by the unbelieving people, left the door open for the mystery of that kingdom and its mysteries while the rejected King is on high, and the gospel of indiscriminate grace, till the church is complete. Then all Israel shall be saved on their repentance, and the blessing of all the nations as such shall fully come.

Plainly, " the kingdom of the heavens " is a dispensational phrase peculiar to the first Gospel, as in contrast with the incredulity of the Jews who looked only for an earthly one. Mark and Luke use " the kingdom of God " for it, and in a general sense; John exclusively for what is real. But Matthew, for that very reason, when he does say " the kingdom of God," does not mean the dispensational view, either in future manifestation or in present mystery, but the power of God ruling in Christ when here, or now in the Spirit's action morally in those that are

His. Hence the same term which is so comprehensive elsewhere has here this force all the more marked because of Matthew's general employment of the dispensational phrase.

Here occurs the first instance; the others are 12:28, 19:24, 21:31, 43, of which this is not the place to speak more particularly.

" But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Be not careful (or, anxious) for the morrow for the morrow will be careful about itself: sufficient for the day is the evil thereof."

Throughout the discourses on the Mount the Lord is not preaching the glad tidings to the lost but instructing His disciples who already believed. Earthly care is a great bane and unworthy of faith. " Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." Where could they find that kingdom and righteousness most truly, plainly, and fully set out before their souls? Surely nowhere as in Himself. It was even more wondrously by God's Spirit in His moral power than by His casting out demons. " Lo, I am come to do thy will, O God," was far beyond all the miracles together that ever had been wrought. Who but He was the "man that lived by every word of God " unswervingly?

Nor is it too much to ask of such as were born of God. Indeed the principle was always true. Jehovah's people were to be holy because He is holy. And this applies all the more strongly now that we have the relationship of sons, with redemption through Christ's blood, and the gift of the Spirit. For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking; nor yet abstinence from flesh or wine; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Making God's kingdom and righteousness our first concern, we are entitled to expect that all the things needful and good will be added to us. For our God and Father never overlooks our wants. If faithful in the greatest and deepest things, He loves that we should confide in Him as to our least things. Do we believe the Lord, that " all these things [about which unbelief worries] shall be added unto us?" Let us not forget the condition: " seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." What can be more due to God, or more comely for us as His sons? The Lord's yoke is easy, and His burden is light.

It is unbelief, accompanied by loving the world or the things in the world, which produces anxiety, darkness, and doubt, as in the Gentiles who knew not God. If we know Him, and the blessedness of His kingdom, and the perfection of His righteousness, why be careful for the morrow? For the morrow, says the Lord, shall be careful for itself. Has He failed us to-day, or in the past? What evil has He ever done us, what good thing withheld from us? Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. Even if the hardest trials come, do we not know that all things work together for good to those that love God, to those called according to purpose?

Do you, my reader, say that you love Him not, but dread Him because of your sins? Then why do you not flee for refuge to Him that stretches out to you His strong and gracious arms? Come unto Me, He cries, all ye that labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. " Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." He is full of grace and truth. Is not this the only Savior for a sinner? What does " grace " mean but unmerited favor? You are justly condemned if you refuse to come at God's word.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Be Not Anxious

As the Lord charges His own to lay up for themselves treasures, not on earth, but in heaven, so does He forbid anxiety about their life here below, as His servant did about anything. He lifts our eyes above the seen present to the things unseen and eternal, whence He came and whither He was going, as He is coming to take us shortly. Here He deals with the believer's heart, and the snare of seeking to serve God and mammon which He pronounces morally impossible.

"For this reason I say to you, Be not anxious for your life what ye should eat and what ye should drink, nor yet for your body what ye should put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body more than the raiment? Look at the birds of the heavens, that they sow not, nor reap, nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father nourisheth them. Are ye not more excellent than they? And which of you by anxiety can add to his stature one cubit? And why are ye anxious about raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow: they toil not, nor yet spin; yet I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory put on like one of these. But if God doth so clothe the grass of the field, being to-day and tomorrow cast into the oven, how much more you, O ye of little faith? Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or what shall we put on? For all these things the Gentiles seek after; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things " (vi. 25-32).

Anxiety as to the things which the present life needs is natural. All these things the nations of the earth seek after. In God they have no faith, as the Jews professed loudly, but in works denied. But the disciples had the heavenly Father's name now set before them as the One who is perfect in grace, making His sun shine on evil and good, and sending rain on just and unjust. How true this is I Yet who had affirmed it as a living principle but the Lord on earth, who also set it forth as a model for His own practically, that they might be sons indeed: an astonishing doctrine, especially for those, as they were, trained up in the legal ideas of the Jews. So their righteousness was to be, whether alms, prayer, and fasting, not before men but to their Father that sees in secret.

The name of their Father made anxiety about earthly and bodily wants a painful incongruity, and in particular about what kind the supply should be. From Himself the birds read them one lesson, and the lilies another. He nourishes each fleeting creature, He gives the passing flower its beauty. How much more did He care for His children 2 It was a touching appeal and carrying with it to every believer the conviction of irresistible truth. They were, they are, called to believe in His sustaining goodness. He never fails in His love: they ought not to fail in resting and counting on it day by day. If tried as to it, let them not doubt that it is for their good. It is impossible for God to lie. Are they to doubt His love Whom the Lord reveals as their Father? He who embraces the least objects of His care will act worthily of His love to the nearest.

Nor does the Lord spare them the humbling proof how little the anxiety of man avails. " Which of you by anxiety can add to his stature one cubit? " It was a very small thing if some would count it a very great addition. Yet even for this how powerless is man! Why then be anxious about a garment? The herbage of the field rebukes the vanity of a child of God; for as the Lord called their attention to the lilies, he pointed the moral by the plain fact that God clothed even these transient creatures, lower in the scale than the birds, with a beauty far beyond

Solomon's array in all his glory.

Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or what shall we put on? Here the Lord urges two considerations which we do well to heed. One is to guard us against sharing the unbelief of those who do not even know God, How compromising to share the thoughts and feelings of the Gentiles 1 " For all these things the nations seek after." The other is to assure the doubting heart. " For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Not one sparrow falls to the ground without Him: but of you even the hairs of the head are all numbered " (Matt. 10:29, 30).

Now are you, who read these words, a child of God by grace? Believe not such as say that all mankind are so. They deny the fall; they ignore sin; they oppose the solemn testimony of scripture, that, however favored by privileges, we are by nature children of wrath, even as others (Eph. 2:3). Believe not others who say that baptism quickens those dead in trespasses and sins. Christ quickens by faith of His word and the working of the Spirit. He is the Life, as He is the Way and the Truth. You have His words, not merely to instruct His own, but to show how the dead may live, yea have eternal life; for this it is He gives to those who believe. " Verily, verily, I say to you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life " (John 6:47). Why wonder? Is He not the Son, the I am? " He that believeth on the Son hath life eternal (or, everlasting): and he that is unsubject to the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him " (John 3:36). O sinner, beware lest this be your portion,

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Lamp of the Body Is the Eye

That Christ is the Light, and the True Light, is a truth dear to every Christian. He coming into the world manifests every man. Rich or poor, simple or sage, false or faithful, not one escapes His all-searching light. Nor is there the least circumstance in the course of every day, any more than in what pertains to God, and truth, and morals, not for this life only but for eternity, that He does not set in the light of God. Only through Him do we see fully what God is, Satan, mail, the sinner, the saint, heaven, hell, everything.

The disciples, as the Lord told them in Matt. 5:14, are the light of the world, as they are also the salt of the earth (13). They could be neither apart from Christ. It is He who thus assimilates them to Himself; the latter in His character of righteousness, the former in the quality of His grace, as already explained in Series xi. 4. In receiving Him by faith they receive a new nature, being born of God; hence there is both righteousness and love in their ways.

But here there is a further though connected truth of great value.

" The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body will be light; but if thine eye be wicked, thy whole body will be dark. If therefore the light that is in thee is darkness, how great the darkness "

It is a question not of the light, which is perfect but of " the eye." Spiritual condition has an immense deal to do with the disciples seeing aright. Our recipiency and discernment, our actual judgment and our practice, depend on the state of our affections. The Lord presents the ready and effectual test. " If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body will be light; but if thine eye be wicked, thy whole body will be dark."

Christ truly the object before one gives singleness of eye; and where He is simply and exclusively the " one thing " before the soul, the whole body is light. Difficulties vanish. The will of God becomes quite clear. I am surprised and ashamed to have had doubts here and uncertainty there. I recognize to my humiliation that I had been asleep in my ways and had to rise up from among the dead, and then only have Christ shining upon me. -

Prayer alone does not ensure singleness of eye, nor yet suffices searching the word accompanied by prayer. There may be a fleshly film that dims the eye. We are too apt to think ourselves of importance for God when it is all of grace that He uses us in this way or that. We fail to appreciate our Lord's waiting on His Father, without taking a single step till He gets the word. Yet it is to His obedience that we are sanctified by the Spirit.

We are not like Jews with every point great or small religiously and in ordinary life, in peace or in war, personal, domestic, or social, all ruled by the statutes and ordinances, prohibitions and injunctions of law. Christ brought in the fuller and deeper obedience of a Son, and makes it by grace the believer's by the gift of life eternal and eternal redemption, with the Holy Spirit indwelling as power and personally also in us. But though thus blessed, there are still the three great enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil, in the face of which we are responsible to please God as His children. We need therefore to pray, as the apostle did for the Colossians, to be filled with the right knowledge of His will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and growing by the right knowledge of God (Col. 1:9, 10).

For this we need the eye single and the whole body light. How is this to be? The Lord tells us in John 15:7: " If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done to you." Habitual dependence on Him with confidence in His love is to abide in Him: without this all else is vain. But where we abide by grace, His words are needed to direct: for who is sufficient otherwise? and His Spirit is given to guide us thus. Only thus are we sure that we have His mind; for thus the eye is single and the whole body light. Then when we ask, we have our petition. 0 that so it may be and that we may be content with nothing less!

What is the issue, where other objects are allowed? The alternative is, " If thine eye be wicked, thy whole body will be dark." How solemn the sentence, and how true 1 " If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great the darkness!" O look to God that it be not so with you, a disciple of the Lord I

See too the impossibility of the Light yours, of the eye single, save by genuine repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus. Doubt yourself, not God; and receive Him who in His grace came to receive you by faith, if you have not already done so.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Thy Father in Secret

Here is a Christian principle, which our Lord puts in contrast with acting so as to be seen. What so suited to exercise and strengthen faith day by day, or to guard from that hypocrisy to which man is prone?

He first lays down the general principle, it would seem, in verse 1, and then applies it to alms in 2-4; to prayer in 5-15; and lastly to fasting in 16-18. Some ancients and moderns have been disposed to regard " righteousness " in verse 1, as equivalent to " alms," as Rabbis and others were prone to do. But the better text and sense point to retaining the inclusive term " righteousness " in verse 1, under which fall the three duties that follow. For if 'applied there to " alms," it is hard to conceive why the proper term for " alms" should be given in 2, 3, and 4. The different word in verse 1 points to the more comprehensive sense of " righteousness" or consistency in practice with our relationship. This is then shown to embrace three varied forms in which the disciple is called to do the Father's will in the pious course of life here below.
Dan. 4:27 distinguishes mercy to the poor from righteousness; and I am not aware of any confusion of the two in scripture.

Verse 1 calls the disciple to righteousness surpassing that of the scribes and Pharisees, without which none can enter into the Kingdom of the heavens. " Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward with your Father that is in the heavens." Here is the large principle for Christian practice. Knowing Him as Christ has revealed Him to us, all acceptable service refers to Him. He is a living and true God whom we serve, and He refuses to share His glory with others. We walk by faith, not by sight. Can anything be more opposite to the ways of Christendom?

1. " When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be glorified by men: Verily I say to you, They do get their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right doeth, that thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret will repay to thee " (2-4). If men walk in a vain show religiously quite as much as in the world, the Lord calls His own to shun publicity, and not merely this, but in His vigorous figure, that our own left hand may not know what the right does. The simple and essential aim is to do what we do to Him and His glory.

2. So it is with the prayer here enjoined. " And when ye pray, ye shall not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they should appear to men. Verily I say to you,

They do get their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father that is in secret, and thy Father that seeth in secret will repay to thee. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions as those of the nations; for they think they shall be heard through their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like them; for your Father knoweth of what things ye have need before ye beg of him.... For if ye forgive men their offenses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you [yours]; but if ye forgive not men their offenses, neither will your Father forgive your offenses " (5-15).

Here the same show before men in prayer is reprehended; nor this only, but the heathen folly of vain repetitions, and of much speaking. Lastly the Lord warns that an unforgiving spirit cannot hope to have its own offenses forgiven.

3. "And when ye fast, be not as the hypocrites, downcast in countenance; for they disfigure their faces that they may appear fasting to men. Verily I say to you, They do get their reward. But thou, when fasting, anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou mayest not appear fasting to men, but to thy Father that is in secret; and •thy Father that seeth in secret shalt repay thee " (16-18).

In fasting there is even more sedulous care to guard from any display of that self-humiliation before God which forms so great a part of it. The Lord would form in His own a spirit of living faith in having to do with their Father. Fasting is for His eyes, just like their prayer and their alms. Faith in Him that is in secret is thus in each way exercised. What a contrast with all that hitherto characterized a Jew 1

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Treasures on Earth or in Heaven?

Christ beyond all others knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for He Himself knew what was in man. He seeks treasures on the earth. It may not be gold or property. It may be pleasure or power or position. Some set their heart on fame in letters or learning, in science or art. Some court poetry, oratory, or philosophy. The bar and the bench, the army or the navy, civil government or politics, philanthropy or even the pulpit ordinarily, fire the ambition of others. These objects and all akin which attract the heart of man are treasures on the earth, and beneath the faith to which the Christian is called-faith in God unseen and eternal. " Love not the world," wrote His inspired servant," nor the things that are in the world. If any one loveth the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the vain-glory of life, is not of the Father but is of the world, And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever " (1 John 2:15-17). Listen to the Savior's words on the more prevailing snare " Lay not up for you treasures on the earth where moth and rust consume, and where thieves dig through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust corrupteth, and where thieves dig not through nor steal. For where thy treasure is, there will be thy heart also." The treasures in heaven are the things that are above, where Christ is seated on the right hand of God. On these things we are to set our mind, not on things that are on the earth. For we died with Christ from its best things, the rudiments of the world which Israel had as their religion; and our life is hid with Christ in God. His cross closed all such shadows and ordinances; and therefore is the world crucified to the Christian, and he to the world. If he is truly Christ's, he is heavenly as united to Christ, though he is still on earth, and bears the image of Adam the earthy till He comes. Be not moved by the unbelieving sneers of those who try to lower as other-worldliness your true objects. These are far above the world, or the habitable earth to come, blessed as it will be when Christ and His saints reign over it. Our proper portion is in heaven and with Christ there. Be not cheated out of that which is revealed to you by the Holy Spirit sent forth from heaven, on which the Epistles enlarge beyond what the disciples could bear when their Master was here, as. He Himself tells us (John 16:12). The wisest of mankind is no judge of what God wills for His children now. The New Testament is as clear as possible that He would have His own not of the world; indeed our Lord declares that they are not, even as He is not. And as it is written, Things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man, whatever things God prepared for those that love Him: them God revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. These are treasures which the Lord calls us to lay

up for us in heaven. And nothing can harm them, like earthly treasures by corruption or violence. Do not say that such an aim is beyond the believer. It would be assuredly, if there were not the grace of God to enable. But we have Christ as Head above, from Whom all the body, ministered to and united together by the joints and bands, increases with the increase of God. His grace suffices one in the most crushing circumstances. And if we have such an Advocate on high, we have One no less divine to work in us here below that we may be strengthened in the inner man. Thus could one of old boast of weaknesses, never of sins, that the power of Christ might tabernacle upon him.

If you urge that you have doubts about your soul, how can you pass this day without settling that question before God? He sent His Son for you, that you might live through Him, and that He, the Lord Jesus, might die for you-yea, for your sins. Let it be your need, your guilt, your ruin, looking to God in the name of the crucified Savior. Jesus never said Nay to one that, feeling his sins, appealed to Him. God the Father would have you thus honor the Son, who declares solemnly: 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 is passed out of death into life. Verily, verily, I say to you, The hour is coming and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that heard shall live." Be not faithless then, but believing; trust His grace that all else you lack, as you surely do, will be given in the like love. It is His joy to bless the believer.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Prayer of the Disciples

Are you a disciple of the Lord Jesus? Are you born of the Spirit? Are you a child of God entitled to say Abba, Father? Such were they, and no others, whom the Lord taught to pray thus: Our Father that art in the heavens, Sanctified be thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done as in heaven also on the earth, Give us to-day our sufficient bread, and forgive us our debts as we also forgive our debtors, and bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. If you are a disciple as they were, you too can pray thus, even if like them you could not say that you have in Christ redemption, the forgiveness of your trespasses (Eph. 1:7). Such too was necessarily their state then, for Christ had not yet suffered for sins. But it ought not to be yours now; for the atoning work is done. If then you believe on the Lord Jesus, be it known to you, that through Him is (not promised, but) proclaimed to you remission of sins, and in Him is every believer justified from all things (Acts 13:38, 39). You have not appreciated the alphabet of the gospel, if you know not that once purged you have no more conscience of sins.

While in this unformed condition, born of the Spirit but not resting on redemption known as yours (and therefore not yet having the Spirit of adoption, Gal. 4:4-6, Eph. 1:13), you do well to pray as the Lord taught His disciples waiting for the Spirit (Luke 11:1-3). When the Paraclete was given, they entered into peace and liberty, far beyond their then state (Rom. 5:2, 1-11 Cor. 17, 18); and so may you prove when thus subject and obedient to God (Acts 5:32). Nevertheless, though the standing of a Christian will lead you to pray in the Spirit according to the new relationships, how blessed ever is that which the Lord here taught! Do you really know what He meant? Many fail in this. Let us weigh His words.

It is in the First Gospel we hear of the Father who is in the heavens. The aim was to raise the eyes on high of Jews who were used to wait for God to display His glorious power on earth (Isa. 25:9; 31:4; 35:4. &c.), as He did in measure since the day of redemption from the old house of bondage. Now He is made known as the One who makes His sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on just and unjust, yet with special favor to His sons.

The petitions are seven, and divide into two classes; the first three are of righteousness, as the last four are of grace. This is an order intrinsically due to God, and proper for saints. If lost sinners as such were contemplated, all must begin with sovereign grace. But of this we hear not in the so-called sermon on the Mount, but such grace shines appropriately elsewhere.

1. And how right, even our hearts feel, is the opening petition, Sanctified be thy name! It is the foremost desire of the renewed, however young in faith. Without this made good, there can be nothing good.

2. Thy (not My) Kingdom come, the Father's Kingdom (Matt. 13:43) where the heavenly saints shine forth as the sun in risen glory, the dearest object of His love here as Father, Who will have them there with and as Christ, through Whom alone it could be.

3. Thy will be done as in heaven also on the earth. This is at the same time the Son of man's Kingdom, Who will send His angels to gather out of it all offenses and all that work lawlessness (Matt. 13:41). It is the earthly things of God's Kingdom, as the other the heavenly (John 3:12), Christ being Head of the church and over all things (Eph. 1:10, 22).

Then come the petitions of grace.

4. Give us to-day our sufficient (or, necessary) bread. Thus are they taught to begin with confessing dependence for ordinary wants, as the apostle called us to be content with food and raiment.

5. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. For indeed all saints are bound to judge self and confess sins; as an antecedent spirit of forgiveness is imperative. See Matt. 18:35, Luke 17:3, 4.

6. And bring us not into temptation. So the Lord impresses on the disciples; for He ever knew their weakness as none else did yet. Luke 22:46. To " endure " temptation is as blessed, as " entering into " it is full of danger.

7. But deliver us from evil in general, if not from the evil one in particular. This was not the sifting, or temptation, deprecated in the clause before, which grace may put us through for good, as we see in Peter; but the power of the enemy in drawing into sin against God. The proper desire was to be kept from the evil, or, if one fell, to be restored from it. Grace in no case fails, if a disciple alas! did. Deliver us from evil.

The doxology is an ecclesiastical accretion and therefore uninspired. Luke was led by the Holy Spirit to omit the special title (2), the earthly Kingdom (3), and the final clause (7), as not so much called for in the case of Gentiles.

Reader, can your state admit of your adopting the prayer for a disciple of Jesus? How sad to use it lightly and untruly?

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Two Masters

When man fell, he abandoned God as Master; he gained by sin another master, even Satan, the great rebel against the true God. The race followed the fallen parents. " Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned " (Rom. 5:12). Such is the moral history of man, recorded in Genesis, there summarized, here reasoned on by the apostle. So vain, so blind, is every man, that he is apt to go no higher than himself in accounting for sin. But it is not so: neither Jew nor Gentile originated sin. It began with the head of the race, long before those distinctions. It was an innocent man too, though Adam was not deceived, but the woman being quite deceived was involved in transgression (1 Tim. 2:14). Sin became the state of all, while each added his own sins also. Satan thus became master in fact of the race; and from the first the guilty pair hid away from God's presence, before " He drove out the man."

Henceforth all for good turned on another, the Second man, the Last Adam. Sinful man can neither atone for sins nor get rid of sin. And from the fall Jehovah Elohim clearly intimated the great truth that deliverance can come only from the woman's Seed, who, Himself bruised, should bruise the Serpent's head, that is, destroy the mysterious enemy. Jesus, the Son of God, born of the virgin, alone answers to this earliest oracle, and to every other in scripture. How many besides His incarnation converge in Him and can apply to no other, in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension Above all He was to suffer once for sins, Just for unjust, that He might bring us who believe to God. For no external rite could adequately meet the dire need. It was not purifying only, but atonement there must be by One who, being God and man in one person, suited and alone could suit God and man, the Holy One whom God made sin for us, that we might become His righteousness in Christ. Hence repentance toward God, and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ, must be in man.

There is thus faith-obedience, the root of all other obedience in practice. It is not mere outward separateness by circumcision or anything akin. The sanctification of the Spirit is thereby secured in a new life imparted to the believer for Christ's obedience as well as His blood-sprinkling. We thenceforth obey as He did, not as slaves under law like Israel with the solemn sanction of the victim's blood on them and on the book of the law, threatening death on disobedience; we obey as sons, on whom grace rests, and as we are begotten of God, so have we Christ's blood that cleanseth from every sin. As we were in baptism buried with Christ unto His death (for nothing short could suffice even as a starting-point), so we also, as He was raised from the dead, should walk in newness of life. What then? Shall we sin because, even if once Jews, we are no longer under law but under grace? Away with it. Know we not that to whom we yield ourselves bondmen for obedience, we are bondmen to him whom we obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? Through Christ and His work set free from sin, and become bondmen to God, we have our fruit unto holiness and the end life eternal.

Thus it is that sin shall not have dominion over us. Not law but grace gives power; and grace and truth came through Jesus, as John 1 expressly declares in contrast with law, which however good in itself could only slay one in whom sin was and worked. For sinful man salvation hangs on Him. Without His blood is no remission; in virtue of it He washed us from our sins, and in newness of life (His life as risen from among the dead), we are fitted to walk worthily and please God.

But Satan ever seeks to mislead. And no one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. " Ye cannot," said our Lord, " serve God and mammon." This tests those who bear His name. Never was mammon more widely sought in Christendom than now. How is it with your own soul? Are you, a professing Christian, a slave to mammon? A divided heart is a disloyal one. No one can serve two masters. Think of the young ruler who in sorrow turned away from following Christ, because he loved his possessions. Think of the apostle who for a paltry sum sold his Master. How true it is that, hating the one, we love the other, or holding to the one, we despise the other! Mammon commands the world; and if we love the world, or the things in the world, we serve mammon. But what does a man profit if he should gain the whole world, and lose his soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Ye cannot serve two masters, God and mammon.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Light of the World

Here the character of the position for the disciples goes beyond " the salt of the earth." For this was expressive of righteousness; a righteousness not outward like that of the scribes and Pharisees (which sought reputation of man, and was little beyond the pride of a Stoic), but lowly and real as in God's sight. Whereas " the light of the world " is the shining forth of grace, and inseparable from the confession of Christ in that respect. Salt preserves, but does not make everything manifest as the light does.

"Ye are the light of the world: a city set upon a hill-top cannot be hid. Nor do they light a lamp, and put it under the dry measure but on the lamp-stand, and it shineth unto all that are in the house. Thus let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father that is in the heavens (vers. 14-16).

" The world " had no such special dealing of God as " the earth." There moral darkness had reigned, which the light was to dispel as far as He gave it scope and power. Redemption, Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, would give the light a penetrating energy unknown before. For such was the deadly pall which overhung the favored land during our Lord's earthly sojourn that, contrary to nature, the darkness resisted the light, and " comprehended not " even the True Light in His person. But when He rose victorious over all the power of the wicked one, the old commandment became the new, and was true not in Him only but in us, Christians, because the darkness is quite passing and the true light already shines.

This is confirmed by the figure which follows and carries the truth out farther. " A city set, or situated, upon a hill-top cannot be hid." The sphere is no longer the circumscribed area of the earth or land, but, as for another aspect we read, " the field is the world." The God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ would make Himself known at least in testimony, before power effectuates His will far and wide. As perfect love He came down in Christ to man; but the world knew Him not, and His own people received Him not, yea insisted that He should be crucified. Now He sets Christ in the heavenlies above every principality and authority and power and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that to come, and put all things under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church which is His body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all. And they, His disciples, are the light of the world: a city set upon a hill-top cannot be hid. Once darkness, they are now light in the Lord, and responsible to walk as children of light, corporately as well as individually. For the fruit of light is in all goodness, and

righteousness, and truth. They are to prove what is agreeable to the Lord, and to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather to reprove them.

Men treat their light more fairly than Christendom does the light of which our Lord spoke. Men shrink from natural darkness, its inconveniences, and its dangers; and when they light a lamp, they do not put it under the dry measure (which of course would quite hide it) but on the lampstand, and it shines to all that are in the house. But Christendom fears the light that exposes its neglect of scripture, and of the Holy Spirit's guidance, and of Christ who is and ought to be the all. Therefore, Christianity and the church being sadly misrepresented, all the privileges and duties suffer in the same proportion; as the Lord and the apostles prepare us to expect. But the faithful are bound with humility yet in courage of faith to let the light shine; for it is not of self, but the confession of Christ in everything going forth as God has taught them, whether men hear or forbear. It is meant by our Lord to shine to all that are in the house, and beyond too.

Do we want to make known God as He is? Christ is His image and alone perfectly represents Him. Would we show Him as Father? He the Son declares Him and is the way to Him. Would we see man as he ought to be? It is not on the first man we must look but on the Second. Would we measure the true wickedness of Satan? It is in his direct, constant, personal hatred of and antagonism to Jesus the Son of God. Do you crave the sight of life eternal in the midst of this evil and guilty world? There it is in word and deed fully revealed in the same Lord Jesus. Would you consider death in all its solemn nature? It is He who manifests it. Would you look at life in risen power? Jesus alone and perfectly discloses it. Do you wish a true sight of the highest heaven? It is where the Father received Him with the fullest love and glory. Would we warn of hell? It is the everlasting fire, in which all that despise, hate and reject Him must have their portion with the devil and his angels. Christ is the light that makes everything and one manifest.

So it might be shown in the whole 'range of privilege and duty and from the least thing to the greatest. He is the measure of love and holiness, of service and worship, of devotedness, of suffering, and of communion. He is the standard of sin and of judgment no less than of righteousness. And as the Father is only known through and in Him, so the Spirit acts to make all good in the believer, that we might be delivered from all our thoughts and imaginations, and be led into all truth and kept.

" Thus let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good (or, comely, KaX«) works, and glorify your Father that is in the heavens." This is practical Christianity in its outgoing, as the salt is the preservative power of purity which we always need to have in ourselves. It is to confess and live Christ, not only in secret which is essential and so pressed elsewhere before Him who sees there, but also truly and unflinchingly before men. Benevolent works are no test, and are not what Christ looked for and here expresses. He spoke of works excellent in the sense of what suits the Father and the Son, and of which the Holy Spirit is the sole power in us. It is not His mind to let our good works shine before men, but our light, or confession of Himself in word and deed.

Nor can anything other or short of this secure the end He proposes. For I might dole out all my goods in what men call charity, or deliver up my body to be burned without confessing Christ, and therefore without in any way glorifying the Father. There is neither light nor love without the faith and the confession of Christ; and self might thereby be honored, but not the Father. Whereas let the light of Christ shine in your confession; and when men see right works in accordance with the will of God, they glorify not you but the Father who is the spring and aim of what you do.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Salt of the Earth

The Lord had laid down in vers. 5-9 the distinctive moral qualities suited to the kingdom of the heavens, with the supplemental blessednesses in sufferings (10-12). He now proceeds to state definitely their position here below according to His mind. The first is given in ver. 13, answering to righteousness, as we saw in the earlier qualities He endorses; the second in 14-16, answering to the outgoing energy of grace, remains for its separate notice in due season.

" Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt lose its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It availeth for nothing any more but to be cast without and trodden under foot of men " (ver. 13).

The disciples were familiar with salt not only in ordinary life but in the oblation to Jehovah,

" the salt of the covenant of thy God ": " with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt " (Lev. 2:13). And so we read of " a covenant of salt ": as expressive figuratively of what was to be preserved inviolate and unchanging (Num. 18:19; 2 Chron. 13:5). Accordingly the Lord, in Matt. ix. 49,50, declares that " every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt. Salt [is] good; but if the salt become saltless wherewith will ye season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace one with another."

If fire represents God's avenging judgment of evil, salt does no less clearly His preserving power in relation with Himself. For, as the Lord lets us know, the figures of the law are now by and in Him translated from the past shadows into present and everlasting realities. There is therefore a necessary dealing with " everyone " because all are ruined by sin. Faith bows to this now, as unbelief braves the warning to find it solemnly true and too late vindicated for eternity before the great white throne, and the unquenchable fire that follows. But as grace sent the Savior to bear God's unsparing judgment when He made Jesus on the cross sin for us, so the believer judges himself all the more when he recognizes in Him that suffered without the gate the true and divine sin-offering, consumed to ashes without the camp; Whose blood enters in all its value the holy of holies, and entitles himself boldly to approach even there, with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having the heart sprinkled from a wicked conscience, and the body washed with pure water.

He then, there, and thus was salted with fire in a way of absolute perfection as none other could be, as those who reject Him must be in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. But all who believe enjoy the full efficacy of that fire of God which He endured for our sins, whilst given to judge ourselves as in the sight of God and to reckon ourselves dead with Him to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus; for he that died is justified from sin as well as sins. We have also the privilege of " every sacrifice salted with salt." It is not only that " our God is a consuming fire " against every evil thing, every inconsistency with relationship to Him and with His nature; but as offered to God, our bodies even as a living sacrifice, we know and have the seasoning with salt that we may be kept pure and incorrupt, abhorring any working of flesh as vile and condemned in Christ's death.

The disciples had yet to learn that wondrous and mighty sacrifice of His; but here they find themselves set in the only position which suited Him, and them too associated with Him. Its moral nature, not only inwardly but publicly, is here conveyed by the words. " Ye are the salt of the earth." To the Son as to the Father anything but this pure and purifying or at least preservative savor was intolerable for the kingdom of the heavens which they were to enter on the earth. The law, as we are told, made nothing perfect. And Moses, in view of Israel's hardheartedness, allowed what could not be when God was revealed in a Son. In that divine light He looks for suitability to His holiness. How it was to be made good in them they did not yet know; for the discourses on the mount did not unfold redemption nor yet the new birth. But there could be no doubt that this was the plain and certain expression of the place in which the Lord set His own.

Let it be noticed that they, and only they, and they emphatically, were " the salt of the earth." The Lord does not say the salt " of the world." This will come for fuller elucidation when we consider what was meant by their being " the light of the world," not of the earth. But when thus distinguished as here, we may remark now in pointing out the force of our text, that " the earth " means that ordered scene where God had dealings beyond other parts. It was then as of old where Israel was set; as it was about to be enlarged by the outward profession of His name far beyond the land of Palestine. The Lord accordingly begins with that position of conserving purity, alike privilege and responsibility. " Ye are the salt of the earth." Less or other than this was unrecognizable since He, the Son, came and called into association with Himself. The life He communicated to the believer, and the redemption He would accomplish for his sins, would be explained fully in its season. But here He shows what consisted with the Father, as well as the kingdom He would establish.

But He adds words-most grave words—" If the salt lose its savor, wherewith shall it be salted?" Profession there would be, and an excellent thing it is, if it be a heart testimony to God, true not only in word but in deed. Here, at the beginning and still more clearly at the end of His communications the Lord prepares us to expect what soon and increasingly became evident how hollow and false it was to become; and He intimated by His question and comment that the true and holy savor if once lost would be irreparable. Whatever grace might work individually, or with a few here and there, the pure position cannot be restored. Salt is itself. Nothing outside can give the saltness that disappears. Wherewith shall it be salted?

He goes farther, and pronounces its unfitness even for the useful purpose of fertilizing supplied by that which is most offensive. Saltless salt is unavailing even to manure the earth. It is only fit to be thrown outside, and trodden under foot of men. And so it will be, as it has been. When Christianity vanishes and only a savorless Christendom remains, men have trodden it down as more worthless than Judaism or even Gentilism, and the more insufferable as so much prouder and more persecuting. And so it will be when the final blows come for Babylon; and the powers which once had their illicit commerce with her shall hate the harlot, and make her desolate and naked, and eat her flesh and burn her with fire. Not only is God strong in judging her, but she shall be trodden under foot of indignant men.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Perfect, as Your Heavenly Father Is Perfect

It is God, not man, whom the Lord makes the criterion; the heavenly Father, not the dread moral governor as made known to Israel, but our Father. What are His affections, what His will about us? Nothing is more foreign here than the delusion of our being freed now from the indwelling evil of our nature.

" For if ye love those that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the tax-gatherers the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye much more? do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Herein was manifested the love of God in our case, because God hath sent His only-begotten Son, that we might live through Him. For we were dead Godward, and in Him only was the life that could serve God, which we wholly lacked. The love of God has met this, otherwise insuperable lack, and this by sending His only-begotten Son who is that life to impart it to those that believe. They have life eternal for their souls now, as they await it for their bodies when He comes again for us. But even this possession of life in Him suffices not to satisfy His love, any more than it fits us to enjoy, serve, and worship Him. There is a burden which nothing on our part could remove. Therefore it follows, Herein is love, not because we loved God, but because He loved us, and sent His Son as propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:9, 10). But there is also, flowing hence, the Spirit, His Spirit, dwelling in us, as of love no less than of power and sobriety, so that we love one another after a divine sort.

This, no doubt, is Christianity in its full privileges, going far beyond the state of the disciples before redemption and the gift of the Spirit. But the divine nature was already there, which would be active when all obstacles were gone through the work of Christ. Hence, even in the time that preceded the cross, the Lord insisted on a love wholly above mere human nature with its likes and its dislikes. The detested tax-gatherers had natural affection, and loved those that loved them. The Gentiles saluted tenderly those bound up with themselves in mere ties of flesh and blood. The disciples were enjoined to love far beyond Jew or Greek. The family were to love as their heavenly Father did. Though this could not be in degree, it was the kind of love, which must be in God's children by divine grace, rising above all question of desert or ulterior aim.

" Ye therefore shall be perfect," says the Lord, " as your heavenly Father is perfect." His is love, because He is love; it is the energy of His nature going out in goodness where there is need, and above all reference to merit, or congruity with what He loves and is. And this in all its perfection He was then showing in the Lord Jesus, image of the invisible God. What did He ever seek for Himself, as He went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people; lunatics, demon-possessed, paralytics, dead men or women? It was love irrespective of self, in compassion to the most wretched of men; it was love rising above all the unworthiness, ingratitude, or hostility on the part of its objects. He was doing not His own will in any case, but the will of God, and for His Father's glory. What is the altruism of men's talk, or of any man's performance, in comparison?

This love we too share as His children. So the Lord taught then; so the Holy Spirit confirmed afterward. Be ye therefore imitators of God, as children beloved; and walk in love, even as Christ also loved us and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor. The blessings of Christianity and of the church of God ought only to accentuate the duty and increase its spring and power.

As the heavenly Father's love is shown in absolute superiority to good or evil, right or wrong, whom He blesses from grace in Himself, so is the Christian now called to walk as made partaker of a divine nature (not merely of Adam's), and in the place of sons. If noblesse oblige, as men say, how much more divine grace and such a relationship?

But, my fellow-sinner, what ignorance, and madness for you, ungodly, enemy, and spiritually powerless as you are, to imagine you can so walk, or so win your way to God! Not so: as lost ones cast yourselves in repentance and faith on the Savior and His redemption. If you look away to Him from your guilty selves, He will give you life everlasting in Him, and the remission of sins through His blood. Then, and thus only, can you follow Him in the path, His path, which He points out to His own.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Love Your Enemies

This word of our Lord demands our earnest heed; for it is as foreign to the feelings of men in Christendom as to Jewish disciples. But here is nothing that goes beyond the word of the beginning of Christ, nothing that supposes the work of redemption accomplished, or the Holy Spirit given to the believer. Yet the presence of the Lord brought in no little change.

" Ye heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those that persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father that is in [the] heavens; for he maketh his sun to rise on evil and good, and sendeth rain on just and unjust " (vers. 43-45).

In vain some essay to impress those words of Christ on men in general, on such as are not born of God. Now the language assumes that those addressed did believe in Christ, and had a new life of the Spirit as being born anew. But this is not so in our country or any other, even if as favored in the possession of an open Bible. Yet the divine speaker takes for granted, what was true then and is still, that the mass of men, the nations (and the Jews are at least as bad), seek after what pertains to this life, eating, 'drinking, clothing, money, ease, honor: baptism, or the profession of Christ, in no way delivers from or lessens it. Therefore He warns that wide is the gate and broad the way that leads unto destruction, and many are they that enter through it; that narrow is the gate and straitened the way that leads unto life, and few are they that find it. It is therefore a total and dangerous misconception thus to overlook man's existing state of ruin.

But others, who seem aware of human inability to obey the law of God, and are accustomed to regard even believers still, as like Israel of old, doomed to failure under law, naturally conclude, that such requirements as the Lord urged on the mount are to man impossible and more condemnatory than the Ten Words of Sinai. They therefore settle down, like the believer in Rom. 7, overwhelmed as he sees himself struggling against the evils of his old nature, and ignorant of emancipating grace in the power of a dead and risen Christ, who can only cry, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of this body of death? Hence the tendency to tone down our Lord's words in these three chapters, or even to deny that they have a living claim on the saint now. Others again contend that they are Jewish and had only to do with the disciples when the Lord was here in the days of His sojourn. They are really His words to men taught of God, and with a new life which desires and delights to walk according to His revealed will.

To love our enemies, to pray for those that persecute, is wholly above the law or the duty of a people in the flesh. An Edomite or an Egyptian was not to be abhorred, and their children might enter into the congregation of Jehovah in the third generation; an Ammonite or a Moabite only in the tenth generation, like a bastard. But Christ brought in grace and truth. In the light of the Son of man all were lost, even the sheep of Israel. As He was come to seek and to save that which was lost, those that were His were to love their enemies and to pray for their persecutors. It was the mind of heaven for His saints on earth, applicable to them and to none but them. They receive life, His life, in receiving Him, and are called to show it thus. It is as incumbent now as when the Lord thus spoke; and His resurrection made it clearer and stronger, as the Holy Spirit when given made it of power. Thus were the disciples to be sons of their Father in the heavens.

What renegades, if not from Christ, at least from His words and will, if any bearing His name seek to fritter away so plain a call! This they cannot avoid, if they justify the ways of Christendom, where the world rules and the language is of Ashdod, where men fail to show their Father's name, and boast of their comprehending all the mixed multitude. For it is now a question of a far higher than Israel and of a separation deeper and nearer to God. It is a true and present calling of grace, inalienable from the Christian if loyal to the Lord. For we are all God's sons by faith in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:26). If we have the relationship and title, we cannot be absolved from the responsibility. Yea, it would be violence done to our new and divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).

Let us therefore be in earnest to keep up the family character. Does not our Father that is in the heavens make His sun to rise on evil and good? does He not send rain on just and unjust? If His sons, it is not presumption to cherish feelings above human nature; it is our new status, and should be our delight. Grace alone can make it good. But Christ has procured all that is needful and efficacious to this end; and the Holy Spirit is here to see to it and guide us to Christ's glory.

Be not deceived, brethren beloved in the Lord. The enemy is sleeplessly active, and only too successful. This is My beloved Son, says the Father: hear ye Him. What is the chaff to the wheat? It is not enough to have life in Him, and our sins forgiven through His blood. We are called to hear His voice and to follow Him, separate from the world that crucified the Lord of glory.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Giving

In this verse we have a grand principle for the Christian. It comes in at the close of the exhortation to resist not evil, but rather to suffer it, privately, by perversions of law, or from public demand. Christ is the pattern for the disciple; and no sound exposition can explain His word away, however distasteful to flesh and blood. The new nature goes along with it loyally as the perfect law of liberty. Only the fleshly mind seeks evasion by every disingenuous means.

" To him that asketh thee give, and from him that desireth to borrow of thee turn not away."

The disciple learns from God that he is a debtor to grace, not only in the outward mercies of every day which he shares with all mankind, but in that still deeper love which quickened him from moral death, death in offenses and sins, when a child of wrath by nature. Here a Jew or a Gentile made no difference: as far as we all were concerned, it was a hopeless case of irremediable evil. But God who is rich in mercy, because of His great love wherewith He loved us, quickened us together with Christ, raised us up together, and made us sit down together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus; that He might display in the coming ages the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness upon us in Christ Jesus.

Those whom the Christ then addresses had tasted already that the Lord is good; but they were soon to be brought into its full compass when He died, rose, and ascended on high, and sent fog th the Holy Spirit in glorifying Him to guide them into all the truth. The Lord, having before Him such fullness of grace which we were to receive, looks for our appreciation of it by faith and the action of the Holy Spirit on our souls correspondingly. As He said elsewhere, Freely ye received, freely give. It is the mind of heaven reproduced on that earth which was full of sordid selfishness. None were more characterized by covetousness than the Jews, who, having for the time lost their place as Jehovah's witnesses, sought a vent and excuse for their energy in heaping up wealth; to which end cheating their Gentile masters only gave a greater zest. No wonder that souls so blessed by grace should be called to an entirely new walk and an equally new worship, unintelligible to such as do not enter into the Christian calling and hope. Yet the apostle says plainly that we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God before ordained that we should walk in them.

But Christ came to save not only from wrath but ruin, not only from penalty but from sin, and to form a new character in those that hear His voice and follow Him. It was and could only be His own character. For what was that of Socrates, or of Antoninus Pius, of Gautama Buddha or of Confutse? Shades of vanity or pride, in comparison with Him who never did His own will but that of God the Father who sent Him, His only-begotten. It was His to come into this world of sin and self to give Himself up as a sacrifice, thus bringing God into it to put sin out of it, as He assuredly will in power as the glorious issue of what He has already done and suffered.

Therefore, as a part of the spiritual process, He would impress on His own the character of grace, and not mere law like a Jew, in which He was the constant witness and blessed perfection. Was there ever a need, a want, a suffering presented to Him without an answer of divine grace and power, and in all human tenderness? He that was about to give Himself up to God for us, what of good did He ever withhold? Money was too small and mean to give, save as meeting the temple-tax. " Take that [from a strange bank! j, and give it to them for Me and thee." Hence the words in Luke 6:38, " Give, and it shall be given you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together and running over, shall be given into your bosom; for with the same measure with which ye mete it shall be measured to you again." It is literally " they shall give," but so often in Luke impersonally stated, and really pointing to God. Thus as His grace produces its like, so will He never forget it, however man may.

Now, my dear reader, you know that this is far beyond your heart and life; and that, if you strove to emulate such giving, you would soon weary, and find it a law more fiery than the ten words of Sinai. Only Christ set the example; only Christ gives the power. But you must first be at His feet as a lost sinner, casting your soul with all your sins on Him for life, for pardon through His blood, and peace. It is in vain for you to think of giving of your means, till you have come to Him as the neediest of all to receive of His fullness. Only then, when you have Him as your unfailing treasure, will you have the faith and love to make to yourself friends with the mammon of unrighteousness. Only then will you, with single eye and liberal heart, " give to him that asketh of you, and not turn away from him that would borrow of you," be he of the world, or of the household of faith; only then not grievingly, nor of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver. And He is able to make every grace abound toward you, that, having in every way always all sufficiency, you may abound to every good work. When grace has saved you by Christ to God's glory, then it will be your joy to follow Christ; and you will shun and hate what is inconsistent with Him, both from your new nature, and in obedience to the word of God.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Resist Not Evil

The Lord here advances beyond all Jewish and indeed human thought, when He enjoins on His disciples patient grace on all kinds of inflicted wrong. To resist it is forbidden. He cites from the law the principle of talion, as it is styled, or retaliation, expressly to abandon it. It was particularly open to abuse; but even when applied with the strictest justice, and acting as a powerful check on human vindictiveness, how far was it from the mind of heaven which Christ was manifesting on earth, and laying down as the only conduct proper to the sons of His Father! Can we conceive a greater shock to Jewish feeling?

" Ye heard that it was said, Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth. But I say to you not to resist evil; but whoever striketh (or shall strike) thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And to him that would go to law with thee and take thy vest (or tunic), leave him thy coat (or mantle) also. And whoever shall impress thee for one mile, go with him two."

No doubt that on such a ground the world could not enter. To the natural man the rule of the heavens is impossible. Yet it is a favorite theme for such persons as believe neither in the Deity of the Lord nor in His atoning worth to descant on the Sermon of the Mount as the perfect ideal of Christian legislation. It is no more than an academic recitation. Nor is it that they have the most distant notion of obeying it themselves, nor do they expect others to exhibit such unworldly traits. If wrong were done them in person or property, as the Lord describes, they utterly object to its applying as a living authority. Even pious men help their unbelief by crying out against understanding His words as they read, and argue for spirit against letter.

Now it is true that here as everywhere mere letter fails. One might imitate the outward acts described and come short of what the Lord aims at throughout His entire discourse. The most rigid obedience of His sayings in order to life and the Father's love would in such a case prove a more fiery law than that of Sinai. For the Lord begins with spiritual qualities in His own, in vain sought in fallen man, and such as characterize a divine nature of which grace gives the believer to partake. Blessed indeed are such, as He pronounced them, and the more, not less, when persecuted on account of righteousness in a world of lawlessness; and if reviled and persecuted for Christ's sake, called to rejoice and exult, because their reward was great in the heavens. What can man do to hurt those who are happier the worse they are treated? The secret is that they are more than conquerors through Him that loved them, and abjure all merit of their own. But they have a new life (and it is the life of the Second man, not of the first) whose internal marks were displayed practically, as the Lord described in the opening verses of the Sermon (Matt. 5:1-12), and their separate position before men follows (vers. 13-16). In all that thence is given us the Lord enlarges the law and the prophets, so far as to rise above them immensely in scope till, as here, we have grace in suffering from evil instead of punishing it as the law

provided.

It was what God had sent His Son to manifest here below, and none fully follow. But suffering for His sake might be our portion as it often has been of our brethren. Thus all our meetness for God's presence depends on His death and resurrection, as our pardon on His blood; and we own our absolute indebtedness to His grace for both. It is our duty and joy to follow and imitate, as indeed He is our life; and He is the standard in not resisting evil.

But cavilers who would pare down and fritter away His words are not ashamed to argue that He meant them not literally, because when struck on the face for His answer to the high priest, He calmly remonstrated, while bowing to the insult. Was this paying evil back in its own coin? On the contrary it was One who did no sin nor was guile found in His mouth, who when reviled, reviled not again, and when suffering threatened not. In fact He presented far mole than the other cheek, for they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and struck Him with the palms of their hands with the utmost contempt. No! the Lord yielded to wrong instead of resisting it; and such is the true calling of the Christian.

Here we may if need be follow Him in spirit and letter. As man is tenacious of his little goods, the Lord puts the case, not of offering personal violence only, but of depriving him of what attaches to man by a legal suit. What then does He call for? " To him that would go to law with thee, and take thy vest, leave him thy coat." How much better to lose one's clothes than consistency with Christ? The spirit of the injunction goes farther than the one cheek or the outer coat. What men seek is to evade all suffering and hold their human rights in defiance of His words, thus losing the reality of Christianity and retaining not even its semblance.

There was another claim in those days of which the Jews were prone to complain as an intolerable hardship. The imperial government authorized its officials, on their errands, in certain cases to require personal attendance, and with their beasts of burden too. How men are apt to be vexed with what after all is no great burden, and none so much as a people like the Jews under their heathen lords! The Lord would raise His disciples above all such self-will. " Whoever shall impress thee for one mile, go with him two!" With what simplicity and force He provides His own with a spirit to carry them in meek dignity above the squabbles of the world 1 How unworthy of Him would be the letter of refusing to go four or five miles, if such were the requisition, because the Lord had said, " Go with him two!" The real mind of the Lord is that he should willingly exceed what he was asked. It is grace in patience.

Can anything convince you, my reader, that you can neither be nor do what is essential to enter the kingdom of the heavens? There is but one way, Christ; and this way you can only get ' by renouncing yourself. So inseparable are faith and repentance. He saves by giving not redemption only, but a new and divine nature which hates self-will, and which loves and does God's will. Hence you obey according to the law of liberty, as contrasted with the Jew under the law of bondage.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Swear Not at All

Here again the teaching of our Lord far transcends what was said of old. His presence brought in the light of God, and it was addressed to a new and divine nature in those who believe. It dealt with the root of every question, not merely with the fruit or overt acts.

" Again ye heard that it was said to the ancients, Thou shalt not swear falsely, but shalt render to the Lord thine oaths. But I say to you, Swear not at all; neither by (in) the heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is his feet's footstool; nor by (toward) Jerusalem, for it is the great King's city. Nor shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your word be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay; but what exceedeth these is of evil (or, the evil one)."

Thus the Lord goes far beyond perjury or breaking a vow. He prohibits swearing altogether in the intercourse of daily life. Our word therein is to be, Yea, yea, or Nay, nay. That which is more than these has no sanction from God, and is therefore of evil, or the evil one, the enemy of God and man. All such asseveration as the Lord illustrates from the facts of Jewish habit arose from the constant experience of men in deceiving or evading. They therefore resorted to such means of insuring the truth. But these efforts defeated themselves; for we know from a reliable Jewish contemporary of the N.T. inspired writers that oaths by earth, heaven, sun, stars, and the entire universe, were not counted binding. Only those obliged the conscience which were by God's name direct and express; nay others might be transgressed. As the Lord supposed in those He addresses poverty of spirit and purity of heart, He proscribed absolutely all such swearing as offensive to God and incompatible with the place of His sons.

Nor is it only Jews then, but professing Christians now, that show themselves as indifferent to the Lord's authority as if He had never thus solemnly uttered His mind. Among Protestants there is some little care to avoid profanity by adopting light and foolish exclamations, or by repeating heathen terms derived from their Greek or Latin reading, forgetting that if the idols are nothing, the demons behind them are real and evil. Romanists are much less scrupulous. It is sad to think how perverts go farther in excuse for their blasphemous phrases than those born and bred in their vain superstitions.

Take the following proof from the late Cardinal Newman's " Lectures on certain Difficulties felt by Anglicans in Submitting to the Catholic Church ": " Listen to their conversation; listen to the conversation of any multitude, or any private party; what strange oaths mingle with it I God's heart, and God's eyes, and God's wounds, and God's blood: you cry out, How profane! ' Doubtless; but do you not see that the special profaneness above Protestant oaths lies, not in the words but simply in the speaker, and is the necessary result of that insight into the invisible world which you have not? You use the vague words, Providence,' or the Deity,' or good luck,' or nature'; where we, whether now or of old, realize the Creator in His living works, instruments, and personal manifestations, and speak of the Sacred Heart,' or the Mother of Mercies,' or our Lady of Walsingham,' or St. George for Merry England,' or loving St. Francis,' or dear St. Philip.' Your people would be as varied and fertile in their adjurations and invocations as a Catholic populace, if they believed as we " (Ninth Lecture, p. 232).

It is grace alone which delivers from Popery and even Protestantism, and makes it a divine joy to be a Christian, neither more nor less. Irreverence of every sort, worldly or superstitious, becomes intolerably evil in one'e eyes; and it is the first of duties for the believer to hear these words of Christ and reduce them to practice. But is it not an awful instance of Satan's blinding power, that while none but the vilest of Protestants would think of excusing his own ungodly badinage, a grave clergyman in his new born (or at least early open) apology for the shameless fooling of Papists should plead so barefacedly, not only for such ebullitions in word, but for turning the Last Judgment into a play of

fireworks, and argue for it that " they are making one continuous and intense act of faith " (p. 237)?

But we must carefully remember, that our Lord in no way forbids an oath before the magistrate or judge. This is not of evil; but of good, being of divine authority. For men swear by a greater, and the oath is a term to all dispute as making matters sure. To refuse it is to deny God's authority in any who represent Him in earthly things, and hence called by His name and translated " judges," as in Ex. 21:6; 22:8, 9, 28. See also Psa. 82:1, 6. The principle is asserted in Lev. 5:1, to which the Lord, far from setting aside on the mount, bowed when adjured by the high priest (Matt. 26:63, 64), though silent before.

In like manner James 5:12 with marked earnestness forbids swearing either by heaven or by earth.

These were not judicial adjuration, which does not fall under people's swearing. It was rather being sworn in God's name. Nor did our Lord any more than His servant prohibit such appeals to God as in Rom. 1:9, 1 Cor. 15:31, 2 Cor. 1:23, Gal. 1:20, or the like. The scruple of Friends or Separatists has no foundation in scripture. But how and where do you stand, my reader? Have you owned yourself a lost sinner, and the Lord Jesus the only, the willing, and the perfect Savior? Believe in Him, and thou shalt be saved. So said Paul and Silas to the Philippian jailer, suddenly arrested, and not to him only, but also to his house. And the same night he was baptized, and all his straightway. Why not you too? The same Lord is open to you. May you exult as he did, having believed with all his house in God, the God of all grace.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Purity in Divorce

In connection with the light of heaven on the lusts of the heart, the Lord adds His word on the permission of divorce in Deut. 24 It is here the woman protected against hard-hearted man. Positive sin in violation of the marriage tie alone calls for divorce. Men abused the license beyond measure, as if the permission were a precept; and any vexation sufficed. But Jehovah hates putting away, as the last prophet testified to the Jews in their evil day.

In chap. 19 of this Gospel the question distinctly proposed to Him by the Pharisees, Is it lawful to put away one's wife for every cause? And He answered and said, Have ye not read that He that made from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be united to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God joined together, let not man put asunder. They say to Him, Why then did Moses command to give a bill of divorce and to put away? He saith to them, Moses for your hardness of heart allowed you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it hath not been thus. But I say to you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, not for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery, and he that marrieth one put away committeth adultery. His disciples say to Him, If the case of man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. And He said to them, All cannot receive this word, but those to whom it hath been given.

Thus was the mind of God made clear. The indulgence of lust is incompatible with entering the kingdom of the heavens. The law forbade the act of adultery; the Lord condemns even the looking licentiously as adultery committed already in the heart. He insisted therefore on the most unsparing decision with all that gave occasion. Was it not better to pluck out the right eye or cut off the right hand, rather than the whole body be cast into hell? Here (as in all the chapters of the first Gospel before chapter xiii. where He begins as the Sower), it is not seeking sinners in sovereign grace, but saints, as He enjoins on the twelve in chap. x. " Into whatsoever city or village ye enter, inquire who in it is worthy " (ver. 11). So the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount (chap. v.) describes what spiritual characters suit the kingdom, as the end (chap. vii.) declares that none shall enter but he that does the will of His Father that is in the heavens. Not even prophesying or miraculous powers, were it casting out demons through the Lord's name, could be a passport to the workers of lawlessness. Practical obedience of His words alone should stand. The rock here is spiritual reality. His word was incomparably more withering to self-righteousness than the law of Moses.

There is power of God given exceptionally to be above marriage, and live only to Christ here below. But, to far the most, marriage is God's order for man on earth. And the monkish rule with high pretension leads into horrible evasion, hypocrisy, and corruption even contrary to nature and abominable. God's mind is clear from the first; adultery alone justifies divorce.

Hence the necessity would be felt urgently and absolutely of receiving a new nature and an everlasting redemption in the Savior. No interpretation of our Lord's words here or elsewhere is more radically false than that He puts believers under the law as their rule of life. He is really condemning unbelievers and hypocrites far more stringently than the law did, and those sayings of the elders which took advantage of a legal permission for carnal indulgence and unfairness to a wife who through any cause became less attractive to her selfish husband. Such souls were inadmissible to the kingdom. Only the godly remnant are here contemplated, who abhor corruption as they do violence. The presence of Christ, not of the law given by Moses, was the suited moment for defining the character and conduct proper to the new thing He would set up. He was the standard of what pleased God, and must mark those who are His. " The law made nothing perfect " was a hard lesson for Jews; it seems quite as hard for those who inherit the traditions of fallen Christendom, and not less for Protestants than Papists.

To be content with being nobody in the world, and despised by its religion, is impossible to human nature; to be mourners as Christ was, feeling for God's will and majesty where lawlessness pervades; to be meek now, waiting for the glorious inheritance in God's time, instead of clamorous for our rights; to hunger and thirst after (not ease or wealth, or power or honor, but) righteousness, cannot be without partaking of a divine nature. Harder still was the actively gracious spirit of mercifulness, purity in heart, and peace-making according to God, with the persecutions which such righteousness entails, and especially such maintenance of Christ's name as effaces ours.

Our Lord accordingly singles out of the Decalogue the two great prohibitions of murder on the one hand and of adultery on the other. Assuredly He came not to make void the law or the prophets, but to give their fullness. He not only went farther than either, but declared that a righteousness surpassing that of the Scribes and Pharisees was indispensable for entering the kingdom of the heavens. He most pointedly sets His word with divine authority, so as to contrast what He laid down far beyond the claims of the law. In the case before us, as looking lustfully convicts of adultery before God, so whosoever put away his wife, save for cause of fornication, made her commit adultery, as well as him who married her. Thus He established a moral basis, not for a nation of mixed character, but fit for God's family and kingdom, which judged the heart's evil and allowed no concession to hardheartedness. And what can be plainer than on this later occasion (chap. 19) His

going up to the beginning, long before the law, to God's instituted order and word in Gen. 2? There again His own word is full and final authority, for the Messiah was the Jehovah God of Israel. Whatever had been allowed by Moses, He is Mediator of a better covenant, which has been enacted on better promises. It is God speaking in Him who is Son: " But I say to you."

Now, I appeal to your conscience, my reader. Can you face the light of God, which our Lord is, on these evils of man's fallen nature? Are you not utterly convicted by every saying of His, who is the Judge of living and dead? And if such be the truth, 0 spread it out, and yourself as verily guilty before God. Presume no more to stand on your own foundation. You are lost: own it truly and humbly and in earnest. The Lord Jesus is not Judge only; He is the real and the only and the present Savior of the lost. But you must be in the truth of your guilt in God's sight, if He is to act toward you in the truth of His salvation. That is repentance toward God; this is faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

There is for faith the blood of Jesus that cleanses from all, from every, sin. There is also life in Him, the Son, for every believer in Him. The one is as indispensable as the other. That life is the spring of the new nature which produces every good fruit and detests every evil work, word, and feeling; and now that one rests on His work of redemption, the Holy Ghost is given as divine power to strengthen the new man and mortify the old. It is true, that dependence on Christ, abiding in Him, is needed all the way through, and His words to abide in one, and prayer suitably and with confidence in divine love. But this is just practical Christianity so far; and we are sanctified by the Spirit, not to independence which is sin, but to obedience, the same blessed filial obedience as Christ's, our blessed Lord.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Impurity

Throughout it is not mere acts the Lord demands, but state; the spiritual condition suitable for the kingdom of the heavens. As in the verses immediately preceding the Lord insists on a spirit of lowly grace, going immeasurably beyond Thou shalt not kill, so now on a purity as far beyond the non-commission of adultery.

It is plain also that here, as everywhere in the so-called Sermon on the Mount, it is not the grace which saves the lost sinner who repents and believes the gospel. The state of soul that befits entrance into the kingdom of the heavens exclusively occupies the Lord: He is teaching the disciples what suited the Father's name which He made known to them. All that He laid down therefore manifestly presupposes that one is born of God, as the essential requisite for His kingdom, not acts merely if they could be good, but renewal of heart. Christ Himself was the blessed pattern of perfection.

" Ye heard that it was said, Thou shalt not commit adultery; but I say unto you that every one that looketh at a woman to lust after her committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye stumbleth (or, ensnareth) thee, pluck out and cast it from thee; for it profiteth thee that one of thy members perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell. And if thy right hand stumbleth thee, cut off and cast it from thee; for it profiteth thee, that one of thy members perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell."

Violence and corruption are the sad characteristics of man's fallen estate. We see them marked in the antediluvian world, at least as the general signs of a ruined state, whatever the specific evil which aroused divine indignation and unsparing judgment. Throughout man's history as traced in the Bible, and particularly in the favored circle of Israel under the law, they are ever before us. Christ came, and grace and truth through Him, and redemption through His blood, everlasting redemption, to say nothing now of heavenly counsels made good in His person and place, and communications to the Christian and to the church. But man is essentially unchanged, and even avails himself of grace to become the worse. " Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set to do evil." " But when thy judgments are in the earth," says the prophet, " the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness." Showing favor to the wicked, who believe not, emboldens them to persevere. And as the Jew was no exception who dealt wrongfully in the land of uprightness and would not behold the majesty of Jehovah, so will the Gentile reject the gospel to his perdition, and be cut off irretrievably. The time also hastens.

But as of old, so now are the faithful men, of whom the world is not worthy, who lived and suffered as seeing Him who is invisible. And the Lord did not lower the standard but raised it, clearing it of letter and of all accretions or diminutions. He has the godly remnant in view, still Jewish as He spoke, who not only entered the kingdom, but had higher relations intimated as His rejection set in, till His session at God's right hand and mission of the Spirit gave all necessary to reveal and make good in the saints what had been ever hidden heretofore.

As violence then was judged and excluded in any shape for the disciples, so was impurity. The avoidance of the extreme act might satisfy a Pharisee or Scribe; but the Lord could not dispense with anything short of truth in the inward parts. To look at a woman lustfully was to commit adultery with her already in his heart; and it is not the outside only that God regards but the heart above all. It is only a new nature that delights in holiness; and he who has it by grace answers to the will of God his Father; and abhors himself if he slip even into a wrong look, as unworthy of his calling and hateful to Him who loves him.

But the Lord follows up His stringent condemnation by the call to deal promptly and unreservedly with anything that acted as an incentive. Therefore He specifies that which is part of ourselves, and when rightly used of the greatest value. Not even the right eye, or the right foot, can be allowed in presence of His displeasure which the saint fears, because he is a believer and God's child; as the Lord said elsewhere, " Be not afraid of those that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will tell you whom ye shall fear. Fear him who, after he hath killed the body, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say to you, Fear him." It is not the highest motive, but it is an imperative and most solemn and urgent appeal.

Therefore says He now, " And if thy right eye stumbleth thee, pluck out and cast it from thee; for it profiteth thee that one of thy members perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell. And if thy right hand stumbleth thee, cut off and cast it from thee; for it profiteth thee, that one of thy members perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell." The right eye and the right hand present forcibly the mortifying of our members that are on the earth, to hinder sin against God. At all cost must the believer deny self; as we find elsewhere he must hate father, mother, wife, children, brethren, sisters, yea and his own life also, or he cannot be Christ's disciple.

O my fellow-sinner, you know that this is wholly beyond you. You do not, will not, make any such sacrifices. Nothing but Christ, the new life, can so feel and act; and you have only your depraved life of sin and self. Are you then to despair? Yes, despair of yourself. You are truly lost,

as the Lord says. But He came to seek and to save the lost. Tell God of your guilt and ruin, but plead the name of Jesus whom He has sent. He is a present and everlasting Savior. Doubt not, but believe what God declares of His Son. Life in Him answers to the appeal of Jesus, when you rest on His redemption; and the Holy Spirit will strengthen you accordingly.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Brotherly Reconciliation

The Lord was not content, with authority peculiarly and emphatically His own, to lay down the hateful evil of anger in heart and word, even if not in violent deed. He proceeds to carry out the revealed mind of God for the kingdom by requiring reconciliation if any had stumbled one's brother. Throughout, disciples are in view, not mankind in general. Sin in disciples is exceeding sinful: good is peremptory (surely not evil) for the kingdom of the heavens.

" If therefore thou be offering thy gift at the altar, and there remember that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Make friends (or, be of good-will) with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the official, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say to thee, Thou shalt in no wise come out thence till thou have paid the last farthing " (Matt. 5:23-26).

It is no less evident that Jewish disciples as yet under the law are those addressed. This is as plain in vers. 20, 21 as in those we are now considering. In fact it is the rule in this Gospel as a whole and in the others; and it must be so, till in the death of Christ the middle wall of partition was broken down, and thus the way was opened to reconcile both Jew and Gentile that believed in one body to God, the enmity being slain. The discourse of our Lord anticipates no such unity, nor even the call of the Gentiles, in any one clause. But it is a profound mistake that this indisputable fact takes away the profit of a single word from the Christian, though we stand now in a position of grace which could not be then. There is the richest instruction morally for every one who honors Him who spake as never man spake; a spiritual estimate of unequaled depth for those who know redemption and have the indwelling Spirit to enter in far more fully than those who heard His words of divine truth at the time He uttered them.

Thus the Lord enjoins the disciple who was bringing his gift to the altar, if he remembered that his brother had anything against him, to stop short of his devoted purpose as to God Himself, and be reconciled to his brother, before returning to offer his gift. What tenderness of conscience was looked for, brotherly affection, lowliness of mind, readiness to own wrong, and desire to win an offended brother! It was the very reverse of anger, contempt, or hatred, which He had just treated, as His servant in measure re-echoed at a much later day (1 John 3:11-15). And that reverse was the Jews' case. For absorbed in bringing their offering to the altar, they were blind to their wrong against Him who deigned to be their brother, with far more than brother's love, born for adversity as they knew not. But they refused to be reconciled, and persisted in their offering, however offensive to God. It was presumptuous sin, and high-handed self-will under cloak of religion.

What follows points to a still more solemn consideration. Who that weighs scripture can doubt that the Lord in vers. 25, 26 refers to the position in which the Jew then stood with God? This was a far deeper consideration than any other brother aggrieved: their Lord became their brother. The awful truth is that He who loved Israel and would die for them, Jehovah-Messiah, was made their adversary by their perverse disobedience and blind unbelief; and His presence, which had been their salvation and best blessing if received, must bring on the inevitable crisis by their utter rejection and hatred of Him. The Lord at this point avails Himself of the occasion in His infinite grace to urge their agreeing, or making friends, with their adversary quickly, whilst in the way with him. How His heart yearned over them, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings! But they would not. Their deadliest aversion was to their loving Messiah.

Hence the case was just about to come before the Judge, and the Judge would deliver to the official the convicted one, and he must be cast into prison till the last farthing be paid. It is no question here of eternal judgment, but of divine government morally on the earth; but all is plainly true of His people found guilty and consigned to suffer long. In that prison still lies the guilty debtor, till his heart turns to the One he despised. Then the word shall go forth, Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye -to the heart of Jerusalem, and cry to her, that her time of sorrow (or, suffering) is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of Jehovah's hand double for all her sins (Isa. 40:1, 2). Who is a God like unto Thee, that forgiveth iniquity and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? (Mic. 7:18.) Is not this the true unforced hearing of our Lord's words? One may apply it to Christian use or unchristian warning. But it is an evil to twist scripture or to complain of those who bow to its full force. Such ignorance has led men into the fable of purgatory.

But let me appeal to you, my reader, who may excuse yourself because you do not profess to be a disciple. How will this avail when you stand before the great white throne? By your own plea to escape responsibility you incur certain and everlasting perdition. You know that your works are evil, and that dying as you live, you are utterly unfit to be in heaven with the Holy One of God. He whom you refuse as Savior now will then be your Judge. You turn away from the Lord, you neglect so great salvation; your name is not in the book of life; your works are selfish, vain, proud, willful; addicted to lustful passion, rebellious against God, you serve Satan, and therefore must your portion be with the enemy of God and of His Son, as you have been here and are now.

O be warned in time. For the end of all things is at hand, even if you live; and your life at best is but a vapor. You know not what a day may bring forth. God was in Christ reconciling, not only embittered, or self-righteous Jews, but a world to Himself, not imputing their offenses to them. But all was vain for either: they hated both the Son and the Father. A great king, a mighty conqueror, would have been to their taste. How would that have blotted out their sins, or given them a nature to serve God on earth and enjoy Him in heaven? In divine wisdom and grace their hatred was allowed to culminate in His cross; and thereby sin was judged, themselves who believe cleansed from their iniquities, and made God's righteousness in Christ. O harden not yourself for hell-fire. God as it were beseeching by us, we pray for Christ, on His behalf who died for you: be reconciled to God. The work is done, according to His will, to save you forever. Repent and believe the gospel. What could be done to compare with that which God has done?

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Anger

The Scribes and Pharisees were especially ritualist and external. This was letter, not spirit. Our Lord not only condemns a righteousness of mere outward acts, but insists on inward reality as indispensable for the kingdom of the heavens. He does not explain at this time how the requisite practical righteousness is possible and actually made good in sinful men. He had already let Nicodemus know of the necessity for a Jew no less than a Greek to be born anew, as well as to have redemption by His cross. Here to His disciples He expounds _ the absolute need of realizing the varied spiritual qualities brought before them in order to enter the kingdom. As the Pharisees fatally narrowed the scope of scripture, the Lord gave its fullness as none but He could. The first of these references is to the law of murder. But the Lord goes immeasurably farther for the kingdom.

" Ye have heard that it was said to those of old, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be subject to the judgment. But I say to you, that everyone that is [lightly] angry with his brother shall be subject to the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be subject to the council; and whosoever shall say, Fool, shall be subject to the hell of fire " (Matt. 5:21, 22). The law and the prophets He had vindicated. All must come to pass. Yet the law made nothing perfect. He speaks Who is above the law and gave fullness to all on His own authority.

Thus is the commandment made exceeding broad and deep. The ax is laid to the root of the evil tree. All violent feelings are judged as in God's sight, and every evil word of malice and contempt shown to be of sinful and dangerous consequence. As He said later in the same Gospel (12:37), "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned." Here He warns, not so much of every light word, but of wrath, hatred, and contempt. The Judge of all the earth, Himself despised by man and abhorred by the nation, as was soon proved, could not fail to discern aright.

The danger He denounced is the burning sense of self, of the old man set on fire of hell. Circumstances might hinder its expression; but it stays in the heart it ruled, and makes itself at length felt in its malignity. He that formed the heart knows it, as He detects a feeling so contrary to His own nature, not only unbecoming in man, but wholly inconsistent with the peacemakers, the pure in heart, the merciful, as well as the poor in spirit, the mourning, the meek, and those hungering and thirsting after righteousness, the blessed ones that suit the kingdom of the heavens. How too could it agree with being persecuted for righteousness' sake? how with being reproached, and having all manner of evil said and done against one falsely for Christ's sake, yet, rejoicing and being exceeding glad to be thus defamed and ill-used for His name?

But we know that very recently (Mark 3:1-6) the Holy and the True looked round with anger in the synagogue on those who watched with murderous hate, if He would heal a poor sufferer on the sabbath. Instead of shrinking from the issue, He bade the man rise up into the midst. They (the high and the broad) were silent; but the fire of their anger burned to destroy Him, after He also bade the man stretch out his palsied hand, restored on the instant. His holy anger was distressed at the hardening of their hearts who, in the vain confidence of tradition (ever spurious), were thus maddened against the active and blessed goodness of God as a reality among men here below.

Again, John the baptist said to the Sadducees coming to his baptism, Viper brood, who forewarned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce therefore fruit worthy of repentance; and think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham for father. These were scathing words; but if anger dictated a word, it was unselfish and holy. It was indignation at men who sought a religious form to cover their unbelief and wickedness. And He, whose sandal-thong John counted himself unworthy to untie, pronounced woe after woe on these Scribes and Pharisees, albeit standing highest in Jewish estimation. Blind guides He called them, fools too and hypocrites and serpents; how should they escape the judgment of hell? Was not the blessed Lord fully justified in His words, overwhelming as they were to the highest degree? It was not enmity to tell an evil-doer the truth, that he might repent. Flesh hates fidelity.

If it be objected that so the Lord was entitled righteously to denounce, but no one else may, what are we to learn from one of like passions with ourselves? He on just occasion could say in the Spirit, to an erring saint at Corinth with questions about the resurrection, Fool! as he said before, Wake up righteously, and sin not; for some are ignorant of God: I speak to your shame. So in the next chapter he declares that if anyone love not the Lord, let him be Anathema Maranatha (accursed at the Lord's coming), 1 Cor. 15:16. The same apostle tells the saints (Eph. 4:26), Be angry and sin not. If one truly follow the Lord and the apostle, anger then is a duty, not a sin; yet one surely has to watch and pray withal.

The source, motive, and aim decide. If of God and for Him by the Spirit, anger has His sanction; if for self, it is evil that exposes to judgment: and so the Lord denounces on its various degrees expressed in a form familiar to Jews.

O my fellow-sinner, whose words have been habitually sinful, violent and ungodly, how can you, as you are, enter the kingdom? And if you cannot, what must be your end without end? The Judge tells you plainly. But He is now the Savior, the only perfect Savior. Flee, flee for refuge, for pardon, and a new nature, to Him Who alone can give all you need. The resource of God's grace is Christ. And if we believe on Him, His love constrains us to live, not to self, but to Him Who for our sakes died and rose again. Then only do we cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Christ and the Law

We have already seen how certainly and clearly laid down is Christ's position in ver. 17. He maintained the authority of the Old Testament. " Think ye not that I came to destroy the law and the prophets; I came not to destroy but to fulfill." He came to make good God's mind therein. This He confirms in ver. 18. " For verily I say to you, Till the heaven and the earth pass, one iota or one point shall in no wise pass from the law till all things come to pass. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of the heavens; but whosoever shall do and teach [them], he shall be called great in the kingdom of the heavens. For I say to you that, except your righteousness surpass [that] of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of the heavens " (18-20).

That the Lord obeyed the law is beyond doubt. This is not the meaning of fulfilling. He gave the full scope of the law and the prophets; and He did yet more, for He revealed God in Himself both by words and ways, and disclosed those secrets of the kingdom which were absolutely hidden of old. For His rejection and departure to heaven would and did give it a quite new form; and beyond this the great mystery as to Christ and as to the church had to be made known, involving things still higher and deeper. But nothing in the new could weaken the authority of God in the old. " Till the heaven and the earth pass, one iota or one point shall in no wise pass from the law till all things come to pass."

Christ should be glorified in heaven, and the Holy Spirit sent down to baptize the believing Jews and Greeks into one body, the body of Christ, the temple destroyed, the city trodden down by Gentiles, and the Jews scattered over the earth for their sin against Messiah. But even these woes on the chosen race fulfilled the law and the prophets, and in a special way Christ's word; yet more remains, and darkness still, before the law and the prophets are fulfilled in the salvation of Israel coming to and out of Zion. Then shall the earth yield her increase, and God shall bless to the full His long unblest people, and all the ends of the earth shall fear Him. O haste the day! Assuredly Christ came not to make void but to fulfill.

But the Lord is here addressing His disciples who were still under the law. He is not yet even predicting His death on the cross and the redemption through His blood to which grace turned it in the justifying righteousness of God by faith to be revealed in the gospel. Indeed, as we have often noticed and might through the entire Sermon on the Mount, not one word says He here of this work of sovereign love. He first sets out the characteristics that are proper to the kingdom in verses 3-12; then position in 13,14; and now the relation, like His own in their measure, to the revelation God had given to His ancient people, however unbelieving and unworthy as a whole. He does not foretell what their rejection of Himself must entail on the Jewish nation, or what God would then do for them or others who believe.

Hence in ver. 19 He still speaks to them as the godly remnant that heard His voice and clung to Him, born of God, but under law, and on this side of the cross and its blessed results to faith. Obedience first and last is insisted on. Here He begins with the law; but even in this chapter He goes on to what He is saying to them, which the ancients never heard. He brings in rich additions in chap. 6 as declaring the Father's name from the close of chap. v., guards them from inward and outward snares in chap.7, and ends the discourse there with hearing and doing His words as the rock of wisdom and safety.

As undoing the word justly sunk one to be " least " in the kingdom, faithfulness to it raised to a great place therein. Evidently therefore the righteousness of such as entered must exceed and excel that of the Pharisee (ver. 20) who honored tradition, the word of man, to the necessary disparagement of God's word.

It was the perfection of giving His disciples their food in due season. Many prophets and kings, some even inspired, desired to see the things which the disciples saw, and saw them not; and to hear the things which they were hearing, and heard them not. And greater things were at hand, even that most wondrous of all wonders, God's work in the cross and the resurrection and the heavenly glory of His Son. But if heaven and earth shall pass, as they are, and not the least tittle of the law and the prophets, how far above these to God's glory and man's blessing rise the words of the Lord Jesus

And these are words of His which deeply concern my reader, who is not a disciple of His, but a slave of sin and Satan. If you are indeed His disciple, let me rejoice with you in the grace God has shown you. If you are not, but only a guilty and wretched sinner, I beseech you to hear His words meant for you to heed before God that you may live forever. " Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Doubt Him not: He is able, He is willing. " I came to call, not righteous men, but sinners: " why despair, or turn away? Even His enemies cried, " This man receiveth sinners." What does He Himself say, even when His hearers sought to kill Him, and when He sought those who had not a pulse of life toward God? " 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 [out of which no unbeliever can emerge, nor yet believer if he entered], but passed out of death into life."

For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him may not perish, but have life eternal. What love in God Who hates the sins and pities the sinner! What infinite love, when you think, first of His Son, then of yourself But O my fellow-sinner, what a doom must be yours according to His word if you disbelieve the Son, are un-subject to Him, and neglect so great salvation

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Christ Came to Fulfill

From the outset of His ministry our Lord was careful to affirm that He came not to dissolve but to make good divine authority in the law or the prophets. In both He was predicted as the One on whom all blessing depended. He only could deliver sinful and seduced man. He was to be the sacrifice which would justify all previous offerings to God, and render their just interpretation, and furnish their efficacy. Fulfillment of a prophecy is the same word; but the context here points to a larger scope.

The law and the prophets testified to man's, unrighteousness and to God's righteousness (Rom. 3:21). But they could not do more. Christ came, not to enfeeble or undo them as His blind enemies thought, but to make good that divine testimony which left the sinner without excuse and gave what God only in His grace could supply. It was far more than even pious men conceived, a mere making up, by His obedience of the law, what men failed in. This had merely been man's righteousness accomplished by Him for the unrighteous. Here too He has done incomparably more and better. He laid the basis in His obedience unto death. for God's righteousness, that God might be just and justify him that believes on Jesus. For He who knew no sin glorified God in being made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him. Hence God's grace is enhanced, not frustrated; for if righteousness is through law, then Christ died gratuitously. But it is not so: never was anything else contemplated or revealed but that the believers rest their hope on His death.

God took care therefore that promise should long precede and exist independently of it, as the apostle argues in Gal. 3 This at Sinai Israel in their self-confidence overlooked. Instead of asking for the unconditional promise of grace they undertook to stand on their own obedience. As no sinful man can subsist on such a condition, the law written on stones, even when brought down a second time with types of mercy accompanying, could not but be a ministry of death and condemnation (2 Cor. 3:7-9). For them it is said in the reading of the old covenant the

veil remains unremoved; and the veil is more than on the face, being upon their heart. They did and do not look to Christ, law's end for righteousness to everyone that believes. They strove to stand on a mixture of law and grace, which only adds to the sinner's condemnation, because the added grace increases his guilt if disobedient. But we look on the glory of the Lord with unveiled face and are transformed to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit, Who testifies to Him in the glory of God as the fruit not only of His person but of His work. And so the apostle preached the gospel of God's grace and of Christ's glory, as he had been converted.

The Epistle to the Hebrews told the Christian Jews that the " new" covenant of which Jeremiah bore witness held out under Christ a better covenant. It did not, like the old at Sinai, depend on Israel as the party on whose fidelity blessing depended. All hung for the new covenant on the Lord's sovereign grace. " Because this is the covenant that I will covenant for the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: giving my laws into their mind, I will also inscribe them on their hearts; and I will be to them for God, and they shall be to me for people. And they shall in no wise teach, each his fellow-citizen and each his brother, saying, Know the Lord; because all shall consciously know from little of them unto great of them; because I will be merciful to their unrighteousnesses and their sins, and their lawlessnesses I will remember no more " (Heb. 8:10-12).

This was no real way to set aside the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them to God's glory and for man's salvation and blessing. Christ filled up the gap between God and the sinner for him who believes on Him. The law pointed to Him as the coming One who alone could restore the balance which the creature's evil had disturbed by weight overwhelming to all but the Savior. He alone could by redemption win and give the blessing which God's nature loved to bestow and God's counsels assured in due time. But all this and more Christ was by His word and Spirit bringing in a new and divine life by faith into the soul, before the day arrives when He will transform our body of humiliation into conformity with His body of glory according to the working of His power even to subdue all things to Himself. It was not mere addition, as if the law and the prophets were not intrinsically complete and perfect for the end God proposed; but He is throughout assumed and predicted as essential to give the blessed result. " For verily I say to you, Till the heaven and the earth pass, one iota or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all come to pass " (vers. 18).

So even the N. T. speaks of filling up the gap otherwise left in it by the revelation of the mystery of Christ's headship on high and the church united to Him as His body. And the apostle in Col. 1:25 tells us of the stewardship of God given Him thereby to complete His word. For this was a secret hidden from ages and generations, and quite distinct from the kingdom, the new covenant, or the inheritance of Abraham's promise. It was a promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel and God's eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:6, 10).

O dear reader, look you by faith to Jesus, the sole accomplisher of what you most want and of infinitely more-what glorifies God and gives the believer a wondrous part in it all. Look not to yourself save to condemn yourself; look to Him who secures from all condemnation which you must otherwise dread. May your heart learn how truly Christ is all. This no man is willing to do, until he is brought to the decided conviction before God, that he is lost, and that in him (that is, in his flesh) good does not dwell.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Grace in Practice

There is nothing that comes before the eyes of men which strikes them more than the meek, lowly, thankful spirit which endures a wrong. The natural man resents, and, if he can, avenges everything of the sort. You might as well tell him to feel otherwise, as to walk in the air a mile or a foot above the ground. To the disciple such grace is a principle of his new life. It is what in its perfection he has beheld in Christ, and what suits his Father who is in the heavens and looks for the reproduction of His own character in His sons. Retaliation is here reversed and uprooted.

" Ye have heard that it was said, Eye for eye, and tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, Resist not evil; but whoever shall strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And to him that would go to law with thee and take thy coat, leave him to take thy cloak also. And whoever will impress thee one mile, go with him two. To him that asketh thee give, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not away.

" Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say to you, Love your enemies, and pray for those that persecute you, that ye may be sons of your Father that is in the heavens; for he maketh his sun rise on evil and good, and sendeth rain on just and unjust. For if ye should love those that love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the tax-gatherers the same? And if ye should salute your brethren only, what beyond do ye? Do not even the Gentiles the same? Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

It may be personal lawlessness, an unjust suit, or a hard law; but the disciple of Christ is taught by the Master to bow. What is a brutal insult compared with truly representing Him? Consistency with Him is far more than one's coat, and cloak to boot. Instead of begrudging the service pressed for one mile, add another to please Him who would have us walk by faith, not by sight, still less selfishly. Luke, who was led to note not the legal side but unauthorized violence only, omits the impressment, and inverts the stripping by letting the plunderer take the inner garment as well as the outer, the Lord no doubt exhorting to both. Nor did He end here, but bade the disciple give habitually to him that asked; for what had not he himself received from the divine Giver beyond all he asked? The object of countless and rich mercies, was he to turn away from one that would ask or borrow?

But the Lord goes farther in His next utterance. Whatever was said of loving one's neighbor and hating one's enemy, His word to His disciples was and is, Love your enemies, and pray for those that persecute you. So too the Epistles insist on those that bear His name. In the Gospel of Luke rightly stand the clauses, Bless those that curse you, do good to those that hate you, and pray also for those that use you despitefully. These enlarge the grace which disciples are exhorted to show to hostile men of the world; and from thence they were imported into the copies of Matthew by scribes who were prone to assimilate. The inspiring Spirit was pleased through him to urge loving our enemies, and praying for our persecutors, which last pertained to Jews pre-eminently, because of their hot and proud religious prejudice in the flesh.

Such love and piety, to be of value, must be no mere form but a living reality, that they might be sons of their Father in the heavens; for such is their place of dignity. And what a pattern He sets! For He makes His sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on just and unjust. What rich

grace in the first comparison, and what faithful goodness in the second!

Nor was the Lord content with the pointed reference to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God. He would make them ashamed, as His disciples, of not rising above the practice of Jews and Gentiles. If they loved those that loved them, did pot the odious tax-gatherers the same? If they greeted their brethren only, the scorned Gentiles did also the same. This was altogether beneath the Christian according to Christ. "Ye shall be therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." A lower standard of feeling and conduct was to the Savior intolerable.

Have we such confidence by grace toward God? Assuredly we have no competency as of ourselves: but our competency is of God, according to the spirit of the new covenant, not of the old. The grace of Christ alone suffices the believer. If you reject Him, you are lost. Flee to this the only refuge, if you would be saved; flee to Jesus now, ere the House-master shuts the door, when " Lord, open to us " will be in vain. Then will He judge strictly, instead of saving as He does now in all grace; then will He say, I know not whence ye are: depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Beatitudes

In what is called the Sermon on the Mount the Lord does not treat either of new birth or of redemption. He addresses His disciples that came unto Him, and begins with pronouncing who are the blessed in the kingdom. It is a solemn test whereby every disciple may try himself.

Such are the qualities, said the Lord, which suit the kingdom. They are not those of man fallen nor even unfallen. The first man in Paradise had none of them any more than the outcast race. " Ye must be born anew," and even then have your new character formed and impressed by the Lord Jesus. None other He owns (vii. 21-23), nor can others have to do with the Kingdom save for judgment. Those only do the will of His Father that is in the heavens. But the Savior Son of God elsewhere shows, and is, the unfailing way. "As many as received Him, to them gave He authority to become children of God " (John 1:12). Who are they? " Those that believe on His name." They are born of God. They have life eternal, and can each say, " I live, no longer I, but Christ liveth in me; and that which I now live in flesh I live by faith in the Son of God that loved me and gave Himself up for me " (Gal. 2:20). O, believe Him in Whom is life producing every quality God values! There is none other in His sight. Believe, and it is yours now; and with an evil nature in an evil world as is the fact, here it is indispensable as well as for heaven.

You, my brethren, may not have noticed that there are seven characters, all blessed in vers. 3-9, divided as after into four and three. Four righteous qualities are first, three gracious follow; and they rise respectively in each class. Christ manifested each and all in perfection. Those that follow Him, having Him as their life, must have His qualities reproduced and manifested in them.

Poor in spirit is the first named. It is just the opposite of fallen man's aspiring spirit. Outward forms of poverty will not do. Under that garb what pride may lurk, what self-seeking, what party-spirit! " It shall not thus be among you, but whoever would be great among you, let him be your servant; and whoever would be first among you, let him be your slave " in this evil age and rebel world. Such was the Son of man in life and I death. He is the disciple's example; for his is not a present place of honor but the kingdom of the heavens whether to faith now or displayed by-and-by.

And who was such a mourner where His Father I was unknown, and His own light and love scorned?' Here too the disciple treads in His steps and looks for the comfort wherewith He was comforted and comforts.

Next, as He was meek and lowly in heart, so must he be who takes His yoke and learns from Him, assured of inheriting that earth where the hard and haughty have now their brief portion.

The last of these are such as hunger and thirst after righteousness, which marks not only persevering energy but this in inward personal desire, and they shall have satisfying fruition in and like " Jesus Christ the Righteous."

After this, we have the higher characters of grace, but with righteousness preceding. As Jesus was full of grace and truth, so His followers not only exceed in their righteousness that of scribes and Pharisees, but show mercy not known to these. And truly they shall find mercy, as they have found it plenteously.

Theirs too is purity in heart, and as by faith they see God now, so shall they beyond others by-and-by (Rev. 22:4).

In fine, they are the blessed peace-makers who now represent the God of peace; and His sons shall such be called as they are.

But observe that the Lord reveals a supplemental blessedness for each of the two great classes. " Blessed they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake" answers to the opening class in 3-6, and so fitly repeats the opening blessing, " for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens." The last of the two rises to the highest, and leaves the abstract for direct personal words of love: " Blessed are ye when they shall reproach and persecute you, and falsely say every wicked word against you for my sake." This was suffering for grace in full. " Rejoice," says the Lord therefore, " and exult, for your reward is great in the heavens; for thus they persecuted the prophets that were before you."

As Christ only is all-sufficient now for evil and lost man, if he believe, so in His day shall the poor in spirit have the true and abiding riches. What then must be the lot of all who despise Him?

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Salt and the Light

In the preceding verses the Lord lays down the character of such as belong to the kingdom of the heavens. Now He states their position here below. Is it truly applicable to you? Do you in unbelief treat it as impracticable or indifferent?

If I own myself a lost sinner, and in me, that is in my flesh, no good thing dwells, neither salt nor light is mine, but sin dwells in me. It would be sheer presumption to claim that I am born either the one or the other. Naturally I am corrupt, and as to God and His things dark as night. Important as baptism is, it in no case according to scripture produces so mighty a change; but life in Christ does, which the believer receives through the Spirit and the word of God. As its fullness and perfection were in the Son, so of His fullness did all we receive, and grace for grace. It is no presumption to believe God, nor what He declares He gives to those who receive Christ.

Let me beseech you, fellow-believer, not to slur over nor shirk the position in which the Lord sets you here below. These are His words:-" Ye are the salt of the earth; but if the salt have lost its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing save to be cast out and to be trodden down by men. Ye are the light of the world: a city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do they light a lamp, and put it under the bushel but upon the stand, and it shineth for all that are in the house. Thus let your light shine before men, that they may see your comely works, and glorify your Father that is in the heavens." Let us earnestly seek to make this good, instead of slipping it through or shoving it on to a Jewish remnant.

As there were two broad characteristics among the foregoing " blessed," righteousness and grace, both displayed in Christ and in Christianity, so is it with the position of the disciples. In vers. 3 to 6 are the righteous characters: in 7 to 9 the gracious: followed by the blessing of the persecuted for righteousness' sake in 10, and by those persecuted yet worse for Christ (i.e. grace) in 11, and their joy, exultation, and reward above in 12. The position too is presented accordingly. In ver. 13 we have the righteous side; in 14 and the rest the side of grace, but both to be verified in our practice.

Salt is the righteously preservative principle. It is sharp rather than sweet, but guards from impurity and decomposition. It gives fixity to what is good and wholesome. It proves all things, and holds fast the right. It keeps aloof from every form of wickedness. When then the disciples are called the salt of the earth, the Lord designates them as set apart to God the Father, and in patient continuance of good work seeking for glory and honor and incorruptibility at Christ's coming. They obey the truth, and are to hold fast what they have till then. If they lose the good savor, it is fatal. Saltless salt (and such a change was familiar in those lands) cannot be restored. It is not fit for anything but to be trodden down on the streets, as it often was.

How has it fared with the holy deposit in Christendom? Has the salt there retained its virtue? Did the favored Gentile abide in goodness, any more than the Jew under law? If not, cutting off is the sentence of God (Rom. 11:21, 22). All the more should every faithful soul humble himself, repent, and look to the Lord who is as willing as He is able to make Him stand.

But are we not responsible as " the light of the world "? If it is not the property or power of salt to cure corruption, it is for light to illuminate the dark. It goes out and around. And we may notice it is to " the world " at large here in this appropriate diffusion by grace, as the salt is " of the earth," the ordered scene of privileges. As being the light, it is compared to a city set on a hill and not to be hid; and not this only, but as penetrating the home, it is as a lamp (not absurdly under the bushel as its extinguisher, but) upon its stand, that all in the house may enjoy its brightness.

Only let us not forget the Lord's momentous caution as to this. " Thus let your light (your living profession of Him, Who is the true Light and made you light in Him) shine before men, that they may see (not your inconsistencies, but) your comely works, and glorify your Father that is in the heavens." He means the very reverse of men displaying their benevolent works before their fellows, so as to bring glory to themselves. He would have His own let their confession of Him, the one source of their light, shine, so that men may see the goodly fruits, and therefore glorify not the disciples but our Father in the heavens, the Father of lights, of whom is every good giving, and whence comes down every perfect gift from above.

Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 5:17-48, Remarks on

We have seen our Lord's statement of the character and then of the position proper to the heirs of the kingdom of heaven. We have found him pronouncing those “blessed” whom man would have counted it folly to have so thought. Our Lord has shown us the perfect pattern of the same blessedness; for what could have sounded more unreasonable, specially to a Jew, than to hear One deliberately and emphatically call those blessed and happy, who were despised, scorned, hated, persecuted, yea, thought ill of, and treated as malefactors? No doubt, it was expressly for righteousness' sake and Christ's sake. But then, to the Jew, the coming and reception of the Messiah wore ever looked forward to as the crown of his joy—that most auspicious event on which all was to turn for Israel, both as to the accomplishment of God's promises made to the fathers, and the fulfillment of the magnificent predictions which involve the overthrow of their enemies, and the humiliation of every Gentile, and the glory of Israel. And, therefore, to suppose that the receiving of Him who was the Messiah would now entail inevitable shame and suffering in the world, was, indeed, an enormous shock to all their most cherished expectations. But our Lord insists upon it, declaring such and such only to be blessed—blessed with a new kind of blessedness far beyond what a Jew could conceive. And this is part of the privileges into which we, too, are brought by faith of Christ. The instruction of our Lord, in the sermon on the mount, only comes out in stronger forms now that He has taken his place in heaven. The enmity of man has also come out to its full measure. It has not been merely the world's enmity. The Jews themselves were the bitterest persecutors of the children of God. And so the last book of the New Testament shows us that those who take the name of Jews, without the present living reality, would remain to the end the most hostile to all true testimony of Christ on the earth.

In the portion before us, we enter upon a most important subject. If there was this new and amazing kind of blessedness, so foreign to the thoughts of Israel after the flesh, what was the relation to the law of Christ's doctrine, and of the new state of things about to be introduced? If Messiah came from God, did not the law—given by Moses, indeed, but from the same source If Christ brought in that which was so unexpected even by his disciples, what would be the bearing of this truth upon what they had previously received through God's inspired servants, and for which they had His own authority? Weaken the authority of the law, and it is clear that you destroy the foundation on which the gospel rests, because the law was of God as certainly as the gospel. Hence came in a most weighty question, especially for an Israelite: what was the bearing of the kingdom of heaven, of the doctrine of Christ respecting it, upon the precepts of the law? The Lord opens this subject (from verse 17 to the end of the chapter we have the question entered into) with these words: “Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets.” They might have thought so from the fact of His having introduced something not mentioned in either; but “think

not," He says, "that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill." I take this word "fulfill" in its largest sense. In His own person the Lord fulfilled the law and the prophets, in His own ways, in righteous subjection and obedience. His life here below exhibited its beauty for the first time without flaw. His death was the most solemn sanction which the law ever did or could receive; because the curse it pronounced upon the guilty the Savior took upon Himself. Rather than that God should have dishonor there was nothing the Savior would not undergo. But, besides, our Lord's words warrant, I think, a further application. There is an expansion of the law, or , giving to its moral element the largest scope, so that all which was honoring to God in it should be brought out in its fullest power and extent. The light of heaven was not let fall upon the law, and the law interpreted, not by weak, failing men, but by One who had no reason to evade one jot of its requirements; whose heart, full of love, only thought of the honor and the will of God; whose zeal for His Father's house consumed Him; and who restored that which he took not away. Who but he could expound the law thus, not as the scribes, but in the heavenly light? For the commandment of God is exceeding broad, whether we look at the end of all perfection in man, or the sum of it in Christ.

Far from annulling the law, the Lord, on the contrary, illustrated it more brightly than ever, and gave it a spiritual application that man was entirely unprepared for before He came. And this is what the Lord proceeds to do in part of the wonderful discourse that follows. After having said "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled," He adds, "Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Our Lord is going to expand the great moral principles of the law into commandments that flow from Himself, and not merely from Moses, and shows that this would be the great thing whereby persons would be tested. It would no longer be a question of the ten words spoken on Sinai merely; but while recognizing their full value, He was about to open out the mind of God in a way so much deeper than had ever been thought of before, that this would henceforth be the great test.

Hence He says, when referring to the practical use of these commandments of His, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" —an expression that has not the smallest reference to justification, but to the practical appreciation of and walking in the right relations of the believer towards God and towards men. The righteousness spoken of here is entirely of a practical kind. This will strike many persons rather sharply. They may be somewhat perplexed to understand how practical righteousness is made to be the means of entering into the kingdom of heaven. But let me repeat, the sermon on the mount never shows us how a sinner is to be saved. If there was the smallest allusion to practical righteousness where a sinner's justification is concerned, there would be ground to be startled; but there can be none whatever for the saint who understands and is subject to God's will. God insists upon godliness in His people. "Without holiness I no man shall see the Lord." There can be no question that the Lord shows in John 15. that the unfruitful branches must be cut off, and that just as the withered branches of the natural vine are cast into the fire to be burned, so fruitless professors of the name of Christ can look for no better portion. Bearing fruit is the test of life. These things are stated in the strongest terms all through scripture. In John 5:28, 29, it is said, "The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation" or "judgment." Clearly, there is no disguising the solemn truth that God will and must have that which is good and holy and righteous in His own people. They are not God's people at all who are not characterized as the doers of that which is acceptable in His sight. If this were put before a sinner as a means of reconciliation with God, or having sins blotted out before Him, it would be the denial of Christ and of His redemption. But only hold fast that all the means of being brought nigh to God are found in Christ—that the sole way by which a sinner is connected with the blessing of Christ is by faith, without the works of the law—only maintain this, and there is not the least inconsistency nor difficulty in understanding that the same God who gives a soul to believe in Christ, works in that soul by the Holy Ghost to produce what is practically according to Himself. What does He give him the life of Christ for, and the Holy Ghost, if only the remission of the sins were needed? But God is not satisfied with that. He imparts the life of Christ to a soul, and He gives that soul a divine person to dwell in him; and as the Spirit is not the spring of weakness or of fear, "but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind," God looks for suited ways and for the exercise of spiritual wisdom and judgment in passing through the present trying scene. While the disciples might be looking up with ignorant eyes to the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, our Lord shows that this sort of righteousness will not do. The righteousness that goes up to the temple every day, that prides itself upon long prayers, large alms, and broad phylacteries, will not stand in the sight of God. There must be something far deeper and more according to the holy, loving nature of God. Because with all that appearance of outward religion, there might be always, as there generally was, in fact, no sense of sin, nor of the grace of God. This shows us the all-importance of being right, first, in our thoughts about God; and I can only be so by receiving the testimony of God about His Son. In the case of the Pharisees we have sinful man denying his sin, and utterly obscuring and denying God's character as the God of grace. These things were rejected by the outward religionists, and their righteousness was such as you might expect from people who were ignorant of themselves and of God. It gained reputation for them, but there it all ended; they looked for their reward now, and they had it. But our Lord says to the disciples, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Allow me to ask, How is it that God accomplishes this in regard to a soul that believes now? There is a great secret that does not come out in this sermon. First of all, there is a load of unrighteousness in the sinner. How is that to be dealt with, and the sinner to be made fit for and introduced into the kingdom of heaven? He is born again; he acquires a new nature, a life which as much flows from the grace of God as the bearing of his sin hung upon the cross of Christ. There is the foundation of practical righteousness. The true beginning of all moral goodness in a sinner is the sense and confession of his lack of it, nay, of his badness. Never have we anything right with God in a man till he gives himself up as all wrong. When he is brought down to this, he is thrown upon God, and God reveals Christ as His gift to the poor sinner. He is morally broken down, feeling, owning that he is lost, unless God appears for him; he receives Christ, and what then! "He that believeth hath everlasting life." What is the nature of that life? Practically, perfectly, righteous and holy. The man is then at once brought into the kingdom. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." But when he is born again he does enter there. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The Scribes and Pharisees were only working on and by the flesh; they did not believe that they were dead in the sight of God, neither do men now. But what the believer begins with is, that he is a dead man, that he requires a new life, and that the new life which he receives in Christ is suitable to the kingdom of heaven. It is upon this new nature that God acts, and works by the Spirit this practical righteousness; so that it remains in every sense true, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."

But the Lord does not here explain how this would be. He declares that what was suitable to God's nature was not to be found in human Jewish righteousness, and that it must be for the kingdom.

Now he takes up the law in its various parts, at least which was to do with men. Here He does not enter into relation with God, but first of all takes up that which flows from human violence, and after this the great flagrant example of human corruption; for violence and corruption are the two standing forms of human iniquity. Before the flood such was the condition of men “The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.” Here then in verse 21 we have the light of the kingdom cast on the command, “Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.” The law took cognizance of this extreme form of violence; but our Lord gives length, breadth, height, and depth to it. “But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.” That is, our Lord treats as now coming under the same category with murder in the sight of God every kind of violence, and feeling, and expression, anything of contempt and hatred, whatever expresses the ill feeling of the heart, any putting down of another, or annihilating other persons as far as character or influence is concerned; all this is no better than murder in God's searching eye. He is expanding the law; He is showing now One who looks at and judges the feeling of the heart, showing that it is not at all a question merely of the consequences of violence to a man—for there might be no very bad effect produced by these words of anger, but they proved the state of the heart—that is what the Lord is dealing with here. “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way: first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” He is not yet showing the Christian in his entire separation from the Jewish system. These words clearly show a connection with Israel, though the principle of a Christian; for the altar has no reference to the Lord's table.

“Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; least at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily, I say unto thee, thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.” I believe that Israel was guilty of that very sin Israel as a people—that they did not agree with the adversary quickly. There was the Messiah, and they, being adversaries of Him, treated Him as their adversary and compelled God to be against them by their unbelief. The position of Israel morally, in the sight of God, was very much the one shown us here. There was a murderous feeling in their heart against Jesus. Herod was the expression of it at his birth and it went through all the ministry of Christ, and the cross proved how utterly there was that unrelenting hatred in the heart of the Jews against their own Messiah. They did not agree with their adversary quickly, and the judge could only deliver them to the officer to cast them into prison, and there they remain until this day. The Jewish nation, from their rejection of the Messiah, have been shut out from all the promises of God; as a nation they have been cast into prison, and there they are to remain till the uttermost farthing is paid. In Isaiah we have the Lord speaking comfortably to Jerusalem. “Cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins.” That is, that, while we come into this now; while we through the grace of God receive the fullness of blessing through Christ Jesus now; yet I cannot doubt that there is this blessing in store for Jerusalem; that God in His mercy will one day say to her, You have had punishment enough: I do not mean to make you any longer the witness of my vengeance on the earth. And why is Israel not permitted to this day to amalgamate with the nations? There they remain, kept apart from all other people by God. But God has in store for them this great mercy. “Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem... for she hath received at the Lord's hand double for all her sins.” This figure we find elsewhere beautifully set forth in the case of the man guilty of blood, who fled to the city of refuge provided by God. But the book of Numbers shows us that there the man abode, out of the land of his possession, till the death, not of the man-slayer, but of the high priest that is anointed with oil. The priesthood of our Lord is referred to there. When the Lord has completed His heavenly people and gathered them in where they do not need the activity of His intercession; when we are in the full results of all that Christ has wrought for us, the High Priest shall then take His place, not at the right hand of God, but as the Priest upon His own throne. Then will be the termination of his present heavenly priesthood, and blood-guilty Israel will return to the land of their possession. I have no doubt that this is the just application of that beautiful type. I cannot understand what proper interpretation there could be of the death of the High Priest anointed with oil, if you appropriate it to a Christian now; but apply it to the Jew, and nothing is more plain. Christ will terminate that character of priesthood that he is engaged in for us now and will take up a new form of blessing for Israel.

We have then the Lord closing this subject with the light that the kingdom of heaven throws upon the sin of killing, and the extension of the sin to every expression of the heart's anger. This is a very solemn thing when we know how little importance we attach to our words and how apt we are to excuse any explosion of strong feeling. They are clearly here shown in their full contrariety to the nature of God.

But there is another thing—the corrupt element that is in the heart of man—the heart lusting for that which it has not. This is taken up in the next word of our Lord. “Ye have heard that is was said by them of old time thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.” (Ver. 27-30.) That is, whatever in our walk, or in our ways, or in our service, whatever it might be that exposes a soul to the danger of yielding to these unholy feelings, must never be spared. There must be the excision of everything that is hurtful to the soul, the members of the body, such as the eye and the hand being only used as showing the various ways in which the heart might be entangled. The cutting off of these members sets forth a heart thoroughly exercised in self-judgment; not prompted to excuse itself by saying that it had not actually committed the sin; but whatever exposed to it must be given up. Following this, our Lord shows as to the dissolution of the tie of marriage, “It hath been said whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement. But I say unto you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.” (Ver. 31, 32.) That is, our Lord shows that though there might be the most serious difficulties, still this human relationship receives the strongest sanction of the Lord. Though an earthly relationship, the light of heaven is thrown upon it, the sanctity of marriage held up, and the possibility of allowing anything to interfere with its holiness entirely put down by Christ, save only where there was that which interrupted it in the sight of God, in which case the act of separation would be only a declaration of its being broken by sin in the sight of God already.

The next case (ver. 33-37) brings us into a different order of things: it is the use of the name of the Lord. Here the reference is not to judicial oaths—all oath administered by a magistrate. In some countries this might savor of heathenism or of popery, and no Christian ought to take such an oath. But if the declaration were simply the authority of God introduced by the magistrate to declare the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, I do not see that the Lord in any wise absolves the Christian from his obligation to competent authority. The matter here is expressly private communication between man and man. “Swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it

is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white nor black." None of these was a judicial oath; they were the asseverations of common life among the Jews. If our Lord had meant to forbid the Christian from taking judicial oaths, would He not have instanced the oath that was usual in the courts of those days? But it was not so. All the oaths that He brings before us were what the Jews were in the habit of using when their word was questioned by their fellow-men, not what was employed before the magistrate. For my own part, so far from thinking that a Christian is doing right in refusing a judicial oath, I believe that he is doing wrong not to take it, provided the magistrate required his testimony. If the magistrate does not acknowledge God in the oath, still the Christian is bound to acknowledge God in the magistrate. He is one who is, to the Christian, a servant of God in the outward things of this world. Even the Assyrian was the rod of God, all the while that he thought only of carrying out his own purposes against Israel. Much more the magistrate, let him be who or what he may, represents the truth of God's external authority in the world, and the Christian ought to respect this, more even than the men of the world, and therefore the oath is a holy thing and not to be refused. The Christian, doubtless, has no business with prosecuting another himself. On the contrary, he owes it to Christ and His grace to let the world, if it will, abuse him; he may protest by word against it, and then leave it with the Lord. When our Lord Himself was dealt with unrighteously, He convicts the person of it, and there it ends, as man would think, forever. There is no such thing as seeking to get present reparation of His wrongs. So should it be with Christians. There may be the moral conviction of those that do the wrong, but the taking it patiently is acceptable with God.

There is no way in which the Christian so shows how much he is above the world, as when he seeks not the world's vindication in anything. If we belong to the world, we ought all to be volunteers. If the world is our home, a man is called upon to do battle for it. But for the Christian this world is not the scene of his interests, and why fight for what does not belong to him? If a Christian fight in and with the world, (save his own spiritual warfare), he is a mere mercenary. It is the duty of men, as such, to fight, if need be, and repel wrong; and if the Lord uses the world in order to put down revolution and make peace, the Christian may well look up and give thanks. It is a great mercy. But the grand truth as to this, which the believer has to get firmly settled in his own soul, is this, "they are not of the world." But to what measure are they not of the world? "They are not of the world even as I am not of the world." In John 17 where our Lord repeats this wondrous word, He speaks in view of going to heaven, as if He no longer were on earth at all. Thus, in the spirit of one away from the world, He says, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." A little before He had said, "Now I am no more in the world." This going up to heaven is what gives its character to the Christian and to the church. A Christian is not merely a believer, but a believer called to the enjoyment of Christ while He is in Heaven. And, as Christ our Head is out of the world, so the Christian is in spirit lifted above the world, and his business is to show the strength of his faith as above his mere natural feeling. Nothing makes a man look so foolish as having no side in this world. Christians do not like to be nonentities; they are apt to wish one way or another to have their power felt. But this is what the Lord delivers us from. To return, then, it is below our calling to indulge even in strong statements. "Let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay, for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." It is worthy of note, as a practical proof of the distinction here drawn, how our Lord acted when he was before the High Priest, He was silent till the High Priest put the oath to Him, then at once He answers; and He shows us the right pattern there.

But He comes next to the case of any practical injury that may be done us. It is not that it is wrong for a man to punish according to the injury that has been inflicted upon another. "An eye for an eye, and a tooth For a tooth," is perfectly righteous; but our Lord is showing that we ought to be much more than righteous, we ought to be gracious; and he presses this as the climax of this part of the discourse. First, He had strengthened the righteousness of the law, extended its depth, and put aside its license; but now He goes further. He shows that there is a principle in His own ways and life which teaches the Christian that he is not to seek retaliation. "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." It is clear the Lord has no reference here to what governments have to do. The New Testament is written for the Christian, for that which has a separate existence and a peculiar calling in the midst of earthly systems and peoples. It belongs to those who are heavenly while they are walking through the earth. We become such by the reception of Christ now, and to such the Lord says, "Resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." There personal injury is meant. Perhaps the evil to the person may be ever so intended and undeserved, but it is to be overcome with good. Show that you are willing to take even more for Christ's sake. "And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." There the law is evoked;—that is, a man lays a claim, perhaps falsely, to one part of your clothing, and if he "will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also." Here it was not exactly a man appealing to the law, but the public officers themselves. "And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." The great principle our Lord shows is this—whether it is human violence, or the law applied ever so hardly or tryingly, that while, according to the law, you might go one step, according to the gospel you would go two. Grace does twice as much as the law, whatever may be the point in hand. Grace is never intended in any wise to supplant obligations, or to lower responsibilities; but, on the contrary, to give power and force to everything that is righteous in the sight of God. The law might say, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." Here there is not only the endurance of that which is positively wrong, but grace that gives more than is asked. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." And this is one way of practically showing how far we value grace. It is not a question of the mere letter of our Lord's words. If you were to limit it merely to a blow on the face, it would be a very poor thing; but the word of Christ is that which conveys to me the spirit that pleases God, and gives me the reality of grace. And grace is not the vindication of self, nor the punishment of a wrong that is done, but the endurance of evil, and the triumph of good over it. Christ is speaking of what a Christian has to put up with from the world through which he passes. He is to receive tribulation as the discipline which God sees to be good for his soul; the great spectacle before men and angels—that there are men on this earth who are allowed and rejoice to suffer for Christ, because they have learned to give up their own will, to sacrifice their own rights, and to suffer wrongfully, looking onward to the day when the Lord will own whatever has been their sorrow for His sake, and when all evil shall be judged most solemnly at His appearing and kingdom.

But now a word as to what follows. It is most weighty, the very pith and essence of that which, concerns our relation towards others here below; the great active principle from which all right conduct flows. This is the question of the true character and limits of love. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy." (Ver. 43.) This was the expression that the Jews drew from the general tenor of the law. There had been the sanction of God for the extermination of their enemies; and from that they drew the principle, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." It was not a question merely about loving the neighbor, which was a duty of common righteousness. But here was a thing that no righteousness would ever have discovered, because it goes beyond the law—it is grace. In a thousand practical instances the question is not whether the thing is right. We often hear Christians asking, is such a thing wrong? But that is not the sole question for the Christian. He is never at liberty to do what is wrong, and most surely he does the thing

that is right. But supposing there is a wrong done him, what is to be his feeling then? If there is enmity to him in another, what is he to cherish in his heart? “Love your enemies ... do good to them that hate you ... that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven:” thus showing that they belonged to such a parentage in practical ways, “for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Ver. 44-48.) This has no reference to the question of whether there is sin in our nature or not. There is always the evil principle in a man as long as he has got the flesh in him. But what the Lord teaches here is this: Our Father is the perfect pattern in His ways with His enemies now, and he calls upon us to be thorough in that smile grace and love in which our Father deals. It is in pointed contrast with the Jew, or with anything that had ever been introduced before. Abraham was not called to walk in this way. He was, I believe, justified in arming his servants for the recovery of Lot; and the Israelites in lifting up the sword against the Canaanites. But we are never so to feel or act under any circumstances. We are called on, as the rule of Christian life, as that which governs our thoughts, and feelings, and ways, and supplies us with true feelings for our guidance day by day, to walk upon the principle of gracious long-suffering. We are in the midst of the enemies of Christ, of our enemies too because of Him. It may not come out at once nor always. Persecution may pass out of fashion, but the enmity is always there; and if God were only to remove certain restraints, the old hatred would burst out with greater violence than ever. Nevertheless, there is only one course open to the Christian who desires to walk as Christ walked, “Love your enemies,” and this really, not by a show of smooth ways or words. A Christian might know very well that, in certain cases, to go and speak to an angry person would only draw out bitterness of wrath, and there the right course would be to keep away; but under all circumstances there should be the desire of his good, to seek the blessing of our adversary. To do real kindness, even if it should never be known by a creature upon earth, to the one who has injured me, is the only thing worthy of a Christian man; and this we are called upon to do, specially towards those who despise and persecute us. We ought to ask the Lord to give us the opportunities of showing love to those that hate us. When the provocation occurs, we should have it settled in our souls that the Christian is here for the purpose of expressing Christ; for, indeed, we are His epistle, known and read of all men. We ought to desire to reflect what Christ would have done under the same circumstances. We are never at liberty to indulge in anything else.

May the Lord grant that this may be true of our own souls, first in secret feeling with Him, and then as manifested lowly and unselfishly towards others. Let us remember that there is no battle for us that is ever decisive with others, but what is an outward reflection of the secret victory over self with the Lord. Begin there, and it is surely won in the presence of men, though we may have to wait for it.

Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 5:1-17, Remarks on

It has been already explained, though briefly, that one reason which seems to have guided the Spirit of God, if we may reverently venture so to speak, in putting the sermon on the mount out of its historical place in Matthew, and giving it to us before many of the events which, in point of fact, took place subsequently, was this: that the whole Gospel was written upon the principle of convincing Jews that Jesus was their real Messiah—a man, but Jehovah—the Jehovah God of Israel; that the nation had had the fullest proofs that He was really their Messiah, according to prophecy, miracle, moral principles and ways, both in His own person and in His doctrine. In order to give the greater weight to His doctrine, the Spirit of God, in my opinion, has been pleased, first, to give as a general sketch the deeds of miraculous power which aroused universal attention. The report went abroad everywhere, so that there was no possible ground of excuse for unbelief to argue that there was not sufficient publicity; that God had not sounded the trumpet loud enough for the tribes of Israel to hear. Far from that: throughout all Syria his fame had gone forth, and great multitudes followed Him from Galilee, and Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and Judea, and from beyond Jordan. All this is brought forward here and grouped together at the end of chapter iv.

And just as there is this grouping of the miracles of Christ, which might have been severed from one another by a long space of time, so I apprehend the sermon on the mount was not necessarily a continuous discourse, unbroken by time or circumstances, but that the Holy Ghost has seen fit to arrange it so as to give the whole moral unity of the doctrine of Christ as to the kingdom of heaven; and to counteract the earthly views of the people of Israel.

Luke, on the contrary, was inspired of the Holy Ghost to give the questions that originated certain portions of the discourse, and the circumstances that accompanied it; and, again, to keep certain parts of that discourse back, and connect them with facts that occurred from time to time in our Lord's ministry, the actual incidents being thus interwoven in moral correspondence with any particular doctrine of our Lord. In some places of Luke the Spirit of God takes the liberty, according to His sovereign wisdom, of keeping back certain portions and bringing in a part here and there according to the object He has in view. The great feature of Luke's gospel, which rims through it from beginning to end, being a moral one, we can perfectly understand how suitable it was that, if there were circumstances in Christ's life which were a sort of practical comment on His discourse, there you should have the discourse and the facts put together.

Now, as to the discourse itself, the Lord here clearly speaks as the Messiah, the prophet King of the Jews. But besides, all through you will find that the discourse supposes the rejection of the King. It is not brought clearly out yet, but this is what underlies it all. The King has the sense of the true state of the people, who had no heart for Him. Hence there is a sweet tinge of sorrow that runs through it. That must ever characterize real godliness in the world as it is; a strange thing for Israel, and specially strange in the bps of the King, of One, too, possessed of such power, that had it been a question of using His resources, He could have changed all in a moment. The miracles which accompanied His every word, proved that there was nothing beyond His reach, if Himself only were looked at. But you will find in all the ways of God, that while He always makes good his counsels, so that if He predicts a kingdom, and takes in hand to set up a kingdom, He will certainly accomplish it, since He never gives up a single thought that has proceeded from His heart. Nevertheless, He first presents the thought to man, to Israel because they were the chosen race among men. Man has thus the responsibility of receiving or rejecting that which is the mind of God, before grace and power give it effect. But man always fails, no matter what God's purpose may be. It is good, it is holy, it is true, it is that which exalts Himself, it is that which abases the sinner: this is enough for man. He feels that he is made nothing of, and he rejects whatever does not gratify his vanity. Man invariably sets himself against the thoughts of God, consequently there is pain and sorrow—rejection of God Himself. And the wonderful thing that the history of this world shows us, is God submitting to be rejected and insulted; allowing poor weak man, a worm, to repel the advances of God and refuse His goodness, to turn everything that God gives and promises into the display of his own pride and glory, against the very character of God. You will find that all this, as it is the truth about man; so the tinge of it runs through this blessed discourse of our Lord. And when He is now bringing out, which is the great purport of the early part of this chapter, the character of the people who would suit the kingdom of heaven. He shows that their character was to be formed by his

own. If there was the dislike and contempt of men for what was of God, He shows that those who really belong to him, must have a spirit and ways flowing from knowledge of, and sympathy with, His own. I only say sympathy here, because you will find that the truth of a divine life which is given is not spoken of in this discourse. Redemption never is touched upon, not being the subject of the sermon on the mount. If a person, therefore, wanted to know how to be saved, he ought not to look here with the thought of finding an answer. It could not be found in it, because the Lord is bringing out the kingdom of heaven and the character of the people that are the subjects of that kingdom. It is clear that He is speaking of his own people, and therefore could not be showing the way for one that did not belong to His own people to be delivered from this position. He is speaking about saints, not about sinners. He shows what is according to his heart; not at all the way for a soul that is consciously at a distance from God to be brought near. The sermon on the mount treats not of salvation, but of the character and conduct belong to Christ—the true but rejected King. But when we examine these beatitudes, we shall find an astonishing depth in them, and a beautiful order, too.

The first blessedness, then, is a fundamental one—that which is inseparable from every soul that is brought to God, and that knows God. “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” Nothing more contrary to man. What people call ‘a man of spirit,' is exactly the opposite of being poor in spirit. A man of spirit is a person such as Cain was—a man determined not to be beaten; a man who would fight it out with God Himself. There was a proud spirited man that never would bend. Now, a man “poor in spirit” is the very opposite of this. It is a person who is broken, who is down, who feels that the dust is his right place. Now, every soul that knows God must, more or less, be there. He may get out of this place; for although it is a solemn thing, yet it is easy enough, to rise again, to forget our right place before God; and it is specially easy for those who have been brought into the liberty of Christ. When there is earnestness of spirit, a man is apt to be low, specially if not quite sure that all is clear between his soul and God. But when full relief if brought to his spirit, when he knows the fullness and certainty of redemption in Christ Jesus, and then looks away from Jesus, and takes his place among men, there you will have the old spirit revived, the spirit of man in its worst form: so terrible is the effect of a departure from God and a mingling with men. The first in order, the Lord lays down as a sort of foundation, and which is inseparable from a soul that is brought to God:—he may not even know what full liberty is, but there is this thing that never can be absent where the Holy Ghost works in the soul—and that is, poverty of spirit. It may be encroached on by others, or it may fade way through the influence of false doctrine, or worldly thoughts and practice, but still there it was, and there, in the midst of all the rubbish, it is; and God knows how to bring a man down again, if he has forgotten his true place. “Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” He is speaking about the kingdom, and he at once says, these are the people to whom it belongs. By the “kingdom of heaven,” He does not mean heaven; it never means heaven, but always takes in the earth as under the rule of Heaven. You will find that many persons are in the habit of confounding these things. “Theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” they think means “theirs is heaven.” Whereas the Lord is not referring to heaven, but to the rule of the heavens over an earthly scene. It refers to the scene of the ruling Messiah—those who are poor in spirit belong to that system of which He is the Head. He does not speak of the Church here. There might have been the kingdom of heaven and no Church at all. It is not till the sixteenth chapter of this gospel that the subject of the Church is broached, and then it is a thing promised and expressly distinguished from the kingdom of heaven. There is not in all scripture a single passage where the kingdom of heaven is confounded with the Church, or vice versa, “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This is the first primary foundation, the great characteristic feature of all that belongs to Jesus. “Blessed are they that mourn,” is the second feature. There is more activity of life, more depth of feeling, more entrance into the condition of things around them. To be “poor in spirit” would be true if there were not a single other soul in the world; but he feels it because of what he is in himself; it is a question between him and God, that makes lam to be poor in spirit. But “Blessed are they that mourn,” is not merely what we find in our own condition, but it is the holy sorrow that a saint feels in finding himself in such a world as this, and, oh, how little able to maintain the glory of God! So that there is this holy sorrow very prominent indeed in the second part. The first is the child of God that just shows us the earliest rudimental feelings of holiness in his soul; the second is the sense of what is due to God; a feeling it may be of great weakness, and yet of what should become the honor of God, and how it should be upheld by himself. “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.” There is not a single groan that goes up to God but He treasures and will answer it; “ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves.” Here, then, you have the sorrowing of the godly soul.

But in the third case, we come to that which is much deeper and more chastened. It is a condition of soul produced by a fuller acquaintance with God, and is especially the way in which God elsewhere describes the blessed One Himself. He was “meek and lowly in heart;” and this was what the Lord said after He had been groaning in spirit, for He knew what it was to have the sorrow we have been speaking about, over the condition of men and the rejection of God that He witnessed here below. He could only say “Woe” to those cities in which He had done so many mighty works; and then Capernaum comes in for the deepest condemnation, because the mightiest works of all were done there in vain. And what could Jesus do but groan in spirit as He thought of such utter spurning of God, and indifference to His own love? But at the same hour we find he rejoices in spirit, and says, “I thank thee, O Father.” There is the blessed proof of matchless meekness in Jesus—that the same hour which sees the depth of His sorrow over man, sees also His perfect bowing to God, though at the cost of everything to Himself. Conscious of this, He says, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me: for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” Now, then, I think I may be bold to say that this meekness, which was found in its absolute perfectness in Jesus, is also what the gradually deepening knowledge of the ways of God, even in the sense of the abounding wickedness of this world, and the failure of what bears the name of Christ, produces in the saint of God. For in the midst of all that he sees around him, there is the discerning of the hidden purpose of God that is going on in spite of everything; so that the heart, instead of being fettered by the evil that it witnesses, and which it cannot set aside; instead of the least feeling of envy at the prosperity of the wicked, finds its resource in God— “the Lord of heaven and earth” as expression most blessed because it marks the absolute control in which everything is held by God. Jesus is the meek One, and those that belong to Jesus are trained to this meekness also. “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” The earth—why not heaven? The earth is. he scene of all this evil that had brought out such sorrow and mourning. But now, having better learned God's ways, they can commit it all to Him. Meekness is not merely to have a sense of nothingness in ourselves, or to be filled with sorrow for the opposition to God here below; but it is rather the calmness of leaving thing's with God, and bending to God, and thankfully owning the will of God, even where naturally it may be most trying to ourselves.

The fourth blessedness is much more active. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be tilled.” Perfect soul satisfaction, they shall have it. Whatever was the form of the spiritual feeling of the sent, there is always the perfect answer to it on God's part. If there is sorrow, they shalt be comforted; if them is meekness, they shall inherit the earth, the very place of their trial here. Now, there is this activity of spiritual feeling, the going out after what was according to God, what maintained the will of God, specially as made known to a Jew in the Old Testament. Therefore it is called hungering and thirsting. after righteousness. We learn deeper principles in

the New Testament still, which had to be brought out when the disciples were able to bear them.

This closes what we may call the first section of the beatitudes. You will find that they are divided, as the series of scripture often are, into four and three. We have had four classes of persons pronounced “blessed.” All the traits ought to be found in one individual, but some will be more prominent in one than another. For instance, we may see great activity in one, astonishing meekness in another. The principle of all is in every soul that is born of God. In verse 7 we enter upon a rather different class: and it will be found that the three last have got a common character, as the first four have.

“Blessed are the merciful: be they shall obtain mercy.” As righteousness is the key-note of the first four, so grace is that which lies at the root of the latter three; and, therefore, the very first of them shows you not merely that they are righteous, and, that they feel what is due to God, but they are found clinging to the will. of God, and maintaining it in the midst of surrounding evil. Yea, there is something more blessed still, and what is that “Blessed are the merciful.” There is nothing upon which God more takes His stand as the active principle of His being in a world of sin, than His mercy. The only possibility of salvation to a single soul, is that there is mercy in God; that He is rich in mercy, that there is no bound to His mercy; that there is nothing in the heart of man, if he only bows to His Son, which can hinder this constant flowing spring of mercy. “Blessed,” then, “are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” it is not merely a question of the forgiveness of their sins, but of mercy in everything. It is a blessed thing to hail the smallest sign of mercy, to take the little and look for much more.

Blessed are the merciful.” They will find, not that there is not difficulty and trial, but though they shall. know the cost of it, they shall know the sweetness of it; they shall taste afresh what the mercy of God is towards their own souls, in the exercise of mercy towards others. This is the characteristic feature of the new class of blessing; just as poverty of spirit was the introduction to the first blessings, so mercy is to these.

The next is the consequence of this, as in the former class. If a roan does not think much of himself, men will take advantage of him. If a man is bold, and boastful, and self-exalting, saints may suffer it. (2 Cor. 11.) If he does well to himself, men will praise him. (Psa. 49) But the contrary of that is what God works in the saint. No matter what he may be, he is broken down before God: he learns the vanity of what man; he is content to be nothing. And the effect. is, he suffers. Poverty of spirit be followed by mourning. Then there is the meekness, as there is deepening acquaintance with God, and then the hungering and thirsting after righteousness. But now it is merry; and the effect of mercy is not a compromising of the holiness of God, but a larger and deeper standard of it. The fuller your hold of grace is, the higher your maintenance or holiness will be. If you only take grace as a wretched, selfish being, trying to find an excuse for sin, no doubt it will be perverted. And so He speaks at once of the proper, normal effect of tasting of this spring of mercy. They are “pure in heart.” That is the next class, and it is, I believe, the consequence of the first, of being merciful. “Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.” It is exactly what belongs to God; for He alone is pure absolutely. Thus also he was perfectly reflected in His beloved Son. For not one single thought or feeling over sullied divine perfectness in the heart of Jesus. in this case he is just showing us what He Himself was. It is clear that he puts his own characteristics before those who belonged to Him; because He is their life. It is Christ in us that produces what is according God by the Holy Ghost—this blessed One, whose very coming into the world was the witness of perfect grace and mercy on God's part; for it was God who so loved the world that he gave His only-begotten Son for it. And He was there, a man—the faithful witness of the mercy and of the purity of God. He, when He came with His heart full of mercy towards the vilest, was yet the very One who was the pattern or the perfection of the purity of God. “He that sent me.” He could say, “is with me; for I do always those things that please him.” The only way of doing anything to please God, is by having the consciousness of being in the presence of God: and there is no possibility of that, except as I am drawn there in the liberty of grace, and as knowing that what Christ was to God, in His own person, is given to me by redemption. Christ has, of course, a title to be ever there, because of what he Himself is: and we are there, through faith of Christ, because of the nearness that is given us by the perfect blotting out of our sins through His blood. But this is not revealed here; for the Lord is rather showing the moral qualities of those that belong to Him.

The third and closing one of these blessednesses is, “Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God.” There we have the active side again, as we saw an analogy in the closing one of the first four. These go out making peace. If there is the smallest possibility of the peace of God being brought into the scene, they are sure to find out where it can be or may be; and if it cannot be, they are content to wait upon God, and look up to Him, that, he will make this peace in His own time. And as this peace-making can belong only to God Himself, so these saints that are enriched with these blessed qualities of the grace of God and His righteousness—His grace, His mercy, and its effects—are equally round now characterized as peace-makers: “they shall be called the children of God.” Oh! this is a sweet thing! Sons of God: is it not because it was the reflection of his own nature—what God Himself was? They bore the stamp of God upon them. There is no one thing that inure shows God manifested in His children than this peace-making. That was what God was doing, what His heart was set upon. Here are found men upon the earth who shall be called the children of God. What belonged to them naturally is merged, and they have a new title, sons of God.

Then follow two exceedingly interesting blessings. They add much to the beauty of the scene, and complete the picture in a most interesting way. “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This is evidently beginning over again. The first blessedness is “Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven:” and these four were all marked by righteousness. It is the very first thing that God ever produces in a soul. He who is awakened takes up God's cause against himself. He is, in measure, broken down, poor in spirit; and God looks for him to grow in poverty of spirit to the last. But here it is not so much what they were, as what their lot was from others. The two last blessednesses speak of their portion in the world from the hands of other people. The first four are characterized by intrinsic righteousness—the last three by intrinsic grace. These two, then, answer, one to the first four, and the other to the last three. “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This does not go beyond the blessed state of things that the power of God will bring in over the earth in connection with the Messiah. Being rejected, the kingdom of heaven is His, only, as it were, with a stronger and deeper title—certainly with the means of blessing by grace for the lost. A suffering and despised Messiah is still dearer to the heart of God than if we conceived Him received all at once. And if He does not lose the kingdom because He was persecuted, neither do they. “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Persecuted, not merely by the Gentiles or by the Jews, but for righteousness' sake. Do not be looking at the people that persecute you, but at the reason why you are persecuted. If it is because you desire to be found in obedience to the will of God, blessed are you. You fear to sin—you suffer for it; blessed are they which suffer for righteousness' sake: they will have their portion under the Messiah Himself.

But now we have, finally, another blessedness. And mark the change. “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake.” This change to ye is exceedingly precious. It is not merely put in an abstract form—

“blessed are they;” but it is a personal thing. He looks at the disciples there, knows what they were to go through for His sake, and gives them the highest, nearest place in His love. “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, for my sake.” It is not now for righteousness' sake, but “for my sake.” There is something still more precious than righteousness, and that is Christ. And when you have Christ, you can have nothing higher. Blessed indeed to be persecuted for His sake! The difference is just this: when a man suffers for righteousness' sake, it is that there is some evil put before him, and he refuses it. He would have perhaps to subscribe something against his conscience, and he cannot do it—he dare not. He is offered a tempting bait, but it involves that which he knows is contrary to God. All is in vain: the tempter's object is seen. Righteousness prevails, and he suffers. He not only loses what is offered, but he is evil spoken of, too. Blessed are they who suffer thus for righteousness' sake! But for Christ's sake is a totally different thing. There the enemy effects great execution. He tempts the soul with such questions as these: is there any reason why you should speak about Jesus and the gospel? There is no need for being so zealous for the truth. Why go out of your way so far for this person or that thing? Now, in these cases it is not a question of a sin, open or covert. For in the case of suffering for Christ's sake, it is the activity of grace that goes out to others. It is not a question of righteousness, but answers to the last three of the seven beatitudes. A soul that is filled with a sense of mercy cannot refrain his lips. He who knows what God is could not be silent merely because of what men think or do. Blessed are ye who thus suffer for the sake of Christ's name! The power of grace prevails there. Too often, alas! motives of prudence come in: people are afraid of giving offense to others—of losing influence for self—of spoiling the prospect of the children, &c. But the energy of grace looks at all this, and still says, Christ is worth infinitely more; Christ commands my soul for this—I must follow Him. In suffering for righteousness' sake, a soul eschews evil, earnestly, peremptorily, and commits itself at all cost to what is right; but in the other, it discerns the path of Christ—that which the gospel, the worship, or the will of the Lord call to, and at once throws itself with its whole heart on the Lord's side. Then comes in the comfort of that sweet word, “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you. . .for my sake.” For the Lord could not refrain the expression of His soul's delight in His saints: “Blessed are ye. . . Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven.” Observe, it is not now in the kingdom of heaven, but “in heaven.” He identifies these with a higher place altogether. It is not only the power of God, over the earth, and His giving them a portion here; but it is taking them out of the earthly scene to be with Himself above. “For so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.” What an honor to follow in earthly rejection and scorn those who preceded us in special communion with God—the heralds of Him for whom we suffer now! We may clearly, then, consider that these two final blessednesses, the persecutions for righteousness' sake and for Christ's sake, answer, respectively, to the first four blessings and to the last three.

In Luke, where we have these blessings brought before us, we have none for righteousness' sake—only for His name's sake. And in all the cases it is “Blessed are ye.” To some it may seem a delicate shade, but the difference is characteristic of the two Gospels. Matthew takes in the largest view, and specially that view of the principles of the kingdom of heaven which was suited to the understanding of a Jew, to bring him out of his mere Judaism, or to show him higher principles. Luke, whatever the principles are, gives them all under the form of grace, and treats them as our Lord's direct addresses to the individual soul “Blessed are ye.” Even if he takes up the subject of the poor, he drops the abstract form of Matthew, and makes it all personal. Everything is connected with the Lord Himself, and not merely with righteousness. This is exceedingly beautiful. And if we pursue, further, the next few verses which give, not so much the characteristics of the people as their general attitude in the world the place in which they are set in the earth by God, we have it in a very few words, and strongly confirming the distinction which I have drawn between righteousness and Christ's name's sake. And if you examine the Epistle of Peter, you will find this remarkably corroborated there also.

“Ye are the salt of the earth.” Salt is the only thing that cannot be salted, because it is the preservative principle itself; and if this is gone, it cannot be replaced. “If the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted?” The salt of the earth is the relation of the disciples here to that which already had the testimony of God; therefore the expression earth or land, which was specially true of the Jewish land then. Now, if you speak about the earth, it is Christendom—the place that enjoys, either really or professedly, the light of God's truth. That is what may be called the earth. And this is the place which will finally be the scene of the greatest apostasy; for apostasy is only possible where light has been enjoyed and departed from. In the Revelation, where the closing results of the age are given, the earth appears in a most solemn manner; and then we have the peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues—what we should call heathen lands. But the earth means the once-favored scene of professing Christianity, where there have been all the energies of the mind of men at work—the scene where the testimony of God had once shed its light—then, alas! abandoned to utter apostasy.

“Ye are the salt of the earth.” They were the real preservative principle there: all the rest, the Lord intimates, were good for nothing. But more than that. He gives a solemn warning that there is a danger that the salt should lose its savor. He is not now speaking of the question of whether a saint can fall away or not. People go with their own questions to Scripture, and pervert the word of God, to suit their own thoughts. The Lord is not raising the question whether life is ever lost; but He is speaking of certain persons who are in a given position; and among them there might be persons who had taken it heedlessly or even falsely, and then there would be the fading away of all that they had once had. And He shows their judgment—the most contemptuous possible, to be passed upon that which took so high a place without reality. And so it will be still more evidently yet.

“Ye are the light of the world.” This is another thing. Bearing in mind the distinction drawn in the series of the beatitudes and of the persecutions, we have the key to these two verses. The salt of the earth represents the righteous principle. The salt of the earth involves the clinging to the eternal rights of God and the maintenance before the world of what is due to His character; and that was gone when what bore the name of God fell below what even men thought proper. You can hardly read a newspaper now but what you find scoffs against what is called religion. All respect is gone, and men think that the condition of Christians is a fair subject for their ridicule. But now, in verse 14, we have not only the principle of righteousness, but of grace—the outflowing and strength of grace. And here we find a new title given to the disciples, as descriptive of their public testimony— “the light of the world.” The light is clearly that which diffuses itself. The salt is what ought to be inward, but the light is that which scatters itself abroad. “A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.” It was diffusing its testimony everywhere. Man does not light a candle to put it under a corn measure, but on a candlestick; “and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.” After this manner let your light shine before men, “that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Mark it well. When we have looked at these two striking sketches of the testimony of believers here below, as the salt of the earth, the preservative energy in the midst of profession, and, as the light of the world, going out in activity and love towards the poor world; and the danger of the salt losing its savor, and of the light being put under a bushel. Now we find the great object of God in this twofold testimony. It is not merely a question of the blessing of souls, for there is not a word about evangelization or saving sinners, but of the walk of saints. There is a grave question that God raises about his saints, and this is about their own ways apart from other people. Calls to the unconverted we find abundantly elsewhere, and none can exaggerate their importance for the world; but the sermon on the mount is God's call to the

unconverted. It is their character, their position, their testimony distinctively; and if others are thought of throughout, it is not so much a question of winning them, as of the saints reflecting what comes from above. This light is what comes from Christ. It is not, let your good works shine before men. When people talk about this verse, they are evidently thinking about their own works, and when that is the case, there are generally no good works at all. But even if there were, works are not light. Light is that which comes from God directly and purely, without admixture of man. Good works are the fruit of its notion upon the soul; but it is the light winch is to shine before men. It is the disciple's confession of Himself; that is the point before God. Confess Christ in everything. Let this be the aim of your heart. It is not merely certain things to be done. The light shining is the great object here, though doing good ought to flow from it. If I make doing good everything, it is a lower thought than that which is before the mind of God. An infidel can feel that a shivering man needs a coat or blanket. The natural man may be fully alive to the wants of others; but if I merely take these works and make them the prominent thing, I really do nothing more than an unbeliever might. The moment you make the good works the object, and their shining before men, you find yourself on common ground with Jews and heathen. God's people are thus destroying their testimony. What so bad in the way of a thing done professedly for God, as a work that leaves out Christ, and that shows a man who loves Christ to be on comfortable terms with those that hate Him? This is what the Lord warns the saints against. They are not to be thinking about their works, but that the light of God should shine. Works will follow, and much better works than where a person is always occupied with them. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Let your confession of what God is in His nature and of what Christ is in His own person and ways—let your acknowledgment of him be the thing that is felt and brought before, men—and then, when they see your good works, they will glorify your Father which is in heaven. Instead of saying, What a good man such an one is, they will glorify God on his behalf. if your light shines, men then connect what you do with your confession of Christ.

The Lord grant, then, that this, as it is the word and the will of Christ, may be that to which we surrender ourselves, and which we desire, above all things, for our own souls and for those who are dear to us; and if we see the forgetfulness of it in any saints of God, may we remember them in prayer, and seek to help them by the testimony of His truth which, if it does not carry the heart which it, may at least, more or less, reach the conscience, and be remembered another time!

Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 4:12-25, Remarks on

It may be instructive to compare the different ways in which the Holy Ghost introduces our Lord's ministry in the gospels. And when I speak of His ministry, you will understand that I mean His public service, for there was much appertaining, to the Lord—miracles performed, and remarkable discourses uttered—before His ministerial course was formally entered on. What I would desire now, with the blessing of God, to notice is, the wisdom with which He has given us a distinct view of our Lord in each of these different inspired accounts. We may reverently follow Him who has been pleased to furnish them so variously omitting certain statements in some, and presenting them in others, altering now and then the order of narrating events, to accomplish thus His purpose more perfectly. In comparing these accounts we may see that the Holy Ghost always preserves the grand design of each gospel, and this is the basis of all just interpretation. We shall find, steadily keeping in view what He is aiming at, that we have in this what was really the principle on winch the gospels themselves were written, and consequently what alone will enable any soul to understand them aright.

Now, I have already shown, to commence with the gospel of Matthew, that, throughout, the Holy Ghost is setting before us the Messiah with the fullest proofs of His mission from God, but, alas! a suffering, a rejected One, and this specially by His own people; and among them rejected most of all by such as, humanly speaking, had most reason to receive Him. Were any peculiarly remarkable for their righteousness in the estimate of the nation? If Pharisees were so, who so bitter against Him? Were any celebrated for their knowledge of scripture? The Scribes were those combined with the Pharisees against Him. The priests, jealous of their position, would naturally oppose One who brought out the reality of a divine power, administered by the Son of man upon earth, in the forgiveness of sins. Now all these things come out with striking force and clearness in the gospel of Matthew. But although we are not arrived at these details as yet, still the main design of the Holy Ghost discovers itself in the manner in which our Lord is presented as entering upon His public ministry, in the portion that is now before us.

First of all, no notice is taken in Matthew of all that passed at Jerusalem. The Holy Ghost knew this perfectly well; He had nothing to learn about it. Humanly, Matthew was as likely to have known and inquired into the earlier circumstances of our Lord, and particularly as connected with that city, as the beloved disciple John. Yet of a great deal given in John, not a word appears in Matthew. In the fourth gospel we have a deputation from Jerusalem to see John the Baptist first, and then our Lord is acknowledged as Lamb of God, and as He who baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. Then we have our Lord making Himself known to various persons, among them to Simon Peter, after Andrew his brother had already been in the company of the wondrous stranger. Then Philip is called, who finds Nathaniel, and thus the work of the Lord spreads from one soul to another, either by the Lord attracting to Himself directly, or through the intervention of those already called. All this is entirely omitted here. Then, again, in John 2 is given the first great miracle in which Christ set forth His glory—the turning of water into wine—and after that our Lord goes up to Jerusalem and executes judgment upon the covetousness that then reigned, even in the boasted city of holiness. We have also a little incidental view of what our Lord was doing during this time at Jerusalem. He was working mighty miracles there, and many were believing on Him, though in a natural way. Jesus, it is said, “did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men;” but He does open the great doctrine of regeneration, and brings out the cross Himself to be made sin, thus, as the serpent had been lifted up by Moses in the wilderness, that whosoever believed Him “should not perish, but have everlasting life.” All this took place before the circumstances recorded by Matthew. When this is seen, it must strike any observing reader of the word of God. It could not be that these things were unknown to Matthew: they could not fail to be named and dwelt on, if, apart from inspiration, you look at him as a mere disciple. Andrew, Peter, and John, and the rest would have conversed on their first acquaintance with the Savior over and over again. Matthew does not say one word about it, neither does Mark or Luke, but John does. Now, when we examine the gospels themselves, we find the real solution. It is not the ignorance of one evangelist, nor the knowledge of another, that accounts either for the omissions or for the insertions. God gives such an account of Jesus as would perfectly impress the lesson He was teaching in each gospel.

Why does all we have noticed appear appropriately in John? Clearly because it falls in with the truth that is taught there. In John we have the utter ruin of man—of the world—from the outset. The first chapter shows us the practical evidence of what Judaism was—the Lord not received by His own, however duly coming, and thus calling His own sheep by name, and leading them out. For the testimony of John Baptist had no abiding effect upon the mass; it might pass from mouth to mouth, but it fell unheeded upon the ears of those that had no faith; “ye

are not of my sheep, as I said unto you.” Now we have the individual sheep called by name, and one of them receiving a new name, thoroughly in keeping with the character of the Apostle John’s gospel. In Matthew we have none of these striking incidents, because therein the Holy Ghost is showing us Jehovah-Jesus, the Messiah, working miracles, accomplishing prophecy, expounding the kingdom of heaven, but in want, despised, and the companion of such in Galilee; for He is not seen here as the Son of God, whether from everlasting or as born into the world; but He Himself takes a place of separation, to carry out the great thought that the prophet Isaiah had been inspired of God to reveal hundreds of years before. For you will remark that our Lord's leaving Nazareth and coming to dwell in Capernaum is brought in here, as the fulfillment of that which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, “the land of Zebulon and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.” It was outside the regular allotment of Israel; in that part of it which is yet to belong to Israel, which certain of the tribes had taken possession of, though, strictly speaking, it was beyond the proper limits of the promised land. The Lord goes through Galilee of the Gentiles—and all this He was doing to fulfill a prophecy. The Jews ought surely to have known it. The people which sat in darkness thus “saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.”

Now, if we turn to the prophet Isaiah, we shall find the importance of this quotation somewhat more. It is part of a great prophetic strain, in which the Lord is showing the exceeding rebelliousness of Israel, and the judgments that came upon His people, because they would not hearken to His voice. His hand was stretched out against them. “For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.” (Isa. 5:25) In the midst of these dealings of God we have in Isa. 6 the glory of the Lord revealed. God is acting in his own glory. Now, we know that this glory is in the person of Christ, as John 12. declares. The Lord shows accordingly in Isa. 7 that there was to be a birth wholly above nature. It was no longer nor merely a glorious One sitting upon. a high throne removed from men, yet men receiving a message of mercy from Him in the midst of judgment. Chapter vii. reveals the great fact of the incarnation. The King of Glory, Jehovah of hosts, was to become a babe, born of a virgin. The next chapter shows us another fact. Israel no more cared for the glorious child of the virgin, than before for the warnings of God. On the contrary, they despised and rejected Him. Consequently, chapter viii. supposes a godly remnant more and more despised in the midst of a fearful state of things in Israel. who will then be joined, too, with the Gentiles, saying, A confederacy. There Israel are to take the place of utter unbelief; the inhabitants of Judea will be the leaders in this rebellion against God. But in the midst of it all, what is He doing? “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. And I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and wonders in Israel, from the Lord of hosts, which dwelleth in Mount Zion.” That is, there is a most distinct declaration that God will be pleased to have only a little remnant in the midst of His own people. When Israel should reject the Messiah, a separated remnant appears there, and the blessing would come at last in all the fullness of this grace. Still it would be a small despised thing in the beginning; and this is exactly the circumstance that our Lord now was bringing out in evidence. “And when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits Should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.” And, accordingly, the prophecy goes on, “Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first He lightly afflicted the land of Zebulon, and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light (namely the Messiah): they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” He shows afterward in his prophecy that, while the Gentile affliction upon the nation would be heavier than ever, and the Roman oppression far exceed the Chaldean of old; yet the Messiah would be there, despised and rejected of men, nay, of the Jews, and that at this very time, when thus set at naught by the people that ought to have known His glory, great light would spring up in the most despised place, in Galilee of the nations, among the poorest of the Jews, where Gentiles were mixed up with them—people who could not even speak their language properly. There should this bright and heavenly light spring up; the Messiah would be owned and received. Thus we can see how thoroughly this prophecy suits the gospel we are considering. For what we have here, is One who is Jehovah-Messiah, in the truest sense, a divine king. and not a mere human being; but at the same time Messiah, while slighted by the nation, despised by the leaders, making Himself known in grace to those who were the most scorned in the outskirts, as you go out towards the Gentiles. What kings had looked for in vain, what prophets had desired to see, it was for their eyes to look upon. The Lord begins to separate Himself a remnant in Israel in Galilee of the Gentiles. This completely keeps up and confirms the object of Matthew, from the first.

But there is more than this. “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” Now it is clear that this begins His public preaching. The discourse to Nicodemus was entirely different. Why have we nothing like the Samaritan woman in Matthew? How does it fit in with the gospel of John? In Matthew the subject is the accomplishment of. the prophecies about the Messiah. The object of God there was to show that there was, on His part, no failure of testimony, till the Baptist's work closes. Jesus awaits this in Matthew In John He waits for nothing. He gives the grandest possible testimony about the kingdom, not exactly of heaven, but of God; the necessity of a life that man has not naturally—that God alone can give; and the necessity of the cross as the expression of God's judgment of sin in grace to sinners—to the world. So that the discourse in John 3 consists of these two parts—a life given of God, that never sins, that is perfectly holy; and Jesus dying in atonement for the sins of the old life which never could enter into the presence of God. And though believers must have that new life, yet this cannot blot out sin. Death is needled as well as life, and the Savior provides both. He is the source of life as the Son of God, and He dies as the Son of man. And this is what He brings out most profoundly in the beginning of John's gospel. In Matthew we have Jesus waiting till the testimony of John the Baptist is closed, and then He enters upon His public ministry. These things are perfectly harmonious. If our Lord had been said to preach the kingdom of heaven to Nicodemus, there might have seemed to be a contradiction; but He did not. He showed the necessity of a new birth for any who would see the kingdom of God. But in Matthew He is looking at what, though from a heavenly source, concerns the earth—the kingdom of heaven according to the prophecy of Daniel. He therefore waits till His earthly forerunner had fully done his task. The ministry of John is set forth by Elias; the forerunner must have done his work before the Lord begins His own. Hence Matthew leaves out all illusion to anything public about Christ before John is cast into prison. He presents to the Jews the kingdom of heaven as that which was according to their prophets.

In the gospel of Luke let us see how our Lord's ministry is opened. Chapter iv. will suffice for my purpose. The Lord 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. And he came to Nazareth where he had been brought up.” This is a previous scene; He is not in Capernaum yet. Matthew leaves it all out. This is the more striking because Luke was not one of those personally with our Lord, while Matthew was. But unless you believe that it is God who has guided the hand of every writer, and put His own seal upon it, you are incapable of understanding scripture; you will add your own thoughts, instead of being subject to the mind of God. What we want is to understand God, who is shedding on us His own blessed and infinite light. Why does God give us this incident at Nazareth in Luke and nowhere else? Is it the Messiah? No; such is not the object of Luke. Nor is it His ministry in the order in which it occurred; this you will find in Mark. But Luke, as well as Matthew, changes the order of events, for the

purpose of bringing out the moral object of each gospel. Luke gives us this circumstance in the synagogue; Matthew does not. if any one has read the gospel of Luke with spiritual intelligence, what is the one grand impression conveyed to the mind? There is the blessed man, anointed of the Holy Ghost, and who goes about doing good. Indeed, this is precisely the way in which Peter sums up the life of Jesus in the Acts, when preaching Him to Cornelius; “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,” and then he gives an account of His wonderful work in His death and resurrection.

Opening, then, the Gospel of Luke, what is the first incident of our Lord's ministry recorded there? At Nazareth, the most despised village in Galilee, the place where our Lord was sure to be scorned—in His own country, where he had been living all the days of His private life of blessed obedience rendered to man and of dependence upon God—in this same place He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up to read from the prophet. Isaiah, where it was written, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor: he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book.” He stopped in the very middle of a sentence. Why so? For the most precious reason. He was come here as a herald of grace, the minister of divine goodness to poor, miserable melt. There was judgment mingled with mercy in the prophecy of Isaiah. The Gospel of Matthew shows us judgment upon the Jews and mercy to despised Galilee. But here it is a larger thing. In Luke there is not a word about judgment; nothing appears but the fullness of grace that was in Christ. He was come with all power and willingness to bless: the Spirit of Jehovah was upon Him for the purpose. He was sent to preach the acceptable year of the Lord—and there and then He closed the book. He would not add the next words, which announced “the day of vengeance of our God.” He most significantly stops before a word is said of that day. As to the actual errand on which Jesus was come from heaven, it was not to execute vengeance: that was only what man would, by and by, compel Him to do by refusing grace. But He came to show divine love, flowing in a perfect, unceasing stream from His heart. This was what our Lord opened out here. Where does such a scene as this suit? Exactly the place where it does occur—the Gospel of Luke only. You could not transplant it to Matthew, or even to John. There is a character about it that pertains to this gospel and none other. Some of the circumstances of our Lord's ministry are given in all the gospels; but this is not; because it flows in the current of Luke: and there it is found, and there alone.

This will help to illustrate the characteristic and divinely-arranged differences of the gospels. Harmonizing is the attempt to squeeze into one mold things which are not the same. Thus, if I may add a few words on the account in Luke, we have more in corroboration. While they hung upon His lips to hear the gracious words, as the Holy Ghost characterizes them, all eyes fastened upon Him. “He began to say unto them, This day is the Scripture fulfilled in your ears. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?". There was their unbelief of heart. He was despised and rejected of men; not only of the proud men of Jerusalem, but at Nazareth. This is Luke's object, who shows is the deeper thought still—that it was not only men who might be built up in the law, but that the heart of man despised Him wherever He was. Let it be at Nazareth, and let Him utter the most gracious words that ever fell from the lips of man, still He was despised. “And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself; whatsoever we have heard down at Capernaum do also here in thy country.” Evidently we learn, too, that the Lord had done many things there. and things that had taken place previously to this: but the Spirit of God records this first at length. The Lord accordingly brings in another thing that I must refer to. He takes instances from Jewish history to illustrate the unbelief of the Jews, and the goodness of God to the Gentiles. “I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up. But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta.” &c. That is to say, He shows that, is the unbelief of Israel, God turns to the Gentiles, and that they should hear. There was one grand point in Luke's Gospel—not only the display of the fullness of grace that was in Jesus, but God going out to the Gentiles and showing mercy to them. The first recorded discourse of our Lord's in Luke brings out the very object of the gospel. Accordingly when the Lord uttered these words, “they were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way, and came down to Capernaum.” And then we have the Lord dealing with a man that was possessed with a devil. This is the first miracle detailed here and it is only in the next chapter that we find out Lord calling Simon Peter, Andrew, and the rest to follow Him; all which is given with the greatest possible care. At once we are struck with the difference; for when we turn back to Matthew, there is not a word about Nazareth, or the casting out of a devil from a man possessed; but that our Lord, when He began to preach, was walking by the sea of Galilee, and “saw two brethren, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew, his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And he said unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” The account is given very succinctly. The particulars are not found, but we do get them in Luke, and I presume, for this reason that his is specially the gospel where we see the moral analysis of the human heart. There are two things specially brought out in Luke—what God's heart is towards man, and what man's heart is naturally towards God; and, besides this, what he becomes throngh the grace of God. Take the parable of the prodigal for instance. Have you not there God's heart, and the wickedness of man's heart fully brought out; and then his coming to himself, and being lost in the goodness of God towards him? That is just the Gospel of Luke, the sum and substance of the whole book. This is one reason why you have the experience of Peter when first called to service; how the Lord met his fears, and fitted hilt, to become a fisher of men. And Peter is there made a prominent one, because you cannot have experience except in all individual. Experience must be a thing between the soul and Christ; and the moment it comes to be a matter of public notoriety, all is gone; it becomes then rather a snare for the conscience. There is the danger of repeating what we have heard from others, or of keeping back what is bad in our own. souls. It must be a matter of individual conscience with the Lord. In Luke you have one individual singled out, and the account given of what be passed through with the Lord; but in Matthew this is not the point. There it is the rejected Messiah, now that His forerunner is cast into prison, who will himself soon find that there is worse than a prison in store for Him. lint for all that, the Lord will accomplish the prophecies. He is, it, the most despised place, fulfilling the prophecy that predicted in Isaiah the law bound up among His disciples, at the very time that the Lord was hiding His face from Israel. Now, He wants to have persons who are prominent as the representatives of this godly remnant in Israel. Therefore, He calls first two brethren, Simon, called Peter, and Andrew, his brother. It would be a mistake to suppose that this was our Lord's first acquaintance with them. They knew the Lord long before. How do we know this? John tells us. If you examine the point, you will find that all the incidents in the first four chapters of John's Gospel occurred before this scene. The circumstances recorded of our Lord in Jerusalem, in Galilee, and with the woman of Samaria even, all took place before Simon and Andrew were called away from their work. In order to call for a special line of service, there is a second work of Christ necessary. It is one thing for Christ to reveal Himself to a soul, it is another to make that soul a fisher of men. There is a special faith needed in order to act upon the souls of others. The simple, saving faith that appropriates Christ for one's own soul is not at all the same thing as understanding the call of Christ summoning one away from all the natural objects of this life to do His work. This comes out here. The Lord, in His rejection, calls, and causes His voice to be heard by these four men, and by others also. They had already believed in Him, and had everlasting life; but to have everlasting life merely is compatible with a man's following a good deal with the world, and being occupied with what contributes to his own ease here below; he remains a member of the society of men. Many that are godly still continue mixed up with the world; but in order for the

Lord to make them to be the companions of his own service, and to fit them for carrying out His own objects, He must call them away. But they have got a father: what is to be done? No matter; the call of Christ is paramount to every other claim. They were casting a net into the sea; and He saith onto them, “Follow me.” But they might have caught ever so much fish: what of that? “They straightway left their nets and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.” No doubt it was a struggle. They were mending their nets with their father when the Lord called them; but they immediately left their nets and their father, and followed Him. And for this reason. They now knew who Christ was, that He was the Messiah, the blessed object of hope that God had from the beginning promised to the fathers; and now the children had it. He called them. Could they not trust all they had in His hands, and confide in His care for their father? Surely they could. The very same faith which gave them to follow Jesus, not merely as a giver of everlasting life, but as One to whom they now belonged as servants, could enable them to confide all that they had pertaining to them in this world into This keeping. Surely, if the Lord called them, His call must be superior to their natural obligations. This was an extraordinary case. We do not find that persons in general are called to such a work as this; but, it may be, there are occasions where the Lord has those that He summons to serve Him in this special way. How could one be of use to the souls of others, unless one has known somewhat of this trial for one's Own soul? The Lord is presented here as thus forming this godly remnant, for Himself From the very beginning. “Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel.” This was what the Lord was now showing; but it is not all. “Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness, and all manner of diseases among the people. And his fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought unto him all manner of sick people, that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy, and he healed them.” Now, mark; you get nowhere, except in Matthew, such a series of the Lord's works and teaching compressed into a couple of verses. In Matthew they are crowned into a cluster, before we have the teaching commonly called the sermon on the mount. Why do we have the ordinary current of the Lord's ministry brought before us here in this comprehensive form? The gospel of Matthew is intended to show that, after the Lord had called these disciples, you have His general service given for the purpose of proving the universal attention that was drawn to His doctrine, The Lord had been giving a full testimony every where through all Syria. Persons had been brought from every quarter; and the Holy Ghost then gives us the grand outline, that follows, of the kingdom of heaven. The circumstances are so arranged by the Holy Ghost as to show the universal attention directed to it. When all are on tip-toe to understand about the kingdom of heaven, then the Lord unfolds it. Matthew knew perfectly well that the sermon on the mount was really uttered long after. He heard it himself. Yet Matthew's own call is not given till chapter ix. It was subsequently to the call of the twelve disciples that our Lord took His place upon the mountain; but Matthew records it long before. The object is to show, not the time when our Lord uttered this discourse, but the fact itself. There were first, all these mighty deeds that were witnesses to His being the true Messiah; and then we have His doctrine perfectly brought out. The sermon on the mount need not be considered, historically, as one continuous discourse, but may have been uttered at different times. It is nowhere said that it was all uttered at the same occasion. We have only the general fact that there He was upon the mount, and there He taught the people. It may have been broken up into several discourses, with the circumstances giving rise to this part or that omitted in Matthew. The human mind compares these things together, and finding that in Luke different portions of it are given to us at different times, while in Matthew all is given together, instead of confiding in the certainty that God is right, jumps at once to the conclusion that there is confusion in these scriptures. There is really perfection. It is the Holy Ghost shaping all according to the object that He has in view.

Another time I hope, if the Lord will, to enter carefully into this most blessed discourse of our Lord's, to show its grand importance in itself, and its appropriateness in Matthew, where alone you have it so fully. In Mark it is not given at all, in Luke only in detached fragments, in Matthew as a whole. But now I merely commend to you the subject we have been looking at, trusting that the general remarks which have been made may prove an incentive to further and prayerful examination. May the hints thrown out help some to a more profitable reading of God's word, and more intelligent entering into His mind, besides giving a key to difficulties in the gospels.

Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 4:1-11, Remarks on

There are two things that we may notice before our Lord is tempted of the devil. The first is, that He is most emphatically recognized as the Son of God by His Father; secondly, that He is anointed as man by the Holy Ghost. Now a similar thing is true of the believer, of course in an inferior way. Still, the believer is owned as a son of God, and has the Spirit of God given to him before he becomes the proper object of the enemy's temptations. And this is an important thing to bear in mind—that, strictly speaking, the relation which the sinner bears to the enemy is not as subject to be tempted. He is a captive: he is led by the devil at his will. This is a very distinct thing from temptation; for it supposes a person thoroughly under the power of Satan. We are tempted, when we are out of the enemy's power, and because we are sons of God. Thus you see all men have to do with Satan in one way or another. The mass of mankind are his slaves; but those delivered by the power of God, those who, by grace, are God's children, become the objects of his assault in the way of temptation. It is not so much his power that such have to dread; for when the soul has received Jesus, Satan's power is really null and void; it is completely broken for the believer. And therefore it is that we are warned rather against his wiles. In certain cases there may be the suffering from his fiery darts; but even this is not his power, which is nothing to the believer, while he is looking to Christ: he has only to resist, and the devil will flee from him. If he had really power, it is clear that Satan would not flee. But he has none. He has lost it as regards the soul that has received Christ. But then, while to faith the power of Satan is a thing destroyed in the cross of Jesus, his wiles are a very serious matter; and we ought not to be ignorant of his devices. Now God has been graciously pleased to give us his manner of dealing with our blessed Lord. And that this is intended for our use, and the great pattern and principle of the temptations of Satan, at any time, is clear from many obvious and weighty considerations.

Besides, we know from the Gospel of Luke that, in the case of our Lord, there was a very long-continued temptation of Satan of which we have no details. We are only told the fact that Jesus was tempted of the devil during forty days. But the great temptations, which the Holy Ghost has been pleased to record for us, are those that took place at the end of the forty days. May we not gather hence, that in the temptation of our Lord there were two parts—first, that not common to man, but peculiar to our Lord? For we are subject to no such circumstances as being driven into the wilderness for forty days. But, secondly, we are exposed to such as are given us at the close. The Lord, therefore, casts a veil over the first, and discloses carefully what, in principle, every child of God may be tempted by some time or another. We shall see that these three temptations, presented by Matthew and Luke in a different order, give us an admirable insight into the ways of Satan when he thus assails the children of God. But it is exceedingly sweet to see, that, before Satan is allowed to tempt at all, the blessedness of the Son's

recognition by the Father is most fully brought out. And, indeed, it is something akin which renders anyone obnoxious to the hatred of Satan. The enemy is well aware when God converts and quickens a soul hitherto dead in trespasses and sins; and at once he is prepared with his temptations. They need not, of course, come in the same order as our Lord's; but they are, more or less, of a similar character with those which are revealed.

It is clear that the first temptation grew out of our Lord's actual circumstances. He had been all this time in the wilderness without food, and at the end of the forty days He was an hungered. When Moses was without food on the mount for the same time, he was with God, and miraculously sustained. But the wonderful thing here is, that the time was spent with the enemy. None had ever been so, or will be so again. To be all that while in presence of Satan, dependent on God, was the greatest moral honor, though the severest trial, that man had ever passed through. Throughout, the Lord is seen as Son of man, though also as Son of God.

The introductory notice shows us that temptation was going on all the time our Lord was in the wilderness. “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness, to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungered. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.” Whatever may be the aim of Satan, this is one main part of his tactics—he insinuates a doubt, a doubt of our own relationship with God. “If thou be the Son of God.” Now, search the word of God as you may, never will you find his Spirit leading a soul to doubt. Nor can anything, indeed, be more opposed to His way than sanctioning mistrust of God. And it shows the exceeding subtlety of Satan, that he has actually made the children of God themselves to be his instruments, not only by permitting doubts in themselves, but helping to raise them in others, often in the mistaken plea, that not to be confident with God is a sign of humility, and of a desire to be lowly! But faith says, “We are always confident.” Not that we are to shrink from self-examination: we do find this pressed in Scripture. Thus, in 1 Cor. 11. the believers are evidently exhorted to examine themselves, but not with any idea of producing doubt. On the contrary— “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat;” for the question was about the Lord's Supper. If the right thing were hesitation, it would have been, “let him not eat,” if he does, not find himself as he ought. But supposing he finds that which is wrong within, is he not to eat. Surely he is to look up to his Savior, and cast himself upon that grace which never can fail. To think that there was no resource would be indeed to dishonor Christ, and to deny His truth and love. “My grace is sufficient for thee: my strength is made perfect in weakness.” Such is the word of the Lord. On the strength of His grace, the believer is to examine himself in the thought of going to the table of the Lord. It is not a question whether he is to go or stay away: I do not find this in Scripture. Nor do I find, on the other hand, that, because I am a Christian, it is no matter what state I may be in spiritually. But a man is to examine himself, and so to eat. He is sure to find that which calls for humiliation. It is important for a soul to draw near to God, and to have his light cast upon all that is there. This will give ground for humbling oneself, but never for staying away. Such is what the spirit of God lays down as a general rule for the Lord's Supper. Of course, I am not speaking now of cases of open sin, where the vindication of the Lord's glory is required. These suppose a man's walking in sin, and not examining himself. But I am speaking now of the ordinary walk of the child of God; and what we read there is careful inquiry as to what he finds within himself—but “so let him eat.”

“If thou be the Son of God.” Our Lord did not look like it. There was nothing of such a character outwardly as to carry necessary demonstration and beat down all question. If it had been so, there would have been no room left for faith at all. Satan takes advantage of the lowliness of our Lord in the place that He took as man. And, indeed, nothing could be more singular than His being found in the wilderness, and, as we read in Mark, with the wild beasts. if He were really the Son of God, Maker of heaven and earth, what a place to be in and led there by the Spirit, after the Father had spoken from heaven and acknowledged Him to be his beloved Son But so it was. And so it is now, in a lower sense, with the children of God. For no matter how much blessed they may be of God, or how truly owned as His sons, and having His Spirit dwelling within them, they also in their measure have their wilderness. “As my Father hath sent me into the world, even so send I you into the world.” Not into some pleasant place where there is no room for trial, but the very contrary. Because we belong to God and to heaven, because we have the Holy Ghost sealing its unto the day of redemption, we have to encounter Satan, but with the certainty that his power is broken, and that his wiles are what we have to resist. This questioning the relationship of Christ with God shows how truly Satan was at work. But the Lord does not pronounce him tube Satan, until open rebellion is manifested against God. When it is mere subtlety, He does not call him Satan. There are two ways in which the enemy is described in Scripture. He is called Satan and the devil. The latter is the term which implies his accusing character and also his wiles; the former refer to his power as adversary.

We must wait, even when we suspect it is the power of Satan at work, before we pronounce it absolutely. For if there is such a thing as the devil tempting, “God also puts a soul to the test, and this may be very sharp. Moreover, even God Himself does not act till a thing is manifest. He shows patience wonderful and most contrary to the haste of man. He comes down to see whether the evil is so great, as in the case of Adam or of Sodom and Gomorrah. But it always remains true, that whatever God may be in other things, quick as He is to hear the cry of His own in sorrow, He is exceedingly slow to judge; and there is nothing that more marks the knowledge of Christ practically and the effect of it in our own souls, than where the same thing is made true in us. Hastiness to judge is man's way, in proportion to his want of grace, because it is not a question of knowledge but of love that lingers over another, unwilling to pronounce till every hope is gone. There might still be hesitation. The rising in the flesh. which looked so threatening, might turn out after all to be only on the surface, and not deep-seated. So here we see patience, even in our Lord's dealing with the adversary. It is only when he thoroughly makes manifest what he is, that the Lord Himself calls Min Satan. Only when he demands the worship due to God alone, does our Lord say, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” Then Satan instantly flees. But the Lord lets him thoroughly discover himself first. This was divinely wise. Because, although the Lord knew him to be Satan all the time, what pattern would this be for us? The Lord is here the blessed man in the presence of Satan, showing us how we have to carry ourselves in the temptations that come upon us as saints of God.

And allow me to say another word with regard to temptation. In the sense we have it here, it is entirely from without. Our Lord never knew what it was to be tempted from within. He was “in all points tempted like as we are.” But the Holy Ghost qualifies this by adding, “Yet without sin.” It was not merely that He did not yield to sin, but He never had the principle of it—never the least feeling of any thought or wish contrary to God. He never knew sin. It is there that we so differ. We have cause of deep humiliation sometimes, because, besides having to do with the devil without, we have got also an evil nature within, what Scripture calls the flesh, i.e., self, the spring of insubordination and of enmity against God. It is the fountain of unloving, willful, ungodly desires in us; that which naturally never seeks God's will, save only in a spirit of fear; that which says, What will become of our souls if we do it not, but never seeks it as that which is loved, till we are born of God? Even afterward the same wicked principle is still there; but we have a new life implanted of God in our souls, which delights in His will.

But although the temptations of our Lord, which we have here, were from without, still Satan adapted them to the circumstances in which our Lord then stood. He had been forty days without food, and the first word, therefore, of the tempter is, “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Our Lord refers to the chapter of Deuteronomy, that alludes to the manna, the daily food of Israel, which involved dependence upon God, and showed that Israel did not need the resources of the world to sustain them. They did not require some rich country to supply them out of its abundant harvest; neither did they depend upon gold and silver. Israel, before they had a land to cultivate and the means of gathering from it, were taught alone with God. In the wilderness, where He had brought them out as His first-born son, He puts them to the proof; and the way of it was, whether they were content with God and with the fare that God provided for them day by day. Alas! they were not.

Here the scene is entirely changed. It is a man in the wilderness, but Satan is there, and not God. In spirit He ever dwelt with His Father; for even when on earth he was “the Son of man which is in heaven.” He combined thus two things in His own person. Day by day there He was, the man dependent upon God for everything. And this was the first great temptation of the devil; the appeal to His earthly natural wants. It was no sin to be hungry; but it would have been a sin to have distrusted God because of the desert place. Did not God know that there was no bread there? and was it not his Spirit who had led Him there? Had God told Him to leave the wilderness, or to make the stones into bread? He would not use His own power, independently of the word of God. And it is the constant mark of the way in which the Holy Ghost energizes in the children of God, that they do not use miraculous power for themselves, nor for their friends. if we look at it in the New Testament, we find Paul working miracles and using the power of God to heal the sick around. But was it ever used for his own circle? On the contrary, Paul leaves Trophimus sick at Miletus, and shows about him all the anxiety of one who might never have had power to heal the body. When Epaphroditus was sick, we see the exercise of a faith which knew that the will of God, and acquiescence in it, was worth a thousand miracles. Miracles had not in themselves the high character of exercising the soul in dependence upon God. To obey God, to submit to Him, to have confidence in Inn, is that which human nature is incapable of. Power alone never reaches so high. Therefore, in the case of our Lord Himself, we never find that He puts His works of might on a level with obedience. Nay, He even speaks of His disciples as those who should do greater works than He Himself had done. Great as had been His own works, He makes known to the disciples themselves that they were to do greater. But obedience was what characterized Christ: this never was found in a mere child of Adam. Here, in the face of Satan, our Lord finds His strength, not in mere miracles, or in any provision that He might have made for Himself, but in the word of God. Hunger might have legitimate wants, but here He was tried in presence of Satan, and He will not step out of the trial, till it is over; He will not shift His circumstances or lift one finger for Himself; He waits upon God. “Man shall not live,” He answers, “by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” It was God's word that had led Him there, for the Holy Ghost always acts by this. He would not leave the wilderness till God Himself intimated as much to Him. This completely set aside Satan's temptations. But more: it brought out the real secret of living in dependence upon God day by day. For it is not a question here of imparting divine life, but of how we live when we have received it; and the food of the new life is the word of God. Of what immense importance does not this show it is to be growing in the knowledge of the word of God, and having that word as our household bread day by day, not merely reading it as a task, or formal duty, but as it is indeed the divinely suitable provision for the child of God! It is good for every one to study it, because he needs it, because it is in every way for the good of the soul day by day to read it intelligently, heartily, as those that receive it from God Himself. And God does not give that which the heart of man cannot take in, but what is adapted to our daily wants. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”

This, then, is the answer of our Lord to the first temptation. Why should He turn the stones into bread? He hung upon God's word; His Father had not told him to do it; He could wait. So should it ever be with us. Where we have no clear expression of the mind of God, it is always our place to wait till we have. Sometimes it will show our weakness that we do not know the mind of God, and this is distasteful to us. Restlessness would like to go somewhere or do something? but this is not faith. Faith shows itself in waiting for God to manifest His will.

The next temptation was not a personal one, but connected with religion, us the first had been in respect of bodily wants. We shall find that the order is different in Luke. But here, the second temptation mentioned, is what I may call the religious temptation. The Lord had said that man should “live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” The devil then takes Him up into the holy city, sets Him upon a pinnacle of the temple, and founds his temptation upon that very point in our Lord's answer—the word of God. He says, as it were, Here is a word of God for you: “He shall give his angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.” Very true. It was God's word, and evidently spoken of the Messiah. But what was Satan using it for? He says, “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, &c.” That was making a move without God—doing something by oneself. Scripture did not say, Cast thyself down, because God has given His angels charge concerning thee, lest thou shouldst dash thy foot against a stone. The Lord would not turn aside from Scripture, because Satan had misused it. He shows us, in the most instructive way, that we are not to be moved from our stronghold because it may be turned against us. Our Lord does not enter into nice distinctions, nor analyze what Satan had said, but He has given us that which ought to be, if I may so say, the standard mode of dealing for every Christian man. There are those who might have spiritual discrimination to see that Satan was perverting the Scripture which he quoted; but many might not. The Lord takes a broad ground in dealing with the adversary. he stands upon what each Christian should know and feel, and this is, “It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” He cites a plain positive word of God which Satan was destroying by the use he made of Psa. 91. Now that is the strength of a believer who may have to do with one that reasons subtlety from Scripture. “It is written again.” He can appeal to that which is palpable and clear. It will be found that, where a person systematically misapplies Scripture, he destroys some fundamental principle of the word of God. Whatever is false is contrary to some plain passage of Scripture. Now this is a great mercy. The believer holds fast to what is sure: he will not quit what he does understand for something that he does not. He may be perplexed by what the adversary is producing and may only have a sort of suspicion that he is wrong. But he may say to himself, I never can give up what is beyond a doubt for that which I do not know. In other words, he holds the light and refuses the darkness.

It is thus, it seems to me, our Lord deals with Satan. He could at once have set him aside on grounds of reasoning and have shown the perverted end to which Satan was applying Scripture; but He rather deals with him on moral grounds, which every Christian is capable of judging. Do I find a scripture used for the purpose of making one disobey God? At once I take my stand on, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” What is meant by this? I am never to doubt the Lord will be for me. If I do anything to prove Him, to see whether He will be for me, this is at once unbelief and disobedience. It is an allusion to Israel's history again and another quotation from the book of Deuteronomy. Indeed our Lord quotes every answer to the temptations, as has been long ago remarked, from the book of Deuteronomy. You will find in Ex. 17 that the Israelites tempted the Lord by asking, is He among us or not? That does not mean that they provoked him by idolatry or refusal to do His

will. It is not a question there of open sin, but of unbelief of His goodness and presence—unbelief, in a word, of God's being for us. This is exactly what our Lord pleads. Cast myself down in order to find that the Scripture is true and that the angels will bear me up! I do not need to do such a thing. I am very certain that, if I were cast down, the angels would be there to sustain me. If you have a person whom you suspect of dishonesty on your premises, you may perhaps be disposed to test him in some way or other. But who would think of testing one that he had full confidence in? Now that is exactly the meaning of our Lord's answer. “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.” His soul resented the idea of trying God, to see whether He would sustain Him. God might try Him; Satan might put Him to the test; but as to His tempting the Lord, as if the Lord his God required to be put to the proof, whether He would be true to His word—away with such a thing!—He would not hear of it for a moment. The Lord still insists upon this—perfect confidence in God. Such is the full expression of it.

This temptation, which is the second in Matthew, Luke gives as the third. Why is this? Surely we ought not to read Scripture as if such differences were not intended to suggest inquiry. We have to take care that we do not misinterpret Scripture; but Scripture is meant to be understood. I say of these different orders in which the temptations are put, both are right, both are inspired of God. If they were both intended to give the temptation exactly as it took place, it is clear they are not right, but God had a much higher object. God wrote for out instruction, caul God has been pleased, in the different gospels, to put the facts in the way that is most instructive. Matthew simply gives the temptation. historically, as it took place. Therefore in Matthew we have notes of time. “Then the devil taketh him up,” &c. In Luke there is no such thought; it is simply “and the devil,” &c. This word at once prepares us for it. It is clear, there were these different temptations, but Luke puts them so as not to tell us the order in which they occurred. This is a general remark, true of the whole Gospel of Luke, that he habitually departs from the niece order of fact, to give an arrangement suited to the design which he had in view. As a whole, the Gospel of Luke is characterized by putting the facts of our Lord's life in an order that suited the doctrine He was teaching. Thus you will find in Luke, that even the genealogy of our Lord is not given in its regular place; there is a departure from the mere natural series, and there is, instead, a moral order. Take the case of the Lord's prayer: Luke puts that in a totally different place from Matthew, who gives it in the grand discourse commonly called the sermon on the mount; and, as prayer formed a most important part of the new principles the Lord was bringing out, so it formed one of the grand subjects of the Lord's discourse. Luke reserves that prayer till chapter xi., because our Lord is showing us there the grand means of spiritual life, how it is to be kept up and sustained in the soul. And he shows us this from the history of Martha and Mary. (Chap. 10) Why was it that Jesus approved of the path and walk of Mary rather than of Martha? It is not that He did not love them all, nor was it that Martha was not fall of personal love to the Savior, and that her heart was not true to Him. But there was an immense difference between them. What and why was it? Luke gives us the moral difference. When Martha was all busied with what she could do for the Lord, to show her love to Him, Mary was occupied with the Lord Himself—seated at His feet, listening to His word. The one was full of what she could do for Christ; the other, full of Christ Himself, and nothing that she could do was of the smallest consequence in her eyes, compared with Christ Himself. Thus we find, in another instance, Mary breaking the alabaster box to anoint the feet of Jesus, an action little accounted for by others; yet what she has done, should be recorded throughout the whole world. Our Lord brings out in Luke this great point—the word of God, the waiting upon Jesus, being the first great means of strengthening the new and spiritual life; and, therefore, immediately after this account of these sisters, you have the request of the disciples to be taught how to pray. It really took place long before; but they are put together in that special form by Luke in order to show the connection of the word of God with prayer.

So in the temptation, Luke departs from the order of fact and gives us the moral sequence. Matthew simply names events as they took place. Luke puts them in the order of magnitude, and rises from the natural trial to the worldly one, and then to the religious temptation. For it is perfectly plain that the temptation by the word of God, was much harder for one who valued that word above everything, than that which merely appealed to natural wants or to worldly ambition. Therefore, Luke keeps this temptation to the last. In Matthew it is not so, but we have, in the third place, the temptation by the world. “Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and showeth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.” Here at once the devil was manifest. The very idea of presenting any object of obeisance and worship between the soul and God, was at once to detect that he was either the devil himself or an instrument of the devil. The Lord, therefore, at once pronounces him “Satan.” “Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.” If it had been an apostle, it would have been just the same. If such an one had been so completely led away as to hint such a thing, the Lord would have said “Satan” all the same. Is not this most solemn for us in dealing with Christians even, who may have become for the time the instrument of Satan? The Lord did not hesitate on one occasion to say “Satan” to Peter himself, and yet he was the chief of the twelve; the first in dignity among the apostles of the Lamb. And yet our Lord Himself, after He had put more honor upon Peter, and given him a new name, does not hesitate to say “Satan,” as much to Peter as to the enemy himself. All this brings out an important principle for our own ways in having to do even with a child of God.

In answering the third and last temptation, our Lord still confines Himself to the book of Deuteronomy. Why? Because Deuteronomy is the book that regards Israel after they had completely failed under the law, and when God brings in the new principle of grace, and shows not the mere righteousness of the law, but that which is of faith. This is the reason why the Apostle Paul also quotes from Deuteronomy, for the same purpose. It is the book that indicates the place of obedience, when it is no longer a mere question of observance under the law. The Lord Jesus is here taking that very place. He is not showing what He could have done as a divine person. As such, He would have taken ground where we could not follow Him. But throughout this temptation He takes the posture that becomes us, and all that desire to follow Him. The only thing right and becoming for a godly man, in meeting temptations, is the ground of the obedience of faith; one who stands in the confidence of what God is in His goodness. The Lord would on no account swerve from what was the due and comely place for a godly man in Israel. If a person was godly, his place was to confess and to be baptized with the baptism of repentance. Our Lord at once finds Himself with such, though in His case it was the fulfilling of righteousness; while with us it is the acknowledgment of sin. He who alone could have taken His stand upon legal righteousness, takes it as in every way vindicating God, not upon the mere righteousness of man. Satan may put temptation before Him in every form; but it is of no use. His only care is to vindicate God, and never to arrogate anything to Himself.

I believe that the principles brought before us in this chapter are of the greatest possible importance for the children of God. The few remarks I have made may help to direct souls to the value, practically, of these temptations of our Lord for guidance in our own path. I therefore commend the whole subject to the attention of the reader, as one that, although it may have come before us many a time, and we may have often meditated upon the practical value of it, may still claim our thought, and our prayerful study.

Bible Treasury: Volume N8, Enduring Temptation and Entering Into Temptation

James 1:2, 12; Matthew 26:41

There is manifestly a vast difference between “falling into temptation,” or “enduring temptation” (James 1:2, 12), on the one hand, and “entering into temptation” (Matt. 26:41), on the other. We do well therefore to have it clear and settled in our souls; for, as the one is blessed, the other is the utmost possible danger for the soul. There is nothing more strengthening than to “endure temptation”; nothing more perilous than to “enter into” it. There seems little difference in the words, and people might easily slur over the difference in their thought. But the difference is complete; for in the one case it is an honor that God puts upon us, and in the other a snare that Satan presents to us.

Which or these two things do we know best? How far do our souls that are here round the table of the Lord Jesus know what it is to fall into divers temptations, or to endure temptation?

For blessed are we if we do. Falling into temptation, or enduring it, is that which God delights in. In Gen. 22 we find that Abraham was in a condition in which God could try him; and He loves that we should be in such a condition that He can try us. But this is not so when we are not governed by the sense of the presence of God, as well as happy in Him. It is not so where flesh is not judged. Are we then brought to this point in the ways of God? For it is this that He looks for from every saint of His. Are we then brought into communion with the Father and His Son in our Lord Jesus (1 John 1)? Have we not the same Savior, and the same salvation of God?

Still, in Christ salvation is not merely an incomparable favor such as God has shown to us in the depths of our need, but it is also assuredly inseparable from the dealing with self in the presence of God; so much so, that where this is not learned at the beginning it must be more painfully taught in the course. And then what dishonor to God! how grieving to His Spirit! Such failure, to teach us what we are, is not enduring temptation, nor is it in the least the same as God’s trying us. In such a state the Lord has rather to buffet us for our faults, as those who bear the name of the Lord Jesus after an un-comely sort.

How grievous that those who have in the Savior such a salvation, based on the utter judgment of the flesh, should so little have used it to deal with self, the most hateful of all things to God; for so one need not hesitate to call it. I admit there is a greater daringness and pride and subtlety in Satan; but it seems to me that for that which is low and base and mean, there is nothing so had as self; and yet this is the very thing that every one of us carries with us. The question now is, How far has grace acted upon our souls to lead us to judge it out and out in the presence of God? Where this is the case, the Lord can try us; that is, He can put us to the proof by what is not at all a question of evil of any kind, because God does not tempt by evil any more than He is tempted by evil things.

When God then was pleased to ask Abraham to give up his only son, this was in no wise evil, but a most blessed trial. It was proving whether Abraham had such perfect confidence in God that he would give up the object that was dearest to him, in whom were centered all the promises of God. And by grace Abraham could. Of course he did it with the perfect certainty that, if Isaac were then to die, God would raise him up; for Abraham perfectly well knew, before the sacrifice was asked, that Isaac was to be the child of promise; and he knew that it was to be that Isaac and nobody else—not another son—so that he was certain, if Isaac were offered up, God would raise him again from the dead. It was therefore really the good of God’s own heart that was reflected in what He asked of Abraham’s heart; and Abraham was brought into greater communion with God in that which was in its measure the counterpart of the gift of His own Son.

Just so is it with the trials that God is pleased to try us by, speaking now not of our had trials, but of our good ones; not of such sorrows as Lot passed through, but of those like Abraham’s. It is a proof of the greatest confidence on God’s part if there is in us such a groundwork of walking before God, and in the consciousness of His presence, that He can try us with something that is like Himself—some prize to give up, some suffering to endure in grace—whatever it may be that is according to His own mind. It is in this sense that temptation is spoken of in James 1:2, 12.

After this (vers. 13-15) we immediately turn to temptation spoken of in a had sense, and this connects itself with the verse I read in Matt. 26 I shall not dwell long upon either, though both are words of most salutary character for our souls. The Lord had looked for His disciples to watch with Him. Alas! He had not found it. And the Lord had gone Himself alone, and had prayed to His Father in deepest suffering. Then He comes back to the disciples, and, finding them sleeping, He says to Peter, “What, could ye not watch with me one hour?” No, they could not watch with Him one hour! The spirit was willing, but the flesh was weak.

Nov it would be very unworthy for us to take this as an excuse for our own failure; this would be reading scripture to the positive injury of our souls and the dishonor of God; yet I am afraid there are many who do so. But we must remember there is this difference between our standing now, and that of the disciples. Flesh had not been thoroughly exposed and judged at that time; it was before the cross of Christ, and so before the Holy Ghost was given. There was divine life, but divine life, in itself, always goes in weakness.

It is the Holy Ghost that acts in power; and you never can have power without Him. But we are always responsible for the power of the Holy Ghost, because He is given to the believer, and forever abides in him. This time was not yet come; but the Lord does say in view of it, as well as of the state in which they then were, “Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” For remember this, it is not any power conferred by the Spirit of God that keeps, even though He be the Spirit of power—it is not energy in this or that which keeps, but dependence; it is the sense of weakness that watches and prays, and thus has the power of Christ resting on us. His strength made perfect in weakness.

There is nothing that so tends, where it is severed from Christ, to destroy dependence, as a large knowledge of the word of God. And that is where our danger lies. The greater our knowledge of the word of God, where it is separated from the sense of utter weakness, and consequently from the need of watching and praying, the greater the danger. This is a solemn warning for our souls. There is no doubt plenty of knowledge of Scripture, and of what is called intelligence of truth; but do our souls keep up this sense of our need and weakness, and the expression of it to God? “Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.”

What does our Lord mean by “entering into temptation”? The will that goes into a scene where nothing but a judged will in one who goes at the bidding of God and leaning on Him can be kept; that is, the will goes in where failure is inevitable, just because it is will at work. So Peter himself soon proved. He went where Peter could not stand, unless the Lord had called and kept him by faith. He entered into temptation. He did not suffer. There was no such thing as enduring temptation; but he entered into it, and fell.

And let me just say that it is all well in the midst of the saints of God to confess our Lord Jesus Christ; but it is not so easy to confess Him truly and humbly where, instead of saints sympathizing with us, shame and contempt, or death even, may be the consequence, as in Peter's case. He would have endured, had he gone in by grace, obedience, watching and praying, instead of trusting in his own willingness to go to prison or even to die for his Master. When our Lord says, "The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak," He is looking at nature in man; and nature is incapable of such a trial. None but God can sustain, and therefore it would require God's will expressed in His word to lead us rightly into such a scene of temptation, and His grace sustaining in faith to keep us in it; otherwise it would be but our own will, and we should fall. It would have been an abomination in Abraham to sacrifice his son, unless God had spoken the word. But faith, where self is judged, strengthens the soul to endure temptation. One enters not into temptation where one abides in dependence and self-judgment. Then when we fall into various temptations, we count it all joy; and as we did not enter of our own will, so we do not fall in them, but by grace endure.

The Lord give us to watch and pray, so much the more because He has blessed us with such a knowledge of His word and of Himself in the Lord Jesus Christ.

W. K.

Bible Treasury: Volume 15, Peter's Denial of the Lord

Flesh in the saint is no better than in any other man. Peter did not know this more than most do now. He did not believe our Lord's warning: if he had, he had not entered into temptation, but would have watched, prayed, and been kept through faith. He must therefore by bitter experience learn what the flesh is, as the word was not mixed with faith in his soul when the Lord warned him so solemnly. He was confident in himself. It was not the vulgar confidence of an unbeliever, no doubt; but still it was confidence built on his own estimate of what his love for Jesus would enable him to do or bear. And this it was which, as it is an illusive and mischievous egoism, grace must expose, as it does pardon, and would turn to profit and blessing, not only to Peter, but to his brethren through him. For now and thus he was humbled and had learned what man is on the one hand, and what God is on the other. If Peter was to be used of the Lord more than all, it was meet that he should more than any learn experimentally his more than nothingness.

The other disciples forsook the Lord and fled. John slipped in, as an acquaintance of the high priest's. Peter followed afar off. Wherefore this? Asleep when called to watch and pray, he awoke to draw the sword and strike, all-through out of communion with the adorable Master. If, bolder than the rest, he ventured into the circle of those who smote the Lord, it was only to sink lower than any and to dishonor Him by a denial which a few hours before seemed to him impossible, by a repeated denial with imprecations and oaths. Only Judas went farther in iniquity. Jesus alone shone in perfection; yet never was His shame and humiliation more complete, save when He hang on the cross, rejected of Bits people, despised of men, and forsaken of God. It was sin on man's part, and for sin on God's: what a climax of reality for both, as the believer knows, in Christ the Lord!

There and then it was that Peter heard a cock crow twice immediately after he denied his Master thrice. How insignificant such a sound ordinarily!!Then how pregnant with the deepest consequence, not to the penitent apostle only, but to his brethren whom he soon began to strengthen, and to the multitudes whom he was honored of God in bringing by the word he preached, out of darkness into His marvelous light! But it was the Lord's look upon Peter, and the remembrance of His words, which gave it all the force that wrought in conscience and heart, the look and words of the Savior brought home by the Holy Spirit where there was life God-ward. But alas! flesh had shrouded all and the believer; having slept, had cursed and sworn as if he never knew the Master! Now in bitter grief he learns himself humiliatingly, and what the world is in its highest religious pretensions; yet what would all else have been, had he not learned the grace of Christ and His moral glory, and God Himself in the cross of Christ and the purpose and ways of redeeming love?

But in that light grace gave Peter to discern the worthlessness of the flesh alike in its weakness and in its energy, in its unbounded self-confidence and in its dastardly fear and falsehood. Yet was he a saint, thoroughly sincere and most truly loving the Lord; but a saint not yet broken before God, with self but little judged, who slighted really if unwillingly His word and neglected prayer and so entered into temptation, instead of being upheld in the dependence of conscious weakness and the power of faith by grace. But Peter (brought down in self-judgment to own that, far from boasting of his love for Christ more than any, only omniscience could know that he dearly loved Him) is then fully re-instated in what might otherwise have seemed forfeited forever, and hears the blessed Lord in the presence of the brethren committing to His care His beloved sheep and lambs, mid promising that he should in very deed be enabled at length to go to prison and death, yea the cross itself, for Christ's sake. Grace thus ensured to him when old and weak all that which in his natural vigor he, a saint withal, had failed in so foully, and with every possible aggravation of dishonor to his Lord.

Now we are told that the accounts exhibit discrepancies, but these, it is said apologetically, owing to the disciples' perturbation of mind! Let us read them: here they are—

Mark 14

"And Peter from afar off followed him, even within, into the court of the high priest, and was sitting with the officials and warming himself at the [fire] light" (St). "And as Peter was below in the court, there cometh one of the maids of the high priest, and seeing Peter warming himself, she looked on him and saith, Thou also wast with the Nazarene, Jesus. But he denied, saying, I know not [him], nor understand what thou sayest. And he went out into the fore-court, and a cock crew. And the maid seeing him again began to say to the bystanders, This is [one] of them. And he again kept denying. And after a little again the bystanders were saying to Peter, Truly thou art [one] of them, for also thou art a Galilean. But he began to curse and to swear, I know not this man of whom you speak. And immediately a second time a cock crew. And Peter recalled to mind the word, how Jesus said to him, Before a cock crow twice, thou wilt thrice deny me. And as he thought thereon he kept weeping" (66-72).

John 18

"But Simon Peter followed Jesus, and the other disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the court of the high priest; but Peter was standing at the door without. The other disciple therefore, that was known to the high priest, went out and

spoke to the portress, and brought in Peter. The maid, the portress, saith therefore to Peter, Art thou also one of this man's disciples? He saith, I am not. Now the bond-men and the officials, having made a fire of charcoal (for it was cold), were standing and warming themselves; and Peter was standing with them and warming himself" (15-18). "Now Simon Peter was standing and warming himself. They said therefore to him, Art thou also [one] of his disciples? He denied and said, I am not. One of the bondmen of the high priest, being a kinsman of him whose ear Peter cut off, saith, Did not I see thee in the garden with him? Again therefore Peter denied, and immediately a cock crew" (25-27).

Matthew 26

"But Peter followed him from afar off unto the court of the high priest, and entering in was sitting with the officials to see the end" (58) "Now Peter was sitting without in the court, and a maid came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus, the Galilean. But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest. And when he went out into the porch, another [maid] saw him and saith to those there, This [man] also was with Jesus the Nazarene. And again he denied with an oath, I know not the man. And after a little those that stood came up and said to Peter, Truly thou also art [one] of them, for thy speech too maketh thee manifest. Then he began to curse and to swear, I know not the man. And immediately a cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus as having said, Before a cock crow, thou wilt thrice deny me. And going forth without he wept bitterly" (69-75).

Luke 22

"But Peter followed afar off. And when they lit a fire in the midst of the court, and sat down together, Peter sat amid them. And a certain maid, having seen him sitting at the [fire] light, and looking steadily at him, said, This [man also was with him. But he denied, saying, I know him not, woman. And after a short [while] another saw him and said, Thou also art [one] of them. But Peter said, Man, I am not. And after the lapse of about one hour, another affirmed strongly, saying, Of a truth, this [man] also was with him, for also he is a Galilean. 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 on Peter; and Peter called to mind the word of the Lord, how he said to him, Before a cock crow this day, thou wilt deny me thrice. And going forth without he wept bitterly" (54-62).

1. It will be noticed in this corrected version of the accounts that it is a question of the high priest's "court," not palace, which more properly applies to the governor's residence or Pretorium (Matt. 27; John 18), which no doubt had its court also, as is also intimated in Mark 15:16. In Luke 22:54 the "house" of the high priest is distinguished from the "court" or open yard. Confusion on this head has obscured the truth; for Peter was not where the preliminary inquiry was held, but "without" and "below" in the court-yard. There at the light of the fire the maid that kept the door (John) taxed him with being a disciple of the Nazarene (Matt., Mark). It has been assumed by some that John puts the first denial in the porch or forecourt; but this is quite to overrule the import of ver. 18, which seems to me appended for the special purpose of guarding against such an error, and adds a correction in the characteristic manner of our Evangelist; just as ver. 24 is meant parenthetically to correct the hasty assumption that the first general interrogatory was before Annas to whom Christ was led first; whereas it really was before Caiaphas to whom Annas sent him "bound," though it may probably have been only across the same court. Luke adds the distinct shade that the maid spoke of him, and not only to him.

2. Unbelief, if it cannot torture an additional fact in the first denial into a discrepancy, thinks that there is a plain contradiction in the second denial. For Matthew speaks of another maid, Mark of the same maid as before (the portress of John), Luke of "another" but a "man." To all this however John gives the key with moral certainty by his use of the plural— "they said therefore." For thus he clearly shows, even to a doubter, that what each of the three Synoptists says may be all and equally authentic; as the believer is entitled to accept unreservedly without any such demonstration. The two maids and a man may have taken part in what the fourth Gospel thus sums up. It is plain from Matthew and Mark that the second charge was in presence of several bystanders on the spot, probably the porch or forecourt whither Peter had gone out, and that Peter's denial was then repeated (), and not a single act like the first. (). Is it not then humiliating to find a scholar like Grotius saying, . quomodo articulum interdum sumi certum est? And J. Piscator one of the most learned of the early Protestant commentators had said (ed. III. iii. 143) pretty much the same thing before, as others since down to J. G. Rosenmuller, to avoid naming more. But the Greek article is never even pleonastic, neither can it interchange with the indefinite pronoun. The only natural if not necessary reference is to the same maid as before, though we know from Matthew of another maid also, who joined in the same second charge. Prof. Michaelis is represented in Bowyer's Conjectures on the New Testament (Ed. iv. 176) as asking, Is there no MS. where the article is wanting?" To this Dr. H. Owen answers, "No MS. yet known omits the article, nor is it necessary that any should. It is apparent, from their own mode of expression compared with that of John's, that the three first Evangelists never attended to the order; their point being only to assure us, that Peter denies our Savior thrice.

Hence it appears to me that the maid here meant is not the same with her that is mentioned in ver. 67, but the principal maid;" &c. No statement can be more rash and baseless as to the neglect of order here in any one of the Gospels, nor had John any superiority over the rest. And as to MSS. the fact is, that out of the vast sum of N. T. Gr. copies, Lambeth 1179,1 a cursive of the tenth century, is the only manuscript known to omit the article here. But the object is as plain as the misrendering in the Memphitic of Wilkins and the Diez cod. as well as in some of the old Latin copies. The omission therefore must be regarded as a mere slip or, if intended, a fraud; for no sane mind of competent knowledge can question that it is inserted in the genuine readings of the Gospel. Dr. Owen's alternative is even less sound; for there is not the smallest reason to doubt that every one of the Synoptists tallies in the order, and that the points of difference do not clash with the perfect accuracy of each. Fresh facts are in no way an inconsistency.

Not less must one deplore the misguided efforts of Grotius, Wetstein, as to force Luke into a reluctant repetition of the same thing with Matthew, instead of believing what each says. No scholar doubts that not only in poetry but in prose the masc. is used where one might expect fem., if an indefinite expression be desired as in Acts 9:37. The object seems rhetorical. What has such a principle to do with the case before us? Nobody would think of any but a male in 58, were it not taken for granted that the third Gospel states afresh what is in the first; but as we have seen, the second differs, and why not the third also? And to conceive that to the maid Peter says (57), and to "another" or different person he says , and yet means as before a woman is surely a harsh interpretation for most, if not in ambiguous eyes. The true answer is that the language of John describing the second appeal to Peter is such as admits of all three taking part to the same effect.

How painful then to think of sentiments so disparaging to scripture from one who so sincerely sought to understand, explain, and defend it, as Dean Alford in his Commentary (i. 283, ed. 5)— "It would appear to me that, for some reason, John was not so accurately informed of this [the third] as of the other denials." What notions of inspiration a man must have formed to allow himself the use of such language! God is

excluded from the schema, or at least inspiration does not mean His conveying the truth perfectly through chosen instruments. The Holy Spirit who empowered John to write could not but be cognizant of all; and if He undertook to reveal the things of God in words taught of Him, was it left to the precarious will and uncertain mind of the writers employed, or carried out according to His own wisdom? An imperfect standard misleads, so much the more because a standard from God cannot but be accepted and applied with the assurance that it is perfect. That an enemy should impugn the truth of God's word is natural; but if its friends unconsciously yet really undermine its character and authority, by misusing the human channel so as to ignore and deny its exemption from error and the divine purpose which makes it what it is, what can one do but mourn as well as warn? The statement here (and alas! how common it is in our day) assumes that the differences in the Gospels are the effects of man's weakness and want of accurate information, instead of their variety being the fruit of the Spirit's wisdom in each contributing to a fullness of truth the more wonderful in result.

Even if one only considers the accounts of bare facts, it is John who alone tells us of the leading of the Lord before Annas. It is from him we learn that the maid who first charged the apostle was the portress, and that it was through the other disciple that Peter was let in to the scene of his fail. It is to him we owe the remarkable link which reconciles at one stroke in the simplest and surest way the diverging accounts of the three Synoptists as to the second denial. And he alone lets us know the interesting connection of the slave, wounded of Peter and healed of Christ, with him who was the most pointed of those who drew out the third and most aggravated denial. And this, even on human grounds, is the one who “was not so accurately informed!” Never were accounts so evidently above the just imputation of one copying another; never was harmony demonstrably more perfect, without hiding or diminishing but fully unfolding the difference, of each succeeding account. Nor can any fact be more triumphantly apparent, notwithstanding discrepancies to the superficial glance, than their really consenting testimony, the more minutely investigated the better, to the full truth of the story as a whole.

Matthew and Mark alone name Peter's going out into the porch or fore-court. How weak and absurd, not to say irreverent, is the reasoning that John does not seem possessed of this detail, which Luke mentions no more than he! Mark speaks twice of Peter's “warming himself,” as John twice of his “standing and warming himself;” but how does it demonstrate that Matthew and Luke knew not this detail?

II. But let me now proceed to draw out the indications that the characteristic manner, in which each of these inspired accounts differs from the rest, has its peculiarity impressed on it by God to serve His distinctive aim, no less than as a whole, without which, it may be added, we could not have the truth as now.

1. In the first Gospel the Spirit traces the Lord as Emmanuel, Jehovah-Messiah, but rejected of the Jew; and consequently the change of dispensation, which brings in the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and the assembly, but associates the rejected Messiah meanwhile with the despised poor of the flock in Galilee, the pledge of resumed associations with such in the latter day, before the Son of man comes on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Conformably with this, the unquestionable design of the Gospel, we may notice that the account of the denial here brings into prominence Jesus “the Galilean” (69) and “the Nazarene” (71), in the first and second denials, as is implied also of Peter in the third (73). Nor do the other Gospels (save Mark for another reason) so bring out the Messiah disowned by His own disciple before the feeble lips of women, or with such aggravation when others pressed it on the third occasion. Was this coincidence an accident on Matthew's part? or the fruit of the inspiring Spirit's purpose? The last without doubt, the peculiarities of form being due to divine wisdom and truth.

Every one at home in the second Gospel knows how devoted Mark is to unfolding the service of the Son of God here below, and the effect of this governing design on all that is omitted as well as inserted from first to last, inclusive of the closing verses which N B do not exhibit (to the serious detriment of the true conclusion of the book). The total failure of Peter as a servant is drawn out minutely, as Christ's grace toward him shines on to the end so much the more brightly. Here we see as in John his selfishness and his “evil communications” or “company,” and the effect on “good manners.” Here as well as in Luke is mentioned the taunt of his Galilean dialect as fixing an unwelcome association on Peter. Here his failure repeated under the pressure first drew out his shame and fear of confessing Jesus the Nazarene. Here only is noticed the warning of the Lord in its most specific form (14:30), and here too its no less specific fulfillment (68, 72). How gracious of the Master! how base in the servant, only to find His goodness still more abundant! Truly, where sin abounded, grace over-abounded! What a contrast the terms of the third denial with his public preaching shortly, to such as these bystanders, of Jesus as a known Savior and Lord! So is he a self-confident servant to learn of the only Perfect Servant, and by grace become faithful at length. Is all this defect and chance? Or is it divinely purposed? If it can be only of God, learn and cavil not.

In Luke we see the Son of man who is Son of God. Perfectly a man He is, the Man in whom the Father delighted, whose delights were with the sons of men. He is the Mediator between God and man, who came into the world to save sinners, Himself the Pattern not only of all that pleased God in dependence and obedience, but of all grace toward all men, Gentiles no less than Jews. Hence, in approaching the case before us, this Gospel alone tells us of Jesus touching the wounded slave's ear and healing him, though all set forth the disciple's misguided zeal. Luke also finishes the account of Peter's fall before he speaks of the preliminary indignities put on the Lord by the priests and elders with their servants, hastens to the council when it was day, and while fully speaking of Pilate, as the rest do, alone lets us know Herod's part in these scenes of cruel impiety.

A maid's steady look and charge sufficed to scare the bold man who failed to believe the word and watch unto prayer. A man takes up the second charge, leaving John alone, it would seem, and setting on Peter, “Thou also art one of them,” as indeed began the maid who certainly knew John; for we may reject utterly the assumption that the high priest was too great a personage to have the son of Zebedee for an acquaintance. “A mean fisherman” John was not, though Calvin says it (ignobilis erat piscator, Opp. vii. 161, col. i); and even had it been so, how strange to ignore that the proudest may have intimate relations with the lowly for reasons too numerous and patent for a word more to be needed! This notion might justly be called “levis conjecture;” and Heumann's hypothesis of Judas Iscariot is, as Alford remarks, too absurd to deserve confutation. But Luke, as all the rest, only supposes this; John alone tells his own tale of shame, as often without naming but the very reverse of concealing himself. Lastly, another unnamed man taxes Peter stoutly (which only receives its explanation in John's gospel), and, the third denial follows in terms peculiar to Luke and characteristic of him only, who makes “man” so prominent. “While he was yet speaking,” says Luke (another touch of his), “a cock crew.” But there is added a fresh trait, which could be nowhere else so appropriately as in the Gospel which preeminently gives us grace dealing with the heart: “the Lord turned” (for He was in an elevated hall facing His accusers and His back toward Peter in the courtyard), “and looked on Peter, and Peter called” &c. The mind that could conceive these differences to be mistakes, or even thrown by hazard into the Gospels where they are, might consistently imagine the world to be the result of a concourse of atoms And yet Dean Alford is but one of a class of well-meaning men who have so little faith in scripture as to say, without the least thought

of impropriety, that “the trial he (Luke) omits altogether, having found no report of it!” What “report” had he of the agony in Gethsemane, though he alone tells us of an angel appearing to strengthen Him, when His sweat became as great drops of blood? He might have had Matthew's Gospel and Mark's long enough before Him without that of which there could be no reporter; for who of men was there to see or hear? Oh! how grievous is the unbelief of believers.

4. But surely believers are not blind to the divine character of John's presentation of things here as everywhere. Alas! it is not only Dean Alford who, we saw, apologizes for John's lack of accurate information; nor is it only men like Olshansen, Wieseler, Tischendorf, speak of a contradiction! between the Synoptists and John as to the locality of the denial. Living writers of eminence hint at a confusion in our Evangelist's account owing to “the excitement of a popular ferment. Happily inspiration, though it may use, is independent of, sight or hearing as well as report and information. And what evidence of divinely impressed design can be plainer or more conclusive, than that John, nearer to the Lord than any of the Synoptists during His agony, does not relate it; and that, none of these, not even Matthew, tells us how the band all went backward and fell to the ground before Him who was the Son, as surely as Jesus the Nazarene.

It is a pleasure to cite Calvin here, more right than he is sometimes on the difficulties of unbelief: even here one might wish a stronger faith and a deeper reverence. He says (ibid.) that John was not too eager ("curiosus” which Mr. Pringle, in the Edinburgh. Translation Series, was not justified in rendering “very exact") in drawing up the history; because he is satisfied with framing a brief summary. “For after relating that Peter once denied Christ, he intermingles other matters, and then returns to the other two denials. Hence inattentive readers inferred that the first denial took place in Annas' house. No such thing however do the words convey, which rather state clearly that it was the high priest's maid who drove Peter to deny Christ.” And Calvin reads ver. 24 as a parenthesis, correcting the idea that the narrative in 19-23 was of what took place at Annas', and explaining that it was before the high priest, Caiaphas. This is the inattention that led Dean Alford after others to deny the bearing of “sent” in 24; for its quasi-pluperfect force is contextual simply, and is quite notorious in temporal subordinate sentences, and not only in relative but independent sentences if they contain some supplementary notice, which is exactly the fact here.

Annas, the ex-high priest, soon high priest again (for all was out of course), is very briefly introduced to mark how completely the Son of God was rejected. Before, Caiaphas was the interrogator while Peter denied his Master; and the tone is here no more different as compared with the other three Gospels than is always found. There is no solid ground for imagining the portress to have charged Peter immediately after entry. It was really at the fire, as in other Gospels. All is open and general in the account of John And the second denial, so far from being a difficulty, we have seen to be the solution of the difficulties which hasty minds found in the Synoptists; as the third sheds an important light on Luke and indeed all the rest, in the keen asseveration of Malchus kinsman, who with the rest might yet more alarm the guilty apostle's mind. Oh! the sad spectacle of Peter, and even John drawn by his own hand in the power of the Spirit, where Jesus stands alone in the majesty of grace and truth, immeasurably superior to all who presumed to judge Him, where His own who ought to have received Him are manifestly and immensely worse than the most hardened of Gentiles, and seal God's judgment on their infidel declaration that “We have no King but Caesar.” Now which of the Evangelists has the function of bringing this out habitually? John, who here does so above all.

Unbelief then is as inexcusable as it is blind. “By faith we understand.”

Go Ye Out to Meet Him and True Worship: Extracts From the Writings of William Kelly, "Go Ye Out to Meet Him"

"Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him." (Matthew 25:6.)

Let me ask, have you gone out? There were those who not only believed when they heard the cry, but went out. Have you left everything that is contrary to Him? Ask yourselves whether you are ready to meet Him: if so you need not be afraid. Be assured that anything the will of man wants to keep is not worth the pains. It is gain to go out from all to meet Him; it is joy to be in the path of His sorrow. Has this reached your heart? Do not be content with saying, "I have got oil in my vessel, and it does not matter where I am." What more selfish and unholy? The Lord grant that such may not be your feeling!

He has saved me that I might think of Him. He wishes me to go out to meet Him—to value the precious hope of His coming. Do you not know? This is a question between your own conscience and the Lord. When you have kept what you do know, you will learn more and find it the truest liberty to serve Him.

From the writings of William Kelly

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: 11. The Talents

Matt. 25:14-30

THIS is the third of the parables in our Lord’s great prophecy, which are distinctively Christian, as compared with the Jewish section (chap. 24:3-44) and the Gentile that concludes all (chap. 25:31-46). All three contemplate an absent Lord, Who is to return, and Whom His own are to expect. The first embodies the professor in one bondman set over the household, either wise or evil. The second is a likeness of the kingdom of the heavens in virgins, five foolish and five wise, who went forth to meet the Bridegroom. All slumbered, but were awakened at mid night. But they only who had the oil in their vessels, the indwelling Spirit, were there to meet Him, and go in with Him to the marriage-feast, This applies not to the future remnant, who are not anointed till Christ appears, but to Christians wholly who are now before them. The third is not such a likeness, being in no way the general state, but refers nevertheless only to Christians, as is certain from applying to the entrusted servants while the Lord went abroad (that is, to heaven), Who meanwhile delivered to His own His goods.

“For [it is] as a man, going abroad, called his bondmen and delivered to them his goods (or, substance). And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability, and went abroad immediately. And he that received the five talents went and traded with them, and made other five talents. Likewise he also that [received] the two gained other two. But he that received the

one went away and dug in the earth and hid the money of his lord. Now after a long while the lord of those bondmen cometh and reckoneth with them. And he that received the five talents came up and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst me five talents: see, I gained other five talents (besides them). His lord said to him, Well done, good and faithful bondman; thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter into the joy of thy lord. And he also that [received] the two talents came up and said, Lord, thou deliveredst me two talents: see, I gained other two talents. His lord said to him, Well done, good and faithful bondman, thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. And he also that had received the one talent came up and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering from where thou didst not scatter; and being afraid I went away and hid thy talent in the earth: see, thou hast thine own. And his lord in answer said to him, Wicked and slothful bondman, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather from where I scattered not; thou oughtest then to have put my money to the bankers, and I on coming should have received mine own with interest. Take then from him the talent and give [it] to him that hath the ten talents. For to everyone that hath shall be given, and he shall abound; but from him that hath not, even what he hath shall be taken. And cast out the useless bondman into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (vers. 14-30).

It is plain that the substance which the Lord submitted to His servants for work in His absence means gifts of a spiritual kind. For He delivered to each according to his respective ability. They are distinguished from the ability of each, which was natural, and are suited to it. They are not merely sanctified "capacity," or "theological learning," but a gift from the Lord adapted to the ability of each as the vessel. With His goods they were to trade, "each ministering it one to another, as good stewards of God's manifold grace; if one speaketh, as oracles of God; if one ministereth, as of strength which God supplieth, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory and the might unto the ages of the ages. Amen" (1 Peter 4:10, 11). The reception of a gift was the ground of exercising it in dependence on the Giver, and for His glory.

Accordingly, where this loyalty ruled, one made five talents, another two: such is the figure in the parable. Without faith it is impossible to please God; and this is no less true of service, than of walk, as it is of salvation too. But God sets Christ before us everywhere: no creature's authority can become the object in any of them, save to His dishonor and our own sin and hurt. Confidence in the Master's grace was the animating spring of the true laborers. They bowed to His sovereignty Who entrusted as He saw fit; and they will in result enter into His joy. The kindred parable of the Pounds in Luke 19 shows individual responsibility, all starting with the like sum, and each rewarded according to the issues of labor. Both are true and important; but each is distinct.

In either case the third servant wronged the Lord. He regarded Him according to his own hard and wicked heart. He did not believe in His grace, and so sought not His pleasure or glory. Such selfish fear as his excludes love. There was no answer to the Master's trust. On his own showing he was inexcusable in hiding the talent in the earth. "Wicked and slothful bondman,.... thou oughtest to have put my money to the bankers, and I on coming should have received mine own with interest." To yield to fear was to distrust his Lord; and this is fatal. It is unbelief in His goodness. This servant had no sense of grace. A bad unpurged conscience led him to impute to the Lord what wholly denies and misrepresents Him, Who is full of grace and truth. And his end was according to his heart and his works. The evil he falsely attributed to the Master, which was really his own, finds its place in the outer darkness. It rendered him useless for God. He must be cast where the weeping and the gnashing of teeth shall be. His Master's joy was nothing to him.

How is it with you, my reader? Have you bowed to God's word which declares you to be sinful, ungodly, and without strength? If so, you must need a mighty and a gracious Savior. And God Who pities you has sent in His love His beloved Son—sent Him to die for you, yea, for your sins. Do not presume to think of serving Him till you are brought to God without a spot or stain. Nothing but the blood of Jesus His Son can thus cleanse you: His blood cleanses from all sin. So His word attests, that you may by faith know yourself made whiter than snow. To doubt this is to dishonor both the Father and the Son; as it is to set yourself against the Holy Spirit Who is here to glorify the Savior. Those who would bid you distrust God in such mercy are His enemies. Those who curse the proclamation of this truth pronounce a curse which will fall upon themselves when the Lord judges them.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: 10. The Ten Virgins

Matt. 25:1-13

HERE again we have the mysterious likeness of the kingdom of the heavens while Christ rejected but glorified is hidden on high. Only, as the parable looks onward specially to the future, when the difference between those taught of God and mere professors will be manifested, the word is "Then shall the kingdom of the heavens be made like to ten virgins," &c. "Then" refers to the execution of judgment on the evil bondman who embodied the collective responsibility of Christendom, as our parable sets out rather the secret of wisdom or the lack of it individually.

"Then shall the kingdom of the heavens be made like to ten virgins, such as, having taken their torches, went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were foolish and five prudent. For the foolish, when they took their torches, took no oil with them; but the prudent took oil in their vessels with their torches. Now while the bridegroom tarried, they all fell heavy and were sleeping. But at midnight a cry is made, Behold, the bridegroom: come ye forth to meet him. Then arose all those virgins and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the prudent, Give us of your oil, for our torches are going out. But the prudent replied, saying, Nay, lest there be not enough for us and you: go rather unto those that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went away to buy, the bridegroom came; and those that were ready went with him unto the marriage feast; and the door was shut. But afterward came also the rest of the virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. Watch therefore, for ye know not the day nor the hour" (vers. 1-13).

The ten virgins vividly represent the Christian profession. All took their torches and went forth to meet the Bridegroom Who is coming again. But if anyone have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. The unction of the Holy One is indispensable. The possession of this, symbolized by oil, depends on having faith in Christ and His work. The foolish never knew their ruin; they were content with ordinances and rites and their own heed to them. To be born anew, to receive remission of sins through Christ's blood, to be sealed with the Spirit, they were strangers: Jews or heathen might want these things; but they had every privilege in their religion, the Christian religion, and had no cause for alarm: such was their self-deception.

Alas! as with Israel so with Christendom, the forgetfulness of God’s work and departure from Him were complete. While waiting for the bridegroom they fell heavy and were sleeping. The true attitude of the Christian was lost; the blessed hope no longer animated any. They ceased to go forth to meet the Bridegroom, and turned in here or there to slumber. Prudent or foolish, all slipped away from the true hope.

But God is faithful, and, when things are darkest, He arouses the sleepers. At midnight is made a cry, Behold the bridegroom. All awake, when even the foolish become uneasy, for they perceive that the prudent have a power which they have not. Torches may burn brightly for a while; but without oil they soon go out. But the believer has the Spirit only for himself; and none can receive that anointing save through God’s grace on the faith of the gospel. Hence the appeal of the foolish to the prudent is vain. They must go to Him who sells on the terms of grace, without money and without price. Sinners must have to do with God. The creature cannot avail. The sinner must face his sins before Him, Who points the lost to the Savior Those who are religious after the flesh hate grace and shrink from God’s presence. They may be zealous; they are willing to do “some great thing” if bidden; but to stand before Him as nothing but guilty ones, and to be saved of divine grace like the worst by a dead and risen Savior, is repulsive to the old man. They may go their way to buy; but this is all we here learn of these self-deceivers.

Meanwhile the bridegroom came; and those that were ready went in with him to the marriage feast. And the door was shut.

Oh, the horror of finding out the truth too late! In vain then to cry, Lord, Lord, open to us! To such as are refusing a like warning and invitation now, His word then will be, Verily, I say to you, I know you not.

My reader, how would the coming of the Savior find you? Those who really long and watch for the Savior have already heard His voice and found in Him redemption, the forgiveness of their sins, through His blood. Hence they are sealed with the Holy Spirit of God unto the day of redemption. They know Whom they have believed, as the Good Shepherd knows such as hear His voice and follow Him. Do not trust in any institution, even of Christ, or any observance of your own, or any class of men however honored, to fit your souls for God’s presence. Nothing but the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses from all sin; but this it does perfectly even now on earth for every believer. And unless you here believe in Him and in the efficacy of His sacrifice for your evil case, flatter not yourselves that He will receive you to Himself or present you to His Father.

But if you are born again and resting on the redemption that is in Christ, you will have the Holy Spirit dwelling in you and strengthening you to render a true witness to Him who is on high and about to return. “This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is the truth.” Your hope will be as real as your faith, and Christ the object of both. You will not doubt His love, but long for His coming to receive you to Himself, having the oil in your vessel, and earnest to call the thirsty, or whoever will, to drink of the water of life freely.

Three Prophetic Gems, Lord's Prophecy on Olivet in Matthew 24-25, The: 5. The Gentile Portion

This is the third and concluding section of the Lord's prophetic word. No part of it has been less understood; yet it is clearly defined as distinct from the other two by internal marks which ought to have carried conviction to every believer. But such has been the fate of scripture; not that God's word fails in plainness of speech and certainty of meaning, but because it crosses man's will, who therefore seeks to interpret it according to his own thoughts. Every scripture is for us, and, being of God, is also profitable for man; but is not all about us, and we can only learn surely from itself concerning whom it speaks.

1. We have had a Jewish remnant believing, but without the full privileges of Christians, as the Lord addressed those who then represented it down to the end of the age. Then He appears as the Son of man, and in that day delivers not only such, but the elect of the nation, the “all Israel that shall be saved,” immediately after unparalleled tribulation.

2. Then (without a vestige of allusion to Judaea, the city, the temple, or any association local or temporal) the discourse takes up what applies directly and exclusively to the Christian profession, sound and unsound, in the three intermediate parables which were therefore couched in terms of altogether general import. Here “the Son of man” disappears according to the overwhelming testimony of the best MSS, Vv., and early citations for 15:13.

There remained accordingly only to tell and hear of the Gentiles. For every reader or enquirer is aware that the mass of mankind, devoted to idols and impostures, has to this day resisted the Christian testimony. But the Lord had given in the first part (24:14) the remarkable intimation that “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the habitable world1 for a witness to all the nations, and then shall the end come.” Here He lets us know the fruit of this preaching, of course (if we are caught up) by the believing Jews of that day, as its place intimates, just before the end comes.

Hence the last section has its suited peculiarity which differentiates it from both the preceding ones, that pertaining to it alone and characteristically. For the specific ground for the King's decision turns on a preaching of the glad news of the kingdom which only came through His brethren (evidently converted Jews) before “the end,” and is here shown to result among all the nations in some heeding the message and in others despising it. It is therefore unique in its circumstances as a whole; though no principle is involved which cannot be justified from other scriptures.

“But when the Son of man shall have come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit down upon his throne of glory, and all the nations shall be gathered before him; and he shall separate them from one another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats (or, kids); and he will set the sheep on his right but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say to those on his right, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the world's foundation. For I was hungry, and ye gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungering, and fed thee; or thirsty, and gave thee drink? and when saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in; or naked, and clothed thee? and when saw we thee sick or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King answering shall say to them, Verily I say to you, Inasmuch as ye did [it] to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did [it] to me. Then shall he say also to those on the left, Go from me, accursed, into the everlasting fire that is prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry, and ye gave me not to eat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me not to drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed

me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer, saying, Lord, when saw we thee hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and ministered not to thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say to you, Inasmuch as ye did [it] not to one of these least, ye did [it] not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life everlasting" (25:31-46).

The Son of man will have already come. His war-judgments are over, as it seems, not only what He executed by the appearing of His presence (2 Thess. 1:8), but when He put Himself at the head of His people, as in Isa. 63, Ezek. 38; 39, Mic. 6 and Zech. 14. Now the "King" (found here only) enters on the sessional judgment of His throne, before which all the nations must appear; for then all the peoples, nations, and languages must serve Him. It is part of that judgment of the quick and the habitable earth by the risen Man whom God appointed, as the apostle proclaimed to the Athenians. The judgment of living man on the earth, in the midst of his busy and selfish (not to say, sordid and sinful) life was much pressed by the Lord and the apostles, as it is largely in O. and N. T. prophecy; but it has been lost to the living faith even of saints in Christendom, alike nationalists and nonconformists. Yet even the, creeds confess it, however little it was realized when they were written, and even increasingly less since. As the Jews let slip the judgment of the dead, save to hurl it at the head of the Gentiles; so Christendom practically forgets the judgment of the quick. Here we have it applied by the Son of man judicially when He enters on the exercise of His world-kingdom. Hence it is a question of men at large, not Jews, and of course not Christians (both whom we have already had), but of "all the nations," when the Lord is come and sits down on the throne of His glory, as here.

It is the fullest and plainest contrast with "the judgment before the great white throne "; for then the earth and the heaven fled from His gaze, and no place was found for them. And "the dead," the great and the small, stand before the throne. There "the dead" (none else are spoken of) are judged according to their works out of the record of all done in the body, the book of life sealing it by its silence. This is not the coming of the Son of man to reign over the earth (as in our scene); for the nations are destroyed, and the earth fled, and even the heavens. Our scene on the contrary shows the Son of man come to the earth, and all the nations gathered before Him. Here they are all living, to whom alone "nations" could apply; there not dead only, but the wicked dead alone, for the righteous dead had been raised long before for the first resurrection.

With all the nations then alive agrees the character of the test applied, There is no such scrutiny as Rom. 2 speaks of for the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by our Lord Jesus, as before the great white throne. Then it will be that as many as sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as sinned under law shall be judged by law; and still more terrible will be the doom of those that rejected the gospel or even neglected so great salvation, as other scriptures declare. But here it is a simple and sole issue, which applies only to that living generation of all the nations: how did you treat the King's messengers when they preached this gospel of the kingdom before the end came? The end was now evidently come. The test was an open undeniable fact; but it proved whether they had, or had not, faith in the coming King. Those who honored the heralds of the kingdom showed their faith by their works, and so did those who despised them manifest their unbelief. The test was not only just but gracious. And "the King" pronounced accordingly. The form was new, as the circumstances were, but the foundation is the same for all the objects of God's mercy on the one hand, and for the objects of wrath on the other. So it was before the deluge, so it will be when the Son of man on His throne of glory on earth shall deal with all the nations. Apart from faith it is impossible to be acceptable; for he that approaches God must believe that He is, and becomes a rewarder of those that seek Him out.

So it will be with the blessed of these nations. Their conduct to those who preached the coming kingdom evinced their faith, and the King's grace accepted to their astonishment what they did to His brethren, even the least, as done to Himself. The trials and sufferings of these "brethren" gave the Gentiles occasion to faith working by love, or to the total absence of it. It was so that Rahab the harlot was justified by works when she received the messengers; but her faith is as carefully stated by the apostle Paul: without faith indeed her works would have been evil. But she rightly judged that Jehovah and His people were above king and country; and this was a turning point for her not then only but to eternity. So it was with the sheep; and the sad reverse was no less true for the goats.

There is another element overlooked by those who confound Matt. 13:31-46 with Rev. 20:11-15. In the judgment of the dead but one class is stated, the dead who were not in the resurrection of the just. So only the unjust appear; and they are judged according to their works in all their life. Here appear not only the sheep and the goats, but the King's brethren, a third and highly honored class; none of them dead or risen, but all alive. Can there be conceived a more striking contrast? The traditional view is nothing but ignorant though unwitting contempt of this scripture, which many Christians do not really believe in simplicity, and therefore cannot understand. The resurrection state must exclude what we find herein. With the judgment of the quick, and in particular of "all the nations," all here is harmonious. At the end "of the age" He comes; at the end "of the world" He does not. There is then no world to come to. It is all gone, to appear afterward quite new for eternity.

The decision is final, which led many to gloss over the marked distinctions, and mix it up with the close of Rev. 20 which is final too. But the one was at the beginning of the thousand years' reign, and the other at its end, when there could be no coming of the Lord to surprise the careless world, as He Himself teaches, but earth and heaven had fled away. To interpret the two (yea, and the three!) as the same is in effect to lose each, if not all, of these grand and solemn revelations.

Let it be observed that the righteous, though they had faith in the kingdom and therefore treated its preachers as became the truth, were evidently little instructed. For we see how little their intelligence rose above that of their unbelieving countrymen. But their heart was right by grace, as the King knew perfectly, who from the first separated these to the right and the others to the left. He allowed this ignorance to come out that He might give to all a profound lesson never to be forgotten. This is quite compatible with the righteous as they were alive in their natural bodies. But is such lack of intelligence consistent with the risen condition? When that which is perfect is come (and it surely comes at the resurrection of the just), that which is in part shall be done away. This was not at all the state as yet of these sheep, the righteous Gentiles; and the King only communicates to them before His throne what every Christian may be assumed now to know, with a vast deal more quite beyond them. Yet was the kingdom prepared for these, as for the righteous generally, from the world's foundation.

Notice also that the everlasting fire to which the unbelieving Gentiles of that epoch are consigned is said to have been "prepared for the devil and His angels," not for the goats, save that they fitted themselves for it by their evil ways. Compare also Rom. 9:22. The devil and his angels were not yet cast into the lake of fire. This will only be after. Satan's last effort at the end of the millennium, as Rev. 20:10 tells us. But here the goats have now their portion, as the Beast and the False Prophet had a little before them, as we read in Rev. 19:20, and that while alive too, Premillennialists like Alford, Birks, and almost all, are nearly as confused as the postmillennialists.

The cause is evident: the ancient and general error which connects the scrutiny of “all the nations” in our chapter with the judgment of “the dead” in Rev. 20:11, &c. Resurrection is not nor could be predicated of “the nations” in the one; whereas it is the positive and essential statement in the other. When they are jumbled, dimness reigns, and alas! irreparably for distinctness of truth.

It must be borne in mind that stupendous facts had just taken place before all the nations are gathered here, facts ignored by most, yet all-important for understanding the position. The vast hosts of the west will have been destroyed from above at a stroke when the Beast and the False Prophet meet their doom. Soon after the eastern hordes led by the Assyrian of the prophets (Daniel's king of the north) will have been dissipated like the chaff. Edom will have met its final judgment (Isa. 63); and so will Gog with his numerous allies (Ezek. 38,39.). The Jews, and Christendom, will have been already judged, as we see in this discourse. Hence “all the nations” here summoned are composed of what remains after these executions of judgment; and, from the nature of the case, they must needs be exclusively living men who were quite lately placed under the responsibility of having heard “this gospel of the kingdom” preached by God-fearing Jews, whom the Lord will have sent for the express purpose before the end come.

This alone explains the peculiar criterion by which “the righteous” were marked off from their unbelieving fellows. It was His grace that blessed those who received these glad tidings; and now they hear of their blessed portion from the lips of the King They were as amazed to learn His estimate of their faith working by love, as the hardened in their incredulity were to meet their awful end. We have no ground to believe that either the sheep or the goats ever heard the full gospel of God such as was preached by the Christian witnesses, any more than that the converted Jews themselves knew it as we do. We must leave room for the sovereign ways of God, dealing variously in His wisdom with the future quite as much as with the past. But for every sinful soul there must be faith for life eternal; and faith is from a report, and the report through God's word. Thus only can any fallen man be brought into living relation with Him. The measure has differed greatly at different times, as it will; but the principle is the same. This of course applies only to those who hear.

We may further and particularly note that there is not the least allusion to the resurrection here for either “the righteous” or “the accursed.” On both sides they were Gentiles living in their natural bodies; for they are expressly said to be “all the nations” when they were gathered before the glorious throne of the Son of man. It is not, as in Rev. 20:11-15, impenitent sinners of every age and nation, and of mankind before there was a nation as in the antediluvian world. These had all died, and were now raised at the resurrection of the unjust, to be judged each according to his works. In Matt. 15:31, &c., all the Gentiles there find their doom decided by the way they treated the King's brethren, the messengers of “this gospel of the kingdom.”

He had said that it should go forth “in all the habitable world for a witness to all the nations.” And now comes out the solemn issue. Some had shown, not merely benevolence, or self-denial, or moral excellence in any formal degree, but love in varied ways to the servants who preached in the King's name the same truth which He had preached at the beginning of His public ministry. But it was faith which wrought in their love. If the King and His coming kingdom had been but a myth in their eyes, they would have at least ignored His messengers as impostors. They believed the message, contrary to all appearances, to be of God, and therefore treated its preachers with kindness; and are to enjoy the gracious result. Ancients and moderns lower, deprave, and destroy the true force of Christ's words by taking it as kindness to “the poor.” Thus Chrysostom, for instance, one of the best of the Fathers, makes this lack of giving to the poor to be the fatal evil, even in the parables which set forth Christendom, of course with more appearance there, but everywhere wrong. It was not good done even to the sheep, but specifically to “My brethren,” even the least of them.

So the King puts the difference of the two classes on the only right ground that could apply to “all the nations” then before His throne, after such a preaching as had by grace reached them before the end. Now it had come: the new age was begun. The King had done what none else could; for He separated them all, and, as it is evident, individually with unfailing discernment.

Instead of their giving account to Him, He recounts to them why He set some on His right and some on the left. The ground for it He lays down with a majesty and a touching yet righteous character, appropriate and peculiar to Himself, the King of kings and Lord of lords. Yet it turned on faith that it might be according to grace, or alas I on unbelief where no grace was, but only self. Hence He said to the wondering righteous, “Inasmuch as ye did it to one of the least of these my brethren [whatever the living work to His despised and suffering messengers], ye did it to me.” How awful on the other hand for the unjust to hear, in answer to their more hurried summary, “Inasmuch as ye did [it] not to one of these least, neither did ye [it] to me.” Yet was it altogether righteous.

Thus all at bottom rests on Christ, though His grace makes the most of what to others might seem little. But the point is lost when the special circumstances of these Gentiles is ignored, and men generalize, oblivious of the principle. Take Alford's note on “my brethren” as a sample (and he is far from the least intelligent): “Not necessarily the saints with Him in glory—though primarily those—but also any of the great family of man (!). Many of them here judged may never have had the opportunity of doing these things to the saints of Christ properly so called (!!).” But here God took care that the preaching did reach them; and that the circumstances of its messengers should give opportunity to all the Gentiles here gathered for this manifestation of faith and love, but also of total indifference, to say the least. The faith working by love in the one class, and the utter unconcern of the other, laid bare respectively their fitness or unfitness for inheriting the kingdom. In all cases of saints, works are the evidence, faith of the word the instrument, Christ s work the ground, and God's grace the source.

It is well also to observe that the King does not call them adopted sons, as is the portion of Christians (Gal. 3:26), nor do they exhibit the indwelling of the Holy Spirit which is characteristic of such, any more than either can be predicated of the O. T. saints. He calls them “blessed” of His Father, but does not add of “yours “; for this was not their privilege to know as it is ours. Nor does He speak of the blessings according to God's counsels for us in the heavenlies, to which He chose us in Christ before the, world's foundation. Even Bengel like others before and since made this strange confusion. The King bade them inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the world's foundation. They are elect and born of God, as all saints must be; but they do not reign with Christ in that day, any more than even “His brethren” among the Jews who survived this last crisis before the kingdom; whereas such as had been at that “time of the end” slain for His name will be raised to reign with Him as shown in Rev. 20:4. But those saved of Gentiles like the saved of Israel will have a distinctive place of honor over those born during the millennial reign, as we may gather from Rev. 7 and 14. As elect Jews will have known “flesh saved” from the tribulation which is to befall the rebellious people, so elect Gentiles emerge out of “the great tribulation” in their own quarters: contra-distinguished from the church, whom the Lord declares He will keep out of the hour of trial that is about to come on the whole habitable world to try those that dwell on the earth.

If there were the slightest value in “universal consent,” it would be hard to find a clearer sample than in the traditional interpretation of the sheep and the goats gathered before the King. Is there a single commentator of note who does not educe from it what they call “the greatest judgment of all mankind” at the end of the world? The postmillennialists are at least more consistent than most premillenialists; because the former are entirely in error, whereas the latter know enough truth to make their system incoherent and themselves without excuse. Let us seek to realize what the hypothesis means. If the terms admitted of all the dead being then raised from the grave, how do the criteria apply to the ante-diluvians? Had they the opportunity of receiving the King's brethren in their varied trials, or of neglecting them to His dishonor?

No such mission of old can be sustained for a moment. Noah alone preached to warn in his day of coming ruin through the deluge; but it was only to that generation, and not at all “this gospel of the Kingdom.” Again, how or where were His brethren? And how can it be shown in “the world that now is” since the deluge? In due time Jehovah gave Israel His law; but this was as far as possible from “the gospel of the kingdom.” Where comes in at that time the preaching of “this gospel?” Now the law and the prophets were till John, who first preached that the kingdom had drawn nigh, because Messiah the King was there. And so the Lord preached, and the Twelve. But His rejection interrupted this, and the cross postponed it, giving meanwhile a new and mysterious form to it during His absence on high (Matt. 13) till Israel's heart turn to the Lord, saying, Blessed be He that cometh in Jehovah's name. A righteous remnant takes up the word before the end comes, whom the Lord will convert and send forth, and preaches it as a testimony to all the nations, before the Son of man appears to establish it in power.

During the many years that precede this extraordinary mission to all the habitable world, the ground of statement as stated in Rom. 2:12 is for mankind generally wholly different. For there is no respect of persons with God, who will then judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, which can scarce apply to this scene. Hence, while there is a resurrection of life for such as (hearing the word of Jesus and believing God that sent him) have life, eternal life, there will be at length also a resurrection of judgment for those who, believing not, produced only evil works. This is the judgment in Rev. 20:11., &c., where all had been dead but raised and judged according to their works, and are therefore lost. But it is an evident and total contrast with the King's decision about the living Gentiles, to whom His brethren, the converted of the Jews, are to preach before the end, and proved righteous or reprobate as they behaved to the bearers of “this gospel of the kingdom.” Clearly the test here employed by the King suits only the living Gentiles who had treated well or ill His brethren with whom they are confronted, because of their faith or unbelief in the King who pronounces on both. The character is peculiar and necessarily determined by the brief mission of “this gospel of the kingdom” before the end. It was in no sense the end of the world (), but of the age (), when the King had not yet come to reign over the earth. This appraisal of all the Gentiles is when He shall have come in His glory, and Shall sit on His throne. It will thus be plain that Rev. 20 in the two resurrections exactly agrees with the Lord's discourse in John 5:21-29; whilst Matt. 25:31-46, though equally true, wholly differs from both.

We may see an interesting link between Matt. 24:14 and Matt. 25:40, 45. “His brethren” were those who at the time of the end carried “this gospel of the kingdom” to all the nations, which are blessed or cursed by the King's decree according to their behavior toward those who thus and then brought the word of God. It was not brethren of the intervening Christian character, but of the converted Jews to the Gentiles. And as these brethren are thus honored by the King, so are the Gentiles blessed who received and entreated them well, the Son of man being come and reigning over both. It is the age to come, not the judgment of the dead; and the ground on which the solemn decision depended fits into no time or circumstances of the Gentiles, save the eventful mission by a future remnant of godly Jews who preach the gospel of the kingdom just before the Son of man comes to enforce it.

(Concluded.)

Three Prophetic Gems, Lord's Prophecy on Olivet in Matthew 24-25, The: 4. The Christian Profession

Now this is characteristic of the Christian: The Israelite did not separate from the world of which he was head. The Christian goes forth to meet Christ, who is gone to heaven. If he had been a Jew, he leaves his ancient association and hopes behind. Again, if the greatest grandee in the Gentile World, or if of the poorest condition, he alike abandons his old obscurity or his old grandeur. He willingly forgets all that is of the world. He is called out of every snare which can arrest or fascinate the heart of man. He has got a new and all-absorbing object in Christ; and Christ in heavenly joy and blessedness. It is not the Judge coming to deal with the wicked. If the Christian goes forth to meet the Bridegroom, does such a parable fitly bring an image of terror? Well he knows that the same Jesus who is the Bridegroom will be the Judge; he knows well that Jesus will put down all those who oppose Him; but He is not the Judge and the Bridegroom to the same persons, any more than both will be at the same precise time. Where would be the sense of such confusion? The Lord purposely brings in the bright figure of the Bridegroom to Christians who are waiting for Him.

But there are other elements of moment. Here are persons true or false. They are not presented as one object: consequently the idea of the bride1 is not the expressed aim. When we talk about Christians, real or professing, we do not fix our mind on unity; we think of individuals who go forth. He was about to show profession, and so introduces foolish as well as wise virgins. It is Christ looking at Christians professing the Lord truly or falsely, not as the bride of Christ. The Christians are here characterized by quitting every object on earth to meet the Bridegroom. Even the Jew, attached as he was to the old religion (and they had a religion which could boast an antiquity before which all others grow pale), when become a Christian, leaves all to go forth unto Him with joy, as we read in Heb. 13:13, “bearing His reproach.”

Here you have the same great principle. As the Christian, even though once a Jew, was called to leave all the old things behind, so the Virgins went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Five of them were wise, and five foolish. Those who were foolish took their lamps but no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

Is it true that the Jewish remnant at the end of the age could have oil in their vessels? They will never have such an unction till the Lord Jesus comes and sheds the Spirit on them. For it is well known that oil symbolically means the power of the Holy Ghost. It is not merely the washing by the Spirit, however vital; for beyond doubt the Jewish remnant will have this. They will be really cleansed by the word in the heart. The Jewish disciples found at the end of the age do not receive the outpouring of the Spirit till the Lord appears; they wait for that day. It is only when the kingdom comes that the power of the Holy Spirit will be for them. They will when converted welcome Him in their heart, saying, Blessed be He that cometh in Jehovah's name. They will go through a serious inward process next; as we are told, when they see the Lord Jesus, they mourn as for an only child. They have a fountain opened in Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness; but the power of the Holy Ghost will

be given only after they have seen the Lord. There is this difference with the Christian, who receives the oil or unction from the Holy One while the Lord is unseen and on high. The Jewish remnant will only receive it when the Lord comes back.

Again, there is at no time in their case, what we see in these Virgins, a class that went forth to meet the Bridegroom. The Jewish disciples will not disappear from Jerusalem until the idol is set up and the tribulation is at hand. Then they flee from the enemy's power and its consequences from God. It is a flight from the sore scourge in retribution and judgment for the people's iniquity. It is no going forth to meet the Bridegroom in joyful hope.

The Christian has another course and hope altogether. Whether it be light or dark, the Christian goes forth to meet the Bridegroom. What is the original hope of the Christian? It is our object and calling revealed in and from heaven. That object is Christ, the blessed One whose grace has been proved, and whose coming one awaits: hence one goes forth to meet the Bridegroom. Not so the Jewish remnant; they expect to see the Lord coming to deliver them by the putting down of their enemies. As Christ ascended, so the Christian waits to be caught up out of the world; the Jewish saint waits for the Lord to come judicially into the world. It is a totally different kind of expectation. The parable speaks solely of the Christian, and in no way refers to the Jewish remnant.

We shall see other proofs of this. It is said that the wise took oil in their vessels: the foolish took no oil. This meets another error. It has been supposed that the foolish virgins mean Christians who are not pre-millenarians. This gives a very undue value to correct notions of prophecy. Granted entirely that those who look for the Lord to come before that reign are right in their judgment. Those who put the millennium before the Lord's coming are mistaken. But how can one sympathize with those who put a slight upon such Christians as have not been taught as you and I? These are self-flattering delusions, and are empty manifestations that bear the brand of sect or school written on them. The best blessings we have are those which God confers on His children, on the body of Christ, in other words on all those in whom the Holy Ghost dwells, who rest on Christ and redemption. These are the persons spoken of here. The Holy Ghost is a divine spring for sustaining testimony, as well as a divine power of understanding the word of God, and for communion with the Father and the Son.

The foolish virgins never had oil in their vessels. Some ask how they can have had their torches burning. The answer is easy. They could light the torch: there is no mystery about that. The foolish virgins were not real Christians. The weakest Christian as well as the strongest has the oil. The, apostle John so tells not the fathers, nor the young men, but the babes, the little children. He tells the feeblest they have an unction from the Holy One. For those who had no oil could not be Christians, in any real, full, or divine sense of the name. Hence a deeper evil is in question than denying the millennium to be after Christ's second coming or before it. The heart was a stranger to the Lord's grace: a thing more momentous than right notions about the word of prophecy.

If you have Christ, if you know the blood of sprinkling, if you rest on a crucified and risen Savior, you surely have the oil in your vessels. You are not one of the foolish virgins. Their folly consisted in a want very much deeper than in a right or wrong prophetic scheme. The foolish lived a life of religious levity, not of necessity hypocrisy but of self-deception, ignoring God and His grace; and, consequently, not having the Spirit of Christ, they were none of His. The foolish virgins have not the Holy Spirit dwelling in them; so the Lord means and deals with them.

We often think of the early Christians with their great advantages; we see that, many of the scriptures applying to them fully, we can only get the principle of them. But your attention is called here to the fact that there are other scriptures which apply more emphatically to us now. There is thus what one may call a divine compensation. We can only take the general spirit of what was said to the Corinthians. For instance, they had tongues and other miraculous powers among them. It is plain that we have not; and only a few enthusiasts pretend to have them. Alas! wherever there are pretensions to such gifts, their falsity is soon found out.

The fact is that God, for the wisest reasons, has not been pleased to continue these miraculous powers. The present condition of the church would make it to be a moral impossibility that God should at present bestow these miraculous virtues. For if the Lord were to restore them now, one might ask, Where? Most people would begin with themselves. Were the Lord to confer these powers upon the various sects of Christendom, it would be putting His seal upon what His word says is wrong as if all were right. How could He thus contradict Himself? How could He thus sanction the broken fragments of His house or put honor upon its fallen condition?.Without this we are ready to be self-satisfied; we are too prone to think more highly of ourselves than we ought: and the Lord will not help us to be more so.

But He has left what is infinitely better; He continues everything due to Christ and good for the soul in every true want. He has taken away nothing needful for edification. He still gives peace and joy in believing. Now as of old He put this inward power in the church; but He marked it of old with a brilliant signature before the world. Those who look for the restoration of these powers are not alive to what befits our fallen condition. It is morally most important for the Christian to know what the church was at first and what it is now, grieving before God at the difference. What sympathy ought there to be with the Christian who is not a mourner because of the state of the church? It is well to have joy in the Lord; but we should be humbled about ourselves and the church. Ought we not for the Lord's sake to feel deeply this condition of ruin?

In the parable, you will observe, the Lord marks the failure from the original calling. “While the bridegroom tarried, they all nodded and went asleep.” What a state of departure, from forgetfulness of the Lord's return! It was a general and total insensibility to the hope. When sleepy, they haply turned in here or there to take repose. It was no longer true that they went forth to meet the Bridegroom. The wise who had the oil slept like the foolish who had none.

But now mark another thing. It is midnight, and there was a cry made, “Behold the bridegroom; go forth to meet him.” Has this been fulfilled? In measure this, or rather it is being fulfilled now. It is a cry made by divine grace. No sign appeared, no outward warning, no seeing of a prophecy accomplished, as for the Jewish remnant in chap 24. In us God works invisibly by His word and Spirit. The Lord is interposing to break the long slumbering condition of Christendom, and this not only for the wise, but for the foolish.

Have there not been times when men were impressed with the fear that judgment-day was coming, when they yielded to sore panic at the cry that “the end of the world” was at hand? In the year 600 they were sure it would be then. But time passed on, and the end of the world did not come. They slumbered again. Then, in the year 1000 (surely 1000 was the fatal number!), there was yet greater alarm all over western Christendom; and the clergy took advantage of this, and got the barons and people to give their gold and their silver, lands and possessions, to build grand cathedrals and religious houses some of which, as is well-known, exist to the present day. This fear passed away, and the end of the world did not come. Then followed a long slumber indeed.

Further there have been partial awakenings at various times since, but they were of the same character. At the period of the great rebellion, when the Puritans got into power in England, there was a momentary shaking in this country; and bold men rose up, who tried to establish the Fifth Monarchy, or present power in the world in the name of the Lord Jesus. Movements such as this took place at various epochs; but where was the going forth to meet the Bridegroom? There was not even a resemblance to it.

In past ages then there was alarm, sometimes to the utmost degree; and this state is represented in the well known medieval hymn or dirge, “Dies Irae,” the extreme expression of Catholic terror. Such was the feeling of the middle ages. Since then in later times, Protestant fanatics tried to get power into their hands. But this means seizing the earth at the present, not quitting all to meet Christ.

The momentous fact is that two spiritual characteristics, very distinct from ancient or medieval or modern views, mark off truth from error as to this. Are we not to be humbled because of the evil that has been done in Christendom? And are we not practically to take our stand on what was the Lord's will from the first? If the Lord at the outset called all Christians to go out to meet Him, they should ever cherish this as their calling and joy of heart. The consequence of a revival of the Christian hope of meeting the Lord is resumption of the original position, that of going forth to meet the Bridegroom. How could believers honestly continue in what they mow to be false and unscriptural if they look for the Lord to come back any day? Thus the practical effect is immediate and immense where heart and conscience are true to Him.

Awe-stricken come the foolish virgins to the wise, saying, “Give us of your oil;” but this is beyond the Christian, and the wise bid them “Go, buy oil for yourselves.” There is One who sells,2 but freely, without money and without price: to buy even from an apostle is fatal. The cry was given to revive the hope, as it had the effect also of recalling to the original and only right attitude of the saints toward Christ. It was enough to sever the wise as alone ready to act accordingly. It was too late for the foolish: who could give what they wanted?

What is the meaning of all the recent agitation? People zealous for religious forms, who know not really of Christianity. It is the foolish virgins in quest of the oil, leaving no stone unturned to get what they have not, the one thing needful—taking every way except the right way. There is only one means of procuring the oil: solely can it be through Christ Himself, without money and without price. I remember the time when men bearing the name of the Lord's ministers spent their time in fishing, hunting, shooting, and dancing. Clergymen joined in worldly pleasures without shame. You rarely hear of such things now: the Oxford delusion has altered the form. The same sort of men now-a-days look very demure: they are in general busy everywhere about religion. Do you believe they are any better than the men who used to hunt and dance? They have a zeal; but is it according to knowledge? Is it Christ, or is it not what they call the church without Him? Form deceives most.

All the fashionable ecclesiastical millinery or machinery, does it change people's state or suppose real renewal? The decking of ecclesiastical buildings, the fantastical costumes of clergymen, the modern taste for church music, processions, and stations, simply show that the foolish virgins are at work. They are not in a fit state to meet the Lord, and fear it themselves. They are troubled with the rumor of they know not what. The consequence, then, of this midnight cry is that a double activity is going on. For the Lord is awakening those who know Himself, and are wise by His grace, to go forth to meet the Bridegroom. The others, if indirectly, are none the less powerfully but in their own way affected by the cry and its effects, which rise not above nature and the earth.

Utterly ignorant of the grace of God, they are trying to make up by what is called “earnestness.” They know not that they are far from God, yea, dead in trespasses and sins: their superstitious trust in baptismal regeneration blinds them. So they think, or hope, that being “earnest” they may somehow or other get right at last. What delusion can be more hopeless? If you ask them whether their sins are blotted out, and they are saved by grace, they count it presumption. They are as ignorant of the true power and privilege of redemption as the heathen or the Jew. They have no Spirit-taught certainty that the Son of man came down to save the lost. If there be such a thing as a present salvation, their occupation is evidently gone. Neither grace nor truth admits of all this religious self-importance, bustle, and vain show. As sinners, we need a Savior, and a divine salvation; as saints, let us seek a calm but complete devotedness to the name, word, and work of the Lord Jesus. But man prefers his own works; and to win the world he finds that scenic representations of Christian facts or forms act most on the masses, and attract the light, sentimental, despairing, and even profane. Individuals in the midst of such histrionic religion may seek with a certain measure of the gospel to win souls; yet they subject Christ Himself to the church. But the movement as a whole is just the activity of the foolish virgins, who have not the oil and in vain try to get it as best they can.

At length the Bridegroom comes, and “they that were ready went in to the marriage; and the door was shut.”

Afterward come the foolish virgins. Now they cry, but it is with horror and despair. Their religious energy is at length seen to be of the old man. In an agony they cry, “Lord, Lord, open to us.” But the Lord of peace, the Giver of life and glory, has only to tell them, “I know you not.” Do not fancy that this is said to faulty believers. It is said of the foolish virgins who had no oil; of those who bore the name of the Lord, but had not the Spirit of Christ. Of and to them it was declared that the Lord knew them not. “Watch, therefore,” says He, “for ye know neither the day nor the hour.”

There is no authority for what follows (“wherein the Son of man cometh”). You have heard the names of Griesbach, Scholz, Lachmann,. and Tischendorf; of Dean Alford, Dr. Scrivener, Drs. Tregelles, Westcott and Hort in this country. It is no peculiar thought in the least; for all biblical critics worthy of the name agree in this omission as required by the best authorities. Copyists added the clause from chap. 24:42 and bring in the sense of the coming Judge. But this is quite incongruous with what He here urges, which is the delight of meeting, yea, the going forth to meet Him, the Bridegroom. Man as such, must be judged; all the guilty tribes mourn before the Son of man. But the calling and hope of the Christian is fraught with other and joyous expectations: and this, spite of their unfaithfulness during the night whilst He tarried, for all slumbered and slept.

The middle parable is a similitude of the kingdom of the heavens. There only is found an historic or dispensational view of the state of things among those professedly Christ's on earth while He is on high. There accordingly the constant expectation of those who took the place of entering into the interests of His love is treated, with the issue at the end for such as were “foolish” and had no share in the unction of the Spirit; for this alone could enable any to be “ready” for going in with Christ to the marriage. The “then” of the comparison (Matt. 25:1), when judgment is executed on the evil servant of chap. 24, carries us up to the foolish virgins shut out and disowned by Him as known to Him a complete disproof of the strange notion that they could be saints. Indeed the theory, if it deserves such a name, that any member of Christ's body will be left behind when He comes to receive His own to Himself and translate them to the Father's house, is not only baseless as opposed to the clearest testimony of scripture, but quite unworthy of a spiritual mind. Think of Christ's body without an ear or an eye, a finger or a toe! The bride of the Lamb mutilated and deformed in glory!

But even worse is that extreme form of the speculation, which supposes persons possessed of eternal life, the knowledge of and communion with the Father and the Son, yet condemned to be tormented in the flame of Hades during the thousand years' reign of Christ and the glorified saints. And why? Because they were not immersed as professing believers in the water of baptism, and were not intelligent enough to accept premillennialism! For who does not know that there are thousands of saints, neither premillennials nor immersed, yet far more intelligent, devoted, and spiritual than multitudes of such Anabaptists even if they fully accept premillennialism? No, “they that are Christ's at His coming,” not some who plume themselves on this or that external mark or of truth quite subordinate to what they have or love, will be raised to share the kingdom when He reigns and be with Him before the kingdom and during it and after it, having His presence and love in a glory deeper and higher. The scheme that denies this revealed certainty as in John 17:24, Rom. 5:17, 1 Thess. 4:17 (last clause), and Rev. 22:5, is not only anti-scriptural but repulsive, yea destructive of all sound judgment and of the best affections.

In the third parable (of the Talents) it is not the collective responsibility so strikingly depicted in the first, nor the heavenly hope separating from other objects and attaching to the Bridegroom's coming, but a kind of pendant on it. “For [it is] as [if] a man going abroad called his own bondmen and delivered to them his goods. And to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his several ability, and went his way. Straightway he that received the five talents proceeded, and traded with them, and made other five talents. Likewise also he [that received] the two, and he gained other two. But he that received the one went off and dug in the earth and hid the money of his lord. After a long time the lord of those bondmen cometh and settleth account with them. And he that received the five talents came forward and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst to me five talents: behold, I gained five other talents [besides them]. His lord said to him, Well, good and faithful bondman, thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many: enter into the joy of thy lord. And he also that [received] the two talents said, Lord, two talents thou deliveredst to me: behold, I gained other two talents. His lord said to him, Well, good and faithful bondman, thou wast faithful over a few things, I will set thee over many: enter into the joy of thy lord. And he also that had received the one talent came forward and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou didst not sow, and gathering whence thou didst not scatter; and being afraid I went off and hid thy talent in the earth; behold, thou hast that which is thine. But his lord answering said to him, Wicked and slothful bondman, thou knowest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather whence I scattered not. Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the bankers, and at my coming I should have got mine own with interest. Take away therefore the talent from him, and give [it] to him that hath the ten talents. For to every one that hath shall be given and he shall be in abundance, but from him that hath not, even what he hath shall be taken away [from him]. And cast out the useless bondman into the outer darkness: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth” (vers. 14-30).

Here it is the Lord working by diversity of gifts; and as He is sovereign, so confidence in Him is what severs the “good and faithful” bondmen from the wicked and slothful one, as it was in Matt. 24 a question of prudent or wise fidelity. Zeal according to that confidence was followed by blessing and fruit. Here we have marked variety, and individual responsibility in faith, in contrast with unbelief and blindness to grace. When we know Christ, and the unprofitable one professed this, it is profound wickedness, and none in general worse than such a professing Christian. When confidence in Him is wanting, all is wrong, though this may be shown in fear to use what He has given for profit. Had he truly known the Lord, he would have served Him gladly, especially as he had a gift of power; but he knew Him not from God, and was judged according to his distrust and the falsehood which unbelief readily yields to. Unbelief receives what itself says, according to what the evil heart suggests when it listens to Satan's lie. And the Lord deals with the wicked as his slander deserved. While those who work on in confidence of His grace enter into the joy of their Lord, those who would not, distrusting Him shall be consigned to the outer darkness with all its horrors and misery. Bliss with Christ is beyond rewards, though this too has its place of moment.

Here the Parable of the Ten Pounds (or, Minas) in Luke 19:12-27 is most instructive. It is peculiar to his Gospel and given before the last visit to Jerusalem; whereas that of the Talents was when the visit was drawing to a close. In Luke there is the same gift entrusted to each of the servants, and their responsibility and right use as yet was strongly in evidence, and to have authority over so many cities is the reward in the Kingdom, not entrance into their Lord's joy. But how profound the mistake to set a place of outward honor above sharing the Lord's joy with Himself! The good and faithful will receive that also, both being in the Kingdom.

If the faithful and wise servant, contrasted with “that evil servant,” set forth the general place in the house, faithful or the contrary, the parable of the Talents shows us those who trade with the goods of Christ, and that blessing in this work turns on confidence in Him and His grace.

(Continued).

Bible Treasury: Volume N7, Matthew 24:45 - 25:13

You will observe that in the verses read there is no word about Jerusalem, Jews, or reference to the prophet Daniel, all of which are found in the preceding part, where we find the Lord using the disciples then present as a groundwork in speaking of those of the latter day. They were Jews though believers; and when God called those who were Gentiles, still they were Jews; and that state will be again. Now those who believe are one body, having to do with Christ and in heaven. The essence of Christianity is— “neither Jew nor Gentile.” In the Old Testament, Jews were brought by grace into blessing by faith, and were to be the head of all nations. That remains to be accomplished, for now God has graven “Not my people” upon them. That is to be removed, and they treated not merely as son, but “firstborn.” The first dominion will be Israel's, while all nations shall agree to it. A prefatory work will be in them as vessels of mercy. God is not now dealing with an earthly people at all. We believe in an earth-rejected, heavenly-glorified Christ, and are associated with Him there— “one spirit with the Lord,” where “there is neither Greek nor Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all and in all.”

Now then you will notice the Lord began His great prophecy by dealing with His disciples as they were, and carried it on on that ground—Jewish ground—passing over all of heaven and Christ above in chap. 24, up to the verses read to-night, because he was speaking of Jewish believers. Next we have Christians, because Christ is now glorified; they are His body, while He is the risen Head on high. This state of things is not to last, though the blessing and glory of it does. God's purpose is to have an earthly people and earthly peoples enjoying His favor, and with Christ their righteousness. God's purposes embrace both heavenly and earthly objects. Christ will be King over all the earth, though He is not called so with reference to Christians now. He is never called King of the church, and though we find the expression “King of

saints” in Revelation 15:3, yet, every scholar knows it is a mistake, and the Revisers, on the ground of testimony of MSS., gave it up, substituting “King of nations,” a title quoted from Jeremiah 10:7, where Jehovah is called so—a remarkable expression to find in a Jewish prophet, but who was compelled by the Holy Ghost thus to bring out God's purposes. God's purpose is to have a godly Jewish remnant, prepared to welcome the Lord, as there was one gathered around Him when He spoke this prophecy. Between these two groups Christianity and the church come in.

There is nothing said about the church here, though it is mentioned in another part of the Gospel. You find much about it in the Acts, Epistles, and Revelation, in the last of which its close is given making way for Jews and believing Gentiles, for there will be a little remnant of God-fearing Gentiles, and then all nations blessed as you have it in the last part of the prophecy. Between the two cones in the present profession of Christ, not necessarily reality. You will observe a marked difference in this section; it is all parable. Parables are very general; they apply equally to any country; they have no local root, and so are particularly suitable in showing that new thing which God was about to do.

First, then, we have a servant—a faithful and wise servant. All Christians are called to be so, though some specially so. A servant in the house is called to provide good and suited meat for the house. Every Christian shares that in a way, though some are more suited for that work than others. Responsibility is according to privilege.

What constitutes a servant according to the mind of God? Waiting for the Master. That is what exactly suits a servant, and the Lord Himself was the perfect model. Christ was the true Hebrew Servant of Exodus 21. He served His time; the wife was given figuratively, and children also, but He was not content to go out. He loved the place of a servant for God's glory, and the service of poor wretched man. What place so good in this poor world? And then taken to the door-post and made a servant forever. The Lord will never cease to be a servant. He is such now, though exalted. Now He is washing His disciples' feet, so often soiled by the mud of this world. Who is the great effectual Washer? Christ; and the Holy Ghost, too, has His part. Yet Christ is the Servant, and that because of perfect love. But for sin, no such service would he called for. Directly ruin takes place then the Savior comes and takes that lowly part which no one else could take, and washes His disciples' feet. Now we ought to know the meaning of that, for each Christian needs the gracious Cleanser of our feet.

And when He comes and takes us to heaven, He is still the Servant. He comes forth to serve those whom He takes to heaven. Are we affected as we ought to be at the words? He said, “I am among you as he that serveth,” when here; but even when eternity begins, and He delivers up the kingdom, He still keeps the place of subjection, because He never gives up manhood, and the place of man is service. He serves forever. Z bus He is, and is meant to be, the great pattern of the Christian. How is this answered to now? The Lord had to warn even apostles not to affect the grandees of this world— “neither be ye called benefactors,” etc.—the complete contrast of Himself.

A “faithful servant” is one always waiting for Him; and He intimates that His coming would soon be forgotten, though the “evil servant” does not refer to it dogmatically. Denial of it is not supposed, but the evil servant says in his heart and tells by his conduct, “My lord delayeth his coming.” The effect is everything unworthy—evil communications with evil people, assumption and presumption—the exact opposite of all in Christ. This is just the history of Christendom. In the second century there was no notion of the true place of Christ and Christianity, and the hope of waiting for Him was lost. The Lord puts Himself into the parable— “Ye yourselves like men that wait for their lord.” Like servants behind the door waiting for their Master, sure He is coming, but ignorant when. This is the only proper waiting for the Lord Jesus, carefully carried out in the Epistles, where the word is always “we which are alive,” not they— “we,” the servants behind the door waiting for the Lord. It is the unfaithful that say “they.” Yet the apostle never said the Lord was coming in his day. It is all the exact truth, but the moment was concealed that we might be always waiting for Him. It is put very strongly here. There is only one servant; it is collective responsibility, and it is strikingly carried on to the evil servant. The collective testimony lost the hope, and when the hope was turned to Jewish from Christian, the foundation got lowered too; the evil servant was punished as a hypocrite, not merely as a man of the world.

The Lord next goes to another and different view— “ten” virgins are not “one.” “Then shall the kingdom of heaven,” etc. “Then,” when judgment falls on the evil servant. He deals with other objects; it is another way of bringing out the utter failure of Christendom. The opening words of this chapter 25 are unique in the three parables which form the group. We find a general picture of Christendom from first to last. By Christendom I mean that which bears the name of Christ, whether truly or not. The kingdom of heaven is that new thing, not the kingdom on earth. If Christ is rejected in lower glory God brings in a higher one. If Jews reject, Gentiles are called. We have a picture here outside Judaism. All ten make a bright profession. All took torches (for the correct word is “torches,” and quite distinct from the “lamps” in The Revelation). In eastern weddings the going in with the bride is always at night.

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.” This is the Christian hope again. From the start of Christendom the call was, Go forth to meet the Bridegroom from all below. If it was a Jew it was from the temple and its ritual, and that because an infinitely greater is there, and He the Bridegroom. Could God use a figure more striking to the heart than that He who died for our sins should be the Bridegroom. “They went forth"; a heavenly character was stamped on their work.

If a person were a Christian in Otaheite, he “went forth” to meet the Bridegroom as much as if at Jerusalem. The Gentiles “went forth” as much as the Jews. If the hope were of another kind—say the coming of the Judge—you could not use the expression “went forth.” No person could “go forth” to meet his Judge. But if you look at the creeds of Christendom, all forget the Bridegroom, all look for the Judge, the One that will put on the darkest of caps, and will sentence not for time but for eternity. Not a word of that here. Here the hope of the Christian is put in the parabolic form of meeting the Bridegroom. Not fighting unbelievers, but the influence of divine love in the person of Christ. Well, five wise and five foolish—these show their folly by having no oil. The torch would burn brightly for a very little while without oil. All go forth, but the difference exists even from early days. John, James, and all the later Epistles assume persons of dubious character in the professing church. But all at first go forth to meet the Bridegroom.

The “tarrying” in scripture is never used to delay the coming of the Lord. All the parables are so constructed that those, who went forth at first, meet Him. But while He tarried “all slumbered and slept"; the heavenly hope was given up. The early fathers all lost it. Sleep implies no longer going forth. You could not suppose they slept on their legs. They must have turned in somewhere; they departed from the will of the Lord and gave up “going forth.” It is true that Jewish believers will carry the gospel of the kingdom as they flee from the enemy, but this is not the attractive power of the love of Christ.

“At midnight there was a cry made, Behold the Bridegroom.” That cry is going forth now, and has been going forth some seventy years. People at the end of the former century waked up, but the cry was, Behold the Judge, not, Behold the Bridegroom. Here persons knowing His love, or ought to, were in peace, and instead of alarm, they go forth to meet Him. In the year 600 they woke up in a fright, but the Judge did not come, and they went to sleep again. Then in 1100 there was a great scarce that the end of the wor1d had come. They woke up, built cathedrals, did much to propitiate the coming Judge, but the Judge did not come, and they went faster to sleep than ever in the dark ages. All was dark, but what has taken place? Not merely the coming of Christ, but the gospel of God has been brought out more simply and clearly than at the Reformation; even all the reformers (unless it were Zwingle) held baptismal regeneration. There is no such notion in the word of God. This is not referred to to slight them, but to show that the gospel could not be taught in its fullness in connection with the idea that life is communicated by baptism. No, all are lost, and all require to be saved. Besides this, peace with God, redemption, new relationship, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost are brought out and keep the heart from being afraid. Instead of going to meet the Judge, if you know the gospel you know Christ bore the judgment and more. He loves me, yes, better than the angels. When the cry went forth, God wrought that hearts might go forth bounding to meet the Lord Jesus, knowing we are immeasurably dear to Him. This made the difference plain. The foolish virgins found no oil, and set to work in great earnestness to get it, as now in Christendom. People who once were card players and fox-hunters are now great for early Communion and outward forms. It is all an effort to get the oil, as there are frequent requests for those they know to be pious to pray for them, as did Simon Magus, instead of buying for themselves “without money” and “without price.” And the solemn part is—the same spirit is found in all denominations!

W. K.

Lectures on the Second Coming and Kingdom of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Tribulation, and Those Who Are to Pass Through It, The

MATTHEW 24:15-32.

Lecture 6.

THE subject for consideration tonight is the great tribulation, — the light which Scripture affords as to those on whom it shall fall, and as to those who shall escape it, though destined, according to the word of God, to be then on the earth; and, consequently, its character and object in the mind of God.

That the Christian must make up his mind to endure tribulation in this world is unquestionable. Our Lord prepares His disciples for no other portion. “These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation,” said He: “but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.” The question, therefore, is not at all whether the Christian is to expect tribulation as he passes through this world: there is no doubt of it. But an important inquiry arises as to that specially defined trouble at the end of this age, of which the prophets speak in the Old Testament, and on which, in two of the gospels, our Lord instructs us. More than once is this, as a connected fact, alluded to in the last prophetic book of the New Testament.

My business us now will be to present, with the Lord’s help, His own testimony; for we have no liberty to speculate upon this subject any more than upon others. That there is to be such a final tribulation, we only know from God Himself. Nothing but His word, therefore, can tell as clearly ascertained and certain truth, who they are that are concerned in the tribulation, Anything else is but fancy, feeling, or a priori reasoning, and therefore impertinent and worthless, One main purpose of Scripture is to deliver the soul from speculation, When men do not seek to understand the prophetic word of God, they more or less begin themselves to prophesy. If they do not set up to be prophets, at least they ought to be prophets, if they presume to speak about the future apart from direct and positive.

Now, the Christian man is not to anticipate the future, but with all simplicity to believe what God has said and given him. This is the true cure for speculation. No doubt, in examining the god, we need to approach it with chastened, dependent spirits. In this there is no preparation to be trusted—except that which is of the Holy Ghost, who works in two ways, more particularly, to bring about this right condition of soul. The first it through Christ known and realized as our portion. No man is in a competent, suitable state to enter, as one ought, upon the study of prophecy who is not at rest as to his own relation to God in Christ. There is another thing also needful, — the spirit of self-judgment and self-distrust, which guards one from haste, and from confidence either in one’s own thoughts or in the opinions of others. God alone is able to keep and guide such as we are; but He has proved His willingness to lead us on, because He has spoken so freely in His word, and also given us His Spirit, who searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. God has lifted up the veil from the future; He has opened to us that which must have been otherwise in darkness impenetrable, so that it would have been mere folly and presumption for us to essay a look into the future. The Spirit now shows us things to come (John 16:13): are we glorifying Him and the Lord Jesus by hearkening?

There was nothing which more distinguished God, as Isaiah (41, 44, 48) tells us, from the vain idols of the nations. Which of them could disclose the future? Their seers might guess; they might embarrass with ambiguous oracles. God alone could speak with plainness and unhesitating certainty of that which was not yet accomplished; and He has been pleased to communicate to His children the future as known to Him; and this touching the earth and its inhabitants at large, not Merely that which concerns themselves. It is a most striking proof of His confidence in His people that He lets us see that which affects others. He tells us of Israel; He tells us of the Gentiles; He tells us of the world outside and its destiny. Just so had He dealt with Abraham of old: He spoke to him not merely of what touched himself and his family, and the line of the promise that was theirs, but, after He had set his heart clear, straight, and free by loving communications that showed His deep personal interest in himself and his posterity forever, He also spread before him the judgment impending over the world of that day, over Sodom and Gomorrah, where the flagitious ways of man so loudly cried for divine vengeance.

This, and more than this, God now does in the New Testament. First of all, He reveals His Son, and that Son utterly rejected of men, and, if there was any difference, specially of the Jew. Then He leads those to whom grace gives eternal life in Him to know, that upon the rejected Christ, the Son of the living God, His Church was built, as we have seen. But having brought the Christian to a knowledge of redemption, even the forgiveness of sins through His blood, having given him a new life, even Christ Himself risen from the dead, having sent down the Holy Ghost from heaven to unite the believer with Christ at His right hand, then it is that pre-eminently the Christian is introduced into the confidence of God’s thoughts and counsels. Having already blessed the Church with the very highest blessing, it is not merely a question of

unfolding to her that which is her own portion; but, in truth, all the plans which circle around Christ to His own glory. The Church is already compassed with favor and privilege to the very utmost — already loved so that God Himself could not love the Christian more. I say it reverently, but withal boldly, that God, infinite as His love is, will not love the saint more in glory than He loves him now in the midst of all his daily shortcoming, infirmity, and failure, with the continual need of humbling himself in His sight. It is in presence of the certainty of such perfect love as this, of the consciousness of union with Christ in that new nature which sins not, but loves all that is in God and of God, which lives from Christ and in Christ and to Christ, the Holy Ghost indwelling there — it is in presence of all this that God can tell out His thoughts to us, treating us as friends, even as our Lord Himself did and said; for whatsoever the Father had told Him, He told us. The moment we understand this wonderful truth and depth and extent of His grace to us in Christ, we wonder not, because it ceases to be a question in the least degree of our desert or competency. Does not Christ deserve it? Is not the Holy Ghost competent? And thus you will see it is entirely founded upon the precious truth, that the Church is Christ's body and bride. Now, it is the way of one who loves his bride to open out the secrets of his heart to her. (Strange if, he did not!) And certainly, whatever an earthly bridegroom may do to his bride, we are always sure Christ duly estimates what is involved in the relationship, and never fails in anything. Moreover, the blood of Christ has washed every believer so clean before God, that the Holy Ghost can come down in virtue and witness of it, and take up His dwelling, as sent from heaven, in the believer on the earth. It is not in heaven that we receive the Holy Ghost, but here on earth. Divine person as He is, how can this be? Because we deserve it? Nay, but because the blood of Christ cannot deserve less. Therefore is it that the Holy Ghost can come down and have perfect sympathy with the new creation which we are made in Christ, and can righteously and holily dwell there, because of the blood of Christ which cleanses us from all sin.

Hence it is to crown this astonishing place of blessing and privilege, which is ours in Christ, that it has pleased God to remove the veil from the future: He lets us know that there are others that He is interested in as well as ourselves. Time was when we should have been envious and jealous; for what is man? Time was when we, even as believers, were so full, alas! of our wretched selves, that we should have thought there was something taken from us, had we heard that there were others entirely distinct from us, yet as truly objects of His love. Is it so now? Far from it. Thank God, we can delight in Him, and in all He feels and does. Let the Lord love as He alone can love, we rejoice the more. We are sure it is for His own glory; we are sure Christ is magnified the more. The consequence is, that the Church, confident of the love of Christ for herself, of His perfect, matchless affection for the Christian, delights in the outflowings of His goodness, whatever they may be. It is the joy of those who are the body of Christ, the habitation of God through the Spirit, to know, that before these high privileges were imparted, known, and enjoyed, there were those He truly loved in the world who will be in heavenly glory. The Old Testament saints are never spoken of as Christ's body, or God's habitation through the Spirit. Be not alarmed. Probably all you mean by "the Church" the Old Testament saints did possess. Are you sure you understand what Scripture means by the Church? You consider it, no doubt, to be the aggregate of the redeemed, of all who are loved by God and born of the Holy Ghost, of all who believe in Christ and have therefore eternal life and are to be in heaven. Now I entirely agree with you in predicating all this of the Old Testament saints; only you are mistaken in calling them therefore the Church, the body of Christ; for none of these privileges, rich as they may be, is the peculiar blessedness of the Church, nor do all of them combined make it up. If I am right, you plainly ignore the Church's nature. And it is evident that there is not a single blessing that you claim for the Old Testament saints that I also could not affirm about them. The difference does not lie here; but it remains true that there are distinctive blessings, through the incomparable grace of God, in virtue of accomplished redemption, a risen Christ and the indwelling Spirit, into which many Christians have feebly, if at all, entered. I do not say this in the smallest degree as a reproach. There is no person here, unless he have a short and treacherous memory, who cannot look back and remember when he knew nothing more about it than his neighbors. It is God, then, who has been awakening His children of late to much momentous but forgotten truth. And what, I think, ought to give an inquirer confidence in seeking to examine the word prayerfully is this, that the lately recovered entrance into the special privileges of the Church is ever inseparable, if it be God's teaching, from an understanding of redemption more fully, and, consequently, from a deeper enjoyment of peace and liberty in the soul's relations with our God and Father and the Lord Jesus. A practical separation from the world beyond our previous experience is the precious result, and a simpler, more devoted service in testimony to Christ.

It is fully admitted, that nothing but Scripture can decide this, as every other question; but here, too, I think we can speak of an enlarged perception of the truth of God in general, as the fruit of seizing the mystery of Christ and the Church. But let us now look back a little at the time and circumstances when our Lord pronounced the wonderful discourse from which a few verses have been read as a preface; it will tend to make the whole field of view more distinct.

In what condition were the disciples when our Lord laid bare the future so fully on mount Olivet? Did they then know redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins? Had they the Holy Ghost the Comforter at that time? Had they the Holy Ghost sealing them, the earnest of the inheritance? Were they baptized of the Holy Ghost into one body? They were believers, no doubt, and had life eternal; but they had none of these further blessings referred to. They were waiting to be redeemed, to know their sins forgiven as a present thing. Am I speaking without the Bible? I am simply expounding the truth the Holy Ghost has laid down in Romans 3:25, where He by a peculiar word distinguishes between the relation of the Old Testament believer to redemption and that of believers now. This ought to surprise no person; for, if I may be allowed to use the name of any man on such an occasion as this, I may mention that a well-known dignitary, who cannot be imagined to sympathize with my views or position, admits this fact fully. The Archbishop of Dublin's book on the Synonyms of the New Testament is familiarly known; and no one can accuse that author of advanced thoughts as to prophetic or dispensational truth. Consequently, he may be accepted as sufficiently unbiassed to lay down the meaning of the word in the clause which is translated in our common version, "the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Of course, it is no way a question of human authority, nor, if such an authority were possible and admissible, is it needful; for the fact is abundantly plain and certain. I merely allude to it that others may satisfy themselves that it is nothing recondite, but generally recognized. Dr. Trench, then, admits, and in strong enough terms, if I remember aright, that "remission () of sins" (as shown, for instance, in Eph. 1:7, to be the present portion of the believer) is quite distinct from what the Spirit says of God's dealing with the Old Testament saints. Theirs was properly pretermission (), ours is remission. Thus, apart from the Holy Ghost dwelling in the Christian, or his membership of Christ's body, even in the matter of the great work of redemption the Spirit of God has been pleased to employ a peculiar term to describe the relation of the saints of old as distinct from ours. The exact shade of meaning is, that their sins were passed by, or pretermitted, — not remitted, in the full sense. Indeed, you need not go beyond the ordinary English Bible in its marginal notes; for the alternative of "passing over" is there given. That was the time of God's forbearance, which could not be said of this time, when the righteousness of God without the law is manifested. In short, the marginal rendering more strictly interprets the term employed by the Holy Ghost. God would not use "remission" when thus comparing the past application of His righteousness with the present. He forbore of old to look at the sins of the saints; He passed them by. But as for believers now, it is a positive "remission of sins." What is the difference? Ah! is it

possible that any child of God, in the face of God's wisdom thus plainly distinguishing His ways, could ask the question, What is the difference. Do you ask really to understand the difference, or in a caviling spirit? To seek to appreciate the revealed mind of God is one thing; it is quite another, without care for the answer, to ask, with a sort of sneer, "What is the difference?" It is the feeling of others again, that provided, somehow or other, their own sins are forgiven, and they get to heaven, the whole inquiry is frivolous. Alas! that any child of God should so slight the wise and gracious communications of God. Is not Christ precious to God? Is not His work intrinsically and infinitely precious to God? If God, then, makes a difference, who are we to cavil at it, to treat it lightly, or to ask in this selfish spirit, as if it were merely a question of wrangling theologians, instead of His own most worthy way of magnifying His Son and His Son's work?

Now, it is God who has made this difference in His word. God Himself calls His dealing with the sins that are past, that is, the sins of Old Testament believers in past times, by a different and to us usual term. "By the sins that are past" He does not mean our past life, but the sins of believers in past times; and God expresses His dealing with their sins as "passing over," or "pretermission." Looking onward to Christ, He would not judge the elders. In virtue of the foreseen work of the glorious person of Christ, who, after manifesting perfect righteousness in Himself as a man upon the earth, suffered for sin, and so glorified God in the way it was borne and judged in the cross, that it became a question of God's righteousness to the believer — in virtue of this it was that God passed over sins in past times. But was there to be no more than this? Is it a bare passing over now? Is it simply God's forbearance as of old? Mark the change of tone the moment that the apostle speaks of what is now going on. "To declare, I say, at this time" [in contrast with the past] — "to declare, I say, at this time His righteousness," without a word added about His forbearance. In fact, to bring in the thought of God's forbearance now is an impeachment of the infinite efficacy of the shed blood of Christ. Suppose that you have contracted a debt, and that a man of substance becomes responsible for you, it is very intelligible that the creditor forbears to sue you, knowing that your surety is the responsible party to whom he looks. But when the debt is paid, does he or any one talk about his forbearance anymore? The credit of the surety was the ground for the creditor's forbearance when the debt was not yet discharged; he knew that the liability would be met duly. But when all is paid, is there no difference? Where is the forbearance then? Such, too, is the analogy now. If you knew what it was to be under the pressure of a debt, and, it may be, in prison for it, you would know the difference between all that and being out of the prison when the debt was paid. Till the work of Christ was done, whatever might be the goodness and mercy of God, it was simply pretermitting sins through His forbearance, At this time, on the contrary, it is the glorious display of His own righteousness, by virtue of which He can afford not only to forgive, but to justify according to all the value of His sacrifice, and all the acceptance of Himself risen from the dead.

All this clearly shows that the disciples, however they were blessed of the Lord when He was upon the earth, were to become possessors of yet deeper blessing. For my own part, I count it as one of the ominous signs of this day of ours, that men regard as a strange tale the assertion of these deeper privileges that have come through Christ's accomplished work on earth and glory in heaven. It is to my own mind the saddest symptom, as indicating where the hearts of the children of God really are. But, hover this may be, there is no doubt, from our Lord's own declarations, that He could not then send the Comforter to them. He must go away, and thus send down the Holy Ghost. Accordingly He did go away, and the Comforter came, who was to abide with them forever; and, so He does. Is this nothing? Is it only a little circumstance? Is it the essential thing in your minds to get to heaven, instead of being sent to hell? Is this your standard of what is essential?

Then I understand you, if I cannot sympathize with such a thought or feeling. For, in truth, you are only thinking about yourself, and swallowed up in it: is God, think you? Nay, He is filled with thoughts of His Son, and so blesses us to the full. Have you ever remarked that when a man searches the Bible simply as ministering to his own wants, his need is but partially met, because Christ is hidden from him. Neither will God fully bless at His expense. It is not that God will not be gracious to a poor soul that is seeking to know how he is to be saved from the wrath to come; but assuredly it is a contracted blessing that is gleaned where this is all; it is a blessing abridged by his own unbelief; for, just in proportion as self is the uppermost thought, Christ is shrouded. The infinite grace of God is, as it were, straitened to the measure of one's own wants, which is immeasurably beneath the fullness of Christ.

It may seem that these prefatory remarks, now made, are somewhat wide of the mark; but I trust you will find them really to the point when we fairly launch into our subject.

The Lord begins with His disciples just as they are. He addresses them as His followers, the companions of a rejected Christ, the Son of man that was going to suffer on the cross. He takes them up where they then were. In other words, he does not address them in connection with their place in heaven, as members of His body, which they were going to become but actually were not till baptized by the Holy Ghost. He meets them in His grace, occupied as their minds were with the earth and its hopes, with the nation and city and temple of the Jews. As they point out the buildings of the worldly sanctuary, they ask Him when the destruction should be, of which He had just warned them, and what should be the sign of His coming, and of the end of the world (or "of the age;" for it is hardly needful to tell most here that the word () for "world" as a material system is entirely distinct from that here employed (), which means a course of time or dispensation governed on certain distinctive principles in this world. The confusion of the two things is one of the unfortunate features of our English Bible, though not at all confined to the authorized version. However this may be, our Lord proceeds to answer their questions about the temple and its destruction, and about His coming at the end of the age, which they put together. His explanation would make evident to them a measure of mistake mingled with these questions; for in this discourse He unravels what was all tangled in their thoughts. He bids them beware of being deceived; for many should come in His name, saying, "I am Christ." Let me ask if this be the character of the Church's deception? Is this the kind of thing Christians are subjected to now? Has it ever been the case in what is called Christendom? Clearly not. So-called Christian lands have not, as a rule, been tried with the question of men pretending to be Messiah in person. No doubt there have been many who have exalted themselves, and virtually claimed what is His prerogative; but they never dreamed of setting up themselves, nor did their devotees set them up, as Christs. We all know there are not a few who, through intellectualism and self-confidence in divine things, have introduced false doctrines; but the assumption to be the Messiah has been confined to a crazy fanatic or two, as it certainly seems to be a character of evil suited to the actual condition and circumstances of the Jews far more than to Christians.

Our Lord, then, opening the subject, explains that all the general troubles He warned them of — nation rising up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom — were but the beginning of sorrows. Then He comes right into the center of such specific details as ought to leave beyond question what He has in view. vs. 15 gives us a most distinct intimation. "When ye, therefore, shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoso readeth, let him understand), then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains." Is this a description of the position of the Christian or the Church? What in present circumstances could bring the Church back to Judea? Why should all the Christians in the world gather into that spot above all others? The very question suffices to diel the entire fallacy of

a thought so gross. The Lord is not at all speaking of Christians as such.

He is describing persons about to find themselves at the end of the age in circumstances analogous to the Jewish disciples who then surrounded Him. The Jews, few or many, are supposed to have a temple in Jerusalem, and, of course, to be in their land; and some of them will be godly men. It is a scene of the latter day, because it is clear that the Lord speaks of His own coming in the clouds of heaven as immediately after the tribulation of those days. It is, therefore, impossible to apply this prophecy in its full extent to the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, or the troubles they endured in consequence of its fall. Indeed, it is evident that the question was about the end of this age; and clearly this has not come yet. As being a sample of a similar class of believers who are yet to rise up in Jerusalem and Judea in the latter day, He prepares them for certain peculiar deceits which might at any time since His rejection affect the Jewish mind, and which will by and by have imparted to them special power, by apparent, and, in a sense, real signs and wonders to mislead souls. He furnishes them with certain tokens by which they might escape the delusion as well as the tribulation of those days — “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation.” What is the meaning of the phrase? “Abomination” in Scripture is habitually the word for an idol; as those of Moab and of Ammon in the Old Testament. There is no ground to suppose it means anything else in the New Testament. In the account given of Babylon in the Revelation, there is no doubt at all that she, the mother of harlots, is there described as also characterized by her abominations or idolatries. So, alas we know it has been in Christendom. The city that sits upon the seven hills has always been famous for her idolatries: as in Pagan times, so now; and so it will be to her judgment by God. Even if Babylon should assume a new form adapted to the last days, there will be a similar badge of inveterate idolatry to the close. Here, too, I think there can be no question whatever that our Lord meant an idol. But then this should be accompanied by a certain peculiarity. Not merely an ensnaring object, but one that would ensure desolation in its train; for the Lord calls it “the abomination of desolation.” Then again it was “spoken of by Daniel the prophet,” who defines the time, place, and circumstances in ch. 12. To this special attention is called by our Lord, not by ecclesiastics, as some have strangely conjectured, against all evidence and every fact. Further, it was to stand, where it ought not, “in the holy place;” which, it appears to me, notwithstanding the absence of the Greek article,1 beyond all fair question, must mean the sanctuary in Jerusalem. Thus the Lord is speaking about Judea, of Jewish disciples, of a special final object of fatal idolatry; and so here He speaks of it as standing in some part of the temple, which was, of course, a familiar sound to the disciples. Had any other sanctuary or spot been intended, it must, I conceive, surely have been defined more carefully. When they saw that idol set up there, spoken of by Daniel the prophet (which they would do well not only to read but understand), let it be the signal for instant flight. We shall find the importance of this in a few moments; but, on the face of the Scripture, the warning of the Lord was there. He foresaw that it would be misunderstood. He knew that Christendom would ignore and forget Israel, their dangers and their hopes; that the Gentiles (wise in their own conceit (Rom. 11) of being the end and scope of prophecy, as if Israel had fallen irrevocably and they themselves had a lease forever of God’s calling,) would be absorbed in their own circumstances. They would apply passages like these merely to what is past, as to Jews and Pagans, or, perhaps, if keen controversialists, they might see in them a cloud overhanging Protestantism, if Papists, or the converse. The Lord accordingly recalled the disciples to the prophet Daniel, who speaks of this desolating abomination as 1290 days before the closing scenes of Israel’s deliverance, not at the Roman captivity and dispersion. With exact conformity our Lord speaks of its setting up before the unparalleled but short tribulation, which is immediately followed by His ingathering of elect Israel. Clearly, therefore, it is the same scene, and yet future.

The setting up of this idol in the holy place is the Lord’s appointed signal for the disciples to escape.

“Let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains.” Further, so rapid was to be the flight, that a man was not even to come down from the housetop to take his property from his house — was not even to return from the fields to take his clothes. Not a moment was to be lost for bare life. Sorrow, sorrow to those who had babes unborn or lately born; for how could they thus flee? Again, they were to pray that their flight might not be in winter nor on Sabbath. How comes here the Sabbath-day? It is well-known — I trust every believer here knows it — that the day for us is the Lord’s-day. I do not mean by this to lower the sanctity of the day that the Lord has been pleased to initiate and give the Christian, but the very contrary. The difference between the Jewish Sabbath and our Lord’s-day, is not that the seventh day or Sabbath is more holy, but rather that its holiness is of a lower character than that which now clothes the first day of the week or Lord’s-day in the eyes of the Christian. The Sabbath was a day of external rest; it was a day on which every one, slaves, nay, the very beasts of burden were to enjoy repose according to commandment. The Lord’s-day, as such, is neither of the first creation nor of the law, like the Sabbath. It is characteristically of the new creation and of grace, in contrast with the associations of the Sabbath. It is not the epoch in which we find the first man, Adam, an unfallen man, nor is it the sign which God subsequently made so special between Him and Israel; but the infinitely brighter day, that is only known to faith, that was ushered in by the Second man, triumphant forever over sin, death, and judgment, who, in virtue of His own triumph, has brought those that believe in Him out of their sins, even now to God. Therefore do I claim for the Lord’s-day a character of sanctity as much transcending the Adamic or Mosaic Sabbath of Jehovah as the Second man is superior to the first, as much, too, as grace rises above law.

But it is not the Lord’s-day in view of Christians that is spoken of here, but that very different day, the Sabbath, in view of Jewish disciples, present and future. Accordingly the context is quite in character with the Sabbath-day. It is question of those in Judea, and no others, fleeing to the neighboring mountains, as the sign was an idol set up somewhere in the Temple of Jerusalem. Hence they are to pray that their flight might not be on that day, any more than in winter time. Is there a Christian here who would have a conscience about himself or another fleeing on the Lord’s-day, if it were a matter of life and death? Would he scruple for just or gracious reasons to travel ever so many miles on that day? Certainly if the Christian were under the law as to the Sabbath, nothing would justify such breaches of it. Nor does the Lord weaken but maintain its authority by His direction, that they should pray for any other day. The question for us is: — Are we under the authority of the Sabbath? Or is our day the Lord’s-day? Were we really on the former ground, our duty would be plain, and we could not, on the Sabbath, do such things rightly. If it is the Lord’s-day, on the contrary, you may magnify it according to what is calculated to glorify Him. Suppose a man could walk twenty miles on the first day of the week, and preach twenty sermons, do you think he would be guilty of a bad work? I trow not: it were assuredly a good and acceptable service if he preached the truth. But here the disciples are manifestly under the law of the Sabbath. How evidently then is it another atmosphere you own as Christians! The obligation of the Sabbath was all right for those who were under the law. The Christian stands in connection with a dead and risen Savior, and the Lord’s-day is the symbol of his blessing. Therefore it is that the Church universal keeps the Lord’s-day, not the Sabbath-day, and quite right too, though (strange to say) so many that do it aver that it is all one and the same thing.

All this, then, indicates a different character of testimony, and a distinct class of disciples. These will both appear in due time in Jerusalem before the present age close. This future Jewish remnant is represented by the men that were then before the Lord, who therefore begins, you

may have observed, with their place as Jewish disciples. The discourse grows nut of their questions about Jewish anticipations. The Lord answers them accordingly. They were thus to pray that their flight might not be winter (which would Create natural impediments) nor or the Sabbath (when the law would bar a flight of any distance worth taking). It is Jews, not Christians, who are thus in the mind of the Lord and the scope of this part of the discourse. And so the great point here is to escape with the natural life. Do you not know that the language of the Spirit to the Christian is wholly different? It is the greatest honor for a Christian to die for Christ. In his case, therefore, who looks for resurrection and heaven with Christ above as his proper hope, it is no question of flesh being saved; but here it is exactly this. What am I to infer from it all? That it is not a description of Christians, which the Lord is here pursuing, but of godly Jews, and at the end of the age especially. These too are disciples, but their associations and expectations are Jewish. The land, the city, the sanctuary, the law of the Sabbath, plainly mark them out. The salient points, not only of outward circumstances but of their soul's experience, and walk, and worship, are rather in contrast with Christianity than in accordance with it.

"For then," our Lord says immediately after, "shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time; no, nor ever shall be." Am I not thoroughly warranted in saying, that there is no evidence that this tribulation falls upon Christians as far as this passage goes? The foregoing indications point clearly and exclusively to Jewish disciples who will be found in Judea in the latter day, cleaving to the law and to the testimony, keeping the commandments of God, as is said elsewhere, and having the testimony (i.e., the prophetic testimony) of Jesus Christ, but, notwithstanding, or rather because of this, not in the full privileges of Christians now. They will be Jewish disciples in relation with the holy place, and so resenting an idol there; they will be keeping the seventh day, and not the first. These in Judea, and these only, as far as this Scripture proves, are to flee to the mountains, and so escape this fiercest of all tribulations;2 for it is expressly said to exceed all from the creation to the end of time. Not a hint of Christians is to be traced where it is here spoken of.

This conclusion is entirely confirmed by what follows; for our Lord tells us, "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved." It is the life of this world; and the importance of the natural life to the Jew is, that he expects the Messiah to come into this world and reign over Israel. And so the Lord will reign. But if the Jew desires to wait for Him, it is to bless him as a living man in the world. That is, it is a saving of flesh, as here. He looks for the Messiah to exalt their nation bless their land, vanquish their foes, and confer every other good in that bright day of glory which is to dawn upon the world. And it is quite true, as far as it goes, though the truth even for Israel goes much beyond it.

But Christ warns them further — "Then, if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not," Let me ask if a Christian man would be in danger from such cries as these? Suppose a preacher were to tell you that Christ was in the city, or at Paddington, would you not judge that the man was (hardly a rogue — it is too extravagant for that, but) out of his mind? "The Lord Jesus in the city?" "What! have I to go to Paddington to see the Lord?" "No," the Christian at once says, "I know He is coming, but He will come from heaven to bring me there; when He descends into the air, I shall hear and see Him and be in that instant caught up, changed into the likeness of His glory, to be with Him where He is, in the Father's house above." On the other hand, the Jew expects Christ upon earth, and rightly expects Him there, and another Jewish prophet furnishes the firm ground for it. Has not Zechariah said that His feet shall stand upon mount Olivet? To be sure he has, and therefore if the Jew be occupied with such an expectation, he might not unnaturally look for some preparatory movement before that great public display in favor of his nation. He might readily receive the rumor that the great Deliverer was already in the desert, where the faithful were expected to repair; or that He was in the secret chambers, where they ought to muster around Him. We can easily conceive these impious frauds of Satan to deceive the elect at such a time who had such expectations. Thus they might be told that their Messiah was still, outside, or secretly within, as might best suit the aim of the enemy and the injury of the godly. And we know that there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, who shall show great signs and wonders; nay more, that the Antichrist is to be accepted by the mass as Christ. These things might, if possible, deceive the very elect among the Jews; but could the Christian, ever so weak and uninstructed, credit such delusions? Impossible, I humbly but firmly think. He must have given up all his hopes of Christ in heaven, all the common faith that the Holy Ghost had communicated and confirmed in his inmost soul, before he could be exposed to the influence of these pretensions and rumors, aptly calculated as they undoubtedly are to deceive the Jew. For the declares that they shall have Christ coming upon the earth to the discomfiture of their foes; and they might not unreasonably be led by reports of Him here or there, before that great manifestation on Olivet. Accordingly to a Jewish remnant all this was of the deepest moment, and the Lord warns them beforehand. (vss. 23-26.) The Holy Ghost never warns the Christian thus. Like theirs to us it is suited to the condition of those who are warned. We know that we shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

But the Jewish disciples in that day, though they have no such hope as ours, are not to be deceived by these calls to and fro. They are not to go forth, nor are they to believe what men say of any secret presence. "For as the lightning cometh out of the east and shineth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Instantaneous and public will it be. All thought of applying this to the past capture of Jerusalem is an utter absurdity. Did the Romans come out of the east? Did they shine even unto the west? I should have thought their direction was just the contrary of what is predicted here. But when the Son of man comes in bodily presence, such no doubt is the fitting simile to set it forth; lightning-like will be the sudden and bright appearing of the Lord Jesus from heaven. Is that our hope? Does Scripture ever present our Lord as the lightning coming to receive the Church? Is it so a Bridegroom comes for his Bride? On the other hand, if He come then and thus to judge, if the abomination of desolation pollute the holy place in Jerusalem, if a man, the Antichrist, sit in the temple as God, I can understand that the shining of the lightning would be a most appropriate figure for so coming and dealing. Incongruous for the ineffable peace and heavenly joy of the meeting between the Bridegroom and the Bride, it is precisely suited for His presence in judgment which is needful to deliver the Jew.

But more: "Wheresoever the carcass is." Has it then come to this? The "carcass!" Is this too the Church? Does the Lord call His body a "carcass?" Ah what folly and ruinous mischief, when men read Scripture according to tradition, or their own will. He that makes self his one object even in Scripture, who leaves no room for the Jew, but finds the Christian here, there, and everywhere, invariably brings a blight upon his own head. Instead of the precious body of Christ, formed by the Holy Ghost, in union with Him above, this system reduces us here to a "carcass!" Instead of the blessed hope of Him who loves the Church receiving it unto Himself, that we may be with Him in heaven, it is the eagles or vultures gathering together. Others again, from ancient days to our own, reverse the application, but with what result? Any improvement? It may appear incredible, but it is the sad truth, that grave men have been beguiled into the irreverent exegesis that the saints, the risen and translated saints, are the eagles, and that the blessed Lord (may He forgive the wrong!) is the carcass, the object which gathers these birds of prey together. I do not feel that either explanation deserves more words in refutation; but baseless and even profane as they are, the important point to note is that they appear to be the necessary consequence of applying the passage, as is popularly done, to the

coming of Christ to receive the saints to Himself above; and, as I judge, the most offensive of these rival abominations is the more logical deduction from these mistaken premises. Take the text in connection with the judgment of the Jews, and all is clear, solemn, and harmonious with other Scriptures. Where the life is fled, and there is nothing but moral death, spite of high pretension, there will concentrate the instruments of final and divine vengeance. We are upon earthly ground here, and not heavenly hopes. We are looking upon the desperate evil that shall characterize Jerusalem in the last days. Accordingly the eagles come there, judgment unsparing and various proceeds, when the Lord shall purge out every abomination and put an end to every desolator, and aid His elect but long-feeble Israel, some of whom had been fleeing in terror to escape the tribulation of the days thus past forever.

Is it, then, too strong to affirm that there is not a thought nor a figure that fits in with the Church's hope, while everything is exactly characteristic of the dealing of the Lord with the Jews in the latter day? It may be said, that the impression was given last night that some portions of these chapters do really apply to Christendom. It is now reaffirmed; for I have no doubt that this discourse of our Lord is not confined to the Jews. What proves it is, that towards the end of chapter 25 we have a description given of the Son of man sitting upon the throne of His glory when He comes, and all His holy angels with Him; and then shall be gathered before Him all nations. These are not Jews, of course. We must, therefore, make room for a larger compass than that which is bounded by Jews. We must, at the very least, let in the Gentiles, all of them who shall be gathered before the throne of the Son of man. It is not the throne in which He shall judge the dead; for it is unscriptural and absurd to imagine such a thing, as that before the great white throne there shall be nations as such. Whoever heard of such a thought or expression as "nations" after the resurrection? Is not the notion of "all the nations" entirely limited and only suitable to men living on the earth? This being so, you have a separation made by the King (for it is in this capacity the Son of man here acts) between those who were proved righteous on one hand, and those who were as manifestly unrighteous on the other; but it is, I repeat, a dealing, however grave and final, with nations. Thus, at the beginning of this great prophetic discourse of our Lord, the Jews are disposed of, and at the end of it the Gentiles. But what occupies its middle? It is the Christian part. Hence that which distinguished the earlier section — the question about the end of the age, a crowd of local and legal associations, as express allusion to the sanctuary, the Sabbath, and the land of Judea, with the neighboring mountains— all this entirely disappears. Certainly these things have nothing to do with the world as a whole. They belong specifically and solely to a small part of the earth and its inhabitants, to the Holy Land and the Jews, and, from verse 15, to a short crisis, which brings their disasters to a head, and is followed by their final deliverance and gathering under the Son of man from the four winds.

But perhaps it may be argued, as it has been, that "the elect" must mean Christians. Now I would ask all such if they really think that the Lord has chosen none but Christians? Would they drive the Lord of His prerogative to choose as He will according to His sovereign will and wisdom? It is plain that ignorance of Him and of His word is the real reason why men take such strange ground, and make such a narrowing of the wonderful purposes and ways of God. It is but another form of that wretched unbelief which kept us so long without Christ, and springs up ever and anon after we have got Christ. But as sure as it does, it darkens the eye and straitens the heart from embracing the vast extent of God's love, and the various glory in which Christ will manifest His own. In point of fact, Christ will have relations not only with the Jews, but with the Gentiles too, besides the Church, His body. Therefore it is plain that, in order to know who are in particular contemplated in any given Scripture, we must always interpret the text by the context. If the apostle is discussing Christian privilege, and talks of the elect, as in Romans 8, we know that he there means none but the Christian election; but if Isaiah is occupied with the Jews in their day of predicted glory (chap. 65:8-25), and speaks of "mine elect," he means only the Jewish elect. The surroundings of the particular text furnish the only sure means of deciding the sense of the Bible; and indeed a similar principle applies to every other book. If so, the Lord, in Matthew 24, has in view solely elect persons connected with Judea. As He died for that nation, and not exclusively for the scattered children of God, so He speaks now about His chosen Israelites in every land of their exile under heaven. This is confirmed by the fact, that there is no intimation here of any being taken up to heaven. There is no allusion to resurrection whatever. He had spoken of flesh being saved, as we saw living Israelites had to be hidden away from the perils, and guarded from the deceits, of the last days of this age. And now, when He comes at the hour of their deepest need, when they seem on the point of being destroyed forever, and He suddenly appears in the clouds of heaven, what is the effect? "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." All the tribes of the earth mourn, and this before His elect are gathered by the providential messengers of His will.

Now, if you apply this to the Christian translation, it is obvious that your interpretation makes Scripture contradict itself. For when Paul was writing to the Colossians, he says that, "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." Here, when our Lord addresses Jewish disciples upon their future, He tells them of His own visible coming in the clouds of heaven, and how all the tribes of the earth (or land, as the context would seem to imply it means) will mourn seeing Him thus coming with power and glory in the clouds of heaven; after which He sends out His angels, with loud trumpet sound, to gather together His elect from every quarter. Evidently the mass will have seen Christ, and be full of anguish at His sight, before the elect are gathered under the Son of man. There is not a hint of their being caught up or of their appearing with, Christ. Thus, the truth of Scripture is perfectly plain, provided we distinguish the parties that the Lord treats of. If the subject be about Christians, their place is with Him in heaven, and they shall accompany Him when He comes from heaven; or rather, in the perfectly accurate words of the apostle, when Christ, our life, shall appear, they also are to appear with Him in glory. Whereas in Matthew 24 Christ appears, and all the tribes of the earth or land are troubled at the sight of Him; and then the elect of Israel are gathered by angels from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

Hence we have to note not identity but contrast between the two parties. They are both, it is true, destined for blessing; but one is for heavenly places with Christ, and therefore they appear with Him when He appears from heaven; the other is gathered upon earth (where they are) by the intervention of angels. The providential agents of God are employed to gather together His people who are scattered over the world. The parable of the fig-tree (vss. 32, 33) confirms one in this; for it is the standing badge of Israel nationally. So too "this generation" has nothing to do with the Christian, but means that Christ-rejecting race of Jews which is not yet extinct. As to all this the Lord's words are sure, whatever theology may say to the contrary: "Heaven and earth shall pass away," but they shall not. Yet it is a hidden day and hour, but as sure as those of Noah, and after that pattern, for the godly remnant that survive shall pass through these scenes of judgment and live to govern the renovated earth, instead of being removed, as the Church will be, like Enoch, to the realms above. Hence it is the converse of our portion; for here one is taken in judgment, the other left in mercy. (36-41.)

The next three verses (42-44) are a kind of transition, being the just application of what had been urged as a motive for watching and readiness for the coming of the Son of man, and an introduction to what follows. Next, from verse 45 comes the distinctively Christian portion of the Lord's prophecy, consisting of three intermediate parables: that of the Household Servants; that of the ten Virgins; and that of the Talents. These compose the part which relates to Christendom. The order too, instead of being a difficulty as it might appear on a hasty glance, seems to me perfectly beautiful. The Lord begins with the Jews, because the disciples who actually surrounded Him were, practically, in Jewish circumstances then. When He has set out their destiny with special reference to the end of the age and His own coming, He then turns to the Christian part in parabolic language, which would open out on these very disciples when the Jews refused the testimony of the Holy Ghost; that is to say, which drops all allusion to the Jew, and assumes that wide character which Christianity demands. The instruction here is presented in the most general forms, because the Lord is looking onward to Christians in any or every quarter of the earth; and therefore we hear no more of the unparalleled tribulation, nor of the end of the age, any more than of the land, or the sanctuary, or the Sabbath. Lastly, as we saw, when the parabolic views of the Christian part are closed, a concluding picture winds up the prophecy about the Gentiles who will be gathered before the Son of man when He is come to reign over the earth (Matt. 25:31-46); but this only by the way to give a complete sketch of the bearing of these two chapters.

Let me notice, as briefly as may be, the other Scriptures which refer to the tribulation. What we have seen in Matthew 24 is the most detailed.

The prophet Daniel, you will recollect, is referred to by our Lord in the first gospel; so we can next turn to him. In his chapter 12 (the one cited) we read these cheering words: "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people." Can there be a doubt what people are meant by Daniel's people? Were they Gentiles, or were they Jews? It cannot be questioned. It was of the Jews, and their troubles, and degradation that Daniel treated, during which times the Gentiles would be allotted the supreme power in the earth; and accordingly the object of the prophecy everywhere is to show the downfall of the Gentiles, to make way for the Jews in the end. How needed this was to strengthen Daniel, or any Israelite indeed like him, in the face of the troubles that had then befallen and yet awaited the Jews They had been carried into captivity by the first of the imperial Gentile powers, of whom the prophet receives a measured account in their successive rise and fall during which the Jews were to suffer. But even from the first God would have His servant comforted with the certainty, that the proud Gentiles must be judged and the Jews at length be delivered.

When they came to their deepest strait, Michael the archangel would stand for them against all adversaries. Such is the critical turn of affairs here brought before Daniel. "And at that time shall Michael stand up" (instead of the Jews being allowed to suffer any longer), "the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time; and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book." It is evident on the face of it, how exactly this statement falls in with the plain bearing of our Lord's prophecy. In that portion of it where He is providing for the special exigencies of Jewish disciples in the latter day (as represented by the four men who were then along with Him), there, and there only, is there any reference to this unequaled tribulation. It is our Lord Himself who quotes Daniel the prophet, with a charge to understand him. We open Daniel, and, as might be expected, the same truth substantially appears. Not that our Lord merely draws on or reiterates His servant's resources; but He knew His own word, and He at least could not misunderstand. "Whoso readeth let him understand." It is we who have to take care; it is we who need to understand what we read. How is it that controversial divines have brought the Pope in here? Because they were occupied with their own things, not the things of Jesus Christ. This Scripture does not touch the Pope, whatever may have been the long train of impieties and atrocious cruelties perpetrated by the Papacy. I doubt not that it is a system which embodies essentially, though not exclusively, the mystery of lawlessness, and that the great whore of Revelation 17 finds her center in Rome. But there is another character of things here. It is presumptuous to determine beforehand that there can be no height or depth of wickedness more audacious than that which has been. It is contrary to all analogy that evil should not be at its maximum when judgment falls. It is vain and unbelieving to reason in the teeth of plain Scripture. "Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations." Idolatry was smitten by Assyria and Babylon, as the rejection of Christ was by the unconscious Romans, What will it be when Antichrist is received? Trouble beyond all breaks out upon the children of Daniel's people; but it is immediately before the triumphant deliverance of the godly ones. Is it not folly to apply this to Popery? It is quite as great, if not greater, absurdity on the part of the rationalists, who can only see in it some past siege of Jerusalem. Let them weigh a decisive reason. There have been many sieges of Jerusalem, and one most celebrated since the gospel appeared; but were the Jews then delivered? Did the Lord come in the clouds of heaven to gather His chosen by angels when the city was invested by the Romans under Titus?

It may interest some here to notice the divine accuracy with which our Lord predicted the Roman siege, as recorded in the gospel of Luke. (21) This is quite passed over in the corresponding passage of Matthew, and even Mark. But Luke mentions, as an event previous to the times of the end, that Jerusalem would be seen "compassed with armies." The Lord singles out this feature. Many sieges of the holy city had there been, but only once, it is said, was Jerusalem thus invested. Besides, our Lord distinguishes that occasion from the future. Examine Luke 21, and you will find that the compassing of Jerusalem with armies, its fall, and the captivity of the Jews, are expressly before the time of the end begins. (Compare verses 20-24 with verses 25-28.) After the capture, Jerusalem is supposed to be still trodden down during a given though unmeasured period. "And Jerusalem shall be trodden of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." This is going on still. The final scene is characterized not only by such tribulation as exceeds all the past of the Jews, not only by distress of nations, but also by the fact that this greatest time of sorrow is immediately followed by unexampled victory for the Jews. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was followed not by deliverance but by servitude; not by the gathering together of the children of Israel into their own land, but by their being led away captive into all nations. Thus the facts, and above all Luke's account, enable us to show the clear contrast of what was then with what is to be by and by. The conclusion, therefore, is certain and inevitable to the believer, that the Lord and Daniel both speak of the unequaled time of trouble for the Jew. It is a tribulation which must fall upon that people, and precedes the mighty deliverance which clearly has not yet been wrought in their favor. Therefore the tribulation must be future because the deliverance is unquestionably future; for the word of God inseparably connects them together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days follows our Lord's appearing, to rescue them from ruin and every other ill and sorrow. Neither the one nor the other can yet be an accomplished fact.

It is well to remark distinctly, in the Scriptures which have come thus far under review, that the people who are in question, upon whom the tribulation falls, are the Jews. Not a word is said about Christians. No doubt there are some other Scriptures which can be produced. It must be shown in them, if anywhere, that Christians will be on earth at that time, in order to make out the case that Christians are to pass through it. Vague notions will not suffice, nor theories; though I may say that one might well wonder at those who talk about the honor of going through these scenes of earthly horror. Do these speculatists comprehend its moral import? Do they know the retributive grounds of that tribulation? Probably they have not even thought of inquiring. I grant you, that to endure temptation at any time is blessed; to suffer for righteousness'

sake does not fail of a reward; to suffer for Christ and with Christ is the precious portion of the faithful Christian. “They that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution,” as the apostle tells us; but is any man so uninstructed as to imagine this the character of the tribulation in the last days? If it were the honor and the privilege, which they have so hastily assumed, do they believe that the Lord would tell the disciples how to escape it? nay, make it a point of obedience to flee from it to the mountains? Does this hang together? Does He ever let the Christian know how he is to escape tribulation? No confusion more preposterous in all its parts. The cases are in contrast, not the same. It is the allotted portion, and privilege, and glory of the Christian to suffer for Christ’s sake. None should be moved by these afflictions, still less fly from them as if they were an evil; “for yourselves know,” says Paul to young believers, “that we are appointed thereunto.” Such is the doctrine of the New Testament for the Christian. “To you it is given, in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.”

How comes it then, that, if passing through this greatest tribulation be a prize, the Lord so carefully instructs His faithful ones how to deprive themselves of that honor? The simple fact is, that the entire system, which thus reasons or imagines, is at issue with the word of God. The tribulation of those days is no honor, but the severest infliction on sin, and unbelief, and apostacy. It is a judicial punishment on the Jewish nation, because they broke the law, despised the Messiah, and will then have received the Antichrist, “the king.” Is it an honor to be buffeted for the most desperate wickedness against God and His Christ? to encounter a trouble that is the divine scourge for all this iniquity? Yet this is the character of the tribulation which some have so inconsiderately thought and called an honor. Accordingly Scripture proves, that the people that rebelled against God, crucified their Messiah, despised the gospel, and bowed down to the beast and the false prophet, will in the end suffer this tribulation. It will fall upon them when the Antichrist has set up an idol in Jerusalem, and he thinks to have it all his own way there, supported, alas! by the powers of the West. Such is the future assigned by Scripture to the revived empire with its divided kingdoms of Europe. Joining the apostate Jews (for Judaism and Christendom will yet coalesce), they will be the material supports of the man that will set himself up as God in the temple of Jerusalem, who will none the less also establish idolatry there. To this end everything tends. It is the educated, civilized West that will before the world sustain and glorify, not the Savior, but the son of perdition, the final instrument of the serpent’s power in deceit and destruction for the last days. The desolator, the Assyrian scourge, will come down upon these victims of Satan. The East, wicked as it is and will then be, is not at any rate prepared to endorse the apostacy and man of sin, and so will pour down its countless hosts on Palestine, in chastisement under God upon the lawless one and his party. Hence Jerusalem in that day acquires such painful interest and importance; for God permits the great desolator (whatever may be his designs) to descend like an avalanche from the North and East. “Behold the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand.” This attack of the eastern powers will at once arouse and attract to Palestine the West, and there both West and East shall find their doom successively at the hand of the Lord. Before this, however, the eastern power will scourge the Jews; but the faithful ones, if they listen to our Lord’s warning, will themselves entirely escape the tribulation. Those in Judea will flee, according to His word, and be hidden from man; so that, when the Lord destroys all the apostates, Jew or Gentile, all His enemies, whether of the West or the East, He will gather back all the Israel of God, whether these or others, who may be then scattered over the face of the earth.

I repeat, then, that in the New Testament tribulation is spoken of as the Christian’s daily companion. It is a gift of grace which a saint is not to run away from, but to thank God and take mirage for; whereas it is beyond controversy, that when the tribulation predicted by the Lord and the prophets falls on Judea and Jerusalem, our Lord Himself expressly provides minute directions for the faithful who are there to escape. And this, some people will tell you, is the tribulation we ought all to account so glorious, and which it is such rank cowardice to shirk Infatuation could hardly go farther. My brethren, if this were but the word of the Lord, not the braying of ignorance, who of us would not, by His grace, welcome fire or water in obedience and love to Him? But it is the very reverse of all He teaches, even for the future Jewish remnant. In truth He has given the Christian something incomparably better, and harder too; not one great trial, but, on the contrary, if faithful, one continuous trial of seduction on the one hand, and of tribulation on the other. To you who know your own hearts I appeal, whether you find it a severer test to bear some sharp, heavy, but single trial, or to wade through and endure never-ceasing shame, loss, pain of mind, and still to be faithful to Christ, through faith rising above the world, and, still in sorrow, to rejoice in the portion God has given you? It is not for any believer to institute a vain comparison, or to disparage that jewel of martyrdom which will never lose its brightness in the eyes of Christ or of those who are His; but methinks, even in the blessed apostle to whom that grace was given, nothing is finer than the love and faith which made his whole life a dying daily. To live Christ is so to die in this world.

On the other hand, in Scripture, whatever men may dream, the last tribulation (Dan. 12; Matt. 24, &c.) is never once presented as an honor to those who have passed through it, but as a deadly scourge upon the ungodly and apostate Jews, because they received the Antichrist after refusing the Christ of God.

There is another portion in the Old Testament which claims our attention — Jeremiah 30:7, though one may be the more brief, because the statement is so plain that argument or even exposition is unnecessary. There we read, “Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob’s trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.” It is the one unvarying doctrine everywhere: it is not the Church, but Jacob who is seen in this catastrophe. As certainly is he saved out of it. Here again is a third testimony to the same effect, that the special trouble which will close the age, and, of course, be in this world, falls on the Jewish people, but they shall be saved out of it. It is, no doubt, a short testimony; but can you conceive any other words that could add to its force? There is no allusion to a Christian being there, unless, indeed, in circles where the extraordinary illusion prevails of understanding “Jacob,” and “Israel,” and “Zion,” and “Jerusalem,” and almost everything else, to mean the Christian or the Church. It is that old system over again, against which I have warned you — nothing but self, which so mars and obscures the truth, and well-nigh blots Christ out of the Bible. Make it all the Church, and you most effectually destroy the Church. All distinctiveness of truth thereby vanishes away.

We may now return once more to the New Testament, just remarking by the way, that Mark 13 falls in with the corresponding passage in Matthew, without adding anything material for our present purpose. He that reads may satisfy himself that none but Israelites are there intimated to be in the scene of this last affliction. There is a passage, however, in the Revelation which demands a longer notice.

In chapter 7 we have, first, God sealing by a mighty angel a certain regularly numbered complement out of the twelve tribes of Israel. There is no doubt whatever in my mind that those twelve tribes, described as they are there, with their names given, cannot be applied to any but the literal twelve tribes of Israel. There may be a fair question raised why the tribe of Dan is omitted, though I am not going to attempt an answer, and, indeed, it is better to be perfectly plain — I have none satisfactory to give. But the indications that the tribes of Israel should be taken in

their literal import are confirmed by the consideration of the vision that immediately follows. For the prophet sees another multitude which none could number, and which, is said to be of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues. That is, it is as expressly a Gentile body, as the hundred and forty-four thousand were out of the tribes of Israel. Now, it is of this Gentile multitude that Scripture declares, “These are they which come out of great tribulation.” (vs. 14.)

Here let me correct what I presume must have been a very unintentional error in our common version. It is universally admitted by everyone entitled to speak with weight on such a point, that the true, plain, and only meaning of the text is “out of the great tribulation.” The difference is immense. If I simply look at the throng, and say, “They come out of great tribulation,” I may spiritualize and say, “Here is the Church they have always been in great tribulation in the world, and will emerge from it air last into heavenly glory.” The moment you render it as it ought to be — “the great tribulation,” this vague way of understanding it drops as inapplicable. How can the Church be said to come out of the great tribulation? Has it been “the great tribulation” from before Pentecost till Christ comes? The Jewish prophets, as well as our Lord, proved, on the contrary, that there is to be a short crisis of tremendous trouble at the end of this age; from which, instructed by Christ, the faithful disciples of that day will be exempt. But the mass of the Jews will be visited by it, and taste its appalling bitterness. Those who are true, the Israel of God, will be saved out of it. The Apocalypse adds fresh information; it does not intimate one of the same unparalleled character, but it is “the great tribulation.” Probably before the time of that in Matt. 24 it will be certainly larger in sphere if not so excessive. Out of it come the numberless crowd of saved Gentiles whom John saw in the vision.

It may be well to point out a few distinctive features in the scene in order to the forming a sound judgment of it. First, observe who it is that explains about this tribulation. It is one of the elders, who, as we have already seen, are the symbolical representatives of the heavenly saints viewed as made a royal priesthood unto God. Of this I have no doubt whatever. Of the elders, then, one explains to the prophet of whom this Gentile multitude, now first seen, is composed. The other sealed and numbered company consisted of a body out of each of the twelve tribes of Israel. This is an innumerable crowd from out of the Gentiles. Just as in the prophecy of our Lord (Matt. 24, 25) there was a need for Christians as well as for Jewish disciples, as well as about Gentiles at the end, so there is here. The elders answer to the Christians who are supposed to be then in heaven, and whose privilege it is to understand the mind of God about all these pages. It an old and true remark that, whenever spiritual intelligence is called for in the Revelation, the elders are those to exhibit it. It is not surprising; for God has abounded to us even now in all wisdom and prudence; and surely so choice a blessing will not disappear in heaven. Again, as the apostle Paul says, “We have the mind of Christ;” and the reason of it is, because we have not only a new nature, but the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, and the “Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God.” Hence, in John’s epistles we find that the whole family of God, even the youngest or the babes in the family, are characterized as “knowing all things” in virtue of that unction which they have from the Holy One. Circumstances here may impair the display of this power of the Spirit in them, but on high all hindrances disappear. We shall all know as we are known. Whatever is done, the elders understand it: heaven and God’s ways are familiar to them. If the living creatures ascribe honor and glory to God, at once they rise from their thrones and prostrate themselves before Him in Worship. Hence too they sing songs suitable to each circumstance which calls them forth. If God on the throne is celebrated, they praise accordingly. If the Lamb takes the book and opens the seals, at once the elders, are found with a new song. “Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and people, and nation, and tongue.” No matter what the subject, the elders display divine intelligence. Of whom else could this remarkable spiritual intelligence be predicated? What characterizes an angel is his power. They “excel in strength,” as the Scripture says. They are the beings that give effect to the providential arrangements of God. Then we find that the living creatures preside over the execution of His judgments in the earth. Thus, in chapter 6 the four living creatures are active on the opening of the earliest sea’s, and bids each agent come forth successively to do his appointed work on earth. But when the understanding of God’s mind in heaven is the point to be shown by any creature there, the elders are the appropriate. They sing the sweetest songs in heaven; they worship more frequently and characteristically than any others. In them combine exalted position on thrones, active office as priests, as well as prophetic intelligence. At home in the presence of God, they have loving communion not merely with the throne and what issues thence, but with Him who is seated on the throne and with the Lamb. Now, what body in heaven is so capable of adequately answering to all these things as the assembly or Church of God taken up to heaven and glorified there? The elders may include the Old Testament saints, but assuredly the Church also, if not confined to it.

At some moment, undefined by dates or signs external, the Church will be taken up to heaven to meet the Lord. The moment the heavenly saints are taken out of the way, God’s plans open for the earth. The mystery of Christ and the Church being thus gone, God looks down upon the two public classes of men — Jews and Gentiles. Out of Israel we find severed this numbered multitude. Will God not regard the Gentiles in His mercy to call any out of them? He will call out of them an innumerable multitude. Inasmuch as the great tribulation occurs just before the turning of God’s hand for the blessing of the world, just before our Lord comes from heaven to execute vengeance in person, so out of this tribulation a fresh body of persons are seen to emerge, and who are thus specially characterized. They are not Old Testament saints, nor the Church. They are not millennial saints, but a multitude without number from every kindred, and people, and nation, and tongue, who come out of the great tribulation. They do not worship as the elders; they do not sing as they; they are not described as seated upon thrones, or as having crowns upon them, or exercising priestly functions — nothing of the kind. In the vision they do not sing, but say, “Amen. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might be unto our God forever and ever. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?” They are redeemed, of course. They are in bliss, I do not deny for a moment, but it is of a lower character than that of the heavenly saints. Accordingly this further description follows. “These are they which came out of the great tribulation.” I care not what judge you choose: any man acquainted with the language, whatever his views, is enough. I defy any competent man in the world to deny that the meaning is “the great tribulation.” When you have learned that it is the great tribulation, the ground for making out of this a picture of the Church in general is gone forever. There is no just sense in which all Christians can be said to “come out of the great tribulation;” but in this case every one of these saints comes out of the great tribulation. So, at least, Scripture speaks, and it cannot be broken. The chief mark upon them, which opens the case of these Gentiles, is their coming out of the great tribulation. They are blessed; they are washed in the blood of the Lamb; but they have no distinctive properties of the Church. They are not of that one new man, where there is “neither Jew nor Gentile.” On one side is a body of blest Jews, on the other is this crowd of blest Gentiles. But there is a special place for Christians, who, through the broken down middle-wall of partition, are called in one body to heaven. We are not only strangers here, in the strongest sense, but belong to Christ, as united to Him above all such distinctions as those of Jew and Gentile. On this ground, if a Jew or a Gentile enter the Church, he ceases to be either Jew or Gentile, and becomes a Christian. The old landmarks disappear, for they were earthly; there is now one new man. Christ is in heaven, and we are His members. It is Christ that characterizes the believer now. By and by, as we have seen, God will have a people out of the Jews; He will have a people out of the Gentiles also; but, as we see here, they will not be mingled together. They are distinctly presented in the vision as two separate groups; and both of

them quite apart from the elders. Yet, strange to say, the most popular work on the Apocalypse of this day makes out that the innumerable multitude of Gentiles is made up — how? By adding together the successive hundred-and-forty-four thousands of Israel from age to age! I do not know how many times it requires a given number of Jews to become numberless Gentiles. Such is the theory, however, that this crowd of Gentiles, somehow or other, comes out of the carefully measured number of the tribes of Israel. From this reference you may gather how extremely opposed to the truth of God's word must be any judgment of plain Scripture, where men lose sight of the great truth of the Church as a heavenly body, wherein there is neither Jew nor Gentile, because we are founded on Christ crucified, and we are united to Him glorified at the right hand of God.

When our Lord died and rose and went to heaven, there was an entire abandonment, in principle, of all connection with the Jews, whatever might be the patient lingering of God's gracious testimony for a time. The Lord Jesus born in the world was an Israelite, their Head and King, even the Messiah; but "if we have known Christ after the flesh, now henceforth know we Him no more." The Christ that we stand related to is no doubt the blessed person who was born in Bethlehem. However, it is not after that pattern, nor any earthly way, that we are in relationship with Him. We have not to do with Christ upon earth accomplishing the promises here below, or at any rate as the minister of the circumcision for the truth of God. We begin with Christ who died for our sins; for, as the apostle Paul says, "I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures." Thence, as it were, we follow Him through resurrection to heaven, and there we find the proper character of the Church in association with Christ and His glory above.

In Revelation 7 appear other facts — an immense mass of Gentiles to be brought out of the great tribulation, distinguished from the sealed thousands of Israel. Where is the Church in all this? Nowhere at all. But not only can you hence furnish no proof that a single Christian (properly so called) will be in, or come out of, the great tribulation; but I can go farther, and give you clear disproof of it. This is not logically necessary on my part. On you lies the burden of proof; if you assert a doctrine, on you is the obligation of proving it. He who maintains that the Christian Church, wholly or in part, is to be in the great tribulation, ought surely to be able to bring some plain scripture — one text at least — for so grave a matter. Why does he believe it, if he can produce none? Because he trusts tradition in his own mind. He has no scripture for his thought; he refuses plain passages, which show that Jews only have to do with the unequaled trouble, that Gentiles only come out of the great tribulation, without one word about Christians in either case. Yet some prefer to stick to that which others have said, or they themselves have imagined before. I will venture to say, that no one who first searched the Bible to see of whom the Lord speaks, or of whom the prophets spoke as passing through the tribulation, even drew such a conclusion. The fact is, that people have brought their thoughts to the scriptures, and thence sought confirmation. They have seen that there are to be saved souls, who must pass through that tribulation; these they call the Church, and then they conclude that the whole question is closed in their favor. They are not aware, because of their ignorance of the Church, that the case is not even touched. When the present work of God in gathering out the Church and taking it into heaven, is complete, the Lord will enter on a new task with the Jews awl. Gentiles, because He means to magnify His mercy in respect of them both for the earth. On this very important point I may dwell longer another day, if the Lord will.

But there is, I think, distinct evidence in Scripture, that the faithful of the Church will not be in the great tribulation; and in Revelation 3:10, it is written, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them which dwell upon the earth." Now, it seems to me, that there can be no just question, (although it is not called "the great tribulation" here, any more than it is so styled in Jeremiah 30,) that the same substantial fact is included. The passages already discussed in Matthew 24, and Mark and Daniel 12, speak exclusively of the scene in Judea. The passage in Rev. 7, treats of a more extensive tribulation out of which spared and blessed Gentiles come; but still, I apprehend, it is nearly the same time, though the spheres may be different. Jeremiah speaks of "the time of Jacob's trouble." John speaks of "the hour of temptation." The Lord promises to exempt, not merely from tribulation, but from "trial;" and not from trial (of whatever sort, seductive, or even what may be terrible and perilous), but "from the hour of trial." Out of that hour, containing within it the great tribulation which comes to try them that dwell upon the earth, He will keep such as are true to Him.

Well, what is the force of the last word to all the faithful here? He says not only, "I come quickly" (that is, He puts the proper hope of the Christian before the Christian heart); not only does He say, "Behold, I come quickly;" but, "Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee out of the hour of trial, which shall come upon all the world, to try them which dwell upon the earth." Does this merely mean preserving power while that temptation presses on man? Where is anything particular in this? The Lord will keep all His own: the sealed Israelites, the innumerable Gentiles, are all kept as far as mere preserving is concerned. Where, then, is the special force of the promise that the Lord here guarantees to His followers, that if we keep the word of His patience, He also will keep us? that is, if we have communion with Christ in waiting while He waits. This, I apprehend, is truly His patience — a wonderful thought: Christ is waiting to come and receive us to Himself. We are called to wait for His coming. The Bride has communion with the Bridegroom, expecting to meet the Lord in the air; and if we keep the word of His patience, He will keep us from the hour of trial which shall come upon the world. Again, mark it is not merely to keep us during it, but out of it; not only out of its range, but out of its time. What can you fairly gather from these words? I should understand that the faithful, according to the Philadelphian standard and approval, are not to be in that scene or hour at all. It is a promise in view of the Lord's coming to receive those of the Church who look for Him; whereas the great tribulation pertains to that portion of the Apocalypse which supposes the translation to have already taken place, and Jews and Gentiles (not the Church) to be the objects of God's dealings on earth.

Thus Revelation 4 shows us the heavenly saints glorified already above. To the end of chapter 11 (where the first volume, so to speak, of the Apocalypses ends) we have various visions in which they figure on high. And what is the course of events upon the earth concurrent with their presence above? What is their disclosed character? In regular sequence the prophet has unrolled before him, and for our instruction, the progress of providential judgment — first more general, next more direct and specific. The enemy is not idle, either in violence against saints who suffer unto death, or, in lieu of which, enthralling them that dwell on the earth. It is in short the beginning, I apprehend, of the predicted "hour of temptation," from which the faithful Christians were promised exemption by the Lord. There are disciples after that, as we have just seen; but their testimony differs essentially from ours and far more reverts to the Old Testament type. However this may be, what may be called the second volume of the Revelation begins with chapter 12, or, more strictly, with the last verse of chapter 11. We go back again in the commencement of that chapter, which presents the symbol of a travailing woman seen according to divine counsel, and opposed by the open hostile power of Satan, in the form of the Roman Emperor. But, spite of his hatred, the man-child who is born is caught up to God and His throne. Who and whose is this woman's seed, this male of might? Unquestionably it is Christ, who was to be born of Israel according to prophecy; and in fact so it was — the man-child destined to rule the nations with a rod of iron. But why is He thus presented here so long after the historical fact? Because it is Christ involving the translation of the saints (in His person, as it were) to heaven, The Apocalypse, more

especially in the prophetic part, naturally adopts the Old Testament manner. It is the mystical style of showing the rapture of the saints, I admit; of course not the literal one, which does not fall in with the Apocalyptic method. Otherwise there is in the book no allusion whatever to this great event, if it be not thus wrapped up in the person of Christ the man-child, and no adequate reason appears to account for the catching up of Christ at this point. Remark, also, there is no date, though dates begin in the chapter before, and follow after in this chapter and the next. How long transpires after the rapture to heaven, before the woman is in the wilderness for her appointed time and the battle in heaven, is not said; but it is certainly an event, however momentous, which must come first.

Thus the first three chapters of the book are but preliminary to the proper prophecy, and contain the things seen and “the things which are.” Then, before beginning “the things which must be after these,” from the very start of chapter 4 we see, not the translation of the saints, but the saints already translated and glorified under the symbol of the twenty-four elders. The second volume of the book represents them, we saw, more according to a fashion that suits the Jewish mind. Thus throughout the law or prophets, whenever any type or prophecy may be supposed to apply strictly and fully to Christians, individually or collectively, the Old Testament says of Christ what the New Testament says of the Church. Take, for instance, that bold challenge in Isaiah 1:8, “He is near that justifieth me: who will contend with me?” &c. Of whom does the prophet speak? Of Christ, to be sure. But the very same thing which the Old Testament predicted of Christ in Isaiah, the New Testament affirms of Christians in Romans 8. And this is so much the more striking, because in Isaiah 1 The end of the chapter discloses another class of saints quite distinct: godly Jews of the last days, listening to the voice of God’s servant, walking in darkness and seeing no light. I am aware there have been and are those who apply verse 10 and 11, like the rest, to Christians now; but the reason is obvious — they do not understand Christianity. We read in the New Testament that he who follows Christ shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. Such is our Savior’s description of the Christian. He does not walk in darkness. So Paul tells us, “We were darkness, but now are we light in the Lord.” So, John 1:6, 7. Depend upon it that this drawing back souls to Jewish conditions is Puritan divinity, where it is not owing to the leaven of the Fathers or to what misled Fathers or Puritans. The Puritans seem to have fallen under the law far more than the old Reformers did, who indeed had somewhat emerged from the influence of the Fathers. But this is only by the way to account for, the effects produced, and sought to be kept up in the mind of Christians at the present time.

I close, then, with the conviction, that the view here maintained follows on a close investigation of every distinct passage that Scripture affords upon the subject of the great tribulation. I should be obliged to anyone who will produce me other passages that refer to it; but I am not aware of them. I demand of those Who have heard me this night, whether they can point out one word which supposes a Christian or the Church on the earth when the beat tribulation arrives? Have we not seen that the doctrine of, Old and New Testament — of Jeremiah, of Daniel, of the Lord Jesus, and of the apostle John — is this, that, just before the Lord appears in glory, will come the last and unequaled trouble of Israel, though Jacob shall be delivered from it; that there will be, (at substantially the same epoch, but probably somewhat longer, and beginning before it,) “the great tribulation,” out of which a multitude of Gentiles emerge; but that both Jacob and the Gentiles are totally distinct from the Christian or the Church. As regards the Christian, the positive promise of the Lord is, that such as have kept the word of His patience He will keep out of the hour of trial, which is about to come upon the whole habitable world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.

But what about the unfaithful? What about pressing Christendom? I have not a word of comfort to say; for as the hour of trial will surely come upon the Jewish nation as a chastening of their unbelief in rejecting Him who came in His Father’s name, the true Christ, and in receiving him who comes in his own name, so will it also be a time of trouble and of darkness, of terror and ruin, for corrupt, apostate Christendom; even as our Lord warned Thyatira that He casts Jezebel into a bed, and those that commit adultery with her into great tribulation. Believe the word of God. It is slippery ground, and argues boundless confidence in one’s self and mankind, to form a judgment of what is coming grounded on what we may see around us; especially if that judgment appear to contradict the clear warning of Scripture. Now the word of God is plain, that God is about to send strong delusion, that men should believe a lie; for He will give up Christendom, as He once gave up Judaism and Gentilism, to its own rebellious perdition. And what does not Christendom deserve at His hands? I speak of the unfaithful profession of Christ ever here. Dealt with in infinite mercy, blest with the largest favors, and the richest privileges, Christendom has lost its way as to truth and holiness and sense of grace and glory in Christ, far more than it has lost ground in actual outward hold upon the world. And yet this is not small; for vast tracks of the earth that were once covered with Christian profession have now lapsed back into heathenism, or Mahometanism. Every person familiar with the facts of early ecclesiastical history knows that this is the truth as to an immense part of Asia as well as of Africa. I am not denying the mercy of God, that works through men who send out Bibles and missionaries here and there over the world in these days; but such societies now are no contradiction, but rather a confirmation, of the sad reality they find everywhere; still less are they a reason why the day of the Lord will not shine with scathing light on the moral darkness of Christendom. On the contrary, here are the too sure indications of the great final crisis — the mass of men settling down, not only in infidelity, but in that phase of it which takes the character of apostate Christianity; not the profane skepticism of a Rosseau or a Voltaire, but the theological infidelity of the day, — that of men who still profess to be Christians, yea, teachers and dignitaries, it may be in high positions, professorial or episcopal. Nor is it limited to one particular body. The working of this evil spirit is well-nigh universal. Romanism cloaks it largely. It has found extensive hiding places among the Dissenters, as well as in the national establishments of these Protestant lands. Therefore I do not mention the fact to throw stones at individuals, but to pray that those who love Christ may labor more earnestly because they know of the fearful growing swamp of delusion into which Christendom is about to fall. The more I am assured of the love of Christ, the more it will act upon my soul; the more I am assured of the destruction that awaits the world, the greater the need to warn men, if peradventure some may be saved. Therefore may God bless His own truth, and keep His children’s eyes on the coming of Christ, free from anxious speculation about the predicted troubles for the earth, as if such must be their pathway to heaven. Waiting for Him in the communion of His patience, we shall be caught up to meet and be with Him, ere the hour of temptation envelopes this guilty world.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: 9. Household Servant Faithful or Evil

Matt. 24:45-51

IT is the first part in our Lord’s prophecy at Olivet which bears directly on Christian profession. This therefore is wholly distinct from the parable of the fig-tree which refers to Israel, as all the preceding discourse did, and accordingly from ver. 15 occupied with the land and the sanctuary, the sabbath day, and the tribulation without parallel for the Jews, with signs before and after, heed being expressly claimed to Daniel the prophet, and illustration drawn from the deluge in Noah preserved through it, not from Enoch caught up before it.

Here begins that which is so general that it applies wherever the Lord's name is called on, Jewish peculiarities being quite dropt. The Lord takes the place of other objects. His service in His house is without restriction or addition the prominent character. Relationship to Him and His rules exclusively. We shall find in the third and last parable of the series His gifts conferred on His servants according to His sovereign will, with which each is called to trade according to the figure of talents committed for profit. But here it is the supply of His house with food in season.

"Who then is the faithful and wise bondman, whom the lord set over his household to give them food in season? Blessed [is] that bondman whom his lord on coming shall find thus doing. Verily I say to you, that he will set him over all that he hath. But if the evil bondman say in his heart, My lord delayeth [to come], and begin to beat his fellow bondman, and eat and drink with the drunken, the lord of the bondman shall come in a day which he expecteth not, and in an hour which he knoweth not, and shall cut him in two, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (vers. 45-51).

It is clear that the Lord looks for faithful and prudent stewardship in His absence from him who is entrusted with the charge of His household, and that, when He is come, He will deal with this responsibility. Did the bondman dispense food in due time? Blessed that bondman whom his Lord on coming shall find thus doing! It is His mind and will and grace about His own. Already elsewhere He had assured His own sheep that entering by Him they should be saved, enjoy liberty, and find pasture. It is in the last particular that the bondman is here made responsible; and this would test him. Faith and love alone render any one faithful and wise; they attach the heart to the household through devotedness to the Lord. Loving Him leads out to feeding His sheep and His lambs; as the Lord puts it to Peter, restored and reinstated after his fall: which by grace would only make him more tenderly considerate of others. And him who thus nourishes duly Christ's household He will set at the head of His inheritance by and by, when He returns the Heir of all things. It is only Christianity which is based on the Lord already come and about to return, while His own serve during His absence; and hence the prominence given to this in the third parable.

But solemn beyond expression is the doom of the man who, professing to be his Lord's bondman, arrogates to himself dominion, and is no model to the flock, but lords it as his possession. What can be conceived more opposed to the mind which was in Christ Jesus? He in infinite pity to the lost and to the glory of God the Father emptied Himself, taking a bondman's form, coming though yet in the likeness of men; and found in figure as a man He humbled Himself, becoming obedient as far as death, yea, death of the cross. The evil bondman, oblivious of all and heartlessly inconsistent, seeks a place of power and pride; he courts the world as one who never died to flesh nor was crucified to the world, but begins to beat his fellow bondmen, and eats and drinks with the drunken. There is both ecclesiastical oppression and commerce with the world, even in its self-indulgent dissoluteness.

Such is just the general aspect of Christendom for long ages, as at the present moment. There may be differences of degree here or there. But the picture applies to Catholics and Protestants, nationals and dissenters. They are not separate from the world; nor do they walk in the Spirit, as those that crucified the flesh with its passions and its lusts; they boast in man and his literary elevation and his scientific inventions, like heathen that know not God.

And what does the Lord indicate as the occasion if not cause of so ruinous a departure? "But if the evil bondman say in his heart, My lord delayeth [to come]." No one betrays the evil of his unfaithfulness so much as a faithless professor of Christ. And here the Lord puts His finger on his heart putting off His own coming again as a living practical truth. Abandoning that hope, the heart can soon learn to value and associate with the world, to slight and ill-treat Christ's household.

What is the end? "The lord of that bondman shall come in a day which he expecteth not, and in an hour which he knoweth not, and shall cut him in two, and appoint his portion with the hypocrites; and there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth." God's wrath is revealed from heaven upon all impiety, and unrighteousness of men holding the truth in unrighteousness. The Jew if wicked is worse than the Gentile; the professing Christian if evil is more guilty than either. His portion shall be, not with bondmen only, but with the hypocrites.

How is it with you, my reader? You, most of you, are neither Jews nor heathen; are you not a professing Christian? Do you not then own your evil if you slight the word of God, and especially the gospel? Any one who disregarded Moses' law died without mercy on the strength of two or three witnesses: of how much worse punishment, think you, shall he be judged deserving that trod under foot the Son of God, and esteemed the blood of the covenant whereby he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? But the door of grace is still open. Oh flee for refuge to Him Who is set before you, the only yet sure Savior of the lost. Delay is proverbially dangerous; and nowhere is danger so great as in putting off the word of salvation which God has sent you. For as He was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, when He sent Him into it, so even when Christ was rejected, God made Him Who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made divine righteousness in Him.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: 8. Fig Tree

Matt. 24:32-35

We have the Lord's authority for regarding the fig-tree here as the groundwork for its parable. "Now from the fig-tree learn the parable. When its branch is already become tender, and putteth forth its leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh; even so ye also, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, at the doors" (vers. 32-35).

It is clear that the Lord treats this tree as symbolic of the Jews. So He had done shortly before, and both so graphically that no believer need miss the meaning. Mark gives details, as often beyond others, illustrating His ministry. Seeing a fig-tree (there was but one, as Matthew says), and being hungry, He came and found nothing but leaves. This was decisive, for it was the season of figs, it was too soon for gathering; so that if none were there, the tree must have borne none.

The Lord therefore said unto it, No one eat fruit of thee henceforth forever; and His disciples heard. On the morrow, as they passed by, they saw the fig-tree dried up from the roots; and Peter remarked on it, when the Lord's answer dwelt on the all-importance and the power of faith. There is no obstacle too strong to resist; only the grace that forgives all personal wrongs must accompany the faith of him that serves Christ. And so it has been. Not only have the fruitless Jews, as responsible under the first covenant, lost their religious position, but they are no

longer a power. They are scattered and swamped in the sea of peoples.

It was one of the two miracles of the Lord which was not an expression of grace but judicial; and both told the destinies impending on Israel because of their evil and unbelief. The one, as we have seen, was their judgment under legal responsibility as barren after all God's care and claim of fruit. The other was set forth by the destruction of the swine, when the demons expelled from Legion entered and drove the herd into the abyss. So it will be in the latter day when the apostate Jews are given over to uncleanness and energized by the powers of darkness. These were the two exceptions. All the other miracles of the Lord displayed the glory of God and grace toward man.

What then is the parable to be learned from the fig-tree in our chapter? The Lord is opening to the chosen disciples His appearing for the Jews first (Matt. 24:4-44); then (vers. 45-25:30) His dealings with professing Christians; and lastly (25:31-46) His judgment of all the nations or Gentiles.

It will be seen therefore that verses 32-35 concern the Jewish remnant directly, however we may profit by this as by every other scripture. The Jews will be objects of grace once more, and come under the new covenant in that day. Here accordingly the fig-tree falls under no curse. Far from withering away from the roots, Israel, which knew nothing but misery and ruin from trusting its own righteousness, is cast on the Messiah in repentance and faith; and now mercy henceforward flows as a river. But "the many," the mass, judge themselves unworthy of life eternal and perish with their Antichrist; the godly remnant become the strong nation, and they are "all Israel" that shall be saved. They will have dates which must run their course; and also have successive events which must be accomplished. Times and seasons particularly characterize them.

Here the Lord deigns to give them signs in a way He never did to us of the church who are called to walk by faith, not by sight. So we may observe in the early verses of Matt. 24 and specially in verse 14. Still more emphatic is what follows from verse 15, where Dan. 12 is referred to, and, more than any, verse 11. There is a tribulation without parallel, but no translation to heaven; and the coming of the Son of man is like the lightning. For there is pre-eminently the carcass, whither gather the eagles. Immediately after the tribulation convulsions above and below follow; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and all the tribes mourn, and they see Him coming to the earth. And His angels gather His elect (who seem here to be of Israel, as in Isa. 65, 66); for over these He will reign in the promised land. The heavenly saints are seen in their own place. Here our Lord treats of Israelitish saints.

The fig-tree is no longer barren; for the Son of man received, and the new covenant with Him, will change all. These are early days; and we hear no more than of the branch tender, and putting forth leaves. The time of fruit will come; but as yet they only know that summer is nigh. "So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, at the doors." Grace will not fail to work its due effects.

How is it with you, dear reader? Have you learned that you are no better than the barren fig-tree? If you have, it is well. For most deceive themselves and are indifferent. If you know that you have neither fruit nor life, oh! look to Him by faith Who is life and gives it to all that believe. It is ruinous to talk of your privileges. The greatest is that you have the New Testament as well as the Old. But only Jesus, the Son of God, can avail; only His blood cleanses from every sin, when you will have the seal of His Spirit and bear fruit by His grace. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Thus will you welcome His coming Who says, "Surely I come quickly," and you will answer, "Amen, come, Lord Jesus."

Three Prophetic Gems, Lord's Prophecy on Olivet in Matthew 24-25, The: 3. The Christian Profession

From this point the Lord begins to open out a new thing, namely, what the disciples were going to enter. Evidently this was the proper order. The Lord had begun with them as they were, and then He leads on to what they were soon to become, with the new relationships to Christ dead and risen, when fresh power would be given by the Holy Spirit. As a mark of this, you will see that the Lord drops all allusion to Judaea, and any reference to the temple, the prophets, and the sabbath. The Lord widens out now into parables of a general and comprehensive nature, which would be equally as true at Timbuctoo as at Jerusalem—it does not matter where. They belong to Christianity. What Christ died and rose to establish by the mission of the Spirit is not one of the narrow systems of men, nor of their broad worldly associations. Christianity is exclusive of nothing but sin; it is the practical expression of Christ, not only in grace and truth but in resulting practice. The Lord definitely marks this opening out into wider principles of a moral nature, which embrace all Christian disciples, wherever they might be in this world, and at any time till He comes. Hence we find three parables which apply thereto.

The first parable is the prudent servant contrasted with the evil one. It is a question of faithful service in the house, the duty of the highest and the duty of the lowest, not of intelligent activity with variety of spiritual endowment in each for trading with his lord's goods as given in the parable of the Talents (chap. 25). The form is very striking. We have, seen as one, a profession carried out and ending very differently; and this in relation with the Lord, not with Israel as before. "Who then is the faithful and prudent bondman whom his lord set over his household, to give them their food in due season? Blessed [is] that bondman whom his lord on coming shall find so doing. Verily I say to you, that he will set him over all that he hath. But if that evil bondman shall say in his heart, My lord tarrieth; and shall begin to beat his fellow-bondmen, and shall eat. and drink with the drunken, the lord of that bondman shall come in a day when he expecteth not, and in an hour that he knoweth not, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (vers. 45-51).

It was another case with the nation. In Judaism there was an enormous unbelieving mass in former times falling into idolatry and all kinds of wickedness, and hence persecuting the faithful brethren. But one of the characteristic marks of Christendom is that all are professors of Christ, whether truly or falsely; and it is therefore presented here as one whole strikingly. The Lord in the parable says the faithful and prudent servant shall be made ruler over all His goods. Blessed is that servant whom his Lord when he comes shall find so doing. It is the responsibility of all in the house. Hence He goes on to say, "But if that evil servant" etc. They are surprisingly joined thus. On what does his ruin turn? The evil servant says in his heart, "My lord delayeth." His coming is not a mere idea: man likes to have his notions; and nobody is the better for them. But He refers to what is deep and real, the heart's indifference to the coming of the Master. The evil servant says in his heart, "My lord delayeth." He believes what he likes; and what he likes is that the Lord should delay His coming.

Most affecting it is to see that the Lord treats the heart's putting off His return as leading to assumption within and laxity without. That evil servant when he says in his heart (for so it is), My lord delayeth, shall begin also to heat his fellow-servants, and shall eat and drink with the drunken. What a contrast with Christ, and practical denial of Him! It led back the professor to the world in self-exalting oppression, and in allowed intimacy with the ungodly and immoral. He is therefore appointed, when the Lord is come, to have his part with the hypocrites. The Lord does not treat him as a Jew or Greek, but according to his responsibility.

How different is it with the faithful and wise servant! He waits and longs for the Lord because he loves Him who first loved us. Hence the hope of Christ is quite distinct from prophecy. One might be greatly versed in the prophetic word, and wholly lack that hope; one might have the heart filled with the hope, and be altogether unacquainted with prophecy. No one could rightly deprecate those solemn warnings of what will burst unexpectedly on the world. But, next to believing in Christ for life and redemption, with worship and service and walk following, the Christian needs and is called to wait for the Son of God from heaven. Now if you love anyone, you delight to see him. The absence of the person beloved is trying to you. There may be the wisest reasons for delay, but the delay taxes your patience; and the hope of the speedy return of the one you love is the greatest joy to the heart.

The Lord gives this feeling, and strengthens it, toward Himself. It is the proper hope of the Christian, not the Kingdom but Christ. Grant that it may be hindered by the influence of prophetic notions; yet there is in the heart of all true Christians a genuine desire for the coming of Christ. But when the soul is not in peace through a full gospel, one is afraid. Those who give them an uncertain gospel are responsible for it; as they thus keep souls in dread, they do the greatest injury to the grace of God. One does not speak of such as quite falsify Christ or His work, but of those who do preach it partially, who fear to set forth the full value of the sacrifice of Christ, in the perfect deliverance which His death and resurrection have wrought for the believer.

The result of this defect in teaching is that Christians are apt to be alarmed instead of rejoicing at the immediate coming of Christ.

They do not own that the acceptance of Christ is the acceptance of a Christian; they have not learned the truth that the Lord by His death has not only effaced their sins but had their sinful nature condemned completely; and this in order to their walking now in the Spirit, to be followed by a perfect conformity to Christ's image in resurrection at His coming (Rom. 8:11, 29, 1-4).

Who can exaggerate what Christ has wrought for the believer? If you rest on His redemption, all difficulties Godward are taken away. Then there is nothing left but the need of daily self-judgment for every inconsistency, the duty of serving Him now, and the delight of being with Him and seeing Him then, as also of worshipping both now and forever by grace. He has done all for each to bring us to God, taking us out of every evil. How can the believer not rejoice in this and in Him? Therefore all Christians, wherever or whoever they may be, are entitled to have joy and delight, though for many dimmed unhappily, in the prospect of His coming.

Notwithstanding all their imperfect notions, it is certain that all Christians love Christ here, and in principle await Him too. To say this may not please some zealous pre-millennialist friends; but surely this hope belongs to every Christian heart. Would you doubt it of S. Rutherford? or of the late S. Waldegrave? Yet the system of the latter in his Modern Millennarianism was wildly unscriptural. For he believed the First Resurrection reign over, and that we are now in the little space, before Christ sits on the great white throne; and this he made His, coming, when heaven and earth had fled!

There are false prophetic views which hinder; but as the new nature goes out toward Christ, so it longs for the day when we shah be forever with the Lord. Waiting for Christ supposes waiting for His coming; but if put into precise forms and logical propositions, damage may easily ensue. If the object be to prove that many Christians do not look for Christ's coming, abundant grounds appear for working on. But if, on the other hand, you are child-like, God gives sufficient evidence that those who are Christ's, notwithstanding obstacles, do look and at bottom long for His coming.

Only let the children of God get clear of those clouds of noxious and unwholesome vapors that constantly rise up between the Lord and them. Let them cherish in their souls the hope He gave them. If you bring in a millennium first, it is hard to see Christ's coming clearly; it must act as a veil, which dulls the hope of that day. It may not destroy the hope, yet one cannot but look for His coming in an imperfect manner. If you bring in a great tribulation first, this 'also lowers the outlook and enfeebles the hope greatly; it occupies one with evils as they rise, produces a depressing effect, and fills the heart with that judicial trouble and the shade of desolation. They are the mistakes of theorists. The one puts a mistaken hope between you and the coming of the Lord, kindling meanwhile a dreamy excitement in waiting for that day. The other case produces a sort of spiritual nightmare, an oppressive feeling in the thought that you must go through so dreadful a crisis.

Be assured, my brethren, that the scriptures deliver us from both the dream and the nightmare. They entitle the believer to wait for Christ as simply as a child, being perfectly certain that God's word is as true as our hope is blessed. There is to be God's glorious kingdom; but the Lord Jesus will bring it in at His coming. Without doubt the great tribulation is to come, but not for the Christian. When it is a question about the Jew, you can understand it well: for why does the greatest tribulation come upon him? Because of idolatry; yea, of the Beast and the Antichrist worshipped. It is for him a moral retribution, with which the Christian has nothing direct to do. The predicted judgment falls on the apostate nations and the Jews. Those called to be witnesses of Jehovah and His Christ will at last fall into the dreadful snare of allowing the abomination to be put into the sanctuary of God.

What connection is there between this and the Christian looking for Christ? Here the prophecy of the blessed Lord drops all allusion to anything peculiar to Israel. His coming will surely be for the solemn judgment of all who pervert grace and indulge in unrighteousness, receiving a sentence so much the more stern, because the gospel reveals God perfectly in light and love, which they abused to fleshly license. As to this the Fathers taught falsehood and unholiness.

Then comes the parable of the ten Virgins. It is essential to disengage the Christian from the thought that the early part of this prophecy is about him such an idea completely perverts his judgment. For it presents, as we have seen, the Jewish people distinctively. Here we have a future comparison of the kingdom of the heavens.

But we have also in our day to do with another and opposite error, an error that takes away the parable of the Virgins from properly applying to the Christian. We may affirm, on the contrary, that it has nothing to do with the Jewish remnant directly; who, as they are not called to go out to meet the Bridegroom, could not have oil in their vessels, and lastly will not be exposed to the temptation of going to sleep. The Jews

ought to abide where they are, or only flee to escape death in their refusal of idolatry. And those who survive, for the Lord's appearing and their own deliverance, only receive the Holy Spirit after He appears. All is in contrast with the Christian position. But many a one who had been a Jewish disciple became a Christian, in the true sense of the term, as Peter uses the word in his First Epistle, and Luke in the Acts. In this parable, then, the Lord shows the kingdom of heaven will be likened to ten virgins. They all went forth to bear their testimony to Christ as the torch was to give light. They were to shine as lights in the world. Each virgin taking her lamp, they went forth to meet the Bridegroom.

(Continued).

Three Prophetic Gems, Lord's Prophecy on Olivet in Matthew 24-25, The: 2. The Jewish Disciples

THEN it is said, “Wheresoever the carcass is, there will be gathered together the eagles” (ver. 28).

Apply this to the church or to the Christian, and what can you make of it? Is the church “the carcass”? We have heard something still more dreadful. Men have not been wanting who say that the Lord is! Such are the results of attempting to interpret the prophecy on false ground. From early days Greek and Latin Fathers taught these strange and even profane ideas; and many down to modern time have followed in their wake. These crudities ought surely to be judged irreverent as well as grossly mistaken. Can any intelligent Christian deny it to be a rash and unworthy interpretation, no matter how (according to this scheme) they take “the carcass,” whether applying it to the church or to the Lord? The church united to Christ by the Holy Spirit is His body (): it is a wondrous privilege and a blessed truth; but is the church a carcass ()? Surely not; it is His living body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. Nor is the Lord regarded as a body dead or merely alive, but as the risen and glorified Head. The Lord a carcass! What were, or are, they dreaming about?

The whole effort is on false ground. There is no getting a consistent meaning out of the passage when interpreted of the church. The moment you refer it to the Jewish people, it becomes strikingly true. For the mass of the Jews will then be apostate; and the eagles or vultures who come together are figures of the divine judgments executed on the guilty people1 by the hostile nations of the earth. Whatever may be the instruments, they are judgments of God executed at this time. If the Christians were the carcass, they must be the object of the judgment, for there the eagles, figures of those that execute judgment, are gathered together. But this is not at all the relation of the Lord's coming to the Christian. Nor can any Christians be the eagles or instruments of divine vengeance, any more than the carcass, without abandoning all the truth and character of their calling. The changed saints undoubtedly will go up to meet the Lord; but is He then to be the carcass, and are the church the eagles? In such a scheme, there is only the choice of one evil less or greater than another; and it is generally so with an erroneous interpretation. Apply it to the object the Lord had in view, and harshness disappears. This is the test of scriptural truth: whenever men press a false interpretation, the general testimony of scripture is confused and dislocated or contradicted thereby.

Then the Lord adds, “But immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give its light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken” (ver. 29).

Here it is that the popular view advocated by Dean Alford and others places the Lord's beginning to speak of His return personally. This however is not only to destroy the force of “Immediately after the tribulation of those days” with which the verse opens, but it breaks the connection with the true transition to the last days in ver. 15, which introduces precise details of that epoch in their order; and it would seem, synchronizing with the preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom in all the habitable earth as a witness to all the nations in the general history, “and then shall the end come.” Thence forward it is, what happens in the temple, Judaea, and strictly Jewish concerns at the end of the age. This is shown clearly by the reference to Dan. 12:11. For the prophet there tells us that “from the time that the continual [holocaust] shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolation set up, [there shall be] a thousand, two hundred, and ninety days,” with a supplement in ver. 12 of “forty-five days” more to complete the incoming of the blessed time. Now count as men like from the siege of Titus, 1335 years for days bring in nothing of the sort.

The starting-point is wrong, and all modes of rectification are vain. It is really the last future crisis in and round Jerusalem, though it seems the gospel of the Kingdom goes on by godly Jews outside over the earth about the same time, the days in the prophet being literal days as here in ver. 22. What has misled most is confounding the very different language and truth in Matt. 24:15 etc. and Mark 13:14 etc. (who both give us what is entirely future) with that of Luke 21:20-24, which is entirely past, save the treading down of Jerusalem by Gentiles while Gentile times last, &c. Here it is unequivocally and exclusively the Roman sack and its consequences to this day; while Luke's future reference commences with ver. 25 and onward. It is an error to Mix up this Roman episode in the third Gospel with the pointedly different description in the first and second Gospels which omit this, and then converge on the future only. They speak of the abomination of desolation, and of the unequaled tribulation, on which Luke is silent. But Luke tells of the Romans investing Jerusalem, and their desolation, of which Matthew and Mark say not a word; as he does not about the tribulation without parallel, but only of days of vengeance, and great distress upon the land and wrath to this people. The other Evangelists are wholly silent on the extreme slaughter by the Roman arms, and their captivity into all the nations; with the notable prolonged fact that Jerusalem should be trodden down by Gentiles till their times are over, as they are not yet. All this is as carefully presented by Luke in exact consistency with the Spirit's design in his Gospel, as the other two omit it, and are devoted to the unprecedented horrors of the future which Luke omits.

But all three take up the closing scene, Luke not saying “Immediately after the tribulation etc.,” as in fact he had not alluded to it in the least, but joining the other two about signs in sun, moon, and stars though as usual noticing moral state beyond the others. Next all speak of the Son of man coming, as he puts it in a cloud with power and great glory; and he alone adds, “But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads; because your redemption draweth nigh.” Can any Christian be so prejudiced as not to see that not the heavenly saints are here in view? For we already have in Him redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our offenses; whereas those here represented have yet to enjoy it in His Kingdom.

Luke's presentation is of the more value as settling the true force of “this generation shall in no wise pass till all things have taken place” among them, the end of Gentile supremacy over Israel and Jerusalem. The desire to limit “this generation,” as here employed, to the destruction of their city by the Romans is thus certainly precluded. Further, at the consummation of the age the revived Roman Empire will not be against the apostate Jews, but rather on the side of the Antichrist or willful king of Palestine, when the King of the North at the time of

the end shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots and with horsemen and with many ships. But each shall perish successively and horribly under the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. The future (and these verses beyond just question strikingly speak of the future,) still more conclusively proves, for any acquainted with the prophets, the impossibility of interpreting the eagles of the Roman armies in the past, or any still more childish fancy of their symbolizing the church or Christians in the future, or the result (yet more offensive involved) of the carcass as figuring the Lord of glory.

“And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven; and then shall the tribes of the earth mourn (ver. 30).” The Son of Man appearing in heaven is, I presume, the sign of His coming to enforce His claim on earth. It is not here the believers with joy going up to meet the Lord, but the tribes of the earth or at least of the land mourning when the sign appears. “And they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (ver. 31).” Here too light is given of all moment to decide that the coming of the Son of man is in view of the land, the Jews (or mankind in general), and not at all to receive the heavenly ones for association with Himself in the Father's house.

For beyond controversy He is seen coming on the clouds of heaven before He sends forth His angels to gather together His elect, here in question, from the four winds. Now it is a matter of positive revelation by the apostle Paul (Col. 3:4) that “When Christ, our (or your) life shall be manifested then (, not ) shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory.” It is not the moment when we are changed and caught up to meet Him in the air, but are with Him manifested in glory. The heavenly saints are already with Him when He comes judicially as Son of man; for this is His given office as such (John 5:27), to execute judgment. They are with Him already, not then translated, called and chosen and faithful, and therefore not angels (who are not “called” or said to be “faithful”) but saints (Rev. 17:14).

Indeed we learn from Rev. 19:14 that the armies that are in the heaven followed Him upon white horses clothed in white pure byss, the righteousnesses of saints as interpreted just before; whereas angelic clothing had been said to be pure bright linen (Rev. 15:6). The elders, who represent the saints as chiefs of the royal priesthood, are seen on high from Rev. 4 to 19. Here they first appear in the quality of bride for the marriage of the Lamb above, and next, accompany Him as armies when He issues from heaven to judge and war in righteousness. Hence it is in the teeth of scripture that we can be on the earth and see Him appear as the glorious Son of Man in heaven coming to judge the quick. On the contrary we shall be then manifested together with Him when He is manifested in glory.

The Lord had already intimated it before Paul wrote 1 and 2 Thessalonians Cor. 15 and Col. 3. Only, though spoken, it was long after Paul had departed to be with Christ that John 14 was written and still longer than Rev. 4-19 These scriptures reveal that Christ will surely come to change and translate above the heavenly saints; as Enoch (Jude 14) and Zechariah (14:5) say they come with Him a truth repeated by the apostle in 1 Thess. 3:13; 4:14. Then in vers. 15-17 he proceeds in a new revelation to explain that this will be by His coming for them by His descent from heaven with a shout of command which gathers them in a moment to Himself. Clearly then “the elect,” subsequently gathered after the Lord appears, are not heavenly, but rather His restored people, the nucleus of godly Israel, in harmony with the context. Too many lay great stress upon gathering “His elect.” Be not too quick, my friends. The “elect” may not necessarily mean Christians. If one speak of elect now, it is so; but had God no heavenly “elect” before there were Christians? And after these are taken to heaven, will there be no elect on earth? Was the Lord to make a solitude and call it peace? Was God precluded from mercy on earth, because His sovereign grace had given us and the O. T. saints our respective places in heaven? There were elect Gentiles in patriarchal days and later too. Take Job for one, and his friends no doubt also the same; were they not elect men? Melchisedec, Jethro, and others; were not they elect? Need one enumerate the elect of Israel in the past? We find clearly elect Gentiles as well as Jews and Christians. When we read of Christianity, then the elect must be so explained; if we read about a Jewish state, then the phrase applies to a Jewish election; and so with the nations too. We must be governed by the context. As the Lord here is simply speaking about Israel, the sense should not be ambiguous. When we have “his elect” named, He means the elect of those described, that is, of Israel. This is not at all to bring in arbitrary rules. Is it not in fact a very plain and necessary principle of exposition?

The Lord in all the context is speaking about Israel and their hopes. Consequently “his elect” must be interpreted according to the object in view. These elect ones are to be gathered “from one end of heaven to the other,” yet not for heaven but on earth. (Compare Isa. 27, 65, Rom. 11:5, 7, 28.)

Then “learn the parable from the fig tree.” The fig tree is a well known symbol of Israel as a nation. This confirms what has been already said. In the Gospel of Luke, where the Lord takes a view of the Gentiles as well as of the Jews, He employs this very symbol, but enlarged remarkably. He says “the fig tree, and all the trees.” The latter are not spoken of in Matthew, because this part only looks at the Jew; but in Luke He refers to the Gentile as well as the Jew: hence He adds, “and all the trees.” (Compare Luke 21:20.)

“Now learn the parable from the fig tree. When its branch is now become tender, and putteth forth its leaves, ye know that the summer is nigh; even so ye also, when ye see all these things, know that it (or, he) is near, at the doors. Verily I say to you, this generation shall not pass away till all these things have come to pass” (vers. 32-34). Mark the phrase “all these things,” —from the first troubles down to the last, and the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. Clearly here “this generation” cannot mean, what some impute to it, a mere period of thirty years, or a man's life. The phrase means, what it frequently does in scripture, a line characterized by certain moral tokens entirely independent of length of time. Hence we find in the Psalms very particularly this use of “generation.” One text is enough to prove it in the most convincing manner. In Psa. 12:7 we read “Thou shalt keep them, O Jehovah, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever.” “This generation” is supposed to go on, and it is an evil generation, a generation which has no faith, a stubborn and Christ-rejecting generation. “This generation,” or the non-believing race of the Jews, is not to pass away till all these things have taken place. Thus the same generation which crucified the Lord of glory is going on still, and will, till He comes again in the clouds of heaven.

Some of you, probably have read in a respectable Review, an article of no small notoriety which boasts that the Jews of the present day are really what they were in the days of our Savior—a noble-hearted generous race (though they made that mistake!) as compared with their rude forefathers in the days of Moses, &c. Alas for the judgment of man! What a confession that “this generation” has not passed away! They are still the same proud, self-righteous, Christ-rejecting race as they were then.

But the grace of God will make them anew, “a generation to come.” The Lord will judge the unbelievers at last, dealing with them righteously after His immense long-suffering, but delivering a godly remnant in His grace. The Messiah has great things in store for Israel. There will be

this double action indeed, that the mass of them will fill up the cup of iniquity which their fathers began; and the remnant will become the holy seed, the Israel of the millennial day. Of the former He speaks when He says that “this generation shall not pass away till all these things have come to pass.” “The heaven and the earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. Of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of the heavens, but the Father only” (vers. 35, 36).

The next comparison (vers. 37-41) is not to the fig-tree or anything else taken from the physical world. A figure is taken from the dealings of God in the Old Testament. “But as the days of Noah, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man; for as in those days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and they knew not until the flood came and took them all away, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; one is taken and one is left. Two women [shall be] grinding at the mill, one is taken and one is left.” Had heavenly saints been in question, Enoch would be the appropriate type; but as the Lord meant saints, not caught up, but carried through the waters of judgment for the earth, He justly chose Noah as the pattern.

Again, instead of being an indiscriminate slaughter or captivity such as the Jews had executed upon them by the Romans, there is a direct contrast to this. Here is unfailing discrimination: one man taken and one left; one woman taken and another left. The Lord will deal with perfect discernment in each case: not so did the Romans, nor any army that ever took a city. Notoriously if not necessarily at such a time, there is scarce thought of, or leisure for, discrimination. The rule is wholesale bloodshed. and often slavery. It was especially so when Titus sacked the city. So alas! it may be to this day. But when the Lord Jesus comes in judgment of the quick, it will be quite otherwise. One, whether of men or of women, is taken for judgment, one left for blessing in the land.

The Lord winds up this part of His prophecy by saying, “Watch therefore, for ye know not on what day your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the house-master had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be digged through. Therefore, be ye also ready, for in an hour that ye think not the Son of man cometh” (vers. 42-44). There closes the portion of the prophecy which refers to the Jews. It began by referring to the Jewish remnant, because such the disciples as yet were really, though believers. Christ took them up just as they were; though we know they subsequently became Christians. They then passed into a new relationship. Faith in Him they had already; but instead of His reigning and blessing them on the earth another order of things was founded in connection with His ascension to heaven. Hence the same disciples merged into a new form of relationship with God, of which the Holy Spirit sent forth was the power. They were taught no longer to expect the Lord's restoration of the kingdom as their proper hope, but, contrariwise, that the Lord would come to receive them to Himself, and take them to the Father's home in heaven. This is the Christian's hope; this is what they await. The Lord calls them out from everything on earth to Himself. They had been expecting the Lord to establish them on the earth up to the day when the Lord Jesus went up to send down the Holy Ghost.

Christianity thus comes in, as if a drawbridge had been opened and let them into an entirely new thing. The disciples at the beginning were on one side of the bridge, the disciples at the end would be on the other side. The drawbridge opens, and the new thing, the church, passes through. It is the calling of Christians out of the world, of those called in one body, waiting till Christ comes to receive them to Himself and take them where He is. The Lord Jesus, having accomplished redemption, has Himself first taken His seat in heaven. Thus the disciples become heavenly (1 Cor. 15:48) and are being transformed spiritually (2 Cor. 3:18). Finally, at His coming, the Lord Jesus will take them completely out of their natural environment, conformed in body to His own glorious body. The state of things on earth since redemption, till He come to take us to be with Him on high, is truly well enough called Christianity.

It is not denied that the saints of old, before Christianity came in, will share in the resurrection, when they too will shine in the likeness of Christ. Only there is an enormous difference meanwhile. We are brought, since His cross, into salvation with new relationships in union with Himself; and the Holy Spirit gives a fresh and incomparably greater power to those who are now gathered to His name. It is possible that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were more faithful than many, perhaps than most of us. For ourselves we cannot take high ground; but we boast in God and of what Christ has given us. This really brings in grace and truth which makes our unfaithfulness more manifest; for the greater the Christian privileges, the more strictly is our unfaithfulness measured. But the hope does not make us ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts through the Holy Spirit given to us.

Very striking is the fact that “the Son of man” is here dropt, only to be resumed in the third section where all the nations come into review. For it will be shown that the clause containing that title in the Christian portion (25:13) is spurious. So in Dan. 7 we see this title used when He comes to deal with the Gentile powers, the last in particular, to the deliverance of the Jewish people.

(Continued)

Three Prophetic Gems, Lord's Prophecy on Olivet in Matthew 24-25, The: 1. The Jewish Disciples

In this discourse the Lord unfolds, first, the future of the Jewish disciples; secondly, that of the Christian profession; and thirdly, that of all the nations tested by the gospel of the Kingdom before the end comes, and He Himself reigns. Such are the simple divisions of the two chapters; and so it was or will be in fact. The discourse grew in His wisdom out of their directing His attention to the splendor of the buildings, from which their hearts were not yet weaned. They believed that Jesus was the Christ; they were born of God; but they had as yet their hearts associated with Israel's hopes, yea, even till the day that He ascended to heaven (Acts 1:6-11), though theirs was no small advance when He rose from the dead.

The Lord therefore begins with His disciples as they then were, who fittingly also represent those who are to succeed in the latter day, when the work of gathering out the Christian company for heavenly glory is complete, and God begins to prepare His people on earth for the reign of the returning Son of man. It is also the order of fact. No other division of the subject matter could be so satisfactory. In this connection were the disciples viewed not only generally throughout the Gospel, but evidently when He sent forth the twelve in chap. 10. “Depart not into a way of Gentiles, and into a city of Samaritans enter ye not; but go rather unto the lost sheep of Israel's house. And as ye go preach, saying, The kingdom of the heavens hath drawn nigh.” That this was superseded by the Christian testimony, as we shall see still more markedly in the discourse on Olivet, is true; but it is plain from ver. 23 that this Jewish mission will go forth again before the end: “for verily I say to you, Ye

shall not have finished the cities of Israel until the Son of man be come.” Christianity is a parenthesis.

Again, in the chapter (23) immediately preceding, the Lord says to the crowds and to His disciples, “The scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses' seat: all things therefore whatever they tell you, do and keep; but do not after their works, for they say and do not.” The disciples clearly are here viewed, not as Christians, but as Jews; and this is confirmed by the pointed language of ver. 34 to the end of the chapter. For sad as the retribution must be, a change should come to the people before His return. “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate; for I say unto you, Ye shall in no wise see me henceforth until ye say, Blessed be he that cometh in Jehovah's name.” Thus the repentance of a remnant will pave the way for His return; some suffering to death for His name, others preserved to welcome the Son of Man when He comes. Of both we hear much in the Psalms and the Prophets, as well as in the Revelation.

The first part of the discourse with its various sections suitably follows in chap. 24:1-44.

“And Jesus went out, and was going forth from the temple, and his disciples came to [him] to show him the buildings of the temple. But he answered and said to them, See ye not all these things?

Verily I say to you, Not a stone shall in anywise be left here on a stone, which shall not be thrown down” (1, 2). The rejected Messiah pronounces sentence: most solemn to hear for believing Jews who justly regarded the temple as the great external and public witness of the one true God and His worship on earth. It had been destroyed before, after the reigning son of David apostatized and made it the seat of Gentile idols. But had not there been a gracious return (not of Israel, it is true, but) of a Jewish remnant from Babylon to rebuild city and temple and to await Messiah? Alas! now, He whom they believed to be the anointed Son of David doomed it to another demolition which should not linger, when not the first but the last Gentile world-power should execute it; not because of idols, but because the Jews were first to refuse and then by Gentiles crucify their own Jehovah-Messiah: the two impeachments which Isaiah so long ago had predicted against the chosen people (40-48 and 49-57.).

“And as he was sitting upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, Tell us when shall these things be? and what [is] the sign of thy coming, and of the completion of the age? And Jesus answering said to them, See that no one mislead you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ, and they shall mislead many. And ye shall be about to hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled; for they must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in places. But all these [are the] beginning of travails. Then shall they give you up to tribulation and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated by all the nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be stumbled, and give up one another, and hate one another: and many false prophets shall arise, and shall mislead many. And because lawlessness shall be multiplied the love of the many shall grow cool. But he that endured to [the] end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole habitable [earth] for a witness to all the nations, and then shall the end come” (vers. 3-14).

From Mark 13:3 we learn that Peter, James, John, and Andrew were those who thus inquired, When shall these things be? i.e. the temple's destruction; and what the sign of His coming and of the consummation of the age? In the Gospel of Luke we find the first of these questions fully answered, and the overthrow of the city involving that of the temple, and Jerusalem trodden down by Gentiles till their times be fulfilled, running on still since the sack of Titus, and very distinctly severed from the Son of Man's coming when the redemption of the godly Jews draws nigh. Here the answer as to the impending ruin, already given in the parable of the marriage feast (Matt. 22:7) is passed by; and the Lord passes on to the second question, which rightly enough brings together the sign of His coming and of the completion of the age.

It is important to note the inexcusable error, in both the A. V. and the Revision, of confounding the end of “the age” with that of “the world.” There is not a shadow of ground for it; for the coming age of a thousand years and more is after the age that still is, and before the eternal scene. Even disciples, as yet preoccupied with Jewish hopes and prejudices, and wholly unintelligent of the new and large and heavenly associations of Christianity, knew better. They did not say rot' KOrrilov (“of the world”) but rov arovos (“of the age”); and the Lord in Matt. 13:38, 40 had amply guarded against such a confusion. The field or sowing place was “the world"; the judgment on the darnel and the display of the wheat should be at the close of “the age.” The new age will be characterized by the King reigning in righteousness, when the Father's kingdom is come on high, and the Son of Man's here below when His will is to be done on earth as in heaven.

The Lord gives first a general sketch of the ruin about to ensue. Moral amelioration, truth prevalent, peace for mankind, as yet were misleading dreams against which they should be on their guard. The rejection of Himself would open the door to many false claimants to lead astray many wars and their rumors should be heard. Only when He takes His great power and reigns could it be otherwise, as Isaiah predicts. His disciples were not to be disturbed any more than deceived. Such evil things must be, as the King was rejected; and the end is not yet. For instead of learning war no more as when He comes in His kingdom, nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; nor this only but providential inflictions such as famines and pestilences and earthquakes in places. Yet all these are a beginning of birth throes. At this time should His disciples be objects of persecution, betrayed, and even killed by all the Gentiles because of His name. Worse still, stumbling should befall many; and mutual treachery and hatred among themselves. Many false prophets should rise and mislead many; and because of the lawlessness that should abound the love of the many would wax cold. But he that endured to the end should be saved.

The Lord in these verses is contemplating souls with Jewish expectations, and tried by Jewish opposition and unbelief with the hatred of all the nations; but the one that endured is specially assured. The Deliverer will come in due time; but not a word about the church, nor yet the gospel in its depth. Yet “this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the habitable earth for a testimony to all the nations, and then shall come the end.” It is a testimony and not without fruit everywhere, without a word of effect farther. The change for dead and for living, for heaven and for earth, is reserved for Him Who is worthy, at His coming—the rejected Christ.

Now the remarkable and evident fact is that the Lord has here before Him Jewish disciples in early days with their counterpart before the end, but without reference to the Christian light and privilege which would come in. And we have plain enough proof in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistle of James, that in Jerusalem there was pertinacity in this respect that has often struck Christian readers as strange, not only after the great Pentecost was fulfilled, but to the eve of the subversion of the city and sanctuary. The Epistle to the Hebrews a little before gave God's final warning and proof, that for the Christian the Jewish system was now null and void. In this way one can apprehend how the Lord provides instruction for Jewish disciples before the end is come. Still thus far all is general; but from ver. 15 we are given much that is precise, He Himself referring to the last chapter of Daniel.

“When therefore ye shall see the abomination of desolation that was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in [the] holy place (let the reader understand), then let those in Judea flee unto the mountains; let not him that is upon the house come down to take the things out of the house; and let not him that is in the field return back to take his cloak. But woe to those with child and to them that suckle in those days! But pray that your flight be not in winter nor sabbath. For then shall be great tribulation, such as hath not been from world's beginning until now, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days had been cut short, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be cut short. Then if any one say to you, Behold, here [is] the Christ, or there, believe [him] not; for there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall give great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect. Behold, I have told you before. If therefore they say to you, Behold, [he is] in the desert, go not forth; Behold [he is] in the inner chambers, believe not. For as the lightning cometh forth from the east and appeareth unto the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of man. Wherever the carcass is, there will be gathered the eagles. But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the land mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with great sound of trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from [one] end of heavens to the other” (vers. 15-31).

Here we learn the awful mark of Jewish wickedness in guilty and fatal alliance with the Gentiles, as Daniel warned. It needs the more attention; for this too had been done by the order of Antiochus Epiphanes long before Messiah's first advent. An idol was then set up in the holy place which brought desolation on all who acted or submitted, as it also drew out the uncompromising opposition of the Maccabees. This was predicted fully and plainly in Dan. 11:31, as the pious heroism that rejected the abomination follows. For this reason it is the more distinguishable from the future of like and even more portentous apostasy. For all has been accomplished up to ver. 35, where a blank is without doubt implied leading to the “time of the end,” which we have here also in the Gospel. Then “the king” of the last time appears, not “of the north” as Antiochus Epiphanes had been in his day, still less “of the south,” but demonstrably distinct from both. For at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him; and the king of the north shall come against him, (Dan. 11:40). He is thus the object of hostility to both, and has for his sphere “the goodly land” between those two powers of the future on either side of him.

But he is also more widely the great religious enemy of Jehovah and His Christ; for reigning over the land of Israel, he will set himself forth as God in the temple of God. For this is the man of sin whom the apostle portrays in 2 Thess. 2., citing or applying Daniel's words. And to this future abomination of desolation the Lord refers in Dan. 12:11, with which is connected a date of 1290 days, and a supplement of 45 more, before the blessed time comes which the then faith of Israel awaits. Then the prophet himself shall rest and stand in his lot; and better still the Son of Man reign over not Israel only but all peoples, nations, and tongues: His dominion an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

This public act of apostasy the Lord makes the signal for immediate flight. That some ancients and moderns have interpreted it of Cestius Gallus or of Titus is familiarly known; but either is really out of the question. For neither the one nor the other set up an idol in the holy place; and as the one gave ample time to flee without the precipitancy here enjoined, so the other afforded none. For the city was surrounded and sacked; and the victor (far from setting up an idol) sought in vain to spare the temple from the flames of utter ruin. The error arose from not seeing that the divine design was to present us with the Roman capture of Jerusalem and its results in Luke 21:20-24. But here the Lord passes these over in the corresponding place of the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, and dwells only on the unequaled wickedness and tribulation of the future days, expressly said to be followed immediately by His own coming in clouds with great power and glory, closing man's evil age and opening the long-desired day of Jehovah. Luke omits that awful crisis.

As the sign for flight is unmistakable, so are those disciples contemplated by the Lord: “then let those in Judea flee to the mountains.” This in our future could not be for Christians, who, as we know from other scriptures, had been ere that translated to heaven. But God, on their disappearance, works in souls by His word and Spirit, to have an earthly people also, but first and especially among the Jews, the mass of whom are then deceived by the Antichrist. The godly Jewish remnant are thus therefore in question; and the Lord here points out that their danger is so immediate that there is no space to come down from the house-top for going into the house and taking their property out: they must flee at once. If one is in the field on the other hand, let him not turn back even to secure his cloak. It touched the Lord to think of women at such a crisis impeded personally or by their babes. And He urges prayer that the flight might not be in the rigor of winter or to the dishonor of sabbath. Can any intelligent Christian fail to see how godly Jews are here in view? From “the holy place” in ver. 15 to “sabbath” in 20, all point to disciples in that form of relationship, at that future epoch, and in that limited area.

So is the tribulation that comes next (21, 22). “In the world ye have tribulation” applies to the Christian in principle: hut no specific one is ever held out for him; he should expect it always. All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But the tribulation beyond parallel even for Israel is during the last three-and-a-half years from the setting up of the abomination of desolation in the sanctuary.

It is a judicial dealing of God through their enemies because of their audacious apostasy, and has no point of contact with the Christian, save that merely nominal Christians fully share it. The Gentiles as such play their part in it; so we read in Rev. 7 of '' the great tribulation “; out of which come a crowd of faithful ones who washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For the Jews and the Gentiles in the latter day will be thus visited in their respective measures, when the Christians are no longer here but in heaven with Christ. But those days are cut short for the elect's sake: otherwise no flesh should be saved: for here the Lord speaks of Jewish disciples preserved on earth for His kingdom, not of Christians that endure suffering, and reign with Him when changed at His coming, which is not even supposed in this question.

Not less clear are the intimations in 23-26. They suppose Jewish dangers and deceits of the most trying kind, but not at all such as Christians are exposed to. For we know that when the Lord Jesus comes for us, we shall be changed, dead or living, and be caught up to meet Him in the air. This is so definitely revealed in the very first Epistle written to correct the mistake in the assembly of Thessalonians, just gathered unto the Lord's name, that it is hard to conceive a Christian that is not now apprised of it. Hence were any to tell him that the Christ was here or there, in Rome or in London, he would reject it, and treat the alleged as a false Christ, and the herald as a false prophet; nor would great signs and prodigies weigh in support of so glaring a contradiction of the word of the Lord. But Jewish believers who have no such a promise did and will need the Lord's fore-warning to keep them from the snare. Whether therefore they say, He is in the desert or in the inner chambers, they were to believe neither. “For as the lightning cometh out of the east and appeareth unto the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man.” Not so does the apostle John put His coming to receive us to Himself, but as the Bridegroom for the bride. But the lightning flash appositely

describes His judicial presence for the Jewish disciples beset with Jewish and Gentile enemies animated with Satanic rage and hatred. And this is fully confirmed by the figure attached: “wherever the carcass is, there shall be gathered the eagles,” the swift instruments of divine vengeance on the dead prey which ought to have been a living witness for God. What a contrast with His coming and our gathering together unto Him! the blessed motive to deliver the deceived Thessalonians from being troubled by the false assertion that His day was there (as in 2 Thess. 2:1, 2).

Then the Lord states that “immediately after the tribulation of those days” there should be a total subversion of governmental order above, the sun, the moon, the stars, “and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken,” signs physically of the great change in progress for the earth. “And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in the heavens.” His appearing there on high is the sign of His coming to set up His kingdom and judge the quick. “And then shall all the tribes of the land” (for the context seems to favor this rendering, rather than “of the earth:” the word means either) lament: a result never expressed with His coming to translate us. “For they see Him coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.” But He acts on and by more than men. He has His angels; and these “He shall send with a great sound of trumpet; and they shall gather His elect,” meaning here those of Israel as well as of Judah who are written in the book, “from one end of the heavens to the other.” We may compare with the many references in the Psalms and the Prophets, Isaiah especially.

To interpret scripture we need a power and wisdom above our own. We cannot understand by forcing the lock: the key is wanted, and grace gives it in Christ as taught by the word and Spirit of God. If you have Christ by faith, you have already the key. In faith apply Him to the Bible, and the Holy Spirit enables you to understand it. It is not a question of a superior mind or of great learning—for many learned men have been most foolish in their mistakes. The simple saint who knows not beyond the mother-tongue may understand the Bible, if he with true simplicity submits himself to the Lord and has confidence in His love. This is produced by the Spirit of God: this, and only this, makes men humble, giving withal confidence in God and in His word, by taking away objects which darken, misdirect, or overpower his own mind.

Take the advice of a friend; read the scriptures carefully but believingly, and you will understand what is infinitely better than anything found in the various schemes of man. It is just the same as regards the interpretation of prophecy as in doctrine. No man should convince a Christian that one part of the word of God is sealed up and the other open. Once on a time it was so. When Daniel of old received those very communications to which the Lord directs the reader, he was told to seal up the book; when John was called to have the same communications and yet greater ones, he was told not to seal up the book. Perhaps you have seen the difference, and the reason of it. The principle lay here: Jewish saints could not enter into the true and full meaning of the future till Christ came, at least until the end comes. For then indeed, when the last days of this age are come, the godly remnant will understand. The wicked shall not understand. You cannot separate moral condition from real intelligence of God's word. But the Christian already has, not Christ only, but the Spirit in virtue of redemption; and hence he is called and qualified to search all things, yea the deep things of God. They are now revealed fully and finally.

When the grace of God gives faith and the desire to do the will of God, then souls become able to understand both doctrine and prophecy. They learn that all the revealed mind of God centers in Christ, not in the first man. When you are not bent on finding in prophecy, England or America, the cholera, the potato disease, or your own time; when you are delivered by grace from all such prepossession, then with Him as the object of the soul you have a fit moral condition; because such absorbing ideas of men no longer govern and blind you. Hence the only way to understand any part of the Bible is just by grace to give up our own will and desires, for Christ; then we can face anything. We are no longer afraid of what God has to reveal; nor do we try to read anything of our own into the Bible, being then content to gather God's meaning from it. May this be truly the temper and endeavor of our souls now.

Has it not been clearly shown that thus far the Lord Jesus speaks of disciples connected with the temple, and Judea, and Jerusalem, but not of Christians? Take these further proofs of it. He says, “And pray that your flight be not in the winter nor on a sabbath day.” The Lord's day is our day, the first day of the week. The Jew rightly and properly keeps Jehovah's sabbaths. As to this, there are languages in Europe more correct than what we hear more commonly spoken around us. The Pope's tongue, the Italian, keeps up the right distinction; it always speaks of Saturday as the sabbath day, and Sunday as the Lord's day. How curious that it should be so, where such gross darkness reigns on almost everything else!

In our own land and for a long time has been a great deal of confusion as to the sabbath and the Lord's day. Let none be offended at the remark; for its truth is certain and of importance. The Lord's day differs from the sabbath, not by a lower but by a higher degree of sanctity, not by leaving Christians free to do their own will on that day, but by calling them to do the Lord's will always in a complete separation to His glory, the holy services of divine praise in works of faith and in labors of love. In short, the Lord's day differs essentially from the sabbath day in that it is the day of grace, not of law, and the day of new creation, not of the old. The consequence of seeing this will be very important differences indeed in heart and practice.

Suppose a Christian had the strength to walk 20 miles on the Lord's day, and to preach the gospel six or seven times, would he be guilty of transgressing God's will? It is to be hoped that not a single person perhaps in this place would venture to think so; yet if really under the sabbath law, what can absolve from the obligations of that day? All under the law are bound within defined limits. Are Jews free to use the sabbath in indefinite labor even for what you know to be the active purposes of goodness? We must obey in our relationship.

Granted that the Son of man is Lord of the sabbath; but are the Jewish disciples also lords of the sabbath? You cannot do freely what you count ever so good: Jews are under stringent regulations as to that day. If the sabbath were your day, you are required to keep it as such. As you, a Christian, have to do with the Lord's day, seek to understand its meaning, and be true to it. Without question the Lord's day is a day of consecration to the worship and to the work of the Lord. It is not the last day of a laborious week, a day of rest that you share with your ox or your ass. It is a day that is devoted to the Lord Jesus, especially to communion with His own in the world. Nor is there sin in the most strenuous labor for souls then; on the contrary such labor in the Lord is good and blessed wherever it is found, if He guide in it, (and we need this).

But the Jewish disciples contemplated here are told to pray that the time for their precipitate flight should not be in the winter nor on a sabbath-day; for the one would seriously impede from its inclemency, and on the other they could not go farther than a sabbath-day's journey. But how could this affect us as Christians? Even if once Jews, we are no longer under such restrictions. The Lord is speaking not of Christians but of future Jewish disciples, subject to the law and its ritual, and animated by Jewish hopes.

Further, it is said, “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not even from the beginning of the world until now, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days had been shortened, no flesh would be saved.” All this is plain enough. It is not a question of heavenly things but of His Kingdom. They sought to live here and be the subjects of the blessed reign and glory when the Lord comes. It is glory on earth, not in heaven. “But for the elect's sake those days should be shortened.”

“Then, if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is the Christ, or there, believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, so as if possible to mislead even the elect. Behold, I have told you beforehand. Therefore, if they say to you, Behold, [he is] in the desert, go not forth: Behold, [he is] in the inner chambers, believe [it] not.” It is clear and certain that the elect here are Jewish. Improbable for a Christian to be deceived by such rumors for an instant. But it is the fact that the Lord Jesus supposes considerable danger for such disciples as are here. In fact, being Jewish (not Christian), they might be deceived by the cry that He was here or there on earth; whereas no Christian could be in danger, who awaits the Son of God from heaven. Yet the Jewish disciples were exposed to it. For looking as they were for the Lord's coming to the earth, they knew that the Lord's feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives. They might thus be taken in by deceits. Not so the Christian. He knows that he is to be with the Lord in the heavens, being for this taken up out of this world into the air to meet the Lord on high. But the deceits in question are addressed to such only as expect to meet the Lord on the earth. The whole of the scene thus far consists of the Lord's instructions to disciples connected with Jerusalem and Judwa, and has nothing at all to do with the Christians looking to join the Lord above.

Here again is the reason why even Jewish disciples should not listen. “For as the lightning cometh forth from the east and is seen even unto the west, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.” Commentators have applied all this to the Roman conquest. But the army of Titus did not come out of the east, as the lightning is said to do here, nor did it shine unto the west: the very reverse would be a more apt figure, had the Romans been meant. So distinctly has the Lord Jesus guarded against the misinterpretations of men. The Son of man's coming will be quite different and surprise men like the lightning. It will be no question of going hither and thither to seek Him.

The Lord then has given these firm standing points, these landmarks as it were, in the prophecy, which hinder us from being carried away by every wind of theory. We may see clearly what the Spirit has set before us. Nor has there been knowingly passed over anything material, or any violence done to a word. No wish is there to give aught but a clear, distinct, and positive impression of the mind of the Lord as conveyed in His own words. The disciples furnish occasion for others in the main like themselves in Judea at the close of the age.

Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 24:32-51, Remarks on

The general outline and the special view of the Jewish portion have been given thus far in chapter 24. This is next illustrated both from nature (ver. 32-35) and from Scripture (ver. 36-41) and closed by a suitable application. (Ver. 42-44.)

“From the fig-tree learn the (or, its) parable.” What is the peculiar significance and propriety of the fig-tree here? It is the well-known symbol of the Jewish nationality. Thus we saw it, in chapter 21, bearing nothing but leaves—that generation given up to the curse of perpetual fruitlessness, whatever grace may do for the generation to come. In Luke 21 The word is, “Behold the fig-tree and all the trees.” Why this striking change? Because the Holy Ghost all through, and notably in that chapter, introduces “the Gentiles.” Luke takes in a larger scope than Matthew, and expressly treats of Jerusalem's sorrows in connection with “the times of the Gentiles.” Hence the difference even in the illustrative figures. Here it is the tree not withered away, but with signs of vitality. “When its branch has now become tender and the leaves are shooting, ye know that summer is nigh; so likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is nigh by the doors;” i.e., the end of this age, and the beginning of the next under Messiah and the new covenant. And how solemnly the Savior warns that “this generation,” this Christ-rejecting race in Israel, shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled! The notion that all was fulfilled in the past siege of Jerusalem, founded on a narrow and unscriptural sense of that remarkable phrase, is from not hearing what He says unto the disciples. In a genealogy (as Matt. 1), or where the context requires it (as Luke 1), a life-time might be meant; but where is it so used in the prophetic Scriptures, Psalms, &c.? The meaning herein is rather moral than chronological, as for instance in Psa. 12:7, “Thou shalt keep them, O Lord, thou shalt preserve them from this generation forever.” The words “forever” prove a prolonged force, and accordingly the passage intimates that Jehovah shall preserve the godly from their evil, vain, flattering, lawless oppressors (ver. 2-5), from “this generation” forever. It is the distinct and conclusive refutation of those who would limit the phrase to a short epoch or a man's life-time. So in Deut. 32:5-20, we find generation similarly used, not to convey a period, but to express the moral characteristic of Israel. Again, in the Psalms we have not only “this generation,” but “the generation to come,” and neither confined to a mere term of thirty or a hundred years. (Compare also Prov. 30) But what may make the case the plainer, is the usage in the synoptic gospels. Thus, in Matt. 11:16, “Whereunto shall I liken this generation,” means such as then lived, characterized by the moral capriciousness which set them in opposition to God's testimony, whatever it might be, in righteousness or in grace. But evidently, though people then alive are primarily in view, the moral identity of the same features might extend indefinitely, and so from age to age it would still be “this generation.” Compare Matt. 12:39, 41, 42, 45, which last verse shows the unity of the “generation” in its final judgment (not yet, I believe, exhausted) with that which emerged from the Babylonish captivity. Again, note chapter 23:36, “Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.” This generation, chapter 24:34, shall not pass till all the predictions of judgment, &c., Christ uttered shall be fulfilled. As it is plain from what has been already shown—indeed, most of all from the plain Scripture itself—that much remains to be accomplished, “this generation” still subsists and must till all is over. And how true it is! There the Jews are, the wonder of every thoughtful mind, not merely a broken, scattered, and withal perpetuated race, not only distinct, spite of mighty effort from without to blot them out, and from within to amalgamate with others, but with the same unbelief, rejection, and scorn of Jesus, their own Messiah, as on the day He pronounced their doom. All these things—He warned of their earlier and their latest sorrows—must come to pass, before that wicked generation shall disappear. “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” That which incredulity counts most stable, the scene of its idolatry or of its self-exaltation, shall vanish, but the words of Christ, let them be about Israel or not, shall abide forever.

But if all be thus sure and unfailing, the Father alone knows the day and hour. (Ver. 36.) Ample and distinct signs the Savior had announced already, and the wise shall understand; “but the wicked shall do wickedly, and none of the wicked shall understand.” “But as the days of Noah, so shall the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not till the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming

of the Son of man be." Here is another testimony that our Lord in this position speaks of the Jewish disciples of the latter day, represented by those who then surrounded Him, and not of the Church. For His illustration is taken from the preservation of Noah and his house through the waters of the deluge; whereas the Holy Ghost, through Paul, illustrates our hope according to the pattern of Enoch, caught up to heaven entirely apart from the scenes and circumstances of judgment here below.

Moreover, when the Son of man thus comes in judgment of living men here below, it will not be as when the Romans or others took Jerusalem, indiscriminate slaughter or captivity; but whether in the open country or the duties of home, whether men or women, there will be righteous discernment of individuals. "Then shall two be in the field, the one is taken and the other is left; two women grinding at the mill, the one is taken and the other is left." The meaning clearly is, that one is taken away judicially, and the other left to enjoy the blessings of His reign, who shall judge God's people with righteousness and His poor with judgment. It is the converse of our change, when the dead in Christ shall rise first, and we, the living who remain, shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air; for those who are left in our ease are left to be punished with everlasting destruction from His presence. But the Lord will also have an earthly people. He waits till the heavenly saints are gathered to Him above, and then begins to sow, if I may thus speak, for earthly blessings, in which case His coming as Son of man will be for the removal of the wicked, leaving the righteous undisturbed in peace. "There shall be a handful of corn in the earth, upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon; and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure forever: his name shall continue as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name forever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen, and Amen."

"Watch therefore, for ye know not in what hour (or day1) your Lord is coming." The dealings with Israel, ending with the rescue of the just in their midst, involved, we saw, the judgment of the self secure, unconscious world. Accordingly, in these transitional verses, 42-44, we have an allusion to a wider sphere than the Jews or their land, in which the godly remnant would be found; protected, but still there. God will know how to deliver the godly out of temptation. There they are, however, surrounded by snares and foes, but preserved: a totally different position from ours, who will be then above in the sovereign grace and wisdom of our Savior. "But know this, that if the householder had known in what watch the thief was coming, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in an hour when ye think not, the Son of man is coming." I suppose that if we are to apply "the good man," or proprietor, of the house strictly, the enemy is meant as the prince of this world, who will be surprised by the sudden day of the Lord as a thief. But the object is evidently a practical warning to the godly on earth to be ready. They had been comforted in view of trouble and violence; they had been set on their guard against the religious deceits of the old serpent; they had been solemnly assured of the stability of the Lord's words in the very point where Gentile conceit has misled even true believers; they are now exhorted to vigilance and readiness for their coming Lord, that they might not only escape the fowlers, but stand before the Son of man.

From verse 45 of chapter 24 to chapter 25:30, we enter on the parables which pertain to Christendom only, and not to the Jewish remnant. Hence here we have so distinct a portraiture of profession, true and false. Whenever we touch what is properly Christian, God we find dealing with the heart and conscience. He is calling out and forming those who are to be the companions of His Son in heavenly glory. Therefore nothing is passed by; all is judged of God in its real light. Hence, too, there is no limit here of either place or people. Christianity is above time, and of and from heaven, though it may be divulged in fact on earth during the gap in the dispensations of God made by the rejection for a season of Israel. It is a revelation of grace flowing from Him who now speaks, not from earth, but heaven. It is not, I need hardly insist, that evil is slighted. No mistake can be more profound or fatal than that grace implies levity about sin. On the contrary, grace is the very strongest condemnation of all evil, as it is indeed not the mere claim of what man ought to be toward God, but the revelation of what God is toward man in the judgment of his sin in the cross of Christ. Therefore it is the fullest display of divine hatred and judgment of evil, but this in Christ, so as to save the most guilty who believe, at the cost of His own Son, the Savior. When dealing with His earthly people under the law, many things were allowed for the hardness of their heart, which never had His sanction. But it is precisely where the complete display of grace shines, as it does now, that there evil is not borne with but judged. Such is Christianity in principle and in fact. And hence it is, that for the true Christian all the time for his earthly sojourn is a season of self-judgment; or if he fail in this, the assembly is bound to judge his ways; and if they fail, the Lord judges him and them, holily but in grace, that they should not be condemned with the world. False profession He may expose now if He see fit, but the end of it We see here in all these three parables. Grace never winks at evil; and if evil takes advantage of grace for its own purposes, the issue is frightful, and will be manifestly so at the coming of the Lord.

And this leads me to remark that the Lord's coming has a two-fold character. First of all, there is His coming in full grace, entirely apart from all question of our service, and consequently of special rewards in the kingdom in which we are to be manifested along with Christ. But we must bear in mind that this manifestation to the world in the future kingdom is far from being the highest part of His glory or even ours, as it does not elicit the deepest exercise of His grace. In receiving us to Himself, on the other hand, all is purely from Himself. It is His own love who would thus have us with and as Himself. Thus we find St. John puts the coming of Christ in his gospel, chap. xiv., nor am I aware that it is ever treated otherwise there. In the Revelation we find both ways. In the first chapter the testimony is, "Behold he cometh with the clouds," &c. Plainly there is no trace of the saints caught up there, but "every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." The Bride nowhere appears in the scene, but rather what is public and affects the world universally, and especially the blood guilty Jew; and all are mourning. But the last chapter could not close without letting us know that there is, spite of all evil and woe and judgment, such an one as the Bride awaiting her heavenly Bridegroom. No sooner does He announce Himself the root and off-spring of David, the bright and morning star, than the Spirit and the Bride say, Come. Here we have the intimate intercourse of heart between the Lord and the Church. It is impossible for any one not born of God to say "Come," though there may be those who are so born, and yet ignorant of their full privilege of union with Christ. And for them, I doubt not, gracious provision is made in the word, "Let him that heareth, say, Come." But in no case can the world or an unforgiven soul take up such a call; to such it would indeed be the madness of presumption, for His coming, to them, must be sure and endless destruction. Again, it is not merely saving flesh, or deliverance out of misery and danger by the overthrow of their enemies; the Holy Ghost never puts the aspect of Christ's coming for us in any such light. We shall have rest, and those who trouble us shall have tribulation in the day of His appearing; but we go to meet the Savior, and to be with Him forever; and meanwhile, it is our sweet earthly privilege to suffer for His sake now. We are left for a while in a world where everything is against us, because against Him, and we belong to Him. But we know that He waits to come for us, and we wait for Him from heaven; and while the waiting lasts, we expect nothing but suffering from the world, but are happy in it, assured that glory in heaven and the cross on earth go together. The cup of trial, the reproach and scorn of men, may be less at one time than another. This is for our Father to give as He sees fit. But if we look for aught else as our natural portion here as Christians, we are faithless to our calling. Rejection is ours because we are His:

“therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.”

As the Bridegroom, then, the Lord has nothing but love in His heart to the Bride. Nor is there question of any save His own. He has told them He is coming; and the greater the power of the Spirit in the soul, the more ardently does the Bride say, “Come.” How incongruous here that other eyes should see! or that wailing throngs should intrude into or witness such a meeting! Scripture does not so speak.

The Jew, the world, which refused the true Christ, will receive the antichrist. This is what men wait for and will fall into; and in the midst of their delusion and apparent triumph, the Lord will come in judgment. But when He thus comes, it will not be alone. Others, His saints, appear along with Him in glory. This is what we see in Rev. 17, and with detail in chapter 19. Not angels only, but His saints follow Him out of heaven, clothed in white linen, and on white horses, according to the striking figures of the Apocalypse. The saints had been in heaven before the day of the world's judgment. They must have been removed from earth to heaven before this, in order to. follow Him out of heaven, and be with Him when that day dawns. And this could only have been through His coming to receive them to Himself. Hence, again, it appears that His coming has a double character, according to the object of each of its steps or stages. He comes to gather above His saints, dead or living, and presents them in the Father's house, that where He is, there they may be also. In due time afterward He brings them with Him, judging the beast and the false prophet, the Jews, and the Gentiles, as well as every false profession of His name. This is still His coming, or state of presence: only now it is (what the former act, when He takes us to be with Him, is never called). His appearing, the shining forth of His coming (2 Thess. 2:8), His revelation, and His day.

With this second act of the Lord's coming or His day is connected the appraisal of our service, and the assigning of reward for work that has been done. For all must be manifested before the judgment-seat of Christ, and each must receive the things done in the body, whether good or bad. Some find a difficulty in bowing to both truths; but if subject to the Word, we shall overlook neither the common blessedness of the saints in the full grace of the Savior at His coming, nor the recognition of individual faithfulness, or the lack of it, in the rewards of the kingdom. When we read of the many mansions, we are not to dream of one being more glorious than another. The truth conveyed is that we are to be as near and dear as sons can be in the Father's presence, through the perfect love and work of the Son. In this point of view I see no difference whatever. All are brought absolutely nigh, all loved with the love wherewith Christ was loved, and having His portion as far as can be for the creature. But am I therefore to deny that “every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor?” or that in some cases the work will abide, as in others it will be burnt? or that, as the parable teaches, one servant may receive ten cities, and another five?

It will be found accordingly, that there is a close connection in Scripture between Christ's day or appearing and present exhortations to fidelity. Thus, Timothy is exhorted to keep the commandment without spot, unrebukeable until the appearing of our Lord Jesus. So the apostle, in 2 Tim. 4, speaks of the “crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.” The results of faithfulness, or of unfaithfulness, are only manifest then. It is the day of display before the world; and “when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we also appear with him in glory.” Hence it is as awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus that the apostle speaks of the Corinthian saints as coming short in no gift, and at once brings in the thought of His day. So Christ's day is the blessed end and solemn test of all in writing to the Philippians. Of the Epistles to the Thessalonians I need say the less, as they present in the clearest way both these truths.

Returning now to the first of the three parables which refer to the Christian profession, I would make the general remark from what we have been examining, that while the words “appearing,” “day,” &c., are special and never used, I think, except where responsibility is concerned, the word “coming” is general, and though applicable, if the context so require it, to the case of responsibility, is in itself of wider character, and is used, therefore, to express our Lord's return in nothing but grace. In other words, the appearing, day, or revelation of Christ is still His coming or presence; but His coming does not necessarily mean His appearing, revelation, or day. He may come without appearing, and I believe that there is proof from Scripture that so it is when He receives us to Himself on high; but His appearing is that further stage of His coming again, when every eye shall see Him.

“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household to give them meat in due season?” It is not a question of evangelizing here, but of care for the household. The principle of trading outside with the Master's gifts will come by and by (chap. 24:14 and seq.); but here the great thing is that, as the Lord loves His saints (“whose house are we”), so He makes much of faithful or faithless service within that sphere. For I need not say that faithfulness to the Lord involves no denial of ministry. Ministry when real is of God; but the mode in which it is exercised is often wrong and unscriptural. Ministry is not Jewish, but characteristic of Christianity. But it is a thing very apt to lose its true character. Instead of being Christ's servants in His household, many sink into the agents of a particular body. In such a case it always flows from the church or denomination. Real ministry is from Christ, and Him alone. Therefore the apostle says he was the servant or bondman of Jesus Christ—never deriving his mission from or being responsible for his work to the church. The gospel and the church were the spheres of his service (Col. 1), but its giver and his Lord was Christ Himself exclusively. It appears to me that this is necessary, in order that ministry should be recognized as divine; and nothing but divine ministry is owned in Scripture, nor should be by God's people now. This, then, is the first thing our Lord insists on, that the faithful and wise servant whom the Lord makes ruler over His household be found doing His work, caring for what is so near to Christ. It is a most painful proof of the low estate of the Church in these days that such service is regarded as the waste of precious ointment. So completely have even. God's children fallen from the thought of true ministry that they think it idleness or proselytism to attend to those that are within. Why not preach to those without, say they, and seek to bring such to the knowledge of Christ? But this is not the first thing our Lord presses. The “faithful and wise servant” had to do with those within his object was to give them their meat in due season; and the Lord pronounces that servant blessed. “Blessed is that servant whom his lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.” Others might raise questions as to his title; but He simply says, If I find you “so doing,” blessed are you. The great point is to be doing His will. It is not title or position, but doing the work which the Lord wishes to be done.

But now comes the other side of the picture. “But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming; and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants and to eat and drink with the drunken.” There you have the great danger of the professed servants of Christ in this world. First, wronging the fellow-servants by assuming an arbitrary place. Authority is right where it is exercised under obedience to Christ. No change of circumstances or condition alters the truth that the Lord remains Head of the Church and raises up His servants at all times to carry out His wishes with authority. But here it is man's will, where the servant takes the place of His Master, and begins to smite his fellow servants. Secondly, along with that, there is evil communication with the world. It is not said that he is himself drunken; but it is association with the world. “Evil communications corrupt good manners.” Where the thought of the Lord is gone, ministry loses its true character. There will be oppression towards those within, and evil commerce with those without. “The Lord of that servant shall come in a day

when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” It supposes that the servant still pursues the same course, and is found there when the Lord comes; his heart thoroughly with the world. He began by saying in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming. This is far more than wrong thoughts about the coming of the Lord, which some saints might hold, without this Scripture applying to them. If there were, on the other hand, persons professing to look for the Lord's coming and acting as if they did not believe it, they are much more like the servant saying in his heart, My Lord delayeth His coming. What the Lord judges is not a mere mistake or doctrinal blunder; but it is the state of heart—content that Christ should stay away. If we are desiring something great and of esteem among men, how can we say, “Come?” His coming would spoil all our schemes. We may talk about the Lord's coming and be learned about prophecy; but the Lord looks at the heart and not at the appearance. He sees where, let the profession be ever so loud or high, souls cleave to the world and do not want Him.

Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 24:1-31, Remarks on

We see in this prophecy of our Lord a remarkable confirmation of a great principle of God—that He never opens out the future of judgments on the rebellious, and of deliverance for His own people, till sin has so developed itself; as to manifest total ruin. Take the very first instances in the Bible. When was it said that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head When the woman was beguiled, and the man in transgression through the wiles of the enemy; when thus sin had entered the world, and death by sin. Again the prophecy of Enoch, given us by Jude, was uttered when the term of God's patience with the then world was almost closed, and the flood was about to bear witness of His judgment on man's corruption and violence. Thus, whether we look at the first prediction of Christ before the expulsion from Eden, or at the testimony of the Lord's coming to judge before the deluge, prophecy thus far evidently comes in when man has wholly broken down. So, next, we find Noah, when there was confusion and failure in his own family and in himself too, led of the Holy Ghost into a prophetic summary of the whole world's history, beginning with the doom of him who despised his father, even though it were to his own shame, and proceeding with the blessing of Shem and the portion of Japhet. So, later on, with the prophecies of Balsam and of Moses, “yea, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those that follow after;” for Samuel's is that striking epoch which the New Testament singles out as the commencement of the great line of the prophets. And why? It was the day when Israel openly abandoned God as their king, consummating the sin which their heart conceived in the desert, when they sought a captain in order to return into Egypt. It was a proud crisis in Israel, whose blessedness lay in being a people separated from all around by and to Jehovah their God, who would surely have provided them a king of His own choice, had they waited, instead of choosing for themselves, to His dishonor and their own sure degradation and sorrow, in order to be like the nations. The same principle equally and conspicuously applies to the time when the great prophetic books were written—Isaiah, Jeremiah, and the rest. It was when all present hope had fled, and David's sons wrought no deliverance, but rather at last a deeper curse through their towering iniquity and profane insults of the true God, who was thus morally forced to pronounce the nation Lo-ammi— “not my people.” Before, and during, and after the captivity, the Spirit of prophecy laid bare the sin of king, and priests, and prophets, and people, but pointed the heart to the coming Messiah and the new covenant. And Him we have seen, in our Gospel, actually come, but growingly and utterly rejected by Israel, and all their own promises and hopes in Him; and now in the near prospect of His own death at their hands, in itself their worst of deaths, He takes up this prophetic strain.

“And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple.” For what was it now? A corpse, and no more. “Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.” “And his disciples came to him for to show him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another which shall not be thrown down.” The hearts of believers then, as too often now, were occupied with present appearances, and the great show of grandeur in God's service; the halo of associations was bright before their eyes. But Jesus passes sentence on all that even they admired on the earth. In truth, when He left the temple, all was gone which gave it value in the sight of God. It is ever thus. Outside Jesus, what is there in this world but vain show or worse 1 And 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 1 How can I enjoy the coming of the Lord if it is to throw down much that I tun seeking to build up in the world? A man, for instance, may be trying to gain or keep 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 and ends, there never was nor will be a lack of men to do its work. But we have a higher business, and it is beneath us to seek the world's honors. Let our outward position here below be ever so menial or trying, what so glorious as in it to serve the Lord Christ? And He is coming?

In the cross I see God humbling Himself—the only One of all greatness making nothing of Himself for my soul—the only One who commands all becoming a servant of the very vilest. A person cannot receive the truth of the cross without having his walk in measure in accordance with the spirit of it. Yet saints of God have regarded the cross, not so much as that power 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 all anxiety, in, order to make themselves a comfortable place in the world. The Christian ought to be the happiest of men; but his happiness consists not in what he has here, but in what he knows that he will have with Christ. Meanwhile, our service and obedience are to be formed according to the spirit of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. Man's evil and God's grace thoroughly came out in the cross; all met there; and it is founded upon this great truth that it is said so often in Scripture, “The end of all things is at hand;” because all was out in moral ways and in dispensational dealings between God and man.

Connected with this, our Lord does not unfold here the portion of us Christians exactly, but takes up the disciples where they were. They were believing, godly Jews. Their associations connected Christ and the temple together. They knew that He was the Messiah of Israel, and they expected him to judge the Romans and gather all the scattered ones of the seed of Abraham from the four winds of heaven. They looked for all the prophecies about the land and the city to be accomplished. There was no thought in the minds of the disciples at this time of Jesus going to heaven and staying there for a long time—of the scattering of Israel, and the Gentiles being brought in to the knowledge of Christ. Consequently this great prophecy on the mount of Olives starts with the disciples and with their condition. Their hearts were too much

occupied with the buildings of the temple. But the Lord, now rejected, announces that “there shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down.” This excited greatly the desire of the disciples to understand how such things were to come to pass. They were aware from the prophecies that there was a time of dismal sorrow for Israel, and they did not know how to put this together with their predicted blessing. They ask Him, therefore, “When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?”

“Thy coming” means, the Lord's presence with them on earth; and “the end of the age” is a totally different word from that translated “world” elsewhere: it means here the end of the time during which our Lord should be absent from them. They wished to know the sign of His presence with them. They knew there could never be such desolation if their Messiah were reigning over them. They wished to know when this time of sorrow should come, and what should be the sign of His own presence that should close it, and bring in unending joy.

“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.” In the epistles of Paul it is never exactly such a thought as warning persons against false Christs. For there the Holy Ghost addresses us as Christians; and a Christian could not be deceived by a man's pretensions to be Christ. It is most appropriate here, because the disciples are viewed in this chapter, not as the representatives of us Christians now, but of future godly Jews. We, as Christians, have nothing to do with the destruction of the temple; it does not affect us in any way. These disciples were regarded as the godly remnant of the nation, who were looking for the Messiah to bring in glory. The Lord, therefore, warns them that if any should arise among them, saying, I am Christ, they were not to believe them. The time was come when the true Messiah ought to appear. And He had appeared, but Israel had rejected Him; they refused to bow to Him, hardening themselves in the lie that our Lord could not be the promised One. But Israel have not given up the hope of the Messiah yet, and this exposes them to the delusion spoken of here, i.e., to persons saying, I am Christ. At any rate, the rejection of the true Christ lays them open to the reception of a false Christ. Our Lord had warned them of this. “I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not. If another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive.” If a Messiah were to come full of self and Satan, the nation should be given up to receive the false, as a just retribution for having rejected the true. The disciples were the representatives of godly Jews, and were warned of what should befall their nation. But take the epistles of John, and what have you there? “Beloved, believe not every spirit.” Why? Because the great thing that the Church is distinguished by is the presence of the Holy Ghost; and the deceit which we have to watch against is false spirits, not false Christs, though there are many antichrists.

How are we to do God's will? How are we to be directed to what will honor Him? The Holy Ghost alone can guide us in a right path, and He acts by the word of God. I must find myself meeting according to the Scriptures, where what is of man is disallowed, and what is of God is freely and fully acknowledged. We are bound to see whether all that we are doing will bear the full searching of the Scriptures; if not, let us stop at once. Never do a single thing which you believe to be contrary to the written word. “Cease to do evil.” “To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” Supposing I only know that what I am doing is wrong, but that I see nothing further, I must stop. God gives me no fresh light before me if I am doing what is wrong. I may have to remain in my chamber, and not see what to do; but wherever I see evil, I am bound by it. We never can go on in evil, hoping for more light. What is the walk of faith? A believer may seem to go blindfold, but he has God for his guide. He does not see before him, but he has the eye and heart and hand of One who does. It is God who guides. He shows me His will for that one step, and when I have taken it, He will show me the next. It is a question of honoring God. When we have done that in any particular step, the Lord opens a further path for us.

Our Lord does not warn against false spirits here, because He is not speaking to the disciples on the ground of Christianity. By a Christian, I mean a believer since the Holy Ghost was poured out from on high. He is not a bit more a saint than a man called to the knowledge of God before; but he has entered more fully into the truth of God as revealed in Christ. The disciples did not enter into this yet; and the Lord takes them as examples of a believing remnant in the latter day. The danger of Christians is grieving the Holy Ghost—nay, listening to false spirits. “Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” These are persons in whom an evil spirit wrought. There are false prophets now, and evil spirits work in them. In these days, faith either in the Holy Ghost or in Satan's power is very much weakened. People only look at the man; whereas Scripture makes a great deal of God and of Satan. What gives Satan power over a professor of the name of Christ is the allowance of sin. Satan has not one atom of power against a child of God who is looking to Jesus; but where self is allowed, Satan can come and make a resting-place for a season. A believer could not be a false prophet, but there might be a temporary power of the enemy over his soul.

Here it is a question of false Christs, because our Lord was going to speak to the disciples about Jewish circumstances and hopes, though He afterward turns to Christian subjects. The prophecy consists of three great parts. The Jewish remnant have their history thoroughly described; then comes the portion of Christians, and after that of the Gentiles. The prophecy divides itself into these three sections. Why are the Jews, we may ask, first brought forward? The disciples were not yet taken out of their Jewish position: only when Christ was crucified was the wall of partition broken down. Our Lord's intention was to take up a Jewish remnant and show that there would be a company in the latter day on the same ground as these disciples—the Christian would come in between. This we have described in the latter part of the chapter, and in chapter xxv. And then we have the Gentiles, “all nations,” gathered before the Son of man. Such is the thread of connection between the parts of this great discourse.

“Many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.” Observe, there are two great moral warnings given by our Lord. First, they were to beware of a true hope falsely applied. He guards them against the attractions of a false Christ, who would take advantage of the fact that the Jews ought to be looking for Christ, and they would pretend to be Christ. But, besides, there is the fear that would be excited by the enemy, who knows how to bring in a new deceit suited to another set of circumstances. Verse 6, therefore, guards them against alarms: “Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars.” We have nothing to do with these. Where do you find that the Holy Ghost warns the Christian about trouble from wars and rumors of wars I Do we find anything about it in the Epistles, where the Christian Church is properly brought out? Am I then denying the importance of the Lord's prophecy? God forbid! But the portion we are looking at does not refer to Christians as they now are, but to Jewish disciples as they then were and as they will be. Our calling takes place after our Lord went to heaven and before He returns in glory; whereas the Jewish remnant will be found in the latter day on similar ground and with hopes like those the disciples had whom our Lord was here addressing. We do not arrive at a clear knowledge of anything by denying the great landmarks of God. If we want to put things rightly together in the word of God, we must notice what and to whom He speaks. If I, a Gentile, take up the language of a Jew, a great mistake is made; or if a Christian adopt the language of either Jew or Gentile, there is again an equal mistake. Therefore it is that such

stress is laid on “rightly dividing the word of truth.” We find various ways of God according to His sovereign will about those with whom He is dealing, and we must take care to apply His word aright. Here we have disciples having a peculiar calling in a particular land, the land of Judea; and if they heard of wars and rumors of wars, they were not to be troubled. “For all these things must come to pass; but the end is not yet.” Mark the difference in the language of Scripture. Do we ever find the apostles saying, The end is not yet, for us? On the contrary, it is said of us (1 Cor. 10), “Upon whom the ends of the world are come.” So again, speaking about the cross of Christ, it is said (Heb. 9:26), “Now once, in the end of the world;” whereas, when the Lord is predicting about the Jewish remnant, “the end is not yet.” And this, because many things must yet be accomplished before the Jews can come into their blessing. But for Christians, all things even now are ours in Christ; the blessing is never put off, though we await the crown at His coming. Again, many parts of Scripture speak of scenes of anguish before the Lord's coming; others make Christians to be expecting Christ at any time. These Scriptures cannot be broken nor contradict one another; and yet they must do so, if they are applied to the same people.

Practically, too, the difference is immensely important; for the Christian is not of the world, even as Christ is not, which could not be equally said of the Jewish body yet to be called in the latter-day. For us “wars and rumors of wars” ought not to be a source of trouble, any more than of interest on either side of this world's combatants. Surely they should be an occasion of holy concern and intercession in the spirit of grace, and this for all engaged. The Jewish remnant, on the contrary, will not be separated after this heavenly manner; and the earthly struggles which will then rage in and round the land cannot but affect them nearly: so that they will need especially to cherish confidence in the Savior's words and not be troubled, as if the issue were a doubtful one, or themselves forgotten in that dark day. They must wait patiently; “for nation shall rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famine, and pestilence, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.”

It is evident that the language is only applicable in its full force to Jews—believing ones, no doubt, but still Jews in the midst of a nation judicially chastised for their apostasy from God and rejection of their own Messiah.

Besides, the Lord prepares the Jewish disciples or remnant for their own special trials, partially true after His own departure till Jerusalem disappeared, and once more to be verified before Jerusalem is fully owned after the destruction of the antichrist. “Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you; and ye shall be hated of all nations (or the Gentiles) for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.” (Ver. 9-11.) There should be false profession among them, and hatred of the true even among themselves, and not only troubles without. And many false prophets shall rise and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold; but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.” Thus there is a certain defined period of endurance—an end to come as truly as there was a beginning of sorrows. But what trial, and darkness, and suffering, and scandal before that end come! When our Lord speaks, as in the gospel of John, of the Christian's lot, He never names either a beginning or an end, but rather implies that tribulation should be expected throughout his career. “In the world ye shall have tribulation.” And such is the constant language and thought in the epistles, where beyond question our calling is supposed.

Then follows a final sign. “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” (Ver. 14.) The gospel of God's grace is not the same as the gospel of the kingdom. Both should be preached—that God is saving souls of His mere favor now through Christ; and that there is a kingdom which He is going to establish by His power shortly, which is to embrace all the earth. Before the end come, there will therefore be a special testimony of this coming of the Lord, as He here intimates. So in Rev. 14 an angel is seen by John in the prophetic vision, having the everlasting gospel to preach to the dwellers on earth and to every nation, and saying with a loud voice, “Fear God and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come; and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” Now it cannot be so said that the hour of His judgment is come; for it is, on the contrary, and expressly, the day of His grace and salvation. Clearly, therefore, the inference is that, just before the close of this age, there will be a remarkable energy of the Spirit in the midst of the Jews; and from that very people who rejected Jesus of old, messengers of the kingdom shall go forth touched by His grace to announce the speedy fall of divine judgment and establishment of the kingdom of the heavens in power and glory. Who so suited, in God's mercy, to proclaim the returning Messiah as some of the very nation who of old had nailed Him to the cross, among all the proud Gentiles whose then representative inscribed it with “This is Jesus the King of the Jews?” The testimony shall go forth universally. How humbling for Christendom! What has become of the East? What of the West? Mahometanism! Popery! with Paganism too still prevalent over vast tracts of Asia and Africa. And yet Christian men close their eyes to the plainest and most solemn facts and boast of the triumphs of the gospel! No: the Gentiles have been wise in their own conceits, though grace has wrought where God has pleased, spite of all; but it is reserved for other witnesses, when the falling away shall have been complete in Christendom and the man of sin revealed, to proclaim the coming kingdom in all the habitable earth.

In verse 15 the Lord goes back in point of time, and shows us not general tokens of the approach of the end and that which should distinguish the end in general from the earlier throes of Israel; but here we have circumstances of the most definite character, which may be applied perhaps partially to what occurred before the fall of Jerusalem under Titus, but which can only be fulfilled in the future of Israel if we duly heed the peculiarity of the scene, the connection of the prophecy, and above all, the consummation in which all is to terminate.

First, then, our Lord points to a Jewish prophet. “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place (Whoso readeth, let him understand),” &c. The parenthesis warns that the prediction might be misunderstood—at any rate demanded attention. Two passages of the prophecy (chap. 11:31 and 12:11) speak of this abomination; but I have no hesitation in affirming that the former was a foreshadowing of the doings of Antiochus Epiphanes centuries before Christ, and that the latter is the one referred to here and still unaccomplished. Entirely distinct from the epoch of Antiochus, Dan. 12 speaks of another idol which brings desolation in its train, and this expressly “at the time of the end.” “Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.” In this we have another link of connection with our Lord's words” whoso readeth, let him understand.” “And from the time that the daily [sacrifice] shall be taken away and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand, two hundred and ninety days.” Thus, beside the idolatrous evil imposed by the notorious king of the north long before the Lord appeared, Daniel looks onward, to a similar evil at the close of Israel's sorrows, the destruction of which immediately precedes their final deliverance. “Blessed is he that waiteth.” As to this last, our Lord cites the Jewish prophet, and casts further light on the selfsame time and circumstances, when Daniel himself shall re-appear in his lot. The conclusion is clear and certain: our Lord in this verse 15 of Matt. 24 determines the allusion to be to that part of Daniel which is yet future, not to what was history when He stood on the Mount of Olives. I am aware that some have confounded the matter with what we read in Dan. 8 and in Dan. 9 But “the transgression of

desolation” is not the same as “the abomination of desolation;” nor can we absolutely identify “the last end of the indignation” with “the time of the end.” The distinctions of Scripture are as much to be noted as the points of resemblance and of contact. (Comp. Isa. 10) The last verse of Dan. 9 might seem to have stronger claims. There we have a covenant confirmed for one week; and then in the midst of the week sacrifice and oblation are made to cease; after which, because of the protection given to abominations or idols, there is a desolator “even until the consummation and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate;” i.e., Jerusalem. I have thus given what I conceive to be the true sense of this important passage, because when it is stated with precision, the supposed resemblance to “the abomination of desolation” disappears. A desolator who comes because of the wing, i.e., protection of abominations, is very distinct from the abomination that makes desolate, or the idol which is yet to stand in the sanctuary. With the setting up of this abomination, the date of 1290 days is connected. Even for those who understand this of so many years, it is impossible to apply the prophecy to the destruction of Jerusalem, or its temple by the Romans. Had it been so, the period of blessing must long ere this have arrived for Israel. Has the prophecy then failed? No; but readers have failed in understanding it. We must correct, not the language of Scripture, but our interpretations: we must go back to God's word again and again, and see whether we have not mistaken our bearings.

The truth is, that the understanding of Dan. 12 is of all moment for reaping due profit from Matt. 24 In its first verse we have a plain landmark: “At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people.” There can be no just doubt that Daniel's people mean the Jews, and that a mighty intervention on their behalf is intimated; but, as usual, not without the severest trial of faith. For “there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time.” This our Lord has unquestionably in view in verse 21: “then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no nor ever shall be.” There cannot be two tribulations for the same people, each of which is greatest: both statements refer to the same trouble. Now Daniel is positive—that “at that time thy people (the Jews) shall be delivered.” Who can pretend that Michael stood up for Israel against Titus any more than Nebuchadnezzar? Does not everybody know that at that time, far from being delivered, they were completely vanquished by the Romans, and that those who escaped the sword were sold as slaves and scattered over the world? God was then against, not for, Israel; and, as the king in the parable, he was wroth, sent forth his armies, destroyed those murderers, and fired their city. Here, on the contrary, the unequaled hour of sorrow is just before their deliverance on God's part, not before their captivity.

Carrying this back to our chapter, the sight of the desolating idol in the holy place is the signal for flight. “Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains.” There is no thought of a sign to Christians as such, but to Jewish disciples in the holy land; and this that they may instantly retire from the scene of danger. “Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house; neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days.” (Ver. 17-19). It has been tried to find in this the warning on which some fled to Pella in the interval after the Roman lieutenant surrounded the city, and before the final sack under the victorious emperor. But this arises from confounding Luke 21:20-24, with Matt. 24:15-21; whereas they are demonstrably distinct, spite of a measure of analogy between them. It perfectly fell within the province given of the Spirit to the great Gentile evangelist, to notice the past Roman siege, as well as the present supremacy of the nations which tread down Jerusalem till their times are fulfilled. Matthew, however, had his own proper task in giving the grand future crisis, at least from verse 15. And it is evident that as the abomination in the holy place differs widely from armies compassing Jerusalem, so there was ample space for the most leisurely departure from the menaced city, yes, for the most impeded and infirm of either sex to go, after Cestius Gallus withdrew. I conclude, therefore, that by Matthew our Lord gives us what bears on the time of the end; by Luke what refers to the past, and the present too, cursorily, as well as the future. Matthew, for instance, could not speak like Luke, of Jerusalem being trodden down of the Gentiles, because he is here occupied only with the horrors which immediately precede Israel's blessing and deliverance. Luke has both an earlier and a later time of trouble: Matthew, from verse 15, leaves that and confines himself to this.

“But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath-day for there shall be great tribulation such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.” How considerate the Lord is. And how surely His disciples in that day may count on His care, that their petitions will be answered, so that, urgent as their flight must be, neither the inclement season nor the day of Jewish rest shall hinder! Here again is another proof that not Christians but His Jewish followers are here contemplated. Holy as is the Sabbath, I have no hesitation in saying that the Lord's day, with which the Church has to do, is founded on a deeper sanctity. The believer has now to beware, on the one hand, of confounding the Sabbath with the Lord's day: and, on the other, of supposing that, because the Lord's day is not the Sabbath, it may therefore be turned to a selfish or worldly account. The Sabbath is the holy memorial of creation and of the law; as the Lord's day is of grace and the new creation in the resurrection of the Savior. As Christians we are neither of the old creation nor under the law, but stand on the totally different ground of Christ dead and risen. The Sabbath was for man and the Jew, the last day of the week, and one simply of rest, to be shared with the ox and the ass. This is not the Christian idea, which begins the week with the Lord, gives the best to Him in worship, and is free to labor for Him to all lengths in the midst of the world's sin and misery.

Thus we have, at every step, a fresh testimony to the real bearing of the prophecy. For us the holy place is in heaven, not in Jerusalem; for us it is no question of escaping some unexampled tribulation, but of being prepared for and rejoicing in it always; for us, gathered out of all nations and tongues, the mountains round Judea are no suited hiding-place; nor could the winter or the Sabbath-day be a just source of alarm. Every word is for us to ponder and profit by; but the evidence unmistakably points to a converted body of Jews in the latter day, not standing in Church light and privilege, but having Jewish hopes, and, while awaiting the Messiah, warned how to escape the deceits and overwhelming trouble of that day. It is a question of flesh being saved (ver. 22), and not of fellowship with Christ's sufferings and conformity to His death, so as, whatever the cost, to have part in the resurrection from among the dead. Hence, too, there is no thought here of Christ's coming to receive us to Himself, and to give us mansions where He is in the Father's house, but of His presence in glory to destroy enemies, to judge what was dead and offensive to God, and to deliver the scattered elect of Israel. For their sake, those days of terror should be shortened. With this agree the warnings in ver. 22-28: “Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there: believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders,” &e. Could such a delusion be addressed even to the simplest Christian who waits for the Son of God from heaven? Yet is it very intelligible if we think of these future Jewish disciples, who might expect something akin from a prediction such as Zech. 14, where we find that the Mount of Olives is the appointed spot on which Jehovah-Messiah is yet to stand. We can well conceive rumors for such saints that Christ was in the desert or in the secret chambers: they might deceive those who expected to meet the Lord on earth, not those who know that they are to join Him and the risen ones in the air. (1 Thess. 4; 2 Thess. 2) The manner of His presence for delivering the Jews is then made known as the guard against their deceits. “For as the lightning cometh,” &c. The figures (ver. 27, 28), which illustrate the presence of the Son of man, convey the thought of sudden, terrible manifestation, and of rapid, inevitable judgment, on what is then but a lifeless body before God, whatever may have been its pretensions. Nothing similar appears

wherever, beyond controversy, Scripture describes the descent of the Lord to receive His risen saints. And what is the result of thus misapplying these verses? The revolting interpretation that “the carcass” means Christ, and “the eagles” the transfigured saints, or the converse, calls for censure, not comment. Nor is it needful to refute the claim set up for the Roman standards. Applied to Israel, all is simple. The carcass represents the apostate part of that nation; the eagles or vultures are the figure of the judgments that fall upon it. It is not only, then, that there will be the lightning-like display of Christ in judgment; but the agents of His wrath shall know where and how to deal with that which is abominable in God's sight. The allusion is to Job 39:30.

“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened,” &c. (Ver. 29-31.) I can hardly be asked to notice the old effort to apply these verses to the Roman triumph over Jerusalem. On the face of it, could this be said to be “immediately after the tribulation,” or was it not rather the crowning of Jewish sorrow, not the glorious reversal of their sufferings by a divine deliverance? Whatever prodigies Josephus reports were rather during the tribulation he records; whereas the signs spoken of here, literal or figurative, are to follow “the tribulation of those days,” i.e., the future crisis of Jerusalem. No; an incomparably greater than Titus is here; and an event is announced in connection with that poor people, which will change the face and condition of all nations. “Then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the coming of the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet; and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.” The elect throughout are the chosen out of Israel. (Ver. 22, 24, 31. Compare Isa. 65) Others elect there are, no doubt; but we must ever interpret by the context; and this in the present case seems to me clear and conclusive. The Son of man in heaven, and seen there, is, I conceive, the sign to those on earth. This fills all the tribes with mourning; and Christ visibly comes to judgment. Other Scriptures show that the heavenly saints have been already translated, and are then to accompany their Lord; but here nothing of this appears. It would have been premature. Besides, the object of this portion of the prophecy is to show His coming for the relief and ingathering of His elect out of Israel. Hence, it is as Son of man (that is, judicially, see John 5:27) that He is present; and hence, too, His angels He sends with loud trumpet sound. “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.” (Isa. 27:13.) It is the proclamation, not alone of the acceptable year of the Lord, but of the day of God's vengeance. “And ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel.” The four winds in connection with Israel are no difficulty, but rather the contrary. (See Zech. 2:6.) As the Lord had scattered and spread them abroad “as the four winds of the heaven,” so now are His chosen ones to be gathered in.

Lectures on the Second Coming and Kingdom of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Jews in Relation to the Coming of the Lord, The

Matthew 23:37-39.

Lecture 2.

OUR Savior’s words seem to me to be clear and Conclusive. They meet a notion that prevails too largely even among the children of God — the notion that God has done with the Jew as such; that there is no longer a hope for them, as a nation; that they are merely to be converted individually now, or it may be later on multitudinously, as Christians through the preaching of the Gospel, to be brought into the membership of the body of Christ, and joined with the Gentiles who believe in the Savior, so as to form one body. Clearly, too, our Savior was here not speaking of the Gospel or any word of God that was about to proceed from Him seated at the right hand of God. He speaks of Jerusalem, loved but guilty, Christ-rejecting Jerusalem; He speaks of that city, the holy city in title, but, in fact, the rebellious city, the once idolatrous city, that had killed saints and prophets, that was now summing up her guilt in the cross of her own Messiah. Yet to Jerusalem, as such, our Lord makes known that she would repent and welcome the now despised King as surely as desolation was to be her portion meanwhile, yea, of the very house, once the house of God, but now degraded before God (He, the Lord who has all rights, being disowned). Thus the Savior puts it — “Your house is left unto you desolate; for I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.”

And what or whose faith is this? Of Christians now? or of Jews by and by? “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord!” The Christian faith is that He has come, that He has died, and is now risen and glorified. Not so does the Lord speak of the shape which the faith in question is to take. I say not that they will not identify their coming Messiah with Him who suffered on the cross, but that distinctly and unmistakably our Savior carries them back to the ancient oracles, and applies that word to them written in the 118th Psalm, which looks for Israel to be blessed, but Israel blessed in the coming of Him who was rejected by the builders, the master-builders. The despised Messiah is no longer refused, but, on the contrary, most welcome to their hearts. “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.” The passage, therefore, is equally definite in showing that if the present Jerusalem and her temple were to be left desolate, all that was her distinctive glory being taken from her, and this at the word of the Savior Himself, yet the time would come when their hearts would desire Him, saying, “Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Jerusalem is not forsaken forever. He who left her to herself, to her sin and shame in refusing Him, even He is our warrant for knowing that the selfsame people and city will look for Him, hail Him, and have provided for their song in the utterance of their faith the great Hallel.1 What a proof that God has in no wise abandoned His people; that He will make good every word He has uttered about them; that, although for a time there is a painful gap, and Israel is forsaken of her Lord apparently, and in a sense really too, yet in truth, as His heart yearned over her in the midst and in spite of her sin, so her heart will turn to Him in that blessed day when His people shall be “willing in the day of His power.” (Psa. 110).

This, then, is our Lord’s own answer to the thoughts of men. If we search the doctrinal unfoldings of the New Testament, we shall find that the Holy Ghost affirms the same great truth, and in the same epistle where, above all others, He insists on the indiscriminate grace of God in the gospel. I do not speak now of such an epistle as that to the Ephesians, where the heavenly character of the Church as an entirely new thing leaves out of sight the thoughts and hopes of Israel. But let us take the epistle to the Romans, which makes it so much the more striking, because unquestionably the Jew by and by will be saved by the same Savior, by the same sacrifice will be set apart to God. Yet it is in Romans that the Spirit of God gives us the truth of God as to this, elaborately laid down with the utmost possible distinctness. All is set before the saints from His perfect mind. We have dispensation in the epistle to the Romans, and there we find the Gentiles brought in as such now. This led to the question, Has God cast away His people? What people? Clearly not Christians. On the contrary, God was only then gathering such believers, not casting them out. What people then are in question? The Jews, and none other. The answer is, that He has not cast them away.

The apostle gives various proofs that there is no abandonment save for a time. There is a limit, just as we have before seen, “until ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh.” So here we find the Holy Ghost confirming the same blessed truth, and we are shown on several plain grounds that the Holy Ghost distinctly looks onward to the gathering together of Israel as a people unto the Lord. It is the blessing of the Jew as such, after the Lord has closed His present work and calling from the Gentiles. Hence, inasmuch as it is a question of the dispensation of God upon the earth, we have the figure of the olive tree introduced — not the one body of Christ, but an old thing, which had begun in early days — begun indeed, I may say, before Israel in him who was the father of Israel Accordingly the olive tree appears before us with certain of its branches — the unfaithful Jewish branches — broken off, and the wild olive of the Gentile grafted in. Next, the Spirit of God intimates that, for the Gentiles, all turns upon their faithfulness, upon their continuance in God’s goodness. That is, it is a question of dispensation. Where it is an outflow of saving mercy, where it is simply the sovereign grace of God, there could be no such question as the condition of the faithfulness of the people; but, inasmuch as it is evidently the course of God’s dealing upon the earth, it is made known to them that they stand by faith, that they stand only in the goodness of God. They are admonished to take warning by the severity God has used towards the Jews, and to hold fast their trust: otherwise they also should be cut off.

Then we have more than this. In the same chapter (Rom. 11) the argument of the apostle makes it perfectly plain that the Spirit of God contemplates nothing less than all Israel, brought in as a people to the enjoyment of their ancient and cherished hopes, though upon the ground of the sovereign mercy of God, and therefore with a real work of the Holy Ghost in their souls. The argument in the eleventh verse is this: “Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their tall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.” The actual blessing of Gentiles by the gospel was in no wise to leave the Jews forever outside the promises of God as a nation. You must remember, there was nothing in the mind of God, or indeed of the saints at that time, to forbid the thought that many individuals of the Jews would be brought in meanwhile by the faith of Jesus. The fact is, a very large portion of the believers then living were Jews; certainly in the places where the gospel was first preached, they formed the great majority of those who bore His name. The work was extending among the Gentiles, and, no doubt, in no long time, the Gentiles that believed far outnumbered the Jews; but still, in the earlier days of evangel, cation, it is plain that the mass of professors were from the nation of Israel. Therefore, manifestly, it was no question at all of God’s mercy to individuals out of Israel. The only point to decide was, whether God had abandoned Israel as a people. The answer distinctly negatives such a conclusion. If His mercy now went out to the Gentiles, it was to provoke Israel to jealousy in the long run, it was to win back the nation as such. “Now, if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness?” Then, instead of seeing a mere remnant of believers separate from the main body of the Jews, there should be a nation born of God, an entire people publicly enjoying all that God had promised, and, by faith, knowing the sweetness of the promises infinitely more because they had found their King, as well as their forgiveness, in that very Savior whom they had before despised, rejected, and crucified. Accordingly, in the latter part of the chapter, he gives us no longer the fact of a remnant as a witness that God had not definitively cast off Israel as a whole, no longer a process of reasoning from the end of provoking Israel to jealousy, but the most distinct textual proof from direct prophecy. He says: “I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits” [the very danger of Christendom and the snare into which it has fallen]; “that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers’ sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” What doctrine or deduction can be plainer? It is certain, from the language of the Holy Ghost, not merely that there shall be a vast accession to the remnant of believers out of the Jews (for this is not the matter in hand), but that there is the surest warrant from the word of God that the nation, as such, shall yet be blessed. “All Israel shall be saved.” It is in contrast with a mere remnant.

Thus we find the Spirit of God citing this portion of Isaiah as authority, and adding the most conclusive reason why it cannot be a part of the present work of God in gathering out the Church of God. In the Church, the Jew and the Gentile, as such, are unknown; there the distinction has entirely disappeared. Here, on the contrary, you have “all Israel” saved, in contrast with the divine action that is now going forth toward the Gentiles, where a remnant of Jews coalesces with a mass of Gentiles. This is in progress now, and in Christ, in the Church, the distinction does not exist. Whereas, on the Contrary, when God has finished His present work, all Israel shall be saved. This entirely explains the language of verse 28, “Enemies, as concerning the Gospel” — an expression which could not be used if it were by the gospel as now preached. No doubt, in that bright day they will be brought into reconciliation; but then it will be by a distinct work of God. It will be, not by a message that supposes the distinction of Jew and Gentile at an end, as in that which God is doing now, because He is acting from Christ at the right hand of God, where Jewish and Gentile distinctions have no place. But God, after this work is done, takes up the links of the ancient promises and prophecies, and brings them home to Israel by the power of the Spirit, so that the whole nation shall be saved.

I have used, therefore, these two scriptures as a kind of introduction, before we look at the prophecies of the Old Testament which refer to this weighty subject. I hope to show, as far as the limits of a single evening will permit, what will precede the real work of God in restoring Israel and bringing them into a true Spirit-taught knowledge of redemption.

The prophet Isaiah presents the fullest revelation of God’s ways with His people. In chapter 1 we have a moral pleading between God and Israel. Throughout it is the same Jerusalem; but first Jerusalem is viewed as no better than Sodom and Gomorrah. The faithful city was become a harlot. It was full of judgment, but now murderers were there. “Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water: thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves.” There can be no question what city is meant. Certainly it is not the heavenly Jerusalem; but the literal, historical, earthly Jerusalem is regarded as already corrupt, becoming more and more rebellious, about to be altogether apostate. “Therefore (vs. 24) saith the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies: and I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin: and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counselors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, The faithful city.” Can any fair-minded person affirm or conceive that there has ever been even the appearance of an accomplishment of this moral restoration? it was uttered considerably more than a century bore the wickedness of Jerusalem was such that God could tolerate it no more. Then Judah was carried away into captivity to Babylon. Has there been anything since answering to this promise? Doubtless small body of Jews returned from that captivity; but was Zion restored as at the beginning? Was Jerusalem at any time afterward “the city of righteousness?” On the contrary; did they not come back feeble and few, a poor broken remnant, the slaves and prey of Gentile lords? Did they not incur after that the further and deeper guilt of rejecting their own Messiah?

But this is not all. The second chapter gives us a view of the restoration that is really intended, certain features of which make plain whether it has been accomplished, or whether, on the contrary, we have still to look forward and wait. “The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.” There are those who interpret passages like this in the mystic sense of converts to Christ gathered out of the Gentiles by the gospel, and brought into the Church; but let us read a little farther. “Many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob.” Now, does not the gospel go out to souls? Is it not so that the Lord now works? Does He not send out His servants with the glad tidings to every creature? Is it not in the most precise contrast with such a gathering as this to an earthly center? Is there not the activity of grace in the apostolic mission? It is not waiting for souls to gather to Jerusalem, or anywhere else on earth, but, on the contrary, going out to them, as it is said, “Neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, shall men worship the Father; but they that worship must worship in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship Him.” In “the hour that now is” we have this excluded. In the prophecy of Isaiah the gathering of nations is to an earthly metropolis, to Jerusalem, to that mountain. That is, our Lord describes the Christian order of things in terms as pointedly in contrast, it seems to me, as could well be conceived. The prophet contemplates another day, a totally different scene. Nothing has answered to it since Isaiah uttered these words. The gospel, we have seen, which is the only active work of God’s grace that there has been since, is in contrast with it—instead of being its accomplishment. But there is even more. We have here the law going forth out of Zion. It is clearly not the gospel, but the living oracles, as of old. “Out of Zion shall go forth the law.” I do not understand by this that it is merely a question of the ten commandments, but the revelation as God gave it before the cross — a revelation founded on the promise of exalting the people of God on the earth, and of maintaining them as a center of blessing for the nations when Messiah shall reign. Such seems to my mind its clear unequivocal character. Mark what follows. “He shall judge among the nations.” It is not the revelation of One who, in grace toward sinners, though as a basis of divine righteousness withal, bore the judgment of sin upon the cross. He will be King then, King not of Israel only, but of nations also, as it, is in Jeremiah 10, and should be in Revelation 15. Here, however, it is rather a question of judicial authority, exercised in respect of them, and assuredly it will be in contrast with what He is doing now. “He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares.” Need I say there has been no accomplishment of such words as these? Need I insist, that even the so-called Christian nations are rather the leaders and chiefs in the invention of every kind of implement for mutual destruction? Is this beating swords into plowshares? The contrary is the fact in this age most evidently. But the age is coming when “they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” Let anyone compare this with what our Savior Himself utters (Matt. 24) immediately after the portion of Scripture we began with tonight. You will find that from the mount of Olives He, instructing the disciples in what they were to expect, distinctly says that nation should rise against nation, that they were to look for wars and rumors of wars. Can this, then, be the same time as that intended in Isaiah 2? How are we to decide then? Make them to be the same time, and you set the Old Testament against the New; distinguish the periods, and the balance of truth is restored. Both are true, Old Testament prophet and New Testament apostle; both were divinely inspired. The Lord, embracing that which, while going on to the end of the age, more or less was at hand for His disciples, conclusively shows that the character of the world should not be changed yet; that it was only the testimony, the Gospel of the kingdom, that was now going forth, not the kingdom itself set up in power and judging the habitable earth, as it is said, “He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people.” As yet it was no more than the witness borne to it, it was the working of His Spirit by the word of God; but this in no wise alters the face of things here below as a whole. Only individuals are brought to the knowledge of Himself, and saved everywhere out of all nations; but as to the nations themselves, instead of being rebuked, they have abused and insulted the goodness of God; they have refused to bow to the divine testimony, and, their passions being unchanged, they rise against each other, learning, teaching, and carrying on war and every ambitious scheme with as much zest and impetus as ever. So it has been, so it is to this very day. And what, then, of this early prophecy of Isaiah? Never having been accomplished to this hour, it remains to be accomplished. Nothing more simple. Everything falls into its place when we leave time and space for the working out of the magnificent ways of God.

Thus, without dwelling upon each chapter, though there is hardly one that would not furnish evidence, if it were needed, upon the subject, I would refer to chapter 4 as a striking picture in contrast with anything that God is doing now. “And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread and wear our own apparel, only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach.” That is, the prophet foreshows a condition where men will have been cut off by the judgment of God, where there has been a fearful desolation by divine judgment. “In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious.” Judgment proceeds, and then there is the breaking forth of the branch of the Lord into beauty and glory. “The fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel; and it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem.” It is to be a real work of God. No Christian should allow the thought of a mere carnal restoration, or of anything which could be achieved by the revolutions of the political wheel. But it is not, on the other hand, the effect of preaching the gospel as now. “That nation” will once more come into prominence, and in their own land — at least the escaped of Israel It will be souls blessed of God, but at the same time blessed as the seed of Jacob in the earth, “When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.” Is this the Gospel — “the spirit of judgment, and the spirit of burning?” “And the Lord will create upon every dwelling place of Mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night.” What delusion to spend our time and breath vainly imagining how the Spirit of God is thus at work now? Is there anything in the least degree resembling it? “For upon all the glory shall be a defense.” Now, on the contrary, the power of God is put forth not in defending the witnesses of His grace, but in nerving the Christian to suffer, in strengthening him to endure with joy as well as patience. Here, on the other hand, it is an openly displayed and glorious vindication of His people, so long broken down, when all war and trouble are ended. It is another state of things altogether. “There shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.” Are we to fritter away the blessed word of God? Are we to suppose that this really means spiritual comfort for souls? Surely souls will be blessed by its spirit now; but every word of the Lord shall be fulfilled, and Israel shall be His witnesses when glory shines on the earth.

Without dwelling upon the intervening chapters, I would point your attention to the opening of chapter 9, where we have a prophecy partially accomplished. It may serve as an instance of that which is very common throughout the Old Testament “Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterwards did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.” As I apprehend, the Spirit of God spews a much more severe affliction coming upon that land than would be under the king of Babylon. The Roman, the last great power of the Gentiles, was to be the instrument of an infliction incomparably more intense. This furnishes occasion for the Spirit of God to bring in a partial application to

Christ, because it was under the fourth empire that our Lord appeared. Consequently there was readiness for the final scene. At any rate there was One who brought them in light divine, and this into Galilee; as it is said here, by the way of the sea, Galilee of the nations. “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” This is the point that the Spirit of God applies in the New Testament; and nothing can be more simple; but then He does not apply what was not accomplished. Then let us read on: “Thou hast multiplied the nation, and [let me refer now to the margin] increased the joy to him: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of the oppressor, as in the day of Midian.” Is this, too, fulfilled? When was there any appearance of it? Under Pompey, under Augustus, under Tiberius, under Titus? What took place then? When the Romans came up, was the rod of the oppressor broken? On the contrary, did it not fall more heavily, and without the smallest intervention from God? Did the predicted facts occur? “For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire.” The Spirit of God here most clearly looks onward to the time when the crisis should be no longer a mere clash of earthly arms, but another character of conflict, God dealing with burning fuel of fire. It is evidently judgment, not the judgment of men before God’s throne, but His dealing with them when He destroys the enemies of His people Israel. “For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” Unquestionably the King in person, the Messiah, appeared under the Caesar’s; but the Jews rejected Him, and the kingdom was postponed. Hence, the execution of judgment awaits another day, and blessing shall follow according to all the promises of God, “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever.” The passage proves, that before the Lord establishes the kingdom of David that is spoken of here, there must be not the mere shock of human armies, but the Lord smiting, consuming, destroying the enemies of His people. This has never yet been, but rather the contrary. Instead of the Jews being delivered by divine judgment, and their enemies overthrown in a manner wholly exceptional and suitable to the action of God Himself, the Romans were permitted to destroy Jerusalem and to sweep away the Jews from the face of their land, carrying off those they spared, and dispersing them ever, the earth even unto this day. There has been no semblance of the accomplishment of the prophecy.

Let us turn now to Isaiah 11. We have there the same Messiah without doubt. There is no question as to this. All, whether Jews or Christians, admit beyond controversy that here we have Messiah described. The question is as to the character of His kingdom. But read from verse 4, “With righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.” Is this an adequate account of the ways of the Lord in the gospel? Is He not meeting His enemies now? Is He not emphatically saving the lost.? How does “judging” or “reproving with equity” meet the case? Doubtless to the poor the gospel is preached; but here it is righteous rule controlling and blessing the earth, not salvation, by grace gathering souls for heaven. Our chapter, therefore, is in no true sense a description of what the Holy Ghost sets Himself to do for the glory of the name of Christ at this present time. Here it is judging, it is the functions of a king — of One reigning in equity. It is a state of things differing entirely from the present. What will further confirm it is the connected word that “He shall smite the earth,” Does the gospel as such contemplate this? “He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He [not quicken souls by the grace of God, but slay the wicked.” Can it be doubted that the mystical interpretation is completely set aside by the use which the Spirit of God makes of this verse in 2 Thess. 2:8, where the apostle Paul quotes it? To what is it applied? To the gospel? Not to the consequences of Christ’s first coming, not to the grace God sends out now — the message of Christ founded upon the cross, but expressly and exclusively to the manifestation of Christ’s coming, the bright shining out of His second advent, when He shall deal with the lawless one.

Thus we have a divine warrant for our interpretation of the prophecy. We learn from the apostle that the Lord at His appearing, when He sets up this kingdom, will introduce His power into the earth by a literal smiting, by a judgment that destroys. Allow me to add, for the sake of any who may not be familiar with these subjects, that from Isaiah 30:23-33 a distinct light is cast upon the expression, “spirit of His mouth” in 2 Thess. 2. The breath of the Lord’s mouth is not compared to the mercy of the gospel, but is the expression of His anger and indignation. It is “like a stream of brimstone.” In other words, this is divine unsparing judgment of the wicked, while the gospel is God’s glad tidings of grace to the wicked, winning them to God by the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, not their consumption by the vengeance of Jehovah.

Before going farther, let me call your attention to a few more points in the chapter, without anticipating that which will come before us in a future lecture. “In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people.” What is the force of this “second time,” if you turn aside the stream of prophecy from Israel? Give it its plain, unadulterated meaning, and what can be clearer? The Lord had once redeemed His people from Egypt: He will deliver them a second time. This is not the only reference to His bringing the people out of a house of bondage.

The close of the chapter repeats the allusion. “He shall set his hand the second time to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from. Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah.” Where and when has there been any approach to a fulfillment of this prophecy? “The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim.” Thus it will not only be a national restoration in the fullest sense (the ten tribes as well as the two tribes, or “all Israel” according to the doctrinal statement of the New Testament), but, besides, there will be a great spiritual action upon souls; there will be the removal by the grace of God of all strife, rivalry, vexation, and envy between the different portions of Israel. It will be a work in every part of it worthy of the mighty transforming goodness of God Himself. But, further, it is said that “the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.” No just principle of interpretation can be applied to this chapter without confessing the plain meaning of a future restoration of Israel as such by the power of God in the latter day. That which would here sanction its application to Christianity, if carried out fully elsewhere, would shake to the very foundations the whole truth of God as revealed in the Bible. Neither verses 6-9 nor verse 14 can be regarded as serious difficulties by those who look for a vast relief for the lower creation under the last Adam, and the re-appearing of ancient races, when a restoration becomes the question once more.

So, again, in chapter 14, we find that “the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose Israel, and set them in their own land: and the strangers shall be joined with them, and they shall cleave to the house of Jacob. And the people shall take them, and bring them to their place: and the house of Israel shall possess them in the land of the Lord for servants and handmaids: and they shall take them captives,

whose captives they were; and they shall rule over their oppressors. And it shall come to pass in the day that the Lord shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve, that thou shalt take up this proverb." In vain one asks where anything in the past answers to this predicted turn of mercy's tide towards Israel.

Another portion of deep interest in some sort will be found in Isaiah 18, especially as the time hastens when it will find its accomplishment. You will have noticed how, in passages already brought before you, the Lord is said to set His hand to the restoration of His people. It would be a mistake to suppose that the only thing disclosed in prophecy is that divine intervention on their behalf. Degraded as are the Jews, scattered up and down the earth, they are more than ever pining after their own land. No doubt there are differences, and some share, if they do not lead, in the rapidly increasing rationalism of the present day; but in those who have not abandoned in every respect the thoughts and aspirations of Israel, there are symptoms of a restless uneasy but strong feeling in the direction of their own land. This chapter shows, that as Israel will desire to return there in their own strength, and after their own wisdom, as they will endeavor to settle themselves there, so they will go down for help to some unnamed Gentile nation. "Woe" (or rather "Ho!") "to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia" (Cush). This means beyond the limits that Israel of old had to do with. There were two famous rivers, both of them called rivers of Cush, the Nile on the one hand, and the Euphrates on the other. A people beyond either of those rivers will undertake the task of protector to Israel: it will set its hand to bring them safely and settle them under its patronage in their own land. This people is further described as a maritime power, by figures drawn, of course, from that which was familiar to the Jews in those days. It is a land "that sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, saying, Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people terrible from their beginning hitherto." The nation spoken of as "terrible from their beginning hitherto," is obviously the Jewish people, who are said to be "meted out and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled." All the world knows how they have suffered from the oppression of enemies. "All ye inhabitants of the world, and dwellers on the earth, see ye, when he lifteth, up an ensign on the mountains; and when he bloweth a trumpet." God calls upon the nations to observe what He is doing, and not only what He does, but rather what they are doing, when He is but a spectator of their ways. The moment is critical, and dangers loom for all. "For so the Lord said unto me, I will take my rest, and I will consider in my dwelling place like a clear heat upon herbs, and like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest. For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks, and take away and cut down the branches." Things promise well. It looks as if all were hastening to the desired accomplishment of Israel's hopes. But it is only the sour grapes; there is no real ripening of fruit for the Lord to taste. The Lord will act then; but as yet it is to blow on the hasty plan. He cuts down without sparing, and brings to naught all hope of restoration by the interference of men. He judges everything that betokened the readiness of the Jews, as they might conceive, for the latter-day blessing. He will not own Gentiles in presuming to be instruments of accomplishing His people's deliverance. "They shall be left together unto the fowls of the mountains, and to the beasts of the earth." The nations are untrustworthy: vain is the help of man. The Gentiles will turn once more from Israel, and oppress them; they will devour and ravage as before. "And the fowls shall summer upon them, and all the beasts of the earth shall winter upon them." Is this, then, the end of Israel? Have their hopes, excited after a carnal fashion, and sought to be made good by human policy, forever come to naught thus under the judgment of God? Nay, "In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto; a nation meted out and trodden under foot, whose land the rivers have spoiled, to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the mount Zion." It is the hour for the Lord to work by His hand. But, as in other cases so in this, man first tries his competency to bring about the purpose of God, and so entails utter ruin upon all. But the Lord at that time will receive Israel and lead them to mount Zion. To the Lord shall the present be brought of a people and from a people scattered and peeled. They shall bring a present, and at the same time be a present, to Jehovah of hosts in mount Zion.

Such is the clear statement of the Spirit. This prepares us for human methods of restoring Israel, and is an important safeguard for the children of God now, lest they should be excited by rumors here or there of great things for the Jews. The believer should have no confidence in any plans of men for the bringing of Israel into their own land. God is not working to that end; He is gathering souls out of Israel as He is out of the Gentiles; for Christ is still at God's right hand in heaven. When He has done the heavenly work, He will permit man in his confidence to think he can repair the ruins of Zion, and gather back the dispersed of Israel; but all will prove fruitless in the pride of man. Gentile affection for Israel will be proved utterly worthless; but just when all appears to fail more hopelessly than ever, at that time the Lord will accomplish His long-deferred purposes. All this again declares, in the strongest possible way, that Israel must be restored; but first there will be an attempt to restore themselves, through the help of the Gentiles, and its entire failure, the issue of which will be to bring upon them Antichrist; and this again will be the signal for other Gentiles to pour down as a scourge upon the Jewish people. All the birds and beasts of prey from among the nations break loose upon them, because of their apostacy as well as presumption; for idols and Antichrist will be set up in Jerusalem and the holy place; and because these abominations find shelter there, a desolator shall be (I presume, the Assyrian), even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate, i.e., upon Jerusalem. (Dan. 9:27.)

Of course I cannot enter into all the proofs of this tonight, nor indeed do I propose to attempt curious detail in this course of lectures; but we may turn to two or three other chapters of our prophet before we have done. In ch. 24 we have the closing scene of this age. "The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again." Perhaps there are some here disposed to think this the end of the world, or the dissolution of all things. But read the next verse, and judge for yourselves. "And it shall come to pass in that day [it is not eternity you see, but "that day"], that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth on the earth." I am only leaving out the words in italics, which have no business here whatever. The arena of evil is also that of retribution. "And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison, and after many days shall they be visited. Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed" [figurative language, I admit], "when the Lord of hosts shall reign in Mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously." In a word, it is not the passing away of the heavens and earth that now are, and the introduction of the new heaven and earth in the final sense. It is a figure of it, no doubt, and such as actually appears in chapters 65, 66, but no more. Nothing can be more certain than that here we have, not the reigning in life (Rom. 5) such as will be throughout eternity, as a general expression of a glorious state before God through the Lord Jesus, but an earthly scene, hover blessed and glorious too. It is Zion or Jerusalem, over which the Lord reigns, after He has punished the hosts of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth on the earth. It is not in any sense the great white throne judgment and the eternal condition connected with it; but it is the introduction of "that day" in the blessing and glory of God for the earth, and specially for the people of Israel.

This is entirely confirmed by what follows. Chapter 25 tells us, "Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee. For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the

heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall." The reference is clearly to that same time of trouble, when the Gentiles summer and winter upon Israel, according to the language of chapter 18 "Thou shalt bring clown the noise of strangers, as the heat in a dry place; even the heat with the shadow of a cloud: the branch of the terrible ones shall be brought low. And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it." This scripture is the more to be weighed, because of the quotation in

1 Corinthians 15:54. Hence it appears on apostolic authority that the epoch of the resurrection of the righteous is bound up with the return and deliverance of Israel, as well as with the millennial blessing of all nations. "If the casting away of them [the Jews] be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"

In the next chapter we have yet more. "In the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee" — it is Israel's song in answer to these dealings of God — "the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness." It is not the gospel in the world calling souls out of it to heaven, but the judgments of God that are in the earth, and then the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness. "Let favor be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness." This is notoriously the result of the gospel where it is refused, as man treats it without faith. He hears of the full favor of God, but despises it. The consequence is that the Lord will let fall His heavy hand in judgment, and the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. "Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them." I need not dwell upon the verses that follow. They may come before us more appropriately upon another occasion, and for another purpose; but this may suffice to show not only that the Israelites are to be gathered as a people, but further, that it will be introduced by divine judgments which separate "that day" from all the past. The Lord will deal with those wicked spirits that seek to corrupt every blessing of God, if it were possible; He will also put down everything that is high and lifted up on the earth. Then and thus will Israel be brought into that which they long for, but long for as yet after a carnal sort, impenitent and unbelieving as they are.

Chapter 27 closes this section of the prophecy, and is most explicit. "He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.... And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem." (vss. 6,12, 13.) To refer all this to the Christian or the Church is untenable: apply it to the Lord's dealing with the Jews brought into their land, after He has translated us to heaven, and all is transparent.

The next chapters (28–35) dwell on the special circumstances of the trial and triumph of the Jews at the end of the age, their internal evils which exposed them to such severe discipline, the blessed change introduced by the reign of the Messiah, the judgments executed on their enemies, and the character of the times of restitution of all things. Then follows the historical episode (chap. 35 to 39) — the invasion and overthrow of the Assyrian in the person of Sennacherib, the sickness well-nigh to death but revival of the Son of David (Hezekiah), and the announcement of the captivity in Babylon. The rest of the book (chs. 40–66) has important sections also, on which it is not now the time to dilate. Suffice it to say, for the purpose in hand, that the last eight chapters are an almost continuous tissue of evidence to the future blessing of Israel as such, and therefore, on principles essentially distinguished from the indiscriminate grace which is characteristic of the gospel. The end of chapter 59 is the scripture cited by the apostle in Romans 11, and itself decisive of the question. While the gospel is going out now, they are evident enemies: when "that day" comes, they will with repentant hearts turn to the Messiah, who will come to and out of Zion, and all Israel shall be saved — the proof that they are beloved for the fathers' sakes, and that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. The past of Jewish history fails to meet this prophecy; so does the present work of God in the gospel. The glory of the Church by-and-by issuing in resurrection is quite distinct. There remains the future restoration and blessedness of Israel here bow. This alone fulfils the exigencies of the word.

Then how rich as well as distinct is chapters 60. "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the Lord thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because He hath glorified thee. And the sons of strangers shall build up thy walls, and their kings shall minister unto thee; for in my wrath I smote thee, but in my favor have I had mercy on thee. Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea, those nations shall be utterly wasted. The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious. The sons also of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee; and all they that despised thee shall bow themselves down at the soles of thy feet; and they shall call thee, The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel." A perverted eye can alone account for missing the force of declarations so plainly converging on Israel's blessing in that day, in Contrast with heavenly grace in Christ now appropriated through faith while the Jews are for the most part blinded. And this is in no way weakened, but Confirmed, by the striking use our Lord made of chapters 61, as recorded in Luke 4; for, as is well known, He closed the book after reading the first clause of verse 2, though it was not even the end of a sentence. He thus marked how far there was an accomplishment. His first advent proclaimed "the acceptable year of the Lord:" only at His second coming will the day of vengeance of our God begin. Then the two appear together. Between them Christianity, properly so called, has come in, founded on the rejection, death, and resurrection of Christ, and calling souls out from the world meanwhile to have their portion in and with Christ in heaven. This done, and they glorified with their Head, He will link the acceptable year of Jehovah with the day of God's vengeance, judge the quick at His appearing, set up His kingdom manifestly over the earth, and bless His ancient chosen people, who will then be the head, and the Gentiles the tail. "Ye shall be named the priests of the Lord; men shall call you the ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves.... All that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed." (See especially chapter 62, 65,

66.)

Jeremiah, though less copious in visions of coming glory, and more characterized by moral appeals to the conscience, than Isaiah, presents ample testimony to the bright future of Israel in their own land. Thus, chapter 3 points to the time when the most sacred associations in the Mosaic institute shall pale before the actual blessing from the Lord. “At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord.; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall walk with, the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.” (vv.17-18.) Compare also chap. 23:5-8, where it is declared that the first deliverance from Egypt shall be eclipsed by a future and far mightier recovery from all the lands where the Jews are still dispersed, the whole people being specified, Judah and Israel. The raising up of their long-expected King, the righteous Branch, also eludes all notion of the return from Babylon, as well as of the Spirit’s way under the gospel. Still fuller, as well as more precise, are chap. 30–33. The great day of Jacob’s trouble, which precedes their deliverance and the humiliation of their Gentile oppressors, is yet future. They are far as yet from serving the Lord their God, and David their king, raised up of God unto them. “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,” &c. — It is important to observe, that the Apostle, in citing thig passage in Heb. 8 and 10, does not speak of the new covenant as our proper portion, still less denies (what the prophet affirmed) that it will be made good to Israel under their Messiah in His coming kingdom. The first citation is to prove the perpetuity of the first covenant an error; for the mention of a new covenant makes the first old, and ready to vanish away. The second citation is simply to show from its terms an inspired witness to the grand truth, that God, in virtue of the sacrifice of Christ, remembers our sins no more, — the very reverse of the action of the old convent. — The last of these chapters (33) goes farther, and not only pledges the restoration of Israel in joy and glory to their land, people, King, and priests, all settled in abiding divine order, but sternly censures the Gentile conceit, that God had cast off His, people, that they should be no more a nation. (Compare Rom. 11) It is not a question of saving souls by the gospel, of gathering out from Jews and Gentiles into the Church, but of the two families the Lord chose, the seed of Jacob and David.

Ezekiel is not less distinct. Compare chapters 16, 17, 20, but particularly 34, 36, 37, and 40-48. It is the blessing of Israel, under the Messiah, and in their own land.

So to Daniel (12) the angel makes known the revival of the prophet’s people Israel, by divine judgment of their Gentile enemies, which is not yet fulfilled.

Hosea plainly intimates the same truth in the close of chapters 1 and 2. Still more striking is the sketch given us in the brief but instructive chapters 3:4, 5: — “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: afterward shall the people of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days.”

Since the captivity, and especially the destruction of Jerusalem, what a comment on these words! To this day (many days indeed) they abide a people in the midst of peoples, yet not absorbed, — a people yet without the bonds of national conservation; for they are “without a king, and without a prince.” Still more peculiar is their religious condition, and as exactly fulfilled in the Jews alone of all races since the world began. They are “without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim.” They lack the sacrifice and the ephod which they had according to divine institution, and essential to the Levitical worship; but they have, on the other hand, neither image nor teraphim, the symbols of idolatry in its public and private forms. Thus they are in the anomalous position of a people who are no people, incapable, somehow, of true worship, yet not idolaters, and thus the contrast not only of all other nations, but most of all of their own antecedents. How evidently divine the picture of verse 4! What an earnest of the fulfillment of verse 5! “Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king.” Thus their future will be peculiar, their conversion not to God only, but to their rightful King, the Messiah. It is not the gospel now, but Israel blessed as such in the latter day. So chapter 14 predicts a repentance and consequent blessing from God, neither of which has yet been seen in Israel from that day to this. Both are future.

Again, men may reason on Joel 2, because of the accomplishment of the pouring out of the Spirit, but it is impossible to treat chapter 3 as fulfilled, which supposes all nations gathered and judged of God when He brings again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, and thin the earth’s blessing, not its destruction. Amos 9 is not said in Acts 15 to have been actually accomplished, but only “to this agree the words,” &c., i.e., to God’s recognition of Gentiles called by His name, which, true now, will be verified in the millennium. verses 13-15 refer not to heaven but to earth, and not to the Church but to Israel, who will then and thus be blessed. So Obadiah 15-21 binds together the day of Jehovah upon all the nations with holy deliverance on Mount Zion.

I do not enter into the moral history of Jonah the prophet, viewed as a type, but would point to the remarkable chapters 4, 5 of Micah, with the concluding verses of chapters 7. It is a vision of the latter-day glory of Zion yet more exclusively than Isaiah 2, which Micah 4 so strongly resembles. Nahum predicts the fall of Nineveh, the Assyrian holder of which typifies one who will figure largely in the East at the close of this age; but God will make his grave, and publish peace to Judah. If Habakkuk bring out chiefly the exercised hearts of the godly, it is not without anticipations of divine judgment on the enemy of Israel, though holding to the life of faith meanwhile. Zephaniah is distinct as to the judgment of the nations, when there shall be no more haughtiness in God’s holy mountain, and the remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity nor speak lies. “The King of Israel, even Jehovah, is in the midst of thee: thou shalt not see evil any more.” It is unquestionably future. The post-captivity prophets — Haggai 2:6-9, 21-23; Zechariah 2:6, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14; and Malachi 4 — are explicit as to Israel’s hopes. What evidence can be conceived more abundant, uniform, or decisive?

But what, it may be asked, is the practical profit of all this for the Christian? Why do we dwell at such length upon the future restoration of Israel? Were we to examine minutely the prophecies which treat of the subject, it would no doubt detain us long, though it would also add many particulars of interest. Time would fail to go through many on a single occasion. I have, therefore, taken the prophecy of Isaiah, with a mere glance at others, as being quite sufficient for the purpose. But once more, What is the value to the believer now of receiving this truth?

In the first place, it is good to see that our own profit is hardly the right measure in looking at the truth of God. It is never the best side: nor is it, I am persuaded, the straight road to reap the best blessing. The Lord gives His riches where He is confided in most simply. Our place is not to weigh the consequence of what He says, but to believe. Then, indeed, when we do believe on the bare warrant of His word, the profit is much every way. But I may briefly observe that there is an immediate result of the most important kind in this, that the giving Israel its own

distinctive place of future blessing, according to the Old Testament promises and prophecies, is a main safeguard against the Judaizing snare, which is in all ways an instrument of evil, and of the most formidable kind, in the hands of the enemy. Give Israel their earthly distinction according to the prophetic word, and you preserve with simplicity the heavenly place to which the grace of God now calls you. Is anything lost by this? On the contrary, it is pure and heavenly gain; it is a gain that keeps the heart free for Christ above, from the world below, maintaining withal the supremacy, and the plain, literal import of God's word. We suffer in every part of revealed truth, when we swerve from the simple meaning into that mystical jargon to which I have referred more than once. You cannot be false to Israel in the Old Testament, and retain the truth of Christianity unalloyed in the New Testament. You weaken the authority of the entire word of God. Stolen waters are proverbially sweet to those who misappropriate them, but they bring their own penalty. And so it has been with those who rob Israel of their hopes: the real character of the Church, yea, of the Christian standing, is never rained as a consequence.

You cannot with impunity defraud Israel of their portion. You may seek to clutch, and appropriate, and keep it to yourself; but the effect is that you are unjust to them. It is not only that your heart is closed against what God has in His heart towards His ancient people, nor is it only that, by such a style of explanation, you tend to overthrow the faithfulness of God, the unchanged purposes of God, the word that He has passed and pledged to His people. But there is worse. For, instead of gaining more, you lose your own proper and peculiar blessing. With Christ in heaven you have all things — just as the apostle could tell the Corinthians who were setting up their favorite here and another there upon earth; it was truly to cheat themselves, as well as to dishonor the Lord, the giver of all that is good, and of all who are good, to every one of His saints. So it is in another way, not the looking down as from heaven, but the sinking into an earthly place, when you read these prophecies as if it were our loss, because we do not find there our own glory and blessedness, or the Lord's mercy to us in those beautiful visions which He vouchsafed touching the people of His choice. To find our blessing there is both to leave heaven for earth and to restrict ourselves to a mere fragment of the blessing, instead of knowing, in our union with Christ, the bride's share in the Bridegroom's exaltation over all things.

In the New Testament we find the same period is looked at from a heavenly or church point of view. Take Ephesians 1:9,10 as an instance. God has "made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself." What is this counsel which He thus puts before Himself? It is His purpose, in view of the dispensation or administration of the fullness of times, to gather together in one all things in Christ, both the things which are in heaven and the things which are in earth; even in Him: in whom also we have obtained an inheritance. It is plain that this is no mean portion of the blessing which the Lord will shed around Him in that bright day. We have obtained an inheritance, not in Israel, nor in the earth, nor even in the heavens alone; but rather in Him. We are by grace heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, who is set Head over all things, the Church being His body and so united with Him in His supremacy over all things. (Eph. 1:22, 23.) Carefully guard against including the Church among the "all things." Not so; the Church is part, yea, the fullness of Him who filleth all in all; the Church is the body of Him who is head over all things. In Him, then, we have obtained an inheritance, who is the Head over all things. These comprehend whatever is in heaven above or in the earth beneath — all which God has put under Him. This exalted position the Church has by association with Him; for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. Evidently, then, the unbelief which endeavors to secure all the blessing on the surface of Scripture defeats itself. The truest and the only full blessing to the saint is found in unqualified subjection to God, who now, as always, honors such as honor Him, and keeps back nothing that is profitable from those to whom He has revealed His Son in glory. In fact, we shall share with Christ all things. So complete is the inheritance of all, that He only is excepted who has put all things under Him. (1 Cor. 15:27.)

The common error is thus morally deplorable, and in every way destructive of the truth; it loses sight of God's glory in Christ, it is blind to the largeness of the ways of God, it knows not the special heavenly character of the Church's relations, and it sacrifices to self the fidelity of God in His covenant dealings with His ancient people. It is evident, that the person who could break his plighted word with one party cannot be trusted by another without hesitation it is dreadful to be obliged to reason thus; but I may be pardoned if I endeavor to present the principle in a very plain form so as to prove its unworthiness. The popular error, then, supposes that God may break His promise; for nothing is more certain than that He repeatedly, spontaneously, and unconditionally bound Himself to bless Israel, and in such sort, that, when the blessing comes from Him, it never should pass away if, on the contrary, God could change His mind as to His gifts and calling in Israel's case, (may the evil thought and expression be forgiven!) if He be now so disgusted and ashamed of Israel as to turn away from them as His people forever, where is the security of His truth? where the assurance of His character in revealing Himself to us? Surely it is not for us to deny that never did Israel more fail, if failure account for change; never did Israel more dishonor the revelation which God made of Himself to them, than we, the Church, have failed in bearing an adequate witness to the glory and the grace of Christ made known to us. How plain it is, then, that all the ground of stable peace and confidence is threatened with ruin by this error, which might at first sight seem to be comparatively trivial.

Besides, I may observe, that it is not only to shake the general character of God, but there lurks behind what Satan has more than ever at heart. God in His grace has of late re-awakened His children to look into heavenly things, and to behold Jesus there. He has shown them their portion with Christ above, who is soon coming to take them to be where He is. This has been before us already; I only, therefore, refer to it again to remark how one truth corroborates another, and how all the parts fit together. The heavenly portion remains in its own unmixed character above. The believer, now gathered out from Jew or Gentile, finds his place in Christ there. The earth remains for the earthly people Israel, who will be called in their season. We have seen tonight that it is not merely a question of Christ in the heavens, but that God will assuredly convert, bless, and restore to their land His guilty people. If there is joy over a single soul that is brought to God, will that joy be less when it is over a nation, and that nation the one which most of all despised, abhorred, and insulted Jesus, ay, His very name? Will it be any loss of blessing to the Church in the heavens to look down and rejoice in the blessed poor of spirit, in the remnant, once so proud yet deceitful, that shall no longer speak lies nor carry itself haughtily? Will it not be joy to see that Abraham will have a seed blessed below as well as above, and all through Christ the Lord? What a joy, when that people, long active and successful in stirring up the Gentiles against the name of Jesus, in perverting the truth of God, in inciting men of intellect and learning throughout the world against the scriptures, in refusing those further and heavenly communications of God's grace, which only draw out the gnashing of their teeth because they were left in utter darkness in regard to them — what a joy when they will be broken down in true repentance, mourning, and self-reproach before their Deliverer, now recognized as the Messiah they crucified! Doubtless their fall has been God's occasion to raise us up to a glory far above their own; yet surely it is not for those called to that surpassing glory to wish for aught not their own, still less to deny to Israel that which God has promised them. Rather let us be the first to proclaim in the ears of Israel, That which the mouth of the Lord has spoken, His hand will surely accomplish, even all that is in His heart, for His beloved people — enemies still as regards the gospel, but beloved for the fathers' sake.

I, therefore, conclude for the present the subject of the Jew, aware how scantily it has been treated. But enough has been said at any rate to stimulate inquiry, and to encourage the children of God to trust every word He has written, every promise He has given.

Matt. 22:1-14

THE parable of the guilty husbandmen at the close of Matt. 21 shows the issue of God's testing men on the ground of His own claims and their responsibility to yield Him fruit. It is just the question raised with the Jew and settled by the rejection of their own Messiah, the Son, yet to be avenged when He comes again.

In the parable with which chapter 22. begins the Lord handles a wholly different case. It is therefore, what the last chapter nowhere furnished, a likeness of the kingdom of the heavens; and therein God is manifested in the ways of His grace, not man under His just claims. God no longer requires fruit from man, though He may and does produce fruit in those who receive His grace in Christ. But in the gospel it is no question of demanding fruit from man. He is represented as in sovereign majesty making a marriage-feast for His Son. This means a total change in His ways: not God requiring from men what is due, but His own grace blessing them in honor of His Son. "It is more blessed to give than to receive"; and this not the law but the gospel vindicates for God, Who gave His dear and only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have life eternal.

"The kingdom of the heavens is likened to a king which made a marriage feast for His son; and sent forth his bondmen to call those who had been called to the marriage-feast; and they would not come. Again he sent forth other bondmen, saying, Tell those that have been called, Behold, my dinner I have made ready: mine oxen and my fatlings are slaughtered; and all things [are] ready: come to the marriage, feast. But they slighted [it] and went off, one to his own land, another to his traffic; and the rest, seizing his bondmen, insulted and killed [them]. And the king was wroth and, sending his troops, destroyed those murderers and burned their city. Then saith he to his bondmen, The marriage-feast is ready, but those that were called were not worthy. Go therefore unto the outlets of the roads, and, as many as ye shall find, call to the marriage-feast. And those bondmen went out to the roads, and gathered together all as many as they found, both wicked and good; and the marriage-feast was filled with guests. And the king on coming in to behold the guests saw there a man not clothed with a marriage-garment; and he saith unto him, Friend, how earnest thou in here not having a marriage-garment? But he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind his feet and hands, and take and cast him out into the outer darkness; there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few chosen" (vers. 2-14).

Here too we have an historical unfolding, not of the past under law, but of God's dealings in grace. We begin with the gospel of the kingdom before our Lord's death in verse 3. Next in verse 4 the gospel goes forth on the ground of His finished work. Only then was the urgent message that "all things were ready"; and then, too, the rebellious hostility ripened into insult and bloodshed; as also in due time retribution came on those murderers and their city (vers. 5-7).

But grace must reign and do its wondrous work, whatever the hindrances. Accordingly the offense of the Jew is salvation to the nations, and the loss of the one is the wealth of the others. The Jews but filled up their cup of sorrow, and wrath came on them to the uttermost, as far as the gospel is concerned; and this salvation of God has been sent to the nations, who also will hear, as the apostle added. This luminously follows in our parable (vers. 8-10).

Nevertheless God is not mocked under gospel any more than under law; and contempt of His grace brings an even sorer punishment than violation of His law. The acceptance of God's testimony by faith is and always has been the soul's turning-point from death to life, from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God and His kingdom. And His testimony has ever been to Christ, whatever the measure once, whatever the fullness now. Hopeless effort under law was used to drive to Christ those who were not won by promise. Grace and truth came as a fact through Jesus Christ, Who is both life and righteousness to the believer, as He is the image of the invisible God and declared Him. Christ is all, and in all. This therefore becomes the surest of tests, as it is the fullness of grace.

But the King, when He entered to behold the guests, saw one who had not on a marriage-garment. This was conclusive. The King provided all in His royal bounty; but here was a man who preferred his own clothing. It was no question of anything else. The man's robe might be splendid or sordid. But it was not the marriage-garment. It was therefore a direct offense against the grace which alone could and did provide according to the king's majesty and magnificence. Nothing could justify such wanton scorn of the king's honor and goodness; nothing could excuse the man's preference of his own things, especially on an occasion expressly to honor the King's Son. The man was speechless at the charge. The outer darkness must be his portion: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth.

It is not providential judgment like that which befell the city of murderers; it is personal and absolute, away forever from Him Who is love and light, from Him Whose grace was so thoroughly despised. To render this all the more impressive, a single individual is thus specified, though the moral at the close prepares us for its applying to individuals far and wide. "For many are called (i.e., by the gospel), but few chosen." In result it is but a "little flock"; not because grace was not ample for them all, but because grace is abused and Christ is in so few, though He is all in such as have Him.

Have you then, my reader, received the Christ, Jesus the Lord? If so, "walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and assured in the faith as ye have been taught [in the written word of God], abounding in thanksgiving." See to it that you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new, renewed into full knowledge according to the image of Him that created him: wherein there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all things, and in all. Remember that there is no putting on Christ on high, unless you have put Him on now here below. Here we have the joy and duty of confessing Christ; as it will be His to confess us before His Father and before the angels.

If baptism be made the marriage-garment, it is only a less destructive delusion than making it the Lord's incarnation, In the one case the baptized in Christendom would be all elect, if it were not a contradiction in terms; in the other case, all mankind would be. The parable is really subversive of both these dreams, and is meant to show that no mere profession can save, that only the reception of God's grace in Christ will stand in that day.

THE parable before us is morally historical. It presents briefly but fully the ways of God with His people of old up to their ruin in the rejection of the Christ, and not morally alone but nationally. The Lord even adds from the scriptures His own consequent exaltation, and their setting aside meanwhile, Himself in humiliation the stumbling-stone of unbelief, but about to return in power as the executor of judgment in this world.

“Hear another parable: There was a householder who planted a vineyard, and made a fence round it, and dug a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and left the country. But when the season of the fruits drew near, he sent his bondmen to the husbandmen to receive his fruits. And the husbandmen took his bondmen, and beat one and killed another and stoned another. Again he sent other bondmen more than the first, and they did to them likewise. And afterward he sent to them his son, saying, They will feel respect for my son. But the husbandmen, when they saw the son, said among themselves, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, and get his inheritance. And they took and cast him forth out of the vineyard and killed [him]. When therefore the lord of the vineyard shall come, what will he do to these husbandmen? They say to him, He will wretchedly destroy those wretches, and let out the vineyard to other husbandmen who shall render him the fruits in their season” (vers. 33-41).

It is plain that the Lord here takes the ground, not merely of relationship and conscience as in the preceding parable of the two children, but of responsibility to render fruit to God Who had done all possible for His people to that end. The prophet Isaiah had similarly appealed in his chap. 5. Here the Lord adds a great deal more, but on the same ground, and with similar result, only yet more plainly proclaimed. For it is not only that the vineyard, instead of grapes, brought forth wild grapes. Here the upshot was growing enmity manifested to the lord of the vineyard. In both what could have been done on behalf of the vineyard that He had not done? The prophet announced that Jehovah was going to lay His vineyard waste; and so it has been, as the state of the Jews proves. The Lord shows the patience that for ages waited on those active among the Jews, if there might be fruit for Jehovah. But His bondmen, the prophets, whom He sent to recall His people to their duty, met with nothing but contempt, ill-usage, and death. Others He sent increasingly, as the evil grew; but they fared alike contumeliously.

Lastly, He sent His Son. The Lord spoke of Himself. But the dignity of His person and the intimate nearness of His relationship to Jehovah gave the opportunity to the religious leaders among the Jews to demonstrate their contempt and deadly hatred to both the Father and the Son, as the Lord says in John 15, Could evil go farther? Other sins, shameful and ungrateful as they were, became in comparison as nothing. “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin. He that hateth Me hateth My Father also. If I had not done among them the works which none other did, they had not had sin; but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father.” And they had been fully warned. For they simply fulfilled what was in their law, “They hated Me without a cause.” It was not only utter unrighteousness, but deadly enmity to Jehovah and His Anointed, to the Son, their own Messiah.

And the Lord, on the near approach of this fatal result of their rebellious alienation from God, Himself puts the question to them, “When therefore the Lord of the vineyard shall come, what will He do to those husband men?” And they could not but answer, “He will wretchedly destroy those wretches, and let out the vineyard to other husbandmen who shall render him the fruits in their seasons.” So it is that the guilty own in their consciences their just punishment for positive rejection of One so good and faithful, and of their own obligations to Him, yea, of apostasy carried out to blood.

Is this nothing to you, reader, with the still greater privileges of Christendom? Are you hardening your heart against the truth, and shrinking from the God Who came so near to you in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning to men their offenses, and having put in His servants the word of reconciliation? Beware then of a fate not better but worse than what befell and is to befall the Jews. “Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, this was made the corner-stone: of Jehovah this is, and it is marvelous in our eyes. Therefore I say to you that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it. And he that falleth on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will scatter him as dust” (vers. 42-44). Such is the danger of stumbling now; such the judgment the Lord will execute on living man when He appears in glory. And the time hastens. See therefore, 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 shall in no wise believe, if one declare it unto you.”

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: 5. The Two Children

Matt. 21:28-32.

The proud men who were blind to the glory of Christ, and averse alike to God’s grace and truth, raised the question of His authority. It is always so with such as value themselves, and love not God’s intervention, and are jealous of those that do His work. He could have pointed to witnesses greater than John; though among women-born none had risen greater than John the Baptist. But the works which the Father gave Him to complete testified yet more. So did the Father’s voice. And the scriptures which bore witness of Him He treats as the highest possible, for they have a permanence which no mere words can possess. But here the Lord met their unbelief by appealing to the baptism of John: whence was it? Of heaven, or of men? They saw their dilemma, and fearing man, not God, they answered, We cannot tell. Confessing their incapacity, chief priests and elders though they were, as the cover of their dishonesty, they are left without an answer. The Lord however presents them with a portrait, not of themselves only, but of those they despised.

“But what think ye? A man had two children; and he came to the first and said, Child, go work to-day in the vineyard. And he answered and said, I will not; but afterward he regretted and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise; and he answered and said, I [go], sir, and went not. Which of the two did the will of the father? They say, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say to you, that the tax-gatherers and the harlots go before you into the kingdom of God. For John came in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not; but the tax-gatherers and the harlots believed him. And ye, when ye saw, regretted not afterward to believe him” (vers. 28-32).

It is a plain and direct dealing with conscience. For two classes were then before the Lord’s eye: the rude and profligate, the careless and profane, who made no pretension to religion and pursued worldly profit and open sin; and the respectable and decorous, who piqued themselves on heeding the rites of religion and on their own decent character. Now mankind in Christendom is the same still, tested by a standard more searching than John’s, though his was a mighty work, as the Lord bore witness to him. Viewed in themselves or in the light of testimony, how living is the picture! The one class puts shameless insult on God, and glories in lawlessness. But an appeal comes which convinces the daring sinner of his outrageous evil: he breaks down in self-judgment; he turns to God and serves Him whom he had set at naught. The other class, on the contrary, claims credit for its proper ways; and as conscience is untouched, they are self-satisfied, and God remains unknown. How exactly such souls answer to him who says “I go, sir, and went not!” Are there not many like him now?

Hence when John, who did no miracles nor claimed official position, came preaching a baptism of repentance for remission of sins, people flocked freely to be baptized, confessing their sins. But as the rule, the Lord here shows that it was not those who justified themselves before men that were baptized by John. They disdained to enter the kingdom by the same strait gate and narrow way as was open to the tax-gatherer and the harlot. But there can be no other way to God for the sinner. The grace of the gospel condemns sins and insists on repentance still more than John coming in the way of righteousness; for the gospel proclaims that nothing but the blood of Jesus, God’s Son, could cleanse from sins, and that His blood does cleanse us from every sin. How deadly and defiling were our sins that such a propitiation alone could avail! Therein is a test far deeper than John’s preaching, excellent and efficacious as it was; for it was repulsive for a moral man and zealous Jew to confess his sins, like a tax-gatherer or a harlot. How intolerable to be put with such on the same common level of guilt and ruin! This is precisely what the gospel does even more thoroughly; and it is therefore of all things most odious to the self-righteous formalist.

When John came, calling men to confess their sins in view of the coming Messiah and the kingdom of the heavens, conscience answered to his call in those who had walked in gross lusts and indifference to the religious world. “The tax-gatherers and the harlots believed him.” They knew in their souls that they had led a life of shame and iniquity; and they bowed to a call which they recognized to be of God. But not so those who stood well in their own eyes and in the public opinion of the day. They therefore annulled for themselves the counsel of God, instead of justifying God by being baptized by John as the despised ones did (Luke 7:29, 30). The self-righteous when they “saw, had no regret afterward to believe him.”

Hence too, since that day, when the gospel is preached, men who are boastful of their religion, their church, or their character, are ever its bitterest enemies. The Jews as the general fact not only refused it but tried to stir up the Gentiles against it everywhere. Nothing in their eyes more hateful than that grace which denied the value of their righteousness, and announces God’s righteousness that He may be just and justifier of him that has faith in Jesus. For this openly declares that there is no difference, all having sinned and coming short of God’s glory; as it also declares to all who believe, that they are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Therefore, being apart from works of law, the gospel is as open to the Gentile as to the Jew, since God is one, Who shall justify circumcision by faith, not otherwise, and uncircumcision through their faith since they believe. Jesus the Lord is the way to the Father: the Way, the Truth, and the Life. And salvation is in none other name under heaven that is given among men whereby we must be saved. Did any wonder at the Lord eating with sinners and the disreputable? His answer was, They that are strong have no need of a physician, but those that are sick. But go and learn what that is, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice; for I came to call not righteous but sinners. Do you, dear reader, know Him thus?

Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 21:23-46, Remarks on

To the question about His authority our Lord answers the chief priests and the elders of the people by inquiring their thought of John's baptism. He appeals neither to miracles nor prophecy, but to conscience. How evident the accomplishment of the ancient oracles in His person, life, ministry! How full the testimony of signs and wonders wrought by Him! Yet their question showed how vain all had been, as His question showed either their dishonesty or their incompetency. In either case, who were they to judge? Little did they think that they and every other class in Israel, who successively sought to canvass the Lord of glory, were in truth but discovering their own distance and alienation from God. So indeed it ever is. Our judgments of others and of all things, above all of what concerns Christ, are the unfailing gauge of our own condition; and equally are we laid bare, whether right or wrong, by our refusal to judge. In this instance (ver. 23-27) the want of conscience was manifest—nowhere so fatal as in religious guides. “They reasoned within themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him! But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.” God was not in their thoughts; and thus all was false and wrong. And if God be not the object, self is the idol, and what more debasing? These chief priests were, at the bottom of their hearts, the abject slaves of the people over whose faith or superstition they had dominion. “We fear the people.” This at least was true. “And they answered Jesus and said, We cannot tell.” This was as clearly false, the merest shift of men who preferred to allege their incapacity to judge in their own sphere rather than own what they knew must convict them of fighting against God. They could tell but would not, because of the felt consequences. In the hands of Satan they are the main energy of evil and enemy of good, their private interests being always opposed to the real interests of God's people. Blind guides by their own acknowledgment! Infinitely worse the blindness, which, governed by no motive higher than present advantage and self-importance, overlooked God manifest in the flesh, and threw away, as incredulity ever does, riches greater by far than the treasures in Egypt! To such as these the Lord with ineffable dignity declines to render an account of His authority: He had often borne witness to it before. To ask it of Him—now furnished of itself the best proof that an answer was useless. How explain color to men who never saw I to men who would not see, if they could But our Lord does more. In the parable of the two sons commanded to work in the vineyard (ver. 22-32) He convicts these religious leaders of being worse before God than the most despised classes in the land. “Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not,” &c. Decent lip-homage forms— “I go, sir, and went not” —such was the religion of those who stood highest in the world's estimate of that day. Self-will was unbroken and unjudged. As for those who disgraced the decencies of society in riotous or otherwise disreputable ways, they were more accessible to the stirring, searching appeals of John. Their very open and unrestrained evil exposed them to his righteous rebuke; and, in fact, they, not the respectable devotees, “believed him.” Such as made a fair show in the flesh were not prepared to withdraw the veil of a fair reputation without from a godless, self-pleasing course and character within; and as they rejected the counsel of God against themselves at John's summons, so they would not follow the example of the poor outcasts now repentant. Deaf to the call of righteousness, they were just as hardened against the operations of God's grace, even where it was most conspicuous. “And ye, when he had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.” Repentance

awakens the sense of relationship to God as the One sinned against. The resolutions of nature begin and end in “I go, sir.” The Spirit of God produces the deep and overwhelming conviction that all has been evil against Him, with neither room for, nor desire of, excuse. But it is lost for worldly religion, which, resisting alike God's testimony and the evidence of conversion in others, sinks into increasing darkness and hostility to God. The ordained Judge of living and dead pronounces these proud, self-complacent men worse than those they deemed the worst. They were no judges now: nay, they were judged.

But next the Lord sets forth, not merely man's conduct toward God, but God's dealing with man, and this in a two-fold form: first, in view of human responsibility as under law: and secondly, in view of God's grace under the kingdom of heaven. The former is developed in the parable of the householder (ver. 33-41), the latter in that of the king's marriage-feast for his son. (Chap. 22:1-14). Of these let us now look at the first.

“Hear another parable: There was a certain householder which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: and when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.” It is a picture founded on, and filling up the sketch in, Isa. 5—a picture of God's painstaking dealings in Israel. “What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?” Then He looked for fruit. All had been settled by His directions, every outward advantage afforded by His goodness and power under Moses, Joshua, &c. There was definite arrangement, abundant blessing, ample protection, and adequate assertion of His rights by the prophets. “And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.” There was full patience too. “Again, he sent other servants more than the first; and they did unto them likewise.” Was there a single possibility that remained, a hope however forlorn? “Last of all, he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.” Alas! it was but the crowning of their iniquity and the occasion of bringing out their guilt and hopeless ruin. For “when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.” They recognized the Messiah then, but only so as to provoke their malice and worldly lusts. “Let us kill him and let us seize on his inheritance.” It was not only lack of fruit, persistent refusal of all the just claims of God and robbing Him of every due return, but the fullest outbreak of rebellious hatred, when tested by the presence of the Son of God in their midst. Probation is over; the question of man's state and of God's efforts to get fruit from His vineyard is at an end. The death of the rejected Messiah has closed this book. Man—the Jew—ought to have made a becoming answer to God for the benefits so lavishly showered on him; but his answer was—the cross. It is too late to talk of what men should be. Tried by God under the most favorable circumstances, they betrayed and shed the innocent blood; they killed the heir to seize on his inheritance. Hence judgment is now the only portion man under law has to expect. “When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?” Seared as the poor Jews were, they could not but confess the sad truth: “He will miserably destroy those wicked men,” &c. The wickedness of the husbandmen failed to achieve its own selfish end, as surely as it had never rendered fruits meet for Him whose provident care left men without excuse. But the rights of the householder were intact; and if there was still “the lord of the vineyard,” was He indifferent to the accumulated guilt of wronged servants and of His outraged Son? It could not be. He must, themselves being the witnesses, avenge the more summarily, because of His long patience and incomparable love so shamefully spurned and defied. Others would have the vineyard let to them, who should render Him the fruits in their seasons.

Thus the death of Christ is viewed in this parable, not as the groundwork of the counsels of God, but as the climax of man's sin and the closing scene of his responsibility. Whether law or prophets or Christ sought fruit for God, all was vain, not because God's claim was not righteous, but because man—aye, favored man, with every conceivable help—was incorrigible. In this aspect the rejection of the Messiah had the most solemn meaning; for it demonstrated, beyond appeal, that man, the Jew, was good for nothing if weighed in divine scales. It was not only that he was evil and unrighteous, but he could not endure perfect love and goodness in the person of Christ. Had there been a single particle of divine light or love in men's hearts, they would have reverenced the Son; but now the full proof stood out, that human nature as such is hopelessly bad; and that the presence of a divine person, who deigned in love to be of themselves as man, gave only the final opportunity to strike the most malicious and insulting blow at God Himself. In a word, man was now shown and pronounced to be LOST. “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.” Christ's death was the grand turning point in the ways of God; the moral history of man, in the most important sense, terminates there.

“Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in his eyes.” (Ver. 42.) It was the revealed conduct of those who took the lead in Israel—so revealed in their own Scriptures. Marvelous doing on the Lord's part!—in manifest reversal of such as set themselves up, and were accepted, as acting in His name: yet to be marvelous in Israel's eyes, when the now-hidden but exalted Savior comes forth, the joy of the people, who shall then welcome and forever bless their once rejected King: for truly His mercy endures forever. Meanwhile His lips utter the sentence of sure rejection from their high estate: “therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God (not of heaven, for this they had not) shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.” Nor was this all: for “whosoever shall fall on this stone (Himself in humiliation) shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall (i.e., consequent on His exaltation), it will grind him to powder.” Thus, He sets forth the then ensuing stumbles of unbelief; and further, the positive execution of destructive judgment, whether individual or national, Jewish or Gentile, at His appearing in glory. (Comp. Dan. 2)

It is in all respects a notable scene, and the Lord, now drawing to the conclusion of His testimony, speaks with piercing decision. So that, spiritually impotent and dull as the chief priests and Pharisees might be, and couched as His words were in parables, the drift and aim was distinctly felt. And yet, whatever their murderous will, they could do nothing till His hour was come; for the people in a measure bowed to His word, and took Him for a prophet. He brought God in presence of their conscience, and their awe feebly answered to His words of coming woe!

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: 4. The Labourers Hired

Matt. 20:1-16.

PEOPLE have little difficulty in understanding the general drift of the answer to Peter, who said, Behold, we have forsaken all and followed Thee: what shall we have therefore? Our Lord shows that God will be debtor to no man, and that for every loss on account of His name every one shall receive again a hundredfold and inherit life eternal. But He adds the cautionary words, Many first shall be last, and last first. For as Christ is the motive where faith is, reward is but. the encouragement to him that follows the Savior; it cheers him when already on the way. Make the reward the object, and all becomes mercenary. Even where Christ is the constraining power, there is danger of clouding Him under an overweening estimate of sacrifices for His sake; and hence the need to think of the shortcoming implied through self-reliance. In every case however God never forgets but assuredly repays.

Why is it that there has been such perplexity and difference from of old to the present about the parable which opens chap. 20.? It is because man bulks so largely in his own eyes that room is not left for the sovereign grace of God. Now this is the very thing the Lord here asserts. Pious men might and must more or less distinctly allow it in His saving souls; but the Lord claims it for His dealing with service. And it ought not to be a question that in the parable not salvation but service is the matter in hand. Alas! in all ages the tendency has been and is to confound the two things to the deep injury of both; for if mixed up, no soul who has a due sense of his unprofitable service can or ought to be assured of his salvation; yet without that assurance God’s grace is not fully received, nor has Christ’s blood practically cleansed the conscience, so that the service is vitiated correspondingly from first to last. And no wonder; for never can exist the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope, which we are exhorted to hold fast firm unto the end.

Now what can be plainer in scripture than the truth that “the free gift of God is life eternal through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:23)? In John, Gospel and Epistles, it is no less plain that the believer has that life now. No doubt, it is in the Son, and alone in Him rightly and securely; but “he that believeth on Me hath life eternal” (John 6:47). And the First Epistle was written that God’s children might know, that they believing on the name of the Son of God have life eternal. They do not wait for His coming again to have it; they have it now for their souls, they will have it for their bodies also, and in its proper glorious sphere, when He comes for them. And it is of life eternal by-and-by that the Synoptic Gospels speak.

But the parable contemplates, not conversion, nor life eternal, but laboring in the vineyard. How can those that know the gospel fall into a mistake so evident and profound as to overlook this? It was for Christ that Simon Peter left all and followed Him. Christ drew him, not reward, though reward there is; for God is not unrighteous to forget any work or labor of love shown to His name in the service of the saints or of the gospel. But it is divine love in Christ, seen by faith, which draws the soul after Him, and makes His call effectual. Such alone do work that pleases God; and life eternal is therefore shown in Rom. 2 to come at the end of a fruit-bearing course; but the utmost care is taken in the same epistle to declare that we are justified freely by His grace (chap. 3: 24). Yea, it excludes any work on our part from that great act of His grace. “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt; but to him that worketh not but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom. 4: 4, 5).

In the parable on the contrary it is a question of work done for the householder, who calls and sends into his vineyard.

“For the kingdom of the heavens is like a householder which went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard; and when he had agreed with the laborers for a denary1 the day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing in the marketplace idle; and to them he said, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing; and he saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard. And when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto the steward, Call the laborers, and pay them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a denary. And when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; and they likewise received every man a denary. And when they received it, they murmured against the householder, saying, These last have spent one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat. But he answered and said to one of them, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a denary? Take up that [which is] thine, and go thy way; it is my will to give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? or is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last” (vers. 1-16).

Plainly the Lord lays down the true spring and principle of service. It is confidence in him who calls. All is set out with divine wisdom. The workmen first called agreed to the terms. Those at the third hour went to work on his word; “whatsoever is right I will give you,” as did those at the sixth and ninth hours. The last batch at the eleventh went there simply at his call: “Go ye also into the vineyard.” With these last the steward is directed to begin, giving each a denary. This aroused the murmurs of the earliest workmen, who resented the householder’s liberality. But he stopped the mouth of their spokesman at once. The injustice complained of was solely in the complainant. “Didst thou not agree with me for a denary?” Grace reserves its title to bless. “Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last.” The despised enjoy the grace that abounds beyond all question of man, and those who indulge in selfish thoughts justly sink. God Who never fails in righteousness maintains His right to act according to His own goodness. He is sovereign even in this where man sets up his claim to his own chagrin. Indisputably just, He is good and will act upon it, as He loves to do: what loss and misery those make for themselves who dispute it!

W. K.

Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 20:30 and 21:1-22, Remarks on

(Chap. 20:30; 21:1-22.)

In the transfiguration we had a picture of the coming kingdom, Christ, the head and center, with representatives of its heavenly and its earthly things; on one side, Moses and Elias glorified; and on the other, the three disciples in their natural bodies. This was a turning point in the history of our Lord's course which John passes by, but it is given fully in the other three gospels. The cross, now that sin exists, is the foundation of all glory. There could be nothing stable or holy without it. It is the sole channel through which flows to us all our blessing; and Christ's decease, we know from Luke, was the theme on the holy mount. But John gives us nothing of that scene. The reason is because he is

occupied with Christ as the Son; we find there, not the human side, but the Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. His rejection by Israel, and Israel consequently rejected by God, are assumed from the beginning of John's gospel: as we read, “He came to his own, and his own received him not.” Now, the transfiguration does not bring out the Deity of Christ, but His glory as exalted Son of man, owned withal as Son of God. This was a sample of the glory of the Lord in His future kingdom, with the types of some risen, and of others in their natural state. So will it be by and by. John does not show us the mount, but the Father's house. This is for the Church. The world may see the glory, more or less, as foreshown on the mount, but this is not our best portion. We look for that blessed hope and the appearing of the glory. Our hope is Christ, to be with Him in the many-mansioned Father's house; a hope which is far beyond any blessing of the kingdom. Neither will it be displayed. The secrets of love and communion which the Church will have with Christ in the Father's house can never be the subject of manifestation to the world. Who now could or would publish the tenderest feelings of his heart? Doubtless the glory, the external pomp, and the place of power which the Church will possess in the coming kingdom will be displayed: for these form some of the chief features in the millennial reign. We shall reign with Christ, the glory of the Bridegroom enveloping, as it were, the Bride. If we discriminate what the Scriptures distinguish, we may find a marked distinction between the proper position and hopes of the Church, and the glories of the kingdom, however real, which all the glorified share, when it is established in power. Thus the Mount of Transfiguration holds an important place in the three synoptic gospels, as showing Christ in the capacity of Messiah, servant, and Son of man. As such, He will be displayed after the pattern in the mount, and, accordingly, the three evangelists, who present Christ in these three aspects, give us the transfiguration. Further, the thought of present reception by the Jews had been entirely given up, and the new thing begins to be announced immediately before it. Christ must suffer and die: and those who follow Him during His rejection will be in the kingdom, but not as subjects; they will be kings with Him when He reigns. When responsibility and even individual privileges come in, “the kingdom” is the thought; but when our corporate place is intended, “the Church” is spoken of. (Matt. 16; 18)

Here, in this chapter (21), and from verse 30 of chapter 20, a preface to it, we have the last formal presentation of the king, though not with the thought of being received; but in order to the filling up of man's iniquity and the accomplishment of the counsels of God, He presents Himself as such. We find first, that He is on His way to Jerusalem, and sees two blind men, who cry unto Him, “Have mercy upon us, thou Son of David!” If they knew nothing of the impending crisis, they notwithstanding were completely in the spirit of the scene. The Holy Ghost was acting upon them, that they might bear testimony to Jesus, who was now for the last time to be publicly presented as Heir to the throne. What a picture! The seeing ones, in their blind hardness of heart, rejecting their own Messiah, though owned of Gentiles as the born king of the Jews; and the poor blind ones, through faith loudly confessing Him the true king. Perhaps their principal, their one desire, may have been to be healed of their blindness. Be it so; but God at any rate gave to their faith the proper object and the just confession for that moment, for He was guiding the scene. His hand was upon the spring; and whatever was the thought of the blind men in crying after the Lord, God's design was that there should be a suited testimony rendered to His king, the “Son of David.” A Jew would well understand all that was implied in the title. What a condemnation of Pharisees who had rejected Christ! The highest point of view is by no means always that which is most proper; a lower one is sometimes far more right. Thus the confession of Christ as “Son of David” was more in keeping here than if they had said, “Thou Son of God.” This may sound strange where the various titles have not been weighed; but in hailing Him according to His Jewish glory, they uttered that which was in unison with what God was then doing.

And now, let me ask reverently, Why should the resurrection of Lazarus be omitted in the three first gospels? Man, if these accounts had been his work, would not have omitted it: he would deem the insertion of it in each gospel as necessary for a full and truthful account. Besides, it would have been thought far too important an item to be left out under any consideration. The omission of so stupendous a miracle, in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, points out clearly that it is the Spirit of God who wrought sovereignly and writes by each with a special purpose. If so, all which men call inconsistencies and imperfections finds no place here, unless God can make mistakes, which none will say. It was a part of the special purpose of God to omit the miracle; for He only presents those facts which suit His design in each gospel. Now this miracle of raising Lazarus does not show us Christ as the Messiah, or the Servant, or the Son of man; but as the Son of God, who gives life and raises the dead—a grand point of doctrine in John 5 and there alone found in the gospels. There were other miracles of raising from the dead in the other gospels; but the truth of His Sonship and present glory in communion with the Father is not in these others the prominent one. It is not, therefore, as Son of God that He appears in them. Take for instance the raising the widow's son at Nain. What are the circumstances brought into emphasis there? He was the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. Luke, or rather the Spirit, is careful to note this; for it is what gives point to the touching story. “He restored him to his mother.” It is the Lord's human sympathy, the Lord as Son of man, which is the object here. True, he must have been Son of God, or He could not have thus raised the dead. If the Godhead, and relation to the Father, of Him who was made flesh, had been the only truth to show, the attendant circumstances need not have been narrated; the Gospel of John might have sufficed, as it does, to display eminently the Lord Jesus as the Son.

All this manifests the extreme perfectness of the word of God, in these gospels. When the mind is subject to Him this is seen, and He teaches those who submit themselves and confide in Him. There is a blind man healed in John 9; but it is not these near Jericho who appealed to Jesus; but as Jesus passed by, He saw a man blind from his birth. Rejected of men, He was going about, seeking for objects on whom to bestow His blessing; the Son acting in grace and truth, who, unsought, saw the deep need and dealt accordingly. It was an opportunity of working the works of God. He waits for nothing, goes to the man, and the work is done, though it were the Sabbath-day. How could the Son of God rest in the presence of sin and wretchedness, whatever religious pride might feel? The Lord leaves him not until he can say, “Son of God,” and worships. Moreover, we may say, John never mentions a miracle simply for the display of power, but in order to show the divine glory of Christ. In Matthew it is the rejected Messiah. Here (chap. xx.) the thought is, that, being despised by the nation, God makes two blind men to bear testimony to Him as Son of David; and this, in the well-known spot of Israel's triumphant power, and, alas! also of rebellious unbelief entailing a curse, now of the Messiah come in grace, and with equal ability and readiness to bless.

The place (near Jericho) was accursed. But if Jesus has come as Messiah, although the Jews reject Him, He shows Himself to be Jehovah; not only Messiah under the law, but Jehovah above it; and so he blesses them even at Jericho, and they followed Him. This was the place that Israel should have taken: they ought to have known their King. The two blind men were a witness for Him and against them. There was a competent testimony—two witnesses: “In the mouth of two,” &c. Mark and Luke, whose object was not to bring out testimony valid according to the law, only mention one. There is, of course, no contradiction in this. One thing is certain, that they were both healed in the journey from Jericho to Jerusalem. Luke mentions simply the vicinity of Jericho—not as He was come nigh, but as He was nigh, which would be equally true when He left the place. The Authorized Version has increased the difficulty unwittingly.

Jesus goes to the Mount of Olives. The Jews well knew what was prophesied concerning this mountain; they ought to have entered into the spirit of what the Lord was doing.

The sending for the colt shows the Lord as Jehovah, who has a perfect right to all. “The Lord (Jehovah) hath need of him.” What more thorough than His knowledge of circumstances in the womb of the future I How evident His control over the owner's mind and feeling! Meek as He was, sitting upon an ass, the King of Zion according to the prophet, He was indeed as surely Jehovah as Messiah coming in His name: the “need” as amazing as the glory of His person. But the Lord goes onward to Jerusalem. And the multitude cry, “Hosanna to the Son of David!... Behold thy King cometh.” They apply Psa. 118 to Messiah, and they were right. They might be very unintelligent, and perhaps many of them joined later in the fearful cry, “His blood be upon us,” &c.; but here the Lord guides the scene. He comes to the city; but He is unknown: His own citizens know Him not. They ask, “Who is this?” So little understanding had the multitude, who had just been saying, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” that they answer, “This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.” But though they only see Jesus of Galilee, yet He shows Himself as King, and takes a place of authority and power. He enters into the temple, and overthrows the tables of the money-changers, &c. This may certainly be looked at as a miraculous incident; for it was astonishing that He whom they knew only as the prophet of Nazareth should dare to enter their temple, and drive out all who were desecrating it. But they turn not upon Him. The power of the God of the temple was there, and they flee, their consciences doubtless echoing the Lord's words, that they had made His house a den of thieves. But here we see not only the testimony of the crowd to the Kingship of Jesus, but the response to it, as it were, in the act of Jesus. As if He had said, “You hail me as King, and I will show you that I am.” Accordingly, He reigns, as it were, in righteousness, and cleanses the defiled temple. Into what a state had the Jews not fallen? A clear testimony it was to them what Jesus thought about them; for what more severe condemnation than “ye have made it a den of thieves.” There were two cleansings—one before our Lord's public ministry, and the other at its close. John records the first, Matthew the last. In our Gospel it is an act of Messianic power, where He cleanses His own house, or, at least, acts for God, as His King. In John it is rather zeal for the injured honor of His Father's house— “Make not my Father's house an house of merchandize.” A collateral reason why John tells us of the first cleansing in the beginning of his Gospel is, that he assumes the rejection of Israel at once. Hence their rejection by Christ, set forth in this act, was the inevitable consequence of their rejection of Him: and this is the point from which John sets out when he begins with the ways of the Lord before His ministry.

But now the blind and the lame come to Him to be healed. “He healed their diseases and forgave their iniquities.” Both these classes were the hated of David's soul—the effect of the taunt upon David's soul. How blessed the contrast in the Son of David! He turns out the selfish religionists from the temple, and receives there the poor, blind, and lame, and heals them—perfect righteousness and perfect grace.

On the one hand, there are the voices of the children crying, “Hosanna,” &c.—the ascription of praise to Him as King, the Son of David; on the other, there is the Lord acting as King, and doing that which the Jews well knew had been prophesied of their King. He was there the confessed King; but not by the chief priests and scribes, who took umbrage, willfully and knowingly rejecting Him— “we will not have this man to reign over us.” Naturally, therefore, they seek to stop the mouth of the children, and ask Jesus to rebuke them: “Hearest thou not what these say?” But the Lord sanctions their praises: “Have ye never heard, out of the mouth of babes,” &c. The power of Jehovah was there, and there was a mouth to own it, though only in babes and sucklings. It is a wondrous scene. The Lord here quotes from Psa. 8, where He is seen as Son of man after His rejection as Son of David in Psa. 2 and seq. In Psa. 8 we have the suffering and exaltation of the Son of man. Herod and Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles and Israel, gather, and do their worst. Refused, then, as the Messiah, He takes the higher place of Son of man, humbled first, and then glorified. The blind men owned Him in the first, and the babes in the last and deeper way. What has not God wrought?

He left them—a significant and solemn act. They rejected Him, and He abandons them, turning his back upon the beloved city.

As to the fig-tree, Mark says that the time of figs was not yet. Many have been perplexed at this, thinking that the Lord sought figs at a time when there could be none. The meaning is, that the time was not come for the gathering of figs; and consequently, if the tree had been in bearing, the Lord must have found figs thereon, for the time to gather them—the time of figs—was not yet. There ought to have been a show of fruit, but there was no appearance, save of leaves—outward profession. It was thoroughly barren. The Lord pronounces a curse upon it, and presently it withered away. Looking at Mark 11:12, you will see how Matthew disregards time; for the circumstance occupied two days, which he puts together without distinguishing. The sentence on the fig-tree was an emblematic curse upon the people, inasmuch as it was the national tree. The Lord found nothing but leaves, and the word is that henceforth no fruit should grow upon it forever. The nation had failed in fruit to God, when they had every means and opportunity for glorifying and serving Him; and now all their advantages are taken away, and it is not possible for them as the old stock. The remnant even now is excepted who believe in Christ, and so is “the generation to come.” The disciples wondered; but the Lord says to them further, “If ye shall say to this mountain (mountain symbolizing Israel's political place among the nations, as exalted among them), be thou cast into the sea,” &c. This has been done. Not only is there no fruit borne for God, but Israel, as a nation, has vanished—cast into the sea—scattered, and to appearance lost in the mass of people—trodden down and oppressed under the foot of the Gentiles.

Here, then, in these miracles and scenes, is a remarkable witness of the Lord's last presentation to the Jews, and an equally striking picture of the judgment of God on Jerusalem and the Jews because of their rejection of the Messiah, who, according to Dan. 9, was cut off and had nothing, only to have all things by and by far more gloriously; and if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him.

2 Cor. 4:10, 11; 5:10.—The “body” has an important place in the exhortations of the word of God. The outward man, as well as the inward, is to be a witness for Christ. A person may say, If I display the world, my heart is not in it. Whereas the truth is, if Christ is enjoyed, things unlike Him drop off like fading leaves. So with the mode of life, furniture, habits, &c., as well as external appearance. Only we must be patient to others and give the truth time to expand and work.

Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 20:1-29, Remarks on

The last chapter closed with the important doctrine that in the kingdom the Lord will remember all suffering and service here for His name's sake. But it is evident that though this be an undoubted truth of Scripture, referred to in the Epistles of Paul, and elsewhere in the New Testament, it is one which the heart would be ready to abuse to self-righteousness; and that a person might soon forget that all is of grace, and might be disposed to make a claim upon God by reason of anything which He had enabled a soul to do. Hence a parable is added which

brings in a totally different principle, where the prominent thought is the sovereignty of God, for the express purpose, I think, of guarding against such effects. For God is not unrighteous to forget our work and labor of love which we may have showed toward His name. But, then, there will be a danger in our remembering it. It does not follow because God will not forget what His people do for Him, that His people are to remember it themselves. We have but one thing to think of and set before our souls—Christ Himself: as the Apostle Paul said, “This one thing I do; forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before:” not forgetting what we have done wrong, the very reverse of what will be even in glory. When there is not a vestige of humiliation more, we shall have a more lively sense than ever of our manifold failures; but not as producing one thought of doubt, or fear, or unhappiness. Such thoughts would be contrary to the presence of God. It is a good thing for the believer, holding fast his full blessing, to think of what he is—to humble himself day by day in the sight of God; always remembering that true humiliation is on the ground of our being children of God. If we take the place of being still in our sins, and needing to start afresh, as it were, over and over again, there never can be proper Christian experience or progress. There is a great difference between the humiliation of a sinner and that of a saint, who, while he has an evil nature, has also a new nature in Christ. Humility is always right; but when we draw near in worship to God, it is no proof of this humility to be speaking about ourselves as poor sinners. We come together to enjoy Christ, to set forth what God is; and after all, can there be a doubt that this, involving as it does the consciousness of our nothingness, really shows the deepest and most genuine humility. A person who had some office about the queen, and who had proper respect for her, would be thinking of her, not of himself. How much more when we are in the presence of God? This ought to fill our souls with joy in the worship of the Lord. What is comely for the saint, what is most acceptable to God, is not the constant bringing in ourselves in one way or another, right as this may be, in a certain sense, in our closet. But the praise of God for what He is, above all, in the knowledge of His Son and of His work, is the great end of all the dealings of God with His children.

This will be a test for the soul. Where there is a consciousness of habitual carelessness and lack of dependence, with their sad results, there will not be a preparedness of heart for worship. In such circumstances, the Spirit makes the conscience active, instead of drawing out the heart. What does not the Lord deserve from us? When we go to praise Him, breaking bread in His name, it is not because we can take comfort from anything but Himself: and this will not arrest, but strengthen, our self-judgment. What is the Word of God, and what the Holy Ghost, for? Is it not that we should be growing up into Christ in all things? The proper thought connected with the Lord's table is, I am going to meet with Christ, to praise Him, together with His saints: and this keeps a check upon our spirits, and brings before our souls what a thing it is to meet with Christ, and to be found in His presence. Worship is the soul finding itself in the presence of God, in the Spirit. By and by we shall have perfect worship in heaven. Now we have it only in part, even as we know but in part. But in principle the worship of the believer is a heavenly thing, even while accomplished on the earth, as we ourselves are said to be “heavenly” also. What we have to forget is not our shortcomings—to be indifferent or light about them; but “let a man discern or examine himself:” it is the inward discernment of the soul. And what then? “So let him eat.” That is, the Christian even, if conscious that he has forgotten the Lord during the week, is not to distrust Him. What is he to do? To go to the Lord's table as if it were no matter at all? That would be sin. Is he, then to stay away? Neither one nor the other. What, then, can he do? He is to judge himself, to confess his fault, to humble himself before God; and “so let him eat.” This is God's way. A person staying away does not mend matters. I am as good as saying, “I am not a Christian at all,” if I keep away from the Lord's table; or I have been behaving so badly, that others would consider me not a Christian if they knew it. Constantly bringing it before the soul is one of God's ways for preserving from sin. But let it be done in the spirit of self-judgment at home, so that we praise when we come together in the name of the Lord.

In order to keep up this sense of grace, the Spirit of God recurs in this chapter to the sovereignty of God; the counteractive to the self-righteousness that is to be found even in the heart of a disciple. Peter might say, “We have left all and followed thee,” and the Lord might assure him that it would not be forgotten; but He immediately adds the parable of the householder. Here you find not the principle of rewards, or God's righteous recognition of the service done by His people; but His own rights, His own sovereignty. Hence, there are no differences here—no one specially remembered because he had won souls to Christ, or left all for Christ. The principle is this, that while God will infallibly own every service and loss for the sake of Christ; yet does He maintain His own title to give as He will. There might be some poor soul brought to the knowledge of Christ at the day of his death. Now, God the Father claims His own title to give what He may please; he may have done no work, but God's title is reserved to give to those who have not wrought anything at all—as you may think—just what is good in His own eyes. This is a very different principle from what we had in the last chapter, and exceedingly counter to the mind of man. “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.”

The common application of this parable to the salvation of the soul is a mistake. For this is that which Christ wrought for, suffered for, and lives for, independently of man. The poor sinner has just to give himself up to be saved by Christ. When brought to an end of itself, acknowledging that it deserves nothing but hell, how sweet that God brings before such a soul that Jesus Christ (and this is a faithful saying) came into the world to save sinners. When content to be saved as nothing but a sinner, and by nothing but Christ, there and then only is there rest given of Him. Wherever we have to contribute our part, it will be only uncertainty, and doubts, and difficulties; and there is where the salvation of God shines forth. Christ alone is salvation. The man that is saved contributes nothing but his sins. But God is delighted, and not the less because it is the fruit of His grace, to hear a poor sinner acknowledge that Jesus is worthy to bring him, freed from sin, to heaven. But in this parable the question is not this. There is nothing in it about believing in Christ or His work. It is positive work that is done. There you may think, surely the Lord will reward the work according to its kind and degree. This we have seen: but there is another principle not always understood—God reserves in His own hand the right to do as He pleases, and He never makes a mistake. It may seem hard that a man should be toiling for fifty years, and that another, brought in just at the close of his life, should be honored in heaven as much as himself. But God is the only righteous, the only wise judge of what is for His own glory. If He please, He will put all upon an equal footing. He will reward the work that is done, but He will give as He will.

“When he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market-place; and said unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.” It is not grace in the sense of salvation here. “Whatsoever is right I will give you.” It is God that judges what is becoming. “Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.” And, singular to say, “About the eleventh hour he went out.” What a heart this tells? What infinite goodness! That God, who recognizes every service and suffering done for Himself, yet keeps intact the prerogative of going out at the last moment to bring in souls, and occupy them with what might seem to be a little service! But He can give grace to do that little well. “About the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right,

that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first." "Beginning from the last" in the perfect wisdom of God. And why is it that "the last" are made so much of in this parable? What makes it the more striking is, that in the close of the preceding chapter it was not so. There, "Many that are first shall be last, and the last shall be first." But here the last are always spoken of first. So the steward is told to begin from the last unto the first. And again, when the master of the vineyard has to speak himself, it is the same thing: "the last shall be first, and the first last." It is the sovereignty of grace in giving as He pleases; not alone in saving, but in rewarding in the time of glory—for this is what is spoken of. Of course the last received their wages thankfully. But when the first heard about it, they begin to think themselves entitled to more—they who had borne the burden and heat of the day. But the master reminds them that all was a settled thing before they entered upon their work. In their selfishness, they forgot both the terms and the righteousness of him with whom they had to deal. If, out of the liberality of his heart, the householder was pleased to give others, who had worked the twelfth part of what they had done, as much as he gave themselves, what was that to them This was his affair entirely. God maintains His own rights. And it is of the greatest importance for our souls that we hold to the rights of God in everything. Persons will argue as to whether it is righteous for God to elect this person or that. But if you go upon the ground of righteousness, all are lost, and lost forever. Now, if God is pleased to use His mercy according to His wisdom, and for His glory, among these poor lost ones, who is to dispute with Him? "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" God is entitled to act according to what is in His heart: and "shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" Is He entitled to act from Himself? He cannot act from man on the grounds of righteousness. There is no foundation on which He can thus deal; and it is entirely a question of His own good pleasure. And we must remember that there is not a man that is lost but rejects the mercy of God, despises it, or uses it for his own selfish purposes in this world. The man that is saved is the only one that has a true sense of sin, the only one that gives himself up as lost really unto God; but then he falls back upon His infinite mercy in Christ to save a poor sinner.

In the case we have here, when the first came and complained to the good man of the house, he answered them, "Friend, I do thee no wrong. Didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way; I will give unto this last even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?" There comes out the whole secret. Man, yea, a professing disciple of the Lord, a laborer in His vineyard, may be disputing because he is to have no more than another who, in his opinion, has done little as compared with himself. It was the same principle that made the Judaizers so jealous about the Gentiles being brought in. So says the Lord, "The last shall be first, and the first last." I would just ask, Why in the last chapter is it, "Many that are first shall be last, and the last first," and here, "The last shall be first, and the first last?" In speaking about rewards, according to the work done, the failure of man is intimated; for indeed weakness soon shows itself. "The first shall be last." But in this new parable is the sovereignty of God that never fails. Consequently here, "The first shall be last, and the last first." "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present evil world." There was a first, we may say, who became last—a laborer for the Lord, who had not given up Christianity, but grown tired of the path of unremitting service for Christ. If instead of honor now, the thousands of those who are engaged in the service of Christ were to receive only scorn and persecution, there would be no slight thinning of their ranks. The present return should be shame and suffering. This must be looked for by him who intelligently seeks to serve faithfully the Lord in this world.

Demas may have been a believer; but the trial and reproach, the love of ease and other things all came strongly over his spirit, and he abandoned the service of the Lord. "All seek their own, not the things that are Jesus Christ's:" there is a similar principle.

We have our Lord next shown going up to Jerusalem; and now he prepares them for still greater trouble. "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem: and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again." And yet even after this, so selfish is the heart of man, the mother of Zebedee's children comes to Him with her sons, who were among the apostles themselves. She comes worshipping Him and desiring a certain thing of Him. "And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand and the other on the left, in thy kingdom." Now comes out another principle; for, indeed, so perfect is the humiliation of Christ—such the self-abandonment of the only One who had a perfect knowledge of all things and a right to everything by His personal glory, that He says, I have no place to give you in my kingdom. It is not mine to give, save as my Father may desire. But I have something to give you now: and what is it? Suffering. Yes, suffering is what Christ gives His servants now, and this as the highest privilege. When the Apostle Paul was converted, he asks at once, "What wilt thou have me to do?" The Lord tells him what great things he should suffer for His name's sake. Suffering all is better than doing anything. It is the best portion a saint can have in this world. The highest honor we can have here is suffering with and for Christ. This our Lord lets the mother of Zebedee's children know, when she asks for a place for her sons on His right hand and on His left in His kingdom. "Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto Him, We are able." He took in two different kinds of suffering: the cup, which is inward suffering; and the baptism, which expresses what we are immersed into outwardly. The two include every kind of trial, inward and outward. He is not here speaking about the cross in atonement, for there can be no fellowship in this. But there might be the cross in rejection, though not as atonement. There may be the sharing of what Christ suffered from man, but not of what He suffered from God. When He was suffering for sin on the cross, He drops relationship, and bows in infinite grace to the place of judgment. He is made sin. He realizes what it is to be forsaken of God, making Himself responsible for the sins of men. He says therefore in that terrible moment on the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" With this we have nothing to do—no rejection because of sin. God forsook Jesus that He might not forsake us. There never can be God forsaking a Christian, or even hiding Himself from him. There is no such thing in Scripture since the death of Christ as God hiding himself from a believer. We have not a promise merely, but the accomplishment of it. The first principle of the gospel is perfect forgiveness and reconciliation. We are brought nigh unto God through the blood of Christ and forgiven all trespasses.

The Lord, then, says that they knew not what they were asking; and asks if they were able to drink of the cup that He should drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that He was baptized with. They say unto Him, We are able. They did not know what they said, any more than what they asked. For after this, when our Lord was only in danger of death, we find that they all forsook Him and fled. And one of these two sons of Zebedee, if he did venture into the hall of judgment, it was merely, as it were, under the high priest's robe, that is, on the plea of being known to him. When Peter followed on his own ground, it was only to show his utter weakness. In presence of such a cup as this, and such a baptism, the Lord says, "Ye shall indeed drink of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with;" not, Ye are able: "but to sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father." I would just remark that the words which are put in in italics mar the sense very much, being inserted without warrant. Leave them out and the sense is better. It was His to give to those only to whom the Father destined it. Christ is the administrator of the rewards of the kingdom. He says, As I

am now the servant in suffering, so I shall be in the glory. In everything, Christ is the One who will turn all things to the glory of God. Every knee shall bow to His name, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; but then it will all be to the glory of God the Father. “And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.” A good deal of our indignation is no better than theirs. Their own pride was wounded. No doubt it seemed a very right thing to put down these two brethren who were so full of themselves. But why were they thus indignant? Because they too were full of themselves. Christ was not filled with indignation. It was a sorrow to Him: but they were moved with hot feeling against the two brethren. We have to take care. Often where we seek to pull down those that seek to exalt themselves, there is self on our part too. Supposing, too, we take one who has fallen into sin, you will see a good deal of strong feeling about it: but is this the best way of showing our sense of sin? Those who feel most for God have always the deepest feeling for poor sinners, and for saints who have slipped away from God. “If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

“But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them; and they that are great exercise authority upon them.” He put His finger upon that very love of greatness in themselves. They were loud in condemning it in James and John; but the feeling with which it was condemned, betrayed that they had the same thought in their own hearts. He says, “It shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant.” There is a difference between the two words. The word translated “minister” means a servant, but not necessarily a slave, though a person who might be hired. But in verse 27 it is a bondman or slave. Do you want to be really great according to the principles of my kingdom? Go down as low as you can. Do you want to be greatest? Go down the lowest of all. Whoever has least of self is greatest in the kingdom of Christ. For “the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” He took the lowest place of all, and gave His life a ransom for many. Blessed forever be His name!

The last verses properly belong to the next chapter, which is the approach of our Lord to Jerusalem from the way of Jericho. And it is necessary to take the two chapters together, to have the proper connection of all that the Holy Ghost has given us here. But I cannot close even this part of the subject without recalling attention to the principles of the kingdom of God as shown us by Christ Himself. And what a wonderful call it is for self-renouncing service! What a joy to think that everything that now is a trial, will be found as a joy in that kingdom! There are those who may think that they are favored with few opportunities for serving the Lord—who are shut out from what their hearts would desire. Let us remember that He who knows everything reserves His right to give as He will to His own and of His own. He will do the very best according to His heart. Our one business now is to think of Him who came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. That is our prime call and need—to be Christ's servants, in serving each other.

Bible Treasury: Volume N5, Unto My Name

It is humbling and grievous when a servant of the Lord gives up any truth of God which he had not only held but advocated publicly, then doubted, and finally denies; from mere sentiment wresting scripture to popular error. Such is the character of “Gathering in the Name of the Lord Jesus.” The friend who sent me the tract regards its writer as the best-taught man in their circle. Yet here he has sunk lower than many of his associates, even on his own showing in the first paragraph of p. 7; for they, if mistaken in their claim to be gathered to that Name, at least own it to be the only right aim for true worshippers. So sadly has he lost this truth as to stigmatize it as “the Corinthian school of Christ” (p. 8) “against all the names of Paul, Apollos and Cephas!” “This is carnality,” he says! Is it not deplorable to see a Christian become more unbelieving as he grows older? carried away by the Laodicean spirit of the day beyond many who probably know less, and blinded to excuse and spread utter laxity under cover of grace which is not grace? Can one honestly say less?

T. N. knows that those who in faith regard it as a special privilege and duty, to be gathered together to the Lord's name, are the farthest of any on earth from setting it against Paul, Apollos and Cephas. It was therefore wholly different with these frivolous Corinthians; who, whilst abiding in the same fellowship, did really and irreverently from their old philosophic habit set up in rivalry not those blessed servants only but the Divine Master as heads of opposing schools! Is there the least approach even to superficial resemblance? We dread all schism; we disclaim denominations or sects. These are what the apostle calls “heresies,” and warns, in 1 Cor. 11:18, 19, as the sure issue of unjudged schism. Yet the gist of this tract is to make light even of that graver evil, and goes so far as to rebuke the better desires of his own companions who left the sects, in order (as they judged) to be gathered to the Lord's name.

According to his present view, and “the Keswick motto,” whether maintaining sects, or abjuring them, all Christians in the existing disorder and confusion, are alike gathered to His name! If he said that, as members of Christ and walking consistently, they are entitled to be received in His name and are free to take their place, it is true. But what if they ignore it and prefer, a gathering according to their own views, or an organization that sets aside God's? Can it be that standing to this looseness, go where he will among orthodox denominations, he and other believers honor that precious privilege as truly as in apostolic days? There was an early man among Brethren (A. N. G.) who seems to have entertained or slipped into a similar negation of all divine principle. To simple and intelligent souls this was ever abhorrent. For it stultifies all scripture which treats of the church, and in particular this Epistle which T. N. perverts to his aid. Can he honestly believe that, when the apostle addresses the church of God that is in Corinth, “with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours,” he sanctions separate sects, and accepts what he calls a heretic (Titus 3:10, 11) as all the same gathered to the Lord's name? This is beyond doubt what the argument involves, as foolish a thought as it is faithless.

It is therefore mere evasion of “gathered to the name of Christ” if we pretend that when gathered as “Presbyterians and Episcopalians, Baptists and Methodists, and those who refuse all separating titles” (to take his own phrase in page 8), Christians, however earnest, are nevertheless gathered to His name. They are never so gathered whilst they abide in religious corporations framed on these extra-scriptural lines. Nor is the refusal of “separating titles” enough. There must be the positive gathering to His name as the divinely given, only, and adequate center for God's children, to the exclusion of all that is incompatible with it by the word and Spirit of God. Matt. 18:15-20 supposes but one communion, no matter in how many places even in the same city they may meet. The church or assembly here and everywhere else in scripture implies inter-communion, and never allows of a fellowship independent and differing one from another. As the Head is one, so is the church according to God's will, who has sent forth the Holy Spirit to act as the power and bond of union for this end. “For also in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free, and were all given to drink of one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13).

See also Eph. 4.

But it, is a delusion to fancy that if souls break away from divine unity for divers doctrines and governments of man's device, they are notwithstanding gathered to the Lord's name. Sect or heresy is insubjection to the Lord, whatever the plea to vindicate such a departure. The same apostle who laid down the principle of one body is the one to pronounce the than guilty of such self-will as perverted and sinning, being self-condemned. Heterodoxy or strange doctrine is quite another evil, which may go so far as to deny God's everlasting judgment of sin, or His glory who bore it away from all who believe. Surely great is the sin if one deliberately seeks to make light of the evil of denominations which directly oppose that for which Christ died: not, it is true, to save the lost, but to gather together into one the children of God that were scattered abroad (John 11:51, 52). How bold to assert, that if Christians set up new limits of fellowship which narrow or broaden the divine will, they are to be notwithstanding condoned, and no-less gathered unto His name than those who are faithful and obedient! Some may flatter themselves that this amiability is growth in grace; whereas it is increasing looseness, and the unwitting desire to excuse themselves and other careless Christians at the cost of Christ's honor and word, to say nothing of the personally present Spirit.

As to a junction of such believers to supplicate God the Father in the Son's name, they surely may, and never in vain for what is His will. But any union for the nonce falls far short of being gathered together unto His name. For this is nothing less than the constitutive principle of the church, abides always (even when not assembled) in its relation and its consequences, and has its “within” and “without” with incumbent duties permanently. He who refused subjection to righteous judgment of his manifest wrong, even to the extreme point of equitable and gracious desire to win him, was to be for a passing season as one of the outside Gentiles. He must, till repentance, lie under the stigma; as the rest would enjoy the standing privileges of their common relationship. For “the church” was to take the place of Christ-rejecting Israel on earth, of Jerusalem and the temple, though in living association with heaven far beyond Moriah or Zion. This is to read in faith what the Lord put into these verses; the tract forgets and tries to blot it out. Neither first nor last was the church to be a rendezvous for casuals. To be believers is not the point but to have His presence as the sanction of acts when gathered together to His name. To have the bishop as the center with presbyters and deacons was the device of the second century and onwards; to have nothing but believers of all orthodox sects or of none is an abuse; to own the Lord in the midst of those (were they but two or three) who own no center but the Lord is the sound and sole principle of God's church. But if it came to “two or three,” what grief and humiliation became them, and utter refusal to arrogate to themselves “the” church, though eschewing all sects but taking their stand upon that ground of grace and truth and nothing else!

To assume that to be saints in the denominations makes them notwithstanding truly gathered together to the Lord's name opens the door to nullify the church, for which it substitutes a mere rope of sand. It is the device of latitudinarianism, and the abandonment of the Lord's promise to those who are gathered together unto His name. And what can be plainer, to those who have learned from scripture the impending ruin evident already to inspired eyes and revealed in the Epistles and the Revelation, than that the Lord before the beginning here as elsewhere intimates that the falling away might be so great that only two or three here and there might be thus gathered in faith of God's will ecclesiastically for fidelity here below? Yet does He deign to provide the sanction here promised to those who obey His word in face of trial and ill report, instead of following the multitude in pride of antique error, or turning to indifference, novelty, and what not.

In earlier days believers were freely received as Christ's members who, having no right notion of the church, were hardly to be counted guilty of departure from what was of God. Yet those who personally departed could plead for no such favor. But there is now an ominous change foreboding “the apostasy.” No saint in those days tolerated the sacerdotalism of Christendom with its lie of apostolic succession as the warrant, its saving ordinances, and its idolatry with the real presence of a demon. Still less had we to challenge those who countenanced the gross skepticism of the Higher critics, though we had to refuse such as fell into the denial of God's judgment of sins or the soul's natural immortality. We are now bound to apply the later tests of scripture.

When giving up in principle that blessed privilege, how self-deceiving it is to say, “Oh let me ever be gathered, when gathered at all, in that Name! And what I prize so much myself let me not refuse to any saint of God.” Some at least of his own company will not deny that he has himself falsified the Lord's mind, and that what he has just written does not come from God but can only mislead those who heed it. It is no question of refusing to any saint of God his true place and privilege, but of convincing the erring that to be of a denomination contradicts it, and that to claim both is unfaithfulness and folly. As I have no wish to expose bad reasoning and misapplied kindly feeling, I refrain from doing more than, for the help of souls, pointing out the writer's radical mistake and sad declension, with much regret that it is a plain duty to do so.

Bible Treasury: Volume N1, Merciless Bondman, The

THE grace which forgives to the uttermost is characteristic of Christianity. Christ Himself bore witness of it habitually, and expressly to the sinful woman in the house of Simon the Pharisee. It is the prime message of the gospel; and the church assumes it to be settled for the least member of Christ's body.

But grace believed and received creates practical responsibility; for where that is real, there is also life in Christ to follow Him, and the gift of the Spirit ensues, a spirit, not of fear any more than of severity, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. But where there is only the profession of the natural man, without a vital work of God, the soul (not being purified by faith) betrays its unrenewal by heartless cruelty to one's fellow. And here it is set out in the strongest light, not only in its total antagonism to God, but by the aggravation of an immense debt forgiven him a servant, followed at once by the most extreme punishment of his fellow for a small debt due to himself.

In a previous section of the chapter the Lord had laid down the grace that saves the lost, illustrated by the owner's earnestness to seek one stray sheep out of a hundred. No trouble is begrudged. He leaves the safe ninety and nine, he traverses the mountains in quest of the wanderer, and, if he find it, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety and nine that had not gone astray. This grace, as it filled His own heart and gave meaning to His death, the Lord proceeds to press on the church or assembly, which was soon to supersede Israel for the present, as He announced in Matt. 16. Founded in God's righteousness on His own death and resurrection, so that the gates of Hades should not prevail against it, the Christian, no less than the church, is called to walk in grace. The injured one is to seek, not vengeance, nor yet retribution, but to gain his brother that sinned against him. If the latter should not hear, one or two are to be taken with the injured, in painstaking love; but if he heed not the assembly also, “let him be to thee as the heathen and the tax-gatherer.” How worthless the state that rejects all overtures of love! Grace refused condemns more than violated law. Indifference would deny righteousness as well as grace. The

Lord is in the midst of even two or three gathered to His name.

Peter suggested what he regarded as a perfect limit of forgiveness, and inquired whether seven times satisfied; the Lord answered, Until seventy times seven. Grace declines a stipulated term and demands the widest margin; but the parable indicates solemnly the doom of him who has no heart fox it. Whatever the man pretended to, the only true God, the Father, was unknown, and Jesus Christ Whom He did send: life eternal was not his.

“For this the kingdom of the heavens is likened to a king who would make a reckoning with his bondmen. And when he began to reckon, one debtor for ten thousand talents was brought to him. But as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and the children and all that he had, and payment to be made. The bondman then falling down did him homage, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay all. And the lord of the bondman, moved with compassion, released him and forgave him the debt. But that bondman, on going out, found one of his fellow-bondmen who owed him a hundred denarii, and having laid hold he was grasping his throat, saying, Pay what thou owest. His fellow-bondman then, falling at his feet, besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee. And he would not, but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay what was owing. But his fellow-bondmen, having seen what was being done, were greatly grieved, and went and fully explained to their lord all that was done. Then his lord, having summoned him, saith to him, Wicked bondman, all that debt I forgave thee, since thou didst beseech me: oughtedst not thou also to have pitied thy fellow-bondman, as I also pitied thee? And his, lord, in wrath, delivered him to the tormentors till he should pay all that was owing to him. Thus also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if ye forgive not from your hearts each his brother” (Matt. 18:23-35).

But one debtor is specified, and his debt enormous. Even if of silver, Haman offered no more in lieu of destroying the entire Jewish people. Not less guilty is the sinner before God. No wonder he “was brought to Him “: of himself he would never come. All depends on the reality of one's submission to God's righteousness. If he be not born of God, it is superficial. Profession may have no root of faith, but spring from the mere feeling of terror on the one hand or of sympathy on the other. It may be but creedism or deference to public opinion. It is often mental apprehension. In all such cases there is no thorough self-judgment, no divinely formed repentance, and hence no true sense of the grace of God, nor real appreciation of Christ and His work, whereby faith knows. But the sentence of judgment (for God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of them that hold the truth in unrighteousness) may alarm souls into the profession of the Lord's name apart from living faith. So it was when our Lord preached; as He warned such as quickly received the word with joy, and soon gave it up in trial. So it was yet more, when the gospel went out in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. A single case is more impressive than a crowd. Further, as individually one believes, so too judgment will be individual.

Here the debtor who did not keep the word, nor bring forth fruit with patience, “on going out,” soon betrayed his emptiness. He, being a dead stone, who had never tasted that the Lord is good, ruthlessly assailed his fellow that owed him a comparatively small debt. And his lord, incensed at cruelty so selfish after such grace, consigns him not to prison only but to the tormentors in irretrievable ruin.

O my reader, deceive not your soul: God is not mocked. Read not only Gal. 6:7-10 but Rom. 2:7-11, which press not the grace that saves, but the indispensable character of those that are saved. “He shall have judgment without mercy that showed no mercy.”

How is it then with your soul, my reader? Have you received Christ and believed the gospel to the remission of your sins? For this is the A B C of God's message based on Christ's redemption. There is far more given in His grace; but with this most needed and touching answer to our deep want God begins. He remembers no more our sins and iniquities, as He often assures us; but He would have us to know them blotted out by the Savior's blood, as we remember Him and show forth His death habitually. What can be conceived more contradictory of His grace than a hard vindictive spirit? Are not we who are forgiven distinctly charged to forgive? Nay more, are we not solemnly warned that Christ's heavenly Father will award unsparing judgment, not to open adversaries only, Jew or Gentile, but to the Christian professor especially, if from his heart he forgives not a brother's trespasses? Can any course be more fraught with danger than glossing over Christ's plain meaning under the fond claim that, whatever come, we are safe? He that believes to the saving of the soul is neither presumptuous nor cowardly where Christ is at stake, but keeps His word and denies not His name, sharing His life and displaying His character.

But this does not exhaust the full bearing of the parable, which (like others such as Matt. 22:2-14; 25:1-13) not only admits a personal application but is dispensational. For it needs little insight to discern that, in accordance with the kingdom of the heavens in its present mysterious form to which the Christ's rejection gave rise, God will have consistency with His own grace, and, as He is forgiving to the uttermost, insists on the same spirit in His children who call on the name of the Lord. Legal retribution is not in keeping with the kingdom of the heavens, least of all with His sufferings and death Who is gone on high, and Whom the Christian is to represent here below. The bondman with the debt to God of 10,000 talents is historically the Jew, availing himself greedily of a gracious oblivion of all in the gospel, but so little imbued with the Spirit of Christ, as to hate and persecute, forbidding any mercy to the Gentile because of his injustice to Israel, little indeed compared with the Jew's wickedness against God. Therefore, as the apostle shows, is wrath come upon them to the uttermost (1 Thess. 2:16). So also we see in the Acts of the Apostles, that though the blotting out of their sins was preached to them on their repentance and turning to God, they did not truly profit by His mercy. They dogged enviously and as enemies the steps of His messengers, whom He sent next to the Gentiles. Thus they pleased not God and were contrary to all men, and afford the sad witness that, if the despiser of Moses' law died without compassion on proof of two or three witnesses, much sorer must be the punishment of those that trample down and count unholy the blood of the covenant and do despite to the Spirit of grace.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Fish and the Temple Tax

Matt. 17:24-27

What had the Lord said in John 8? It is the Son only Who, being free in the highest sense, sets free those who are His disciples abiding in His word. All else, however boastful, are but slaves of sin, the lowest of all slavery. The slave passes; the son abides forever; but this he derives solely from the eternal Son, though not without faith in the truth which He in grace tells out, as indeed He was it and came that we might hear and receive it. " Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

So here what ineffable grace " Lest we cause them to stumble, go unto the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and having opened its mouth, thou wilt find a shekel: that take and give to them for me and thee."

Now it is His omnipotence that is proved; for what else could make itself forthwith obeyed by a fish passing through the paths of the sea? Who but God in man could or would have caused it to rise to Peter's hook with a silverling in its mouth of the exact amount for the temple? Whom but the Son did it befit to say in His grace, lest we cause them to stumble "... give to them for me and for thee "? The grand truth is breaking through the clouds of a self-destroying Israel and Judaism, that the Son was emptying and humbling Himself, not only to rescue, but to associate with Himself every one that believes in Him. What grace 1

This association, as the gospel tells, is based not only on the divine glory of His person, but on the accomplishment of an everlasting redemption. This He found, as Heb. 9 declares, by His own blood. And as it is attested by His ascension glory, so it is the glad message sent to you, my dear reader, if you have not already received it unto salvation. This, and no less, it bears, and, on God's authority and in His love, assures to every sinner who repents and believes the gospel. God is thus honoring His Son, as well He may; for He and He alone perfectly glorified Him, even as to sin on the cross, as before in all respects.

Oh persevere not in that unbelief which is the most radical and hateful of all evils. Listen no more to the ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan: why die the second death? Christ is the way, the truth, and the life: are you so infatuated as to prefer the pleasures of sin for a season, and make shipwreck for eternity? Can it be that you turn a deaf ear to Him Who suffered once for all for sins, and will not come to Him that you may have life?

The New Testament presents no miracle more striking and instructive than the one before us. Its place too in the First Gospel and there only is precisely appropriate, if the Holy Spirit meant here to bring out the divine glory of Christ, along with His grace in associating the believer with Himself; when, rejected as He is by the Jews, the church and the kingdom of the heavens should replace the things even promised by new things.

" And when they came unto Capernaum, those that receive the half-shekels came to Peter and said, Doth not your teacher pay the half-shekels? He saith, Yea. And when he entered into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? The kings of the earth, from whom do they receive toll or tribute? from their sons or from other folk? He (or, Peter) saith to him, From other folk. Jesus said to him, Well then the sons are free. But lest we cause them to stumble, go unto the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and having opened its mouth, thou wilt find a shekel: that take and give to them for me and thee " (vers. 24-27).

Peter, like most disciples and like all naturally, was slow to distrust himself and to wait on the Lord and His word. He was quick, being zealous for the law, to assure those who took the redemption money (not the tax-gatherers so repulsive to Jewish feeling) that his Master was the same. He did not when questioned bear in mind, either what the Father had revealed to Him of the Lord's personal dignity (chap. 14), or of the glory conferred on Him for the coming kingdom (chap. 17): Jesus was too good an Israelite to neglect the heave-offering to Jehovah, the atonement for the soul! Peter forgot that Jesus was the true temple of God and the true God of the temple; he knew not yet that the visible temple was doomed, as ready to vanish away. He still savored the things that are of men.

The Lord therefore anticipated him on entering the house by the question, From whom do the kings of the earth take toll or tribute? from their sons, or from other folk? He could not but answer, From other folk; and the Lord rejoined that therefore the sons are free.

The Lord had just shown His omniscience, as He showed every creature subject to Him. He proved to Peter that He knew what had not reached His ear. He graciously corrects His servant's mistake and leads him once more into the truth. He was God, the Son, equally with the Father and the Holy Spirit; but He speaks and acts in perfect grace; as indeed otherwise where could Peter or we be? He says, Then are the sons free. On Him, Who alone is the Son eternally in personal right and title, depends the blessedness of the sons. We are by grace sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus, not Peter only but now, once Jews or Gentiles, all God's sons, all one in Christ Jesus; and because sons, God sent out the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So that each can hear, Thou art no longer a slave but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Lunatic Son Healed

Mark 9:17-27

What a contrast with the manifestation of the excellent glory on the mountain was the actual state of man even in the favored people here below! Jesus the Son of God was there; yet that the disciples knew not so by faith, as to avail themselves of His victory over the enemy!

" And one of the crowd answered and said, Teacher, I brought unto thee my son having a dumb spirit; and whensoever it taketh him, it teareth him, and he foameth and gnasheth his teeth, and is withering away. And I spoke to thy disciples that they should cast it out; and they were not able. And answering them He saith, O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you? Bring him unto me. And they brought him unto Him; and when He saw him, straightway the spirit tore him, and falling on the ground he wallowed foaming. And He asked his father, How long time is it that this hath come to him? And he said, From a child. And often it cast him both into fire and into waters to destroy him; but if thou hast any power, help us in thy pitifulness toward us. But Jesus said to him, If thou hast power (is) to believe: all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out and said, I believe: help mine unbelief. And Jesus, seeing that a crowd was running up together, rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, Dumb and deaf spirit, I command thee, come out of him and enter no more into him. And having cried out and torn [him] much, it came out, and he became as if dead, so that the most said, He is dead. But Jesus laying hold of him by the hand raised him up; and he stood up " (vers. 17-27).

It was indeed a mighty deed: and so it fell to our Gospel above the others to give most details. There are differences in the evil spirits; and only to prayer and fasting did the kind in question yield. The lack in that respect was grievous in the Lord's eyes. The distressed parent did not despair, and turned from the failing disciples to Him Who never fails. How humbling when believers thus dishonor their Lord " O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I bear with you?" This was the overwhelming fact. That the crowd, that the scribes,

should have no faith, was bad enough after such ample witness of the gracious power of God in His Son, servant of all need in man, marked out from the first in doing good and healing all that were oppressed by the devil. Did He not give the twelve, and more than the twelve, authority over the unclean spirits? How was it then that these put shame on His name by failing to draw on Him?

" Bring him unto Me" says the Savior. Even so, He lets all see the depth of the child's need, the malicious power of the enemy. He manifests His interest in all that dismays the heart of man. He inquires, not as if He did not know the reins and the heart, but that the tried soul may learn the reality of His compassion. He teaches the feeble suppliant that the question of power turns on faith; for faith God will have, whatever may be His own grace. What possible good morally could power insure without believing? On the other hand, all things are possible to him that believes. So even the disciples had to learn; and the father, through his necessities believing the lesson at once, tends to the right way under the Lord's guidance. " I believe: help mine unbelief." How wholesome for the believer to feel and own his unbelief!

How is it with you that read these words? Have you found out what a deadly thing is unbelief? Have you received the declaration from God that you till brought to Him live in the lusts of your flesh, doing the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and are by nature children of wrath, even as the rest of mankind? Judaism did not hinder this of old, whatever its great privileges; nor does Christendom now with its still greater advantages. And has Satan no power over such as are dead in trespasses and sins? Do not such walk according to the age of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience? If men but saw by faith, they would discern themselves thus in a plight more appalling than that of the lunatic child under the power of the dumb and deaf spirit. For in itself it was for the life that now is; whereas Eph. 2:1-3 describes for both time and eternity.

But the Lord, as He wrought in power then, is also the Deliverer according to the rich mercy of God and the great love wherewith He loves. God is now showing the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus, as He assures us He will in the ages to come. Let me, following the apostle, entreat that you receive not the grace of God in vain; for vain it undoubtedly is, if you have not faith in God through our Lord Jesus for your own soul as a guilty sinner, powerless in yourself before Him. But He hearkens to the cry of need and distress; yea He sends His word and works in manifold ways to make souls sensible of their ruin, that they may cry and He may answer in the glad tidings of His gospel. Now too it is a day of salvation; and the casting away of Israel is the world's reconciliation. For their fall is our wealth, their loss is our rich gain.

How awful then for men in Christendom to live only for present enjoyment, money, ease, honor, power, like the heathen who know not God I He Who for sins suffered unutterably, not from man only, but from God's judgment on the cross, is the Author of everlasting salvation to all those that obey Him; and faith in God's testimony to Him is the beginning of that blessing which shall never end. Oh, take heed, and put not off the call of grace, which you may not hear again! The spirits, now in prison and awaiting, not another deluge, but everlasting judgment in the resurrection of the unjust, once heard the Spirit of Christ in Noah's preaching while the ark was in preparation. Beware lest you, who have heard a far fuller expression of divine mercy in the gospel of Christ, frustrate the counsel of God against yourselves. For God is not mocked in the end, however men cheat themselves in thinking that He heeds not their words and ways now. To-day if you will hear His voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation, throughout the day of the temptation in the wilderness.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Transfiguration

Matt. 17:1-9

In the midst of His service of humiliation our Lord was for a little transfigured. It was not like Moses whose face shone from his nearness to the divine Presence. Our Lord was with His own here below. A week before He prepared them for seeing the Son of man coming in His kingdom. After it He takes with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and brings them up into a high mountain apart. " And His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as the light. And, behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah talking with them." It is a miniature of His kingdom wherein will be the risen and changed saints with others in their natural bodies, and the Lord the center of all.

Yet it would seem that the divine aim of Moses and Elijah being there was to mark the surpassing glory of the Lord before Whom the chief representative of the law and the most honored of the prophets gave place and vanished away. The personal glory of Jesus is most conspicuous as elsewhere in this Gospel. He is Son of God and Son of man.

Peter counted it a great thing to see His Master with saints so renowned and glorious. " Lord," said he to Jesus, " It is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, I will make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah." He made the natural but fatal mistake of equalizing all three. Yet he who had only so short a time before confessed His Master to be not only the Messiah, but the Son of the living God, ought not to have so erred. So easy is it to forget what flesh and blood never truly knows, what is revealed by the Father; just as then too he could not bear to think of His going to Jerusalem, suffering many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and being killed but raised the third day.

Here it was not the withering rebuke of the Lord Who knew that all blessing for man and glory for God, in a ruined world, hung on His rejection. It was the Father's voice out of the excellent glory. " While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and, behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son in Whom I found my delight: hear ye him." The Father then displayed His jealousy for the honor of His Son. He would not allow the law-giver or the law-restorer to be put on such a level. They were servants and to be honored in the place He set them. But His beloved Son I-there were His delights; and if Christ went down in love infinite to suffer as man, and as man to be exalted, the glory of the eternal Son was precious beyond all thought of man in His Father's eyes.

It is the Son Whom we are to hear. See how the great truth is attested in the Epistle to the Hebrews, both in chap. 1:2, and in chap. 7:25. Equally explicit is John 5:25 for quickening, and in John 10 for every day; and not only for the sheep led out of the Jewish fold but for other sheep, Gentiles, not of this fold. Dear reader, does not this reach to you? If the blessing is immense, what is the loss? And what must be the fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries and the indifferent? For Himself has said, " My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give to them life eternal; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." On the other hand " he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

When the disciples heard the Father's voice, they fell on their faces and were sore afraid. They were far from knowing yet His love; but He, Who brought it in His own person, was at hand to strengthen their hearts. " And Jesus came and touched them and said, Arise, and be not afraid." Not less now but more does Jesus cause His word to come home in the power of redemption to those that believe. And the God Who sent Him would fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope in the power of the Holy Spirit. Is it thus with your souls? Can you say that you have heard the voice of Jesus by faith, and that you are " not afraid "? This is His will, not only for the three who then heard, but for all that believe the gospel of God. Perfect love casts out the fear that has torment, and creates the fear of reverence. It is the effort of the enemy to work on the conscious guilt of man that he may distrust the words of Jesus; it is the work of the Spirit from the beginning to efface it all. The entrance of that word dispels darkness before the light of God to the soul, and enables the heart to receive " Be not afraid."

" Lifting up their eyes, they saw no one save Jesus only." Visions were always rare; such a vision is unique. But for the heart's comfort, and the right direction of the eye, there is nothing to compare with having Jesus the Son of God to hear. So has God the Father ruled: " hear Him." And He abides the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever, May we by faith look to " Jesus only." It is not only at first that the soul may be saved by faith, but for every day and hour after we do believe. For the only right Walk is by faith, and the fight of faith is the only good fight, in which Jesus is the one unfailing Captain. Other fights we may have to our shame, where flesh is not judged, and Satan gains advantage for the moment. To Jesus then may we ever look, to " Jesus only."

The Dealings of God With Peter, Dealings of God With Peter: 3. In the Gospels, The

Matthew 17:1-8, 24-27

No man, after such a blessing as the Lord had just pronounced upon Peter, ever received a sterner rebuke. “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona,” so soon to be followed by, “Get thee behind me, Satan.” So serious the place of a Christian—of a believer at least! so true the One who watches over us in love! Whilst there is the fullest value even for that which nothing but His own grace had given, and the deepest encouragement, yet how stern and unsparing is the Lord in letting Peter see what his thoughts, what his feelings, were; what Peter's heart was thinking about! And what was it that had drawn it out? Peter had owned the glory of His person. It was of God, God's teaching, without question, and the Savior owned it at once; but that very Peter would turn Him away from the cross! Should that be? “Get thee behind me, Satan.” The Lord Jesus came to die, and to die, too, in all the depths of it. For as to all the externals of the cross, they were indeed—deep as they were—but the outward form of that which only God could estimate. They greatly err who look only to what man was the instrument of in the cross of Christ—most true, most real as it was. But here the Lord was particularly looking at the cross as rejection; yet the path of that rejection led straight into the glory in which He was coming by and by. And the Lord accordingly, in the beginning of the seventeenth chapter, would give a view of the glory, and amongst others, to the very disciple that would have stopped His way into, as Peter thought, a suffering that was unworthy, but in truth that which was the foundation of His glory. For we are not here to look at His glory as Son of God; there was no foundation for that, it was its own foundation. That was truly divine, essentially divine. But here it was conferred glory. It is the kingdom; it is what God has given. As it is said in another place, “Wherefore God hath highly exalted him,” so, by and by, He will be exalted in the kingdom; and the Lord would give a view of it that it might be not only a prophetical testimony, but, as the apostle Peter says, and he is the one that does say it, “We have the prophetic word more confirmed,” that is, we have what was said by the prophets shown out in a reality. It might he only one that passed away; but still to have the sight of all the great elements of the kingdom brought before them in this life was an immense support to faith, an immense cheer, especially to one who must have felt deeply the rebuke that His Master passed upon him.

So “after six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter.” And this you know is the particular object that I have before me now—the dealings of the Lord with His servant, as manifesting His own grace and truth (no doubt bringing out the need of it on our part, bringing out weakness, wretchedness, pettiness, vanity, pride—the carnal mind in so many forms, but) the grace and truth of One that had unfeignedly met every failure of His servant; One therefore that would encourage our hearts and instruct us and strengthen us against the very same things in which he had broken down. Do we think we need it not? We are upon the very verge of similar failures. There is nothing that so surely brings a fall as the unbelief that does not believe it possible.

“Then answered Peter and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here.” And was not this then, a pious thought and sentiment? “If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.” It was a disciple's way of magnifying his Master, but there is only one that is trustworthy—God's way. It is not enough to have God's end; we must learn God's way. Now there was exactly where Peter's haste betrayed his weakness, and where we are apt to fall precisely in the same way. “Let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.” He evidently thought it was no small honor for his Master—a man—though the Son of God. But he thought it no small honor for his Master to be on common ground with Moses and Elias, the head of the law, and, we may say, the chief of the prophets. Doubtless He was the Messiah. But were they not glorified? At once, “while he yet spake, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud.” For this was no ordinary cloud—not a dark one, which is an ordinary one—but a bright one: it was the cloud of Jehovah's presence. “A voice out of the cloud said, This is my beloved Son.” It is not merely a question of the kingdom. The kingdom alone would always leave the soul, as the law would, with thoughts altogether short of what is due to Christ. If I look at the law, I think of duty, and I see the Lord merely as a fulfiller of duty. If I think of the kingdom, I see glory, but a glory that others share along with Him. But the Father would not permit it. He breaks the silence from above, and says, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

Now, it is not merely that the Father was thus maintaining the glory of the Lord Jesus at the very time when one who ought, most of all, to be exalting Him was really depreciating Him—most unintentionally, because there is no putting of the Lord with any other that would give Him His just place. The very thought of placing any, however excellent, on a level with the Lord Jesus is reprehensible. Certainly Moses and Elijah were most incomparable among (I will not say the sons of men, but) the children of God. Elijah that had gone up to heaven in a chariot of fire! Moses whom Jehovah had buried, about whose body even the archangel had fought with the devil! Certainly, the man that had been with God without food for forty days and nights, and the man that had closed his career on earth thus to be in heaven, these were men to speak of, if of any. But this very thing brings out the supreme glory of the Son; and this I will say, beloved friends, that a more instructive principle there

cannot be. You will find, if you search, that almost all failure, both in doctrine and in conduct, is attributable to this—low thoughts of Christ. I do not mean now thoughts that are evil, thoughts that are untrue, but I mean that the power of faith is always the taking in and subjecting our souls to the glory of the Son of God. This is the faith that overcomes the world. It is not merely that He is the Christ, that He is the King of the coming kingdom. Perfectly true; but He is the Son, and if the kingdom brings in the heirs of the kingdom, and those that enjoy the kingdom, the Son brings in God, and God as He, the Son, knows Him, and as the Father knows the Son; and there is none that comprehends the Son but the Father. And it is remarkable He does not say, “To whomsoever the Father will reveal,” but, “Neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal.” The Father does not reveal all He sees in the Son. And I am persuaded that the reason is this—t hat there is a depth in the very fact of the Son of God having taken manhood that transcends all possible knowledge, except of God the Father; that there is therefore a depth in it, and a secret, too, that He will not have broken. And there is where the prying mind of man loses itself. He desires to know that secret, and, consequently, unable to loose the knot, he cuts it in some violent method of his own mind—the source of all heresy. But I was not speaking of it merely in reference to heresy, but also as to the appreciation of Him day by day; for what a strength it is where His glory is before our eyes, and where each question that arises just exercises our hearts in answer to the Lord—Himself the answer to all difficulties—the Son of God!

Well now, that was where Peter failed. He thought to exalt and enhance the glory of Christ, but he was altogether beneath God's thoughts.

“This is my beloved Son"; and how did He show it? He says, “In whom I am well pleased.” It is not merely He. Peter was thinking of his being so pleased with the Son that he would like Him to be with such wondrous men as Moses and Elias. It is, “In whom I am well pleased"; and why so? Why so? Just because He is His beloved Son; that is, it has not any connection with Peter at all, but with God Himself in this relationship out of all time, that is, infinite as God Himself is. “Hear ye him.”

And there comes in another point, beloved brethren, that I wish to trace, and that is that this is really what was about to be unfolded in the New Testament. What is the New Testament? The New Testament is the evolution—if I may say so—of this little word, “Hear ye him.” It is God unfolding the glory of the Son to us. All that He was, as revealed in the Gospels, the Epistles, or whatever part of the New Testament it may be, is precisely this very thing that was summed up in these few words, “Hear ye him.” That is, whatever might be the blessedness of Moses and Elias, of the law and the prophets, they have their place, but their best place was to bear witness of Him. And now it was not merely a witness of Him. It was Himself; He was come. And one, therefore, who had an adequate sense of the glory of the Son of God would not care to be listening to the servants about Him, now that he had an opportunity of hearing Himself. “Hear ye him.” Accordingly, “when the disciples heard it they fell on their faces and were sore afraid; and Jesus came and touched them and said, Arise, be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes they saw no man, save Jesus only.” There it is, that the Father leaves, as it were, the disciples in the presence of Jesus only; and the greatest possible honor, and also the proof of the value of Moses and Elias was this, that they bring out the superior glory of the Son of God; they make way for it. They are finger-posts to direct to Him, but then there is no greater mistake than to be occupied with what merely directed to Him; it is Himself. The New Testament, then, is the revelation of that which the Father has to tell us of the Son—not all that He knows, but all that which is for His own glory in making known His Son to us.

The foot of the mountain showed a very different thing. There was the power of Satan, and such a power of Satan that baffled the disciples. We have this accordingly brought out very clearly in the man that they presented to the Lord. “I brought him to thy disciples,” said the poor father, “and they could not cure him.” And the Lord utters words of unusual severity. “O faithless and perverse generation! how long shall I suffer you?”

My object is not to dwell upon any of these intervening portions. I just touch them as I pass along, but still it is most serious to observe this as we pass—the inability, and I do not know anything more characteristic of our weakness, and that more shows its character at this present moment than the same thing—the inability, not of Christ, but of the disciples, to avail themselves of Christ for what came before them. And why was it? What was connected with them then? Unjudged power of nature, confidence in self. “This kind cometh not out but by prayer and fasting.” “Prayer and fasting” is evidently used as expressive of the nothingness of man, but the nothingness of man that expects God and counts upon God. “How long,” said the Lord, “shall I suffer you, or be with you? How long shall I be with you?” Unbelief, and particularly in the disciples, is of all things the greatest pain to Christ. We often think of the unbelief of the world. There is another question nearer home. What do we think of our own faith? What have we to say about it; our power of bringing in Christ to solve every difficulty? I do not know a more distressing thing at the present moment than the mass of unsolved difficulties everywhere; and the very persons that make the difficulties most are the Lord's own disciples. It is not merely evil. There is always power superior to evil, but when the disciples themselves fail to look to Christ, and have objects of their own that complicate the bringing in of Christ to meet the difficulty—oh, how sorrowful! The Lord gives it as a reason for leaving the world. There is but one comfort that I know, and that is that this is to us, or may be to us, so much the greater token that the Lord must soon undertake all Himself, because there is so little power to bring Him in. And if that be comfort in the thought of Christ, what a condemnation of our little self-judgment, and consequently of our oftener making difficulties than solving them!

Well the Lord is now seen in another point of view, but also Peter is seen too; and indeed, it is Peter who gives occasion for the Lord to show Himself in a new way, and in a new dealing with His servant. “And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute-money came to Peter and said, Doth not your Master pay tribute?” Now here again he was jealous for his Master. He was jealous for his Master when he thought it would be an excellent thing, and a most suitable, to make three tabernacles—tabernacles for Moses and Elias as well as for Him—a tabernacle for Him along with them. And so now he, as it were, said to the collector of tribute that his Master was much too good a Jew not to pay tribute. He said “Yes.” What does the Lord do? Before he says a word about it, the Lord lets Peter know that it was all known to Him. How little he had thought of that. How little the Godhead of Jesus had penetrated the soul even of the man that said, “Son of the living God.” How little he knew of his own confession! That is often the case. It is humbling if we think of ourselves, but at the same time it is a ground of encouragement and patience with other people. You must not expect people to know, though it is often a very startling thing how little we enter into the patience of our Master, and we are surprised that persons should so little understand, for instance, the very place where they are, the very worship into which they are brought, the very truth that they are supposed to live for. But here I find the same thing. Here I find that it is all full of it; but the fact is that we are not conscious ourselves that it is precisely in the same way that we break down, not perhaps in the same particular, but in the same principle. And you will observe that it is a very different thing to judge another's trial where we are not ourselves tried at the same time. Wait till we are. We shall see how far we know how to bring Christ in ourselves. I do not say it to make light of such a thing. It is a very grievous thing, but it really is the grand secret: that is, the readiness to answer from self instead of from Christ, instead of from God's side of Christ. We look at our side. Peter was jealous lest his Master should be thought not to pay the tribute. The

Lord shows him He knew it all; He was God.

“Jesus prevented,” or “anticipated him” —that is the meaning, for of course this is in old English— “saying, What thinkest thou, Simon: of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their own children or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers.” What an answer! Was the Lord a stranger?—for this is the temple tribute. Who was the Master of the temple? Was Jesus a stranger to him? “Of strangers” the kings of the earth take tribute. Of whom therefore does Jehovah take it? “Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.” Not the Son. No, He does not say the Son. He says what is infinitely better, at the very time when there had just been this overwhelming conviction on the mount. Peter in his zeal for his Master was after all depriving Him of His just title, forgetting His divine glory. How slowly we learn the lesson! “Then are the children free.” For this, beloved friends, is really what Christianity means, and what the Lord was to bring out still more clearly before long—that the grace that sent down the Son of God did not merely send down one to be a propitiation, or even to be life, but that we too might acquire a new relationship according to His—that we might know the place of the children of God. “Then are the children free.” He does not merely, therefore, claim it for Himself. He did not need. But He asserts it for those that are His. How astonishing to Peter! He had forgotten it; he had no thought of it. Yet was he born of God, and he was slowly learning what it meant; about to learn it far more blessedly soon when the hindrances should be taken away by the grace of Christ, and the place of deliverance was about to dawn upon his heart.

“Notwithstanding,” said He, “lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast a hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money.” The last place in the world to find, except for God! And that is the very thing He showed—that it was One who had the power of God as well as the knowledge of God; that it was One who was very God, although He was here a man upon the earth. Let Peter's soul be filled with this. How his heart would turn back to it another day! know it far better when he looked back upon it, when he read it as the word of God, than when it was merely passing then before his eyes! There is no greater mistake than to suppose that if we had been living in the time of our Lord we should have understood our Lord's words better than now. The very reverse. The written word in this, as in other respects, has a higher place than the spoken word. Just as the written word has a mightier testimony, so also the written word has a permanent place of correcting our thoughts, of deepening even what is true as well as correcting what is mistaken, and the Spirit of God is pre-eminently with it. Hence, therefore, I do not hesitate to say that, far from being worse off, we are better. Peter himself was better off when Peter was not merely regarding the words he had listened to, but when he read them as inspired of God for his use and ours.

Well here, then, I say, we have just the very same thing: that is, we have human thoughts of Christ corrected by divine, and at the same time in the doing of this a marvelous outburst of the divine glory that shone upon Peter's soul more fully than had ever been the case before. We have had, then, the kingdom. Here we have what much more belongs to Christian relationship—the children.

[W. K.]

(To be continued)

Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 17:8-27, Remarks on

Now there is another thing to be observed. John leaves out the transfiguration altogether; because his proper work was to dwell, not upon Christ's outward manifestation to the world as Son of man in His kingdom, but on His eternal glory as the only-begotten Son of God; or, as he says himself, “We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father.”

In 2 Peter we have a most interesting allusion to this scene. It is said there (2 Peter 1:17), “He received from God the Father honor and glory” —confirming what I said, that this scene does not show us so much His essential glory, but that which He received from God the Father, “when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory,” or the cloud, which was the known, external symbol of Jehovah's majesty. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” But mark, “hear ye him” is omitted here. This is very striking. In the three Gospels, not one of them omits the words, “hear ye him.” In the Second Epistle of Peter they are omitted. Matthew gives us the fullest account. All that God the Father said, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him.” But the others, that is, Mark and Luke, give, “This is my beloved Son: hear him;” while Peter himself, who was an eyewitness of the scene, omits the words, “hear him.” Matthew shows us the complacency of the Father in Jesus, for the purpose of specially raising the hearts of the Jewish disciples above His mere place as Messiah, to the Father's peculiar delight in Him as the Son; and this as a ground for valuing His word above all. Peter leaves out “hear ye him,” because now, the revelation of Jesus having come out, the point that remains is the Father's delight in Jesus. I do not pretend to say how far the inspired writers knew all the mind of God in such a thing: they wrote as moved by the Holy Ghost.

There are two ways, I would observe, of looking at these differences in the accounts that are given us: the one is the infidel view, and the other the Christian. The infidel way is to suppose that Matthew, Mark, and Luke did their best as men; but that they sometimes made mistakes. The infidel way is always the most foolish in the world. It is not only unworthy of God, but, I repeat, also as absurd as possible when the facts are quietly looked into. How came it to pass that the man who wrote the first gospel gave this scene the most fully? If he had written it after the others, I could conceive his remembering and registering what the others had forgotten; but Matthew gives both the first and minutest account. Mark and Luke leave out some parts, and Peter leaves out what they had all put in— “Hear him.” Such criticism, therefore, is not merely pride of heart, but it is the folly of spoiled children against the word of God.

But, again, let us look at it in the other way. We are ignorant; we know nothing as we ought to know. Let us believe that what God says is perfect—that everything that He has given in His word is perfect; and that in the very differences there is a divine object. Matthew, writing to those who were under Jewish prejudices, brings out the Father's good pleasure in Jesus as His Son, which is the grand thing that lifts up the soul from earth. And as it was the Evangelists who were the first to bring out this new and blessed truth, they all put in, “Hear him.” But Peter, writing long after, makes the person of the Son to be the prime object, and not His revelation. What does Peter mean to teach us, when he says that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation? You cannot understand prophecy if you take it merely piecemeal and by itself. A prophecy confined to particular circumstances and persons loses its chief value. Christ is the substance of prophecy. It is His glory that the prophecies bring out. They are not connected merely with England or France or any other country you may choose: but you must see

the connection of the prophecies with Christ; when you do, you have a sure light. God is thinking of His beloved Son, and commending His Son to us. He wants to have our hearts filled with His Son, and not with thoughts about our country or great men. The Son of God is the object of the Father. This is what the Holy Ghost is insisting upon here. He spews that prophecy is a lamp which shines in a dark place, but not when it is severed from the object of God. Take it in connection with its due aim, and all is bright; but connect it with self, and you turn the very prophecy of God into a false light which will lead you astray. Let us, therefore, settle it in our hearts. I am to trust in every word of God; to lay up and consider each word and thought, confiding in the Holy Ghost to lead me into all truth. I must wait upon God to see what the particular design and object of the Holy Ghost is: and “God is faithful who has called us unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” And if He has called us into fellowship with His Son, what will He not tell us about His Son? The Son is before Him; and the Lord grant that He may be before us.

As the disciples came down from the mount, the Lord charges them, saying, “Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.” It was no longer a question of testifying to the kingdom of Christ. That was rejected. This vision was for the disciples, for strengthening their faith in Jesus. The Lord was occupying Himself with the souls of believers, not with the world. There is always a period when testimony of an outward kind may close. You may remember the time when Paul separates the disciples that were at Ephesus from the multitude, and leads them into what more particularly concerned them. Now for the present time till the Holy Ghost was given, till the Lord was risen from the dead, and power came from on high to make these things a fresh starting point, it was no use to speak of them any further. “His disciples asked Him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come and restore all things; but I say unto you that Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed.” He shows that to faith Elias was come. If the nation had the word, Elias would have come in person, according to the prophecy in Malachi; but the nation refusing Jesus, the disciples were instructed to regard the testimony of John the Baptist as being virtually that of Elias: This accords with the statement that we have in chapter 11, where it was said, “If ye wilt receive it, this is Elias which was for to come;” showing that it was not Elias actually and literally, but the spirit and power of Elias in the person of John the Baptist. The Messiah is coming in glory by and by, and Elias is coming too. But the Messiah was come in weakness now, and humiliation; and His forerunner had been put to death. It was Elias who was come in the person of the suffering John the Baptist, and his testimony was despised. The disciples are let into the secret of this: “Elias is come already, and they have done unto Him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that He spake unto them of John the Baptist.”

But now another thing is noticed. The power of Satan is in no wise put aside by the effect of the glory of Jesus being revealed upon the mountain. At the fact of that same mountain where the Lord displayed the glory of the kingdom, Satan displayed his power. It was not broken yet. The kingdom was only a matter of testimony. The disciples failed to draw upon the resources of Christ to put down the power of Satan. It came out thus. A man comes to the Lord, kneeling down to Him and saying, “Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is lunatic and sore vexed; for ofttimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.” There was every kind of trial brought together. “And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you, how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the devil, and he departed out of him. And the child was cured from that very hour.” And when the disciples wanted to know how this was, that they could not cast him out, He tells them, “Because of your unbelief.” It is a wonderful thing, but nothing can be more sure, than that unbelief is at the root of the difficulties Satan foists in. He has lost his power over those that have faith. A believer could never, if walking with the Lord, fall under the power of Satan. We must distinguish the falling into sin from falling into the power of Satan; which latter I believe to be his power in eclipsing all confidence in the goodness of God. Hence when a man is put away from the Church, he is delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, though it is that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. Whenever a person is really and rightly put away from the table of the Lord, unless there is a restoration of spirit, which can only be when the power of Satan is defeated, exceeding power is acquired over the soul. But here we have it as to the body. This child is described as a lunatic and sore vexed. But unbelief entirely misses the power of God which ought to have been at the command of the disciples. “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard-seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place.” The very least working of faith in the soul is power available for present difficulties. The power of the world, the settled power of anything here, which is what the mountain sets forth, would completely disappear before the faith of the disciples. “Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.” There must be dependence in the conflict with the power of evil. It was Christ's moral glory; it is one secret of strength. The assumption of power because of association with Jesus simply fails and turns to shame. There must be self-emptiness, and self-denial, that God may act. When Jesus descends, all Satan's power is broken and vanishes.

Then comes another declaration of His sufferings, but I will not dwell upon that now, beyond remarking that, as in chap. 16:21, we had His suffering through the Jews (elders, chief priests, and scribes), so here it is rather Gentile rejection. “The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men.” This follows the manifestation of His glory as Son of man, while the other followed the confession of His still deeper glory as Son of God.

In conclusion, let us look at the beautiful tale of the piece of money demanded for the temple. Peter there answers quickly, according to his usual warmth of character. When the tax-gatherer came, who was connected with the temple, and the usual fee was demanded, Peter answered very hastily, that of course his Master would pay this tribute. His mind went not beyond their Jewish position. But our Lord anticipates Peter when they come to the house, and says to him, “What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute, of their own children or of strangers?” It was not that any king of the earth was demanding tribute now from them, but it was a payment for Jehovah's temple. Peter answers truly enough, Of strangers. Then Jesus says to him, “Then are the children free.” Nothing can be more beautiful. For the truth taught us here is this: whatever be the glory of the kingdom that is coming, whatever the power of Satan that disappears before the word of Jesus, whatever the faith that can remove mountains, nothing is to take the Son of God out of the place of grace. It may be that there is no claim, no right to ask—the children are free. It would be an absurdity to suppose that among the kings of the earth, the children would come under the same circumstances as strangers in the payment of tribute. They are exempt. Jesus takes that place, and most sweetly too He puts it in a general form. The principle of it would be true of others, as well as of Himself: the children were to be free. He puts it in the broadest form, in order to give an idea of the place of blessing into which the children of the kingdom would be brought—the children of Him in whose name this demand might be made. “Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take, and give unto them for me and thee.” This is the great wonder of Christ, and the practical wonder of Christianity—that while we have the consciousness of glory, and ought to pass through this world as sons of glory as well as sons of God, for that very reason the Lord calls us to be the humblest, the meekest, taking no place upon the earth. I do not mean claiming no place

for Christ. It is our business to live for nothing but for Christ and the truth: but where it is a question of ourselves to be willing to be trampled upon, and counted as the filth of the world and the offscouring of all things. Flesh and blood cannot like it; but it is the power of the Spirit of God raising us above nature. It is not hastiness of feeling. It is not persons talking about their rights or anything of the kind. Here we have the consciousness that the children were free—fullness of privilege their portion, but at the same time, “lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea.... thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.” This is the place of a Christian: not contending for anything that pertains to ourselves; yet earnest for what pertains to God; but in what concerns ourselves, the willingness to suffer. See the manner in which our Lord provides for all demands for this tribute. He directs Peter how to find the piece of money, and says, “That take and give unto them for me and thee.” What a joy to think that Jesus associates us with Himself and Himself provides for everything, if we would only let Him; that Jesus who proves Himself in this very thing to be God the Creator, displayed divine knowledge, having the command even of the restless deep, and as such working this most extraordinary miracle (making a fish to provide the money needed to pay the tax of the temple), should thus give us a place with Himself, and undertake for all our need. Nothing can more beautifully show us how, with the consciousness of glory, our place should ever be that of the bending and lowliness of Christ. How blessedly the Son stooped to be the servant, and leads the children into the same path of grace!

The Lord grant us to know how to reconcile these two things. We can only do it so far as our eye is upon Christ.

Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 17:1-8, Remarks on

The chapter at which we have been last looking, has shown us Jesus rejected as Christ or Messiah, confessed as the Son of the living God, and about to return in glory as the Son of man. But along with the glory in which He is to come, and reward each according to his works, we have His suffering: not merely rejection, but His being put to death—raised, no doubt, the third day, but still the suffering Son of man, and, as the Son of man, returning in glory. Following up this subject of His Father's glory, in which He declares He is to come with His angels, and judge in His kingdom, we have now a picture given on the holy mount: a picture most striking, and this in a twofold point of view. The glory, as we saw, of the kingdom, depends upon His being the Son of man, the exalted man who had erst suffered, and into whose hands all glory is committed—who had, at every cost, retrieved the honor of God, and is to make effectual the blessing of man: who, by virtue of His suffering, has already brought to naught the power of Satan for those who believe, and who eventually, when the kingdom comes, is to expel Satan altogether, and bring in that for which God has been waiting—a kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world. Accordingly, “After six days” (type of the ordinary term of work here below), “Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart.” That is, He takes chosen witnesses; for it was merely a testimony to the kingdom—not exact the kingdom, but the sample of it that He had referred to when He said, “There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.” The point there is the Son of man coming, rather than the kingdom itself; and what follows in our chapter is only a partial view of it, as illustrative of the glory of the rejected Son of man. But partial as it was, nothing could be more blessed, save the thing itself; and faith brings us into wonderful present realizing of that which is to be. It is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of thing not seen.” The kingdom, of course, of which our Lord spoke, is not yet arrived. When it is said, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” it is clear He speaks of a kingdom which we do enter now. For John does not speak of it as a thing of mere outward manifestation, but was giving a deeper revelation of the kingdom, as it is true now, into which every one that is born of God comes, anal which shall yet be displayed with its heavenly and its earthly things. But Matthew, who takes up the Jewish part, or Old Testament prediction of the kingdom, gives us the presentation of the Son of man coming in His kingdom.

The Lord, accordingly, fulfilling His word, takes these disciples “up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them. And his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.” The sun is the image of supreme glory, as that which rules the day. “And behold there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him.” Moses was the great person by whom the law was given; Elias, the grand sample of the prophets, who recalled the people to a broken law. They were thus the pillars of the Jewish system, whom every true Israelite looked back to with the deepest feelings of reverence: one of them singled out as the only Jew taken to heaven, without passing through death; the other, lest he should become an object of worship after his death, having the singular honor of being buried by the Lord. These two appear in the presence of our Lord. They were known to be Moses and Elias: there seems to have been no difficulty in recognizing them. So, in the resurrection-state, the distinction of persons will be kept up thoroughly. There will be no such thing as that kind of sameness which blots out the peculiarities of each. Though there will be the termination of earthly relationships, and no peculiar links will survive in heaven which connected one with another, no matter how closely, upon earth. Yet each will retain his own individuality—with this mighty difference, of course, that all saints will bear the image of the heavenly. All men are after the pattern of the earthly now: for we all in the body resemble fallen Adam now, yet are we not all lost in one common undistinguishable throng. We each have our own proper character and our peculiar conformation of body. So in glory, each will be known from what he is. Moses and Elias are seen here as glorified, but as Moses and Elias; and the Lord is transfigured in their midst. “Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here. If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias;” showing that he perfectly well knew which was which. “While he yet spike, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them: and, behold, a voice out of the cloud which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear ye him.” I conceive there is the grand depth of the whole passage. Peter, meaning to do honor to his Master, but in a human way—Peter, still savoring in a measure the things of men and not of God, proposes to put his Master on common ground with the heads of the law and of the prophets. But it must not be. The Father at once breaks silence. New revelations were about to follow, and indeed were being made. Whatever might be the value of Moses—whatever the special charge of Elias, who were they, and what, in presence of the Son of God? The Son may make nothing of Himself; but the Father loves the Son. Peter may put Him on a level with the most honored of mankind; but the Father's purpose is, that every knee should bow to Him—that all men should honor the Son, even as they honor the Father. Man never does this, seeing simply man in the Son, in no adequate way honoring Him with divine homage. Faith does, for it sees God in the Son—hears God in Him, and also hears Him in the peculiarly blessed relationship of Father. For if Jesus were conceived to be simply God, and not the Son, it would be an incomparably less blessed a revelation than that which we have in Jesus. If such a thing could be as divine nature, without the blessed relationship of Sonship with the Father, we should lose the very sweetest part of our blessing. For it is not barely the deity of Jesus that has to be owned—though that lies at the bottom of all truth; but the eternal relationship of the Son with the Father. Not merely was He Son in this world: it is most dangerous to limit the Sonship of Christ to that, for it is from all eternity. People reason that, because He is called Son, He must have had a beginning in time, subsequently to the Father. All such argumentation ought to be banished from the soul of a

Christian. The Scripture doctrine has no reference to priority of time, but He is called Son in respect of affection and intimate nearness of relationship. It is the pattern of the blessed place into which grace brings us through union with the Lord Jesus Christ, though of course there be ineffable heights and depths beyond in Him. But if we are simple about it, we gather from it the deepest joy that is to be found in the knowledge of the true God—and that, in His Son.

The Father, then, interrupts the word of Peter, and answers Himself. The bright cloud that overshadowed them, Peter well knew to be the cloud of Jehovah's presence: but the Father adds, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” It is not, This is your Messiah—though, of course, He was this; but He brings out the grand New Testament revelation of Jesus. He reveals Him out as His own beloved Son; and, further, asserts His unqualified delight in Him. “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him:” this last, also, a statement of all importance. What was Moses, and what Elias now? They are entirely left out in the word of the Father. I need not say that every one who heard Jesus was the Son of God would be very far from despising Moses and Elias. They who understand grace have a far deeper respect for the law than the man who muddles grace and law together. The only full way to value anything that is of God is in the intelligence of His grace. I do not understand myself nor God till I know His grace; and I cannot know His grace, except as I see it in the person of His Son. “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” He was full of grace and truth.

The Father therefore directs attention to Him. He says, “Hear ye Him.” It is no longer, Hear Moses, or hear Elias, but “Hear him.” Could anything be more startling to a Jew? All must give place to the Son. The dignity of the others is not denied, nor their due position slighted. To assert the glory of the sun that shines all day is in no way to despise the stars. God made Moses to be what he was, and Elias received in like manner what He saw fit; but what were they compared with His Son? How fearful it is that men should be at this present moment making two tabernacles—one for Moses (if not, for Elias), and one for the Lord Jesus! What Peter was rebuked for doing is what men have continued to do. They talk about God being the unchangeable God. But He who ordained the night made the day; and as surely as He once spike the law, He has now sent the gospel. I see there the display of the glory of God, showing out now one part of His character and now another. That is not changing. God gives us to see His different attributes, and His various wisdom, and His infinite glory; but I must see each in its own sphere, and understand the intent for which God has given each. Moses and Elias were the two great cardinal points of the Jewish system; but now there is One that eclipses all that system—Jesus, the Son of God; and in presence of Him not even the representatives of the law or the prophets are to be heard. There is a fullness of truth that comes out in the Son of God; and if I want to understand the mind of God, as it concerns me now, I must hear Him. This was most difficult for a Jew to enter into: and, indeed, it was, if possible, more important for him to heed the call than for anyone else; because he had already a religion based upon the law and the prophets. Now the beloved Son of God, in whom the Father Himself expresses His perfect satisfaction, is commended to all. “Hear ye him.” As Jesus, the Son of God, is the object of the Father's infinite love, so He is the means of that same love reaching even to us. If I see Him to be the beloved Son of the Father, my soul resting upon Him, enters into communion with the Father. “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” What is fellowship? It is our having common joy in a common object which we share with one another. Our joy now we share with the Father and with the Son. The Father bids me hear the Son, and the Son declares the Father. We have fellowship with the Father who points out to our hearts Him in whom He Himself delighted; we have fellowship with the Son, inasmuch as He makes known to us the Father. How shall I know the Father?—how know His feelings? But by one way. I look at His Son, and have now seen the Father. The Son speaks, and I have heard His voice also. I know how He acts—His love going out to the very vilest. Such was Christ; and now, I am sure, such is the Father also. I know what God the Father is, when I follow the Son and listen to the Son. It is the Father He is revealing, not Himself: the Son came to make known what the Father was, in a world that knew Him not. Even those who had faith, what thoughts had they about the Father? We have only to look at the disciples, to see that there was no answer to the Father's heart, and no sympathy with it. Although they were born of God, up to this time it was just what Philip said, “Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.” Not that he did not divinely know Jesus as the Messiah; but he had not entered into the blessedness of what He was as the Son revealing the Father. It was only after the Holy Ghost came down, after the Son's departure to heaven, that they acquired the consciousness of the grace wherein they stood. So, yet more, the Apostle Paul says, “Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.” To know Christ at the right hand of God—to appreciate what He is there, is to know Him far better than if we had heard every discourse, and seen every miracle, of His upon earth. The Holy Ghost brings it out more and more fully through His word. I am not saying now how far we enter practically into what the Holy Ghost is teaching, because this depends upon the measure of our spirituality. But the Holy Ghost is here to take of the things of Christ, and show them to us—to make His glory known and His sufferings, as it is the Father's delight that He should be known. But there were many things that they could not then bear. When the Holy Ghost was come, He should lead them into all truth. This was the great object of the Father. He takes advantage of the very glory of Jesus, seen as Son of man, to show that a still deeper glory attaches to Him. The kingdom of Christ by no means exhausts the glory of His person: and it is as connected with His deeper glory that the existence of the Church is brought out. So the confession of His Sonship brought out the word, “Upon this rock will I build my church.” This is the pith of the New Testament revelation—it is the Father revealing His Son, and the Holy Ghost bringing out what the Son is, both as the image of the invisible God, and as introducing us into fellowship with the Father. It is not God merely known as such, but the Father in the Son, made known by the Holy Ghost. Hence it is, then, that here, in a gospel specially written for Jewish believers, the Holy Ghost takes particular pains to show us this. (Compare the close of chap. xi.) When Peter would have put the Son of God upon an equal ground with the most exalted and favored servants of God, a higher object is brought out. When before Him, Moses and Elias rejoice to take the place of servants merely. The Son is commended of God to us as the One whom we are to hear. This is a truth of all importance, in order to a soul's getting thoroughly settled upon Christian ground. Christians are often afraid of distinguishing between the ways of God, and afraid of bringing out the full place of our Lord. But to give Jesus His rightful place is the first duty of the soul; even as the Father Himself proclaims it. He spoke of Jesus as God the Father speaking of God the Son. We want more singleness of eye, a more fervent spirit, and greater intelligence, to give increasing honor to the Son of God. All heresy has as its root the slighting of Christ. One man makes doing good his object, another the gospel, another the Church, each rising perhaps above the other; but he is practically nearest to God who makes everything a question of Christ. This is the highest spirituality, because it is the most simple reproduction of His own thoughts and feelings.

The disciples, confounded by what they heard, fall on their faces and are sore afraid. There was no communion with it yet. For the present they enter into it but slightly, though it was afterward recalled to them by the Spirit of God. “And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.” The heavenly vision had passed away for a time: they were on the mount alone with Jesus. What a joy that, if it vanish, He abides!

Let us just refer briefly to the account of this scene as given in the other Gospels. In Mark 9 we have this same vision of glory, and it is opened in a similar manner. I am not now going to enter into all the points of difference, for there are several. But what was chiefly on my mind was

this: in what the Father says about Christ, the words, “in whom I am well pleased,” are left out. The emphatic point, forgotten nowhere, is that He was the Son; and in Mark, as in Matthew, He is the Son (not a servant only, though truly such), who is to be heard. But the Holy Ghost by Matthew adds, “in whom I am well pleased.” The satisfaction of the Father in the Son is given as the ground why He should be heard, as the full expression of His mind. In Luke we have another thing. (Luke 9:30.) “Behold there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias.” They are called “men” here in a distinct manner, this Gospel having been written more particularly in view of man at large. These men “appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.” There we have the subject of their conversation—a thing of the deepest interest for us to learn. The death and sufferings of Jesus are the great theme on which men in glory converse with Himself, the Son of God. And Jerusalem, yea, Jerusalem, would be the place of His death, instead of welcoming Him to reign! But then we find the sad trait of human weakness. Peter, and they that were with him, were heavy with sleep. There again we find the Father's affection for His Son. The highest glories of Judaism wane: the Son is to be heard. The moral features are prominent throughout.

Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 16:20-28, Remarks on

But, further, we have internal administration committed to Peter, both binding and loosing, authority vested in him by Christ to act publicly here below, with the promise of ratification above. “Whatsoever thou shalt bind in earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” That is first said to Peter; and I presume from what we have in Matt. 18:18 (“Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven”), that the binding and the loosing belong to the other disciples: not, unless I am mistaken, to the apostles only, but to the disciples as such. Compare also the charge in John 20:19-23. On that principle people are received into the Christian Church, and on that principle wicked people are put away till restored on the acceptance of their repentance. The Church does not forgive sins as a matter of eternal judgment, of course, which God alone has the power to do. But it is called of God to judge a person's state for reception or exclusion from the circle which confesses the name of Christ here below. In Acts 5 Peter bound their sin upon Ananias and Sapphira. That does not necessarily prove that they were lost; but the sin was bound upon them and brought present judgment. Peter was not, nor Paul, at Corinth; and there the Lord acts Himself, laying His hand upon the guilty: some were weak and sickly, and some falling asleep. Their sins were indeed retained; but this does not decide against their final salvation—rather, indeed, the contrary. When they were judged of the Lord, they were chastened, that they should not he condemned with the world: that is, that they should not be lost. They might be taken away by death, and yet be saved in the day of the Lord. The church puts away a wicked person. The man at Corinth, whom they were told to excommunicate, was guilty of appalling sin; but he was not lost. He was delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might “be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.” In the next epistle we find this person so overwhelmed with sorrow on account of his fall, that they were charged to confirm their love to him. Nothing is more simple than the binding and loosing which people often make so mysterious. The only sins that the Church ought to judge are those that come out so palpably as to demand public repudiation according to the word of God. The Church is not to be a petty tribunal of judgment for everything. We ought never to claim the assembly's intervention except about the evil that is so plain as to be entitled to carry the consciences of all along with it. This I take to be the meaning of binding and loosing. The former is applied when a soul comes under public discipline before the Church, and the latter when he humbles himself and is formally restored. Eternal forgiveness of sins is another thing altogether. Therein popery has shown its wickedness—confounding remission in this world with the absolute and eternal forgiveness which God reserves in His own power. Protestantism has thrown away the other truth—the Church's bounden duty to judge sins in this present life.

“Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was1 the Christ.” What a remarkable change is here! Peter had confessed Him to be the Christ, the Son of the living God: now the Lord charges them that they were not to tell any man that He was the Christ—not that He was “the Son of the living God.” What is the meaning of this? It was as good as saying, It is too late; I am rejected as the Christ, or the Messiah, the anointed of Israel. He is refused by Israel, and He accepts the fact. But mark another thing. “From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” If you compare it with Luke, it comes out more distinctly. There we are told (chap. ix. 20), “He said unto them, But whom say ye that I am? Peter answering said, The Christ of God.” A remarkable thing! “The Christ of God.” “The Son of the living God” is not mentioned in Luke: consequently, nothing is said about the building of the Church. How perfect is Scripture! The two things go together. But in Luke it is said, “He straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing (i.e., to tell no man that He was the Christ of God), saying, The Son of man must suffer many things,” &c. He does not forbid them to tell this. There is a great distinction between “the Christ” and “the Son of man.” The latter is the title of Christ, first as rejected, and then as exalted in heaven. This is the turning point in Christ's ministry—where He forbids the disciples to tell that He was the Christ. The meaning is that Christ drops His Jewish title. He speaks of His Church. Before it comes He says, “Upon this rock I will build my Church.” From that time He begins to show unto them how that He must “go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.” Luke adds that “He must first suffer,” &e. All this is connected with the building of the Church, which began to be built after Christ rose from the dead, and took His place in heaven. In Ephesians the Church is not even named till after Christ's resurrection and His taking a new place in heaven have been brought out. We had God choosing the saints in Christ Jesus, but not the Church. Election is an individual thing. He chose us—you and me, and all the other saints of God, wherever they are. He chose us that “we should be holy and without blame before him in love.” But when Paul has introduced Christ's death and resurrection, he says that God “gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.” Christ was not so given till He was at the right hand of God. There His headship commences. His Sonship was from everlasting; He was a man in this world; and He was made Head of the Church, after having accomplished redemption. The word of God is wiser than men: what men call foolishness, is really the wisdom of God. It is our duty to give up our own theories, as much as the notions of other men. We must always bring ourselves up to the standard of God's word—not be always correcting other people, but ourselves. The word of God is what He has written for this purpose: it is no doubt very useful for others, but we must honestly use it for our hearts first. When the children of Israel were going to make war with the Canaanites the Lord appears, and lets them know that they must take the knife to themselves before the sword against others.

But mark the solemn fact that is here recorded. Immediately after Simon had made this glorious confession of the Lord Jesus, he is called, not Peter, but Satan! How could this be? Because he savored not the things that were of God, but those that were of men. He had not said one improper word according to human judgment. He had not even indulged in haste, as was often his wont. The Lord never called mere excitement “Satan;” but He so called Peter because he sought to turn Himself away from suffering and death. The secret was this: that he

neither fully felt what sin was nor what the grace of God was. He stood in the way of the Lord's going to the cross. Was it not for Peter that he was going there I Had Peter thought of this, would he have said, “Be it far from thee, Lord?” It was man; and when it is man thwarting Christ, He pronounces it Satan. “He turned and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offense unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” Peter thus feeling and acting is the true foundation of the mystery of iniquity; not Peter confessing what flesh and blood taught not but God.

Our Lord turns to the disciples and puts before them that not merely is He going to the cross, but they must be prepared to follow Him there. If I am to be in the true path of Jesus, I must deny myself and take up the cross and follow—not the disciples—not this church or that church, but—Jesus Himself. I must go in the very teeth of what is pleasing to my heart naturally. I must be found compassed by shame and rejection in this present evil world. If not, depend upon it, I am not following Jesus; and remember, it is a dangerous thing to believe in Jesus without following Him. The Lord shows that it must be a man losing his life as it were. At the present time the confession of Christ is comparatively an easy matter. There is no opposition or persecution. How it shows what the heart is! People imagine that the world is changed, and they talk of progress and enlightenment. The truth is, Christians are changed; the world is but restrained in the exercise of its power. “He that letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.” When that day comes, it will not be merely the usual spirit of hatred that animates the world, but God sending men a strong delusion that they should believe a lie, and should thus be ready to receive the antichrist, the man after their own hearts. I am not speaking woes and troubles of my own imagining, but what we find in the word of God. There is a great calm before an earthquake. The cry is of peace and safety, but there approaches fast this time of dissolution of all that men count so settled and secure. That we, Christians, shall be taken up to be with our Savior before that day comes, I have no doubt. We must look at the bright side, the coming of Jesus, to take us to be in the Father's house. But for the little while that we are here, the important thing to remember is, that, as Jesus must needs go to the cross for our deliverance, each Christian has got his cross too. Do we desire this to be true of ourselves? If so, we shall be sure to find it out. Let us ask ourselves whether we desire to be found taking up our cross and following Jesus? “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”

What lessons for our souls! The flesh easily arrogates superiority over the Spirit; and indulgence to the path of ease comes in (though of Satan) under the specious plea of love and kindness. Is the cross of Christ our glory? Are we willing to suffer in doing His will? What a delusion is present enjoyment.

Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 16:1-19, Remarks on

In the last chapter, which introduces a new part of the subject of Matthew, we saw that the two great pictures introduced were, first, the hypocritical disobedience of those who boasted of the law, completely exposed out of their own prophets, as well as by the touchstone of the Lord Himself; and, secondly, the true nature of grace shown to one whose circumstances demanded nothing but sovereign mercy if she were to be blessed at all. I need not enter more into a chapter already looked at, but I would recall also the particular manifestation at the close of the Lord's perfect, patient grace towards Israel, spite of the condition of the Jewish leaders. If He compassionated the Gentiles, His heart still yearned over the people, and He showed it by repeating the great miracle of feeding thousands in the wilderness, though this was not intended to be the figure of His dispensational retirement from earth, which, as we saw (chap. 14.), followed the first miracle of feeding the multitudes—the type of our Lord's occupation at the right hand of God.

Now, we have another picture quite distinct from the last, though akin to it. It is not the flagrant disobedience of the law, through human tradition, but the source of all disobedience—unbelief. Hence, in the language employed by the Holy Ghost, there is only a shade of difference between the words unbelief and disobedience. The former is the root of which the latter is the fruit. Having shown us the gross systematic violation of God's law, even by those who were religious leaders in Israel, and having convicted them of it, even about the highest earthly relationships, which that law bound and encouraged them most of all to honor, a deeper principle is now brought out. All that disobedience of God flowed from unbelief of Himself, and, consequently, misapprehension of their own moral condition. These two things always go together. Ignorance of self flows from ignorance of God; and ignorance of both ourselves and God is proved by despising Jesus; and what is true of the worldly man or the unbeliever in full, partially applies to Christians who in any measure slight the will and person of the Lord. All these are only the workings of that heart of unbelief, of which the apostle warns even believers. The grand provision against this, the operation of the Holy Ghost, in contrast with the working of the natural mind of man, comes out here plainly. “The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting, desired that he would show them a sign from heaven.” They were beginning the same story over again; but now it is higher up the source, and, of course, therefore worse in principle. It is an awful thing to find opposed parties with one only thing that unites them—dislike of Jesus; persons who could have torn each other to pieces at another time, but this is their gathering point—tempting Jesus. “The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came tempting him.” There was nothing in conflict between the scribes and Pharisees, but a wide chasm separated the Sadducees and Pharisees. Those were the free-thinkers of the day, these the champions who stood up for ordinances and for the authority of the law. But both joined to tempt Jesus. They desired a sign from heaven. The most significant token that God ever gave man, was before them in the person of His Son, who eclipsed all other signs. But such is unbelief, that it can go into the presence of the full manifestation of God, can gaze at a light brighter than the sun at noonday, and there and then ask God to give a farthing candle. “But Jesus answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather, for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day, for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?” Their own moral condition was the sign and proof that judgment was imminent. Doubtless, for those who could see, there was the fair weather, the day-spring from on high that had visited them in Jesus. They saw it not; but could they not discern the foul weather? They were in the presence of the Messiah, and were asking Him, who consummated all signs in His person, to give them a sign from heaven! The God that made heaven and earth was there, but the darkness comprehended it not. “He came to his own and his own received him not.” Nothing could be more awful, but they were utterly blind; they could discern physical changes, but they had no perception of moral and spiritual features. “A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them and departed.” Such was His word to them. Men constantly err as to the character of Jesus. They imagine that He could use no strong language and feel no anger; but yet there it is in, the word, written in the light. It is the same thing now as ever. Unbelief is always blind, and shows its blindness most against Jesus. The same kind of unbelief that could not then discern who and what Jesus was, sees not

now Jesus coming, and discerns not the signs of the times, or of their own impending ruin. It is the moral condition of men, no matter where they are, only the more remarkably manifested where the light of God is. If England be now the focus where God's light is more displayed than in any other place, it is this which makes all the more glaring the unbelief of men, who perhaps are engaged in His work, who are professing to help it on, one way or another, and at the same time are utterly careless as to whether they are walking according to His will revealed in the Bible. Clearly we have no right merely to follow the word of God in what suits us, but the word of God as a whole, for our own souls first, and for all the children of God next, as far as in us lies. This is what we have gravely to consider. If we cannot act upon people's consciences, at least let us keep our own unsullied ourselves. There is always the question of personal allegiance to the Savior, and this is what puts us to the test above all. Precept is most weighty when commended by our own example.

Here we have our Lord who does not hesitate to touch the evil with unsparing hand. He was the perfect fullness of love: but do men remember He is the One who said, “wicked and adulterous generation,” “generation of vipers,” &c.? It flows from true love, if men would but think so, and bow to the truth that convicts them. To submit, at God's word, to the truth in this world is to be saved; to be convicted of the truth only in the next world is to be lost forever. Christ was the Faithful Witness; He brought God face to face with man, and caused His perfect light to shine upon them. Why, then, could not He grant them a sign? God, full of love as He is, never does anything to the disparagement of Him who made Himself known. Jesus can meet a soul in its sin; He may eat with publicans, to show that He is able to receive sinners and forgive sins to the uttermost; but He will never give any sign to satisfy the unbelief which rejects Jesus. These Pharisees and Sadducees did not hear His voice of grace. They listened only with their outward ears; but they were compelled to hear their own sentence from the Judge of all the earth: and shall not He do right? “A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.” Had Jesus not been there, to ask for a sign would not have been so wicked; but His presence made it audacious unbelief and frightful hypocrisy. It was flying in the face of what God had already vouchsafed, and asking for something altogether inconsiderable in the presence of His best gift. So now, the death and resurrection of Christ is preached to a soul that turns away from it. He says, salvation is not so easy a thing as all that; I must do something myself. This is asking a sign, and that not even from heaven, but from his own heart. And what is his heart? God declares that from his heart proceeds everything that is wicked. Yet he still clings to the fatal delusion, that some good thing must be got out of that which God pronounces only and always evil: and so he turns away from Jesus and God's righteousness in Him, that has been perfectly brought out, because Jesus is risen and at the right hand of God. When you find very high religious pretensions along with disparagement of Jesus, what can be more offensive to God? “A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it but the sign of the prophet Jonas.” And what was that? The sign of one that disappeared from the earth, that passed into the figure of death away from the Jewish people, and after a while was given back to them. It was the symbol of death and resurrection, and our Lord immediately acted upon it. “He left them and departed.” He would pass under the power of death; He would rise again, and would carry the message, which Israel had despised, to the poor Gentiles.

But there are other forms of unbelief; and the next scene is with His disciples: so true is it that what you find working in its grossest shape in an unconverted man may be traced, in another way, perhaps, in believers. “Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.” They did not understand Him: they reasoned among themselves; and whenever Christians begin so to reason, they never understand anything. “They reasoned among themselves saying, It is because we have taken no bread.” There is such a thing, of course, as sound and solid deduction. The difference is that wrong reasoning always starts from man, and tries to rise to God, while right reasoning starts from God towards man. The natural mind can only infer from the experience of men what they think or feel, and thus form within a sort of image of what God must be. This is the basis, the aim, and the character of human speculation in divine things; whereas God is the source, strength, and guide of the thoughts of faith. How do I know God? In the Bible, which is the revelation of Christ from the first of Genesis to the end of the Apocalypse. I see Him there, the key-stone of the arch, the center of all Scripture speaks of; and unless the connection of Christ with everything is seen, nothing is understood aright. There is the first grand fallacy, the leaving out of God's revealing Himself in His Son. It is not the light behind a veil as under the Jewish system, but infinite blessing now that God has come to man and man is brought to God. In the life of Christ I see God drawing nigh to man, and in His death man brought nigh to God. The veil is rent; all is out, of man on the one hand, and of God on the other, as far as God is pleased to reveal Himself to man in this world. All stands in the boldest relief in the life and death of Christ. But disciples are apt to be very dull about these things now as ever; and so when He warned them about the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees, they thought that He was merely speaking of something for daily life—very much like what we see at the present time. But our Lord “said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?” Why did they not think of Christ? Would they have troubled themselves about loaves if they had thought of Him? Impossible! But what may there not be in a believer's heart, even before Him in whose hands is the earth and the fullness thereof? They were anxious, or thought Him so, about bread! “Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spike it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.” And this is what disciples even now often misapprehend. They do not understand the hatefulness of unsound doctrine. They are alive to moral evil. If a person gets drunk, or falls into any other gross scandal, they know, of course, it is very wicked; but if the leaven of evil doctrine work, they do not feel it. Why is it that disciples are more careful of that which more natural conscience can judge, than of doctrine, which destroys the foundation of everything both for this world and for that which is to come What a serious thing that disciples should need to be warned of this by the Lord, and even then not understand! He had to explain it to them. There was the working of unbelief among the disciples; making the body the great aim, and not seeing the all-importance of these corrupt doctrines which menaced souls in so many insidious forms around them.

But there is another way and scene in which unbelief works. This chapter is the dissection of the root of many a form of unbelief. “By faith we understand,” says the apostle to the Hebrews. The worldly man tries to understand first and then to believe; the Christian begins with the feeblest understanding, perhaps, but he believes God: his confidence is in One above himself? and thus out of the stone there is raised up a child unto Abraham. The Lord now questions the disciples as to the real gist of all the matter, whether among Pharisees, Sadducees, or disciples themselves. “He asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?” It is now Christ's person which comes out; and this, I need hardly say, is deeper than all other doctrine. “Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some Elias; others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.” There are so many opinions among men, unbelief argues, that certainty is impossible. Some say one thing and some another. You talk of truth and Scripture, yet, after all, it is only your view. But what says faith? Certainty, from God, is our portion, the moment that we see who Jesus is. He is the only remedy that banishes difficulty and doubt from the mind of man. “He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?” This was for the purpose of bringing out now what is the pivot of

man's blessing and God's glory, and becomes the turning point of the chapter. Among these very disciples we are to have a blessed confession from one of them—the power of God working in a man who had been rebuked for his want of faith before, as he was indeed just after. When we are really broken down before God about our little faith, the Lord can reveal some deeper, higher view of Himself than we ever had before. The disciples had been relating the various opinions of men: one said he was Elias; another, John the Baptist. “But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Most glorious confession! In the Psalms He is spoken of as the Son of God, but very differently. There it is as one dealing with the kings of the earth, who are called upon to take care how they behave themselves. But the Son of the living God. The Holy Ghost now lifts up the veil to show that the Son of the living God involves depths far beyond an earthly dominion, howsoever glorious. He is the Son of that living God who can communicate life even to his enemies. “Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I also say unto thee,” &c.

First, there is the Father revealing; and the moment Christ hears Himself confessed as the Son of the living God, He also sets His own seal and honors the confessor. It is the assertion of One who at once rises up to His own intrinsic dignity. “And I also say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” He gives Simon a new name. As God had given Abraham, Sarah, &c., because of some fresh manifestation of Himself, so does the Son of God. It had been prophetically announced before; but now comes out for the first time the reason why it was affixed to him. “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church.” What rock? The confession Peter had made that Jesus was the son of the living God. On this the Church is built. Israel was governed by a law; the Church is raised on a solid, and imperishable, and divine foundation—on the person of the Son of the living God. And when this fuller confession breaks from the lips of Peter, the answer comes, Thou art Peter—thou art a stone—a man that derivest thy name from this rock on which the Church is built.

In the early chapters of the Acts, Peter always speaks of Jesus as the holy child (or servant) Jesus. He speaks of Him as a man who went about doing good; as the Messiah slain by the wicked hands of men, whom God raised up from the dead. Whatever Peter might know Jesus to be, yet when preaching to the Jews, he presents Him to them simply as the Christ, as the predicted Son of David, who had walked here below, whom they had crucified and God had raised again. Then, at Stephen's martyrdom, a new term is used about the Lord. That blessed witness looks up and says, “I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.” It is not now merely Jesus as the Messiah, but “the Son of man,” which implies his rejection. When He was refused as the Messiah, Stephen, finding that this testimony was rejected, is led of God to testify of Jesus as the exalted Son of man at God's right hand. When Paul is converted, which is given in the very next chapter but one, he goes straightway and preaches “Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God.” He did not merely confess Him, but preached Him as such. And to Paul was entrusted the great work of bringing out the truth about “the church of God.”

So here when the Lord hears Peter's confession, He says, “Upon this rock I will build my church.” You understand the glory of my person; I will show you the work I am going to accomplish. Mark the expression. It is not, I have been building; but I will build my Church. He had not built it yet, nor begun to build it: it was altogether new. I do not mean by this, that there had not before been souls believing in Him and regenerate of the Spirit; but the aggregate of the individual saints that were born of God, from the beginning to the end of time, it is an error to call “the Church.” It is a common notion which, I am bold to say, has not got one thread of Scripture to give even the appearance of truth to it. The expression in Acts 7:38, “The church in the wilderness,” means the whole congregation—the mass of Israel—the greater part of whose carcasses fell in the wilderness. Can you call that “the church of God?” There are only a few believers among them. People are deceived in this by the sound. The word, “Church in the wilderness,” merely means the congregation there. The very same word is applied to the confused assembly in Acts 19, which would have torn Paul to pieces. If it were translated like Acts 7, it would be, the “Church in the theater,” and the blunder is obvious. The word that is translated “church,” simply means assembly. To find out what is the nature of the assembly, we must examine the scriptural usage and the object of the Holy Ghost. For you might have a good or bad assembly: an assembly of Jews, of Gentiles, or God's assembly distinct from either and contrasted with both, as can be readily and undeniably seen in 1 Cor. 10:32. Now it is this last alone which we mean, i.e., God's assembly, when we speak of “the church.”

What then, to return, does our Lord intimate when He says, “Upon this rock I will build my church?” Clearly something that He was going to erect upon the confession that He was the Son of the living God, whom death could not conquer, but only give occasion to the shining forth of His glory by resurrection. “Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades” —the power of death – “shall not prevail against it.” This last does not mean the place of the lost, but the condition of separate spirits. “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven.” The Church and the kingdom of heaven are not the same thing. It is never said that Christ gave the keys of the Church to Peter. Had the keys of the Church or of heaven been given to him, I do not wonder that people should have imagined a pope. But “the kingdom of heaven” means the new dispensation now taking place on earth. God was going to open a new economy, free to Jews and Gentiles, the keys of which he committed to Peter. One of these keys was used, if I may so say, at Pentecost when he preached to the Jews, and the other when he preached to the Gentiles. It was the opening of the kingdom to people, whether Jews or Gentiles. “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose in earth shall be loosed in heaven.” The eternal forgiveness of sins has to do with God only, though there is a sense in which forgiving was committed to Peter and the other apostles, which remains true now. Whenever the Church acts in the name of the Lord and really does His will, the stamp of God is upon their deeds. “My Church,” built upon this rock, is His body—the temple of believers built upon Himself. But “the kingdom of heaven” embraces every one that confesses the name of Christ. That was begun by preaching and baptizing. When a man is baptized, he enters “the kingdom of heaven,” even if he should turn out a hypocrite. He will never be in heaven, of course, if he is an unbeliever; but he is in “the kingdom of heaven.” He may either be a tare in the kingdom of heaven, or he may be real wheat; an evil or a faithful servant; a foolish virgin or a wise one. The kingdom of heaven takes in the whole scene of Christian profession.

But we have seen, when Christ speaks of “My church,” it is another thing. It is what is built upon the recognition and confession of His person, and we know that he that believeth “that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God.” And again “He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God overcometh the world.” He has got the first workings of life in him if he acknowledges Jesus as Christ; but he has the power of the Holy Ghost if he acknowledges Him as Son. The higher the acknowledgment of Christ, the more spiritual energy in going through this world and overcoming it. If one believer is more spiritual than another, it is because he understands the person of Christ better. All power depends upon the appreciation of Christ. Mark our Lord's words first: “Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.” Christ must be found outside the Church and before it; Christ must be discerned first and foremost by the individual soul; Christ, and what He is, must, before and above all, be revealed to the heart by the Father. He may employ persons who belong

to the Church as instruments, or may directly use His own word. But, whatever the means employed, it is the Father revealing the glory of the Son to a poor sinful man; and when that is settled with the individual, Christ says, “Upon this rock I will build my church.” Faith in Christ is essentially God's order and way before the question of the Church comes in. This is one great controversy between God and the mystery of iniquity which is now working in this world. The aim of the Holy Ghost is to glorify Christ; whereas that of the other is to glorify self. The Holy Ghost is carrying on this blessed revelation that the Father has made of the Son; and when the individual question is settled, then comes the corporate privilege and responsibility—the Church.

It is not, therefore, enough to say I have got Christ, infinitely blessed as that is. If I know that He is the Son of God, I ought to believe also that He is building His Church. Do I know my place there? Am I found walking in the light of Christ—a living stone ever in my place in that which He is building—in healthy action as a member of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones? The building of the Church is going on here. It was here that salvation was wrought, and here it is that the Church is being built upon this rock; and the gates of Hades, the invisible state or separate condition, shall not prevail against it. Death may come in, but the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. The Lord says in the Revelation, that He has the keys of death and Hades. The death of the believer, the Christian, is not the wages of sin: all is changed now. Christ is the Lord both of the dead and of the living; death is not our Lord, but Christ. “Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord, whether, therefore, we live or die, we are the Lord's.” The Lord has absolute command over us; and therefore death is robbed of all that makes it so terrible; even to the believer that is looking at it with unbelieving eyes. The Lord here says that the gates of Hades shall not prevail against His Church. The book of the Revelation at the close, brings us its blessed light. That book which people commonly talk about as the most obscure in the Bible, is the very one to which we are most deeply indebted for light upon this and other parts. There you have the Lord with the keys of death and Hades. He gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven, to Peter, because he it was who was to preach to Jews and Gentiles. The keys did their office; the door was flung open on the day of Pentecost first, and afterward, yet more widely, when the Gentiles were brought in.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Feeding the Four Thousand

Matt. 15:32-39

The miracle here does not merely attest again the divine Messiah's presence and power on behalf of His needy people. Each has its own characteristics for our instruction. Both prove His ready and almighty resources. El ad each miracle appeared in a different Gospel only, the skeptics would have insisted on discrepant accounts; but God has cut off such an objection, because Matthew and Mark record both, Luke and John only the first of them. The miracle wrought twice signifies, if one may apply Joseph's interpretation (Gen. 41:32), that the thing is established by God, whatever be man's unbelief. The distinctions are marked, but in no way favor those of old who imagined a reference in the former to the Jew, in the latter to the Gentile. Both express Messiah's grace to the chosen people.

What then is the true difference? It is defined in detail, as well as in broad features. There were five loaves and two fishes in the first, seven loaves and a few fishes in the last, five thousand fed in one, and four thousand in the other; the surplus then filled twelve baskets, now seven. The very baskets employed had in each instance a differing appellation, meaning respectively a hand-basket and a creel, as expressed without confusion in each account, and maintained in our Lord's recall of both in Matt. 16 The larger distinction will appear presently, though it may here be added that the first was in the spring when the grass was green, the second some months later; and that in the second the crowd had stayed three days, whereas in the first we do not hear of more than one day.

“And Jesus, having called his disciples unto him, said, I have compassion on the crowd, because they continue with me already three days and have nothing to eat; and I would not let them go fasting, lest they faint in the way. And his disciples say to him, Whence should we [have] in a wilderness so many loaves as to fill so great a crowd? And Jesus saith to them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few small fishes. And he commanded the crowds to lie down on the ground; and taking the seven loaves and the fishes he gave thanks and broke, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the crowd. And all ate and were filled, and they took up what was over of the broken pieces, seven baskets full. And those that ate were four thousand men, besides women and children. And having let go the crowds he went on board the ship and came over into the borders of Magadan " (vers. 32-39).

On the first occasion the disciples took the initiative, and proposed the dismissal of the crowds to buy themselves food in the villages. Their faith was weak indeed. How sad to overlook His presence who was pledged to satisfy Zion's poor with bread I Even His call that they should give them to eat failed to awaken any sense of His fullness. So He took the provision they despised, and abundantly blessed it to the five thousand, and more; yet there remained over of the broken pieces twelve baskets full. Now this answers to the twelve apostles, being the number of full administration by or in man. But it was only a sign in His rejected testimony to Israel; and sending His disciples to go before Him to the other side, on dismissal of the crowds, He went up into the mountain apart to pray, the figure of His priestly place on high. After this comes the wondrous scene of Peter leaving the ship to join Jesus on the water, which is peculiar to Matthew, as alone expressive of the divine design by that Gospel, and having nothing like it on the second occasion.

Hera it is the Messiah yearning over His famished people. They were guilty; but He commiserated their distressful state, and gave His disciples a fresh opportunity of drawing on Him by faith. Alas they were slow to learn. “Whence should we have in a wilderness so many loaves as to fill so great a crowd?” He was there, and full of compassion; but unbelief, even in believers, is ever blind. The seven loaves which He took and distributed through His disciples, and the surplus in the seven baskets here named, point to spiritual, not to administrative fullness. All was ordered of God, all is meant to teach man, if he has ears to hear. It is Jehovah-Messiah acting in His own perfection. Here there is no going on high to pray; nor is there a rejoining the disciples for the other side, when and where all who once rejected Him welcome Him and His beneficent power, as will be in the consummation of the age.

How is it with you, dear reader? Whatever engrosses you, whatever interests you, the first and deepest of all questions is, How are you treating Jesus? He is the Lord of glory, the Son of God Who became man to die for you. How do you regard Him? It concerns you now, and for all eternity. He died to save sinners; but the blessing is for those that believe. If you believe not who have heard His name, you are far more guilty than heathen who have not heard. God the Father resents all dishonor done to His beloved Son, and has given all judgment into His hands, because He is Son of man (John 5), to punish all men who despise Him. Is it not then of incalculable moment that you bow to Him Who

will be your Judge by-and-by, if you refuse Him now as Savior? Remember that His judgment is eternal. Yet how righteous is it also For the unbeliever in the gospel is not impenitent only but despises God's grace. How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Canaanite Woman

Matthew 15:21-28

It is in the First Gospel we find this most instructive incident, which reveals the Lord, not merely as minister of circumcision for God's truth, but as the display of His sovereign grace where God's curse lay, and Satan's power.

" And Jesus going forth hence retired into the parts of Tire and Sidon; and, behold, a Canaanite woman coming" out from those borders cried out, saying, Pity me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is grievously possessed by a demon. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and asked him, saying, Dismiss her, for she crieth out after us. But he said in answer, I was not sent save to the lost sheep of Israel's house. And she came and paid him homage, saying, Lord, help me. But he said in answer, It is not good to take the children's bread and cast [it] to the dogs. But she said, Yea, Lord; for even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters. Then Jesus in answer said to her, O woman, great [is] thy faith: be it done to thee as thou wiliest. And her daughter was healed from that hour " (Matt. 15:21-28).

The Lord withdrew from the proud religionists of Jerusalem, who made void the law of God for the sake of their tradition. He also laid bare to the disciples that only the plants of His Father take root, while all that issues from man's heart is defiled and defiling. The sinner needs God's grace to save him. This is shown in the otherwise desperate case of the Canaanite, and her daughter sorely possessed of a demon.

Here may many a soul learns why the Lord does not accede to its appeal. Hers was deep and earnest; yet He answered her not a word. What claims on the Son of David had a Canaanite woman? When He reigns, there shall be no more a Canaanite in the house of Jehovah of hosts (Zech. 14:21). When the two blind cried early or late, saying, Pity us, Son of David, He touched their eyes, which were then opened according to their faith (Matt. 9:27-30; 20:30-34). But repentance has its place as truly as faith; and God will have the soul to judge itself aright. " Cursed be Canaan " is the word from of old; and yet was she not now asking His pity Who is to avenge and deliver Israeli How many to-day have said the words, " Father,... forgive us our sins "! Yet they too have received no answer; nor would they assert, any more than they believe, that their sins are forgiven. They have gone on ground wholly untenable. They are not His sons by faith in Christ. They are not born of water and Spirit. They stand on law, supplemented by ordinances. They are unrenewed, serving divers lusts and pleasures, a prey to the power of darkness. They do not cry to God in the truth of their estate, but imitate the language of disciples, which they might own they are not in heart. Have we not experienced it ourselves? Our state was below the Canaanite's.

The woman of Canaan evidently knew that no Israelite ever appealed to Christ in vain. She had faith in Him; but she had overlooked her own dismal position. Theirs were " the promises "; but what had she? Not promise, but curse. And He Who is the truth would have her feel it. Not so the disciples; they would have Him dismiss her. This was far from His heart. They disliked the discredit of her importunity, and wished to be rid of her. He meant to bless her; but it must be in the truth as well as the grace of God. For this He waited, and she as yet had no answer; but He answered them, " I was not sent save to the lost sheep of Israel's house."

Now faith where real perseveres; and the woman came and did Him homage, saying, " Lord, help me." He is indeed Lord of all: this is truth without assumption of privilege. To such an appeal He does reply, " It is not good to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs."

Thus does His grace help her to see where she was lacking. The light of God shines into her heart; and she bows at once. For she said, "Yea, Lord; for even the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters." She apprehends where and what she really was, and takes her true place before God. She had forgotten that she was not a "sheep" to claim the succor of Israel's Shepherd. She was truly a "dog" before Him, no better than a little dog or whelp. Yet while no longer hiding this from her soul but confessing it freely, she rejoins, " Yea, Lord; for even the whelps eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters."

Oh what refreshment did such faith give to our Lord Jesus! She savored the things of God. She appreciated, believed, and enjoyed the grace of which she was the object. And the Lord owned her " great faith," and gave her all she wished.

How is it with you, dear reader? Have you learned that you are no better than a dog before Him? Or are you, while in your sins, claiming to be His sheep? Own yourself a sinner, and Him the only Savior, that you may be saved. He is the same Lord of all, and is rich unto all that call upon Him. Why should you stand without? A better voice than Laban's invites you to come in and be blessed. All depends on Him; but it is not yours save by repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Till then we have no known divine answer to our cry.

Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 15:21-39, Remarks on

But now we find our Lord turning to a different thought. He goes away from these scribes and Pharisees to the coasts of Tire and Sidon, that is, to the very extremity of the Holy Land, and that particular quarter of the borders of it that had been expressly the scene of the judgments of God. In chapter xi. our Lord had referred to them, and said, that it would be more tolerable for Tire and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for the cities where His mighty works had been done. They were proverbial as the monuments of God's vengeance among the Gentiles. There our Lord is met by a woman of Canaan coming out of the same coasts. If there was one race in all these borders more particularly under God's ban, it was Canaan. “Cursed,” said Noah, “be Canaan.” Such a deep character of evil had come in by the youth Canaan, who seems to have been specially the leader of his father in his wickedness against his grandfather Noah. “Cursed be Canaan. A servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren.” And so, when Israel was brought into the land, the Canaanites were to be exterminated without mercy. They were persons whose abominations had gone up to heaven with a cry for vengeance from God. Here this woman came out of the coasts of Canaan, and cries unto Him, saying, “Have mercy upon me, O Lord, thou son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.” If we could have conceived any case most of all opposed to what we had before—scribes and Pharisees of Jerusalem, full of learning and outward veneration for the

law—we have it in this poor woman of Canaan.

The circumstances, too, were dreadful. Not only was it in Tire and Sidon, recalling the judgments of God, but the devil had taken possession of her daughter. All these circumstances together made the case to be as deplorable a one as could be found. How was the Lord going to deal with her? The Lord shows, in meeting her case, a great change in His ways. We have seen the Jews pronounced hypocrites; their worship intolerable to God, and declared such through their own prophets. For if the Lord pronounced these men to be hypocrites, He did it out of the lips of their own prophet Isaiah. Now comes one that had not the smallest tie with Israel. In former times, the obligation of Israel had been to kill the Canaanites. How would the Messiah deal with her? She cries unto the Lord, saying, “Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David: my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word.” Not a word!

Why was this? She was on totally wrong ground. What had she to do with the son of David? If the Lord had acted as the son of David, what could he have done with her except order her to be executed? Had the Lord merely been the son of David, could he have given her the blessing He had in His heart? She appealed to Him as if she were one of a chosen people who had claims on Him as their Messiah. Was it ever promised that Messiah was to heal the Canaanites? Not a word about it. When the Messiah does come as son of David, the Canaanites will not be there, Look at Zech. 14, and you will find that, when our Lord shall be King over all the earth, “In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of Hosts.” So that it is plain that the judgments which were not thoroughly executed by Israel, because they were unfaithful to the trust of the Lord, are to be executed by and by when the son of David will take His inheritance. This woman was altogether confused about it. She had the conviction that He was much more than the son of David, but she did not know how to bring it out. In the same way, many persons now, anxious about their sins, have tried the Lord's Prayer, and have asked the Lord to forgive them their sins as they forgive others. They go to God as their Father, and ask of Him to deal with them as children. But that is the very thing which is not yet settled. Are they children? Can they say that God is their Father? They would shrink from it. It is that which they chiefly desire, but they fear it is not so: i.e., that they have no right to draw near to God on the footing of a relationship that does not exist. So that when persons are thus confused, they never get thorough peace to their souls. Sometimes they are hoping they are the children of God, sometimes fearing they are not, cast down with the sense of the evil within them. The fact is, they do not understand the matter at all. They are quite right in wishing to turn to God, but they do not know how to do it. They are not willing to go to God in all that they are—just as they are—giving up all thought of having promises or anything else. This shows the wrongness of an anxious soul seeking after God on the ground of promises. A good deal is said about sinners “grasping the promises;” but I say you have no title to grasp the promises. Who were they for? In the Old Testament they were for Israel; in the New, for Christians. But you are neither an Israelite nor a Christian. A soul brought to that point is confounded.

It is good for a soul to be brought to this: I have no claim upon God for anything; I am a lost sinner. If God shakes a person from what they have no right to, if He strips them of everything, it is for the purpose of giving them a blessing that He has a right to give them. People forget that now it is the righteousness of God—God's right to bless through Christ Jesus, according to all that is in His heart. No right of theirs: sin has destroyed that. The cross has come in. Men are lost. But they are afraid to confess the true ruin in which they are found. This is what the Lord was dealing with in the poor woman of Canaan. He was bringing her down to feel that she had no right to the promises. As son of David He had promises. He was to do all kind of things for Israel: but where were the promises to the Canaanites? So that on the ground of promise, on the ground of His being the son of David, it was impossible for the Lord to give her what she asked. She did not understand that. She thought that if an Israelite might go on the ground of promise, she might. But it is a mistake. “All the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him amen, unto the glory of God by us.” But who are the “us?” We who have the Lord Jesus. When we have got Christ without a promise, then we have a Christ in whom all the promises of God are yea and amen. We go to Him as sinners, naked and bare, without the smallest help even of a promise. But when we have got Christ as sinners, then we find that in this Blessed One all the promises of God are found ours. But we get Him as lost sinners first, and there are no such things as promises to lost sinners. Not a soul has a right to a promise till he has got Christ; and when we have got Christ, we have got all the promises. So God will deal with Israel by and by; not on any claim that they have got, for He has allowed them to forfeit that by rejecting Christ now. “For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. 0 the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!”

This poor woman compelled the Lord not to answer her. If He had spoken to her, it must have been with a rebuke. It was grace and tenderness that led the Lord not to answer her: He remains silent till she drops the ground that she had first taken. But the disciples were not silent; they wanted to get rid of her importunity; they did not like the trouble of her. “They came and besought him, saying, Send her away, for she crieth after us.” But the Lord confirms what has been already said as to the wrongness of her plea, He says, as it were, She does not belong to the house of Israel: I cannot give her a blessing on the ground she takes, but I will not send her away without a blessing. He stands for the special privilege of the sheep of the house of Israel, and she was not a sheep. She could not get the blessing on that ground. “He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” Then the poor woman “came and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.” She drops the words “son of David.” She no longer uses the title which connects Him with Israel, but acknowledges His lordship, His authority. Now He answers her, though she is not vet down low enough. When she appeals to Him as Lord, which was a suitable title, He answers, “It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs.” The moment that this is uttered, all the secret is out. “Truth, Lord,” she says, “yet the dogs eat of the crumbs that fall from their masters' table.” She takes the place of being a dog. She acknowledges that Israel was, in the outward ways of God, the favored people, as children eating of bread upon the table; whereas the Gentiles were but the dogs around it. She acknowledges it, and it is very humbling. People do not like it now. But she is brought down to it. The Lord may, for the purpose of leading us into deeper blessing, break us down to the very lowest point of the truth about ourselves. But was there no blessing even for a dog? She falls back upon this truth: let it be that I am a dog, has not God some blessing for me? No one could fancy that there were ever promises for dogs; yet that was the place she took. When she is brought down from it, the Lord gives her the full blessing. He even meets her with the strongest approbation of her faith— “O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.” When He had pronounced the sentence upon the nation of the Jews, who were only hypocrites, the Lord goes out to the Gentiles. Faith meets with its blessing. The faith that penetrates through outward circumstances, and bears the discovery that we have not yet got down to the lowly place that we ought to take, only receives deeper and more enduring blessing than ever. The poor woman was blessed even to her heart's content. “Be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.” This was grace—and grace dealing with the most extreme case of a Gentile is that which occupies the Lord on His turning away from Israel.

But there is more than this. It is not the Lord retiring after He has fed the multitude, but the Lord coming down from the mountain in sovereign goodness. “Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain and sat down there.” It is now the Lord, who had been away visiting the Gentiles, when the multitude can approach to Him. “Great multitudes came unto him,

having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet, and he healed them: insomuch that the multitude wondered when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel." I consider that this is a picture of Israel feeling their real condition. They are coming to Jesus, looking to Him, and saying, as it were, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." They are to speak thus by and by; and the Lord said they should not see Him till they should say, Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord. What they saw in Jesus led them to glorify the God of Israel. It is the Lord having relations with Israel. They come not now in controversy, but as a poor, maimed, blind, and miserable multitude; and the Lord heals them all. But that is not He feeds them as well as heals them; and we have the beautiful miracle of the loaves.

But mark the differences. In a former case, the disciples were for sending the multitudes away; and the Lord allowed them to show out their unbelief. In the present instance, it is Christ Himself that thinks of them and purposes to bless them. "I have compassion," says He, "on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way." You may remember that it is said in Hos. 6, "After two days will he revive us, and the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight." It is the full time of the trial of the people. Literally, it was the time our Lord laid in the grave. But it is connected also with the future blessing of Israel. "I will not send them away fasting lest they faint by the way. And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?" How slow they are to learn the resources of Christ, as before to learn the worthlessness of man. "Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye'? And they said, Seven, and a few fishes." It is not now five loaves, and twelve basketsful left; but seven loaves with which they begin, and seven with which they end. The reason is this: Seven is always the number of spiritual completeness in Scripture, and this is intended to spew the fullness with which the Lord makes the blessing to flow to His people; the fullness of provision that they have in Him. "He took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to the disciples, and the disciples to the multitude." I conceive that this is the picture of the Lord providing amply for the Jews—for Israel—the people of His choice, whom he never can abandon, to whom he must accomplish His promises, because He is the faithful God. Here the Lord, out of His own heart, is providing for their refreshment fully, even for their bodily refreshment. This will be the character of the millennial day, when not only the soul will be blessed, but where every kind of mercy will abound, God vindicating His world from the hand of Satan, who has defiled it. Even here below, there will be this flowing out of divine compassion toward them, and giving them all they need. In the seven loaves before they eat, and the seven baskets of fragments taken up after they had eaten, you have the idea of completeness, an ample store for wants to come.

Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 15:1-20, Remarks on

We find in this chapter striking evidence of the great change which was now fast coming in through the rejection of Jesus by Israel. For, first, we have certain religious guides, "scribes and Pharisees which were of Jerusalem," who had the best spiritual opportunities of their nation, and who came clothed with all that savored of antiquity and outward sanctity. These men put the question to our Lord, "Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread." The Lord at once deals with conscience. He does not enter into an abstract discussion about tradition; nor does He dispute with them as to the authority of the elders; but He at once jays hold of this great fact, that, in their zeal for the tradition of the elders, they were setting themselves point-blank against the plain, positive commandment of God. This I believe to be the invariable effect of tradition, no matter with whom it may be found. If we take up the history of Christendom, and consider any rule that ever was invented, it will be found to carry those who follow it in opposition to the mind of God. It may seem to be the most natural thing possible, and growing out of the new circumstances of the Church; but we are never safe in departure from God's word for any other standard. I am not now contending for the mere literal interpretation of Scripture. A certain course that the word of God binds upon His saints in dealing with one evil may not be their duty at some other crisis. New circumstances modify the path the Church ought to pursue. Were you to apply the directions given for judging immorality to fatal error touching our Lord's person, you would have a very insufficient measure of discipline. False doctrine does not touch the natural conscience as gross conduct. Nay, you may too often find a believer drawn away by his affections to make excuses for those who are fundamentally heterodox. All sorts of difficulties fill the mind where the eye is not really single. Many might thus be involved who did not themselves hold the false doctrine. If I hold the principle of dealing with none but him who brings not the doctrine of Christ, it will not do: for there may be others entangled with it. What is any individual, what is the Church even, in comparison with the Savior, the Son of the Father? Accordingly, the rule laid down by the Spirit for vindicating Christ's person from blasphemous assailants or their partisans, is infinitely more stringent than where it is a question of moral corruption, be it ever so bad. Again, there is a strong tendency to stereotype our own previous practice, and when some fresh evil comes in to insist on what was done then, or generally, without inquiring afresh of God, and searching into His word in view of the actual case before us and our own responsibility. The spirit of dependence is needed in order to walk rightly with God. There is in the written word of God that which will meet every claim; but each case should be a renewed occasion for consulting that word in His presence who gave it. People like to be consistent with themselves, and to hold fast former opinions and practices.

Our Lord, in this place, asserts that deference to mere human tradition leads into direct disobedience to God's will. Washing the hands might have seemed to be a most proper act. Nobody could pretend that Scripture forbade it; and no doubt the Jewish doctors could press its great significance. They might very well argue how calculated it was to keep before their minds the purity God insists on, and especially that we ought never to receive anything from His hand without putting away all defilement from ours. They might reason thus to a people who loved all outward routine. At all events they might say, What was the harm of such a tradition? What mischief could it do for persons to wash their hands, while it might do so much good? But our Lord simply comes to this issue, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" It was not in spite of, but by, their tradition that God was disobeyed. This is illustrated by a very important relationship in Israel. The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, shows us that the command to honor the father and mother was the first commandment with promise. Other commandments had the threat of death annexed to them; but this commandment was one that God singled out to crown with long life on the earth. The apostle's reasoning is, that if a Jewish child was not only bound, but encouraged, by such promise to venerate his parents, how much more is a Christian child now. He was to obey them in the Lord; not merely in the law, but in the Lord. This is the instance here also taken up: "God commanded, saying, Honor thy father and mother; and he that curseth father or mother, let him die the death." That is, on the one hand, the honor was valued by God; on the other, disrespect was deadly in His sight. "But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and shall not honor his father or his mother." The Jews had brought in a cheat for their consciences, by which they might free themselves from the obligation to meet filial duties. They had only

to pronounce the word, “It is a gift” (Corbin), and a parent might be forgotten! Doubtless, it was one of their authorized traditions, and for the priest's profit, but it was as undoubtedly an unhallowed act in God's sight, and a direct infringement of His command. “Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.” This is a solemn thing to be remembered; for it is not merely applicable to this class of natural relationships, but if any will take the trouble of examining every kind of religious rule introduced, not only in popery, but in protestantism, they will find the same thing invariably true. To add to Scripture is ruinous; it does not matter by whom it may be done, nor for the holiest motive men may allege; for God is jealous about it, and will not have His word enlarged or amended. Revelation is complete, and our simple business is to be obedient to the word of God.

Thus, it matters not what example any may propose. Take one of the commonest possible—the choice of a minister. People, Christians, say, We must send for ministers, and choose between them who is to be ours. I am willing to conceive care and conscience in exercising their judgment without partiality or prejudice. But where is the warrant for choosing any one whatever to preach the gospel, or to teach the church? Is there one precept, one instance in all the New Testament? Did God, then, not foresee the difficulties and the wants of congregations? Surely He did. Why, then, is there absence of all such directions for them Because it was a sin to do it, not only not His mind, but contrary to it. There is not a single case, nor anything like it, from the time the Holy Ghost was sent down at Pentecost till the canon of Scripture was closed. And yet you have multitudes of churches spoken of in the Scripture. What, then, is a congregation to do where they want a minister Why not search and see the Scripture way of meeting such a dilemma.? The difficulty arises from their being in a false position already. The central truth of the church is the presence of the Holy Ghost. I am speaking now of the Christian assembly, wherein the Spirit is personally present to act according to His own will in the midst of disciples there gathered for the purpose of glorifying God, and exalting Christ. Where the meeting is thus carried on, the question of choosing a minister could not arise. Where there are but three meeting upon God's principles (that is, church-ground), it is, if I might so say, church, if not the church. If there were three thousand real saints met, but not on God's principles, that would not be the church nor church either, though all members in Christ. So that, if you take this common Protestant tradition of choosing a minister, it is decisive. It puts the persons who use it in distinct opposition to the word of God. It might be good for a Christian assembly to feel their weakness. There might be none with any special gift among them; some might be able to help in worship and prayer, though not in preaching or teaching. But the blessed comfort is that, even if there were not some one specially gifted in the word, the Holy Ghost is able to edify the saints without him. If the assembly could have any amount of gift, and have it in a wrong way, the blessing would be impaired, and the will and glory of God so far set aside. But if there were not one with a special gift, there might be real blessing, provided the eye were towards the Lord. The object of the Holy Ghost is to put the souls of the saints in direct connection with the Lord. God in His wisdom may be pleased to raise up none in a particular assembly, or He may send there two, three, or more to minister. I do not believe that any one man has sufficient gifts for the church. The notion of having a single person to be the exclusive organ of the communications of God to His people, is a wrong to them, and above all, to the Lord. In every respect it opposes and destroys the will of God about His church. There might seem to be a great many good reasons why people should choose a minister, but never listen to any apology for that which you do not find in the word of God. We are bad judges of what would be best for us. Men may make great mistakes; but faith goes upon the ground that God can make none. He provides for everything in His word. God is pressing that upon us at this very moment. At the Reformation the point was to get the Bible at all, so that there might be the possibility of poor souls learning Christ for their salvation. But there nearly all that was known of the truth ended. The Reformation never touched the true question of the church. The Reformers had to deal with a very rough enemy. They had to blow up the masses of rock in the quarry; and we must not find fault if they could not fashion the stones nor build them with equal skill. But we ought not to stop at their hewings.

Tradition ought never to be held in any shape whatever. Here it was not mere following one another, but using tradition to indulge hypocritical selfishness. “Ye hypocrites,” says our Lord, “well did Esaias prophesy of you saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.” Those who pretended such zeal for the law were destroying its very foundations all the while. The father and mother stand at the head of the relative precepts which have to do with men. Thus, by their tradition, which allowed their dishonor, God's own authority, was made mill and void—and that, too, in the very highest earthly relationships in Israel. Isaiah shows that, as they had got rid of the law by their tradition, so the prophets condemned them. “In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

Having dispatched this matter, He calls the multitude, and says to them, “Hear and understand: not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.” It is the religious leaders chiefly that occupy themselves with tradition. The great general snare is denying the evil of men. The constant weapon which Satan uses now is the idea that man is not so bad but moral culture may improve him. The progress of the world is astonishing, they say. There are societies for promoting every philanthropic object, even down to preventing cruelty to animals. Here is a word that pronounces on these efforts of men in the gross. “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.” The real secret of man's deplorable condition is his heart. This affects all that comes out.

It is not in any wise what God made. Man now is merely a corrupt creature, whose corruption is imparted to what he takes in. Therefore mere restraining of the flesh is entirely useless in God's sight and essentially false. The Lord says to the multitude, “Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.” Observe, He has done with the question of Jerusalem and of tradition. He speaks of what touches human nature. Man is lost. But no one thoroughly believes this about himself, till he has found Christ. He may believe he is a sinner, but does he believe he is so bad that no good can be got out of him? Is not the prevalent theory and effort to better man's condition? But our Lord declares here that it is not by what you put in, or what you keep from man, that he is made better. The heart is bad; and till the heart is reached, all else is vain. “But the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart.” God's way of dealing with the heart ought to be the nearest thing to a Christian. What so simple, so blessed, so mighty as the gospel? Who says that the gospel wants a handmaid? The handmaid has lost her mission and is discharged. As Hagar was sent out of the house, so all that you get by Hagar is merely Ishmael—the son born after the flesh, that mocks the child of promise. Man is not now in a state of probation. The trial has been made. God has pronounced upon men that the flesh is utterly worthless; and yet man is trying the question again, instead of believing God.

The disciples came to speak to our Lord about it. They did not altogether relish what He had been saying. They came and said unto Him, “Knowest thou not that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?” They might not be offended themselves, but were disposed to sympathize with the people who were. We might have thought the multitude would be most offended. But no; the Pharisees, standing upon tradition, have no more notion of the true ruin of man's nature in the sight of God than even the poor multitude in all their ignorance. Nothing so blinds the mind as tradition. The Pharisees, then, were offended, and the disciples were trying to act as mediators between them and our

Lord. But our Lord answers still more sternly, “Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.” There needs be a new life from God, not an improving of the old one. A plant must be planted, then, and the heavenly Father must do it. Every other plant must be rooted up. “Let them alone; they be blind leaders of the blind.” We are not to spend our time reasoning with these Pharisees: it is altogether vain. They require first principles, and the work of God in their souls; and therefore all discussion is premature and thrown away. “Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind.” He did not apply this to the multitude, but to the leaders that were stumbled by the doctrine of man's total corruption. Such are best left to their own devices. “Let them alone.” And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.

But the Lord does not leave the disciples where they were. Peter answers and says unto Him, Declare unto us this parable. This is evidently instructive. What did He mean by calling it a parable? He did not understand it himself. Here was one, the very chief of the twelve apostles, and he cannot understand what our Lord means when He tells them that man is altogether wrong—his heart most of all; that what comes out of him is what is so bad, not that which goes in. And this is a parable! The difficulty of Scripture arises less from difficult language than from unpalatable truth. Truth is contrary to people's wishes; and they cannot see it, because they do not like to receive it. A man may not be always conscious of this himself; but it is the real secret that God sees. The obstacle consists in man's dislike of the truth. Peter says, “Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?” Think where a disciple was when he could find a dark saying in our Lord's sentence upon man as utterly bad and worthless! “Do ye not yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth, goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draft? But those things that proceed out of the heart, they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.” The source of man's evil is from within. And, therefore, until there is a new life brought in—till man is born again of water and of the Spirit, all is useless. “These are the things which defile a man; but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.” There closes our Lord's most blessed and weighty instruction; showing that the day of outward forms was past, and that it was now a question of the reality of man's state in the sight of God. And this he brings out with the greatest possible clearness for the disciples who could not understand: all very suggestive indeed to us.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: Jesus Walking on the Sea

Matthew 14:23-33

Bright was the witness, as it is still, to the rejected Messiah. This glory is great, but He is greater still, Immanuel and Jehovah; and it shines out the more that men despise Him.

" And having dismissed the crowds, he went up into the mountain apart to pray: and when even was come, he was there alone. But the ship [or boat] was already in the midst of the sea, tossed by the waves for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night he came to them walking on the sea; and when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is an apparition; and they cried out for fear. But Jesus immediately spoke unto them. saying, Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answering him said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come; and Peter, going down from the ship, walked on the water to come unto Jesus. But seeing the wind strong, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand and caught hold of him, and saith to him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? And when they had gone up into the ship, the wind ceased. And those in the ship came and paid homage to him, saying, Truly thou art God's Son " (vers. 23-33).

Whatever His own title, and it was truly divine, our Lord had become man, and loyally maintained His dependence on God, of which prayer is a signal expression. It is peculiarly prominent in the Gospel of Luke where His humanity is most brought before us in all its lowliness and sympathy, in all its piety and obedience. And it has its due place in Mark's Gospel of His service. But the disciples on the tempest-tost sea were as distressed as their boat, and the wind was contrary, so that they toiled in vain at the oar. He waited long enough for them to realize their danger and their powerlessness, and came unto them, walking on the sea. Troubled at what they thought an apparition, they cried for fear, but immediately He bade them take courage. " It is I: be not afraid."

Reader, have you never heard His voice? It sounds in the written word in His own tones of love and compassion. It is for you to hear and live by believing them. The blessing is expressly for faith to receive. When you, judging yourself for your sins, look to Jesus at God's warrant, remission is yours. You are reconciled to God and justified by faith. You are called thenceforth to walk as a child of God and sealed by His Spirit till the day of redemption, when your bodies will have the power of Christ's life, as your souls have now (John 5). All other ways and means are a delusion. Baptism and the Lord's supper are His institutions, most expressive of His death, and of your blessing thereby. But faith is by hearing, and this by God's word. He is best honored in His Son's honor.

No doubt the enemy stirs up storms of every kind to alarm and endanger the disciples; but what of that, if the Lord sees all with watchful eye and fails not to give His guardian presence? This will be true and sure for His Jewish remnant in days to come as well as then when He was on earth; so is it assured to the Christian and the Christian assembly now, however few they may be. He, Who has His way in the whirlwind and in the tempest, with the clouds as the dust of His feet, was there in the person of Jesus walking the waves to say, Be courageous. It is I: fear not. They ought to have known already that winds and waves obey Him, their Creator.

Peter yields a little intimation of what was at hand. He quits the boat at the word of the Lord, and goes to meet Jesus on the sea; as the church did gathered to His name, apart from the Jews and the Gentiles (1 Cor. 10:32). But he quickly displays the instability of his faith. To the Christian also Christ is all. If we look away from Him, we begin to sink as he did. What, if the storm raged and the waves rose ever so high? Had the sea been smooth instead of rough, could Peter have walked across it? But he saw the wind strong and began to sink, with the cry, Lord, save me. And the Lord's outstretched hand was the answer, though there was the loving reproof, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt? Such is He to us now, faithful, gracious, and superior to all circumstances. But we have to walk by faith, not by sight. Yet if our faith fail, He does not fail to deliver.

By-and-by He will rejoin His Jewish disciples in their unequaled trouble at the end of the age, bespeak a calm which is not the church's portion while on earth, and bring at once the old ship into the desired haven. For heaven and for the earth, for the church as for Israel, Jesus is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever. “Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

Matt. 14:14-21

Only one Gospel connects our Lord's retirement with tidings of John the Baptist's death. The herald's lot only precedes that of Jehovah-Messiah's Whose time was not yet come. In the Gospel of Mark (6:30, 31) He would give a little rest apart with Himself to His sent workmen. Those who serve Him need not look for better things. In Luke there is no such account, but the fact of John's execution alluded to, as the effect of the report which reached Herod of the Savior's gracious power.

But Jesus was the same in the desert as in the city, the compassionate healer of the sick. Nor this only; for when the disciples at evening would dismiss the crowd to buy themselves food, He says to them, They need not depart: give ye them to eat. But looking not to Him they were powerless.

" And they say to him, We have here but five loaves and two fishes. And he said, Bring them hither to me. And he commanded the crowd to recline on the grass, took the five loaves and the two fishes, looked up to heaven, and blessed; and having broken he gave the loaves to the disciples, and the disciples to the crowds. And they all ate and were filled; and they took up what was over of the fragments, twelve baskets full. And the eaters were about five thousand, apart from women and children " (17-21).

He was the true Solomon, though Israel did not yet sing the song of Ascent. Yet He was there, and not David's Son only, but Jehovah Who chose Zion and will there dwell. Was He not in their low estate giving the manifest testimony that He would abundantly bless her provision, and satisfy her poor with bread? Their unbelief might and did put off the kingdom; nevertheless He was there, the King, and no failure in Him of grace or power. How little those nearest to Him drew on either by faith! How promptly He met the need beyond all thought of men or saints!

This however is revealed for you, my reader, as it was then shown to the needy, that they and you might look to Him and be saved. Beyond doubt the soul is more than the food; and none ever pressed this so much as Himself. None warned as He to fear Him Who is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. But who like Him assured guilty man that God so loved the world as to give His beloved Son, that whosoever believes on Him should not perish but have life eternal?

The day comes fast when He will make good every promise, as He will also inflict the judgment which in every form the Father committed to Him, because He is Son of man. As such He was despised and rejected; as such He suffered to the utmost and is exalted on high. But if His sufferings will bring vengeance on His foes, they do also bring salvation to those who believe, and none the less, because they like all others were lost till they believed.

It is not yet the day when He will ask nations for an inheritance, and break them with iron scepter, as a potter his vessel. Then shall His name be excellent in all the earth, as well as His majesty above the heavens. But it is given now among men, and none other under heaven, wherein we must be saved. He alone is worthy; He is God as well as Jesus Christ the righteous Man. The Word became flesh to glorify His Father and God, Son of man to save the lost. Such a sign as He then wrought was proper to show His compassion to the needy and distressed in Israel. Was it not meant to let you know who read or hear the word, that He pities your deeper need, and is no less ready to bless you with the bread of God, in order that you, believing on Him, may never hunger or thirst more?

This, His discourse to the crowd that followed after Him, as we read in John 6:1, clearly points out. It is His express application of it to you who read now as to those who then heard. Why then should you doubt that He will make good His word? He declares that the believer has life eternal; He declares elsewhere that His sheep shall never perish, and that none shall pluck them out of His hand. He and the Father are not more one in divine nature than in divine love, to keep His sheep, however exposed in this world to the enemy's malice.

The grace of Christ is sufficient for you, great as is your weakness; indeed it is made perfect in weakness. Fear not therefore to trust in Him. Believe God Who sent Him, that those who receive Him may live eternally, and that those who believe not may be judged everlastingly. He is the giver of life because He is Son of God; He is the executor of judgment because He is Son of man. One or other must be your portion. He gives you life if you believe; He will judge you if you reject Him. It is unwise, it is full of danger, it is in the highest degree sinful, to reject the gracious and saving message of God in Christ to your soul.

The Dealings of God With Peter, Dealings of God With Peter: 1. In the Gospels, The

1My object, as you know, is not to enter into all the particulars that might claim our attention and our interest in such a scene as I have now read, but the Lord's dealings with Peter—the special teaching of God's Spirit in that which concerned His servant on this occasion. Now, on a previous one, the Lord had manifested His gracious power in a kindred scene—not, it is true, in a storm, but in the very neighborhood of the shore, after a fruitless night of labor where they had toiled much and caught nothing. And the Lord had then shown not only His absolute power on behalf of His own people, but His perfect knowledge. For it was not merely that there was a shoal of fishes caught, but there was the direction of the Lord. There was the telling them to cast on the right of the boat; and it was found therefore, as Jesus had said, and as the apostle (he who was about to be an apostle) now learned, “at Thy word.” It was against all appearances, in the face of an experience which would have made him utterly doubt the possibility of such a thing; but it was the Lord, and it was the Lord honoring His word—the Lord who showed boundless resources, and that these resources were not only at His command, but according to His word to His own people. And this, accordingly, was the starting-point of Peter as a fisher of men.

Here we have another scene, not by the shore, but on the lake, which was now a scene of boisterous wind, and, as it is said, “the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves; for the wind was contrary.” It is a picture of what the world is for the servants of the Lord in His absence. He was on high on the mountain. He was there in prayer—just what He is doing now. He is in the presence of God interceding;

and, meanwhile, His servants are here, and all is against them—all outward circumstances—for there is one who is in power allowed for a season, and his uniform effort is to oppose and thwart the servants of the Lord. Hence, therefore, they, being exposed on the lake, were an object against which Satan raged. “And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled.” The very thing which if believed in is the spring of the deepest comfort, when it is merely a question of sight, even if it were Jesus, is turned into an occasion of fear! So little can we trust ourselves, so infinitely are we indebted to God and His word. I say that the word revealing Jesus is a totally different thing from our own thoughts, our own sight, even if it were so. So we know it was when the Lord was here below; not perhaps terror as on this occasion, but certainly indifference, stupid wonder sometimes, at the miracles that He wrought, but always only one feeling of the heart after another. There was no divine link. The only spring of divine association is the word of God.

Well here there was nothing of the kind. They “saw him walking on the sea,” and “were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them.” Here was His word. “Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer, it is I, be not afraid.”

This draws out Peter, who showed what, alas! he often showed—he showed confidence in his own feelings about the Lord. He was right, of course, as to the Lord; utterly wrong in acting upon his own thoughts and feelings. So now, when the Lord had brought out this comfort, nothing seemed to him a more simple thing—with that fervor and readiness that was his character—to act upon it. So he says, “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.”

Now there, I need not tell you, it was what man never ought to venture—a going before the Lord. All blessing and power, in acting where the Lord leads, but what a thing, after all, for man to wish to lead the Lord! It was really this which Peter, through his haste, was doing. “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.” The Lord acts, however, upon His word. He would test him. It was needful for Peter. And it is exactly what the Lord is doing now with us. It was what He did with Israel in the wilderness, but then He shows what is in the heart. It is not merely a question of evil, but there may be that which seems ever so good, for what could be better than to go out to Jesus? Yes, but there is all the difference whether it is the Lord, who, from His own heart, bids me come, or the Lord who acts upon my own impetuosity, and who puts me to the test, if it is my own thought, my own haste. It was so, certainly, with Peter, and this, accordingly, was what Peter had to learn—the blessedness of waiting, the danger of dictating, of drawing even upon the Lord according to his own thoughts. So the Lord answers him: “Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water to go to Jesus"; for undoubtedly that word “Come” for the moment filled his heart. It was faith. It was faith to act upon the word of the Lord, but inasmuch as it was not only faith, it was mingled. It was Peter's word, and not simply the Lord's word. “If it be thou.” Was that simple faith? “Lord, if it be thou.” Assuredly not.

With the faith, the unmingled faith, that God gives a soul, there is no such thing as “If it be thou.” There was clearly, therefore, the mingling of Peter's own mind, Peter's own thoughts. A question was involved in the very way in which he speaks to the Lord: “Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee upon the water.” Was it His will? He had not thought of that. It was Peter's will; but, nevertheless, there was reality in Peter, and this is exactly what we find on the occasion. It is a mingled scene; it flowed out of a mingled source.

And this is one thing that we have often to learn, beloved friends, of one another. It is the commonest thing possible, especially in the younger days of every Christian. And it is precisely where we have to take care of our thoughts and our theories. “There may be reality of faith, but there may be much more than faith, too, and it is wisdom never to disown faith. But, on the other hand, it is wisdom also to discern that there is something besides faith.

So in this very case. There is faith in so far that Peter does go at the word of the Lord, and does, therefore, walk on the water. There would have been no such thing if there had not been faith; but still, I repeat, it was not unmingled. There was enough of Peter himself to enfeeble his walk on the water, and this shows itself quickly, for when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and, beginning to sink, he cried, saying, “Lord, save me.”

Now there at once an unskilled soul, in dealing with another, would say, “There is no faith there whatever. There you see he is sinking. He is crying, ‘Lord, save me.' He never knew that he was saved. He never had faith.” It does not follow by any means, but it was quite evident that there was this trouble in the heart of Peter, and, accordingly, the Lord dealt with what was simply of Peter, while at the same time He stood faithful to His own word, for He had bid him come, and He would not revoke it. He does not change, but inasmuch as Peter had been too forward, and his own will was concerned in it, the Lord would judge the will, but He would strengthen the faith. And so He acts in the perfecting of His own grace. For He allows Peter to learn the folly of being before the Lord. He allows him to prove that even His own word, “Come,” was not enough unless there was faith in it. Peter could say in his First Epistle, “Kept by the power of God.” Yes, but “through faith.” And supposing there was something besides faith at work—feeling, desire—for, no doubt, Peter thought that nobody else in the boat could go out but himself; well then, I say, there was something to judge, and this was in the very fullness of the love of the Lord Jesus to Peter. For Peter would have to do with others as a fisher of men, and if Peter had walked bravely on the water, and there had been no sinking, do you think that Peter would ever have known the weight of his own word, “kept by the power of God"? Certainly not.

This then was an incomparably valuable lesson, a lesson that he learned from the Lord personally, but a lesson that was only better known when the Lord was no longer there in person, when the Lord was away. Indeed, it was particularly for that time, for the whole scene in its force rather refers to the absence of Jesus. No doubt there is a linking on of the present with that which will be by and by, and I suppose that the end of the chapter shows most clearly that view. Taking the scene as a picture of what is coming, no doubt it does show us our Lord when He rejoins those from whom He has been separated; when He comes back again, and not only joins Peter on the sea, but joins the others in the ship. There will be a coming to the “desired haven.” There will be the return of the Lord. There will be the blessedness that will follow His return. “And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased, and besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment, and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.” No doubt there will be this, not merely in a little testimony as then, but in power when the Lord returns in His kingdom, and He will be welcomed in the very place from which, on the contrary, He had been rejected. For it was at this very spot that there had been the desire expressed, and expressed strongly too, that He would depart from their coasts. It is the return of the Lord, then, which finishes this part of the chapter.

The eighteenth chapter takes up another line of truth, but it brings us, as far as a figure can, to the return of the Lord by and by. Only we have evidently a very great advance in the position of Peter. When Peter left the ship we have what, as nearly as possible, shows the place of a

Christian; what ought to be the pathway, indeed, of the church as a whole. That is an abandonment of every prop of nature, and the going out to Jesus where nothing but divine power could keep him. But I repeat that is only through faith. Now that is the grand lesson, that it is not even Jesus only, but it is through faith. And where therefore Peter allowed other things to occupy his mind, when he saw the wind boisterous, that was not faith. “When he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.” Certainly that is not the triumph of a Christian man. A Christian man is characterized always by this, “receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” A man who does not maintain with simplicity and with constancy the happy enjoyment of the salvation of his soul, so far gives up the principle of a Christian man. Of course I do not the least mean that there are not very true Christians who have been bewildered and perplexed and misled as to the salvation of their souls. I am very far from saying that they are not Christians if they have not that constant enjoyment, but I do say they are off the ground of Christianity. I do say they have never known it, or that they have let it slip as Peter did here. And the source is the very same thing, for people have tried to have the joy of salvation by thinking of salvation. They never will, never! It is by Christ before them, by Christ as one that we are entitled to look upon and rest in and enjoy. And indeed this characterizes, as we find afterward, in this very Gospel, not merely Christ as an object now, but Christ as an object of hope by and by. “They went forth to meet the bridegroom.” That is what we are called to, that is, from the very beginning, and that is what God now has brought back again. We go forth to meet Him. We do not belong to an association. We do not belong to a society, and nothing on earth, no person, no thing upon earth, has a right to us. Jesus only. Consequently therefore if He says, “Come,” we go, and if this fills the heart it does not matter whether there are the waters or not. And it makes not the slightest difference that the waters are boisterous, for I need not repeat the remark, familiar to many, that the waters might have been as smooth as glass, but they would have been just as difficult to walk upon. It is not, therefore, in the least a question of smooth or rough, but of Jesus; and of Jesus (I repeat) as one that the heart was occupied with Jesus again, as I have said, as one that is coming back, for we have that too. It is not merely as one now, but as one that is coming, and coming to receive us into His own glory, into His own joy.

Here then we have this most weighty lesson impressed upon the soul of Peter—that even in the presence of Jesus, where the circumstances of trial and of danger, instead of the word of Christ, filled his mind; his heart was utterly powerless, and he was in far more imminent danger than those that were in the boat. No doubt he despised them! They did not dare to go out to meet Jesus! But where was Peter now? Hence you see he was, after all, comparing himself. He was looking at these things, and looking at himself upon the water; he had forgotten Jesus really, and therefore in this agony he cries out, “Lord, save me,” and the grace of the Lord at once meets him. “And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith.” Ah, there was faith then, but it was little faith, and this little faith now became manifest. He thought he was a man of great faith. Now here was exactly the lesson that Peter had to learn. “O thou of little faith.” It was himself. It was not Thomas. I do not say that Thomas' faith was not very little, but still, it was not Thomas, it was not John, it was no other, it was Peter. He never thought of it. On the contrary, he was quite sure that he was a man of great faith, and now he has this most wholesome lesson. How humble he would be! How tender with others! He would remember that there was One who had searched the heart and the reins, who had said, “O thou of little faith.” And I have not the slightest doubt that the very fact that the Lord pronounced, “O thou of little faith,” was the means of his growth in faith. For the thing that hinders us, brethren, at least one great source at any rate, is our conceit of ourselves. We do not think we need to grow; we forget that. We forget our lowliness, and I would speak now, spiritually too, for that was the point. It was not little in any circumstances that belonged to Simon Barjona. It was the little faith of Peter. And so the Lord shows also that which characterizes little faith—doubt. There is not a word in the Bible to create a doubt, not one. The Spirit of God never put a doubt into the heart of man. Doubt is of Satan, or of man himself under Satan, if you please, never of the Spirit of God. There is everything to search, everything to humble, to exercise, but to exercise faith; because, beloved friends, what is the root of doubting? Depreciating Christ. Do you think the Holy Ghost ever depreciates the grace of Christ towards even the man of little faith? Here you have the contrary. To whom did Christ manifest His grace more? To the man of little faith most of all. “Wherefore didst thou doubt?” They come into the ship, the wind ceases, they arrive on the other side, and, as I have already pointed out, with that result of blessing in the very place of His rejection. [A. T. K.]

(To be continued)

Bible Treasury: Volume 20, Leaven, The

THE Lord Jesus here pronounces the fourth parable of the seven, the third likeness of the kingdom in these mysteries.

“Another parable spake he unto them. The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was wholly leavened” (ver. 33).

Individuals are not the question here any more than in the two that precede, especially in that of the mustard seed which is most akin as the structure marks. Individuals had their place in the opening parable, and, hearing, were born again, and were each fruit produced by the seed. If received into good ground, there was life and fruit; if not, the word of the kingdom had no vital effect. But in the parables that follow before the multitude, we have successive states which characterize the kingdom while Christ is hidden on high. The first is the ruin of the harvest here below by the mixture, while men slept, of darnel with the wheat; which mixture must be left for the returning King to deal with at the end of the age. The second is the portentous rise of what was planted an exceeding small thing; but it grew into an earthly power of attractive pretensions. Neither of these clearly has to do with the individual, but, as it suits “the kingdom,” with the state of things, and each in its due sequence.

What then signifies “the leaven”? Does the bearing of it revert to the opening parable and its appeal to individuals? Does it not rather continue the line of the comparisons of the kingdom? Surely the latter only, setting forth the assimilating effect of a doctrine, or creed, over a certain measured sphere till it was wholly permeated. This very distinctly differs from seed with a principle of life that bears fruit, a suited and frequent figure in scripture. Never is leaven so employed elsewhere. From earliest days it symbolized a corruption that tended to work and spread, as in the Passover, authoritatively applied in 1 Cor. 5 to evil which must be purged out. By our Lord it was used to set forth the teaching of Pharisees and Sadducees, of which the disciples were to beware. Compare Gal. 5:9 for doctrine, as 1 Cor. 5 for immorality.

In no case then does scripture warrant leaven as a figure of quickening, in no case identify it with the washing of regeneration, and renewal of the Holy Spirit which God shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior. Living water is as different as can be from leavening; which,

being a process of fermentation, causes dough to rise and makes it pleasanter to the natural taste. If Christ be in Levitical language the unleavened bread the redeemed eat, leaven has its appropriate use in the two wave-loaves which represent the Pentecostal first fruits; for the regenerate have still evil in their nature. Hence the sin offering which always accompanied the wave-loaves; whereas for the wave-sheaf, figuring Christ risen, as there was no leaven of course, so no sin offering could be thought of. The same principle explains the leavened bread alone with the sacrifice of peace offerings for thanksgiving. Where fallen nature enters, so does leaven; whatever the promises of grace, God takes account of it. But quickening is the direct energy of Christ, Who is life acting by the word of faith.

Hence, the best that can scripturally be said of leaven is of doctrine working among men, as here in three measures of meal till it was wholly leavened. The kingdom was not only from the humblest beginning to become a towering power on the earth, like any worldly state, with its elevation coveted by those that found shelter there. It was also to penetrate men's minds within a definite sphere, forming and fashioning them according to the teaching presented. What the spiritual character of that doctrine might be is hardly within the scope of what is said before the crowds. And we know that what spread over a large part of the shattered Roman empire and beyond, after the Christian profession rose up to worldly power and influence, was a mere creed, and by no means God's gospel for faith obedience: an idolizing of the sacraments and of the crucifix, and a setting up, if not of gods, yet of mediators to the dishonor of the One; not the word of the cross as His power to those that are saved. It was no longer God choosing the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, or the weak to shame the strong, but the wise, mighty, and noble choosing the symbol of Christendom as the object of visible homage, and even the means of advantage or ambition. Such was the work of the “woman.” The Lord had long been in the back ground.

My reader, see that you be not deceived nor deceive yourself. The unseen enemy has boundless and subtle wiles; and you are exposed, but ought not to be ignorant of his devices. Christ only can avail your soul for salvation. And He is as acceptable, as He is unfailing. Other foundation can none lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. It is not when we become strong or godly; but just as we are that He saves and to the uttermost: while we were yet weak, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. Only hearken to God's call. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.”

Bible Treasury: Volume 20, Mustard Seed, The

IT is well to understand that “the kingdom of the heavens” does not mean heaven itself but its reign over the earth while the King rejected by man is seated on high. The six later parables present successive comparisons of that kingdom in its chief characteristics: three are its public aspect, and so, like the first, were addressed without to the great multitudes; the three last, like the explanation of the first similitude, or Parable of the Darnel, were spoken in the house only to the disciples, as dealing with what needed spiritual intelligence.

Another distinction is obvious. The Parable of the Mustard Seed, like that of the Leaven, shows what the kingdom is like, in marked difference from its predecessor, as it becomes more apparent still in its successor.

“The kingdom of the heavens is like a grain of mustard which a man took and sowed in his field; which is less than all the seeds, but, when it hath grown, is greater than the herbs, and becometh a tree so that the birds of heaven come and roost in its branches” (vers. 31, 32).

Here the Lord gives us to see the least and lowliest beginning of Christian profession growing to be a power in the earth. In Luke 17:6, He employs the same figure of a grain of mustard; as indeed it was a proverbial expression for what is diminutive. But the grain soon shot up so as to leave the pot-herbs behind, and afford shelter to the birds it notoriously attracts.

So it was to be, so it has long been, with that which bears His name here below. The Lord marks beforehand the surprising contrast between the extreme littleness of its first estate when sown, and the height to which it was ere long to advance. He is not here pronouncing on its inner or moral nature. He shows from the first what all the world can see when it came to pass. It is one of “the mysteries (or secrets) of the kingdom of the heavens,” but secrets given for the disciples to know. And the Lord here sets out the fact, in due time palpable to all mankind, that what began the most minute was to develop into a conspicuous and protective power on the earth, according to the well known figure of a nation or political system in Isa. 11:33, 34; Ezek. 31; Dan. 4, &c.

Now this was no mystery for Israel any more than for the Gentile powers. It was expressly allotted to the ancient people of God, as we read in the Psalms and the Prophets. So in the days of depression when captivity befell “the rebellious house,” God made use of a tree to illustrate His ways with them, and their ways before Him which drew out His sternest chastening. But He adopted the same figure to assure the believing heart that in His mercy all will be reversed in the day to come, and that He will plant the tender twig on a mountain high and eminent, even the height of Israel. “And it shall bring forth boughs and bear fruit, and be a goodly cedar; and under it shall dwell all birds of every wing; in the shadow of the branches thereof shall they dwell. And all the trees of the field shall know that I Jehovah have brought down the high tree, have exalted the low tree, have dried up the green tree, and have made the dry tree to flourish: I Jehovah have spoken and will do it” (Ezek. 17). It is all of His mercy; but how could the result in this case be otherwise? For Jehovah of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem and before His ancients gloriously.

Wholly different was to be the proper portion of the Christian on earth. “Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth...Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens. Blessed are ye when they shall reproach you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you” (Matt. 5:3-12). Even those whom God set first in the church were expressly charged by our Lord against power and glory of an earthly sort. “Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you. But whosoever would become great among you shall be your servant; and whosoever would be first among you, let him be your slave: even as 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).

Thus the Lord lets us know in this parable that, in the face of His revealed will, Christendom would soon manifest a portentous change, and from its primitively low estate vie with the powers of the world in earthly grandeur and influence. We are called now to walk apart from the

world, its power and its glitter, content to be hated as our Master was (John 15), cherishing also the secret of God's grace and the relationships it gives us, and suffering with Christ meanwhile. “But if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him” (Rom. 8). “Faithful is the saying: for if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we endure, we shall also reign with Him” (2 Tim. 2:11, 12). Now is the time for us to have tribulation in the world, till He come to take us to the Father's house, and we be manifested also with Him in glory when He is manifested. The day of glory with Christ will make ample amends.

But how is it with you, dear reader? Is Christ the object of your faith? If so, it is well indeed with you now and evermore. If He is nothing to you beyond any other whom men discuss, notwithstanding God's testimony to Him, it were better for you that you had not been born. Refusing God's light and love in Him Who went down below all depths for sinners, you cannot escape the judgment which He will execute on all the impenitent and unbelieving, that despise Him and the saving grace of God in Him. Before that everlasting judgment there shall be a day of Jehovah of hosts upon all that is proud and mighty, and upon all that is lifted up; and it shall be brought low. Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day. Meanwhile God commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent. Oh, that His goodness may lead you to repentance! The time is short: delay not. Your sins are many and great. The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from every sin: nothing else can.

Bible Treasury: Volume 20, Darnel of the Field, The

FOR the due understanding of this parable, observe that it is the first in which the kingdom of the heavens is likened to this or that. The opening parable of the seven contained in the chapter is not such a comparison; it presents the Lord as Sower before that kingdom was set up. The other six suppose its establishment; not in manifested power and glory according to Old and N. T. prophecy, but in mystery, as here made known by our Lord, rejected by men and exalted by God on high, unseen but none the less real and glorious, affording scope for faith no less than unbelief as being a day of profession. It is Christ's ascension which gives occasion to the kingdom of the heavens here revealed to faith and assuming a character of grace in keeping with His rejection.

We have the Lord's own interpretation that “He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man” (ver. 36). This it was of moment to explain; because His heavenly position might have seemed incompatible with such activity of grace. There ought to be no doubt that He was the sower before He took His seat on high as in the first parable. Whatever the means or instruments employed, He it is that is still sowing good seed in His field. And as He says, “The field is the world.” As He is the rejected but glorified Son of man, it is no longer the land of Israel, but the world. The needy, the guilty, the ruined world is precisely the object of His gracious care. Among the lost sheep of the house of Israel He had labored in the flesh, and in vain (Isa. 49) for the mass, who refused and hounded Him to the cross. Now from the right hand of power He sowed the good seed in. His field, the world. Nothing less was suited to His glorious plans, any more than His love. Undoubtedly He will another day bring Jacob again to Him in sovereign mercy; but meanwhile He is given for a light to the Gentiles, and salvation to the end of the earth. “The field is the world.”

O my readers, hear His voice, that you receiving His word, now sent to any and to all, may be sons of the kingdom. Even before the kingdom of the heavens was set up, our Lord said (ver. 9), “He that hath ears, let him hear.” So He says still at the end of His interpretation of this first likeness of the kingdom (ver. 43). It is not the law laid down to an ordered people on penalty of death. It is the word, wherever received in faith, to produce fruit. The great principle the Lord introduced when here is individual responsibility. This He reiterates from on high. The kingdom when set up in no way enfeebles it, as we thus learn. And though the church, as we know from elsewhere, brought in communion of saints, common subjection, and common action, yet never does God sanction the giving up of individual responsibility. The presence of the Spirit gives power to the word for conscience and heart to conciliate what self-will under Satan ever seeks to dislocate.

Christ is life, and righteousness, and salvation. If you believe on Him, these are yours in Him; and they are found not otherwise nor elsewhere. Man cannot quicken, nor a minister, nor yet the church. Christ is all: so scripture testifies; and if you receive Him on God's word, this is the work of the Holy Spirit, Who glorifies Him. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are admirable and abiding institutions; but they are perverted to poison when put in the place of Christ and of faith in Him. Hence it is the word for individual reception. If you reject Christ and receive not His saying, you cannot escape One that judges you: the word the Lord Jesus spoke, that shall judge at the last day. Oh! neglect not so great salvation, nor His authority.

And the danger is the greater, because Christ's enemy, while men slept, came and sowed darnel also among the wheat. Indistinguishable at first, they became manifestly different ere long. For the darnel are the sons of wicked ones. They are found all over the field, the world of Christian profession. Such is Christendom, to speak of nothing worse, and there were soon greater abominations from early days too. But these are bad enough and prepare for every evil from beneath., The darnel are the heterodox and the lawless among the baptized.

Yet this does not make the field to be the church but the world, save in their eyes who understand neither, and are so deceived as to confound them. Hence we may see that, when the Lord forbade His servants from uprooting the darnel, He in no way denies in the church the discipline which the Holy Spirit demands (1 Cor. 5). It is the extermination of the wicked professors He prohibits under His figure of gathering up the darnel from the field. And experience falls in with this. Disobedient servants of His have rooted out the good seed, oh! how often, under the plea of getting rid of the darnel. Grace is to reign now. “Let both grow together until the harvest,” saith the Lord Who will then send forth the executors of judgment.

The season for harvest will be a marked change: a different work with different workmen. The reapers are quite another class, His angels, whose business is to gather up first the darnel, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but the wheat are gathered into Christ's barn above. It is a vain dream that the world is to improve under the action of the gospel or the church. On the contrary the normal state of the wheat-field was spoiled as a fact from early days; and the servants are forbidden to employ their ineffectual efforts to efface the evil, which must go on till the consummation of the age. Then shall the Son of man intervene with His angels. Revival or reformation can in no way abolish the mischief the devil wrought while men slept, as they quickly did. God secures His own work by grace all through: the good will surely be gathered into the heavenly granary in due time. But the field was soon spoiled through man's lack of care and Satan's craft; and this cannot be adequately dealt with till the Lord come in judgment of the quick.

Look and listen then to Him now. Receive Him at God's word to life eternal. He is the way, the truth, and the life; and there is no other; that you who live may henceforth live not to yourselves but to Him Who for you died and was raised. Thus may you await His coming not only in peace but with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: 3. The Dragnet

Matt. 13:47-50.

THE last similitude of the chapter is the counterpart of the first; for as this is the sowing of the good seed in the world, where the harvest is spoiled by the enemy's darnel, so that is the judicial dealing with the bad fish after the good had been gathered into vessels before the consummation of the age.

"Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a dragnet cast into the sea and having brought together of every sort; which, when it was filled, they drew up on the beach, and, sitting down, gathered the good into the vessels and cast the worthless out. Thus shall it be in the consummation of the age: the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from amidst the righteous, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping, and the gnashing of teeth" (ver. 47-50).

Here again we have what was meant, not for the multitude, but for those who had ears to hear. The Lord speaks to the disciples only in the house. It is for the spiritual mind.

We may notice here as elsewhere how carefully the truth was communicated, so as not to impair the Christian hope. The Jew has had times and seasons set out and discriminated to guard him from being deceived by the cry, The time is at hand. Now that the Christ was rejected of Jew and Gentile, the unequaled tribulation must be before the times of refreshing from the presence of Jehovah and His Christ. But for the Christian it is of all moment not to confound the proper hope with prophecy, but to wait for the Lord to receive us to Himself precisely as the early saints did. Whatever events are revealed, and they are many, varied, and momentous before the day of the Lord, His coming remains immediately before the heart without any predicted events to intervene.

In fact, we now know that many centuries have transpired; but from the parables here and elsewhere we should never have gathered such an interval as might hinder constant looking for Christ. We could not from the letter have gleaned, but that the fishermen, who first cast into the sea the dragnet, at length filled out of every sort, were the same that drew it up on the beach, and sitting down gathered the good into vessels and cast the worthless outside. He Who knew the end from the beginning had all before Him but disclosed with a wisdom self-evidently divine. Mistake there was none: only the rashness or of unbelief can say so. If taught of God, we wait for the Lord Jesus now, as the apostles did. Our hope, as our faith, is the same. All hangs on His word, which can fail no more than His love. And those who have fallen asleep have in no way missed their hope; for it remains true as ever, that the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we, the living that remain to the coming of the Lord shall in no wise precede those that are fallen asleep, but shall together with them be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord (1 Thess. 4).

The parable does mark in the first place the fishermen completing their work of filling the dragnet from every kind, and drawing it ashore; next, sitting down and sorting the good fish into vessels, while they cast away those unfit for food. This was the fishermen's work of delicate discrimination; and the more striking as the servants were forbidden in the first similitude to gather the darnel. To deal with the wicked is in both parables assigned to the angels. They are, as the interpretation goes on to say (not only explaining, but adding), to come forth and sever the wicked from amidst the righteous. This is another truth, which must not be confounded with the fishermen's work of gathering the good into vessels. Both are true, but they differ in their nature and objects. We, the servants or fishermen, have to do with the good; the angels will execute judgment on the wicked. The Christian is called to the work of grace. So it was even among the Jews of old. "If thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth," said Jehovah to Jeremiah: not the vile from the precious, but the precious from the vile.

How is it with you, dear reader? To be within the dragnet is no security. Are you Christ's? He Himself welcomes the anxious and the restless and the wretched and the despairing. "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Yea, He declares, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out." And He deigns to give the most lowly and gracious reason: "For I came down from heaven not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." And His will that sent Jesus is, "that every one that seeth the Son and believeth on Him shall have life eternal; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:37-40).

What more do you want to win your hearts than these words, if you believe the Lord? To honor Him is to honor the Father, Who refuses to be honored otherwise. And no wonder; for to Him it is that His God and Father is indebted for His glorification morally in a world which had departed from Him, and done Him foul wrong, not only among Gentiles, vain and dark and proud, but in His own people guiltier and prouder still. Then and there it was that the Lord Jesus vindicated Him, not only in emptying Himself and becoming man, but in humbling Himself when man and being obedient unto death—yea, death of the cross. There it was also God made Him Who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might become God's righteousness in Him. Then it was He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree that we being dead to sins should live to righteousness.

Fear not therefore to receive the Lord Jesus at God's word, as your quittance from all that you have done and are, and as your new start; for He Who died is risen, the giver of a life in Him, which speaks to you of victory, and is the pledge of holiness. Fear not: only believe.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: 2. One Pearl of Great Price

As the leaven followed suitably the mustard seed in the parables spoken without, so does the pearl duly come after the treasure in those within, the house. None of these conveys what was shown in the parable of the sower before the likeness of the kingdom. In that first parable did the Lord set out the word as the germ of life and spiritual understanding to the believer. The comparisons of the kingdom of the heavens,

external and internal, present subsequent truths and larger considerations; whether of the outward course of the dispensation while the rejected Lord is on high; or of its spiritual aspects for the guidance and enjoyment of the faithful who have the mind of Christ.

After the Lord explained within the house the parable of the darnel to his disciples, the latter class opened, as we have seen, with the treasure. Now is given the far more precise instruction of the “one pearl.”

This, which is evidently true as a sketch, helps to save the reader from serious misconception of the particulars. From early times men, having lost the fresh fullness of grace in the gospel, began to bend scripture generally to meet the first need of the soul. Hence the mustard seed was diverted by many to teach the work of grace in the heart from its small beginning, as the leaven was supposed to mean the gradual work of sanctification to bring about a universal change. Even the parables within the house are turned to the same account, only employing great things, instead of small, to show in the treasure the value of what we should make our own, and in the pearl the dream doubled to make it certain.

No believer doubts that the Lord Jesus is the richest of treasures, and the jewel above all price. But as the general structure and the bearing of the discourse point to a different aim, so the special forms of these similitudes are inconsistent with the assumption that the work of divine grace in the heart is intended. How plainly untenable it would be to suppose a sinful or even an exercised soul selling all he has to buy the world in order to possess the treasure said to be hidden there. Nor can any deny the truth that Christ in His joy over the treasure did, as He alone could, buy the world, in order to have the treasure of a people out of the earth for heaven.

A late dignitary, who treated the parables in a very interesting way, thought this interpretation “strangely reverses the whole matter.” What matters overturning an error however old, if we can only receive and enter into the truth with simplicity? The fact is that spiritual men have long felt the inadequacy of popular views. The word of the Lord abides. Be this our criterion. “Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a man of merchandise seeking goodly pearls; and having found one pearl of great value, he went and sold all whatever he had and bought it” (Matt. 13:45, 46). Now is it not harsh in the extreme to infer that lost sinners are compared to a man in quest of goodly pearls? It is untrue even of the uncommon case of the rich young ruler, irreproachable as his conduct was, who clung to his wealth, and forfeited treasure in heaven, and left Christ full of sorrow. He never knew his ruin and did not even seek to be saved. And never was a greater mistake than that Saul of Tarsus answers to the merchant, “determinate, discriminate, unremitting.” He was, as he said, “chief of sinners” and, like every other, saved in sovereign grace.

It is Christ then Who really seeks and buys. It is Christ Who alone has also the perfect discernment of the moral beauty He saw and prized above all. Indisputably He alone of men understood and sought goodly pearls; and this one pearl of great price He saw, in divine counsels, to be saints like Himself holy and blameless in love—yea, one with Him, the church glorious, which He will present to Himself, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. He alone was in Himself perfectly what the saints are in divine purpose to be; and shall be in fact at His coming again, as in principle they are even now.

He that is in Christ is exhorted, as he has life in Him, to have in himself the moral mind which was in Christ Jesus, to obey and serve in love as He did absolutely, to count all things loss and dung that he may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having his own righteousness but that which is through faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God on the condition of faith. But the parable sets forth what is the ground and pattern and spring of all such effects in the Christian, in the Lord’s own love to saints seen as the reflection of His own beauty, the one inestimable pearl, for which He sold all else, glory on high, kingdom below, all whatever He had, to buy that pearl. It might be, it was, in the depths, submerged in what was lowest and vilest; but He saw the end from the beginning, He discerned what grace would effect, loved us and gave Himself for us, as He will have therein the object of His love and rest in His love on high.

O my friend that reads these words, flatter not human nature, nor your own character. In an ungodly family you may have been shocked with the horror of open evil, and have walked morally; in a godly one you may have been guarded from corruption and trained in religious habits. Yet it strangely reverses, not the point of this parable only, but the whole force of revealed truth, and of the gospel particularly, if you compare yourself in your natural state to a merchant in quest of goodly pearls, still more if you credit yourself with such devotion, in your unconverted days, as would give up all you have to win Christ. Since man was created on the earth, never was such an instance; and if it had been, how could it avail for a sinner without new birth or redemption?

The same apostle, who tells us this was his experience as a saint, condemns all he had been previously (though more moral and religious than you) as filth. He also proclaims from God of the entire race, that there is not a righteous person, not even one, that none understands, that not one seeks after God, that peace’s way is unknown, and no fear of God is before their eyes. He further declares that it was not merely so among the Gentiles, but that the law expressly pronounces this sentence on those under the law, spite of all their privileges. Now the gospel is sent to all as equally lost. For, says he, there is no difference; for all sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Hence God justifies freely though the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God set forth a mercy-seat through faith in His blood. The very object is to cut off boasting of self in every form, that no flesh should boast before God. He that boasts, let him boast in the Lord.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: 1. Treasure Hidden in the Field

HERE the importance of the Lord’s speaking to the disciples in the house is manifest. He began with explaining the parable of the Darnel of the field. They are not exterior facts of the kingdom like those said without to the crowds, but spiritual views for His followers only. If those spoken openly have been misinterpreted through the natural mind, the later are yet more exposed to it.

“Again, the kingdom of the heavens is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid, and for the joy of it goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field” (Matt. 13:44).

The gospel or the soul’s salvation is by no means what this parable or the next presents, though often so interpreted. In reality, one can hardly conceive anything more opposite. For the gospel is the revelation of God’s grace in Christ; salvation is a free gift, like eternal life. It is in no way true that the man, who has it brought before him, sells all that he has to purchase that treasure; still less does he buy the field, which is certainly something else very different, to acquire the salvation of his soul.

Never since the world began has any soul been led by the Spirit to sell all that he had to buy life or pardon, salvation or glory. And if any have sought in this fashion to be delivered from evil or to gain God’s favor, we may be sure that their suit was rejected; for it is an ignoring of guilt and ruin, a frustrating of God’s grace, and a making void in effect Christ’s death. On the other hand it is allowed fully that, in those that are Christ’s and have Him as their portion, there may be and there ought to be a like devotedness to any extent in our measure. But this is a very different thing, and not what the parable teaches.

It is overlooked that the soul’s need and blessing we have had already in the opening parable of the Sower, as it is indeed a personal question, antecedent to the mysteries of the kingdom, and carefully presented as distinct, before any likeness of the kingdom begins. Those likenesses bring out larger considerations, whether outside or within. And the Lord is the “man” here, as nobody can doubt in His field of wheat spoiled by the darnel (ver. 24).

Thus read, all flows without jar and in accordance with all truth. It is the Son of God incarnate Who is compared to one who found and hid the treasure in the field. And, in this aspect, “the field” retains its significance as “the world,” instead of being twisted into “the scriptures,” or “the letter” or “the Christian profession”; it is “the world” where Christ found His own, who constitute His “treasure.” The meaning is then not only enforced by but agreeable to the rest of God’s word. And the Lord’s consequent action is no less in harmony. For what can be more certain than that He emptied Himself to become man, and, when found in that fashion, humbled Himself and became obedient unto death—even death of the cross? Nay, we may press the analogy closer still from the known facts of the case. He was as Messiah heir of David’s throne, but gave up all in His death, which purchased the world and redeemed His own who were in it. Even His enemies, who blaspheme and deny Him Who bought them (2 Peter 2:1), are His purchase. But His own have also in Him redemption through His blood. So plain is it that purchase and redemption are not the same, nor equally extensive. For clearly the purchase is not of the treasure only but of the field (or world) wherein the treasure was hid. Redemption is not thus universal but belongs only to those that believe, as all scripture teaches and this parable illustrates. Christ has paid (to say the least) the full price, to reconcile “all things, whether the things on earth or the things in the heavens” (Col. 1:20); and the day is near, when God will head up the universe in Him (Eph. 1:10), the Heir of all things, at His coming. Christ bought the world, but His joy is in the “treasure” which is to be with Him and like Him in that day.

How then do you stand as to Him? To be bought, as is the field of the world, is only the more terrible if you deny Him. And all that call not on Him, all that neglect so great salvation, do deny Him, though they may not break into heresies of perdition. You are summoned by God in His word to believe on Him. So believing you shall have mercy: for it is written that whosoever does believe on Him shall not be ashamed. All who reject Him, high or low, poor or rich, must bear their doom to endless shame and woe. Oh, why sin against God and His Christ and your own soul? Why regard lying vanities, whatever they may be, and forsake your own mercy?

Christ, the world-rejected Lamb, is worthy, and He has brought to your door redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins. Is not this your deep need whoever and whatever you are? In none other is remission; in Him it is as perfect as Himself. Oh, delay not, nor turn away. It is yielding to His enemy and yours, to the liar and murderer from the beginning. Consider too how your unbelief insults God in all the ways of His grace. “As though God did beseech through us, we pray (says the apostle) on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20). Unbelief directly dishonors the Father Who sent, and the Son Who in love deigned to be sent. And the Holy Spirit is sent down since Christ’s ascension to testify of His Person and work and glory. Oh! beware of doing despite to the Spirit of grace. For we know Him that said, Vengeance belongeth to Me: I will recompense.

Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 13:54 and Matthew 14, Remarks on

In commenting on chapters 8 and 9 of our Gospel, some striking instances of displacement have been already pointed out. Thus the incidents of crossing the lake in the storm rebuked at last, of the cured demoniacs, of the raised daughter of Jairus, and of the woman healed on the way, belong, as matters of history, to the interval between the parables we have been lately occupied with and the despising of our blessed Lord, which our evangelist proceeds to set down next in order. I then sought to explain the principle on which, as I believe, the Holy Spirit was pleased to act in thus arranging the events, so as most vividly to develop our Lord's Messianic ministry in Israel with His rejection and its consequences. Hence it is, that the intervening facts having been inserted in that earlier portion, the unbelief of in presence of His teaching naturally follows. He was in His own country and taught them in their synagogues; but the result, spite of astonishment at His wisdom and mighty works, is the scornful inquiry, “Is not this the carpenter's son? And they were offended in Him.” A prophet He is, but without honor in His own country and in His own house. The manifestation of glory is not denied; the vessel is not received according to God's will, but judged according to the sight and. apprehensions of nature. (Chap. 8:54-58.)

Nor is this the whole sad truth. About this time the twelve were sent forth. This we have had in chapter 10, forming part of the special series of events transplanted into that part of the gospel; but, in point of time, it followed the fleshly judgment which was now Messiah's portion. Their mission was beautifully given before by Matthew, so as to complete the picture of Christ's patient persevering grace with Israel, as well as to testify the rights of His person as Jehovah, the Lord of the harvest. Here consequently the fact is omitted, but the effect appears. “At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, and said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist: he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do show forth themselves in him.” (Chap. 14:1, 2.)

This gives occasion to the Spirit of God to tell the tale (ver. 3-12) of the extinction of John the Baptist's testimony in his own blood. It was not only a blinded people, but in their midst ruled a false and reckless king, who feared not, first to imprison, and finally to slay, that blessed witness of God. Not that he did not fear the multitude (ver. 5), for his passions would have impelled to do the deed; not that he had not sorrows and qualms when it came to the point (ver. 9); but what can these restraints avail in presence of the undiscerned wiles and the unremoved power of Satan? Bad as Herod was, he was not without conscience, and the preaching of John had reached it so far at least as to render him uneasy. But the issue was what he might expect who knows that an enemy is behind the scene, who hates all that is of God, and goads man on to be his own slave and God's foe, in the gratification of lust and the maintenance of honor worse than vanity. What an insight into the world and the heart we have here from God! And with what holy simplicity all is laid bare which it would be profitable for us to hear and weigh! Man being in honor abideth not; he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly; yet their posterity approve their sayings. Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning. So

sang the Psalmist, and surely it was right and of God. “And he (the king) sent and beheaded John in the prison; and his head was brought in a charger and given to the damsel; and she brought it to her mother.” (Ver. 10, 11.) Such is man, and such woman without God.

When word was brought to the Lord about John's death, He marks His sense of the act at once— “he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him.” (Ver. 12.) There was no insensibility in Him, whatever His longsuffering and grace. He felt the grievous wrong done to God, and His testimony, and His servant. It was the harbinger of a storm still more violent and a deed of blood darker far—the awful sin of His own rejection. He would not hurry the moment, but retires. He was a sufferer, a perfect sufferer, as well as sacrifice; and while His sufferings rose to their height in that most solemn hour, when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, it would be to ignore much if we limit our thoughts and feelings of His love and moral glory to His closing agony. The Lord, then, so much the more felt the evil, because of His unselfish love and unstained holiness. It is ever felt most in God's presence, where He felt everything.

Did this deep sense, in His spirit, of the growing power of evil in Israel interrupt the course of His love? Far from it. “And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.” (Ver. 14.)

The disciples poorly enter into His grace, and leave small space for the display of His beneficent power. So, when it was evening, they “came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves victuals.” (Ver. 15.) “Send the multitude away!” Away from Jesus! What a proposal! The greatness of the strait, the urgency of the need, the difficulty of the circumstances, which to unbelief are so many reasons for men to do what they can, are to faith just so much more the plea and occasion for the Lord to show what He is. “Jesus said to them, They need not depart: give ye them to eat.” O the dullness of man!—the folly and slowness of heart in disciples to believe all! And yet, beloved friends, have we not seen it! Have we not proved the self same thing in ourselves? What lack of care for others! What measuring of their wants to the forgetfulness of Him who has all power in heaven and on earth, and who, in the same breath that assures us of it, has sent us forth to meet the deepest necessities of sin-darkened souls!

“And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves and two fishes.” Ah! were they, are we, so blind as to overlook that it is not a question of what but Whom, we have. Jesus is nothing to the flesh, even of disciple.

He said, “Bring them hither to me.” Oh! for more simplicity in thus bringing every lack and every scanty supply to Him whose it it is to provide, not for us only, but for all the exigencies of His love; to reckon on Him more habitually as One who cannot act beneath Himself.

“And He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass; and took the five loaves and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed and brake; and gave the loaves to His disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. And they did all eat and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children.” (Ver. 19-21.)

How blessed the scene, and how the perfectness of Christ shines through it all! In nothing does He depart from grace, spite of the recent display of murderous hatred in Herod; His very retiring apart before it is but a further step in the path of His sorrow and humiliation; and yet there, in the desert, to this great multitude, drawn out by their wants, comes forth this striking testimony. Should they not have assuredly gathered who and what He was? Jehovah had chosen Zion—had desired it for His habitation—had said, this is my rest forever; here will I dwell; for I have desired it. But now an Edomite was there, the slave of a ravening Gentile; and the people would have it so, and the chief priests would shortly cry, We have no king but Cesar. Nevertheless, the rejected One spreads a table in the wilderness, abundantly blesses Zion's provision, and satisfies her poor with bread. The miracle may not be the fulfillment of Psa. 132:15, but it is the witness that He was there who could, and yet will fulfill it. He is the Messiah, but the rejected Messiah, as ever in our Gospel. He satisfies His poor with bread, but it is in the wilderness, whither He had withdrawn apart from the unbelieving nation and the willful apostate king.

But now a change opens on our view. For “straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship and go before Him unto the other side while he sent the multitudes away. And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.” (Ver. 22, 23.) The crown was not yet to flourish upon Himself. He must leave His ancient people because of their unbelief, and take a new position on high, and call out a remnant to another state of things also. Rejected as Messiah on earth, He would not be a king by the will of man, to gratify the worldly lusts of any, but go above and there exercise His priesthood before God. It is an exact picture of what the Lord has done. Meanwhile, if the masses of Israel, “the great congregation,” are dismissed, His elect are ushered into a scene of troubles, in the absence of their Master, during the night of man's day. “The ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.” (Ver. 21.)

Such were some of the consequences of Christ's rejection. Apart on high, and not in the wilderness, He prays for His own; locally severed and yet in truth far nearer, He prays for the disciples, left alone to outward appearances. They are “such as should be saved,” the chosen ones, companions of His own humiliation while the nation despised Him.

“And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?” (Ver. 25-31.) Without dwelling now on the moral lesson, with which we are all more or less familiar, a few words on the typical instructions conveyed by the passage may be welcome.

He will leave His intercessional place above, and rejoin His disciples when their troubles and perplexity are deepest. The mountain, the sea, storm and calm, darkness and light, are all, as to security, alike to Christ; but His taking part in the distress is the terror of the natural mind. At first, even the disciples “were troubled, saying, it is a spirit; and they cried out for fear,” only hushed by the sign of His speedy presence. This hardly goes beyond the circumstances and condition of the Jewish remnant. If there be any part which does, it is set forth in Peter, who, on the word of Jesus, quits the ship (which presents the ordinary state of the remnant), and goes to meet the Savior, outside all support of nature. The wind was not hushed—the waves as threatening as ever. But had not Peter heard that word, “Come;” and was it not enough? It was ample from the God and Lord of all. “And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.” As long as

Jesus and His word was before his heart, there was no failure any more than danger. “But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord save me.” Peter failed, as the Church has failed, to walk towards Christ and with Christ; but as in his case, so in ours, Christ has been faithful, and has delivered us from so great a death, and cloth deliver; in “whom we trust that He will yet deliver.” “And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.” Jesus now rejoins the remnant, and calm immediately follows, and He is owned there as Son of God. Nor this only, for “they came into the land of Gennesareth. And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about and brought unto him all that were diseased; and besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment; and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.” (Ver. 34-36.) The Lord is now joyfully received in the very scene where before He had been rejected. It is the blessing and healing of a distressed and groaning world, consequent on His return in acknowledged power and glory.

Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 13:31-52, Remarks on

The parable of the wheat-field had fully shown, what must have been an unexpected blow to the thoughts of the disciples, that the dispensation just opening would turn out as complete a failure, as regards man's maintaining the glory of God, as the past one. Israel had dishonored God; they had wrought, not deliverance, but shame and confusion in the earth; they had failed under law, and would reject grace so thoroughly that the King would be obliged to send His armies to destroy those murderers, and burn up their city. But it might not have been so clearly understood, that if there was to be a new work which was to take the form of gathering disciples to the name of Jesus by the word preached to them, it was by no means so clear that this new work would be spoiled in the hands of man. As far as the salvation of souls is concerned, it is independent of the creature at any time. But its trial by God turns out now, as ever, a complete failure. Man came short of the glory of God in Paradise, and outside he corrupted his way and filled the earth with violence. Afterward God chose a people to put them to the test, and they broke down. And now came the new trial. What would become of the disciples who professed the name of Christ? The answer has been given: “While men slept, the enemy sowed tares.” And a solemn announcement declares that no zeal on their part could remedy the evil. They might be faithful and earnest themselves; but the evil that has been done by the introduction of the tares—false professors of Christ's name—will never be eradicated. The Lord evidently speaks of the vast field of Christian profession, and of the sad fact that evil was to be introduced from the very beginning; and, once brought in, it would never be turned out till the Lord Himself returns to judgment, and by His angels gathers the tares in bundles to burn them, while the wheat is gathered into the barn. Thus we saw tares from a very early period were to be mingled with the wheat—not necessarily with the Church, for the field is not the Church, but the world; and the meaning is, that there might be those bearing the name of Christ who were clearly wicked persons. We know that such people have managed to get and even to keep a footing within a great deal that bears the name of the Lord; but the field—mark it well—is not the assembly, but the scene of outward adhesion to Christ. If we are thinking about the Church in reading Matt. 13, we shall never understand the chapter. “The field is the world,” the sphere where the name of the Lord is professed, and extending much beyond what could be called the Church. There might be, there are, many persons, neither Heathens, nor Jews, nor Mahometans, who would call themselves Christians, and yet show by their ways that there was no real faith in them. These are called “tares.” It is not necessary that they should be conscious hypocrites. They might or might not be; but they are unregenerated professors of the “one Lord,” and “one faith;” baptized persons who have no appreciation of Christ, no care for His glory—destitute, consequently, of life—not born of water and the Spirit, but withal bearing the name of Christ, and zealous, it may be, for the faith after an outward sort. These are now found everywhere in the western world, as once in the east. There are many, whom nobody believes to be born of God, who, nevertheless, would be shocked if they were regarded as infidels. They acknowledge Christ is the Savior of the world, and as the true Messiah, but it is as entirely inoperative upon their souls, as theirs was who, in Jerusalem, believed in Christ when they saw the miracles which He did. (John 2) Jesus does not commit Himself to such now any more than He did then.

The next parable intimates that the evil would not be merely the intermingling of a false profession, but something quite different would surely follow. It might be connected with the tares, and grow out of them; but another parable was required in order to set it forth. Beginning with the smallest possible nucleus, most humble as regards this world, there was to be that which would assume vast proportions in the earth, which would strike its roots deeply among the institutions of men, and rise up into a system of vast power and earthly influence. This is the mustard-seed springing into a great tree, into whose branches the birds of the air come and lodge. These last the Lord had already explained as the wicked one or his emissaries. (Compare ver. 4 and 19.) We must never depart from the meaning of a symbol in a chapter, unless there be some fresh and express reason for it, which in this case does not appear. Thus we have the smallest of all seeds that grows into anything like a tree; and from this exceedingly petty beginning, there comes a stem, with boughs sufficiently capacious to yield a shelter and a home to the birds of the air. What a change for the Christian profession! The destroyer now housed in its bosom!

Then follows the third parable, and again of a different nature. It is not a seed, good or bad. It is not the small now becoming lofty and large, a protective power in the earth, and for what? But here we find that there would be the spread of doctrine within, assimilating to itself whatever came in its way. “Leaven” is used in the Gospel of Matthew, as well as occasionally elsewhere, for doctrine. For instance, we have “the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees,” which is called “leaven.” No doubt, there it is speaking of hypocritical doctrine. The thought here is not to characterize the doctrine, whether good or evil, but rather, it would appear, as symbolic of that which spreads and permeates what is exposed to itself. “The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.” The three measures of meal are not legitimately assumed to mean the whole world; they are, I suppose, a certain defined space that was devoted to the action of the leavening doctrine, throughout which the doctrine spreads effectively. Whether the result is a good or a bad state when the whole is indoctrinated, we must judge by the word of God in general, and not merely by a particular figure or expression. It is not usual to find the truth make such way. We know what the heart is, and we may infer that the doctrine which is so thoroughly spread under the name of Christ must be very far departed from its original purity when it becomes welcome to any considerable “masses” of men. We have, moreover, seen the tares, which do not imply anything good, mingled with the wheat. We have had the mustard-seed grown into a tree, and strangely harboring the birds. of the air, which erst preyed on the seed that Christ sowed. Again, whenever “leaven” occurs symbolically in the word of God, it is never employed save to characterize corruption which tends to work actively and spread. So that the point here must not be assumed to be the extension of the Gospel. The meaning, I doubt not, is a system of doctrine which fills and gives its tone to a certain given mass of men. What sort of doctrine it is must be decided by other considerations, but leaven assuredly would be an unwonted symbol of good. On the other hand, the Gospel is the seed—the incorruptible seed—of life, as being God's testimony to Christ and His work. It may be taken away, or trodden down; but wherever the Gospel is lodged in the heart, there it issues,

through grace, in a new nature. Leaven has nowhere and nothing to do with Christ or giving life, but expressly the contrary. Hence there is not the smallest analogy between the action of leaven and the reception of life in Christ through the Gospel. I believe that the leaven here sets forth the propagandism of dogmas and decrees, after that Christendom became a great thing in the earth (answering to the tree, which was the case, historically, in the time of Constantine the Great). We know that the result of this was an awful departure from the truth. When Christianity grew into respectability in the world, instead of being persecuted and a reproach, crowds of men were brought in. A whole army was baptized at the word of command. Now the sword was used to defend or enforce Christianity; more frequently earthly reward and imperial favor might quicken the downfall of heathenism. All this was, no doubt, that which prepared the way for the spreading of the leaven; but not for the sound truth of God nor for His grace.

Observe, too, that this interpretation flows on harmoniously. We have parables devoted to distinct things, which may have a certain measure of analogy one to another, and yet set forth distinct truths in an order which cannot but commend itself to a spiritual, unprejudiced mind. Much depends on a due understanding of that which is meant by the “kingdom of heaven.” Let us not forget that it is simply the authority of the Lord in heaven, acknowledged upon the earth. Whoever may own it, whether born of God or not, they are in the kingdom of heaven. Some are really renewed, while others have merely adopted Christianity as a good creed and a sound moral code. When it becomes a thing the world takes cognizance of, as a civilizing power in the earth, weighed in the scales of man's wisdom, it is no longer the mere field sown with good seed, which the enemy may spoil with bad, but the towering tree, and the wide and deeply working leaven; and such is the very unexpected disclosure which our Lord makes—what the multitude might admire, but the wise would understand. If the disciples looked for everything going on according to the mind of Christ, they were quite mistaken. They were informed that there was to be a state of things wholly different from what they expected according to the prophets, who discoursed in glowing strains of a time when there would be universal peace, blessing, and glory on the earth. Here they find that, although the Messiah was come, He was going away; that, while He should be in the heavens, the kingdom would be introduced in patience, not power—mysteriously, and not yet to sight; and that therein, consequently, the devil would be allowed to work just as before, only taking his usual advantage of the fresh truth revealed of God.

So far, then, these parables show the gradual growth of evil. First, there is the mingling of a little evil with a great deal of good, as in the case of the wheat field. Then the rising up of that which is high and mighty, and influential, from the lowly origin of early Christianity. Instead of having in the world tribulation, the Christian body becomes a patron, a benefactor, in its exercise of authority, and hence the place to which the most aspiring of the world betake themselves for what they want. After that a great propagation of doctrine follows, when the folly of Paganism and the narrowness of Judaism became so much the more apparent to men, as their interests carried them there also.

Mark a change now. The Lord ceases to address Himself to the multitude. Who could fail to see that the Lord was Himself sowing the wheat? Who could not perceive the growing up of the mustard tree, and the spread of the leaven, when once the facts were and the application made? But the Lord now turns aside from the multitude, who had been in view thus far. As it is said, “All these things spake Jesus to the multitude: and without a parable spake he not unto them.” But now Jesus sends the multitude away, and goes into the house. I would call your attention to that, because it divides the parables, and inaugurates a distinct set. The parables which follow were not such as man could see or enter into. Any one might take in the others. It is the world's wisdom, that Christianity is an institution to be proud of, but in creed, like another, involving no moral responsibility—a leaven, in fact, that assimilates to itself, either from birth, habits, colonization, &c. But although these parables represent different aspects and states, the preaching of the word of the kingdom might be going on all the time. This has a place to itself; just as, among the Jews, there are many feasts, but the Sabbath was a constantly recurring one, repeated week after week. Here we come to a great distinction, and there is a like analogy in those feasts, for they, too, are divided. After the passover, and the unleavened bread, with the feast of weeks, following one another, you have an interruption, after which come the feast of trumpets, of atonement, and, finally, of tabernacles. Also, as the apostle teaches, Christ, our passover, has been sacrificed for us; so that we have to celebrate the feast of unleavened bread inseparably connected with it. Nor is this all. We read in Acts 2, “When the day of Pentecost was fully come.” There you have the feasts that are accomplished in us Christians. The feast of trumpets, the day of atonement, and the feast of tabernacles, it would be absurd to apply to the Church; their application (save what we enjoy in the way of earnest by the Spirit) is to the Jews. Thus, as in the middle of Lev. 23, the break indicates a new order of subjects, so, in this chapter, there is another just as marked; and while the first parables apply to the outward profession of Christ's name, the final ones pertain especially and intimately to what concerns real Christians. The multitude could not enter into them. They were the secrets of the family, and, therefore, the Lord calls the disciples within, and there He unfolds all to them.

But before He enters upon the new ground, He gives us further information touching the old. The disciples ask Him, “Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.” Ignorant as they might be, still they had confidence in their Lord, and that what He had spoken He was willing to explain. “He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one.” The Son of man and the wicked one, it has been well remarked, are opposed to each other. As in the Trinity, we know there is a suited part which each blessed Person bears in their work of blessing, so the sad contrast appears in evil outside. As the Father brings out specially His love, and separates from the world through the revelation of it in Christ; as you have the Holy Ghost, in contrariety of the flesh, the great agent of all the Father's ways, counsels, and grace; so Scripture holds forth the devil, always acting as the grand personal antagonist of the Son. The Son of God is come that He might destroy the works of the devil. The devil makes use of the world to entangle people, to excite the flesh, stirring up the natural liking of our heart for present honor and ease. In opposition to all this, the Son of God presents the glory of the Father, as the object for which He was working by the Holy Ghost.

Discrimination runs strongly through the Lord's explanation to the disciples in the house. In the first of the parables, the good is thoroughly separate from the evil, but in the last of the three all is merged in an undistinguished lump. At first, however, all was plain. On the one hand, there is the Son of man, and He sows the good seed, and the result is the children of the kingdom. On the other hand, there is the enemy, and he is sowing his bad seed—false doctrines, heresies, &c.; and the result of this is the children of the wicked one. The presence of Christianity in the world has given the devil an opportunity for making men a great deal worse than if there never had been any fresh and heavenly revelation. The infidel historian has put the result in an awful light— “the annals of Christianity are the annals of hell.” We know that this arises from his confounding the nominal system, which is Babylon, with the true Church. In God's sight, that which bears the name of Christ is a more wicked thing than any other in the world. There never, elsewhere, has been so much righteous blood shed as at the hand of religion so-called. Is not this solemn? What we have had in Popery is merely the full carrying out of earthly religion. Every religious system of the world tends to persecute whatever falls not in with it. This is seen even now, where there is a measure of faithfulness to Christ. The bitterness and opposition towards those who are seeking to follow the Lord in our day, is the same kind of thing that broke out into the horrors of the dark

ages, and lingers still in the holy office of the inquisition, when and wherever it holds up its head.

To continue, however. “The harvest is the end of the world, and the reapers are the angels.” The “world,” in verse 38, must not be confounded with “the world,” in verse 39. They are totally distinct words and things. “The world,” in verse 39, means the age. It is a course of time, and not a geographical sphere. In verse 38 the sphere is intended, wherein the gospel goes forth; in verse 39 it is the space of time in which the gospel is either advancing or hindered by the enemy's power. The harvest is the consummation of the age, that is, of the present dispensation, i.e., the time while the Lord is absent, and the gospel is being proclaimed over the earth. It is grace that is going forth now. The only means which God now employs to act upon souls are moral or spiritual means. The angels introduce a sort of judgment, and deal with wicked people to destroy them, while the Gospel lays hold of poor sinners to save them, The Lord intimates here that an end will be put to the present sending out of the word of the kingdom, and a day when the effects of Satan's working would be fully developed and judged. “The reapers are the angels.” We have nothing to do with the judicial part, only with the spread of the good; the angels, with the judgment of the wicked. “As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world.” The same word is used for “world” in verse 40 as in verse 39. Unfortunately our version gives only the same English word in all.

Many scriptures show a state of things to come at a future time upon the world, totally different from what the gospel contemplates. I will refer to one or two in the prophets. Take Isa. 11, which speaks first of our Lord under the figure of a branch out of the roots of Jesse. It is plain that this is true of Christ, whether at His first or second advent. He was born an Israelite, and of the family of David. And again, as to the Holy Ghost resting upon Him, we know now that was true of Him when He was a man here below; but in verse 4 we find another thing “With righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth.” If you argue that this applies now, because in the kingdom of heaven the Lord acts upon the souls of the meek, &c., I ask you to read a few words more: “And he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.” Is the Lord doing this now? Clearly not. Is He not sending a word of mercy throughout the earth? and instead of slaying the wicked with the breath of His lips, is He not converting the wicked by the word of His grace ?—all in entire contrast with what is described here. The breath of His mouth is sometimes applied to the gospel; but let us see how this suits Isa. 30:33. “For Tophet is ordained of old; yea, for the king it is prepared. He hath made it deep and large; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; and the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it.” I find there a most valuable help to the understanding of chap. xi. What is He said to do with the breath of His mouth there? He slays the wicked one. “The breath of the Lord,” as interpreted by the Holy Ghost, forces us to the conviction that it means the execution of the Lord's judgment on the wicked. The Lord Jesus came to save; but the time is at hand when He shall come to destroy. “He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.” The Revelation also gives us the key, where He is seen with a sword proceeding out of His mouth. It represents righteous judgment executed by the bare word of the Lord. As He spoke the world into being, He will speak the wicked into perdition. Taking this as the indubitable meaning of the verse, what follows? A state of things quite unlike what we have now under the gospel: “Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed: their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

All this is not contemplated now; for whether we look at the gospels or at the epistles, when the Holy Ghost is speaking about the preaching that goes on now, the effect we have to anticipate is this—some believing, but the great majority rejecting. Besides, it is added, that in the latter days perilous times should come; and that which is most prevalent in the last time is not the truth of Christ, but the lie of Antichrist (1 John), not the triumph of the good, but of the bad, till the Lord puts to His own hand; and this is what is reserved for His appearing and kingdom. “He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.” As the consequence, we see all those blessed effects. The Lord is not smiting the earth now. He has opened heaven—by and by He will take the earth. In the Revelation you have the vision of the mighty angel, with his right foot upon the sea, and the left on the earth. It is the Lord taking the whole universe under His own immediate government. Now the mystery of iniquity is left unjudged. Evil is allowed to go on rampant in the world. But this will not be forever. The mystery of God is to be finished. Then will begin this amazing change, “the regeneration,” as our Lord styles it, when the Spirit of God shall be poured out, and the earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. But till these times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord, Scripture calls the intervening space the evil age. So in Gal. 1:4, not the material world is meant, but the moral course of things, that is, “this present evil age.” The new age, on the contrary, will be a glorious, holy, blessed one.

In the very next verse of Isa. 11 we have the restoration of God's ancient people foretold, the gathering in of all Israel, as well as of Judah. At the return from the Babylonish captivity such was not the case. A very inconsiderable fraction of Judah and Benjamin came back, and none beyond a few individuals of Israel. The ten tribes are universally called the lost tribes; whereas, “it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. And he shall set up an ensign for the nation, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim. But they shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together; they shall lay their hand upon Mom and Moab, and the children of Ammon shall obey them. And the Lord shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea” —a thing that has never been done, nor anything like it. The Egyptian sea exists just as it was; whereas, there would be outward marks of the accomplishment of this prophecy, both spiritually and physically, had it ever taken place. “And with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dry-shod. And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people which shall be left from Assyria, like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.” Both in the Egyptian sea and in the Nile there will be this great work of God, outstripping what He did when He brought the people out the first time by Moses and Aaron. This will be the age to come; but as to the present age, the tares and the wheat are to grow together till the harvest, which is the consummation of this age; and when that arrives, the Lord sends forth His angels, “and they shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.” The severing then takes place: the tares are gathered and cast into a furnace of fire, and “then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” Mark the accuracy of the expression, “then shall they shine forth;” not “then shall they be caught up.” I believe they will have been caught up before this epoch. “When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” So that the meaning is as plain as possible. It will be a new age, in which is no mingling of the good and bad;

but the gathering out of the wicked for judgment closes this age, in order that the good may be blessed in the next. The righteous, here spoken of, shine forth as the sun, and are in a higher sphere; but the heavens and earth will then be a united system, though there be no confusion of its several parts. There will be the heavenly and the earthly glories. There will be those who shine above and others destined to rich blessing below. It will be all one kingdom, but there will be the heavenly and the earthly things, as the Lord distinguishes in John 3 “If I have told you of earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?”

So here, we have the upper region called the kingdom of the Father, and the lower the kingdom of the Son of man. “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity.” These are not even allowed to be on the earth, but are cast into a furnace of fire. “Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” Both are “the kingdom of God.” What a glorious prospect! Is it not a sweet thought that even this present scene of ruin and confusion is to be delivered that God is to have the joy of His heart, not only in filling the heavens with His glory, but in the Son of man, honored in the very place where He was rejected?

But let us now look at the next parable. “The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field, the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof, goeth and selleth all that he hath, and “buyeth that field.” This is the first of the new parables within the house. The Lord is there showing, not the state of things found under the public profession of the name of Christ, but the hidden things, or those which require discernment. It is a treasure hid in a field, which a man finds and hides, and for joy thereof sells all that he hath and buys the field. I am aware that it is the habit of persons to apply this to a soul finding Christ. But what does the man in the parable do? He sells all that he has to buy the field. Is that the way for a man to be saved? If so, salvation is to him that worketh. It becomes, then, a question not of faith, but of a man giving up everything to gain Christ, which would be the law carried to the greatest excess. When a man has Christ, he would doubtless give up everything for Him. But those are not the terms on which a man first receives Christ for his soul's need. But this is not all. He buyeth the whole field; what do you make of that? “The field is the world.” Am I to buy the world in order to obtain Christ? This only shows the difficulties into which we fall, whenever we depart from the simplicity of Scripture. But where we really search, and try the Scripture by Scripture, the meaning is made plain. The Lord Himself confutes such an interpretation. He shows that there is one man, and one only, who saw this treasure in the midst of the confusion. Who? It is the Lord; the Lord who gave up all His rights in order that He might have sinners washed in His blood and redeemed to God; and He bought the world in order to acquire the treasure He valued. The two things are distinctly presented in John 17:2, “As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him.” There is the treasure— “as many as thou hast given him.” But “all flesh” is no treasure at all. It is the outside thing that goes along with the bargain, if I may speak thus familiarly; but it is not the thing that is in His heart. He buys the whole, the outside world, in order to possess this hidden treasure.

But, moreover, “The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.” (Ver. 45, 46.) The parable of the hid treasure did not sufficiently convey what the saints are to Christ. For the treasure might consist of a hundred thousand pieces of gold and silver. And how would that show the blessedness and beauty of the Church? The merchantman finds “one pearl of great price.” The Lord does not see merely the preciousness of the saints, but the unity and heavenly beauty of the assembly. Every saint is precious to Christ: but “he loved the Church, and gave himself for it.” That is what I see here— “One pearl of great price.” I do not in the least doubt that its spirit may be applied to every Christian. But I believe it is intended to set forth the loveliness of the Church in the eyes of Christ. It could not be fully said of a man awaking to believe the Gospel. If we consider a sinner before he has received Christ, is he seeking goodly pearls? Is he not rather feeding on husks with the swine? Here it is one who seeks “goodly pearls,” which no unconverted man ever really sought. There is no possibility of applying these parables except to the Lord Himself, or to the working of His Spirit in His own people. How blessed it is, that in the midst of all the confusion which the devil has wrought, Christ sees the treasure of His saints, and the beauty of His Church, spite of all infirmities and failure!

Then we have all wound up by the parable of the net, which is thrown into the sea. (Ver. 47-50.) It is a figure used to remind us that our energies and desires must be directed after those who are floating about in the sea of the world. The net is cast into the sea, and gathers of every kind, “which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. Who are “they?” Never do we find angels gathering the good, but always severing the wicked for judgment. The fishers were men, like the servants in the first parable. But it is not only the Gospel that we have here. The net gathers in of every kind; but is not the putting the good into vessels, more? Is it not gathering saints according to God? It is shown us that out of every class, before the Lord returns in judgment, there was to be a mighty operation of the Spirit through the fishers of men, gathering saints together in a way quite unexampled. May not the spirit of this be going on now? The Gospel is going out with remarkable power over all lands. But there is another action—the gathering the good together, and putting them into vessels. This is not what takes place in heaven. The bad are cast away; but that is not the end of them. Another thing is reserved for them—the furnace of fire. But we have this additional information in the next verse, “The angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just.” The angels' business is always with the wicked; the servants' with the good. The severing of the wicked from among the just is not the fishermen's work at all; and their casting of the bad away is not the same thing as the furnace of fire.

Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew 13:1-30, Remarks on

At the close of the chapter before, our Lord disowned all the natural ties which bound Him to Israel. I speak now simply of His bringing it out as a matter of teaching; for we know that, historically, the moment for really and finally breaking with them was the cross. But, ministerially, if we may so say, the break occurred and was indicated now. He took advantage of an allusion to his mother and brethren to show who His real kindred were. No longer those who were connected with Him after the flesh. The only family He could own now were such as did the will of His Father in heaven. He recognizes nothing but the tie formed by the word of God received into the heart and obeyed accordingly. The Holy Ghost pursues this subject by recording, in a connected form, a number of parables which were intended to show the source, the character, the conduct, and the issues of this new family, or at least, of those who professed to belong to it. This is the subject of Matt. 13. A striking instance it is, how manifestly the Holy Ghost has formed the materials into the particular shape in which we actually have them: for we know that our Lord spoke more parables than are here given. Comparing it with the Gospel of Mark, we find a parable that differs materially from any which appear in Matthew. In Mark, a person who sows the ground and sleeps and rises night and day, waiting for the germination and the full growth and the ripening of the corn, and then gathers it in himself. This differs very considerably from all the parables of the earlier

Gospel: yet we know from Mark that the parable in question was uttered on the same day. “With many such parables spake he the word unto them, as they were able to bear it. But without a parable spake he not unto them. . . .And the same day, when the even was come, he saith unto them, Let us pass over unto the other side.”

Just as the Holy Ghost selects certain parables in Mark which are inserted, while others are left out, and the same in Luke: so also was it the case in Matthew. The Holy Ghost is conveying fully God's mind about the new testimony, commonly called Christianity and even Christendom. Accordingly, the very beginning of this chapter prepares us for the new scene. “The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.” Up to this time the house of God was connected with Israel. There God dwelt as far as this could be said of the earth; He counted it as his habitation. But Jesus went out of the house, and sat by the sea side. We all know that the sea, in the symbolic language of the Old and New Testaments, is used to represent masses of men, roving hither and thither outside, and not under the settled government of God. “And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship and sat.” From thence he teaches them: “And the whole multitude stood on the shore.” The very action of our Lord indicated that there was to be a very wide-spread testimony. The parables themselves are not confined to the sphere of our Lord's previous dealings, but take in a much more extensive range than anything which He had spoken in past times. “He spake many things to them in parables.” It is not intimated that we have all the parables our Lord spoke; but the Holy Ghost here gives us seven connected parables, all brought together and compacted into a consistent system, as I shall endeavor to show. The Holy Ghost is clearly exercising a certain authority as to the parables selected here, for we all know that seven is the Scripture number for that which is complete: whether it speak of good or evil spirits—whether in one form or another—seven is regularly the number used. When the symbol of twelve is used, it expresses completeness, not spiritual, but as to what has to do with man. Where human administration is brought into prominence for carrying out the purposes of God, there the number twelve appears. Hence we have the twelve apostles, who had a peculiar relation to the twelve tribes of Israel; but when the Church is to be presented, we hear again the number seven—“the seven churches.” However that may be, we have seven parables here, a thing ordered of God for the purpose of giving a complete account of the new order of things about to begin—Christendom and Christianity, the true as well as the spurious.

The first question, then, that occurs is, How comes it that we have this series of parables here and nowhere else? Certain of them are in Mark, and certain in Luke; but nowhere, except in Matthew, have we seven, the complete list. The answer is this: Nothing can be more beautiful, or more proper than that they should be given in a gospel presenting Jesus as the Messiah to Israel; then on His rejection, showing what God would next bring out. To the disciples, when their hopes were melting away, what could be of deeper interest than to know the nature and end of this new testimony? If the Lord should send out this word among the Gentiles, what would be the result? Accordingly, Matthew's gospel is the only one that gives us a complete sketch of the kingdom of heaven; as it also gives us the intimation that the Lord was going to found the church. It is only in Matthew that we have it brought out. That, however, I reserve for another day; but I must observe that the kingdom of heaven is not the same thing as the Church, but rather the scene where the authority of Christ is owned, at least, outwardly. It may be real or not, but every professing Christian not a Turk, or a Jew, or a Pagan, of course) is in the kingdom of heaven. Every person who has, even in an external rite, confessed Christ, is not a mere Jew or Gentile, but in the kingdom. It is a very different thing from a man's being born again and being baptized by the Holy Ghost into the body of Christ. Whoso bears the name of Christ belongs to the kingdom of heaven. It may be that he is only a tare there, but still there he is. This is a very solemn thing. Wherever Christ is outwardly confessed, there is a responsibility beyond that which attaches to the rest of the world.

The first parable clearly was true when our Lord was on earth. It is very general, and would apply to the Lord in person or in spirit. Hence it may be said to be always going on; for we find in the second parable the Lord presented again, still sowing good seed: only here it is the “kingdom of heaven” that is said to be like to a man which sowed good seed in his field. The first is, Christ's work in publishing the word among men, while He was here below. The second rather applies to our Lord sowing by means of His servants; that is, the Holy Ghost working in them according to the will of the Lord while He is above, the kingdom of heaven being then set up. This at once furnishes an important key to the whole subject. But inasmuch as the matter of the first parable is very general, there is a great deal in all the moral teaching of it which applies as truly now as when our Lord was upon earth. “A sower went forth to sow” —a weighty truth, indeed. It was not thus that the Jews looked for their Messiah.

The prophets bore witness of a glorious ruler, who would establish His kingdom in their midst. No doubt there were plain predictions of His suffering as well as of His exaltation. Our parable describes neither suffering nor outward glory; but a work carried on by the Lord, of a distinct character from anything the Jew would naturally draw from the bulk of the prophecies. Nevertheless, our Lord, I conceive, was alluding to Isaiah. It is not exactly the gospel of grace and salvation to the poor, wretched, and guilty, but it is One who, instead of coming to claim the fruits of the vineyard set up in Israel, has to begin an entirely new work. A sower going forth to sow, marks evidently the commencement of that which did not exist before. The Lord is beginning a work not previously known in this world. “And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the wayside, and the fowls came and devoured them up.” That was clearly the most desperate case of all. It was null and void, not because of any fault of the seed, but from the destructive agency of the fowls which devoured what was sown. Next we have, “Some [that] fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth, and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth.” There was a more hopeful appearance in this case. The word was received, but the ground was stony; there was no depth of earth. Appearances were very quick—“forthwith they sprung up.” It is a serious thing to think of souls who seem awakened. Nature always brings to maturity in a very short time whatever it can do in the things of God. There is little or no sense of sin. All is taken in but too readily. The plan of salvation may be thought to be excellent, the enlightenment of the mind undeniable; but such an one has never measured his awful condition in God's sight. The good word of God is tasted, but the ground is stony. Conscience has nothing to do with it. Whereas in a real work of heart, conscience is the soil in which the word of God takes effect. There never can be a real work of God without a sense of sin. This is a thing which souls, drawn and attracted by the Gospel, ought to weigh earnestly: whether, in deed and in truth, they have really faced the blessed God who is speaking to them about their ruin. Where warm feelings are excited but sin is slurred over, it is the case spoken of here—the word received at once, but the ground stony. There is no root because there is no depth of earth; consequently, “when the sun was up, they were scorched, and because they had no root, they withered away.”

But, further, “Some fell among thorns, and the thorns spiting up and choked them.” This is another case; not exactly that wherein the heart received the word at once. And, let me repeat, that I have as little confidence in the heart as in the head. The flesh differs in different individuals. Some may have more mind, and some more feeling. But neither can savingly receive the word of God, unless the Holy Ghost acts on the conscience and produces the sense of being utterly lost. Where this is the case, it is a real work of God, which sorrows and difficulties will only deepen. Those that received the seed among thorns, are a class devoured by the anxieties of this age, and led away by the

deceitfulness of riches, which choke the word, so that no fruit comes to perfection.

But now comes the good ground. “Other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” The sower here is the Lord Himself, yet, out of four casts of the seed, three are unsuccessful. It is only the last case where the seed bears ripe fruit; and even there the issue is checkered and hindered— “some an hundred-fold, some sixty-fold, some thirty-fold.” What a tale of man's heart and the world! that even where the heart does not refuse, but receives, the truth, it abandons just as quickly. The same will that makes a man gladly receive the Gospel, makes him drop it in the face of difficulties. But, in some cases, the word does produce blessed effects. It fell upon good ground, and brought forth fruit in different degrees. “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.” A solemn admonition to souls to look well to it, whether or not they produce according to the truth they have received.

The Lord explains these things. But, first of all, the disciples come and say unto Him, “Why speakest thou unto them in parables? He answered and said unto them, Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.” The same parable would be just like the cloud of Israel in a former day—full of light to those within; full of obscurity to those without. Thus it is with the sayings of our Lord. So solemn was the crisis now, that it was not His intention to give clearer light. Conscience was gone. They had the Lord in their midst, bringing in full light, and He was refused, specially by the religious leaders of the nation; and He had broken with them. Here was the clue to His conduct: “To you it is given to know,” &c. It was kept from the multitude, and this because they had already rejected the clearest possible proofs that Jesus was the Messiah of God. But, as He says here, “Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance.” Such was the case with the disciples. They had already received His person, and now the Lord would supply them with truth to lead them on. “But whosoever hath not,” the Christ-rejecting Israel, “from him shall be taken away that he hath.” The Lord's bodily presence, already there, and the evidence of miracle, would soon pass away. “Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand.” That judicial sentence of darkness which Isaiah had pronounced upon them hundreds of years before, was now to be sealed, though the Holy Ghost still gives them a fresh testimony. And this very passage is, afterward quoted to show that it is a finished thing with Israel. They loved darkness rather than light. What is the good of a light to one that shuts his eyes? Therefore would the light be taken away, too. “But blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.” (Ver. 16, 17.)

Then follows the explanation of the parable. We have the meaning of “the fowls of the air” given us. It is not left to any conjecture of our own. “When any one heareth the word of the kingdom” (this was being preached then; it is not exactly “the word of the gospel,” but “of the kingdom”) “and understandeth it not,” &c. In Luke it is not called “the word of the kingdom,” nor is it said, “understandeth it not.” It is interesting to observe the difference, because it shows the way in which the Holy Ghost has acted in this gospel. Compare Luke 13 We find some of these parables first given us in chap. viii. 11. “Now the parable is this. The seed is the word of God” —not the word of the kingdom, but “of God.” There is, of course, a great deal in common between the two; but the Spirit had a wise reason for using the different expressions. It would have been rather giving an opportunity to an enemy, unless there had been some good grounds for it. I repeat that it is “the word of the kingdom,” in Matthew, and “of God,” in Luke. In the latter, we have, “that they should believe,” and in the former, “that they should understand.” What is taught by the difference? It is manifest that, in Matthew, the Holy Ghost has the Jewish people particularly in His mind, although the word is going out to the Gentiles in due time; whereas, in Luke, the Lord had particularly the Gentiles before Him. They understood that there was a great kingdom which God was about to establish, and destined to swallow up all their kingdoms. The Jews being already familiar with the word of God, their great point was understanding what God taught. They had His word already, though superstition and self-righteousness never understood it. You might be controverted, had you said to a Jew, You do not believe what Isaiah says; but a serious question came, Do you understand it? But if you looked at the Gentiles—they had not the lively oracles, so that among them the question was believing what God said; and this is what we have in Luke. The point for a Gentile was that, instead of setting up his own wisdom, he should bow to what God said. Hence, you will observe, that, looking at people who had not the word of God, and who were to be tested by the Gospel going out to them in due time, the question was believing something that had not been brought out to them before. In Matthew, speaking to a people who had the word already, the great thing was to understand it. This they did not. The Lord shows that, if they heard with their ears, they did not understand with their hearts. So that this difference, when connected with the different ideas and objects of the two gospels, is alike manifest, interesting, and instructive.

“When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not.” Another solemn truth we learn from this:—the great thing that hinders spiritual understanding is religious prejudice. The Jews were charged with not understanding. They were not idolaters, or open infidels, but had a system of religion in their minds in which they had been trained from infancy, which darkened their intelligence of what the Lord was bringing out. So it is now. But if among the heathen, though you would find an evil state morally, yet at least there would be that kind of barren waste where the word of God might be freely sown, and, by grace, be believed. That is not the case where people have been nurtured in ordinances and superstition: there the difficulty is to understand the word. “Then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.” The answer to the fowls, in the first parable, as we saw, is the wicked one taking away the word of the kingdom as soon as it is sown. “But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it.” There you have the heart, moved in its affections, but without exercise of conscience. Anon with joy the word is received. There is great gladness about it, but there all ends. It is only the Holy Ghost acting upon conscience, that gives what things are in God's sight. “Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.” Then we have the thorny ground: “He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.” There is a case that might have seemed promising for a time; but anxiety about this world, or the flattering case of prosperity here below, rendered him unfruitful, and all is over. “But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word and understandeth it” (all through it is spiritual understanding) “which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty.”

Now we come to the first of the similitudes of the kingdom of heaven. The parable of the sower was the preparatory work of our Lord upon earth. “Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field; but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way “exactly what is become of the profession of Christ. There are two things necessary for the inroad of evil among Christians. The first is, the unwatchfulness of the Christians themselves. They get into a careless state, they sleep; and the enemy comes and sows tares. This began at a very early epoch in Christendom. We find the germs even in the Acts of the Apostles, and still more in the Epistles. 1 Thessalonians is the first inspired epistle that the apostle Paul wrote; and the

second was written shortly after. And yet he tells them that the mystery of iniquity was already at work; that there were other things to follow, such as the apostasy and the man of sin; and that when the lawlessness should be fully manifest (instead of working secretly), then the Lord would appear, and put an end to the lawless one and all concerned. The mystery of iniquity seems akin to the sowing of the tares spoken of here. Some time after, “when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit” —when Christianity began to make rapid strides in the earth, “then appeared the tares also.” But it is evident that the tares were sown almost immediately after the good seed. No matter what the work of God is, Satan is always close upon its heels. When man was made, he listened to the serpent, and fell. When God gave the law, it was broken even before it was committed into the hands of Israel. Such is always the history of human nature.

So the mischief is done in the field, and never repaired. The tares are not for the present taken out of the field: there is no judgment of them. Does this mean that we are to have tares in the church? If the kingdom of heaven meant the church, there ought to be no discipline at all: you ought to allow uncleanness of flesh or spirit there, swearers, drunkards, adulterers, schismatics, heretics, antichrists, as much as the rest. Here is the importance of seeing the distinction between the church and the kingdom. The Lord forbids the tares to be taken out of the kingdom of heaven: “Let them both grow together until the harvest,” that is, till the Lord come in judgment. Were the kingdom of heaven the same as the church, it would, I repeat, amount to no less than this: that no evil, let it be ever so flagrant or plain. is to be put out of the church till the day of judgment. We see, then, the importance of making these distinctions, which too many despise. They are all-important for truth and holiness: nor is there a single word of God that we can do without.

What, then, is the meaning of this parable? It has nothing to do with the question of church communion. It is “the kingdom of heaven” that is spoken of—the scene of the confession of Christ, whether true or false. Thus Greeks, Copts, Nestorians, Roman Catholics, as well as Protestants, are in the kingdom of heaven; not believers only, but also bad people professing the name of Christ. A man, who is not a Jew, nor a Pagan, and who outwardly professed Christ's name, is in the kingdom of heaven. He may be ever so immoral or heretical, but he is not to be put out of the kingdom of heaven. But would it be right to receive him at the table of the Lord? God forbid! The church, i.e., the assembly of God, and the kingdom of heaven are two different things. If a person falling into open sin were in the church, he ought to be put out of it; but you ought not to put him out of the kingdom of heaven. In fact, this could only be done by taking away his life; for that is meant by the rooting up of the tares. And this is what worldly Christianity did fall into, in no very long space of time after the apostles were departed from the earth. Temporal punishments were brought in for discipline; laws were made for the purpose of handing over the refractory to the subservient civil power. If they did not honor the so-called church, they were not to be suffered to live. In this way, the very evil our Lord had been guarding the disciples against, came to pass: and the emperor, Constantine, used the sword to repress ecclesiastical offenders. He and his successors introduced temporal punishments to deal with the tares, to try and root them up. Take the church of Rome, where you have so thoroughly the confusion of the church with the kingdom of heaven: they claim, if a man is a heretic, to hand him over to the courts of the world to be burnt; and they never confess or correct the wrong, because they pretend to be infallible. Supposing that their victims even were tares, this is to put them out of the kingdom. if you root a tare from the field, you kill it. There may be men outside profaning the name of God; but we must leave them for God to deal with.

This does not destroy Christian responsibility towards those who surround the Lord's table. You will find instructions as to all this in what is written about the Church. “The field is the world;” the church. only embraces those believed to be members of Christ's body. Take 1 Corinthians, where we have the Holy Ghost showing the true nature of ecclesiastical discipline. Supposing there are professing Christians guilty of any sin you please; such persons are not to be owned, while they are going on in that sin, as members of Christ's body. A real saint might fall into open sin, but the church, knowing it, is bound to intervene for the purpose of expressing God's judgment about the sin. Were they deliberately to allow such an one to come to the Lord's table, they would in effect make the Lord a party to that sin. The question is not whether the person be converted or not. If unconverted, men have no business in the church; if converted, sin is not to be winked at. The guilty are not to be put out of the kingdom of heaven, they are to be put out of the church. So that the teaching of the word of God is most plain as to both these truths. It is wrong to use worldly punishments to deal with a hypocrite, even when he is detected. I may seek the good of his soul, but that is no reason for punishing him thus. But if a Christian is guilty of sin, the church, though called to be patient in judgment, is never to suffer it; but we are to leave guilty people, who are unconverted, to be judged by the Lord at His appearing. This is the teaching of the parable of the tares; and it gives a very solemn view of Christianity. As sure as the Son of man sowed good seed, His enemy would sow bad, which would spring up along with the rest: and this evil cannot for the present be got rid of. There is a remedy for evil which enters the church, but not yet for evil in the world.

This is the only gospel containing the parable of the tares. Luke gives the leaven. Matthew has the tares also. It particularly teaches patience for the present, in contrast with Jewish judicial dealings, as well as with their just expectation of a cleared field when the millennium arrives under the reign of Messiah. The Jews would say, Why should we allow enemies, ungodly heretics? Even when our Lord was here below-, and some Samaritans received Him not, James and John wished to command fire to come down from heaven to consume them, Theirs was the natural thought of dealing with the tares at once, but the Lord rebuked them for it. They did not know what manner of spirit they were of; “for,” He added, “the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.” This illustrates our Lord's will about the tares. To kill them is contrary to Christianity, all whose real power is of the Holy Ghost, and not mere force.

But we have further instruction. “Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.” Thus the heavenly saints are to be gathered into the Lord's barn, to be taken out of the earth to heaven. But “the time of the harvest” implies a certain period occupied with the various processes of ingathering. In that scene of “the harvest,” the Lord “will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them.” It is not said that the wheat is to be bound in bundles in order to be taken to heaven. There is no intimation that there is to be any special preparatory work about the saints before they are taken up. But there is such a dealing of God with the tares. The angels are to arrange them in special ways, before the Lord clears them out of the field. I do not pretend to say how that will be, or whether the systems of associations in the present day may not pave the way for the final action of the Lord as regards the tares. But the principle of worldly association is growing apace. When the time approaches for the judgment of the quick, there will be the preliminary work, entrusted to the angels, of binding the wicked in bundles to burn them. How it will be done I do not pretend to affirm, merely keeping to what is said in the chapter before me.

Gospel Words, Gospel Words: the Withered Hand Healed

Matt. 12:9-14

THE sabbath like everything else was turned by Jewish unbelief against the Messiah. But like

everything else the sabbath only told to His glory against man's sin, shame, selfishness, and pride. At that time (Matt. 12:1) the Lord went through the cornfields on the sabbath, and His disciples, being hungry, began to pluck and eat. Seeing this the Pharisees reproached Him, but He vindicated them by David's act in 1 Sam. 21 generally, and in particular by the priests who do their work in the temple blamelessly on the sabbaths. What value had the show-bread if the anointed of Jehovah and his men were hunted for their life? Yet says He, " a greater thing than the temple is here." Had they known too what Hos. 6:6 means, they would not have condemned the guiltless. " For the Son of man is lord of the sabbath." The rejected Christ is the Son of man about to come from heaven in judgment.. They were guilty not only of transgressing the law, but of refusing Jehovah's Anointed. So He enters on a higher and larger glory which supersedes their boasts and judges their sins.

On a subsequent sabbath he exposes their evil state, hypocritical and murderous.

" And when departed thence he went into their synagogue; and, behold, a man having a withered hand. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath? that they might accuse him. And he said to them, What man of you shall there be who shall have one sheep; and if this fall into a pit on- the sabbath, will he not lay hold and raise it up? How much then doth a man exceed a sheep! Wherefore it is lawful on the sabbath to do well. Then he saith to the man, Stretch out thy hand, and he stretched it out; and it was restored sound as the other. But the Pharisees went out and took counsel against him, how they might destroy him " (vers. 9-14).

Here it is not the authority of His person in which He will judge not the Jews only but all the nations; it is the character of Him Who is good and doeth good, let His people be as false and faulty as they may to their ruin. In vain for His people to plead the sabbath against Him Who is lord of it; still more vain to forbid on that day His active goodness for needy suffering man. The poorest Jew was not debarred by the sabbath from extricating his sheep from the pit. God had compassion, if they had none, for their brother fallen under a worse calamity; and here was He anointed of Jehovah to bind up the broken-hearted, let Pharisees rage and plot as they might. " Lo, I am come to do thy will, 0 God."

Mark presents the scene yet more vividly; for he tells us that the Savior directed the man to "Stand up " before He uttered His fuller and withering questions: " Is it lawful on the sabbath to do good or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? " And when they held their peace but with malice to the uttermost, He looked round about on them with anger, distressed at the hardening of their heart. What right had selfish murderous men against God's grace? Such they showed themselves; for they went out of the synagogue to plot, Pharisees and Herodians, deadly enemies of each other, against the Son of God, His servant among sinful and suffering men, to minister as none else could, to save souls as well as life.

Oh! how is it with you who read these lines? Is not your case still more deplorable than his of the withered hand? Is not your heart withered Godward? Is it not active only as the source of uncleanness in every kind which defiles you? Do you love your own will and way? and what is this but sin, hateful to God and destructive to you? Yet for you Jesus, the Son of God, came; for you He died. And He died not for any imaginary good in you, but for your sins, too many and too real. Fear not then to commit yourself, just as you are to the Savior. Hide not anything of your evil from the eyes of your heart; let your conscience confess all out to God: Christ is the only meeting-place between the sinner and Him. He is all-embracing for such as come as sinners; and as surely a Savior as they are lost.

Therefore of God's word doubt not, but look to Jesus in your guilt and unworthiness. Seek only to be in the truth of your sins before God; and you will find Christ in the truth of divine grace toward your soul.

If it be so with you, this is true repentance toward God, and true faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. The merit, the grace, the efficacy, the power are in Him. The pardon and peace, the life and blessing, are yours on believing the glad tidings of God about His Son. Till you believe on Him for life and salvation, you have nothing to do with practical love and holiness, incumbent as they are on the Christian. First be settled in faith.

Wisdom: April 2019, Wisdom

Paul writes in Romans 16:19, “I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.” Such is the divine remedy for the evil in this world, even as our Lord Himself put it figuratively in Matthew 10:16, combining the prudence of the serpent with the harmlessness (or simplicity, for it is the same word) of the dove. Human wisdom seeks to guard itself by a thorough knowledge of the world and of all evil ways. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, devilish. The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceful, gentle, yielding, full of mercy and good fruits, uncontentious and unfeigned. It does not need to cultivate acquaintance with evil. It knows good in Christ; it is satisfied, and it adores. It hears and loves the Shepherd’s voice; a stranger’s voice it knows not and will not follow. And this suits the simplest soul brought to the knowledge of God, so that it becomes the wisest, because it alone glorifies the Lord. Indeed, it is the only path of safety for us, being such as we are and in such a world, for in the world evil as yet has the upper hand, though the believer has the secret of victory over it, already vanquished in the cross of Christ.

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