Titus - Commentaries by John Nelson Darby

The Promise of Life, Promise of Life, The

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Titus 1

It is at the beginning of this chapter that the Spirit of God marks with an especial character that on which I desire to speak—the eternal thought of God toward us which we find in verses 2, 3. Evil had come in; the Spirit takes notice of it; and the effect in a most remarkable way is to throw us back on the whole mind and thought of God from the beginning. As evil progresses, and corruption comes in, the apostle turns back to the origin of all, and coming from the divine nature itself (and all that could meet the evil, and convey us on, must come from that); that is, the eternal life which God, Who cannot lie, promised before the foundation of the world; that which was in the mind of God as to the thing itself before the foundation of the world; that which God had in His mind, the counsel of God for us before itself was created. It just shows us what we are, and what man is, with and apart from that eternal life.

In Ephesians we find it in connection with Christ (chap. 3. 3-7): a mystery hidden through all ages in God until Christ was raised up as Head of the body, the bride. It is not on this I would dwell. I am not going to speak about the church, but would turn back to what the life is, and would dwell on this thought, the promise of life in the mind of God before the world ever existed. Before that, I say, this life existed in a person, Christ, the One Who was in the beginning with God, and was God; that is the Christ with Whom my life is hidden with the Father. Being in Himself life, He came into the world as the Life, and manifested the Life. The thing was embodied in the person of the Lord as Man; and there it was—the life of man, not of angels. That which was specially God's divine thought toward man is shown out when Christ becomes Man; and this life is communicated to us, the instrument used being the preached word of truth. This divine life had been manifested here in a Man—the Lord Jesus. He having given it to us, it is now manifested in our bodies. It has the character of godliness in its manifestation. It tells you what you are. It is in a poor vessel, and where there is a wretched will; but it tells you what you are, and what the world is; it throws out an additional light to show what man is as a creature totally departed from God.

Morally speaking, the world has grown up in departure from God; that is, the world we live in—all that we see around—has sprung up from the creature having got away from God. But the life we have existed before the creation of the world; and this portion of scripture is very full of the simple, quiet, blessedness of what that life is, practically manifested and given in Christ. A great deal of evil had come in. Satan was corrupting the truth by the wild reason of man's mind. The apostle specially warns Timothy and Titus, and throws them back, not on common Christian profession, but on the faith of God's elect, the acknowledging the truth which is after godliness. They were to be as those who knew what were the thoughts and mind of God, and were cast on Him. If I have got divine teaching, I can say I know the Shepherd's voice; and if it is not His, I shall know that too. The truth which is after godliness is not only acknowledged, but is marked and stamped as of God by a man living to and for God. Godliness is what a man would do if instigated by God; and what a man would not do if God were close by him, it is clear, would certainly not be for God. A man daily taught by the knowledge of God how to be living for God would do everything to manifest the ways of godliness, knowing those ways because of God. I speak not of doing right instead of wrong, or of conscientiousness. A believer clearly ought to be righteous with regard to others; but I speak of godliness. You never can be for God without knowing what God is. I cannot walk worthily of God if I do not know Him. I cannot walk with God without that, though I may walk uprightly with man. Here it is walking worthy of God, the loins being girded (affections tucked up). This applies to all revealed to us in Christ. A believer, as to his motives and life, has Christ's mind revealed to him, to show him how to guide himself through all circumstances. Sorrow could draw out His heart in divine love, but in motives and all circumstances He was always Himself (perfect, of course). It is the mind of Christ that believers are to have. What a wonderful place we have got! Only as we are taught of God can we get hold of this; that is, the hope of eternal life promised by God before the world began. Mark that; for as to the Adam life, it never could be that, but a divine life in those who are saved—a life for heaven. We have got it now, and we shall be there on account of it. There will be its full manifestation, everything there, every word, and all praise will be according to the presence of God. As participators of the divine nature we shall be in fullest blessedness there, where nothing inconsistent with the divine nature can exist, but everything will be in accordance with that life, and ourselves as possessors of it in the highest and most blessed perfection. We belong to that place now, whilst our bodies are down here. The life we have got came down from thence, and has its only full sphere of blessing there.

The promise of God before the world began, this life was in the mind of God for us before ever the world existed. I do not speak now of predestination, but of the thing itself in the mind of God before ever the world existed. If we turn to 1 John 1 we see how this Life came down. What “our hands have handled, of the Word of life” (ver. 1-3). It is a real Man. The Life which was with the Father was manifested down here in the person of Christ. In many you will find great vagueness of thought in connection with this life. It is Christ Himself. “When He Who is our life,” &c. Before He speaks of the communication of life, He speaks of its manifestation. John could see what it was down here, amongst friends and enemies. He says, “We have looked upon, and our hands” &c. The Life which was with the Father is the life promised before the world began. I get what it is perfectly displayed. I see this life in One Who, in due time, fully manifested it as Man. The last Adam is the Man in Whom its perfection is seen; a Man in this world, in all points tempted like us; a perfect Man, without sin, walking in the world in meekness and holiness, a pattern set before us to follow.

2 Tim. 1:9 shows the way it was given us in Christ. God connects the two things here: saved by Christ according to His own purpose and grace given us in Him before the world began. In this life we see a thing that has its display in heaven. We have got it now, and in a place where it is hindered. It leads my thoughts and feelings to be ever in heaven, where it is as before the world began. Though displayed in all perfection down here by Him Who has abolished death, and has brought life and incorruption to light, the life was in heaven before it was manifested here. Wonderful truth!

For the power of this life Christ has gone through death and annulled it. Death is an abolished thing for saints. It takes us out of all the misery of the first Adam. It was not so with saints in the Old Testament. They could not say, “Absent from the body, present with the Lord.” It was all death to them. Elijah was taken away for a testimony without passing through death; but Christ passed through it and annulled it, rose and went up to heaven; and life and incorruption are thus brought to light. Turn to John 1:4: “In Him was life.” You never could say that of a saint. God gave us to have that life in His Son. If in ourselves we might lose it, but if He is my life I cannot. “He that hath the Son hath life.”

He is the life and light of men, not of angels. This is an unutterably humbling truth for us. If God was exercising life-giving power, it was to be manifested in a man, and therefore the Son of His love becomes Man. God displayed it by the incarnation of the Word—the eternal Son. He was given in promise to us before the world existed: and He came into the world personally. The Word, made flesh, dwelt among men in all the circumstances in which we walk. He goes down into the death of the first Adam and abolishes death, bringing life and incorruptibility to light, and goes up to the right hand of God as the display of this life in a Man up there. What a thought! That eternal life in this world—a man, a poor man, a carpenter, One Who had not where to lay His head. The life promised before the world began now has been made manifest by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, and in due time manifested to those who believe through preaching. Christ Himself is the great firstfruits of the life that we, as saved ones, have in Him—He the firstfruits of the great harvest of God. I repeat, this life, given in promise before the world existed, was manifested by the Christ, Who in the power of it passed through death; and in heaven it is now manifested in the risen Man Christ Jesus: while down here it is manifested in those who believe through preaching.

That is how we get it. It is preached in the world now. And what does the world make of it? That is the solemn thing for your consciences. If we take the world, we get not the Second Man, but the first. Turn back to the garden of Eden, and you get the clue to the present state of the world and how it began. Man, created in responsibility to keep his first estate, was commanded not to eat the fruit of a certain tree. He eats it, doing his own will, and is cast out of paradise. And the world begins where paradise ends; and that is the world we live in, only it is a thousand times worse, because it has rejected Christ. Yes, the world around us sprang up when man was driven from paradise. A man in a state of responsibility, departed from God, made the world what it is. And what a world! Solemn as is the responsibility of man in it, for us who have life it is only by-the-bye. True, we have to go through it; but it has nothing to do with the eternal life we have, except as being the place where the eternal life has been manifested and brought to us. I would ask, What is man departed from God about? Making the world a scene of delights for himself by cultivating the arts and sciences. (You will find among the heathen the most beautiful exhibition of the arts and sciences.) I repeat, man is making a scene for developing and displaying faculties that have nothing to do with God (the best as well as the worst have nothing to do with Him). (To be continued.)

The Promise of Life, Promise of Life, The

Well, it is in this world that the eternal life has been and is manifested now. Is it by first mending and reconstructing man, by setting the world right, that God gives eternal life? Is life to be got by reforming the world, by modifying the evil of the ways and the tastes of man away from God, by improving man first without God?

What is man? A responsible being that has never been lost! A responsible being, I repeat, away from God, and in departure from God, he has built up for himself a world without God. Bring God into all the fine things that man is doing, and what would be the effect? Most of us know it as a matter of fact that this world, with all its pleasures and things delightful to the flesh, does not let God in, nor Christ, Who is the eternal life; and I get it as a thing that comes in between. Eternal life has come down here, and I have it in a world that has all its life from the first man; in a world entirely departed and alienated from God—a world that had its origin in man having been turned out of—a world that, when Christ in divine beauty and grace was in it, spat in His face and turned Him out. That is the world I am in now.

But where does my heart go to out of the world? To that blessed life I have in Christ. I may have got it but yesterday, but the thing I have received was up there for me before the foundation of the world. I have got Christ as my life: “the life I live is by faith of the Son of God;” and it was in God's mind to give me this life before the world was. “He that hath the Son hath life” —a life not of man at all; and having got it I am to show what is the effect of it, and from whence I got it. What is the life I got from the first Adam? All sin; if put under law, not subject to it; a life with lusts and a will of its own. I judge it altogether. When Christ was here, the tree being bad had judgment pronounced against it. The flesh is a judged thing. I find only sin and condemnation in connection with it, but I get God dealing with this sin in the flesh: “What the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

Mark, it is not only sins remitted, but sin condemned. Oh, I say, sin is in the flesh; I have got it, and I hate it! It is lusting in me, making me dislike what Christ likes whilst my heart is set on Christ. But I find God has dealt in judgment with it, and put it away on the cross. He condemned it where it was put away, and that is where I find I am. I have sin, but I am not to be judged for it—Christ was of God made sin for me. He, in grace, has taken it. My soul in the power of this truth gets perfect peace. I have no more conscience of sins; I am no longer dreading God's judgment, because I am forgiven; all has merged into the deliverance Christ has given. I have perfect liberty; sin has not dominion: I judge this flesh of mine, and all its lusts and will entirely, because it is a judged thing. I am crucified with Christ; I stand in a new condition; I have eternal life in me, Christ being my life. I have liberty and joy by His going through death; I have died, and am risen with Him. This is where I am brought by grace.

I have not only a life of him that departed from God, but as a believer the life of Him Who came into the place where I was away from God, to bring me back to God. I belong to Him; I am risen with Him, where the eternal life is to be displayed. In spirit I am up, there now whilst in the body waiting for Him to come. I am in a world that is merely by the bye to me, only a thing I have to pass through; not of it, even as Christ was not. He passed through and left us an example that we should follow, walking in His footsteps. I am to reckon myself dead. “As we have borne the image of the earthly, even so,” etc. A believer does not belong to the first man, but to the Second. The life of Christ is his, and that is all be owns as his life—that life so blessed, so divine, that the world would not have it, and shrunk from it because it was so perfect, and God took it up and put it on His throne as the only place fitted for it.

Christ down here displayed everything that characterizes this life. I should like to mark one or two traits of it. One is that quiet confidence with God that springs from, and is the fruit of, divine love, that which can trust God and is capable of enjoying blessed communion with God,

enabling one through all things and circumstances here to walk confiding in God. One could not have had that confidence if Christ had not died to put away sin, and brought me into relationship with God. Having a purged conscience, I can delight in God; and as regards my walk through this world, Christ is my life, my all. I am consciously dependent on Him. As we pass on through this world we have to overcome. How? “This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” Life has this especial character. It avoids evil, and walks in grace through the world. If I have the life of Christ, I am to walk down here as He walked, in practical life, “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord,” etc. with the consciousness that it came from God, promised before the world was.

We shall most surely find defectiveness in this from not having self-judged, and the spirit free to enjoy Christ. We have to watch that things of this world do not narrow up the life that is to be made manifest. Do we not find continually that we get under the power of circumstances, by which the heart is often narrowed? How often we have to say, I did not think of that at the right moment! But if always bearing about the dying of the Lord, it would be always easy to manifest His life. If the heart be full of Christ, it will always be ready for Christ. The tendency of saints is to have the heart narrowed up—not ever ready for God and their neighbor. It would not be so if we could only get the heart exercised under a deep consciousness of what the life we have got is, and what the world is, what a. poor, little, wretched thing it is. Having hearts exercised to discern good and evil whilst down here, we should pass through this world as pilgrims and strangers, having cleansed consciences able to judge the flesh as being only the old thing. Life being given, the world (grown up from man rejecting God) is the place where this life is to be exercised, and we get various exercises. See what Paul passed through “We who live are always delivered unto death,” etc. He gloried in tribulation and in infirmities if only the life might be manifested. I desire that your hearts should get hold of what this eternal life is, so to live in the power of it, that you should see how it came into the world revealed in Christ.

Seeing all its blessedness and beauty in Christ, the heart clings round it. In Him the life was the light of men. What a thing—in the place where Satan rules to have God's own life given to us in His Son, and that we live in Christ only, but ever remember that this life has no affinity with the world! We have to manifest the light of life in the midst of the world that will not have Christ; and, alas! how constantly everything tends to make us live by sight instead of by faith. But whatever we fail in, we shall certainly find that God has given us everything in Christ.

Oh, may He give us to know more and more what that eternal life is which was promised in Him before the foundation of the world! J. N. D.
(Continued from page 117.)

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Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Evangelic 2, Promise of Life

Titus 1

IT is at the beginning of this chapter that the Spirit of God marks with an especial character that on which I desire to speak-the eternal thought of God towards us which we find in verses 2, 3. Evil had come in, the Spirit takes notice of it, and the effect in a most remarkable way is to throw us back on the whole mind and thought of God from the beginning. As evil progresses and corruption comes in, the apostle turns back to the origin of all, and coming from the divine nature itself (and all that could meet the evil, and convey us on, must come from that); that is, the eternal life which God who cannot lie promised before the ages of time; that which was in the mind of God as to the thing itself before the foundation of the world; that which God had in His mind, the counsel of God for us, before itself was created. It just shows us what we are, and what man is, with and apart from that eternal life.

In Ephesians we find it in connection with Christ (chap. 3: 3-7): a mystery hidden through all ages in God until Christ was raised up as Head of the body, the bride. It is not on this I would dwell. I am not going to speak about the church, but would turn back to what the life is and would dwell on this thought, the promise of life in the mind of God before the world began. Before that, I say, this life existed in a Person, Christ, the One who was in the beginning with God and was God; that is the Christ with whom my life is hidden with the Father. Being in Himself life, He came into the world as the life and manifested the life. The thing was embodied in the Person of the Lord as Man, and there it was, the life of man, not of angels: that which was specially God's divine thought towards man is shown out when Christ becomes Man, and this life is communicated to us, the instrument used being the preached word of truth. This divine life had been manifested here in a man-the Lord Jesus. He having given it to us, it is now manifested in our bodies. It has the character of godliness in its manifestation. It tells you what you are. It is in a poor vessel and where there is a wretched will, but it tells you what you are and what the world is; it throws out an additional light to show what man is, as a creature totally departed from God.

Morally speaking, the world has grown up in departure from God: that is, this world we live in-all that we see around-has sprung up from the creature having got away from God, but the life we have existed before the creation of the world, and this portion of Scripture is very full of the simple, quiet blessedness of what that life is, practically manifested and given in Christ. A great deal of evil had come in. Satan was corrupting the truth by the wild reasoning of man's mind. The apostle specially warns Timothy and Titus, and throws them back, not on common Christian profession, but on the faith of God's elect, the acknowledging the truth which is after godliness. They were to be as those who knew what were the thoughts and mind of God and were cast on Him. If I have got divine teaching, I can say, I know the Shepherd's voice, and if it is not His, I shall know that too. The truth which is after godliness is not only acknowledged, but is marked and stamped as of God by a man living to and for God. Godliness is what a man would do if instigated by God; and what a man would not do if God were close by him, it is clear, would certainly not be for God. A man daily taught by the knowledge of God how to be living for God would do everything to manifest the ways of godliness, knowing those ways because of knowing God. I speak not of doing right instead of wrong or of conscientiousness. A believer clearly ought to be righteous with regard to others; but I speak of godliness. You never can be for God without knowing what God is. I cannot walk worthy of God if I do not know Him. I cannot walk with God without that, though I may walk uprightly with man. Here it is walking worthy of God, the loins being girded (affections tucked up). This applies to all revealed to us in Christ. A believer, as to his motives and life, has Christ's mind revealed to him, to show him how to guide himself through all circumstances. Christ was always Himself, never guided by circumstances. Sorrow could draw out His heart in divine love, but in motives and all circumstances He was always Himself (perfect, of course). It is the mind of Christ that believers are to have.

What a wonderful place we have got! Only as we are taught of God can we get hold of this, that is, the hope of eternal life promised by God before the world began, mark that; for as to the Adam life, it never could be that, but a divine life in those who are saved, a life for heaven; we have got it now, and we shall be there on account of it; there will be its full manifestation, everything there, every word, and all praise will be according to the presence of God;. as participators of the divine nature we shall be in fullest blessedness, there where nothing inconsistent with the divine nature can exist, but everything will be in accordance with that life and ourselves as possessors of it in the highest and most blessed perfection. We belong to that place now, whilst our bodies are down here; the life we have got came down from thence, and has its only full sphere of blessing there.

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John 1, we see how this life came down (v. 1-3)-" What our hands have handled, of the Word of life." It is a real man. The life which was with the Father was manifested down here in the Person of Christ. In many you will find great vagueness of thought in connection with this life. It is Christ Himself. " When he who is our life," etc. Before He speaks of the communication of life, He speaks of its manifestation. John could see what it was down here, amongst friends and enemies; he says, " We have looked upon, and our hands," etc. The life which was with the Father is the life promised before the world began. I get what it is perfectly displayed. I see this life in One who, in due time, fully manifested it as man. The second Adam is the Man in whom its perfection is seen; a Man in this world, in all points tempted like us; a perfect Man, without sin, walking in the world in meekness and holiness, a pattern set before us to follow.

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I have not only a life of him that departed from God, but as a believer the life of Him who came into the place where I was away from God, to bring me back to God. I belong to Him-I am risen with Him, where the eternal life is to be displayed. In spirit I am up there now, whilst in the body waiting for Him to come. I am in a world that is merely by the bye to me, only a thing I have to pass through-not of it, even as Christ was not. He passed through it, and left us an example that we should follow, walking in His footsteps. I am to reckon myself dead. " As we have borne the image of the earthy, even so," etc. A believer does not belong to the first Adam, but to the Second. The life of Christ is his, and that is all he owns as his life-that life so blessed, so divine, that the world would not have it, and shrunk from it because it was so perfect, and God took it up and put it on His throne as the only place fitted for it.

Christ down here displayed everything that characterizes this life. I should like to mark one or two traits of it: one is that quiet confidence with God that springs from, and is the fruit of, divine love, that which can trust God and is capable of enjoying blessed communion with God, enabling one through all things and circumstances here to walk on confiding in God. One could not have had that confidence if Christ had not died to put away sin and brought me into relationship with God. Having a purged conscience, I can delight in God, and as regards my walk through this world, Christ is my life, my all. I am consciously dependent on Him. As we pass on through the world we have to overcome. How? This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Life has this especial character. It avoids evil and walks in grace through the world. If I have the life of Christ, I am to walk down here as He walked, in practical life, " Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord," etc., with the consciousness that it came from God, promised before the world was.

We shall most surely find defectiveness in this from not having self judged and the spirit free to enjoy Christ. We have to watch that things of this world do not narrow up the life that is to be made manifest. Do we not continually find that we get under the power of circumstances, by which the heart is often narrowed? How often we have to say, I did not think of that at the right moment! But if always bearing about the dying of the Lord, it would be always easy to manifest His life. If the heart be full of Christ, it will be always ready for Christ. The tendency of saints is to have the heart narrowed up-never ready for God and their neighbor. It would not be so if we could only get the heart exercised under a deep consciousness of what the life we have got is, and what the world is, what a poor little wretched thing it is. Having hearts exercised to discern good and evil whilst down here, we should pass through this world as pilgrims and strangers, having cleansed consciences able to judge the flesh as being only the old thing. Life being given, the world (grown up from man rejecting God) is the place where this life is to be exercised, and we get various exercises. See what Paul passed through, " We who live are always delivered unto death," etc. He gloried in tribulation and in infirmities if only the life might be manifested. I desire that your hearts should get hold of what this eternal life is, so to live in the power of it, that you should see how it came into the world, revealed in Christ.

Seeing all its blessedness and beauty in Christ, the heart clings round it. In Him the life was the light of men. What a thing-in the place where Satan rules to have God's own life given to us in His Son, and that we live in Christ only, but ever remember that this life has no affinity with the world! We have to manifest the light of life in the midst of the world that will not have Christ; and, alas! how constantly everything tends to make us live by sight instead of by faith! But whatever we fail in we shall certainly find that God has given us everything in Christ.

Oh, may He give us to know more and more what that eternal life is which was promised in Him before the world began.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Evangelic 2, Saving Grace of God, The

Titus 2

THE more we study the word, the more we see how it takes us out of the present world, and how it associates us with all things that are of God. When we come to what is Christian, it is not what the law was (that is righteous claim), but the revelation of God's grace and God's mind to give what takes our hearts from this world, and associates us with a revealed scene that is not this world at all, but outside it all. This is Christianity in its practical character; it is an association completely of our hearts with things not seen. When we walk right, we walk by faith.

" Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Servants are not to purloin. Why? " That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things." Paul was so full of Christ Himself that he could not speak without bringing Christ in. He cannot say, " Husbands, love your wives " without saying what Christ was Himself, " even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it." It is no mere morality, nor a question of results.

The Christian is a person whose mind has got hold of the revelation of God by the power of the Holy Ghost. " He that is of the earth is earthly and speaketh of the earth; he that cometh from heaven is above all." The Lord says, " No man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." He comes and brings from heaven the full revelation of what He knew. This is the reason that no one received His testimony. He brings in these heavenly things: all His words were the expression of what He was, at the same time perfectly adapted to man down here, while all the fullness of the Godhead was in Him. We find in Christ that which is entirely divine and perfectly human. It is the bringing down of these heavenly things perfectly adapted to what man was on the earth; and now He sets us to walk through the world according to that which has been revealed to us. So with the servant: it is the motive power. If one say, You will be killed if you do that, my answer is, If I die, I shall only go to heaven. Earth loses its power and so does lust. " Not purloining ": the commonest duties are connected with motives which take the heart above everything here.

There is no difficulty in the world that this principle does not rise above. You can never take a person entirely out of everything that surrounds him without a motive above them all: you may take him out of one thing or another, but not out of everything. Then the motive is everything done for Christ; and everything else is advanced and elevated because the motive is elevated. If the things in this world cease to be motives (of duties there are plenty), in the commonest things you get the soul lifted out of the world; the governing motives are above it. The Christian is thus unassailable. If men try him by pleasant and natural things, he is kept; for they are not Christ, and for him " to live is Christ."

The law brought in the authority of God, and of course it ought to have been obeyed. The law took up the relationship in which men stood with God and with one another, and said, You must walk according to these words. Duties were there, and God took man according to the way he ought to act, keeping the relationships as they stood; but there was no revelation of Himself. God's authority was there in claim, but this was not a revelation of love. Law told them what they ought to be as the means of finding out what they were. Christianity is a different thing; it is God revealed in grace, coming amongst men. What the law told was this, on the contrary': that God did not yet come out to man; and that man could not go in to God. Christianity, while fully upholding the authority of the law, is just the opposite: God did come out; and man is gone in.

The law was not an arbitrary thing, but the commandment was holy, just and good. The apostle, as touching the righteousness which is in the law, was " blameless "; but the moment the law added this, " Thou shalt not lust," to the perfect rule from God for a man where he was, it might as well have said, You must not be a man, for man was already fallen and a sinner. God added that to the rule of ordinary relationships, and it reaches the conscience.

But Christianity tests man in another way, namely, by the very revelation of God. God did come out in blessed perfect grace and unutterable goodness; His Son became a man. Still it was the revelation of God, and men would not have God, but they rejected and crucified Him. Now the condition of man is proved; the judgment of the world is pronounced. " If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin." " Now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father."

Man was thus fully tested. A nation was taken up to try thorough agriculture of the human heart; but it brought forth sour grapes. Then God said, I have yet one Son, it may be they will reverence Him when they see Him. But said they, " This is the heir, come let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours."

Christianity is the testimony that man is lost. You have thus the rejection of Christ bringing in the condition of the whole world before God. Not only is man out of paradise; but he has turned God out of the world. In the cross, in which man showed his enmity to God, the blessed work of redemption was wrought, the sacrifice put away sin was accomplished, and man has gone into glory. As the law was the testing of man as a child of Adam, so in the gospel I have now got the " Second man "-much more than a man, of course-gone into glory. The more we meditate on the cross, the more we see the place where sin above all was manifested, the place where obedience was perfected. Sin was at the highest point, and there was the absolute perfection of obedience; I see sin where obedience is perfected. Christ was there glorifying God in the place of sin. There was the absolute perfection of obedience, and the absolute completion of man's sin. Where was judgment shown in its fullest character? Not in the condition of the sinner, but in Christ made sin for us. The perfect love of God was shown there; what man is, was shown there, what Christ was, what God was also in judgment against sin.

But the consequence of the cross is that man is in glory, and believers are justified and cleansed through Christ's blood, all cleared and cleansed. Then the Holy Ghost comes down, dwells in them, and connects them with the Man in glory. Paul first sees Christ in the glory; he did not lose Him in the clouds like the others, but he saw Him first in the glory beyond the clouds. " Delivering thee," in Acts 26:17, means taking thee out from among " the people and from the Gentiles ": he was neither Jew nor Gentile; he was completely associated with Christ in glory. The gospel went out to every creature, coming out from heaven on the ground that Christ is in heaven.

The Spirit takes of the things of Christ and shows them to you. All your relationships as a Christian are in heaven. This is where the Christian is in these verses in Titus. He has the Holy Ghost to go according to the heavenly Christ; he looks back to what I have been speaking of; he stands between the first coming and the second, having a clear apprehension of the effect of the first and also of the second. This is not prophecy at all, which foretells things coming on the earth: there is no prophecy of heaven. Prophecy refers to the government of this world. Hence John the Baptist says, that he was talking of things on the earth. When Christ came He told them heavenly things, and, having been sacrificed to put away sin, by the baptism of the Holy Ghost associates with Himself there.

The Christian is a person who has the Holy Ghost and who stands between the first coming and the second. Israel is a witness of God's dealings on the earth; the Christian is a witness of His sovereign grace that gives man a place in heaven. Prophecy told of a day of darkness coming on the earth. " We have also the word of prophecy more sure whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a candle that shineth in a dark place." A candle is a very useful thing. What do you get in the Revelation? Trumpets, seals, vials, all judgment; but this prophecy is my candle, and I see where all evil will end. It is all very useful as a warning; but when Christ as the day star dawns in my heart, it is attracted out, it is of the place. " I will come and receive you unto myself "-that is in heaven! The Lord teaches us to look for Him in affection: we are converted to this-" to wait for his Son from heaven "; we are not converted to prophecy. Grace has appeared, and it teaches us to look for the glory of His appearing. Compare verse 11 with 13.

It is hard for us first to feel, " In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing," and next, to know that the world is judged.

The gospel is grace addressed to the lost, not probation to see how I shall turn out. It has turned out that I loved every vanity better than Christ, that is, in short, that I am lost.

The flowers of human nature are often no less pretty: the blossoms on the crab are as pretty as those of the apple.

Character is not the question, but motive. A cross man may be breaking his heart about his temper (there is the same difference in dogs; of course an amiable dog is much pleasanter to meet than a cross dog). It is conscience, not character at its best, which shows I have had to do with God. In the gospel I find what I am, and what God is; I have found a grace which has met man in this state. The gospel turns me from what I am right over to what God is to the lost. I am guilty by what I have done; I am lost by what I am. The fullest grace comes in; but grace connects me with the fullest salvation. The Savior has come to deliver me out of the condition I am in. All I have done, all my condition as a child of Adam, I am completely done with; I have got to the end of myself. Salvation is a big word. I have my place in the Man that is gone into

paradise above, not in the man that was turned out of paradise on earth. That is the way grace appears: it is not help; it is salvation, the blood of Christ the ground of it. I get sins sent away, the conscience made perfect, and Christ always appearing in the presence of God for me: there is not an instant of my life as a believer that Christ is not before God for me. I am now a man saved, justified, cleansed, made the temple of the Holy Ghost. There I stand in that Man in glory.

Now the Christian is taught by grace-" Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." I am redeemed out of the world, but I have got to walk through it. How did the present world come? God never made this world or age (of course I do not mean the physical world), He made paradise. Sin and the devil made this world; for morally speaking God did not make it. Cain goes out from the presence of Jehovah; he settles, when a vagabond, in the land of his vagabondage, and builds a city. Next, the city must be a pleasant place; what harm was there in brass and iron? None whatever; but there was a great deal of harm in going out of the presence of Jehovah. What harm was there in the trees of the garden? If you bring in God and Christ in speaking to the men of the world, they will turn you out; they say, It is not the time for it. Well, it may not be; but it is never the time with man to bring Christ in. The world is all built up away from God; man will not have God come into it.

You have the whole life of the Christian practically summed up in three words, " soberly, righteously, and godly ": " soberly " with self-restraint; " righteously " as regards others; " godly " with God. In this new place, with new motives, he is to live in the power of his new life; he has an object out of the world.

Faith, human faith, is always the spring by which anything in this world is done; God gives me what is divine. A man is always what his object is; if Christ is a man's object, he is a Christian. " That I may win Christ," this was Paul's object. He had found the blessed Son of God willing to become a man to save him; he is looking for Him; he wants to see the One that loved him.

I am not speaking of doctrine, of an item of knowledge, but of what I am converted to; it is the thing for which a man is converted, the object. As I have borne the image of the earthy, I am going to bear the image of the heavenly. I am going to be with Him, and I want to be like Him. You will find this strikingly as the hope of the Christian; and so the Lord never says a word that goes beyond the present life; He takes care not to put His coming in a shape to make it necessarily more distant. The virgins that fall asleep are the same virgins that awake; this is the principle. The servants the lord gave the talents to are the same servants with whom he reckons. That in the seven churches we have history I do not doubt; but does He give it as history? No, He takes care to give seven churches then before Him; He will never

sanction the heart making a delay. You are to live as you

would live if you were expecting Him every day. Whether changed or raised, then we shall be with Christ and like Christ. Christ will be satisfied; so shall I. The thought and purpose of God is to have us like Himself and with Himself. He is still gathering out souls. But on the other hand we are to be " as men that wait for their Lord." If a mother is expecting her son from America, she is always expecting him, for she loves him. When a person is really waiting for Christ, he has the room of his heart ready for Him. He has given Himself to have us for Himself, with hearts united, gathered up, to Him; a peculiar people, a people of possession, manifesting the character of God in grace till He display it in glory.

Now, beloved brethren, where are we? Can we say, " This present evil world," not in hardness as if we did not once belong to it, but as the world that has rejected Christ, and of which Satan is the prince? The world is not only a sinful world outside the earthly paradise, but a world that rejected Christ when He came into it.

The things I shall have in heaven are to form my heart now. Our hearts are so dim to see these heavenly things, but it is God's thought to reveal them to us. " Now we see through a glass darkly "-true, but we see the same things. 1 Cor. 2, often quoted to prove I cannot know them, really proves I can. " But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." Christianity says He has revealed them all. Quite true, it has not entered into the heart of man to conceive them. In the Old Testament they did not know them (of course not); but the Holy Ghost has come down to reveal them to us. The veil is rent, the way into the holiest of all is manifest. There is a perfect contrast as to the condition of the saint now. I am associated with Him. now; I know I shall be like Him then. He has become a man for the very purpose to have me with Him in glory. I know that righteousness is there, and through the Spirit I am waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith (that is, for glory), for Him to bring me actually there. I am so identified with Christ that, when He appears, I shall appear with Him in glory.

Has this power over our hearts? Are your hearts settled as to the perfectness of His work? Is there such love to Him that you wait for Him who loves you?

The Lord give us in these last days to have hearts thus watching, taking His word, and clinging to it. This gives us what is heavenly, and perfectly suited to us while here.

Collected Writings of J.N. Darby: Expository 6, Titus 2:11-14, Notes of Lecture on

IT is very striking to notice the connections in which the summary of divine truth, contained in these verses, is introduced. The chapter is occupied with teaching what sort of conduct Christianity demands from those who profess it, according to the relative position in life in which they may be found. It teaches what is becoming in aged men and in aged women. It tells us, also, how young women should behave; and what should be characteristic of young men. It then takes up the common every-day conduct which is due from servants to their masters; and (while teaching them to be obedient, and to seek to please them in everything- guarding against insolence and dishonesty-" that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things ") it adds, " For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

Now there is a reason for the introduction of this passage here; which is simply this: that while men are satisfied- and must be satisfied, for they can go no farther-with the expression of the mere outward behavior, the word of God occupies itself with the correction of the motives

and springs from whence all conduct flows. More than this-no conduct can ever be acceptable in the sight of God that does not flow from a heart subjected to His grace, which brings salvation; and that is not swayed by its daily powers. Rules of conduct are not given, cannot be given, to those whose hearts have not been subjected to " the obedience of faith."

But even here, amongst Christians, there is a very frequent mistake. While the world values Christianity merely for its collateral results, such as the reformation of manners and its conservative effect on society, etc., Christians too often are occupied with the working and effect of God's grace, in the subjects of it-whether themselves or others-to the exclusion of the contemplation of that grace in its divine and absolute character, and in its first and grand effect. I mean this: ordinarily the Christian's mind is more occupied, as expressed in the passage before us, with what the grace of God teaches, than with what it brings. It teaches us to deny ungodliness, etc.; but before it teaches, it brings salvation. How many may be found most anxious to discover, what men now call the subjective power of this grace, who at the same time are utterly at sea as to what is meant, in corresponding phrase, by its objective power! Surely it is well, and necessary, in its place, to see to it that we yield ourselves to the teaching of God's grace, when its lesson is, " that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." But it is not well to overlook, or underestimate, the absolute power of that grace in what it brings. The grace of God brings salvation, or is salvation bringing, to the lost and ruined, before it teaches in those whom it saves.

" The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared," is but the succinct description of God's intervention in infinite love, by the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, for the accomplishment of redemption.

Apart from all the effects and fruits of grace in those who are the subjects of it, there is God's intervention in perfect absolute goodness, in the scene of ruin and death, which sin has introduced, for the perfect and entire deliverance out of it. The grace of God brings salvation into this world, where sin and death and Satan's power mark the condition of man's existence; and that apart from all effects of that grace, in peace of conscience, or holiness and happiness, on the part of those that believe. There is the grace itself, as well as the blessed fruits which it produces. The salvation which it brings has its own proper character, as the intervention of God in divine love and power, as well as its own blessed results in the position Godward, to which it brings its objects.

The two termini of a Christian's course are here marked as the results of this interposition of God in grace, namely, salvation and glory. The Christian's path, I repeat it, is here shown to lie between the starting-point, which is salvation, and the goal, which is glory. Grace and glory are inseparable. Conduct, exercise of heart, trial, conflict, service, lie between these two points, and in God's estimate take their character from them; but the salvation was accomplished alone by Christ's appearing in grace-for " grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." And the glory will be accomplished, alone, by Christ's appearing in glory. This is what the passage states. " The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." It then adds, " looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ." Intermediately it tells us that the grace, which brings salvation, teaches us, " that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world "; while in verse 14, we have the constraining motive to holiness in the end for which Christ gave Himself for us. " Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

This is plainly practical as the end, in us in this world, of Christ's infinite love.

Let us look, then, first, at the character of the deliverance, or salvation, which this wondrous intervention of God in grace brings. This cannot be learned by going over the points of systematic divinity [i.e. the creeds of religious systems], but by a reference to the character of man's condition through sin, as unfolded in the word of God, and manifested by the suffering and death of Christ. Whatever there is of moral distance from God, through sin, this salvation, which " the grace of God " brings, meets, and sets aside. " For Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Sin in its very nature separates from God; for light cannot have fellowship with darkness; but then it is said, " Ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Sin, and death, and Satan's power, and the judgment of God-all marked man's condition of ruin, and all must be met before salvation, full and adequate, can be proclaimed. It is not enough to raise man from his degradation and moral pollution, if such a thing could be, and set him on his pathway to happiness. The conscience must be set at rest on the ground of every claim of God in His righteous holiness having been met, and every possible consequence of sin set aside. And this is the salvation which the grace of God brings. It brings eternal life into this region of death; for " God hath given to us eternal life: and this life is in his Son." It brings in divine righteousness into the midst of condemnation. For " he who knew no sin was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." It brings deliverance from Satan's power; for " through death [Christ] destroyed him who had the power of death, that is, the devil." Nay more, the salvation which the grace of God brings puts us in the very place, and position, and acceptance before God, and makes us partakers of the very life and glory of Him by whom the salvation has been wrought. It has no other measure, and has no lower character. Was ever love like this!

There is, indeed, the teaching of this grace, which is all-important in its place; but what the heart must know first (as it is its first action, on the part of a God of goodness) is its salvation-bringing power; for without the knowledge of the salvation, its teaching will be misapprehended and in vain.

The grace of God, then, first brings a perfect absolute deliverance of the soul from the whole consequences of sin, and brings into God's presence in acceptance, according to the acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ. For the salvation lies in His obedience and sufferings for sin, in the acceptableness of His sacrifice, and in the power of His resurrection; and " as he is, so are we in this world." This is all absolute; it is God's part in the grace which brings salvation,

And as it is absolute in its character, so is it universal in its aspect and bearing. " The grace of God which bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." It is unrestricted in its character; as the sun shines for all, though some hide themselves even from its light. " God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish but have everlasting life." " Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

But the grace received becomes teaching in those who are the subjects of the salvation which it brings. It teaches us " that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." And here, I observe, it is " the grace " that teaches, and not something else. It is not man's wisdom, or man's morality, mixing itself with that which is divine in his salvation, and, I may add, divine in the nature which it imparts. It is the grace which brought the salvation still acting-but acting now in the subjects of it, and on the divine nature which it imparts. They are not human motives, which form and fashion and produce the morality of a Christian, any more

than it is human power that accomplishes his salvation. It is " the grace of God " that teaches him as well as saves him.

This is very remarkably shown in a passage in Timothy (1 Tim. 3:16), the force of which is very frequently overlooked. The apostle would teach Timothy how he ought to behave himself " in the house of God "; and he then presents the formative power of all true godliness in the words, " Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

This is often quoted and interpreted as if it spoke of the mystery of the Godhead, or the mystery of Christ's Person. But it is the mystery of godliness, or the secret by which all real godliness is produced-the divine spring of all that can be called piety in man. " God manifest in the flesh," is the example and the power of godliness, its measure and its spring. Godliness is not now produced, as under the law, by divine enactments; nor is it the result in the spirit of bondage in those (however godly) who only know God as worshipped behind a veil. Godliness now springs from the knowledge of the incarnation, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. It takes its spring and character from the knowledge of His Person as " God manifest in the flesh "; the perfectness of His obedience, " as justified in the Spirit "; the object of angelic contemplation, and the subject of testimony and faith in the world; and His present position as " received up into glory."

This is how God is known; and from abiding in this flows godliness. And as in the passage before us, between the salvation, which is the result of the appearing of the grace and the crowning of " that blessed hope " which the believer looks for in the appearing of the glory, is the teaching of the grace that has brought salvation. It teaches the denial of ungodliness and worldly desires, as at war with the ends of redemption, and contrary to the character and position in which salvation places us as " delivered from this present evil world." Certainly the cross and the glory alike forbid the allowance of ungodliness and the pursuit of worldly desires. It was the world that crucified Christ; and in the appearing of the glory worldly desires can have no place. " For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away and the lusts thereof." It will be all withered by the appearing of the glory. But sobriety, righteousness, and godliness are due from the believer towards the world as a witness; and due towards God as a witness of the conforming power of His most precious grace.

Already I have noticed that this passage presents the believer's path as lying between the salvation, which was accomplished by Christ's appearing in grace, and the glory, which will be accomplished by Christ's appearing in glory. " Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing [or epiphany of the glory; as there was the epiphany of grace] of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ." The salvation which the grace of God brings settles every question between God and the soul as to sin and condemnation; and the appearing of the glory will bring those who are Christ's into the enjoyment of the presence of God and Christ, into the perfected victory of Christ, and into the possession of all that can fit us for His presence in glory. " Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself," Phil. 3:20, 21. " Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation," Heb. 9:28. " We are saved by hope "; and nothing so molds the affections for heaven as " waiting for God's Son from heaven,... even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come." In possession, and in the enjoyment, as to the soul, of this divine and perfected salvation, the believer has that which is far brighter in hope. He who, in sorrow and suffering and in infinite love, wrought the salvation, is coming to receive us unto Himself; that where He is, there we may be also. We shall see Him as He is, and then we shall be made like Him.

All is divine and precious, infinite in love and goodness, in the way our God takes to act upon the soul. How touching is the motive to holiness which is presented in the closing verse of our passage! " Who gave himself for us that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," v. 14. Here we have the end of redemption in the practical walk of the believer in this world. But what can equal the motive that is presented in the declaration, " Who gave himself for us "?

May our hearts more fully answer to its constraining power!

Notes and Jottings, Titus 2:11-15, Edinburgh Meeting Address:

IT is a great thing for us, beloved friends, in all our path, to know where we are, and then to know the mind of God, not only as to where we are, but as to our own place in the path in which we find ourselves.

Not only has God visited us in grace, but we have to take into our own mind what the present actual result of the grace is that has reached us, so that we hold fast the great principles under which God has set us as Christians, and at the same time be able to apply those principles to the circumstances in which we find ourselves. These circumstances may vary according to our actual position, but the principles never vary. Their application to the path of faith may vary, and does.

I mean such a thing as this:

In Hezekiah's time, they were told that " in quietness and confidence shall be your strength," and that the Assyrian should not even cast a mount before Jerusalem; they were to stay perfectly calm and firm. And the host of Assyria was destroyed.

But when, in Jeremiah's time, the moment of judgment had come, then he that went out of the city to their enemies, the Chaldees, should save himself.

They were still God's people as much as before, though He was saying for the time (in judgment), "not my people," and that made the difference.

It was not that God's mind was altered, or His relationship to His people changed; that never will be. Yet in the latter instance the conduct of the people was to be exactly the opposite. Under Hezekiah they were protected; under Zedekiah they were to bow to the judgment.

I refer to these circumstances as a testimony that while the relationship of God with Israel in this world is immutable, yet their conduct had to be the opposite at one time to that at another.

And so we have to know where we are, and, at the same time, to learn what the path of God is in the position in which we find ourselves.

Look at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles, as regards the church, God's assembly in the world. There I find the full display of power; all had one heart and one mind; they had all things in common; and the very place was shaken where they were.

But suppose I take the professing church now, including the Roman Catholic system and all else; if we look at that sort of thing and own it, at once we bow down to everything that is evil.

Although God's thoughts never change and He knows His people, yet we need spiritual discernment to see where we are, and what the ways of God are in the circumstances, while never departing from the first great principles which He has laid down for us in His word.

We have, too, to take account of another thing as a fact of Scripture: Wherever God has set man, the first thing man does is to spoil his position; we must ever take that into account.

Look at Adam, Noah, Aaron, Solomon, Nebuchadnezzar.

God goes on in patient mercy; yet the uniform way of man, as we read in Scripture, has been at once to upset and destroy the thing which God set up as good. Consequently, it is impossible that there can be any walking with a true knowledge of our position, if this is not considered.

But God is faithful, and goes on in patient love.

Thus, in Isaiah we find, " Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes," and so on; but it was not fulfilled till eight hundred years after; and when Christ came they rejected Him.

God waited in patience; individual souls were converted; various testimonies were rendered by the prophets, and a remnant was preserved still.

But if we should plead the faithfulness of God, which is invariable, in order to put a positive sanction upon the evil that man has brought in, our whole principle is false.

That is exactly what they did in Jeremiah's time, when judgment was coming, and what Christendom is doing now. They said: " The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these "; and, " The law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise," when they were all going to Babylon.

The faithfulness of God was invariable, but the moment they applied that to sustain them in the place of evil, it became the very ground of their ruin. If we lose the sense of where we are, the very principles which would be our security become our ruin.

We get the word, " Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him "—a passage constantly misapplied. God is saying there, " Abraham was alone, and I called him." Israel, to whom God spake this, was then but a little remnant—" Don't let that make you uneasy, I called Abraham alone." Their being little was of no consequence; Go &would bless them alone, as He had blessed Abraham.

Now, in Ezekiel, that is denounced as iniquity. There they said, "We are many"; "Abraham was one, and he inherited the land," God blessed him, and so He will bless us still more.

From want of conscience, really, they misapprehended the condition in which they were, and with which God was dealing.

So now, if we have not the sense of our own condition, I speak of the whole professing thing in the midst of which we find ourselves, we shall be marked by an utter lack of spiritual intelligence.

I think we are in the last days, but sometimes I think people do not weigh the full force of that.

I think I can show you from Scripture that from the very outset, the church as a responsible system down here has got into the condition of judgment, and that the state of it is such as to require individual faith to judge it.

Many seek to find a kind of resource from the present confusion in the doctrine that the church teaches and judges, and does this and that.

But, on the contrary, God is judging the church.

He does show patience and grace, calling souls to Himself as He did in Israel; but what we have to look in the face is that the church has not escaped the effect of that principle in poor human nature that the first thing it does is to depart from God, and ruin what He has set up.

When we speak of the last times, it is not a new thing, but one which we have in Scripture, one which God in sovereign goodness has given us before the closing of the canon of Scripture.

He allowed the evil to come up so that He could give us the judgment of Scripture upon it.

If you look at Jude—and I take now merely some of those principles which the church of God wants—he says, " Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." The faith was in danger already; they were obliged to contend for that which was slipping from them, so to say, " for there were certain men crept in unawares," etc., so that you must look at judgment now. As God saved the people out of Egypt, and then had to destroy them that believed not. So, too, with the angels in like manner.

Enoch prophesied of those of whom he speaks as having come in, as those upon whom the Lord will execute judgment when He comes again.

These were there then, and the starting point of the evil in the apostles' days was sufficient to give the revelation of God's mind by His word; the ground of the judgment when the Lord comes again was there present already.

If you take John's first epistle, chapter 2:18, he says, " Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time."

So that it is not a new thing that is developed, but it began at the first, just as in Israel they made the calf at the outset; yet God bore with them for centuries, but the state of the people was that which a spiritual man judged.

John says, " We know it is the last time." I suppose the church of God has hardly improved since then. In verse 20 he adds, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things"—you have got that which will enable you to judge in these circumstances.

Again, take the practical state of the church as seen by Paul in Phil. 2:20, 21: "I have no man like minded who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." That was in his days. What a testimony! It is not that they had given up being Christians.

He tells Timothy, " At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me; I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge," 2 Tim. 4:16. Not one stayed by him.

Peter tells us, " The time is come, that judgment must begin at the house of God."

I name these as the authority of the word of God, showing that even then, at the very beginning, there was that going on outwardly which the Spirit of God could discern and testify that it was the ground of final judgment. It was already manifest in the church of God.

There is another thing that shows this principle strongly, and that is the ground of action in the circumstances portrayed in the seven churches of the Revelation.

I do not doubt that that is the history of the church of God; but the point is, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The churches could neither guide nor have authority, nor anything else of the kind; but whoever had an ear to hear God's word had to judge their state. That, very evidently, is an important principle, and a very solemn thing it is. He is speaking to the churches, not as Head of the body, though He is that forever and ever, but He is looking at them as responsible down here on the earth.

It is not the Father sending messages to the church, as in the different epistles; but it is Christ walking in the midst of the churches, to judge them. He is, therefore, seen here, neither as the Head of the body, nor as the Servant. He has His garment down to the feet, but if I want to serve, I tuck my garment up. He is walking in their midst to judge their state. That is a new thing.

It is a question of responsibility. So you find some approved and some disapproved. Their condition is the subject of judgment on the part of Christ; and they are here called to listen to what He has to say. It is not, properly speaking, the blessings of God which you get here in the churches, though they had many blessings, but the condition of these churches, when these blessings had been put into their hands—what use had they made of them?

Look at the Thessalonians; in their freshness, the work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope were manifest. But in the first epistle to the churches, that to Ephesus, you get: " I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience." Where were the faith and the love? The spring was wanting. Ah! I will take your candlestick away if you do not repent. They were put in a place of responsibility, and He deals with them according to it. And the first thing is, you have left your first love; so the time was come that judgment should begin at the house of God.

Peter's words allude to Ezekiel, when he says, " Begin at my sanctuary "—God's house at Jerusalem; for that is where God looks first for what is right—to His own house.

I feel it is an exceedingly solemn thing, and one that should bow our hearts before God.

The church has failed in being the epistle of Christ—it was set as such in the world; but now, is it anything like it at all? Can a heathen—that is the way to look at it—see anything of it?

Individuals may be walking blessedly, yet where do we get faith like Elijah's, though he knew no one in Israel who was true, while God knew seven thousand? Blessed man as he was, even his faith failed, and God asks him, " What doest thou here, Elijah? "

This should not be discouragement either, for Christ is sufficient for us. Nothing reaches up to the full perfect faithfulness of God's own grace, and our hearts ought to be thoroughly bowed as to that.

Neither is it the thought of attacking or blaming, for we are all in it in one sense, but our hearts should take note of that which was set up so beautiful in the power of God's Spirit—what has it all come to?

It casts us on the strength of Him who can never fail.

When the spies returned to Israel, the faith of ten gave way. Caleb and Joshua say: Do not let us be afraid, these giants shall be bread for us.

It is the same now for us in view of difficulty or opposition.

We are called to see where we are, and to know what the path and the place are, in which we have to walk, and to have a consciousness of the state all around us is in.

Yet though the church has utterly failed, the Head never can fail. Christ is just as sufficient for us now, in the state of things in which we find ourselves, as He was when at the first He set up the church in beauty and blessedness. It may require us to look at His word, to see what His mind is, but we must not shut our eyes to the state of things in which we are.

In reading the Acts it is most striking to see that there is power in the midst of the evil.

When we get to heaven there will be no evil at all, and we shall not want faith or conscience in exercise then; but now we do, and when evil is dominant, the only thing we have is the power of the Spirit of God, and, by it, we should be dominant over the evil in our path.

It does not say that every Christian will be persecuted, but it does say, all that will " live godly " in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. If a man show the power of the Spirit of God, the world will not stand it—that is the principle. In the Acts, when we get the power of the Spirit shown in miracles, as it had been in Christ before, what did it draw out? The enmity that crucified the Lord.

What we now have is good in the midst of evil (that is what Christ was, perfect good in the midst of evil), but the effect of the display of God in Him (inasmuch as the carnal mind is enmity against God) was that it drew out hostility; and the more the display, the more the hostility drawn out; and so, for His love He had hatred.

As yet, we have not got evil done with, that will be the case when Christ comes again, and therein is the difference between this present time and that time; that time will be the coming in of good in power so as to bind Satan and put down evil.

But the presence of Christ in this world, and afterward that of His saints, what is that but good in the midst of evil, while Satan is the god of this world?

Directly these got mixed up together, the good was swamped.

Take the wise and the foolish virgins, while they are asleep, they can all stay together, why should they not? But the moment they trim their lamps, there arises the question of the oil, and they do not go together any more. And we shall find it the same.

Again, in Joshua, it was a time of power. True, they fail at Jericho, and get beaten at Ai, but the general character is power; enemies are subdued and cities walled up to heaven are taken. Faith overcomes all—a most blessed picture. Good in the midst of evil, power carrying on the good and putting down enemies.

In Judges, it is the contrary. God's power was there, but the power was manifested by the evil because the people were not faithful. They got at once to " Bochim," i.e., tears, weeping, whereas in Joshua they went to Gilgal, where the total separation of Israel from the world had taken place; they had crossed the Jordan, and that was death, and then the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. But the angel of the Lord went to Bochim, he did not give Israel up, though they had left Gilgal. It was grace going after them.

And on our part, if we do not go to Gilgal, if we do not go back to the utter annihilation of self in God's presence, we cannot come out in power.

If a servant's intercourse with God does not surmount his testimony to men, he will break down and fail; he must renew his strength.

The great secret of Christian life is, that our intercourse with God should make nothing of ourselves.

God did not, however, give Israel up, and they built an altar unto the Lord; but at the altar they were weeping, not triumphing; and they were constantly being triumphed over. But though the people had lost their place, God sent them judges, and He was with the judges.

That is what we have to consider in the same way. " All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's "; was not that losing their place? (Not that such ceased to be in the church of God, I do not mean that.) And unless we do consider this, we too shall get to Bochim—the place of tears. The whole state of the church of God has to be judged—only the Head can never lose His power; and there is grace that fits the condition, too.

What I see in the beginning of the history of the church is, first, this blessed power converting three thousand in a day. Then came opposition: the world put them into prison, but God shows His power against that, and I do not doubt that now, if we were more faithful, there would be a great deal more of the intervention of God. The power of the Spirit of God was there and they were walking in a blessed unity, showing that power, and that, too, in the midst of the power of evil; though we find, alas, evil working in that scene, as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. They get credit for giving up their goods, falsely; the Spirit of God is there, and they fall down dead, and fear comes upon all, both inside and outside.

And that is the first display of it so.

Then before the history of Scripture closes, the time has come that judgment must begin at the house of God.

It is a most solemn thing characterizing the present time until Christ comes, when His power will put down evil—a different thing.

Next we get the testimony to the gross evil where the good ought to be: " In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves," and so on.

There, the professing church—for such it is—has the same description given of it as that which the Apostle gives of the heathen in the beginning of Romans. It is a positive declaration that such times should come, and that the state of things would return back to what it had been in heathendom. And it goes on to say that evil men " shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."

But he tells Timothy to continue in the things he had learned; 2 Tim. 3:14. People say now the church teaches these things, but I ask, what is that? The church? What do they mean? It is all something in the air; there is no inspired person in the church now to teach. I must go to Paul and to Peter, and then I know from whom I learn. Just as he says to the elders from Ephesus, " I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace."

Evil men and seducers had waxed worse and worse, but the apostle casts Timothy on the certainty of the knowledge he had got from particular persons; to us now, it is the Scriptures which are able to make us wise unto salvation.

We have to learn this when the professing church is a judged thing, and the form of godliness characterizes it.

And this is what I think Christians must look in the face. Do we not see men now turning away who were once called Christians—such turning infidels? A well-known person told me recently, " You would not find one young man in forty down in the South who is not turning infidel." That may be exaggerated, but mere formality is throwing people more and more into open infidelity or open superstition.

It is notorious how things are going, even in an outward way. In itself Christianity is Christianity as God gave it, but outwardly as seen around us, it is gone. And it is Christianity that we want, as it is in the word of God. Not that there is anything to fear; it is a blessed time, in a sense, casting us upon God.

Only we must look at things simply and steadily.

There is not a more blessed picture of lovely faith and godliness, before the gospel came in, than that which you find in the first two chapters of Luke, amidst the abounding iniquity of the Jews, we see Zachariah, Mary, Simeon, Anna, and other like-minded ones.

And they knew each other, for Anna " spoke of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem." Just as we ought to be doing in another way.

But I wanted to say that as regards the present state of things, viewing it from the side of man's responsibility, man has departed from what God set up; and then comes in a growing corruption, until judgment is necessary.

John spoke of the last days as being already come, because there were even then many antichrists; but God's patience has been going on, until at the close perilous times have come.

And now, I will add a word as to how we are to walk in the midst of such a state of things. It is clearly by the word of God, i.e., by immediate reference to it. Not that God does not use ministry. Ministry is His own ordinance. Still for authority we must turn to the Word of God itself. There is found direct authority of God, as determining everything. And we have the activity of His Spirit to communicate things.

It is an unhappy thing if a person only goes to the Scripture, refusing help from others; and so much the worse for him.

And again, it is a different thing for you to look at them as a direct guide, and deny the Spirit's place.

A mother ought to be blest in the care of her children, and so should a minister among saints; that is the activity of the Spirit of God in an individual—he is an instrument of God. But while owning that fully, we must go to the Word of God, and to that directly; is what we have to insist upon. We all say that the Word of God is the authority, but we have to insist that God speaks by the Word. A mother is not inspired; no man is inspired; but the Word of God is inspired, and it is direct: " He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." I never get the church teaching the church is taught and does not teach; individuals teach. But the apostles and others whom God used in that way were the instruments of God to communicate directly from God to the saints. So it is, Let " the letter be read to all the holy brethren."

This is of all importance, because it is God's title to speak to souls directly. He may use any instrument He pleases, and you cannot object; " the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee "; but when you come to direct authority, it is a most solemn thing to touch that. Neither do I talk of private judgment in the things of God, I do not admit it as a principle. You have to discern about many other things, but the moment I get into divine things, am I going to talk of judging the Word of God?

That is one sign of the evil of the times that are come in. When I own the Word of God brought by His Spirit, I sit down to hear what God will say to me. And then it judges me, not I it.

When the divine word is brought to my conscience and heart, who am I to judge God when God is speaking to me? It would be denying that He is speaking to me. To have real power, it must be the Word of God to my soul; and then I don't think of judging it, but I sit down before it to have my heart drawn out, and my conscience exercised.

But then I must have " that which was from the beginning." Why? Because God gave that. At the beginning we have the thing not as it was spoiled, but as that which God set up.

It will not do to speak to me of the primitive church. I must have that which was from the beginning. I then get the inspired Word, and the unity of the body.

But after the beginning, the very next thing in ecclesiastical history was all wretched division; whereas John says, " If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father." You lose your place in the Son and in the Father, if you go away from that which was from the beginning.

It is evident, then, in applying this, I must take notice of the circumstances we are in, for there I find, not what was set up from the beginning, but what man has made of that which God setup at the beginning. People say the church is this and that, but if I take what God has set up, I see the Unity of the Body, and Christ the Head, and this is what the church was manifested to be on the earth.

But do we get it so now? On the contrary we are warned. Paul, as a wise master builder, had laid the foundation, and when others would build he warns them not to build with wrong materials, wood, hay, stubble, all of which will be destroyed.

The work of building was put upon man's responsibility; as such it became the subject of judgment. " Upon this rock I will build my church " gives me Christ's building, and that is going on building, it is not finished yet; and again in Peter, " To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house "; there too, the building is seen still going on; then, in Eph. 2, it is described by Paul, as fitly framed together, and growing unto an holy temple in the Lord.

All that is Christ's work—what men call the invisible church, and so it is.

On the other hand, " let every man take heed how he buildeth " (that is on the foundation laid by Paul), there you have man's work as a responsible instrument.

Now men have confounded these two things, they go on building with wood, hay, stubble, and then they speak of the gates of hell not prevailing against that, because they do not give heed to the word of God.

But we have to look at God's principles, and to the power of the Spirit of God; to hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, and to discover truly where we are, so finding the path which God has marked out, and in which we are distinctly to walk.

We need also faith in the presence of the Spirit of God. The Spirit will use the Word, and make us take notice of the state of things, not confounding God's faithfulness with man's responsibility (what the superstitious world is doing), but owning that there is a living God, and that that living God is amongst us, in the Person and power of the Holy Ghost.

All is founded on the cross, surely, but the Comforter has come, and, by one Spirit, believers were all baptized into one body.

And now whether I take the individual or the church, the secret of power for good against evil, outside or inside; I find in this fact—the word being the guide—of the presence of the Spirit of God: " Know ye not," he says to people going on very badly to correct them, " that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God? " Do we believe, beloved friends, that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost? Then what kind of persons ought we to be?

In 1 Cor. 3 the same thing is true of the church, " Ye are the temple of God."

The presence of the Spirit gives power, and practical power, too, for blessing, whether in the church or in the individual; and He alone can do anything for real blessing.

.gain, it is only on the footing of redemption that God dwells with man. He did not dwell with Adam innocent, though He came down to Him; He did not dwell with Abraham, though He visited him and ate with him; but when Israel came out of Egypt, He says He brought them to himself " that I may dwell among them." At once the tabernacle was built, and there was God's presence in the midst of His people.

Of course, now, we have true and full redemption, and the Holy Ghost has come down to dwell in those who believe, that they might be the expression of what Christ was Himself when He was down here. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God," and, "hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he bath given us of his Spirit."

Where a person is really a Christian, God dwells in him; not merely he has life, but he is sealed with the Holy Ghost, who is the power for at moral conduct.

If we believed that the Spirit of God dwells in us, what subjection there would be, and what manner of persons we should be, not grieving that Spirit!!

And further, in 1 Cor. 2 I find, " Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit." " We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God." Now the Spirit of God and the world are always in contrast.

But then I find the revelation is in contrast with what is our state. We have to say, " Eye hath not seen." These things are so great; we can't conceive them, but God hath revealed them by His Spirit.

Taking the state of the Old Testament saints, they could not find out or know these things. But with us it is just the opposite. We do know them and He has given us His Spirit that we might know them.

In this passage you get the Holy Ghost in three distinct steps: first, these things are revealed by the Spirit; next, they are communicated by words the Spirit taught; and then, they are received by the power of the Spirit, i.e., they are " spiritually discerned "; all three are the operation of the power of the Spirit of God.

If I were to take the Word of God by itself, and say, I can judge of it and understand it, then I am a rationalist; it is man's mind judging the revelation.

But when we get God's mind communicated by the Holy Ghost, and the Holy Ghost the power to receive it, then I get God's mind.

There is just as much wisdom and power from God for us to meet the state of ruin in which we now are, as there was at the first when He set up His church.

And that is what we have to lean upon.

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