

The background of the cover is a painting. It depicts a man in a dark, hooded robe walking away from the viewer down a path that reflects the golden light of a sunset. The path is flanked by dark, tall grass. In the distance, a city skyline is visible on the left, and a large wooden cross stands on the right. The sky is a warm, golden yellow, and the overall mood is somber and reflective.

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THE MAN OF SORROWS

John Nelson Darby

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How To Use

THERE are three ways in which this volume may be helpfully used.

1. By **reading straight through** as an ordinary book, making a pencil note in the margin of portions suitable for meditation and careful study.
2. Taking **chapter by chapter**, first reading the chapter in the Bible itself, then carefully noting the valuable and suggestive thoughts by this able minister of the Word of God.
3. As a **book of reference**. The *Subject Index* will readily indicate where any incident or event mentioned in the Gospel may be found. The Bible *chapters* are indicated at the head of each page, the verses at the beginning of each paragraph. The **black type** clearly indicates portions of the Gospel quoted.

Some of the quotations are from the Author's *New Translation* of the New Testament, now supplied in thin paper pocket edition, cloth, 2/; leather, 3/.

Isaiah LIII

WHO hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?

2. For he shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness: and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him.

3. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.

A MAN OF SORROWS.

4. Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

5. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.

Chapter 1

THE Saviour is presented to us in Luke in His character as Son of Man, displaying the power of Jehovah in grace in the midst of men. At first, doubtless, we find Him in relationship with Israel, to whom He had been promised; but afterwards moral principles are brought out, which apply to man, as such, wherever he might be. And indeed what characterises Luke's account of our Lord and gives special interest to his gospel is that it presents to us *Christ Himself*, and not His official glory, as in Matthew, nor His mission of service, as in Mark, nor the peculiar revelation of His divine nature, as in John. It is Himself, such as He was, *a man upon the earth*, moving among men day by day.

1-4.—Many had undertaken to give an account of what was historically received amongst Christians as it had been related to them by the “**eye-witnesses.**” However well intended this might be, yet it was a work undertaken and executed by men. Luke had an exact and intimate knowledge of all from the beginning, and he found it good to write to Theophilus, in order that he might know “**the certainty of the things he had been instructed in.**”

It is thus that God has provided for the whole Church by the teaching contained in the living picture of Jesus that we owe to this man of God. For Luke, although he might be personally moved by Christian motives, was, of course, none the less inspired by the Holy Ghost to write.

THE FORERUNNER.

5-17.—The history brings us into the midst of Jewish institutions, feelings, and expectations. First, we have a priest of Abia (one of the twenty-four classes, 1 Chron. 24), with his wife, who was of the daughters of Aaron. “**They were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.**” All was with them in accordance with God's law Jewishly; but they did not enjoy the blessing so earnestly desired by every Jew; they were childless. Yet it was according to the ways of God to accomplish His work of blessing while manifesting the weakness of the instrument which He was using. But now this long-prayed-for blessing was to be withheld no longer; and when Zacharias draws near to offer the incense the angel of Jehovah appears to him. At the sight of so glorious a being Zacharias is troubled; but the angel says to him, “Fear not, thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and **thou shalt call his name John,**” *i.e.*, “the favour of Jehovah.”

And not only should the hearts of many rejoice in him, but he should be great in the sight of the Lord and be filled with the Holy Ghost. “**Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.** And he shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias . . . to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” The “spirit of Elias” was a firm and ardent zeal for the glory of Jehovah and for the re-establishment, through repentance, of Israel's relations with Him. The heart of John clung to this link of the people with God, and it is in the moral force of his call to repentance that John is here compared to Elias.

18-23.—But Zacharias' faith, as is, alas, so often the case, was not equal to the greatness of his request. He knows not how to walk in the steps of Abraham, and he asks again how such a thing can be (18). God's goodness turns the unbelief of His servant into a chastening that was profitable for him, and that served, at the same time, as a proof to the people that he had been visited from on high. Zacharias remains dumb until the word of Jehovah is accomplished.

24, 25.—Elisabeth, with feelings so suitable to a holy woman, remembering what had been a shame to her in Israel (the traces of which were only made the more marked by the supernatural blessing now granted to her), **“hid herself five months,”** whilst, at the same time, she owned the Lord’s goodness to her. But what may conceal us from the eyes of men has great value before God.

26-38.—And now the scene changes, in order to introduce the Lord Himself into this marvellous scene that is unfolding itself before our eyes. In Nazareth, that despised place, there was found a young virgin, unknown by the world, whose name was Mary. She was espoused to Joseph, who was of the house of David; but so out of order was every-thing in Israel that this descendant of the king was a carpenter. But what is this to God? Mary was a chosen vessel; she had **“found favour in the eyes of God.”**

We must remark that the subject here is the birth of the child Jesus, as born of Mary. It is not so much His divine nature as the Word which was God and which was made flesh (though, of course, it is the same precious Saviour presented here as in John’s gospel); but it is Jesus as really and truly man, born of a virgin. His name was to be Jesus, *i.e.*, Jehovah the Saviour. **“He shall be called the Son of the Highest,** and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David,” still looking at Him as man born into the world. But He was God as well as man. Holy by His birth, conceived by the power of God, this blessed One, who even, as born of Mary, is spoken of as **“that holy thing,”** was to be called **“the Son of God.”**

The angel then tells Mary of the blessing God had bestowed upon Elisabeth. The wonderful intervention of God had rendered Mary humble instead of lifting her up; she had seen God and not herself in what had happened. Self was hidden from her because God had been brought so near, and she bows to His holy will. **“Be it unto me according to Thy word.”**

39-45.—Afterwards we find that Mary goes to visit Elisabeth, for her heart loves to see and acknowledge the goodness of the Lord. Elisabeth, speaking by the Spirit, acknowledges Mary as the mother of her Lord, and announces the accomplishment of God’s promise. **“Blessed is she that believed.”**

46. - **“My soul doth magnify the Lord.”** The heart of Mary is filled with joy, and she breaks forth into a song of praise. She acknowledges God her Saviour in the grace that has filled her with such joy, whilst, at the same time, she owns her utter littleness. For whatever might be the holiness of the instrument that God might employ, and that was found really in Mary, yet she was only great so long as she hid herself, for then God was everything. By making something of herself she would have lost her place, but this she did not. God kept her in order that His grace might be fully manifested.

The character of the thoughts that fill the heart of Mary is Jewish. It reminds us of Hannah’s song in 1 Samuel 2, which speaks prophetically of this same blessed intervention of God. But Mary goes back to the promises made to the fathers, and takes in the whole of Israel.

56.—After remaining three months with Elisabeth, she **“returns to her house,”** humbly to follow her own path, in order that God’s ways may be accomplished. Nothing is more beautiful in its way than this account of the conversations of these holy women, unknown to the world, but who were the instruments of God’s grace to accomplish His glorious designs. They moved in a scene where nothing entered but piety and grace. But God was there Himself, no better known to the world than were these poor women, yet preparing and accomplishing what the angels would desire to look into.

57-59.—But what is only known in secret by faith is at last to be accomplished before all men. The son of Zacharias and Elisabeth is born, and Zacharias, no longer dumb, pronounces the blessed prophecy given in verses 60-80. **The visitation of Israel by Jehovah,** which he

speaks of, embraces all the happiness of the Millennium connected with the presence of Jesus upon the earth. All the promises are Yea and Amen in Him. All the prophecies encircle Him with the glory which will be then realised. We know that since He has been rejected, and while He is now absent, the accomplishment of these things is necessarily put off till His return.

Chapter 2

1-7.—When God is pleased to occupy Himself with the world, and to take a part in what passes therein, it is marvellous to see how He acts and the instruction He gives. There is no agreement, but a total opposition between His ways and those of men. The Emperor and his decree are but insignificant instruments. Caesar Augustus acts in view of his subjects; yet he is, without knowing it, the means of accomplishing the prophecy that Jesus should be born in Bethlehem. The entire course of the world is outside the current of God's thoughts. The capital fact for Him and for His kingdom here is the babe's birth at Bethlehem; but the Emperor has no thought about it. The decree puts the world in motion, and God makes good His thoughts here below. How wondrous! All the world is in movement to bring about this event, needed to fulfil prophecy, that the poor carpenter, with Mary his espoused wife, should be in the city of David, and David's heir should be born there and then. And this is the more striking, for the census itself was first made some years afterwards, when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. God is accomplishing His purpose of love, but man was blind to it. Who cared to notice the poor Jew, though he might be of the house and lineage of David? The things that are perfectly indifferent to man fill the heart and eye of God.

THE BIRTH OF JESUS.

4.—Still we are in Jewish atmosphere. *Promises* are being accomplished; the babe must be born in Bethlehem. "**The city of David**" is nothing to the Christian as such, save as showing prophecy fulfilled; *to us* the Son comes from *Heaven*. On earth the babe is the object of God's counsels; angels and all Heaven are occupied with His birth; but there is no place in the world for Him! Go where the great world registers every individual, go to the little world of an inn, where each is measured by the servant's knowing eye, and place is accordingly awarded from the garret to the first floor; but there is no room *for Jesus*. And the manger led, in due time, to the lowest place—the Cross.

What a lesson for us as to this world! What a difference, too, between giving up the world and the world giving us up! We may do the one with comparative ease; but when we feel the world despises us, as Christ was despised, we shall discover, unless He fills and satisfies the heart, that we had a value for its esteem that we were not aware of. When obedience is as important to us in our measure as obeying was to Christ, we shall go right on whatever be before us, without regarding the world; not that we shall be insensible, but when Christ is the object, we shall only be occupied with Him.

All intelligence of the things of God comes from His revelation, and not from the reasonings of men. Hence the simple go farther in spiritual understanding than the wise and prudent of the earth. God acts here so as to set aside all appearance of human wisdom. Happy he who has so seized the intention of God as to be identified with it, and to want none but God! This was the case with the shepherds. They little entered into the great intent of the registration; but it was to them, and not to the prudent, that God revealed Himself. Our true wisdom is through what God reveals. But we never get God's fullest blessings till we are where the flesh is brought down and destroyed—I speak as regards *walk*. We cannot get into the simple joy and power of God till we accept the place of lowliness and humiliation, till the heart is emptied of what is contrary to the lowliness of Christ. These shepherds were in the quiet fulfilment of their humble duty, and that is the place of blessing. Whoever is keeping on terms with the world is not walking with God, for God is not walking with you there. From the manger to the Cross all in Christ was simple obedience. How unlike a Theudas, who

boasted himself to be somebody! Christ did all in God's way, and not only so, but we must do so too.

8-12.—The glory of the Lord shines round about the shepherds, the angel speaks to them, the sign is given, and what a sign! **“Ye shall find a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God,”** and for what? “The mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh.” The hope of Israel is revealed to them—glad tidings of great joy to all the people. For Jesus is the pivot of all God's counsels in grace. Adam himself was but a type of Him who was to come. Christ was ever in the mind of God. Such displays of glory are not shown to mortal eyes every day; but God sets them before us in His Word, and we must every day follow the sign given, follow Jesus the babe in the manger. If He filled the eye, the ear, the heart, how we should see the effects in person, spirit, conversation, dress, house, money, and other things.

Such, then, is the sign of God's accomplishment of promise and of His presence in the world - “a babe in the manger”—the least and lowest thing. But God is found there, though these things are beyond man, who cannot walk with God, nor understand His moral glory. But God's sign is within the reach of faith. It is the token of perfect weakness; a little infant who can only weep. Such, born into this world, is Christ the Lord. Such is the place God chose—the low degree. God's intervention is recognised by a sign like this. Man would not have sought that.

13-20.—The heavenly host praise God, and say: **‘Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.’** Nothing higher or more astonishing (save the Cross) for those who have the mind of Heaven. The choir above see God in it, God manifested in flesh, and praise God in the highest. They rejoice that His delights are with the sons of men. Of old God had displayed Himself to Moses in a flame of fire, without consuming the bush, and here, still more marvellously, in the feeblest thing on earth. Infinite thought, morally, though despicable in the eye of the world! How hard it is to receive that the work of God and of His Christ is always in weakness! The rulers of the people saw in Peter and John unlearned and ignorant men. Paul's weakness at Corinth was the trial of his friends, the taunt of his enemies, the boast of himself. The Lord's strength is made perfect in weakness. The thorn in the flesh made Paul despised, and he conceived it would be better if that were gone. He had need of the lesson: “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2 Cor. 12. 9). It is God's rule of action, if we may so say, to choose the weak things. Everything must rest on God's power, otherwise God's work cannot be done according to His mind. One can hardly believe that one must be feeble to do the work of God; but Christ was crucified in weakness, and the weakness of God is stronger than man. For the work of God we must be weak, that the strength may be of God, and that work will last when all the earth shall be moved away.

21-28. - **“His Name was called Jesus.”** Besides the additional testimony rendered by the offering of His mother to the circumstances in this world, in which the Lord of glory was born, we may see that while God all through the Gospel is settling man in his *new* place with Himself, He did not forget His ancient people. He shows us here that He met every thought in every heart that was touched by grace in Israel. His heart was especially toward those who sorrowed over the sins and desolation of His people, and who, withal, waited for redemption, crying from the darkness, “How long, O Lord?” God will accomplish in power that wherein man has failed in responsibility. Should we therefore be content if God's people do not glorify Him? No; faith is not hard; it will sorrow, but it will wait for God, and God's time too. For faithful is He who hath promised, who also will do it. He will bring about His own purposes.

THE PROPHECY OF SIMEON.

25.—Thus was Simeon “**waiting for the consolation of Israel.**” Thus Anna departed not from the temple, but served with fastings and prayers night and day. Thus all they that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. There were those who watched, and Anna knew and spake to them. The rest doubtless were occupied with Roman oppression, but these few waited for Him, bowing before His hand in judgment of evil, but looking for His deliverance.

29.—There was something more in Simeon’s soul than the joy of holding in his arms the babe, the expected Messiah. Simeon felt he had God, and was satisfied. So he says, without even looking on to the glory, “**Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace,** according to Thy word.” In Romans 5. 11 the apostle, after speaking of rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God, says, “and not only so.” What could be more than that hope? Yes; there is more: “We also joy *in God.*” The eyes of Simeon had seen God’s salvation, and he begs of the sovereign Lord that he may go.

We often see something like this in dying saints, who deeply joy in the Lord’s love to His own, and in the nearness of His coming for them. Why, one might say, what is His near coming to those who are dying and departing to Him? Just this: The nearer we are to God, the more precious is all the truth of God, and everything which is near to *His* heart.

30-32.—So Simeon rejoices as he surveys the extent of the divine deliverance. It was for the revelation of the Gentiles, who had been till now hidden in the darkness of idolatry and ungodliness, as well as for the glory of Israel. But his soul is satisfied possessing Christ, and anticipating the effect of His presence in the whole world. He has *all* in HIM, and desires to depart. If a man walk with God, and has finished his course, he knows that his work is done, and is conscious of the Lord’s time being come. He has a companionship and communion with the Lord he has walked with. If simply brought to a bed of sickness, he is not then ready to go; not that he fears, but God is teaching him something else. But when God’s time is come all is joy and readiness. He feels like Simeon: “Lord, *now* lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace.”

34.—But, further, when Simeon blessed Joseph and Mary the Spirit gives him to disclose the more immediate results of the babe’s presence in Israel. He should be the touchstone of many hearts, an occasion for **the fall as well as the rise of many**; He should be a sign spoken against, a rejected Messiah; and Mary’s heart should be pierced through, whatever the present joy or the future glory. Israel was low indeed, but did not know it. Israel must be made to know it, and Christians too, for Christ had to descend to the grave and rise again. The thoughts of the heart must be revealed, whatever the outward garb. But then He is the One who brings out God’s thoughts too. If He is the Christ, the glory of God’s people, He is also the One who will abase the flesh, and meet the humble man in his pride; He is the One who will make you know whether He in His rejection is more precious than all beside.

THE SILENT YEARS.

39.—When all was done according to the law, “**they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth.**” Jesus would not be the Christ we need if He had taken any glory from Jerusalem. His place is among the poor of the flock, His place all through in Israel.

40. - “**And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.**” Luke gives us more of the reality of His childhood than the other gospels; He was not made man full-formed like Adam. If one only reads the account without comment, how the soul feels it unspeakably precious! When we see WHO it was, we see human nature in Him filled with God, so to speak. It is not official distinction, but the heart feels God brought nigh. The blessedness of the child’s intrinsic loveliness fills the heart.

Deeply instructive, too, is the incident recorded in connection with the Passover when He was twelve years old. His true character comes out, though He was not yet to act upon it. He came to be a Nazarene, to be about His Father's business. This is here stated distinctly before He enters upon His public ministry, that it might be seen to be connected with His person, and not to depend merely upon His office. He was the Pastor of the flock in spirit and character. It belonged to Him. He was the Son of the Father, though abiding God's time for showing it.

51.—Nevertheless, **“He went down with them, and was subject to them.”** What a majesty in His whole life! His being God secured His perfection as a child and man here below. He had ever the blessed consciousness of His relationship to His Father, an obedient child, but conscious also of a glory unconnected in itself with subjection to human parentage. He belonged to Mary and even Joseph, in another sense He was not theirs. His divine Son-ship was as well known to Him as His obedience to His parents was in due season absolutely right.

52. - **“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.”** His human intelligence being developed, He, though ever perfect, became so in a fuller way; the perfect child grows into the perfect man. The lovely plant grew up and unfolded before God and man.

Chapter 3

1.—The two preceding chapters have given the general character. They have shown the going out of the thoughts of God to man. Accordingly we find that the Gospel, as a whole, is particularly occupied with what is not Jewish. Still the Jewish part is given at first with considerable detail, inasmuch as Israel, because of their unbelief and moral worthlessness, are to be set aside in order to make way for new relationships, founded on what God reveals Himself to be for man in Jesus, the true and only Mediator. But if chapter 1 disclosed the faithfulness of God to the Abrahamic promises, to His covenant and His oath, chapter 2 puts us in the presence of the actual government of the world and of the Lord's land and people under the fourth beast, the Roman Empire. What confusion does not sin create? The Jews are subject to the Gentiles. Joseph and Mary, of David's royal house, go up to be taxed. Nevertheless, the ways of God shine so much the brighter for the darkness that surrounded them. He was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself. Israel, however, would be put to a new moral test by His presentation of Himself. Alas! it would soon appear that if they had not kept the law they hated grace. "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against."

JOHN THE BAPTIST.

2.—In this chapter we have the ministry of God coming in by a prophet as of old by Samuel. "**The Word of God came unto John, the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.**" It is not without object that the Spirit mentions the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar. All the earth was seemingly at rest under its heathen lord; the Word of God found its suited sphere in the wilderness. The law and the prophets were until John, and where should he be in such a state of things but the wilderness? Could he morally own it? God will not have His messenger in Jerusalem.

4.—Prophecy is the sovereign means whereby God can communicate with His people when they are ruined and departed from Him. John understands this, and preaches the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And such was the place assigned him many centuries before by "**Esaias the prophet.**" It was vain for Israel to plead their privileges and rights. All was wrong, and the Judge was at the door. John's work was not to lead the people back to the law; he was preparing the way of the Lord. Herein he differed from the prophets as well as the law, or rather, he went farther, for God's time was come for a step in advance. The prophets led back to Horeb. John says not a word of this, though his father was a priest, and himself, of course, an Aaronite. He does not try to set up again what was closed; he announces the kingdom. He may not introduce the Church, nor even the glad tidings of God's grace (both awaited the accomplishment of the work of redemption), but he drops the law, and shows that God's purpose is the kingdom.

5.—The quotation from Esaias sets aside Israel—not the Gentiles merely, but Israel—as grass, withered grass, without a green blade left. Yet the Word of the Lord endureth for ever, and this when all hope from man was gone. Israel may have failed, but the Word of the Lord shall stand. Moreover, since it was the Lord who was coming, "**every valley should be filled.**" Not the Jews alone, but all flesh should see God's deliverance. If sin plunges all in indiscriminate ruin and a common judgment, God can meet man thus ruined, but His glory will not be shut up in the narrow limits of Israel.

7-14.—But to be blessed man must "**repent.**" God would have realities, and not a mere nominal people; He must have fruits answering to hearts which felt and judged their moral

condition, and which, therefore, turned from themselves to God. Ordinances and formal claims which should have been a means of blessing would be no shelter against the coming wrath, nor would God permit them to hinder His creating true children of the promise, even if this generation were but Ishmael over again. Judgment must begin at the house of God.

In fact, as we know, John was beheaded, and the Lord was crucified, and the kingdom, presented in Him and by Him, was rejected by Israel. By and by it will be set up visibly and in power. Meanwhile the Church is set up, because the kingdom is not set up in this manifested way. And those who now take their place with the Lord share His rejection. They are members of His body, the Church. They shall share His glory, but it will be heavenly and not earthly glory. In another sense we are in the kingdom now. To faith Heaven rules now, and we own it, and know it; but Satan is actually prince and god of this world, and hence those who are made kings to God (for that is our true place) are called to suffer. Therefore Paul went everywhere preaching the kingdom of God, as well as Christ and the Church. We have that by virtue of which we shall reign with Christ; but even that is not our best portion. To be one with Christ—His body and bride—is far more blessed. If your mind only rests on the person of Christ, there is no difficulty in seeing that when He is cut off all must cease as regards the earth. He is the centre of all, and when rejected what prophecy spoke of, and what seemed about to be accomplished, breaks off. Thereupon Christ ascends and takes up a glory above the Heavens, and there now the saints find their place with Him (cp. Psalm 2 and 8).

John Baptist, then, addresses himself to the Jews, demanding repentance and righteousness as its fruit; shows them that if they were nearer to God outwardly as Jews they must expect judgment the sooner. If the Lord was coming, He must have what became the Lord. **The axe was even then lying at the root of the trees.** If there was not good fruit on the trees every one must be hewn down and burned. Repentance or wrath—which? The Lord would allow no plea of descent from Abraham if their ways belied Abraham; He must have righteousness. It is the Lord that is just at hand, and He must have a people fit for Him, or He would out of the very stones make a suited people for Himself.

Evidently John's word is not a voice of mercy to the poor sinner. God is presented in the way of judgment, not of sovereign mercy. He does not say "Come unto me." John could not, because he was not Christ, and none but He could say "Come unto ME." John came in righteousness.

In 10-14 moral testimony is given, and that in detail. John deals with the practical iniquity of each set of people. So even when the question of the Christ is raised (15-18), "One mightier than I cometh," says he. It is of His power especially he thinks, His power morally as outwardly. **"He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."** It is the power of the Holy Ghost and His consuming judgment. He could not speak of the grace of the Gospel which we know now. He proclaims One who was coming after him, not a present salvation. Whatever would not stand the fire was to be burned up. For His fan "is in His hand, and **He will thoroughly purge His floor,** and will gather the wheat into His garner; but the chaff He will burn with fire unquenchable" (cp. Isa. 21. 10). God's floor was Israel; there He was getting His wheat, if any were to be found. But His fan is in His hand; He is going to make short work. Titus finally set aside God's floor upon the earth; Israel's sin had lost it morally when they rejected Christ, but at the destruction of Jerusalem it was done with thoroughly for the present.

19, 20.—Luke's method of instruction is to be noticed in passing. He shows that John had preached and exhorted moral truth, and then disposes of him, putting him, as it were, out of the scene in order to bring Christ in. It was not that historically John was imprisoned at that juncture by **Herod the tetrarch**; it took place long after. But it is a sample of Luke's manner,

who returns to the Lord as taking His place amongst the remnant of Israel. For the Lord does not identify Himself with the nation; but directly there is a poor remnant He identifies Himself with it.

THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST.

This history opens with verse 21, and how wonderful and full of grace. “Now when all the people were baptised, it came to pass, that **Jesus also being baptised**, and praying, the Heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from Heaven, which said, **Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well pleased.**” One may have looked and listened mournfully as one reads of John Baptist and his testimony. We might have asked, as the dying record of men passed before us, What is *man*? But now my eye rests on Jesus, I find the Lord from Heaven a *Man*. All is to begin again. Do I ask again, What is a man? At once Christ comes out. Do I look at myself, or at all around? What do I see? Enough to break my heart, if there is a heart to be broken. The only thing which prevents people being utterly broken down is that they have not a heart to feel things as they are. But a rest is here. I have got a Man now who satisfied God, this blessed Man on earth in the presence of God, looking to God, and an object to God! Not Messiah purging His floor, but Him in whom God’s thoughts and purposes are all folded up; not man perishing before the moth, but Jesus the Son of Man, not merely coming down from Abraham and David, but traced up, “which was the Son of Adam, which was the Son of God”—the Second Man, the last Adam, the quickening Spirit. What a relief, for what *is* man? What oneself when the heart’s sin is known, giving up God for an apple from the. beginning hitherto! But now a Man, a blessed Man appears, “and praying.” We are not told this elsewhere, and why here? Because Luke presents man in his perfection, the *dependent* man, for dependence is the essence of a perfect man. Truly we see God shining all through, but yet in Jesus, the dependent Man, in the place and condition of perfectness as man. The root of sin in us is self-will, independence. Here my heart has rest. A dependent Man in the midst of sorrow, but perfectly with God in all. See Luke’s account of the transfiguration also; in humiliation or in glory it makes no difference as to this, the perfect is ever the dependent one.

And when that blessed heart thus expressed its dependence, did He get no answer? “The Heaven was opened.” Does Heaven open thus on me? It is open to me, indeed, no doubt, but I pray because it is open; it opened because He prayed. I come and look up because the Heavens were opened on Him.

It is, indeed, a lovely picture of grace, and we may be bold to say that the Father loved to look on—to look down, in the midst of all sin, on His beloved Son. Nothing but what was divine could thus awaken God’s heart; and yet it was the lowly, perfect Man. He takes not the place of His eternal glory as the Creator, the Son of God. He stoops and is baptised (Psa. 16) . He says, “In Thee do I trust.” He says to Jehovah: “Thou art My Lord; My goodness extendeth not to Thee.” He says to the godly remnant in Israel (*i.e.*, to the saints that are in the earth and to the excellent): “All My delight is in them.” He needeth no repentance, yet is He baptised with them; just as when, later on, He puts forth His sheep He goes before them. He identifies Himself in grace with Israel, even with such as were of a clean heart. And the Holy Ghost descends like a dove on Him, fit emblem of that spotless Man, fit resting-place for the Spirit in the deluge of this world. And how sweet, too, that Jesus is pointed out to us as God’s object. I know the way the Father feels about Him. I am made His intimate, and admitted to hear Him expressing His affection for His Son, to see the links re-formed between God and man. Heaven is opened, not on something above, but upon a Man upon the earth. Thus I get rest, and my heart finds communion with God in His beloved Son. It is only

the believer who enjoys it, but the link is there. And if I have that in and about me which distresses the soul, I have that in Him which is unfailing joy and comfort.

THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST.

23-38.—The genealogy quite falls in with the thought that God is showing grace in man and to man. Jesus, the beloved Son of God, is traced up **to Adam and to God**. Jesus is Son of Man; He is heir in this sense. He takes up the inheritance God gave to man. O what a truth! Where could one's heart turn for rest if it had not Jesus to rest in? With Him let Heaven and earth be turned upside down, and still I have a rest. What blessedness for the heart to have the object God Himself is occupied with! May our hearts also be more and more occupied with Him!

Chapter 4

We saw the Lord taking His place of servant with the excellent in Israel, and thereon the Heavens opened, and Himself owned by the Father as His beloved Son. His delights were with the sons of men, and He is traced up, not to Abraham only, the root and depository of Jewish promises, but to Adam and God Himself. Independently of His proper divine glory as Son of the Father, Jesus should be called the Son of the Highest, the Son of God. As Man on earth He was sealed with the Holy Ghost. He took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. His entire perfectness now was to fulfil as a servant the will of Him who sent Him, for a servant doing his own will is a bad servant. Dependence, waiting, and obedience were the characteristics of this place, and they are found in Him to the uttermost. Hence, as in the Psalms, “I waited patiently for the Lord.” He would not ask for power, but waits on God. “Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matt . 26. 53). Put thoroughly to the test, He would do nothing but His Father’s will. He was to learn obedience. Having taken the place He would go through it wholly, not in one act, but experiencing the force of that expression, *learning* obedience, without one comfort here, with enemies around, bulls of Bashan besetting, dogs compassing. He had to learn obedience where obedience was always suffering, even to the yielding up of life. Every single step was humiliation till the close came in the Cross, where the wrath of God was borne in love to us. No doubt He found in His rejection fields white for harvest, and so shall we, in our measure, when walking in the same path. But the Cross was always before Him—everything that could stop a man. Nevertheless, He went on, patiently waiting, and not asking for deliverances. Thus, He presented perfect God to man, and perfect man to God.

THE TEMPTATION.

1.—In this chapter He begins this walk of suffering obedience publicly. And the first thing to be re-marked is, that “**being full of the Holy Ghost,**” He is led by *Him* “**into the wilderness,**” where He is “**tempted by the devil.**” There are two ways in which the enemy has power: first, by allurements; and, secondly, by terror. In the one he works upon us through our lusts, presenting what is calculated to attract, and so he rules over us naturally. In the other he has the power of death. Thus, Judas being a covetous man, and without the faith which purifies the heart, Satan suggested the occasion and gets him. He has no right to rule over men, but he acquires dominion through the lusts of the flesh. Another way is through the terror of death. In both he assailed the Lord, but found nothing in Him.

Here, then, we have the devil meeting *man* in the power of the Spirit of God—man tempted, not in Paradise, but in the wilderness. Jesus does not say, “I am God, and you are Satan; go away.” That would not have glorified God, nor have helped us. But as the Lord was led into the wilderness, not by lust (God forbid the thought!) but by the Holy Ghost, so in His blessed grace He puts Himself in the place where man was. He has help from none, not even from John the Baptist. There was all that might have stumbled rather, had it been possible, through all He goes as man. He must be tempted, and must overcome where man not only had failed, but was lying under the power of wickedness.

2, 3. - “**He afterward hungered.** There was no harm in hunger; it was no sin. He could have commanded stones to be made bread, but to do so, save at His Father’s word, would have been doing His own will, and then He had not been the perfect man. Satan tries to introduce into His heart a desire which was not in the Word of God. He succeeded in insinuating a lust

into the heart of Adam; he failed with Jesus, though He was for forty days exposed to his presence and power. Jesus had to know by experience what it was to be tempted of the devil, without a single support, without a friend, in solitary dreariness (save indeed the wild beasts). Thus He measured the power of Satan. The strong man was there, putting forth all his weapons, but the stronger than he overcame; Jesus binds the strong man. He was abstracted from human condition for forty days, not like Moses to be only with God, but as the One who was always with God, to be exposed to Satan. None other man needs to be abstracted in order to be tempted, he has only to go on along with men. In this case this extraordinary separation was to be with the devil. To be with God He did not need anything out of His everyday path, for it was His natural place; but to be with Satan He needed it. Others are strangers to God, and at home with Satan. He, in the most adverse things, is a stranger to Satan, and dwells in the bosom of the Father. But He emptied Himself as God to become a servant as man, and there He waits in dependence on the Word of Him whom He served. The living Father had sent Him, and He lived by the Father. He was as man under His authority, and His meat was to do His will. "By the Word of Thy lips, I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer" (Psa. 17. 4).

4. - **"It is written, man shall not live by bread alone."** It is the written Word He ever uses, and Satan is powerless. What amazing importance Jesus gives the Scriptures! God now acts by the Word, and Satan is resisted morally in this way. A man cannot be touched by Satan while the Word is simply used in obedience. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John 5. 18). It was not as an exercise of divine authority He dismissed Satan, but the enemy is proved unable to grapple with obedience to the Word of God. If he cannot take out of the path of obedience, he has no power. What more simple? Every child of God has the Holy Ghost acting by the Word to keep him.

Jesus does not reason with Satan. A single text silences when used in the power of the Spirit. The whole secret of strength in conflict is using the Word of God in the right way. One may say: I am not like this perfect Man; it might be so with Christ, but how can I expect the same result? True, we are ignorant, and the flesh is in us, but God is always behind, and He is faithful, and will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able. Temptation may be simply a trial of our obedience, as in Abraham's case, not a snare to lead us astray. Satan presents what has no appearance of evil. The evil would be doing one's own will. Now it solves every difficulty to ask, *not*, What harm is there in doing this or that? but, Why am I doing it? Is it for God or myself? What! am I to be always under this restraint? Ah! there the secret of our nature comes out. We do not like the restraint of doing what God will approve. It is restraint to do God's will. We want to do our own will. To act merely because one must is law, and not the guidance of the Spirit. The Word of God was the motive of Christ, and such is Christ's guidance. Not fencing the old man, but the new man living on the Word is our defence against Satan.

3-13. - **"Into an exceeding high mountain."** **"Set Him on a pinnacle of the temple."** The first temptation is an appeal to the need of the body. The second in Luke (not in Matthew) is the inducement of the world's glory. The third in our Gospel is the religious temptation through the Word of God, and therefore morally the hardest of all to one who values that Word. And is this the reason why Luke departs from the actual order of the events in order to group them morally, as is the habit of this evangelist elsewhere also? Thus we have the tempter assailing the Lord Jesus, first, as to man's *life*; second, as to the *power* given to man; and, third, as to the *promises* made to Christ Himself. Satan's saying, "All this Power," was false as to *right*, but true in *fact*, through men's lusts. So far as these go, he gives the power, but God, after all, is above him, and governs in providence.

The Lord might have argued with the devil, but He does not even tell him that the dominion of the world would be His by and by. He takes His stand on that which settles everything, and is a perfect example for us. He stands to God's Word and God's worship. He awaits His Word, He worships Him, He serves Him only. How simple and how blessed! It was the immediate link of an obedient heart with God. The question was one of relationship to God. So of old, Eliezer receives blessing, but before he begins to enjoy it he gives thanks. He had the Word first, then the blessing, and what follows forthwith? He bows his head and worships. God is the first thought of his heart. And so still more fully with the Lord here.

9-11.—The last and subtlest temptation was grounded on the promises to Messiah. **“If Thou be the Son of God,”** why not try? But why should He try, who KNEW that God was for Him? Why should He be like presumptuous Israel of old, who would go up the hill in disobedience to prove whether the Lord was among them? Not even when Lazarus was sick would He stir till it was the Father's will, though all nature would have moved; and He knew well the sorrow of that house which was His refuge; for “Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus” (John 11. 5).

The Lord did not listen. Who would? you say. But you do listen to Satan every day of your lives that you seek a very little bit of the world. But was there not a promise? Doubtless there was; yet why should He throw Himself down to see whether God would be as good as His Word? Did He not know that God was with Him? And so with us. Let us only have the Word *behind* us, no matter what may be before us. Never should we raise a question whether God is with us. If He does not send, let us not move, but let us never question His presence. If we are in the simple path of His will, the Holy Ghost will act in us to guide, and not merely on us to correct.

Thus, then, in the order of Luke, which, as we have seen, is not historical, but moral, we have the progressive exercises of a man. First, natural lasts; secondly, worldly lusts; and, lastly, spiritual temptations. The Lord Jesus was tempted here, not in Eden, but in the great system where we are. He put Himself, by the will and wisdom of God, in the place of our difficulty in the world where man is. He has gone through all the difficulties a saint is in. Who wants His help? Not a sinner, for he wants salvation; but a saint needs help and sympathy in his path. We have practically to keep our first estate as renewed. Satan cannot touch the new man, but he tries to entice out of the path of godliness. We want succour to walk as obedient ones where Christ walked.

IN THE SYNAGOGUE.

14, 15. - **“And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee; . . . and He taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.”** In all things His obedience is shown.

Untouched by Satan, He goes forth in unhindered power, as we shall, in a measure, if like Him we pass through temptation, so as not to be touched by Satan.

16. - **“And He came to Nazareth,** where He had been brought up”—the low, despised place, but just the place where spiritual power is found. Was it not ever thus? When was it found allied to the great things of this world?

18. - **“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor.”** It was the characteristic of grace to come to such. The great business of Christ was to preach, *i.e.*, to present God. The Holy Ghost gives the right word at the right time, and in the right way.

21. - **“This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears.”** The Lord does not reason; He says here it is. The way of God is to present what we want. You want salvation, there it is; you want mercy, and there it is. God alone can thus come, by grace, into the place of a sinner.

They wonder, for His were precious words, but soon they ask, Is not this Joseph's son? Was He ashamed of being the carpenter? Grace goes down to the lowest need. But man will take occasion to despise grace, because it is clothed in humiliation. He cannot but see God, but he steps aside to look at the humiliation, and so show out the hatred of his heart. God's grace is despised and His sovereignty is hated. God did not despise Nazareth, but man despises Jesus because He came out of Nazareth. Even the guileless Nathaniel asks, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John 1. 46). How little appreciation of the way of grace there is even in the godly! Christ comes into man's misery, and finds him where he is. Could an angel? No; he stays in his proper position, doing the Lord's commandments, and hearkening to the voice of His Word. An angel ought not to come down to me in my sins; God only can in His grace. And man despises the lowliness to which grace brought Him—wretched man!

25-27.—But Israel ever resisted grace, and yet it was ever the way of God's delight. Witness **the widow of Sarepta** in Sidon, and **Naaman the Syrian** leper. Grace overleaped the bounds of Israel. They might be enraged, but grace does overstep their limits. They rose up to thrust Him down who had denied their privileges, but He passed through (verse 30) to renew the work of grace elsewhere.

31, 32. - "For His Word was with power." This does not move Jesus; it tries Him and breaks His heart, but it does not move Him. The reproach of man turns Him to God. His comfort in His rejection is His Father's will: "Even so, Father." It was perfectness in the scene of grace, as before in the scene of temptation.

There was also the manifestation of power, and not merely promise. There was the accomplishment of promise for the deliverance of man in power as well as grace. And this remains true for us who know Him as a Man risen and at the right hand of God. Mere promise does not give a centre for the affections—Christ Himself is that—Christ to whom promise pointed. He awakens divine feelings and thoughts in us, which find no response or satisfaction from anything in this world. It is the special character of Christ. When He presents Himself it is perfect peace and grace, and in fellowship with Him the soul can praise and rejoice in what He is.

THE GREAT HEALER.

This grace adapts itself to all difficulties, so as to bring man into peace with God. The very demons knew who He was; *man* alone was dull and blind. The devil held captive, but a single word of Jesus sets the captive free. *He* was there, not a promise merely, but power accomplishing, the living power of the Lord Himself among men, the power of God in man overcoming Satan. Such was Jesus in the synagogue of Capernaum dealing with the unclean spirit.

38, 39.—And it is the same when He goes out and "**enters Simon's house.**" Disease disappears, the weak is made strong. He ministers unto Simon's wife's mother, as she lay taken in a great fever, "**and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.**"

40, 41.—What can resist this delivering power in the person of the Lord Jesus? "**Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto Him; and He laid His hands on every one of them, and healed them; and devils also came out of many.**" He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. Therefore when men stayed Him that He should not depart, He pleads His mission to preach elsewhere also. He is ever the obedient One.

Chapter 5

It is interesting to know the progressive power of the Word of God. The Lord was preaching, as related at the close of chapter 4, and in so doing, as well as in the miracles He wrought, He was manifesting the power of goodness. Thus, in performing miracles, two purposes had to be accomplished—confirmation of the testimony given, and present deliverance from the power of Satan. But His great business was preaching the kingdom of God. He will set up the kingdom in power by and by, but His great object then was, and is, to bring the heart into contact with God, and the Word does this more than miracles.

1. - **“The people pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God.”** In a measure even the unconverted are sensible of the presence of God. Adam was when he tried to hide himself. When the Gospel is preached with power crowds are gathered together by it, touched, perhaps, by something new, but without fruit. So it was with the Lord’s preaching and miracles. We know their motives were selfish often, yet He went on all the same. Come for the blessing of man, He would associate others with Himself in this work of grace; but He calls them in such a way as leaves no glory to man.

CATCHING FISH AND MEN.

2-4.—He “saw two ships standing by the lake, but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And He entered into one of the ships, which was Simon’s, and prayed him that he would launch out a little from the land; and He sat down and taught the multitudes out of the ship. Now when He had left off speaking, He said to Simon, **Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.**” The Word had authority in the conscience. Peter and Andrew had seen Jesus before, but had not yet stayed with Him. There had not been sufficient power in their faith to attach them to Christ. There are many now, as ever, who own the authority of the Word, yet are not attached by its power to His person; many absorbed by their everyday pursuits, the Word not having laid hold of their souls so as to make them walk thoroughly with Christ. It is one thing simply to hear His word when spoken to them; quite a different thing when the Word reaches them and becomes the spring and motive of all their ways. So here these men had spent a little time with Jesus, had heard Him speak, and owned Him as Messiah; so now also we see obedience to His word when it comes to them. They launch out at His word, and at His word they let down their nets.

5.—The miracle which the Lord wrought was one every way suited to act on those concerned. Their own powerlessness was confessed: **“Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing.”** Man could do nothing in such a case. If Jesus could it was because everything was at His disposal. “At Thy word I will let down the net.”

6-8. - **“And when they had this done, they enclosed a great multitude of fishes, and their net brake.** And they beckoned unto their partners, . . . and they came and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.” There was not even strength to receive of themselves. “When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, **Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.**” If the Word of Jesus had not reached Peter’s heart he would merely have obeyed it as a means of temporal help; but he owns Him as Lord, hearing far more in the words spoken. His conscience was reached. The Lord Himself is revealed to Peter, and that shows Peter himself. When the eye of God is consciously upon us we see in ourselves what He saw. This was Peter’s case. He, when brought into God’s presence, feels that he has been deceiving himself.

Grace begins here, but we have not the end yet. So Paul was blind three days, and his soul so wrought on that he could neither eat nor drink. Here Peter falls down at Jesus' knees. So with us. When brought really into His presence there is the discovery of our sinfulness. The means used to bring us there may be various—circumstances of life, providential occurrences. But when we are there, there is the revelation of Christ Himself, and wherever He is He takes His right place in the soul. It is not only that a man then has salvation, but he cannot longer be content without God having His due place before him.

Peter does not fly away from the Lord, like Adam hiding himself, he is attracted to Him. At the same time he is there a judged, convicted, sinful man in his own conscience, which takes the part of Christ against itself. "Depart from me," he says, but he says it at Jesus' knees. This might seem like a contradiction. It was really love to the Lord and care for His honour, because His Word had become the revelation of Christ to him. His heart was not perfect peace, but Christ has got possession of it. Grace draws to Christ, but there is withal the sense of unfitness till His work is known in all its peace-giving consequences. God sees the thoughts and intents of the heart, and we are made to see these as He sees them. Righteousness is planted in the conscience; God and manure brought together. It was not that Peter could be happy anywhere but at the feet of Jesus, but he felt all the while how unfit he was to be in such company.

10.—But the Lord deals in perfect grace. He does not leave Simon Peter. He knew all his sin before He went into the ship, and says to him: "**Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.**" Jesus went into the ship to show Peter that he had nothing to fear. Truly "perfect love casteth out fear." Fear has torment till grace is fully revealed; and now it was, with as much authority as that miracle-working word, "Let down your nets for a draught." It was the Word of Christ to his heart. If he trusted it for the fish, why not for his fears? Peter had said "Depart," but instead of that Christ had already come, knowing all he was better than Peter. He was come as a Saviour; nay, more, He intimates to Peter that He was going to make him an instrument in gathering others. Every one who has the love of God shed abroad in his heart becomes a vessel of living grace himself. Not the source, but the river flows through him, so that people may come and drink. Recipients of grace, we are associated with Christ in the activity of love. Outward gift is not meant here, but that, as members of His body, there is living fellowship with the Head in the testimony of His grace and power.

11.—We see in these disciples the effect of all. They are absorbed with Christ now. They not only look to Him for salvation, but they think of nothing else for life, speaking now generally and apart from any particular failure. "**They forsook all, and followed Him.**" Christ becomes their life. It is a new line altogether, not merely obedience to an express command with the reserve of thinking and saying, perhaps, "There is no harm in this or that." Christ pleased not Himself. His reason for action was His Father's will, and not the absence of a prohibition. And *we* are sanctified unto the obedience and sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus Christ. "They forsook all," and where Christ went they went. They are associated with their Lord in His love to souls and in the walk of life. This is liberty. May we, having Christ our life, have Him as our one motive, detached from all to Him, yet channels for all the blessing and grace we have ourselves tasted in Him! There is power to attract out of every corruption around, and to gather the soul into the thoughts and ways of God by the revelation of Christ Himself.

CLEANSING OF THE LEPER.

12-14.—Christ was the manifestation on earth of God's power and character—of grace. Of this the leper's case which follows is a striking witness, for leprosy was an evil which none but God could remove. But God was there in grace. Leprosy presented sin in the aspect of

uncleanness. A man full of it on seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought Him, saying: **“Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.”** There is the recognition of divine power in Jesus, but he has not full confidence in His grace. He seems disheartened by misery, and almost in despair says “If Thou *wilt*.” But He who alone on earth had the title so to say it, says **“I will.”** It was God only, not in Heaven, but come down in man and among men. Christ was there, who could touch the leper and the leprosy without being touched by it. Divine power was needed, doubtless, and the very priests could not but attest the results of its intervention, but there was divine and perfect love in His touch, while it was the touch of a man, a man who acknowledges the ordinances of God, and as one who had been born under the law. Thus this **“turned for a testimony.”** For the leper must go to the priest, and what could he think? Why, who has been here? Jehovah must have been to heal the man.

16.—And what next? Jesus **“withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed.”** Let the power exercised be ever so great and manifestly divine, He is the dependent Man, and this is just where we fail.

THE MAN BORNE OF FOUR.

18-26. - **“They went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling.”** Here we have another thing. Not the power of Satan, as in chapter 4, nor the uncleanness of sin typified by leprosy, but the guilt of sin. They brought the man because they felt the need; and there was the perseverance of faith, which would not be put off till another day. And Jesus brings forgiveness of sins as well as cleansing from defilement. This is what appears in the instance of the palsied man. The first and grand point is that Jesus pronounces his sins forgiven. Authority to pardon has come in the person of the Son of Man on earth, whatever scribes and Pharisees might think. It was God, the Lord Jehovah, but the Son of Man withal, having on earth power to forgive sins, and using it. It is in this way Israel is to be forgiven by and by (cp. *Psa.* 103. 3), and accordingly the Lord here gives the proof of that authority to forgive by the healing the disease of the paralytic.

24. - **“That ye may know.”** The man was to know in his relationship to God that his guilt was gone. Through infinite grace we are entitled to more than even this, for we have the righteousness of the accepted Man in God’s presence. We are made the righteousness of God in Him. This palsied man was a sample of what will be in the future day Israel’s portion. Jesus was forgiving iniquities and healing diseases. He had shown the power to do the one, now He would show that He could do the other also. It is God’s delight to do it all. You may not believe that you can have such a boon, but it is ours in Christ. The perfect Man has come with perfect title in His person. God wrought there, but it was also as a man filled with the Holy Ghost. The believer walks, too, a proof not to himself so much as to others that God was there. The man ought not to say “I wonder if I can walk.” If he has faith he will get up and do it.

Two things are here present. First, the exceeding blessed grace that the Lord is come, the power of God within the sphere of human misery, which, extreme as it may be, does but make that power evident. If I look around as a man I am lost. I cannot unriddle the history of the world—abominations committed in the Name of Christ, Himself rejected by His people Israel, and crucified by those Gentiles to whom God had entrusted the government of the world, Mohammedanism, Heathenism. What kind of a God have you, says the reasoning heart, when it is such a world? But here I have the Lord come down into all the wretchedness, sickness, sin, and my heart is drawn away from pleasure and sorrow to Him. How beautiful to see heart after heart brought around this One, the only true centre, soon to be the risen head of the new creation; Himself the object drawing out feelings and affections of which He alone is worthy. He who by His excellency gives excellency, and by His gracious thoughts towards us

produces and draws out gracious thoughts in us. Next, our hearts are fixed just so far as we have an object—fixed according to God, when we have Christ Himself before us. How can I love if I have nothing to love? A man is what he feels, and likes, and thinks. If my soul lives and feeds upon that which is most excellent—Christ the bread of God—Christ becomes, in a practical sense, formed in the heart. In Him, the Man Christ Jesus, God has had all His delight, and the display of it too.

Remark further, that in the accounts we have seen, divine power in the person of Jesus, the Son of Man, is exercised in the midst of Israel. First (chap. 4. 31-41), its triumph over the enemies' power in sickness and in demoniacal possessions, and the testimony of the kingdom, when all such effects of Satan's work should disappear. This last opens the way for the more positive and deeper blessing of souls being put in relationship to God. Hence from chapter 5. 1-26 (the call of Peter, the cleansing of the leper, and the pardon of the palsied man), it is a question of the state of the soul (whatever the outward accompaniments might be), of the authority of the Word over the heart, of faith, and of Christ's personal glory. Still it was grace in operation towards Israel; grace, if one might so speak, in government. To Israel God had said that He would not put upon them the plagues of Egypt save for their sin. They were an outwardly elect, redeemed people, but they were under God's government; and hence chastening came, of which the leprosy and the palsy were peculiar samples. Jesus shows Himself to be "Jehovah that healeth thee," in the midst of Israel, though He was passing away from them into a wider display of power and goodness. He could have healed every one, leprous or paralytic; He could have removed all the diseases, now, alas, brought on the Israelites; but in these cases it is where they come to Him in quest of healing, *i.e.*, it is in answer to faith that He works. He was *there*, showing divine power and grace in healing.

THE CALL OF MATTHEW.

27-32. - "**Levi left all, rose up, and followed Him.**" But this grace, being of God and sovereign, could not be bounded by human circumstances. Wherever a want appeared to Him, could He gainsay His power or His love? Now, see how that connects itself with what follows. There was full deliverance for all who trusted in Israel, but He could not, and would not, limit His grace. The law limited, but when Himself, the God who gave it, came everybody who needs Him is welcome. His house is a house of prayer for all nations. Hence He calls a publican, a Jew indeed, but detested by the Israelites, and in a sense rightly, when viewed as the mark of their servitude nationally. A publican was one who profited by their Gentile masters, to extort money from Israel, and therefore naturally regarded with horror. But Jesus calls one named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom—calls him to be an apostle. Grace must act according to its own rights. If God has been good to you or me, does that hinder His mercy and love to another? Grace creates the instrument it wants to act by; and it will flow further than the publican yet, even to the most distant Gentile. True, Israel had the promises; the Gentile, strictly speaking, had none; but for that very reason it was more purely grace, and grace would act towards the Gentiles. The Lord Himself, God, was there, and Israel could not be the centre nor the temple when He was there, the despised Lord of both. He is the door, the new centre and turning point of blessing; not a mere branch of the old vine, but Himself the true vine. As a Jew He was subject to ordinances, but as the Lord He is above them, and He breaks out beyond all the old restrictions.

29. - "**Levi made Him a great feast in his own house**, and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them; but the scribes and Pharisees murmured." It was a terrible sight and blow to such.

31.—But Jesus answers, “**They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.** I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” They mistook the Lord altogether. He came to show how grace could deal with those who had no righteousness.

34. - “**Can ye make the children of the bride-chamber fast?**” He is now breaking, as it were, out of the old thing. He is faithful to Israel, but breaking up that order of things. How could they fast who owned the presence of the divine husband of Israel, the Messiah? The time was coming when the Cross must be taken; but when the Bridegroom is there, fasting was out of place and season.

36-39.—Further, **the old garment cannot be patched with new cloth.** Jesus would do no such thing as tack on Christianity to Judaism. Flesh and law go together, but grace and law, God’s righteousness and man’s, will never mix. Neither can the new wine, the power of the Spirit, be put into the old legal ordinances without loss on all sides. A man accustomed to forms, human arrangements, father’s religion, etc., never likes the new principle and power of the kingdom; he says the old is better. . Such is nature; grace is offensive to it. Nor does man improve in divine things. He can degrade himself and give up what his heart never relished. And this goes on rapidly to-day.

Chapter 6

Here we have a most weighty thing spoken of—**the Sabbath**. It is a question that often agitates the minds of men, and was then specially important as closing Jewish relations. And this, it will be borne in mind, was just where the Lord had morally arrived at the close of the preceding chapter. The rights of His person and His grace, now becoming more rejected by the religionists of Israel, reach out beyond the narrow bounds of that proud people. God thereon, by degrees, intimates the coming purpose of His mercy. His salvation in due time shall be sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear. If the Jew judges himself unworthy of everlasting life, God will have His own joy of saving souls somewhere.

THE QUESTION OF THE SABBATH.

1-5.—Now it is very evident that the incident of the cornfields, “**on the second Sabbath after the first**,” thoroughly falls in with the object of the Spirit in hand. “The Son of Man is Lord also of the Sabbath.” His person entitles Him to supremacy over that which was the sign of the covenant of the law.

6-10.—In the next case He asserts the right to do good on the Sabbath day, as His adversaries on the same day show their disposition to destroy. The Sabbath, in any real sense, man had entirely lost. Indeed, he had never entered into God’s thoughts of rest. It was His rest, and had not sin spoiled all, man should have enjoyed that which was the result not of his own, but of God’s labour. This is the proper character of that rest which belongs to man distinctively; but sin having come in the necessity has arisen that God should work afresh if man is ever to share the rest of God (see Heb. 4). Meanwhile, Christ has appeared and finished the work which God gave Him to do. Hence we who believe find rest in Christ, as does God Himself. In Him, by virtue of the accomplished and accepted work of redemption, we have our Sabbath spiritually.

The day was set apart and hallowed from the beginning (Gen. 2). Afterwards it came in, first in grace to Israel, marked by the cessation of the manna and a double portion to provide for that holy day (Exod. 16); and, secondly, as a part of the law of Sinai, and incorporated with every new and special dealing of Jehovah (chap. 20; see also 31. 13, 14; 33. 14; 34. 21; and 35. 2). It was a memorial thenceforward of the deliverance out of Egypt (Deut. 5. 15). Accordingly the prophets expressly treat it as a sign of Israel’s separation from all other nations unto God, and of God’s covenant with them (Ezek. 20. 12-20; 22. 8; 23. 38; 44. 24; Isa. 56, 58; Jer. 17. 4). But then, in the past, Israel, a sinful people, had the Sabbath as a legal ordinance, and consequently are condemned by it as by all else.

Where is this covenant with Israel? All gone, because of their iniquity. Hence they were thrown into the hands of the Gentiles and became slaves.

Behold, we are servants this day; and for the land that Thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we are servants in it: and it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom Thou hast set over us, because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle at their pleasure, and we are in great distress” (Neh. 9. 36, 37). If they had a temple after the captivity it was only at the mercy of their Persian masters. The outward emblem lingered on no doubt, and was especially made much of to dishonour Him, of whom and whose work it was so significant; but where was its reality when Jesus was on earth? Alas! He lies in the grave all the day which His murderers kept as a day holy to Jehovah - “for that Sabbath was an high day” (John 19. 31)—awful testimony to

the Jews of their position. Their own Messiah slain by His own people. Such was the truth which that Sabbath day uttered to Him who had ears to hear. Israel never had the rest of God. “If Joshua had given them rest” (Heb. 4). “There remaineth therefore a rest” (Heb. 4. 9). They must own Jesus first.

5.—But the rejected Jesus was Son of Man, and the Son of Man was **Lord of the Sabbath**, a truth of the utmost gravity, to be asserted with all strength. Those who confound the Lord’s day with the Sabbath are in danger of forgetting this. It was the very point here in controversy with the Jews who maintained that the Sabbath was superior to the Lord. But He shows that another new principle had come in which wholly overleaped the old, and that to remain in the old was to have no deliverance. For there is no possibility for a lustful creature to be under a commandment that condemns lust without being condemned. Grace, however, has entered through a rejected Christ, and now there is rest for us who believe—not for those who are on the ground of law.

THE LORD’S DAY.

This is the reason why Christians keep the first day of the week, and not the seventh or Sabbath day. The rest was acquired by the power of Christ’s redemption, and the first day, when He arose from the dead, was that which proclaimed it to faith, spite of man’s guilt and ruin. The seventh day will be the rest of man on earth; the first day celebrates Christ’s taking us in Him to Heaven. Then was life from the dead, life more abundantly, liberty from the law, and every consequence of sin—in a word, the victory of grace. The Christian, therefore, has the *first day* distinctively, because it belongs to and witnesses of the perfected work of Christ, and consequently introduces heavenly rest. The first day is in contrast with the seventh, which appertained to the round of man’s labour in nature and of the Jew’s under the law, in which Adam and Israel utterly broke down. It is the *Lord’s day* emphatically, and this testifies of the triumph of Christ’s Word and the glory of His person—not the day which guilty unbelief would have perverted into the proof and means of His inferiority. It is positive, direct blessing to him who owns and honours it, not because it is the close of legal toil, but the commencement of Christian hope; the resurrection day when we begin our spiritual life, and look on for what will crown so precious a pledge.

Here, however, the grand thing is the maintenance of the rights and authority of the Son of Man. You never can, according to God, raise up the title of the Sabbath against the Lord of the Sabbath.

3-5. - “**What did David,**” the anointed of the Lord, when Saul persecuted him and sought his life? Was it of God, then, to uphold the ritual and so starve the man after His heart? No; the foundations were out of course, and everything became common in Israel when the chosen king was thus iniquitously rejected. But a greater One, and graver sin were now in their midst, The Son indeed, but the Root of David, God Himself was there; He who instituted the Sabbath, its Lord, was there in the person of the Son of Man.

6-12.—But if God was there, would He deny His own goodness or restrain His power in presence of human misery, because “**the scribes and Pharisees watched Him whether He would heal on the Sabbath day?**” Divine love must act and heal the withered hand, even if wretched man should seek to find therein an accusation. And they were filled with madness and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus (11); but Jesus in those days retired to a mountain to pray. He drew near to God to commune with Him as to what He was to do for them (12). His was the activity of grace, of love displaying itself holily and mightily in the midst of evil.

THE TWELVE CHOSEN.

13-16. - **“And when it was day He called His disciples.”** In this call He proves that He was the only One who could empower others to bear this testimony also. And yet here, as in all that passed before, He is the lowly dependent One—perfect Man, as well as God. He was in perfect, unbroken communion with His God and Father, though Himself God manifest in the flesh. How blessedly near to us this brings Him, though so infinitely above us! What He did we should aim at, whatever our measure and our little sphere. In Him we see man perfect in that place of power wherein He came.

He knew whom He chose. He knew that one of them had a devil; but He sent them out. Twelve He chose specially, whom also He called apostles, “sent ones.” It was an important and significant word, as quite a distinct thing both from law and promises. No one was sent out by law. Now God is active; He is sending His Son, and the Son is sending out apostles. The love of God is active in gathering souls. This first Sent One is a Man really and truly. God’s work of His grace must be done by His Son, not by angels, but by His own Son, as the Man Christ Jesus, and He sends men out from Himself. The gathering point is Man—Himself of course. To Man God has committed all things. While it must be God who shows grace, the Son of Man it is who comes on the mission of love and sends out men to men.

17-19.—Whatever He attracts by He gathers round Himself to worship, surrounds Himself with them, and then comes down and stands in the plain. The great multitude are attracted by His miracles and their want, coming to hear and be healed. The company of the disciples were an inner circle. **“The whole multitude sought to touch Him.”** It is not said that they were converted, which is another thing; but living power went out of Him, healing their bodily misery and delivering from the power of Satan.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

20.—He now lifts up His eyes on His disciples and speaks to them, not as in Matthew 5, giving them the developed principles of the kingdom, but distinguishing those before Him as the remnant. Hence it is “ye” here. He puts seal and stamp on those actually gathered round Himself. They are to be like Him. He is at once their centre and their pattern. He was God, but the fulness of the Holy Ghost dwelt in Him as man also; and so He could say “I do always those things which please Him.” So should it be with those around Him.

20-26. - **“Blessed (are) ye poor; for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed (are) ye that hunger now; for ye shall be filled. Blessed (are) ye that weep now; for ye shall laugh. Blessed are ye when men shall hate you.”** These words of the Saviour give the contrast of those He pronounces blessed with all that are at ease in this world. Those who, if in this life only they had hope in Christ would be of all men the most miserable, are the only happy few. They are severed from all others, and put in relationship with Him, the source of blessing, to be blessed. If you can make yourselves happy and comfortable in this world which has rejected Jesus, count not on His blessing. It is the poor, the despised with Jesus who shall have the kingdom. He says, if we may so speak, “I am distinguishing *you*,” for there is no enunciation of abstract principles, as in the beginning of Matthew 5, but a speaking to the hearts of those gathered around Him. “I am come as the centre of power and active love. There is but one sole place of blessing on earth. *With Me* you are blessed.” Others may be gay and cheerful where Christ has no place; but it is a time when a true spiritual soul can get no good save with Christ. It is a definite distinction of, and address to, the disciples who attached themselves to Him. This is made clear in verse 22, where the persecution for righteousness, which St. Matthew carefully records, is omitted. Here it is only a question of suffering **“for the Son of Man’s sake”** (22).

In the midst of a world of misery and selfishness there came One who displayed not law nor judgment, but grace. But the light shines in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not. Like the adder that hears nothing the world goes on as deaf as it is blind. No; you who are “full” now Jesus has no charm for you; but you, disciples, are weeping now, the sorrow and the sin of man distress your spirit; you shall rejoice. When God has His way, you who cannot be satisfied with the husks shall be filled. “Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for, behold, your reward is great in Heaven; for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.” You have your portion with Christ here, you shall have it with Christ in Heaven. You suffer with the suffering One; you shall have glory with the glorified One. But the others!—they shall have what they seek. For the full there shall be a famine by and by, for they have lost God. If you can laugh in such a world as this, you shall weep when God’s time for blessing comes. They are of the world, and the world naturally loves its own. “So did their fathers to the prophets.” Are the times altered? Is Christ’s character changed? It is not a whit more agreeable to the flesh. And if you can find your joy, ease, and pleasure in the world, Christ could not, and you have not His Spirit. He that will be its friend is the enemy of God. Can the disciple of Jesus be merry and gay in a world which has sin wrapped up in it? There is communion with Jesus, joy in the Spirit, while patient in tribulation; but this is quite another thing. It is a serious joy, though very real and blessed.

27.—He now shows what must be the conduct of the disciples as such. They were to manifest God, to be the unfolding of what was displayed in Him. Grace which was in Him in fulness and perfection should be reproduced in them, sadly as we all fail in this—the principle of our path. “**Love your enemies.**” God loved us when we were His enemies, and we have now to show practically what God is.

29.—This brings us into entirely human circumstances, patiently learning in them; or, as in 1 Peter 2, doing well, suffering for it, and taking it patiently. This may seem poor comfort. But Jesus did so, and love must so manifest itself in an evil world. The time comes when God will judge, instead of bearing long as now; but now, at whatever cost to self, show love as Christ did.

35.—Flesh can love for love, but the disciples of Christ are called to imitate God, and walk in love. “**Love ye your enemies**, and do good and lend, hoping for nothing again, and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest; for He is kind to the unthankful and to the evil.” What a blessed character of God comes out here! It is not righteousness, though surely there was that, but in the world where God had to do with the unthankful and evil He shows grace. For the angels He has not grace, but love; but Christ in this world of sin is grace, *i.e.*, love to those who deserve it not. “Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful” (Luke 6. 36). It is not *with*, but “as your Father.” As He loves His enemies, so do you; He is merciful, be ye also merciful. In all this God’s character is displayed—perfect love in a world of sinners. It must cost us something; it cost the life of Christ. His love was a stream which if it met with hindrances in its way only went on flowing over, and leaving them behind till it reached the Cross.

37. - “**Judge not, and ye shall not be judged.**” This is not certain things required in order to get life, but the result of certain conduct shown. As though He had said: You will find the consequences of your conduct as Christ did. He took the lowest place, but He has got the highest now. He humbled Himself; “wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him” (Phil. 2. 9). He came not to judge, and now “all judgment is committed to the Son” (John 5.22). Thus we not only have the display of grace, but divine character meeting its consequences.

38.—It is a question of government—of walking with the Lord. It must cost a great deal in the path, but in the end it will be “**full measure, pressed down.**” There will be God’s

blessing, too, in the way, though self is mortified. Grace will abound, according to God's way.

39. - **“Can the blind lead the blind?”** See the contrast of those who are in utter blindness, and the blind leading the blind. You must let them alone; leave them to go on their own way; but you have to take your place with Me; and the disciple is not above his Master, but you shall be as your Master. If your Master suffers, you suffer; if it has cost your Master much, it must cost you much. If Christ teaches you, it is to make you possess the divine learning that He has Himself. And see what a place He gives us! When He gives, what does He give? The very same that He has Himself. “As He is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4. 17). “Not as the world giveth” (John 14. 27), which if it gives a little reserves the chief for itself; but as though He said “I am putting you in the very same learning that is in My nature, the grace that I have you are to have.” But people do not like to do those things that Jesus did. Why is there so much argument about that one passage, “Resist not evil?” It is because you like to resist evil. Your will is touched, your conscience is reached, for it is given you as a matter-of-fact exhortation. But you do not like it, and you will get rid of it if you can. These things are given as tests for the conscience; they judge the eye, not the path only. “If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light” (Matt. 6. 22). The object is wrong if you have not light for the step. There may be difficulties in going up a steep hill, but if the object before you is clear, you get over them as quickly as you can. This is what is meant by the expression “This one thing I do” (Phil. 3. 13). It is having one object, and the mind intent on accomplishing it. If it is so with you there will be sure to be light in the path—light not for ten years hence, but for this one step that is before you, and then for the next. It was said to Moses, “Speak to the children of Israel that they go forward” (Exod. 14. 15), and when they were out in the wilderness the pillar was given to be their constant guide. So with us. We are called out to go after Christ on the principle of obedience, and this puts us into connection with Him in the revelation of His will, not giving us to see all the path onwards. A man may see a wall, and say “I cannot go that way, there is a wall,” while if he but takes a single step he will find that there is a path all down by the side of the wall.

44. - **“Every tree is known by his own fruit.”** Not only bearing fruit, but fruit that Christ produces should be ours. There is fruit that an upright nature produces, such as that of the young man who came to Jesus, but that was not divine fruit—“its own fruit;” and where Christ is the root and the stock, it is Christian fruit, *i.e.*, fruit that will remain (John 15. 16). Two men may go together up to a certain point, and then some test for Christ comes; one goes on with Him, and the other turns aside. “Its own *fruit*”—fruit shows itself, springs of itself. There will not be the question of: What harm in this or that? What harm in being rich? as a person once asked me. If it shuts you out of Heaven, is there any harm in that? Oh, I did not think of that! But the secret is that you like the things. The evil is not the things themselves dug out of the earth, but the love in the heart for them. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” An impatient word betrays the heart. A blow I may restrain, yet utter the word.

THE HOUSE ON THE ROCK.

47.—In the hearing of all the multitude the Lord speaks now about **the house built upon the rock**. This is not a question about building upon Christ, the Rock, for the salvation of the sinner. It is the path of the saint. But where Christ's Word does connect with Himself, see the result. The very thing people are called upon to do is to follow Him; and when I follow it proves that the Master's words have taken such a hold upon my soul that they have power to carry me over the difficulties. “My soul followeth hard after Thee” (Psa. 63. 8). A man's affections, heart, will, are taken and connected with Christ instead of with himself. Is Christ

sufficiently precious to make me leave all beside and follow Him, to do those things that please Him? “If a man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, but shall have the light of life” (John 11. 9). “As when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light” (Luke 11. 36). Keeping close to Christ, the light shines upon us. If we have to get into the light we may be dazzled by it. Thus He has gathered round Himself in light and love those whom He will have to enjoy Himself, and be as their Master, at length to be conformed to His image in glory.

Chapter 7

We have seen the Lord rejected by Israel gradually, in virtue of His person and rights, breaking out beyond the ancient limits, and gathering the remnant round Himself, the new and only just object of God, the source of a mission in grace, and the full development and exemplification of holy love in an evil world; for whatever the principles laid down in chapter 6 they are but the expression of God's character in grace, as displayed in Christ here below.

THE CENTURION'S SERVANT.

1-10.—In accordance with this, we have now **the case of the centurion**, and a very full and striking one it is. It is not merely an act of grace, but grace to a Gentile. Nor is this all. The principle on which the apostle rests this question is brought out. "It is of faith, that it might be by grace, that the promise might be sure to all the seed" (Rom. 4. 16). Faith, as the great turning point, is introduced. It was no mere theory. It was living faith, and such faith as had not been seen in Israel. Neither was there presumption, but, on the contrary, remarkable humility. He recognised the honour God had put upon His people; he sees, holds to it, owns and acts upon it, spite of their low and debased and in every other respect unworthy condition. Despised and failing as they might be, he loved the Jews as God's people, and for His sake, and he had built them a synagogue. Unfeigned lowliness was his, though (yea, rather, for) his faith was far beyond those he honoured. Consequently he had a very high apprehension of the power and glory of the person of Christ as divine, reaching out beyond Jewish thoughts altogether. He does not refer to the Lord as Messiah, but recognised in Him the power of God in love. This was blessed faith which forgets itself in the exaltation of its object. He saw not Jesus, it would seem, but assuredly gathered from what "he heard" that diseases were nothing to Him but occasions wherein to display His absolute authority and His sovereign mercy. He was a stranger, and the Jews were God's people; must not they or their elders be the fittest to bring this wonderful Person? For he confided in His mercy as well as His power, and his servant, "dear unto him," was sick and ready to die. He needed Jesus.

6. - "**Then Jesus went with them.** And when He was not far from the house the centurion sent friends to Him, saying unto Him, Lord, trouble not Thyself; for I am not worthy that Thou shouldest enter under my roof; wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto Thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed." There was surely the deepest personal respect and affection. Untaught as he might be in other things, he strongly felt the excellency of Christ's person, and here again with humility correspondent to the measure in which His glory was seen. This message of the centurion's friends admirably depicts his character and feeling. He told nothing to Jesus of his service to the Jews, spoke of nothing personal save his unworthiness, and this so consistently that he begged Jesus not to come to his house, as unworthy to receive Him. There was in this soul the exact opposite of doing Christ an honour, by believing on Him, and far from him was the pretence of receiving Christ to set himself up—both, alas! found often elsewhere. The simplicity of his heart is as apparent as his strong faith. There was none such in Israel, and yet it was in one who loved Israel. It was a lesson of grace in every way for the crowd that followed Jesus—for us, too, most surely.

THE WIDOW'S SON.

11-17.—Along with grace to the Gentiles came the evidence of power to raise the dead, but here it was manifested in human sympathies, in witness that God had visited His people. It

was the power of resurrection, a power which was yet to be shown more gloriously and to be the source of that which is new for man according to God—the God who raiseth the dead. It was another and wondrous proof that He is here going, in the character of His action, without the sphere of the law and its ordinances. “For the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth” (Rom. 7. 1) . What can it avail for one who is dead? “But what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. 8. 3). It was grace indeed, and divine energy, but withal displayed in One who was touched with the feeling of our infirmities. And how astonishingly all the details bring this out? The dead man was “**the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.**” “And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother.” How exquisitely human, and withal how unmistakably divine!

It is manifest that these two cases illustrate the change which the Spirit is attesting in this part of St. Luke. Nor is it otherwise with the scene that follows, which brings out in fact the hinge of the dispensation. The Lord bears witness to John Baptist, not John to the Lord. John sends two of his disciples, on the report of the Lord’s miracles, to learn from Himself who He is. Are we surprised? He had preached and baptised in the confession of sins and in faith of the coming Messiah. But now all was changed. John was in prison, not delivered, and it was no longer a people preparing for the Lord. Was it not strange? At any rate, John sought a plain answer, and well could he trust the word of One who did such mighty and holy works. But what a comment upon the marvellous change was this very inquiry. It was a sort of turning over the disciples of John to the Lord.

21-35. - “And in the same hour **He cured many of their infirmities, and plagues, and evil spirits;** and unto many that were blind He gave sight . Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way and tell John.” At the same time, if He receives no longer testimony from John, He bears it to him, owned John and his work. But they were owned from a higher ground where the Lord in grace and resurrection power had placed Himself, and this was based on entire rejection in and by the world, so that, though He was doing all good, still it was “Blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in Me.” Hence in the very verse where the Lord recognises in the fullest way John the Baptist, He marks the change about to take place: “**He that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.**” Happy they who justified God in being baptised of John; wretched the self-righteous who rejected his counsel against themselves. Wisdom is justified of all her children. They understand the ways of God, whether in the servant or the Lord. The ways are quite different, but understood in grace. This generation, alas! understands none, finds fault with all. John is too righteous for them, Jesus is too gracious. The mourning of the one and the piping of the other are utterly distasteful. Such is man’s wisdom to the ways of God. But the children of wisdom justify wisdom notwithstanding.

IN THE PHARISEE’S HOUSE.

36-50.—And in spite of the perverseness of men our Lord did not stop manifesting Himself to the world. Accordingly a tale follows which shows how God’s wisdom is justified by, and in, those who own it in Jesus. It is a tale of grace, of pure, plenary, pardoning grace, which rests not till its object is dismissed in perfect peace. **Jesus is in the Pharisee’s house**, who failed entirely in the essential point; Simon perceived not the glory of Christ. In this the Lord meets him, and shows in contrast with the woman, “**which was a sinner,**” the point where this Pharisee was exercising judgment to be precisely that wherein he failed. God’s thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor His ways as our ways. What if the despised Jesus were not a prophet only, but a Saviour of poor, lost sinners? Ah! God was unknown, that was the secret.

The converted soul sees the glory of the Lord as grace towards itself; he who is unconvinced, however interested humanly, judges according to his own thoughts, and therefore necessarily fails to see the glory which is not according to these thoughts. Man's judgment of the Gospel must be wrong therefore; his reception of it, as grace, is alone right, and alone the way of coming to the knowledge of it.

This was, then, a direct and distinct example of God's ways. It was a forgiving of sins in grace, sovereignly and freely, to any poor sinner manifesting and producing love in the forgiven who loves God, because God is love, and this in respect of his sins, in Jesus the Lord. It was proper grace, the ground on which any one, a Gentile or not, would be received, and God manifested not in requirement from man (and so making man in the flesh of importance), but making God all, and His character in sovereign grace, so bringing in blessing, and its blessed effect upon the heart, developing the fruits of grace in a heart restored to confidence in God by the sense of His goodness. What a blessed picture! Goodness known not only in the act, but in Him who did it. The discernment of guilt in its gross forms by man was one thing, but the grace of God which could blot out and forgive all was quite another. It was not Christ there to judge and sanction Pharisees, but love to a sinner, manifesting God in this new character of grace, producing thankful, holy love to God, and a blessed relationship, sovereign, and beyond the reach of man. Note how God has always to prove Himself right in His goodness to man, so hard is man's heart. But the Lord identifies Himself with the believer, and vindicates him against the haughty world, and this gives assurance. Perfectly regardless of comments, He applies Himself, not to unbelief, which were useless, but to those who have faith, and having communicated forgiveness, shows the soul His uprightness, *i.e.*, the right thoughts of God and self, which faith has. The last word settles the question. The soul's love was a ground of evidence and reasoning, not, of course, the cause. "**Thy faith hath saved thee,**" said the Lord to the woman, "**go in peace.**" All is discharged from the conscience, and the heart finds itself infinitely and everlastingly a debtor to the continual fountain of all grace.

Chapter 8

We have seen in what has preceded the Lord presenting Himself, by His words and His work, as a new centre to which and round which His people were gathered. Before this JEHOVAH had been the centre when Israel was the gathering point, for Jehovah was among the Jews, and the temple the place where He met with the people. But now the Son is here, "God manifest in the flesh," and He must be the centre of everything. But Israel would not be gathered, as the Lord Himself said in Matthew 23. 37, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered, . . . but ye would not." Again, in Isaiah 65. 2, "I have spread out My hands all the day to a rebellious people." Israel could not have the blessing, for the flesh could not hold it. The flesh simply looked at as such is "as grass" (Isa. 40). "All flesh is grass." We have these two great principles running through the latter chapters of Isaiah. First, that flesh, as flesh, could not hold the blessing and be the depository for the promises. For when all grace came, in the person of the Lord, the people to whom He was sent He found withered down like grass. "Surely the people is grass: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the Word of our God shall stand for ever." But God was not going to give up His purpose. Therefore in chapter 49 we find Jehovah says unto Christ, "Thou art My Servant, O Israel, in whom I will be glorified." Then Christ says if God is to be glorified in Israel: "I have laboured in vain, and spent My strength for nought, and in vain, yet surely My judgment is with Jehovah, and My reward with My God." Then saith Jehovah, "Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorified in the eyes of Jehovah. I will also give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation to the ends of the earth." This is what Christ is becoming in Luke's gospel, "A light to lighten the Gentiles." And afterwards we find Paul, with the perfect accuracy of the Spirit, quoting this very scripture, so exactly fitted for them, to the Jews at Antioch. "It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken unto you, but seeing ye judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, *we turn to the Gentiles*" (Acts 13. 46, 47; and, again, Acts 28. 28). Israel will be gathered afterwards, for Christ will hereafter raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore the preserved of Israel; but before this He turns to the Gentiles. All this the Lord pictures to us in Luke. In chapter 7 we see Israel refused both John the Baptist and Christ, but "wisdom is justified of her children." The Pharisees and lawyers did not justify God at all, for they saw no beauty in Jesus, whereas the publicans did; and thus the poor woman, "who was a sinner," whose heart was touched by the grace of God, is the true child of wisdom, and is brought in here as an illustration of Christ being the new centre of blessing, "though Israel be not gathered."

The Lord then goes on with His testimony, gathering by the Word, first, by parables, as in chapter 8, and then in chapter 9 sending forth His disciples to preach with this commission, to shake off the dust from their feet if they are not received, a token of the last testimony being given when they are given up.

1-3. - **"The twelve with them, . . . and many others."** Here are two classes of persons gathered round Christ. First, the twelve apostles were public witnesses, fitted by divine grace to be the vessels of testimony, manifesting the electing power of God in calling them, and sending them forth in all the energy of ministry; Christ's apostles, sent out by Himself, "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you," His chosen ones. "Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." Then, secondly, there were others who were gathered by affection round Him, having no place of office in the Church, but those whose hearts were touched and drawn round Him, not sent out like the first class, but not less devoted in heart than the apostles, for they followed Him, and ministered to Him of their substance.

THE SOWER.

4-8.—In the parable of the sower, as previously remarked, it is not the kingdom brought out as in Matthew, but the testimony as to what and whom Christ was gathering, and not as to the form the kingdom would take afterwards. The very fact of Christ coming as the Sower proved that Israel was set aside; for had it been now to Israel as His vine-yard, He must have come seeking fruit from the vine He had long before planted. He had come to Israel previously, seeking fruit, and finding none He now comes in the new character of the Sower, which is quite another thing. He comes into a waste world where there was nothing, and He begins a fresh work. God is not now looking for fruit from man in one sense, because man has been proved to be a bad tree, and the more you dig about and dung a bad tree the more bad fruit it produces. “A tree is known by its fruits.” Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost. God is now going to produce the fruit He requires. He is not now looking for *man* to produce anything, for John Baptist said, “Every tree that bringeth not forth *good* fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire” (Matt. 3. 10), Therefore the Lord now comes as Sower, not looking for fruit, but doing that which will produce it .

9-15.—He then goes on to describe the character and effect of the sowing, and the disciples ask the **meaning of the parable**. Israel, as such, had forfeited its place, and therefore was “a people of no understanding” (Isa. 27. 11) . Long patience had waited on Israel. Seven hundred years had passed since the Word was given to Isaiah: “Go, tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not.” As individuals they might be drawn round the person of the Lord, but as a nation they were blinded. The disciples had an explanation of the parable, but as a nation the Lord speaks to them in parables (10), thus fulfilling to the *nation* the very words spoken by the prophet so long before. Now the testimony is closed as to Israel, though not as to God’s final purpose respecting them.

The seed is sown indiscriminately, and although man rejects it because his will is opposed, nevertheless it is sown in his heart, for this parable shows how the Word of God is perfectly adapted to the need of man, meeting his conscience and heart. “Never man spake like this Man” (John 7. 46). Christ’s Word came with a power that reached the heart and affections; the WILL is corrupt, and therefore resists it. It is not abstract grace here, but the condition of man that is recognised, therefore we find the Word so perfectly suited to the need, not claiming righteousness from man, but coming in with power to show him that he is a sinner, and laying open the thoughts and intents of the heart. When the heart is thus detected the Word comes with all gentleness and comfort for healing and rest, because there is grace to meet a soul in whatever state it may be found. The heart is spoken to, and therefore the Gospel leaves man without excuse.

13.—Some “**received the Word with joy.**” This was a proof that the conscience was untouched, for when that is reached it is anything but joy until forgiveness is known. The feelings may be moved for a time, and the Word be listened to with a joy which will give place to sorrow. The reason truth is thus flippantly taken up with joy is because there is no root, and so it is received in *joy* and given up in *trouble*.

14.—Another class is where **thorns** spring up and choke the Word. The understanding may be convinced and receive the truth, but the **cares, pleasures, and riches** of this world come in and choke the Word. Now these “cares” are most subtle things, because they enter as necessary duties, and there is no sin in doing one’s duty. Nay, it is right that a man should do his duty in his daily calling. But if these duties choke the Word, and a man loses his soul through it, what then? The natural tendency of the heart often needs to be met with that Word, “Take heed and beware of covetousness” (chap. 12). It is the love of possession. One came to the Lord, saying, “Master, speak to my brother that he divide the inheritance with

me.” The heart wanted to keep it. If love of the world or covetousness gets in among the saints it is an insidious thing, and most difficult to meet, because it is often not open to discipline, and yet if covetousness slips into the heart it checks the power of Christ over the soul and conscience, and eats out the practical life of the Christian, and his soul is withered, withered, withered. It may be checked by the power of God coming in, but this covetous care about earthly things is so subtle that while there is nothing on which to lay the hand, the practical power of Christian life in the soul is gone, though, of course, I need hardly say, eternal life can never be lost in those who once had it.

15. - **“That on the good ground** are they which, in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” There may seem to the world to be fruits bright and blessed, but if people have not got Christ they *tire*. There will be no enduring unless Christ has possession of the soul; but if He has, there will be an abiding motive, and people will go on, and **“bring forth fruit with patience.”** They that hear and keep go steadily on, having their motive for action in the Lord. Trouble may come into the Church; disappointment may arise, even from brethren; but they go on just the same, because they have got Christ before them. For the Word they have heard and keep connects them with Christ, and He is more than anything else.

16-18.—This is a question, not of eternal salvation, but the practical effect of the Word as seen in this world, the growth of the Word in the soul, and that will not be hidden under a bushel. “Ye are the light of the world” (Matt. 5. 14) and “the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5. 13). In those who only appear to be Christians it soon comes to nothing. **“Whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away, even that which he seemeth to have.”** But those in whom the Word works effectually are to be as a “candle” set on a candlestick. Israel being set aside for a season, God sets up a new light in the world; a light lit up by God because of the world’s darkness. When Christ was here He was the Light of the World because of its darkness, and now we should be a light in the world as we are “light in the Lord.” The light is here set up by Christ’s Word, and people are responsible for the Word received. Suppose you have heard the Word, and bring forth no fruit, it will all come out by and by that you have heard the Word and lost it, and the spiritual power accompanying it. For even if you are saints, all that you have heard without fruit or power resulting therefrom, it will come out. For nothing is hid that shall not be known or come abroad. **“Take heed how you hear.”** Christ is looking for the results of His sowing. There must be not only the hearing but the possessing, and in this rests the responsibility, for if you keep the Word which you have heard, more shall be given you. If on hearing I possess that which I hear, not merely have joy in receiving it, but possess it as my own, then it becomes a part of the substance of my soul, and I shall get more, for when the truth has become a substance in my soul there is a capacity for receiving more. Suppose, *e.g.*, you hear the truth of the Lord’s Second Coming, and see your portion as the bride of Christ, and you do not lay hold of it practically so as to possess it (have communion with God about it, which is possession), you will presently lose the expectation of His coming, and forget your place of separation from the world, and the truth will gradually slip away, because you are not holding it in your soul before God. Consequently your soul becomes dead and dull, and you lose the very truth you have received. Thus, if one lives daily as waiting for the Lord from Heaven, there will be no planning for the future, no laying up for the morrow. Such a man will learn more and more, as other truths will open round this one grand central one, and he will be kept in the truth. If, on the other hand, he drops this centre truth by saying “He cannot come yet, so many things must happen first,” then is the progress of such a one’s communion with God hindered, for, as we have said, it is according to what a man has heard and holds with God that there can be any growth. For what is the use of teaching me that the Lord may come to-morrow if I am

going on living as though He were not coming for a hundred years? Or where is the comfort and blessedness of the truth to my soul if I am saying in my heart “My Lord delayeth His Coming?” Though I cannot lose my eternal life, yet if I am losing the truth and light I have had I shall be merely floating on in the current of life, half world and half Christ, and all power of Christian life will be dimmed in my soul. If the truth is held in communion with God it separates to Himself. Truth is to produce fruit, and you have no truth that does not bear fruit. Truth must build up the soul. “Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth” (John 17. 17). Christ becomes precious in and by the truth that I learn, and if it has not that power it all drops out, comes to nothing, and is taken away. If Christ is precious to me I shall be waiting for Him with affection, and if it is not so, the bare truth will soon be given up.

NEW RELATIONSHIPS.

19, 21. - **“Thy mother and thy brethren stand without.”** Here He closes up His connection with Israel after the flesh, for the relations of mother and brethren put Him into connection with Israel after the flesh. Observe, He here distinguishes the remnant by the word *“these,”* as He did in chapter 6 by the word *“ye.”* His mother and His brethren came to Him on the ground of natural relationship only, and there *was* all natural affection in the Lord, as on the Cross we find Him remembering His mother, and commending her to the care of John. But He replies here, as much as to say, “I am not on that ground now, My mother and My brethren are these **which hear the Word of God and do it.**” Israel was now given up as to that position, the Lord owning and acknowledging only those to be His relations on whose hearts and consciences the Word of God had taken effect. It was not what was found in nature, but what was produced by grace, and being thus produced by power through the Word, the principle is hereby established that it might go out to the Gentiles as well as to the Jews, although not fully brought out until after His resurrection. In these three verses we have a judicial sentence on Israel, which closes in verse 21.

STILLING THE WAVES.

22-26.—Here is a parabolical display of what we may expect if we follow the Lord, and the opening out of what the Lord would be to those tried by such circumstances. The consequence of being the disciples and companions of Jesus is that they get into jeopardy every hour, they are not on *terra firma*, but are tossed about on the troubled sea, and Christ Himself absent (“asleep”). **“There came down a storm of wind on the lake,”** the ship was filled with water, and they filled with fear, and were in jeopardy. But the fact was Christ was in the same boat with them. He who made the worlds, the Son of God, was with them, and yet they are afraid, and cry out **“We perish,”** as though *He* could be drowned, thus showing they had no sense of *who* He was that was with them in the boat. To us, now calmly reading the circumstances, what absurdity there seems in such unbelief, when, alas, is it not just the same with ourselves spiritually? Have we no sense of jeopardy when tossed about, and trouble is in the Church? In truth we have, for there is many a heart saying “Who will show us any good?” forgetting what God is acting and doing, though man is battling to all appearance against God’s purposes. But God is not baffled, and He is calmly carrying on His purposes through all the storms raised by men or devils. In John 16 we find the disciples sorrowing because Jesus was going away, and the Lord had said to them (chap. 14), “If ye loved Me, ye would rejoice, because I said I go to the Father.” In chapter 16 Jesus says, “Now I go My way to Him that sent Me, and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou? But because I have said these things, sorrow hath filled your hearts.” God was accomplishing His blessed purposes in redemption by Christ’s going. You forget that God is acting in all this, for you cannot suppose that God is so baffled as to give up His purpose. The disciples thought when Jesus was crucified that all their hopes were disappointed. They say, “we

thought it had been He that should have redeemed Israel” (Luke 24. 21) . In fact, in that very act, and at that very moment, all was being accomplished for them, Where is the Lord going? should have been their question. It is not now that there seems no jeopardy, no confusion, no sorrow; but faith looks at and through it all to God, and asks, What is the Lord doing? Where is the Lord going? In and through all the trouble the Lord has not turned a hairbreadth out of His way. We may be in distress, but faith will not say the Lord is far away, but will know Him nigh at hand.

24.—The Lord let them be in jeopardy, the ship filled with water, and Himself asleep *on purpose* to put their faith to the test, to prove if they were really trusting Him, and that it might be seen if such foolish thoughts would arise when they were put into jeopardy. They say “**Lord, we perish;**” but they were in the ship with Christ, and could they be drowned? He said to them: Where is your faith?” Well might He say thus to them, for though the water was in the boat, He was there too, and could sleep through it all. It was not so much of Him they were thinking as of themselves. “*We perish,*” said they, and it is just the same now, for the fact of being in danger with Christ in the boat is the same at one time as at another, just as impossible now as then. And in truth Christ is much more with us now, being more perfectly revealed to us, and we are united to Him, one with Him, so that He is with us every moment in the power of the Spirit. However high the waves may rise there is no drowning His love and thoughts towards us. The test is to our faith. The question is: Have we that faith which so realises Christ’s presence as to keep us as calm and composed in the rough sea as the smooth? It was not really a question of the rough or the smooth sea when Peter was sinking in the water, for he would have sunk *without Christ* just as much in the smooth as in the rough sea. The fact was the eye was off Jesus on the wave, and that made him sink. If we go on with Christ we shall get into all kinds of difficulties, many a boisterous sea, but being one with Him, His safety is ours. The eye should be off events, although they be ever so solemn, and surely they are so at this present time, and I feel them to be so, for none perhaps has a deeper sense than I of the growth of evil, and of the solemn state of things. But I know all is as settled and secure as if the whole world were favourable. I quite dread the way many dear saints are looking at events, and not looking at Christ and for Christ. The Lord Himself is the security of His people, and let the world go on as it may no events can touch Christ. We are safe on the sea if only we have the eye off the waves, with the heart concentrated on Christ and on the interests of Christ. Then the devil himself cannot touch us.

THE GADARA DEMONS.

26.—A solemn picture of the consequence of Christ’s rejection by the world. Christ comes and finds them utterly under the power of the devil. **A man of the Gadarenes was possessed,** but He delivers “him, thus showing that the Lord had complete power over the enemy. With a word of Christ the devils were off. “The Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3. 8). What was the effect of His thus casting out Satan? Why, the whole multitude of the country round about “**besought Him (Christ) to depart from them.**” These Gadarenes, who had borne with the devils because they could not help it, will not bear with Christ, and they beg Him to depart. Man would be glad to bind legion if he could, for he does not like the effects of the devil’s power; but man’s will is against Christ, he has a deliberate, determined hatred to Christ. The Lord came to the world full of love and power to deliver from the consequences of sin, but man rejected Him, cast Him out, and God will not stay where the will is determined against Him. When the Gadarenes request Christ to depart He immediately went up into a ship and returned back again. And, mark, the world in which we live is just going on as having quietly rejected Christ. But does God give them up though Christ is gone away for a season? No, He did not give them up, but sent amongst them this man whom He had healed to tell them what great

things God had done for him. This is what the disciples did in the world, and the delivered residue also are to tell the world what great things God has done for them.

32.—The swine appear to represent the state of the Jews after their rejection of Christ. The Lord, doubtless, **permitted the devils to enter the swine** (as the swine having no passions of their own, it was their being possessed with these devils which made them run violently to destruction), showing it was not merely the evil passions in the men, but their being possessed by wicked spirits which hurried them on to destruction. And we know historically, from Josephus and others, that one can hardly conceive the infatuation with which the Jews rushed on to their own destruction when those Gentile powers went and ploughed up the holy city. This is just a consequence of Israel's rejecting the Lord.

JAIRUS' DAUGHTER.

41-56.—Then the Lord gives us two other pictures through the medium of real events of His dealings in deliverance. In verse 41 we have **Jairus' daughter**, who lay a dying; and here is a picture (dispensationally) of Israel. The Lord was going to heal Israel, who was just like one dying, but while in the way the people throng Him. What He came to do He did, for the world crowded Him while on the way to heal the sick "daughter of My people;" whosoever could touch Him by faith got healing, the activities of grace going forth from Him. Jairus' daughter "lay a dying." Man was not pronounced to be dead until Christ was killed. Before Christ came there was no healing for man. Abraham longed for the day of Christ. There were prophets who spoke of Christ as a healer, blessing was promised, but there was no physician. "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there?" (Jer. 8. 22). There was none, for no physician could be found to heal man's condition until Christ came, and Him they put to death.

In Him there was living power, for when the people thronged Him a woman does but touch the border of His garment, and virtue goes out of Him to heal her. Healing depended not on the condition of those who were healed, but in the power of the healer. Physicians might apply remedy after remedy, but it is of no avail until One came who could impart life, then the case was changed. When the multitude press upon Him, and He recognises the touch of one to have been the touch of faith, He says, "**Somebody has touched Me, for I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me.**" And now, before the Lord comes forth in resurrection power and glory to bring life from the dead in Israel there is perfect healing where there is faith, for the Lord is always alive to the exercise of faith. The woman hid herself, for there was shame in her, because of the consciousness she felt of the disease which had needed to be healed. "But she could not be hid." The heart always shrinks from opening itself when within itself, but when it looks at Christ it is open to Him, for that is always the effect of being in the presence of Jesus. Shame, reputation, character, all give way before the sense of what He is. When grace gets to the bottom of the heart all else is easily set aside. A link was formed between this woman's soul and Christ. "Thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace." He brings perfect peace and comfort into her heart, for His way is not only to heal, but to make Himself known. She is not only to be cured, but to have the assurance of peace from His own mouth.

49.—Meanwhile they come, saying that Jairus' daughter was dead; "**Trouble not the Master.**" They thought He might possibly heal her while she was living, but now she is dead, they supposed He could do nothing. This is a picture of Israel, who are dead before God (as are Gentiles, too, of course). But Jesus encourages them, and says, "**Only believe, and she shall be made whole.**" When He came to the house He suffered no man to go in save Peter, and James, and John (the pillars of the future glory, when He will come forth as the resurrection and the life to the dead nation), and the father and the mother of the maiden.

In this chapter we get a picture of what was then doing, and what will come to pass. We have the seed, the Word sown, and the effect of it, the use man made of it. We have God's explanation of all that was going on, as being all known and settled in His mind, and if a storm arise, and if Christ appear asleep and insensible to the danger, though "He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep" (Psa. 121. 4), as disciples we are in the same boat with Him. The Lord give us to rest on that with undivided, undistracted hearts, for Christ is in the boat as well as the water. Only let the eye of faith rest on Christ, then come what may we shall say "Who shall separate us?" (Rom. 8. 35), nay, in all, "more than conquerors." Then the more the trouble the more the blessing, because of the exercise of faith.

Chapter 9

After the Lord had given a picture, as it were, of all that was going on in chapter 8 He raises the question in chapter 9 as to who He was, and He tells His disciples some should see His glory, for the mount of transfiguration shows what the glory of the kingdom would be. Peter speaks of the power and coming, “when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory . . . when we were with Him in the holy mount” (2 Peter 1. 17, 13). But it is closing testimony at that time, though the glory would come, and as a signal that it was the disciples were to shake off the dust from their feet when they were not received. It is interesting to mark all the circumstances which bring out the fact of its being the Lord Himself there, and a test to Israel. He worked miracles, and could confer on others the power, as we have seen. Now we find another thing, He is committing the power to several together, giving to those men, *a number of them together*, power and authority over the devils, and not only entrusting it to whom He pleases individually.

Three things we have noticed in connection with the testimony of the Son of Man: (1) The testimony of God to Him; (2) the misery of man set aside by Him; and (3) devils cast out, so proving that it was really the Lord visiting this world in grace and power.

There will be the display of power by and by; but He was bringing in, in His own Person, the manifestation of that which will be then full and perfect, so being an earnest of the “powers of the world to come” alluded to in Hebrews. This was not redemption, but the exercise of power in dealing with the enmity of man against Himself, and they would not have Him in this way.

THE TWELVE SENT FORTH.

3-6.—He is **sending out His disciples**, and in so doing He disposes of all their circumstances. While He was with them He supplied them with everything, they lacked nothing. The power of the Lord was there to take care of them wherever they were. Afterwards, when He was going to leave them, He tells them to take a sword. They would have to shift for themselves, as it were, but while He was with them He was their shelter. As in the demand for the ass to ride into Jerusalem, He proves His authority royal and divine altogether, “the Lord hath need of him.” The disciples depart, preaching the Gospel, and healing everywhere. Then comes the question of who He was; He would have the conscience awakened about Him. There are two things in man brought out by the question—curiosity is excited on the one hand, and perplexity and dismay on the other.

7-11.—He goes on, and wherever there is an ear to hear He ministers to them according to the grace of the kingdom.

FIVE THOUSAND FED.

12.—The disciples ask Him to send the multitude away. Let them go and get lodging. No, says the Lord, “**give ye them to eat.**” He does not now say He would feed them, but He is committing to others the same power as He had Himself, and He would exercise their faith in what He could do by them. This applies to the Church now. Faith uses the power that is in the head. “Give ye them to eat.” What He expected was for faith to exercise His divine power, that which they saw in Him. We should be so reckoning on the power in the head. The Lord was trying their faith in Him, “Give ye them to eat.” But, no; they had no faith. They began to reckon on their resources.

13. - **“We have no more but five loaves and two fishes.”** So it was with us. No faith. Memory is not faith. “He smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Can He give bread also?” He gave us water, but can He give us food? We know He has done that one thing, but can He do this other thing to-day? We want to count on the energy of the Lord’s love, and expect Him to be interested for us. When He said “Give ye them to eat” they should have expected He would give them the power. Jehovah was amongst them exercising His own power, but we see in their answer the horrid principle of unbelief. Unbelief shuts out God, and limits itself to what it sees; “except we go and buy meat.”

14. - **“He made them all sit down by fifties in a company.** And they did eat, and were all filled.” It was said in Psalm 132, “I will satisfy her poor with bread,” and here He was doing it. This was said of their King, and He had chosen Zion; He had desired it for His habitation. He was here giving a sign that He was the One to accomplish this blessing, for He was feeding their poor with bread. He was not only sending out the power through His disciples, but Himself among them, not only as a man, a messenger, but as it is said in Hebrews, “The Word began to be spoken by the Lord.” He was *the* Apostle. There were others sent afterwards, but He Himself was there first as their Apostle. It is a solemn thing to think that the Lord has really visited this world. He has come and presented Himself first to His people Israel, but they would not have Him. It shows us what the world is we are in. God is now dealing with it in grace, though His Son has been rejected.

17. - **“Twelve baskets of fragments.”** Just observe, in passing, that the number twelve is significant of power exercised in the way of government—twelve apostles, twelve gates to the city in Revelation.

PETER’S CONFESSION.

18-20. - **“Whom say ye that I am?”** Hitherto we have been looking at Christ presenting Himself among the people as Jehovah, the Messiah; we now see Him as the dependent Man (praying). He was Immanuel, God with us; Son of David; Son of Man. He was to be all. Then the question is started among the disciples who He was. Some said one thing, and some another, but Peter said, “The Christ of God.” Upon this He charges them to tell no man that thing. There was faith, however feeble, dictating this answer, and therefore there is no thinking about it. With perfect certainty Peter says, **“The Christ of God.”** So it always is with faith. When the Spirit of God brings home the truth with power there is no uncertainty about it. A man may not doubt whether Christ is the Son of God or not; but the mind may work upon it, and think, perhaps, I do not love Him enough to be saved; then there is uncertainty. But when the Spirit, with power, shows whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him; then I believe it, and I see that my sins and my iniquities He will “remember no more.” It may set a man thinking about the consequences of a truth.

22.—He now passes by the thing that has been already brought out, and He presents Himself to them as the Son of Man, and He is going to suffer, to be crucified. They must therefore be content to take up their cross. A new thing was coming in. He was going to be rejected, going to be slain, and the third day rise again. It is no longer Messianic ground, but in another sphere altogether beyond this their hopes must lie. **“If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily.”** “Daily,” this is the trial. A man might heroically do it once for all, and he would have plenty of people to honour him, and have books written about him, but it is truly difficult to go on every day denying oneself and no one knowing anything about it. It came to this, that if you spare the flesh in this life you will lose your life in the next; and what if a man gain the whole world and lose his own soul? What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? It is not a question of bringing life down to the flesh; but if you lose your life here you will get it elsewhere, above and beyond this world: “For whosoever

will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it." It is giving up the world for eternal life or for eternal misery that is the real question. "What is a man advantaged?" You must give it up, you cannot keep it.

There is the glory of the kingdom, there is the manifestation of glory coming. Those tastes and dispositions which are attracted by Jesus cannot find their portion here. "They declare plainly that they seek a country; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God" (Heb. 11. 14).

26. - **"Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me, . . . of Him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He comes in the display of His own glory."** One like to the Son of Man came to the Ancient of Days, and there was given Him dominion (see Dan. 7. 13). Then He comes, too, in the glory of the Son of God—His Father's glory, and in the glory of the angels. The angels are waiting upon Him who created them, for they were created *for* Him as well as *by* Him, and thus give glory to Him as Son of Man, giving Him His proper glory, for He has not lost a tittle of His glory. "Thou hast set Him over the works of Thy hands." "Let all the angels of God worship Him." There was the same thing at Sinai. "The law was ordained by angels." "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels" (Psa. 68. 17).

We are now finding the displayed glory in this triple character spoken of. It is that glory when He appears; and it is a question of His being ashamed of those who have been ashamed of Him—they could not deny themselves present advantage. I do not here allude to the Father's house, which, of course, has another character. Here it is the kingdom manifested in its glory on the earth.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

28. - **"He went to pray."** This is not mentioned in the other gospels. He was going to show His disciples His glory, to give the declaration of His power and coming. From the other gospels we find that a week after this He went up to Jerusalem where He was to be crucified.

29. - **"The fashion of His countenance was changed."** An entire change of things is here. He talks of His decease, which He should accomplish at Jerusalem, where He ought to have been crowned; but there He is going to be crucified. There, where this horn of David was to bud, shall this Root of David be taken, and by wicked hands be crucified and slain. This is the deep centre of all the change.

30. - **"There talked two men with Him, Moses and Elias."** This we may look at in two ways: dispensationally, as representing the law and the prophets, and in this way Moses held a very peculiar place, for it was through him the law was given; Elijah had nearly as important a place also, for though the Jews were in a right position, they had failed in it, and he goes back to Horeb. The other prophets were never called to work miracles. Except the account of the dial of Ahaz, we hear of no miracle in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea, Habbakuk, etc. Those prophets, sent of God, gave proof that He was caring for Israel; but there was nothing like the calling back in Elijah. Elias stood as the maintainer of the law, when the people had departed from it most grossly, though all the prophets, even to Malachi, called back to law. Moses and Elias were taken away, and Jesus is left alone. Law was gone, prophecy gone, and Christ is alone, and He was going to be crucified. All the fabric built up by law and prophets (not the testimony given by them, but the law as given to man in the flesh) is broken up because man ended by killing the Lord come in the flesh, therefore all is gone.

33.—Peter would have had the three established together, taking all alike: **"Let us build three tabernacles."** But that moment Moses and Elias disappear, and the voice is heard: **"This is My beloved Son, hear Him."** It is now the righteousness of God without law in Jesus. *Law* did not send Christ. What law could have been put upon God to do it? Nothing but

divine love could have originated such a thought. “*Grace* reigned through righteousness” (Rom. 5. 21). The law was good and perfect, but Christ was far beyond law. Moses and Elias, therefore, were not to have any place with Him. God the Father puts them aside when Peter wishes to put them in connection. They disappear immediately. This is the important thing for us. Every word of law and prophets is the truth of God, but these were until John. Now the Son of God is the Messenger of the Father’s love and the Accomplisher of divine righteousness. When He is there, the voice says, “**This is My beloved Son, hear Him,**” and He is left *alone*.

Mark, too, that they were occupied with His *death* while talking with Him. One thing occupies the minds of Heaven and earth. He was going to be crucified where He ought to have been King. Under such circumstances there was nothing for Heaven or earth to talk about but His death. And so for us the great thing to talk about Messiah is that He died. Though He could destroy all the evil that had come in, He must die—in grace, of course. It must all end in death, because the carnal mind is not only under Satan’s power, but enmity against God; therefore Heaven has to speak.

Zion, the very place He had chosen, where He had been and is to be the special place of God’s favour, is to be the scene of His death. There they cast Him out of the world He came to save. The One in whom all human and divine righteousness and perfections were centred must die there. All man’s nature, under the most advantageous circumstances; all man’s wickedness, spite of the public, and patient, and varied ways of God in government, are brought out here.

Moses could deal with man as man, and bring water from the rock for them in answer to their murmurings; the prophet the same, “Plead with me,” “Put me in remembrance, let us plead together” (Isa. 43. 26). But now all this was gone. God had cultivated the vineyard, done all that could be done for it. There was yet one thing, His Son, the best of all. Him He sent, and they cast Him out, and slew Him. And now the testimony concerning man is that he has “killed the Prince of Life,” and “denied the Holy One and the Just” (Acts 3. 14, 15). We never can have peace then till we get pardon through Christ on the Cross. Then we see a true picture of Heaven; but all the intermediate dealings of testimony are entirely short of what we have in Christ on the Cross, because short of the ground of what man actually *is*, which fully came out only when he “killed the Prince of Life.”

TEST OF DISCIPLESHIP.

When the Lord’s Messiahship was given up we have seen He takes the place of translation from earth to Heaven. He, being rejected, was no longer to be looked upon as the Head of Israel down here, but as the heavenly Christ; for He takes His place on high when cast out by man, and this fact was to give a character to the path of those who follow Him. The two things go together—rejection on earth and a heavenly place. “**If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me**” (23). The Lord shows them that this heavenly calling involves the *Cross* down here, as it was with Christ Himself. The peculiar place given Him in Heaven was, in God’s counsels, dependent on the Cross which He bore as the Man. “He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death; wherefore God hath highly exalted Him.” It was through the Cross that He went there; and if we are to have a place in Heaven we must have it too. The Cross was for the destruction of sin and for the destruction of self in which sin dwells. We have the same place, therefore He says, “Let these sayings sink deep into your ears, for **the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men**” (44). We want the heavenly calling to give power to take up the Cross; and it is at the same time in proportion as we are dying to things down here that the heavenly things are realised. When the blood was taken within the veil, the sacrifice was taken without

the gate. So we are to go “without the camp, bearing His reproach” (Heb. 13. 13); and if we apprehend the value of the blood, and go within the veil, we get to the place of being where the burning outside the camp was. For while we are in spirit where His Blood has been carried in, our bodies are where His body was given the place of the “burned” “outside the camp.” Judaism only put men between the two; for they did not go in within the veil, His Blood not having been shed, and they never went without the camp (18-22). He is going to take another place, and they are to follow Him in it; and then, in order to strengthen them for it, He shows them what the heavenly place was.

THE KINGDOM OF GLORY.

28. - **“He took Peter, and James, and John, and went up into a mountain to pray.”** The heavenly part of the kingdom is here represented by Christ, Moses, and Elias; the earthly part by the disciples (and there is one part in which the Church on earth is alluded to as down here). Peter speaks of this scene as the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ Himself, in the position of the dependent Man (praying), takes them up into a mountain. **“Peter and they that were with him were heavy with sleep.”** Asleep in the presence of the glory, just as in Gethsemane, showing what human nature is. There is no power in it, in suffering or glory, to fix the attention on Christ and His interests.

Moses and Elias were in the same glory (30-32), and we are made the associates of Christ in the same glory, the glory of the kingdom in its broad character, not, of course, the essential glory. “As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Cor. 15. 49), even of God’s Son in glory. “We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him in glory” (1 John 3. 2). The portion is not to be under Christ, but with Christ. “We shall appear with Him in glory,” with Him in the same glory. We look for the Lord from Heaven, “who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned” (Phil. 3. 21). We shall be with Him and like Him, and this we shall all alike share, though there will be different degrees of glory for one and another, *e.g.*, Paul’s measure will not be mine. What we speak of now is all the same glory, and we are predestinated “to be conformed to the image of His Son” (Rom. 8. 29). “The glory Thou hast given Me I have given them” (John 17.22) . The next thing that we see is the perfect familiarity in this glory. They are talking with Him, not presenting a petition, not at His feet, though this is our blessed place, too; but this part of the scene represents *communion*, familiarity of intercourse, the same as that of the disciples on earth, though better of course. On the holy mount they had a higher understanding about it, but it was the same subject occupied them. This shows us the kind of intercourse we have with Jesus now, for we belong to the heavenly part of the kingdom.

A third point to mark is the subject they talked of. This is quite a new thing, for He ought to have been a King. But man was a sinner, and there was the determinate counsel of God to be fulfilled—*redemption*. Jerusalem was the place of royalty, and His decease was to be accomplished there, where He ought to have been acknowledged King. There was full intimacy on the theme which occupied His heart, for they talked on this, His decease. Then He told His disciples afterwards the consequences of it to them. They must deny themselves. **“Let these sayings sink down into your ears.”** The great subject on God’s heart should be that for us. Another thing is, it is the glory which enables us to talk on this subject. We cannot talk of it until we have peace with God through the knowledge of forgiven sin. When a man has not this he has to come in his need and get it; but when he is in it he can contemplate and enjoy it. Besides this, God saw all that was passing in Christ’s soul as to obedience unto death. We shall never cease having interest in this subject, when with the Father in the glory it will be the absorbing theme. He said Himself, “Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life” (John 10. 17). How much more shall we not love Him for the same

cause? Think what it must have been to be occupied with Christ about His decease. What His knowledge was of what He was going to do. He knew what man was, what the counsel of God was. He came to “reconcile all things to Himself” (Col. 1. 20). It was so effectually done that the eye of God could only see the effect of that Blood in what was washed away. The rejected Christ a Saviour, and this the subject of intercourse with Christ Himself! “They speak of His decease.”

THE VOICE FROM HEAVEN.

Peter says, “Master, it is good for us to be here.” Then immediately there was a voice from the cloud: “This is My beloved Son, hear Him.” The effect on Peter’s mind is a wish to put Moses and Elias on a level with Christ. We have spoken of this, viewing it dispensationally, law and prophecy mixed with Him; but there is another thing to be noticed in it, viz., that which characterised the Son was peculiar. Nothing could be put on a level with Him. There necessarily comes out, therefore, the Father’s testimony to the Son: “**This is My beloved Son.**” When a saint knows Jesus, though he also knows he will be like Him hereafter, and that all the saints will be like Him, too, yet Christ has the supremacy in His heart. He is single and alone in blessedness, having supremacy in the heart, as well as being the object of faith. I delight in the saints, but Christ is the alone object of faith. Then I get into this fellowship with the Father. I have the Father’s thoughts about the Son, as well as the Son’s thoughts about the work. I have fellowship with the Father and the Son. We cannot have communion with the Father about redemption work because He had not been made a man. Notice, the Father does not say: This is the Son whom you ought to adore and admire, but He tells us His own thoughts about Him: “**This is My beloved Son.**” Wherefore “beloved?” “Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life” (John 10. 17), thus I know that I have one thought with the Father, in delighting in the Son and in His death. The Father communicates His own thoughts about the Son, and by the power of the Holy Ghost they are put into my heart, and I have fellowship; and as a consequence I know that He that hath everlasting life shall never come into judgment.

34.—Mark, further, how they came into the excellent glory. There came a cloud and overshadowed them. The cloud is the Shechinah, the dwelling place of God, which the people had to guide them through the wilderness, and they were to stay or move according to it. It was the divine presence, and “**they feared as they entered into the cloud.**” They were not protected by the cloud, as Israel were, and as they will be by and by. “Upon all the glory shall be a defence” (Isa. 4. 5), but here they enter into the cloud. The fact was, coming into the cloud was coming into the presence of the Father, now a dwelling place for us. It was thence the Father’s voice was heard: “This is My beloved Son.” Thence they were told who this Son was. He had been with them as one of them. He was the Father’s beloved Son, in a place worthy of adoration, but the companion of their hearts. He brought them to the Father, the only place into which redemption brings us (as to our relationship). Until a man knows redemption, and is brought into His presence, he can never know the Father’s love; but when there he can never know the end of it. It is the kind of love the prodigal never knew till he was in his father’s arms. He had doubts and fears as he went on, and thoughts about the hired servants, but none when he was in his father’s house. It is known only by the teaching of the Holy Ghost in us—in the cloud—God in us. It is in the presence of the glory, realised by faith now, we know the power of redemption; and by its brightness and its truth it blots out all other relationship.

THE POWERLESS DISCIPLES.

Notice *who* are learning this glory. Saints walking on the earth—**Peter, James, and John**; and so with us. The truths written in this book are not for us to know in Heaven. Is the

Father's love not to be known till we are in Heaven? Is redemption only to be known there? Was God less intimate with those on earth than with those in Heaven? Not at all. It was to Peter, James, and John this was communicated, not to Moses and Elias. The Father's voice was to men on earth. We learn the rejection of men here and the grace which has brought us to share in the glory. In what follows we find the Lord coming down into the crowd of this world, not remaining on the mount. We may listen and enjoy, but we have to come down and pass through this world.

37-42.—The Lord comes down and meets three things: (1) A throng of men, (2) Satan's power, and (3) the disciples' unbelief. There was no seclusion here for Him, but He comes to a crowd. What a picture of distress this is! The **son possessed with a devil** (38), and the father's heart racked more than the son's body. The world will weep till they are tired of weeping, and then go on with the same thing again. We have seen before how the Lord was come in the display of His power and bound the strong man. The disciples could not do it. The power of Satan remains the same unto this day. He is not literally cast out, but remains the "prince of this world," the character he has gained, not lost, by Christianity. He will be bound; his power will be overthrown as a fact, and not to faith only. The question was to be settled about Satan's right, and what did the Lord say of him?

"Now is the judgment of this world: now is the prince of this world cast out" (John 12. 31). His title is "cast out," but Christ has not yet exerted this power. Therefore in the epistles we find him spoken of as still ruling in this world. In Ephesians he is called the "prince of the power of the air," "the spirit that now worketh." Then we hear of the "rulers of the darkness of this world." When "the powers of the world to come" are in their full display Satan will be cast out entirely, but these instances and more show he was here then as he is still. "**How long shall I be with you**" (41). It was not because Satan was here that Christ said this, because the disciples could not use the power He had brought in, and that closed the dispensation. So it will be in this. The power and goodness of God brought Christ into the world, but the incapacity of man to believe so as to use that power will close it. So we read in Romans 11: "Towards thee (the professing body now) goodness, if thou continue in His goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." But until His grace ceases there is refuge for us to go to Him. While He was here, the moment the father of the child sought to Him, He cast out the spirit. As long as Christ's grace is at work, if there is only one saint on the earth, and everything else failed around, He would find the power of Christ ready to be exercised on his behalf. There can be no failing in meeting the need of a soul, because as there is Christ to go to there is help in Him. However dark the dispensation may be there is exactly the grace that is needed for the position. Not that God would have our eyes blinded to the darkness around, for if we do not take heed of the ruinous state conscience is not in its right place. If I am ready to say, "Why should He not stay?" when He says, "How long shall I be with you?" I am insensible to the state of things around me, and I am not awake to the response that Christ's love to the Church demands; but, on the other hand, if I am not able to look up and count on the grace of Christ to meet that state, however bad it may be, I am powerless.

THE MIGHTY POWER OF GOD.

43. - "**They were amazed at the mighty power of God.**" It is very humbling to see how amazed they were about this power. They did not wonder at the power of the evil. But they ought so to have counted on His power as to have been amazed if the power were not exerted. Christ brings them back to the Cross. "Let these sayings sink down in your ears, for the Son of Man shall be delivered into the hands of men" (44). You ought to have been able to get this power; but you must now know not only the power of Christ, but the Cross of the rejected One. "Rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice because

your names are written in Heaven” (Luke 10. 20). We have more to be rejoiced at in this than if a miracle were to be performed to-morrow. It is more blessed to know the Cross. It was as though He had said: “I had rather you should come now to own the rejected One than be looking for this power even.” Beloved friends, you are not thinking of what God is doing at this present time if you do not see that now it is not power on the earth but rejection.

46. - **“There arose a reasoning among them which should be the greatest.”** What a tale this tells! What a selfishness runs through and through! Even at the Lord’s Supper it was the same thing. In Luke we find it, where there is so much of what man is brought out.

We see, then, from what we have been tracing, that we need to come down from the hill; not to be without Jesus, but to learn what man is.

It is not necessary to come down from the mount, as some people say, lest we should be puffed up there, for we shall never be puffed up while on the mount. Like Peter, we may be afraid, but we are never puffed up in the presence of God. It is when we quit it that we are in danger.

Paul was not exalted above measure when in the third Heaven, but after he came down he needed the thorn in the flesh to prevent it.

Besides, there is an historical necessity for us to get through this world. But Jesus was as much with His disciples when they came down as while they were on the mount, and that is our comfort. Do not let us suppose we have lost Christ. We have to serve Him, walk with Him, learn from Him, and mark His patient grace towards us in and through all circumstances. The Lord give us to know while passing through this world what a Christ we have, taking our hearts clean out of the defiling circumstances around, so that, whether we get a taste of the glory, or are passing through the crowd of this world, He may be everything *to* us, as He is everything *for* us.

THE DISCIPLES’ PLACE ON EARTH.

The Lord is now showing His disciples the place they are to take upon earth. They are not to be in a position connected with Him as Messiah in earthly glory, heavenly glory they could have till the end. In the meantime they have to take their place with Him in rejection, and thus put them to the test, for they were to give up things right enough in themselves, to hate father, mother, wife, etc., all which earthly relationships had a claim upon them, and especially so upon the Jew. “Honour thy father and mother.” But all these relationships would not stand in association with the *Cross*. Everything must be sacrificed, everything that linked man with the earth must be snapped asunder to faith where Christ was rejected. The character of the world was fully manifested in His rejection; its deeds were evil, and it rejected the light. The incarnation, which should have been the link to man’s blessing, is rejected. He accomplishes redemption by His rejection on earth, and He has a place in Heaven. This alters the character of everything. It brings in the judging of self. There never would have been this if Christ had been crowned on earth. He was “delivered into the hands of men.” He whose very Name carried power and authority is to be delivered up. If Christ had had His place on earth the heart of man would never have been put to the test. Why? Because if men had seen all the dignity and glory displayed on earth which was His right it would have gratified their flesh with its greatness. But flesh cannot inherit Heaven, and what place has it on the Cross? There they go together so blessedly, the Cross and Heaven, and for the flesh there is no place in either. There was a terrible breach between man and God, and the One who would have healed it they crucified. Then every carnal thought that was in accordance with such an act must be judged. The disciples were disputing who should be the greatest, not greatest in the world, but the greatest in the glory. It is self after all. They have not to tell Him much, but

their thoughts are judged. When in the light everything is judged. Jacob had the word from God to go to Bethel (Gen. 35), and he immediately says to his household, "Put away the strange gods that are among you." And why so? Everything is detected when getting into the presence of God. Jacob could get the blessing before he went to Bethel; but when he goes into God's presence the idols are judged. When he has got rid of the idols it is "El-bethel," the God of Bethel.

THE LESSON ON THE CHILD.

47, 48.—The disciples were reasoning which should be the greatest, and when He detected their thoughts, He **"took a child and set him by Him."** This shows us our place; we ought to seek the lowest place. We never can have it, because Christ has taken it. He went down under sin, wrath, death. He took the lowest place, because the Servant of all. This is the truly happy place for us, but how it judges self. This is what the Cross does. Not only are the idols judged, but self is judged. It is a blessed thing to have done with self. When there is room for God we can be full of joy and happiness. We are not humble, even when we are occupied with our own nothingness, or how bad we are, but we are humble when we do not think of ourselves at all. When we have to learn our nothingness and badness, that is being humbled. If we get away from the Lord we have to be brought back, and that is a humbling process. We want to judge the flesh in ourselves. It is quite easy to judge it in another, but it is in ourselves we miss it. Things are brought to a crisis.

49, 50. - **"He that is not against us is for us."** Mark how thoroughly conscious the Lord was of His utter rejection by man, so utter that He said: "He that is not *against* us is proved to *be for us*." Christ was perfect, therefore He was a perfect test to men's consciences, and as far as He is manifested in us we shall be so also. Paul could say: "If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost" (2 Cor. 4. 3). Why could he say so? Because it went out from him as pure as it went in. John said: **"We forbade him, because he followeth not with us."** That tells the whole tale. They were thinking of themselves, not of Christ; of their own importance, and not His honour. If it had been His importance they would have thought how blessed it was to find the effect of His Name, and rejoiced to know how His power was being exercised by man. But, no; they were looking at themselves as well as at the Messiah. Even John was thus using Christ Himself to further his own importance. And is there not something in us of the same thing, a satisfaction at that which aggrandises self as well as Christ, instead of seeking the honour of Christ alone? The Lord takes him up and answers him on the ground of His utter rejection which was coming. "He that is not *against* us is *for* us." And mark that the very selfishness of John brings out the grace of Christ. He says "us." You do not know the lot you have with Me. If you find one who can use the power of My Name *rejoice* in it.

LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM.

51. - "It cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." I am going to get a portion in Heaven, and you are to have the same portion, but it must be through rejection here. "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily" (Matt. 16. 24). "When the time was come that He should be received up, **He set His face steadfastly to go to Jerusalem.**" In Isaiah, "I set my face as a flint." He was accomplishing His Father's will here, as in all His course. Redemption must be accomplished through the *Cross*. He "learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (Heb. 5. 8). It was the same obedience as at the beginning, when He was coming amongst them with "Blessed are the poor" (Matt. 5. 3); more painful, and, of course, He felt the difference, but still He goes in the same blessed spirit and earnestness. Are there not twelve hours in the day? If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not. He had found it His meat to do the will of Him that sent Him. There was joy to Him in this; but in the cup of wrath which He was going to drink there was no joy. He had

met with scorn here, smiting there, rejection all through, but nothing like this cup, and therefore He cried, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me" (Matt. 26. 39). Christ proved His perfectness, for He felt what it was to be "made sin." His holy nature shrunk from it, yet there was the same quiet, steady, patient obedience, for "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," as all through. He knows His Father's will, and He does it. He sets His face there where His Father's will is to be done, not looking to this side or to that, but there—

Jerusalem.

We, according to the measure we have of the single eye, shall be following in the same course, going to the Cross steadily with one purpose, and in proportion as we do so will those who do not so set their face oppose us. But the Lord says, "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me" (John 12. 26). Service is not doing a great deal, but following the Master, and the world and half-hearted Christians do not like that. There is plenty of doing in the world, but "if any man serve Me, let him follow Me." Paul wanted to serve every way, but we find the Spirit forbidding him to go into Bithynia or Troas, and yet two years afterwards we read that "all Asia heard the Word" (Acts 19. 10). God's work was to be done, but it was to be in His time and of His ordering. His servant had only to follow in obedience. It was the same with Moses. Nature would say of him: "Why not stay in Pharaoh's court that the people there may be converted in-stead of leaving it?" Flesh cannot understand what faith leads to. Then after he goes out in all the earnestness of his spirit natural energy comes in, but still there is no deliverance. Moses has to go and keep sheep for forty years, to be broken down and made nothing of, and what were Israel to do all that time? To wait. Then when he comes back to serve them, how is it done? There is the flesh appearing in another way. "Lord, I am not eloquent" (Exod. 4. 10). Then Aaron is sent back with him, and the work is done in the power of God.

52. **"They went and entered into a village of the Samaritans."** We see the very reason they did not receive Him was because His face was set towards Jerusalem. His very obedience, singleness of eye, going to do God's will without honour, or attractiveness, or repute, going to Jerusalem is the very reason they would have nothing to do with Him (54). See the religious opposition of the disciples to them. The Samaritans would not submit to God's way. Christ did. That is the difference, and the disciples want to command fire to come out of Heaven as Elias did, and at the very place where Elias worked the miracle. In fleshly reasoning they think Christ was as worthy as Elias to call down fire. This is a more subtle kind of self than the other. It seemed like direct zeal for Christ, but they did not understand the zeal of Christ. He was not come for judgment, not to destroy men's lives, but to suffer Himself for them. If they had known God's thoughts they would have submitted quietly. Peter again understood not the Lord's mind when he drew his sword and smote the servant of the high priest. All the miracles of Elias were characterised by the spirit of judgment, not like Elisha, who had his commission from Heaven. Elijah stood in the place of judgment and righteousness, like John the Baptist, who came in the spirit and power of Elias, saying, "Every tree that bringeth not forth fruit shall be hewn down (Matt. 3. 10), and "the axe is laid to the root of the trees." Elisha had life-giving power, on the contrary, and was a type of grace. Elijah passed through Jordan (death in type), while Elisha starts from the other side of Jordan in resurrection.

56. - **"They went to another village."** It is not pleasant to be trodden upon in this world, but Christ was. To do well, and suffer for it, and take it patiently, is what we have; and is it to end there? Yes, and that is "acceptable with God." Christ came to suffer, to bear anything for the sake of others, and He would not have been doing that if He had called down fire from Heaven upon the Samaritans. We have to follow Christ in carrying the testimony of God's love into the world in all our walk through it. The world needs it. We must not be seeking for

ourselves, but having Christ the object. At the end of the chapter he goes on to show how the links with this world are to be broken.

SOME DISCIPLES PUT TO THE TEST.

57, 58.—One says, “**Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest,**” but Christ puts him to the test. You cannot go if you do not take up your lot with One who had not where to lay His head; for you may sooner go to the birds of the air for a nest, or to the foxes for a hole, than to the Son of Man for a home in this world. They were not now to come to Him as the One who had the promises, but to One whose portion was utter and entire rejection. Following Him could not be accompanied with ease and comfort here. He was to be delivered into the hands of men. At His birth we see the same things. Every one found room in the inn save He, but any who wanted to find Him whom angels celebrate must go to the manger.

59.—He says to one, “**Follow Me.**” The first one wanted something with Christ; but here where He says “Follow Me,” then immediately a difficulty is started; and it is when He calls a man that difficulties are felt. There was no sense of the difficulties in the one who said “Lord, I will follow Thee” without His call. But this man who is called says “Let me *first* go and bury my father.” He is going presently, but there is a link felt. Jesus says, “**Let the dead bury their dead;**” you must leave them to follow Me. You may be ready to say the things of the earth have no power over you; but just try what it is to have them, and you will learn the extent of their power. A man may go to the length of his cord, but when he gets to the end he is checked. A father had the first claim in nature, and especially to a Jew, but Christ says: “I am calling you out in the power of life; I am putting in My claim for the life I give you, and it breaks every bond here.” It is a question of life in the midst of death. This word “first” shows something put before Christ, as though the man said: “There is something I put before your calling.” Death had come in, and this very plea told Christ they were all under death. It was quite a right thing for a man to bury his father; but if life has come in, and the question is one of redemption, to be lost or saved, you must give yourself up to it. In the divine light which is in the Cross He saw all dead, and therefore He said, “Let the dead bury their dead,” The one thing to be done now is to follow Christ. The question is: Death in the world, or life in Christ? Where are the affections?

THE TEST OF AFFECTION.

61. - “Another also said, Lord, I will follow Thee; but **let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.**” In the previous case it was just this: When my first affections are settled, then will I come and follow Thee. There is no good in that, the Lord says “Let the dead bury their dead.” But this case shows that those at home were not left in heart. He felt he had to break with them, and yet his heart lingered. “No man looking back is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9. 62). “Remember Lot’s wife” (Luke 17. 32). “A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1. 3) . If Christ be not first and last He will always be last, for faith is not in exercise. The question is whether we are walking as seeing what the Cross tells us. The Cross lifts the veil, showing the skeleton of this world, and when I see this sentence on all that is in the world, self as well as what is outside, and our links of affection with it, I learn that all is to be given up; but there is Christ Himself and the love there is in Him to meet it. It will and must judge self; and it brings out the will, too, for there is a great deal of will in all this shunning of the Cross. People may speak of the claims of affection, but it is not really and only family affection, but the end which connects with self is felt. Natural affection there should be—indeed it is one of the signs of the last evil days to be without it—but if you have power to judge yourselves you will find that many an excuse you make has this secret at the end. So in affliction, bereavement, etc. It is not only the affection that is touched, but the will. There is sweetness in the sorrow so long as we realise Christ in

it, and affection only is sorrowing. But if the will is touched there is rebellion, resistance, struggling, and all this the Lord must judge, for a mass of flesh and self can never follow Christ. What a wonderful detail all this is! It is God going through our hearts, entering into every corner and crevice. Why? Because of the constant, undeviating steadfastness of His love; and as a father loves his child when it is naughty as well as when it is good, so our God takes pains, as it were, with us all even when so bad.

The effect of all is not only to make us practically righteous, but happy - “imitators of God as dear children” (Eph. 5. 1). It is well, on the one hand, for us to judge ourselves and see what there is to detect in us, and, on the other, to see the fulness of His grace in Christ. May the Lord give us to feel more and more that “the friendship of the world is enmity with God” (James 4. 4), and that the energy of the flesh cannot accomplish the work of God, so that we may learn to work from God, for God, and with God.

Chapter 10

The Lord pursues the subject we have been looking at in the preceding chapter, connected with the change that has taken place in His own position amongst them. It is no longer the Messiah on earth, but the heavenly Christ they are to look to. There is another thing brought out here in the amazing importance attached to that moment, the last testimony being applied to them, and those who heard it would be subject to greater judgment than Tyre and Sidon. Any among them would have repented with the truth *you* have, but they had it not. The blessing now was the Lord Himself being there; and He was so glorious and excellent that to hear Him was the prime source of blessing. All hung upon their reception or rejection of Him.

THE SEVENTY SENT OUT.

In the sending out of the seventy we see the same patient grace at work as when He sent out the twelve. If they were not received they were to shake off the dust from their feet. God's love never stops, whatever the wickedness of man, until His work is done. His grace never fails. Christ looks at the power of grace in God more than at the wickedness of men, and He went patiently on, and said, "The harvest is great," though knowing what there was all around Him. The Lord was not like Elijah, who needed to be reminded of the seven thousand who, as God knew, had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. He came in by the door, and went through everything with God. Nothing stopped Him from seeking out His sheep scattered on the dark mountains. He laid down His life to save His sheep, and not one should be lost. To gather them He went on in the power of grace. Paul was of this spirit when he says, "I endure all things for the elect's sake" (2 Tim. 2. 10).

Did Christ suffer nothing in it? Look at Him, weary with His journey, sitting at the well, and a poor, wretched, vile sinner coming to meet Him, to whom He gives the water of life. There He finds meat to eat that they know not of, and He says, "The fields are white unto harvest" (John 4. 35). He was as fresh and happy in His testimony while sitting at the well with this poor woman as if all Jerusalem had received Him, because the fountain was within. In Him was "a well of water springing up." So with us. If we are going on with Him we shall be "troubled on every side, yet not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair; cast down, but not destroyed" (2 Cor. 4. 8, 9). The testimony is in the earthen vessel, it is true, but the fountain is within, and they were to be perfectly dependent on God, and independent of everything else. They were to expect to meet enemies, wolves.

3. - "Go your ways; **behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.**" You cannot turn a lamb into a wolf to defend itself. Peter was for taking a sword to smite off the servant's right ear, but the Lord forbids him, and says, "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Matt. 26. 52). It is difficult to receive everything and do nothing, to be a lamb among wolves, like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in prospect of the fiery furnace, saying, "We are not careful, O king, to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver."

4. - "**Carry neither purse, nor scrip, nor shoes,** and salute no man by the way." Be not uncourteous, but waste not time in useless ceremonies. When in God's service, and among God's enemies, God must be everything. It needs concentration of heart in Him, as knowing that the world has rejected your Master, and will reject you if you are faithful to Him. Faith knows this and goes on, not with carnal prudence and worldly wisdom, but as knowing what to do and going on to do it. Faith always carries to the house *peace*; it produces enmity—two

against three, and three against two—because some will receive it and some not; but the thing brought is always *peace*.

7-9. - **“The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.”** Not merely such and such a thing is God’s will, but whatever you do, whether you receive or reject it, “the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.” The condition of the world now is that it has rejected it. The Son of God, the King, has come into the world, put it to the test, and it says: “We will not have Him.” This fact has not lost its solemnity now, for we are walking through the world that has rejected Christ; we bring the testimony of peace to it—peace that has been made, for the sacrifice has been offered. It is also true that the testimony has been rejected.

11. - **“Notwithstanding, be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.”** Faith carries things in its own sphere, needing nothing but God’s Word. The sight of the eyes is constantly tending to dim the estimate which faith forms; and if faith is not nourished by the Word it sinks down and fades away. If I am not feeding on the Word faith is not fed, for it cannot be fed by sight of things then around. When the Lord spoke to Jerusalem, saying, “Their house should be left unto them desolate, and there should not be one stone left upon another,” they could not actually see the stones then falling, but it was Christ’s Word for them to believe. Natural reasoning is fed by what we see, but *faith* is fed by what God has revealed to the soul.

15. - **“Thou, Capernaum, . . . shalt be thrust down to Hell”**—in God’s eye, not man’s. In man’s eye it might be exalted to Heaven. So with this world. And what does that prove? That it may last as long as God permits, but that His Word will be fulfilled. “The earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Peter 3. 10). There is nothing stable here. When God comes in, where will it all be? though there are scoffers who say, “Where is the promise of His coming?”

NAMES WRITTEN IN HEAVEN.

16. - **“He that heareth you, heareth Me.”** That is where faith has its resource. In hearing the Word the disciples spoke: “I am hearing Christ Himself.” That is where faith walks. I know it must be true, for Christ has said it. Everything may go wrong, the world, Jews, the Church, but God’s Word never. And it has been given. It never changes, for it has been given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine. The Church, as ground of confidence in testimony, is gone, though we know it is founded upon a rock; and, as to its security, it can never be destroyed, but God’s Word will not fail. Whatever we see tends to weaken and deface faith puts to the test what the affections of the soul are, because it is not to be what I like, but what God says.

17-20. - **“Rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven.”** This shows the change of everything. Devils may be subject to you, but the Lord says: “That is not the portion for you to rejoice in; I am now showing My power in another way.” This word, **“I beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven,”** alludes to the time when Satan, the “accuser of the brethren,” will be cast down. Now he is in Heaven, not in God’s presence, in light inaccessible, but before the throne of judgment—two different things. “Hast thou considered My servant Job?” (Job 1. 8). Proving that when others came before the throne Satan came also. Contrast verses 19 and 20. The one speaks of what can be seen, the other what could be known only to faith. The unseen thoughts of your heart are much more important than what can be seen. The invisible is always more important than the visible.

In this world it is not merely that man is a sinner, but there is the introduction into it of the power of evil. Satan has got hold of this world through man’s sin. So in the case of the poor woman it is said, “Whom Satan hath bound these eighteen years” (Luke 13. 16). But when

the Church has been caught up Satan will be cast down. There was war in Heaven; but when he is on earth he will for three and a half years be raising up the Man of the earth against the Lord from Heaven. When He comes Satan's power will be put away. He is not put into the "lake of fire" until the close of the thousand years, but into "the bottomless pit." That is just what the devils asked to be saved from when cast out of the man whose name was Legion (8. 30); "deep," meaning "bottomless pit." The Lord did not cast them down to it, because the time was not then come.

This ability to cast out devils was a great thing. The communicating of the power by the Lord was a power above the immediate working of the miracles themselves. It required divine power, and none but that could give the power to others. In the Millennium there will not be the power of good and evil together; the latter will be cast out. "Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with Thee?" (Psa. 94. 20). The pit shall be digged for the wicked. Satan must be cast out. And when Christ was upon earth He was presenting Himself in the power of God to bind the strong man and spoil his goods. It was a wonderful thing to meet a man under the power of Satan and to cast Satan out. It was an earnest of the "powers of the world to come," the "world to come" referring not to Heaven but to this earth being renewed. He was then putting forth the same power that He will exercise fully in the coming kingdom.

19. - **"Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents."** And it was at the point when He was rejected that He says this. He knew what was really going on, and though He said peace, they did not say peace to Him. "I give you power" over all the power of the enemy. "Notwithstanding, in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven." That is the Church's place. When Christ was manifested on earth it was a blessed thing; but it is better to be His companion in Heaven, as we shall be when He comes to take us. Far better to be with Himself, and as Himself, in the Father's house. We have nothing to do with earth, our names are not written in the earth; kings in it, indeed, but our portion is not in it. "He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places" (Eph. 1. 3). We shall have the inheritance with Him, but it is below us; our hope is to be with Himself above it. The inheritance is the consequence of having this place with Him (Eph. 1). We are children of the Father, to be "holy and with-out blame before Him in love." Now we have our portion according to the riches of His grace, of poor sinners whom He has saved, and we shall be to the glory of His grace in the manifestation of it. The inheritance comes in afterwards. "Rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven." As though He would say to them: "Do not let your minds be filled with things down here, but think of what you have in Me and with Me." We find two things brought before us in God's ways: first the government of this world—that which is still prophetic, connected with the kingdom; and then the Church up in Heaven. When the inheritance is spoken of it is always future, but when our place is spoken of it is always up in Heaven. The Lord saw that the present setting up of the kingdom would all fail, and He was bringing in a better thing than any kingdom, and He rejoiced in that, for when He gives joy to another He cannot help having it also Himself. When the thief on the cross asked Him to remember him in His kingdom, He said, "This day shalt thou be with Me" (Luke 23. 43). He was gratifying the thief and also Himself. So with these disciples. He would have them not be rejoicing in the good down here, for it is not good enough. Not only do not be troubled with the bad, but rejoice not in the best thing in this world.

DISPENSATIONAL CHANGE.

21.—**'In that hour Jesus rejoiced in Spirit; .. even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.'** He felt the circumstances deeply, but His soul was up to the source, and He would say: "It is quite right that these proud and haughty ones should see they are nothing,

and that these poor despised lambs should get the glory.” “Even so, Father.” He must bow to the evil, because the time to judge it was not yet come. Evil is going on; people are saying: “Where is the God of the earth?” We have to bear it; the Lord did. We must get our thoughts away from the expectation of having things better down here. The soul that enters into God’s thoughts and purposes bows to His will. “Even so, Father.”

Then He, as it were, retires into the glory of His own Person. The Son has to reveal the Father. The world rejects Him, and He submits to the rejection of the kingdom, and brings out instead of it the blessedness of the heavenly thing, and now speaks of Himself as the Son, and glories in that. The present result of His coming is the Son revealing the Father, and this is even better than the kingdom. The testimony is brighter as to what God is about when I take things quietly and submit, not desiring to be a wolf among the wolves. It is exceedingly difficult for one’s heart to bow, and say, “I will be nothing but a lamb;” but that is our place, for the Lord says, “Vengeance is Mine;” “rather give place unto wrath” (Rom. 12); and neither “give place to the devil” (Eph. 4). But if you do not give place to wrath you will give place to the devil. Shall we lose anything by being quiet and taking things patiently? No. “All power,” He says, “is given unto *Me* in Heaven and on earth.” We must bow to what is without, and be satisfied with what is written. If not, we shall be only wearying ourselves in the greatness of our way. May we be satisfied to have our “names written in Heaven.”

23, 24. - **“He said to them privately.”** These things could only be enjoyed by faith. He would have them in the consciousness of present blessing.

THE RICH YOUNG RULER.

25.—Now that the Lord has shown out the dispensational change, He shows the moral change. A lawyer comes and asks how he is to get eternal life. The Lord brings him to the law—keep the law and you shall live. But he is stopped directly with the simplicity of this, **“Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”** He does not love his neighbour as himself! He asks, “Who is my neighbour?” “This do, and thou shalt live.” Who does love his neighbour as himself? The good Samaritan is the one who does not ask who the neighbour is, but acts in grace, without asking what title the other had. Christ has the title of doing good to him that is in need and misery. This is grace that gives without a title.

See how thoughtful this grace and love is. He went to him, did not send some one else, but went, bound up his wounds, poured in oil and wine, set him on his own beast, brought him to an inn, took care of him, gave him in charge to the host, and said, “When I come again I will repay thee.” How beautiful are all the details of the actings of this love which flows from what is within, and acts according to what is working there, and not according to the claims upon it!

MARY’S GOOD PART.

38-42.—In the closing part we see the one great thing was to hear Jesus’ Word. Hence the approval given to Mary above Martha, who in a certain sense was doing a very good work. She received Him into her house, and served Him; but there is something better than this: **“Mary hath chosen that good part which shall never be taken away from her.”** He wanted His words to enter and to have power in the heart. The only thing that endures for ever is “the Word of the Lord.” The wisdom of this world is against it, human reasoning is against it, but it is the only thing worth waiting upon diligently; and if Christians reason about the things of God instead of appealing to the Word they are sure to be going down. We want to have the Word in our hearts, to sit at Christ’s feet that we may understand and treasure it up. To hear Jesus is the “one thing” needful. No attention, even to Himself in the flesh, though it were from one who loved Him and whom He loved could replace this. “The many

things” end only in disappointment and death instead of leading into life eternal, as did the words of Jesus, issuing from a broken heart that it might let forth the stream of life. The hearing ear for His Word delighted Him. He was bringing in truth to people’s souls. “Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1. 17). “Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth” (James 1. 18). “Now are ye clean through the Word which I have spoken to you” (John 15. 3). Truth sets everything to rights; it sets God and man in their place, or it is not truth. Sin, and righteousness, and love, these never came out fully by the law, but “grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” Every-thing was set morally in perfect light by Him, but men saw it not because they knew Him not. The Word now is the instrument of revealing truth. The law was perfect because it was of God, but it did not tell what man was, much less what God was. It told what man ought to be. Christ comes in as the light, and says: “You are all dead, but I can give you life.” His coming into the world showed out everything exactly as it was. As the living Word He came and revealed to those who could see God, not at first in redemption, but in testimony. What value to Him was it that Martha cumbered herself about serving, in comparison of a soul listening to His Word? It is the same now to a Christian. When God’s Word comes with nothing else it has a right to have power over the soul. It makes its way by its own authority and its attractive grace to the heart, and where received it gives life in Christ. There is no living power in a miracle to quicken a soul, but there is living power in the Word. It is by the Word that any soul can get into Heaven. We are begotten by the Word. If the Word cannot do it it will never be done. There are three things constantly pressed in connection with the power of the Word. First, the Word spoken will all come up against them another day (John 12); second, though perilous limes come (2 Tim. 3) the Word is able to make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. There is another thing also. When a soul is quickened by the Word the moral effect is to make it dependent and obedient, “sanctified to obedience.” Such is the character of the new man, as the old man would be independent.

Chapter 11

1.—At the beginning of this chapter we have an-other instance of our Lord **praying**, the expression of dependence. And there the disciples ask Him, “**Lord, teach us to pray.**” They had not learned the simple confidence in the Father that would go up naturally to Him and tell Him all. There may not always be wisdom in asking, but there should be confidence of communion by the Holy Ghost. Even Paul had not always intelligence of God’s mind, or he would not have asked to have the thorn in the flesh taken away; but he was not afraid to make his request. The disciples had not this simple-hearted confidence.

THE DISCIPLES’ PRAYER.

2. - “**Our Father.**” They understood not their place as children of the Father. He condescends to teach them when in this condition, and gives them this prayer. The Lord teaches them to pray for things about which His own heart was occupied. “Father, glorify Thy Name” (John 12. 28) was expressive of the grand desire of His heart.

2.— - “**Hallowed be Thy Name.**” He first tells them of Him with whom they are brought into relationship. Not that they had the present power of the Holy Ghost giving them the consciousness of their relationship—*that* they did not get till the day of Pentecost—but He teaches them to say, “Father, hallowed be Thy Name.” There we have perfection. It is the desire for Him to be glorified, though I cannot tell what it may involve me in. There will be the desire not to sin. This was the expression of the perfect desire that was in Christ Himself: “Hallowed be Thy Name.”

2. - “**Thy kingdom come.**” There will be the removing of those things that are made, that “those things which cannot be shaken may remain.” Are you quite sure that you would like Him to come in this kingdom that will involve the shaking out of every-thing that may not remain? Surely that will wrench the heart from a quantity of things that are attaching you to that which does not belong to the kingdom to come. There may be the desire for these things, while at the same time the consciousness that I have not the sense of the object, but a sense of distance from it which hinders my enjoyment, though I know Him to be “the Chiefest Among Ten Thousand,” and the “Altogether Lovely.” There are often complaining prayers, because there is not the present enjoyment of seeing Him in the sanctuary, though the remembrance of it. We may have the hope of the Lord’s coming, being glad to get to the end of this desert, because it is a desert; or we may long to get out because Canaan is at the end. If it is not the latter we shall be in danger of being tired with running, which is always wrong. We should be in the spirit of waiting pilgrims, not weary ones. We ought not to be weary; I do not say we are not, but we ought to be ever desiring His coming, because He is precious. In Revelation 22. 17 the bride says “Come,” in answer to what He is, when He says, “I am the Bright and Morning Star.” God does not reject the cry which comes to Him as “out of the depths,” but there is a difference between the cry of distress and the cry of desire. When Christ was on earth there was an answer in Him to God’s will, for He always did the things which pleased His Father. He did it as no angel ever could.

3.—Then He comes down to notice our daily need, and there is dependence, indeed, in this. “**Give us day by day our daily bread.**”

4. - “**Forgive us our sins.**” This chapter does not go in to what we may call proper Church privileges; the desires are perfect, but the place is not known. The Lord touches upon all the circumstances down here. Man is looking up from the earth, he is walking there, and needs

his feet washed. There are trespasses to be forgiven, and the spirit of grace is wanted. There is no sin imputed to us now; it is all put away. But will that make me hard when others fail? No; my seeing that Christ has agonised on the Cross for me will give me a sense of my freedom, but not indifference about sin. Instead of hardness it will give us tenderness and softness of spirit .

4. - **“Lead us not into temptation.”** Why should God ever lead us into temptation? it may be asked. Sometimes the Lord has need to put us through a certain process to make us learn our weakness. Look at Peter. The Lord saw he needed to be sifted, or He could have prayed for him to be saved from that fall. A soul would always desire that he may not have this sifting. Christ Himself, though it was a different thing for Him, desired to be delivered from it when bearing sin. Paul prayed for the thorn to be removed. But Paul did not get a fourth Heaven, that would have made him worse, but a “thorn in the flesh,” something to make him despicable in preaching—otherwise people might have come to him and said, “Paul, you must be better than any one else, for you have been to the third Heaven”—to prevent his being puffed up, and to keep him even. It was a gracious provision for him, though it is a right thing for the soul to desire not to be led into temptation, but to be delivered from the evil.

THE IMPORTUNATE FRIEND.

5. - **“Which of you shall have a friend?”** This is another character of prayer, earnest waiting upon God. There is majesty in God’s goodness, and yet He takes knowledge of all our wants, and we must wait His will and pleasure. Suppose one asks his father for anything, and he says, “You must wait five minutes,” is the child to say, “No, I cannot; I must have it directly?” Meantime, while waiting, faith is exercised, and the spirit broken down in the sense of need. Look at Daniel, and see another thing. God gave him a deep sense of his identification with Himself in what he was doing, so He must make him pray three weeks before he has his request granted. This is a great privilege, for it is to have fellowship with God. In the case of this friend there is a depth of interest excited in desire for the thing, and because of his importunity he gains it. There is a certainty of God’s answering in blessing though He delay.

9-13. - **“Ask, Seek, Knock.”** This is prayer for the Holy Spirit, which they, *though believers*, had not then received. In one sense a man may pray for this now, when he has not the Spirit of adoption, like the disciples then. But now the Holy Ghost has been given, consequent upon the Lord’s ascension to the right hand of the Father (Acts 2. 22). There could be no union with the Man Christ on earth. It is as a heavenly people that there is union with Him. Christ was looked upon alone until His work was done. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone” (John 12. 24) . The Holy Ghost was the seal of Christ’s work, not of John’s preaching righteousness. The second time He received the Holy Ghost was for the Church. He received it Himself (Matt. 3) at His baptism, but for us when He ascended, having finished the work of our salvation. The fruits of the Spirit in us are the consequences of the grace and righteousness in Him, He being the only righteous Man. The first fruits of the Spirit in us are love, joy, peace, then come the practical fruits toward men. The first named fruits are towards God, then patience, temperance towards men. The Holy Ghost cannot be the subject for the Church, as such, to ask for now, seeing He has thus been given. Christ received Him for us. We pray *by* or *in* the Holy Ghost, not *for* Him now. We should pray for more of the working of the Spirit in us, and desire to be filled with the Spirit—poor little hearts indeed, but they may be filled, It does not at all follow that we are filled with the Spirit because sealed with the Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit would keep out evil thoughts. It will not take away the evil nature, which ever remains, but thereby that will be kept down.

GATHERING OR SCATTERING.

14-26.—See the dreadful opposition of man's heart against Him, which brings out a very important test: **“He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth.”** When Christ is manifested it is *for* or *against* Him that people take their stand. We have spiritual enemies to contend with, and Joshua leading the people in conflict was figurative of the Spirit leading the soul against our spiritual enemies. It is not Christians but Christ who is become God's centre. We may gather Christians together, but if it is not Christ in one's own spirit it is scattering. God knows no centre of union but the Lord Jesus Christ. It is Himself the object, and nothing but Christ can be the centre. Whatever is not gathering round that centre *for* Him and *from* Him is scattering. There may be gathering, but if not **“with Me”** it is scattering. We are by nature so essentially sectarian that we have need to watch against this. I cannot make Christ the centre of my efforts if He is not the centre of my thoughts. It is a great thing for a man to say: “I have no other object but Christ, no other activity in my heart but for Christ, not only that He is the chief object at bottom—every Christian has that—but there may be a quantity of middle things in our hearts between the inside and the outside.” These must be judged in the soul. Besides love to Christ, there may be love of company, and we must judge all that is between Christ, the Root, and the Offspring.

THE MOST BLESSED.

27. - **“Blessed is the womb that bare Thee.”** They speak of the honour of being His mother. No, we would say, that has nothing to do with it. The closest connection with the Son of Man is not equal to keeping the Word of God. Religionists make a great deal of natural affection, but though blessed in its way it is nothing to the life of God in my soul. Of course it was a blessed thing to be the mother of the Lord; yet it was but a natural relationship, though a miracle, nor could it have been a light thing to her heart. Still, it was not equal to the blessing of the Word of God bringing a soul to Himself. Oh, beloved friends, if you will only let the pure Word of God abide in your hearts you will find that it will sweep away all the cobwebs of the flesh!

29.—They are seeking a sign, another *natural* thing, but He says, **“There shall no sign be given.”** Jonah is a sign. He preached, and they repented. Now My Word has come to you, and that is the test to you .

31. - **“The queen of the south.”** The Word of God is so perfectly suited to man's heart, even the natural feelings are touched by it . The Word is sown in the heart, though it may bring forth no fruit.

THE LESSON OF THE LIGHT.

33-36. - **“The light of the body is the eye.”** Light is there, and the question is about the man's eye. If a man has bad eyes the light is painful. So the Word to one who has not clear eyesight or the single eye. This is a solemn Word, but if a person was converted only yesterday, it might be true of him; he might be full of light. It applies as much to the babe in Christ as to the grown man. Where God is in the soul His light is seen. **“If a man walk in the day he stumbleth not.”** **“If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light, having no part dark.”** When the candle is there we see all around. It shows itself, and thus shows all around. The eye receives the light, single or evil. It is not single or double, but single or evil. If Christ is not the object, there is some evil object. If the eye be single, it is all simple, though there will be difficulties in the path, as with Paul. The light is set on a candlestick that all who come in **“may see the light.”** The man is forced to the question: Do you see it or not? Christ has set up the light in the world. God has displayed Himself in Him, and the effect of

that is to show your condition. Do you say: "Suffer me first to go and bury my father?" (Luke 9. 59). Ah! you have something first. If my body is not full of light there is something not single in my eye, something has not given way before the power of Christ, something not given up. People say I cannot see. No, of course you cannot; you have some other light. Further, what you do see now will presently be given up if you do not walk in the power of what you have. "**Take heed that the light that is in thee be not darkness.**" Our manner of judging may be wrong, because the standard is not Christ, and then the light becomes darkness; we are guided wrong and mistaken in our path. If the eye be full of Christ, and we judge everything by that light, when I see anything that would not glorify Christ, I say that will not do for me. I may be a little vessel, but I must be wholly for Christ. May we be walking in the power of the Holy Ghost, and by the divine teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ content to follow Him, and desire no other path, having the eye upon Him, and only upon Him, so that when other objects are put before us we may be able to say, "This one thing I do." While walking through the world may we be occupied with Christ, not making it our business to judge evil, but simple concerning it.

THE SAVIOUR PRONOUNCES "WOES."

37-43. - "**Woe unto you Pharisees.**" We have the sure judgment of the Lord on the various forms which the lifeless religion of those who led the people took up expressed in different ways, but His constant and unmingled judgment upon it all. The first ground of condemnation is the substitution of out-ward cleansings and services, which the flesh can render, for purity of heart and the spirit of love; where these last are external things are clean. Thus money occupies the heart where there is only a religious form, for it represents the world, and pre-eminence is another expression of the same thing.

45.—Next the **doctors of the law** are sentenced, and with them the imposing of burdens on others, while they spared themselves from the trouble. It might not at first appear why building the sepulchres of the prophets showed approval of those who killed them; but the truth was that the lawyers sought in this their own honour, instead of receiving the testimony of the prophets, which would have humbled them, for the moral and utter ruin of the nation. But they were adorning, as if all were right, the tombs of the righteous and good. It was the spirit of the world arrogating credit to itself for piety to the dead, not holy fear at the prophet's rebukes. But a clearer proof should be in the wisdom of God that they sympathised not with the word of the prophets, but with the works of their fathers. Prophets and apostles would be sent, and once more be slain and persecuted. The Pharisees were hypocrites, and so judged; the expositors of the law perverted their nearness to Scripture in their hatred of any real testimony to their own conscience. These could least of all bear what detected their evil. Hence in pride and fear they took to themselves all the springs of knowledge, neither entering themselves (for they must do that as learners, and needy, and lost), nor allowing those to enter who would, lest they should condemn themselves, and besides their honour and characters go for nothing. The closing verses show us the invariable conduct of false religionists. Having no answer of moral truth to the evidence of deceit and evil exhibited in their ways their effort was to perplex and to entrap. Convicted of sin, and incapable of truth, they sought to make void God's goodness in accusing even Christ of error. It was mercy towards others to be plain as to these false guides, and therefore the Lord denounced them unsparingly.

Chapter 12

The last section of this Gospel (chap. 10. 38; 11) showed the two great means of blessing to the soul, namely, the Word of God and prayer, the precious gift of God, and the true need of man in the presence of a rejected Messiah. It showed withal the doom of the people who refused every testimony of God. Chapter 12 presents the disciples carrying on their testimony in the midst of hypocrisy and opposition, but in the power of the Holy Ghost. The Lord addressed His disciples first of all, but fearlessly and without compromise, before a vast throng as one who acted in the spirit of what He taught. He warns them against that religious formalism which consists of what could be presented to man, and insists strongly and explicitly upon the sure bringing of all things into the light.

1-3.—But just as the breaking down of forms and the revelation of the full light of God had its highest operation and effect in His own death, so the disciples must look for the world's hostility, must be prepared for it in their own case, it might be up to death itself. If Messiah were rejected and slain, what could they look for in the same scene while Satan's power is not set aside? Hence, also, in these chapters it is a question of the soul's relationship with God. It was not the unfolding of the Church yet, but the kingdom in its Jewish application is set aside, and the consequence is that the disciples are to look for the Lord's coming again, and until then trial and violence. His return would have two aspects—one for such as are in relationship with Himself, and the other for the world, and both are taken up here. They were to beware of hypocrisy, and to remember God's necessary determination to bring everything to light. **“For there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; neither hid that shall not be known. Therefore whatsoever ye have spoken in darkness shall be heard in the light; and that which ye have spoken in the ear in closets shall be proclaimed upon the housetops.”**

OUR FATHER'S CARE.

4, 5.—Next, as to the danger of walking in the light. They were not to fear them who kill the body, but God, who could cast into Hell. Jesus perfectly feared God, and called on His friends to fear none but Him. **“Yea, I say unto you, fear Him.”**

6.—But further, not even a **sparrow** is forgotten before God. **“And the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”** Therefore they were not to fear. Our God has made it of faith to be assured that He cares much for us.

8-12.—On the other hand, they were not to trust in themselves, in their own courage, or their own wisdom, but to **confess Christ**. There was the result in relation with the humbled, but yet to be exalted, Son of Man. There would be a return of love or shame before the angels of God according as He should be confessed or denied before men. He had hidden His glory to effect grace. He had come among men and into the midst of evil that God might be fully glorified in His humiliation. This was the patience of God, for Christ claimed nothing. But the Holy Ghost would come asserting the glory of God, and claiming subjection to it, witnessing the grace and proving the glory in power. Hence a word spoken against the Holy Ghost would not be forgiven. Wonderful to say, this is attached to the disciples to console and strengthen them in their weakness. The Son of Man might be slighted, and yet there was forgiveness; but if He by whom they would speak was blasphemed it would be unpardonable. Further, the Holy Ghost would speak by them whatever the power, ecclesiastical or civil, that arraigned them.

Such were the principles, the-warnings, the motives, and the encouragements the Lord attached to a mission which, rejected by and outside Judaism, was the introduction of light by grace into a world of sin and darkness.

13, 14.—Thereupon the Lord, by positively refusing to **adjudge in Israel**, shows that Jewish blessing had lost its place. It was no longer a question of dividing the inheritance, but of the soul in its position before God. Only He warns against the folly of loving the things which gave occasion to such disputes. Righteousness on earth is not looked for now. Jesus declines the place of regulating it, and proceeds to show the inward principle of the kingdom in contrast with the world. Hence He told the multitude to beware of covetousness, for a man's life is not in what he possesses, adding a most solemn parable as to the doom of the rich man, who was not rich toward God. Whatever he might say to his *soul*, God required it that night. **“So is he that layeth up treasure for himself”** (16-26).

22-31. - **“Take no thought for your life.”** If it be thus with the world, do you who have a Father, even the Father, not be anxious for your soul or body. Food and clothing were not just objects for disciples' care, but rather to “put on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Their thoughts should be in another channel, rising above a mere natural view of the life and the body. But He proceeds to assign positive grounds operative upon them as believers. Needful things were subsidiary which God provided, for they were His and under His ordering. He cared for much less than they were. The **fowls of Heaven** and the **grass of the field** read them no un instructive lesson, as interpreted of Christ. And if there was on the one side God's provident care for the least of His creatures; on the other side let them bear in mind the utter weakness of their anxieties. Whatever might be natural to those who knew not God, they were not to be seeking what to eat or drink. Their Father knew they wanted such things. Let them **seek the kingdom of God, and all the rest should be added.**

THE LITTLE FLOCK.

32-34.—The Lord now takes higher ground for them. **“Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”** Therefore were they rather to get rid of what they had as men, and to provide things such as the Father gives to the heirs of the kingdom. They were to act the part of kings called to and having a higher inheritance. The heart follows the treasure. Let them provide a treasure in the Heavens and their heart will be there also. The great saint is not the value of what they gave meritoriously, but the effect internally suitable to their position and their calling. God is not ashamed to be called their God.

35-37.—Further, they were to wait for their Lord. This was especially to form their character, and to be continually and outwardly expressed, the habitual expectancy of the Lord. Their loins were to be girded, and their lights burning, as if Christ was actually on His way. And He that shall come will come; and **“blessed are those servants whom the Lord when He cometh shall find watching;** verily I say unto you, that He shall gird Himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.”

They were now associated with the heavenly character of the kingdom. This world was nought; what they had of it they could return into the privilege of doing good, unselfishly, and have their treasure above, where there would be no losing it, and so their hearts would be kept there. Thus their character would be heavenly. Meanwhile they were to be as men who waited their Lord returning from the wedding. The general aim of the heavenly effect of the calling is here in question. They were to be on the watch. It is not prophecy, but character and position. There are no signs or historical circumstances, as in chapters 17 and 21, for people on earth; here there is heavenly separation from it. For those who thus wait Jesus is still a

servant. He will make them sit down to meat, and come forth and serve them. Girded to serve as man, His ear bored in death, in joy He comes forth delighting in disciples so walking. Gladly He releases them from their endurance, and watching, and service; He sets them at the feast, and honours their faithfulness thus. They were therefore left in uncertainty; and so the Church, when formed, was left. The Church is always to wait for Christ, having no special time; every moment is its time in desire and duty, as, alas, it is the world's for negligence. The Jews have a time. Days, years, and earthly computations belong to them, and therefore signs. To us it may be the second watch or the third watch; blessed only if we are found watching.

THE WISE STEWARD.

41-48. - **"That faithful and wise steward."** Peter puts the question of the application of what goes before, which brings out the portion of those who serve faithfully. They will be set over all the Lord's goods when He returns to take possession of all He made and will inherit. A very encouraging thought, though not the highest. On the other hand, Christendom apostatises by putting off in heart the Lord's coming. The great stay of heavenly-mindedness is lost thereby, and so our peculiar calling and hope. To expect the Lord detaches from the world, putting it off left the servant to his own will. It is not doctrinal denial, but he says *in his heart* **"My Lord delayeth His coming,"** and then he acts with violence towards the fellow-servants, and his fellowship with the world. But that servant, let him act ever so independently, has a Lord, and He will come when not expected, and set that servant's portion with the unbelievers, whatever may have been his boasted rights and privileges. Further in detail there would be a righteous adjudgment (47, 43); for here we have the principles of service, as before of position. The ignorance of heathenism will not be spared, but far more tremendous will be the doom of Christendom. Most righteous, but, oh, how solemn!

49. - **"I am come to send fire on the earth."** There is another thing to be noted, the import of our Lord's coming then into the world. Had man been what he ought peace would have been the result; but man saw no beauty in Christ to desire Him, and the effect was hatred—not peace, but a sword. The nearer the relation the deeper the grievance. The will of man comes out, and is utterly opposed to God. They would not endure to be told that they were under God's judgment. But there is this peculiarity in the character of division which the entrance of grace makes. He who is converted in a family becomes generally, and at once, the slave of the rest. Nature even is subverted in such cases. How often thus a husband or parent loses his authority! There is a fire kindled before Christ comes again in judgment to kindle it. He was not then come to judge, but they by their rejection of Him kindled the fire of judgment.

THE BAPTISM OF HIS DEATH.

50.—Now, look at the Lord's part. **"I have a baptism."** What could straiten the Lord's heart? The perfect, infinite love of God in Him was, as it were, shut up. If He spoke to His disciples of His death, "That be far from Thee, Lord" (Matt .16. 22), was all the response He met with even in Peter. How painfully was He thus shut up into Himself! But on He went in His service of living love through the world, looking forward to the baptism of His death, and His being straitened showed the fulness and strength of His love. Till then there could be no letting out of heart, for who understood Him? The Jews said, "Behold a gluttonous man and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!" They were shut up within the walls of Judaism, so that, though One was there with a flowing river of blessing, they would not receive Him. Divine love was, we may say, pent up and driven back into the heart of God. But all is met. **"How am I straitened till it be accomplished?"** He is not straitened now. The barrier is broken in His death.

How could they as sinners have communion with Christ? There could be none. When He came to meet man's need they hated and rejected Him. But on the Cross He has put away sin, and now grace can flow out without hindrance or measure. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5. 20). Man is not changed, but God can act in His own way through redemption. Christ's love and glory did come out in a measure before, for "He could not be hid" (Mark 7. 24). But at the Cross all overflowed, and looking back from that over His life we see what infinite love and sorrow and suffering filled it up.

54-57.—The multitude are addressed on the **principle of personal responsibility**. First, upon the evident signs of God's dealing with the world; and next, from their moral judgment of what was right. The conclusion was that God was in the way with the Jewish people, and that if they did not agree with Him then they would turn Him into a judge, and must incur the full penalty of their iniquities. In human affairs man would be prudent enough to come to terms with his adversary, knowing himself wrong and anticipating the judgment. If they did not submit and be reconciled to the Lord now in the way they would soon be delivered to His judicial dealings, and not cease from them till they had received of His hand double for all their sins.

Chapter 13

There are two great principles or subjects in connection with man on the earth: The Church of God as such, and the government of God in the world. And these are very distinct. In the Church the riches of His grace are manifested. In His governmental dealings we see the display of His justice, mercy, and goodness. An example of God's governmental power as to Israel we have in Exodus 34. 5-7. This is not sovereign grace, bringing a soul to eternal life, but government of the same character as we may see every day around us. If a man wastes his fortune or ruins his health by intemperance of any kind his children suffer for it. "What a man sows, that shall he also reap." See God's dealings with David because of the matter of Uriah. "The sword shall never depart from thine house. . . Thou didst it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, . . . because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die" (2 Sam. 12. 10-14). And we know that this judgment for his sin was accomplished in David's after history. This is not grace, but government. God deals in the same way with a saint now, that is, both in grace and righteousness.

THE TOWER OF SILOAM.

1-3.—The Jews had this thought of government in their minds, nor was it wrong in itself. They thought that God could not let such a guilty fellow live as this Pilate, who had been mingling the blood of the Galilaeans with their sacrifices. But Christ brings them to a new principle by which to judge, and tells them judgment was coming upon themselves if impenitent. **"Suppose ye that these Galilaeans were sinners? . . . I tell you, Nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."** It refers to judgment in the government of this world, which would overtake all who repented not. They had God's Son there, and they were practically rejecting Him, and how many of the Jews had their blood mingled by Titus? Christ had said to the Jews at the close of chapter 12, "When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate . . . give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him, lest he hale thee to the judge;" but of the state of the Jews, who were under God's dealings, and would not escape till the chastenings of the Lord upon them are complete. Thus it is very evident that this passage refers simply to God's government of His people. Natural conscience ought to have told these Jews not to reject the Messiah, for God was going all the way along with them to the magistrate, dealing with them in patient grace, and He would say to them: "If you do not repent and be reconciled judgment must come upon you, when it will be the same with you as with those whom ye think to be such sinners."

THE BARREN FIG TREE.

6.—The Lord is dealing here with the same state of things. The fig tree is Israel, and God comes seeking fruit in them, and finding none. In the Gospel there is this difference. That grace, instead of seeking, sows in order to produce fruit. He found none, and the sentence therefore upon it is, **"Cut it down."** He not only found it useless, but His vineyard was encumbered by it. "The Name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you" (Rom. 2. 24). Then comes in Christ's mission. Last of all "He sent His Son" (John 3. 16). God had planted a vineyard and pruned it, but there was no fruit. Then a new Gardener comes in, and He says, **"Spare it this year also, till I shall dig about it."** It must bring forth fruit then, and be digged up. He has done as He said, but still there is no fruit.

THE WOMAN WITH AN INFIRMITY.

11.—Jesus heals on the Sabbath day, and brings out another thing that was working in their hearts in the place of the law, which left room for hypocrisy. They would lead an ox or an ass from the stall on the Sabbath, but they would not bear that a daughter of Abraham whom Satan had bound these eighteen years should be loosed on that day. One of the infirmities of man's mind is to use possessed truth to resist revealed truth. Paul was an example of this. "As touching the righteousness of the law, blame-less" (Phil. 3. 6). Still, he "thought he ought to do many things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26. 9). So also Christ says of the Jews in John 16, "These things will they do unto you." They were using the Name of the one true God, which had been given them ("The Lord, thy God, is one God") to reject the *Son*, for when Christ came in humiliation they would not receive Him. Orthodoxy is used to stop the reception of truth. When truth is the ground of a man's standing it gains him credit, but when a new truth comes in it puts faith to the test. Truth that requires faith to walk by is resisted by the natural heart, and the root of this is hypocrisy.

14.—The ruler of the synagogue said, "**There are six days in which men ought to work: in them come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day.**" But he ought to have known that the Lord of the Sabbath was there for that single word, "daughter of Abraham," ought to have told him who He was that stood there. The Lord answered him, "Thou hypocrite!" A solemn word this!

18.—He goes on to show **what the kingdom will be like** when the King is rejected and gone away. A kingdom without a King, who is sitting on His Father's throne, until He comes to take His own throne. The kingdom is like a little seed thrown into the ground, which springs up and becomes a great tree; just what we call Christendom. This fills up the gap between His rejection and His coming again. There is no power exercised while the King is away. As in Mark's gospel it sprang up, men knew not how. When the harvest is ripe He will come again. He sowed the first time, but He will put in the sickle the second time. He is looking for heavenly fruit now; but when He comes He will find Christendom a great tree with the fowls of the air lodging in its branches. Pharaoh was a great tree, Nebuchadnezzar a greater still. They were the high and mighty ones of the earth, representatives of worldly power. Even Israel, which had been planted a noble vine, wholly a right seed, was bearing no fruit. Therefore, as it is said in Ezekiel 15, "What is the vine tree more than any tree" if it bear no fruit? It is only fit to be burned. Otherwise useless, if it does not bear fruit it only makes the best firewood.

THE PARABLE OF THE LEAVEN.

21.—Here the kingdom is likened unto leaven, and leaven is that which spreads throughout the whole mass, and also gives a character to that in which it works. It is nominal profession of Christianity which is spread into a vast system. There is not a word here about the Holy Ghost, but about the effect in the world. In Matthew 13, in the first parable, there is individual result, and not the kingdom spoken of. In the three first of the six parables it is the public appearance; in the three last the inward character is described.

23. - "**Are there few that be saved?**" The word used here is the same word that through the LXX. signifies a remnant, or such as shall be saved. The question really was as to whether this remnant would be few or many who were to be spared when the judgment came; but this being a mere idle question, the Lord does not answer it, but says to them:

24. - "**Strive to enter in at the strait gate.**" The strait gate was receiving Christ at that time, the real but narrow entrance of faith in Him and conversion to God. There will be some come and knock when the door is closed, to whom He will say, "I know you not whence you are;" you are not changed. Strive to enter in at the strait gate, through which Christ goes before

you, that is, rejection. “Many shall seek to enter in (*not* at the strait gate), and shall not be able.” It is most simple when we see the rejection of Christ. Those who reject Him in the day of His humiliation will themselves be rejected in the day of His glory; and instead of being His companions in the kingdom, they will be thrust out. The unbelieving Jews will see the Gentiles come into the glory of the kingdom, while they remaining in unbelief will be cast out.

31.—The Pharisees say to Him, “**Get Thee out and depart, for Herod will kill Thee.**” Now Herod was an Idumaean, and what right had such a stranger to be their king? What had *he* to do with the promises to Israel? Nothing. In Herod we have a figure of the wilful king. He tried to kill Christ, and therefore the character of opposition king belongs to him. He had no faith in God’s purposes or in Christ’s glory, and the Lord says, “**Go and tell that fox.**” I shall do My Father’s will till the moment come for Me to be glorified. I am here as long as My Father wills, and then I shall be perfected. The power of God must be fully known. What divine contempt for the apostate king, but what perfect human obedience combined! “Leaving us an example, that we should follow in His steps.”

LAMENT OVER JERUSALEM.

33. - “Nevertheless I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem. **O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets.**” After all Jerusalem is the guilty place. Let the Edomite king do and say what he will it is “the holy city” that is guilty, for it was nearest to Himself. The nearer I am to God, if I reject Him, the worse is the sin and the more dreadful the judgment (See Psa. 132). “The Lord hath chosen Zion,” and Psalm 88. 65-68, the same election of Zion. Christ does not put the sin upon them till they have rejected both Him and His Father. He brings out a purpose of grace in these closing verses. The old man is condemned and profitless, Israel and all of us. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?” (Jer. 13. 23). The Gospel begins with seeking and saving that which was lost. Here we see that though they have rejected Him in responsibility He has not rejected them in the day of His grace. Grace shines out in His yet choosing Judah.

34.—Notice how the divine Person of the Lord comes out here. “**O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered.**” A prophet could not say this, and He was a prophet, too, and more than a prophet. He was Jehovah, for none but Jehovah could gather Israel, as “He that scattered Israel will gather him” (Jer. 31. 10). Israel had rejected Jehovah under responsibility, but Jehovah will own them when He comes in sovereign grace. How blessed is the way; the circumstances through which He passed in His path down here did bring out in a far brighter way WHO HE WAS than any text to prove it, important as that is in its place. For sup-pose you believed there was a God, yet if He were to come down by your very side and say “I AM,” would not that be a very different thing? Christ was the humbled Man all through His path down here, for He was ever the Servant of all; yet when the service was done, and rejected as of no use, His glory shines out. “Before Abraham was, I AM.” See in this chapter of Luke the connection between verses 33, 34, and 35 as illustrative of this: “How often would I have gathered thee . . . desolate . . . *until* ye shall say, **Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord.**” The complaint in the Psalms is that there is none to say “how long,” none to count upon the faithfulness of God to His people. (See Psa. 74. 9.) This expression is often used in the Psalms and in Isaiah 6, and refers to chastening, not retribution. How long is Israel to stumble and fall? (Rom. 11). In Isaiah 6 the prophet having uttered these words, “Make the heart of this people fat,” taken up by the Lord in John 12, then says, “How long?” He waits in faith, and reckons upon God, and having God’s mind He cannot believe that God will give them up, and therefore asks “How long” is the chastening

to continue? To which the Lord answers, "There shall be a great forsaking in the midst of the land, but yet in it shall be a tenth, and the holy seed shall be the substance thereof" (Isa. 6. 12, 13). The sap is still there though there are no leaves. So in Psalm 118. 18, "He hath chastised me sore, but He hath not given me over unto death."

THE COMING OF THE BLESSED.

35.—In the same way the Lord does not say, "**Your house is left unto you desolate**, and there-fore ye shall not see Me again." No. But He says, "**Ye shall not see Me until ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord.**" He can give, as Jehovah, the answer in grace, and when He gives repentance to Israel, then He will send Jesus, whom until that day the Heavens have received. Meanwhile our connection with Him comes in. The prophet spake only of earthly things, though divine; but to the Church it is, "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" (Heb. 3. 1), and "Hath quickened us together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2. 5). That gives security. How did I get there? By virtue of Christ. He is my title. My desire is to be acquainted with this, that I am one with Christ in Heaven, an ever-lasting portion, that the Holy Ghost seals upon my soul, and would have me enjoy more and more.

When Israel is brought to repentance "The stone which the builders rejected" will be "the head of the corner" (Luke 20. 17), and owned of them. They will say "O give thanks unto the Lord, for His mercy endureth for ever" (Psa. 106. 1) . Alas! they will receive another first; but when their hearts are turned, and grace works, they will use the language of Psalm 119, and find the expression of the law within their hearts; and when faith is thus exercised, and their hearts are broken and open to receive Him, then He Himself will come to them. If there is not a prophet to say "How long?" Jehovah will give the answer. He never changes, and though He executes judgment and righteousness grace is found in Him still. "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18. 8). Well, if there be not faith to be found, or a prophet to say "How long?" there is One who will lay up in His treasures something for faith to lay hold on in the sovereignty of His own grace.

Thus we see Jehovah in that humbled One, and how He is able to rise above all iniquity. How precious does all this make Jesus to us, and we are one with Him.

May we learn Him, and so follow Him, remembering that all that is left outside the narrow way is the flesh and evil.

Chapter 14

This chapter shows out the distributive justice of God. First, it is toward His saints the consequence of conduct with God, and the place a man will take in view of that. Next, we have responsibility connected with grace, the moral position of the soul, because of having grace presented to it. Slighting God's grace fills up the measure of man's sin. But here is the *presentation*, which is a different thing from the *possession* of grace. This is brought out in those who refused to come to the supper.

THE SABBATH.

1-6. - **"On the Sabbath day . . . they watched Him."** The Lord in bringing the dispensation to a close consequently brings before Israel the *Sabbath*. The question was: Could man, as man, find rest with God? Could man ever enter into God's rest? We know man broke God's rest directly; how soon we are not told; but perhaps the very day he ought to have rested he ate the forbidden fruit. Man never entered into God's rest; and now the question was how to enter in—by his own work or Christ's? It was essential to the rest after creation to have it at the end of six days of work, and therefore it was on the seventh day. So afterwards when the legal ordinances were given the Sabbath became a sign of the covenant. The Lord when here constantly trenched on the Sabbath to show that, sin being unremoved, He must work. He could not rest, the Sabbath being a sign of man's getting rest after work, and the law showing that man constantly broke that covenant. The Lord presses home to their consciences their sin by showing them that He must work if they were to have rest. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work" (John 5. 17). If man had kept the law he was entitled to the rest, but he neither did nor could keep it. All that was the sign of God's rest for man, after work done, failed; but "there remaineth a rest for the people of God" (Heb. 4. 9). The Sabbath continued as a sign, and all through the prophets we find it insisted on, but they did not get rest. Paul, reasoning upon it in Hebrews 4, says "We which have believed do enter into rest." But Canaan, the nominal rest, they of old did not enter, save the few faithful ones, and these did not get rest, for if they had, another day would not have been spoken of, and so it is said by the Psalmist, and quoted in Hebrews, "If they shall enter into My rest." "If" means "they shall not." This being the Sabbath was no rest to them. The Sabbath was still the sign, but no real rest. The whole thing being therefore gone as to man's getting into God's rest it must be now on an entirely new principle, by faith and not by works. When Messiah came He would have been rest to the people, but man would not have Him, as we find it here. Man *could* not have God's rest by *law*, and they *would* not have it by *grace*, and this proves man altogether broken with God. If I have got to God I have rest, and need not journey farther for it. I have my rest in Himself, for grace, not law, has given me a capacity to enjoy what God is. But when the creature had broken the rest of his Creator there could be no relationship between them. Sin has come in and caused God to be towards me as a judge, and there can be no link of heart between a judge and a criminal. If God judges me as a sinner the only word I can have from Him is, "Depart from Me, ye cursed." Therefore all that man can say is, "Enter *not* into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord." There is a link between a father and a child that brings them into relationship, but it is a new thing. All must be put on a new footing, for there is no rest in the old creation.

HEALING ON THE SABBATH.

In chapter 15 we have grace at work to give rest, the Shepherd bringing the sheep home, and in this chapter we have a case of misery brought out in the **man who had the dropsy**.

3-5.—Christ said, **“Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?”** But they held their peace. He puts the case to themselves. **“If you shall have an ox or an ass fallen into a pit, . . . and they could not answer Him.”** There was no present rest, no hope of rest, no possibility of rest for man as a sinner, and there could be no rest for God, for God could not rest where sin was. There was no Sabbath for righteousness, for man had no righteousness. There was no Sabbath for love, for love could not rest where judgment must be exercised. Love might come in and work, but work is not rest. Man has lost his communion with God through his sin, and this is a solemn thing, for he has made God a judge through his sin. The very thought of judgment connected with God shows man a sinner, for there was no necessary association of judgment with God; but when sin came in judgment must follow, for God is holy. If brought to the consciousness of there being no relationship between us as sinners and God, we learn what a place becomes us when once we have faith in His grace.

HUMILITY AND EXALTATION.

7-11. - **“And He put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when He marked how they chose out the chief rooms.”** It is just the place that nature likes. The world which has no relations with God delights in exalting self and shutting Him out. Self gets for self what it likes, and forgets God. Man is always setting up self, pushing for self against God. He does not think so, for he says he is only using his faculties. But so Adam did to hide himself from God. Do not we use our faculties to please ourselves rather than for God? While the master is away the servants go on their own way and do their own will. A man is naturally hurt when he is put down in a corner and despised. Flesh does not relish being thrust aside, but this seeking for a place is to seek for it where Christ had none. “Therefore,” He says, “when thou art bidden to a wedding, sit down in the lowest room.” The point of this parable is seen in verses 8-11. It refers the *heart* to the *master*, to “him that bade thee.” If I am conscious of being a sinner, and therefore deserving no place, I shall take none, but wait till God bestows one on me. I shall have honour indeed when God gives me a place. The point is: What does He bestow upon me? Having the eye upon God, and referring to Him, seek for the lowest place as Christ did. It will not do to say I will not have a place in the world. The great thing is the heart resting on God’s place in the world. When the eye is thus upon God self is forgotten. If not, I am thinking of the slights I receive, and neither faith nor grace are in exercise. If I could think nothing of myself I should be perfect. The man who bade the guests has the right estimate of each and the honour due to them. The evangelist’s place, the pastor’s, the apostle’s will all be appointed by God. When God gives me a place it is one of power and nighness to Himself; but when a man takes a place for himself it is one of weakness and alienation from God, because self is the object.

Then, again, we must guard against the mere refusing to take a place in the world, because we know it is wrong as followers of Him who has been rejected. A mere legal estimate of what is right can never last. A thing may be very right, but there is no stability in pursuing it, because there is no power to subdue the flesh in merely doing what one knows to be right. There was the sense of obligation with the law, but the law did not set an object before me to attract my heart; it did not bring God to me nor me to God. That lasts which feels that we are nothing and that God is everything. Many have begun very energetically, and taken a certain place right in itself; but if legality be the source of it there will be no power of perseverance, for that which is taken up under law will be sure to be lost in the flesh. When God is the object the low place here is sufficient. He Himself carries me on, and whatever it be, if the mind and affections are upon Him, what was hard at first is no effort as I proceed. His love which attracted and gave me power at first to take such a position becomes brighter and brighter when better and longer known, and what was done at first tremblingly is easy with increasing courage. The only thing which can enable me thus to go on is to have Christ the object before

me, and just in proportion as it is so can I be happy. There may be a thousand and one things to vex me if self is of importance; they will not vex me at all if self is not there to be vexed. The passions of the flesh will not harass us if we are walking with God. What trials we get when not walking with God and thinking only of self! There is no such deliverance as that of having no importance in one's own eyes. Then one may be happy indeed before God.

If we look at Christ we learn two principles. First, that He humbled Himself because of the sin of the world all around Him. Second, the world did all they could to humble Him, for the more He went down so much the more they sought to pull Him down.

No one cares for another, so that if a man does not care for himself he will be sure to be pushed down low enough. Then, again, so deceitful are our hearts that it is possible we should be willing to humble ourselves if we could get anything by it, even the approbation of men. On the other hand, if we, in the usual sense of men, merely seek to *imitate* Christ in this it will be but legal effort. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2.5). He humbled Himself. First, "He made Himself of no reputation" (Phil. 2. 7). That is, He emptied Himself of His glory to become a Man. In doing this He left the Father's glory to become a Man. This was a great descent, though we think a great deal of ourselves. But was that all? No. He humbled Himself to death, even the death of the Cross.

11.—It is the same principle which is put before us in this chapter in Luke. "**He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.**" Real lowliness is being ready to serve any and everybody; and though it may to the eye of man look low it is in reality very high, being the fruit of divine love working in Our hearts. God operating in our hearts makes us unselfish. The only thing worth doing in the world is this service, except it be enjoying God. We should be ready to serve one's enemies. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted." This is not only *being* humbled, but humbling *oneself*, and not doing it before those who would honour us all the more for being humble. Paul could say of himself and others, "Ourselves your servants for Christ's sake" (2 Cor. 4. 5). He felt they had a title to serve in grace, and in proportion as he took the humble place he will be exalted in the day that is coming.

THE GREAT SUPPER.

12-14.—The next statement in the chapter goes on to speak of Him who bade. Before, it was about the guest; but here it is the principle on which feasts are made. "**Call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind,** and thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." Thus He takes them all out of the world again to the time when they shall meet God, and makes it a present guide for action. They must not act on the principle of getting reward here, but must wait for the time when they are to meet the Lord, as it is not till the Master of the house returns that the servants receive their wages. This is not a question of salvation, but of reward for service. "Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the *just*." Mark how the Lord brings out the JUST as a separate class. The resurrection is not a common one; there is no such thing in Scripture. There is no thought of confounding in another world what God has separated in this. Grace has separated the believer, so that He has risen in his soul now; but he does not get the reward of his service till "the resurrection of the just." A sinner is quickened here, though not judicially manifested here, because we are in a dispensation of faith, and the portion is in glory. There is no "general" resurrection to good and bad alike, but there is the "first resurrection," which is God separating in *power* those whom in *grace* He has made His own. It was the resurrection from among, or out of, the dead that awakened such wonder among the Jews. The Pharisees could teach the resurrection, though the Sadducees denied it. A resurrection was commonly believed, as Martha said, "I know that he shall rise again at the last day" (John 11.24). But they could not comprehend divine power coming into Satan's

house and taking the righteous *dead* out from among the rest of the dead. Jesus replied to Martha, “I am the Resurrection and the Life” (John 11. 25), speaking of the living power that visits a man when he is in a state of death and takes him out of it. They knew nothing of the discriminating process of the one to life and the other to judgment (John 5) .

The Master of the house will show His approval of the faithful servant. There will be degrees of glory given according to the service done. Not that I shall be *saved* for what I have done, but my service will be rewarded, whatever may have been produced by the Holy Ghost answering the desire of Christ in working in me, for it is service of which I could not do an atom without His power. It is likewise the answer of God according to His counsels, as we may see in the reply to the mother of Zebedee’s children: “It shall be given to those for whom it is prepared of My Father.” The service of love is never influenced by recompense. Reward is not set before the soul as the motive for doing anything; but when we find difficulties in treading the path of service, then the crown is set before us to encourage us to go on. So even Christ, for the joy that was set before Him, “endured the Cross, despising the shame” (Heb. 12. 2). So also Moses, while esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, had respect unto the recompense of the reward. If the recompense and not love be the spring of our service it would just amount to this: “Take thy penny, and go thy way.” But if the world is broken with no recompense can be looked for from that source, which is as great a deliverance as the deliverance from self.

15-24. - “**A certain man made a great supper.**” See how grace, when brought in, is rejected. The supper was ready, the guests were bidden, but they would not come. The Lord had before spoken of the kingdom, and here He shows what the reception of the kingdom would cost. “**All things are now ready.**” But they all make excuses. They do not care enough for the supper to leave their yoke of oxen, the piece of ground. The supper was in God’s thoughts from the beginning, and it was to be when He came to the Jews as their Messiah at the close of the day. But they rejected Him, they did not want Him. It does not say that their sins shut them out from the supper, for God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. Neither was it the piece of ground, the oxen, or the wife that were in themselves the evil; but in their case they became so, because their minds were intent on them to the slighting of the supper. And is it not just the same now? What harm is there in these things do you say? If they have occupied your heart, and made you slight God, that is the harm. In the kingdom of God where are you? There was not one link of heart between Christ and the people He came to, and therefore they rejected the supper. This is also a test to our souls all through the day. It is not a question of whether a thing be right or wrong, but what savour have the things of Christ to our souls in it? It may be a very small thing. If we find the reading of a book makes the manifestation of Christ to become less precious to us we have got away from God, and we cannot tell where the next step may take us. Satan often cheats us in this way. The soul is put to the test day by day, whether the things that are revealed by God in Christ have so much power over us as to engage the heart; but if other things have come in between when we want the enjoyment of the things of Christ we shall not have it, and this will show us how far we have got away. If anything comes in and takes the freshness of Christ from your soul take heed, for if the oxen are thus cared for when you have opportunity for the things of Christ you will have no taste for them.

“THE POOR OF THE FLOCK.”

21.—The Lord turns to “**the poor** of the flock,” those who have no yoke of oxen, and are glad of the feast . The priests and chiefs of the Jews had the first invitation, but they rejecting it the Master of the house sends out into the streets and lanes of the city to bring in the poor,

the maimed, the lame, and the blind of the people, still the house is not filled; and then He sends outside the city, into the highways and hedges, and compels them to come in that the house may be filled. These are the Gentiles. In this Gospel the poor of the flock and the Gentiles are distinguished from each other. But in Matthew, whose aim is Jewish, there is no mention made of both classes as distinct. "The wedding was furnished with guests," includes the Gentiles gathered in after the Jews are brought into the blessing. Then mark the lowliness of the servant and the patient grace of the Master; that goes right on to the end. He cannot rest till He gets His house filled with guests. What perseverance there is on the part of God! And we are called to go on in the same spirit. It does cost a great deal to go on, and on, and on, in spite of everybody and everything; and for us to do so marks the presence of divine power in us, for God's grace is unwearied.

24.—There is indeed judgment at the same time, for it is said, "**Not one of those that were bidden shall taste of My supper.**" But God's acting thus shows us what lowliness there should be in us as regards self and grace as regards every one else, and all grounded on this one fact that all man's relationships with God are morally broken, and if you are really going to take such a path as that of following Christ you must count the cost. It is all very well to see such grace and admire it, but there is no power to persevere in it, without such love in the heart as the establishment of a new relationship with God gives. There must be a link in the heart with the new thing, and Christ must have such strength in the heart as to give power to break with old things.

25-33. - "**Multitudes**" were attracted by the hearing of such grace, so in verse 26 He tells them what discipleship will involve. There may be an allusion here to Micah 7. 5, 6. Friends must be given up for Christ. A man may have to leave everything else, but the question is: Am I to leave God? What! life too? Yes; no matter. In that life you are linked with the world, and that must be given up, too, if I am in question. You cannot have two hearts, a heart for the world and a heart for Me, Christ would say. I tremble when I see people who have not counted the cost setting out in the profession of following Christ. It is God's way to put the barrier at the first start. If you can leap that you will do. Legal obedience will not stand, but *following* Christ. If He is in the path it is happy and easy, but it is a path between two hedges. If Christ is not with you in it there will be nothing but trouble and difficulty.

SAVOURLESS SALT.

34, 35. - "**Salt**" is grace in spiritual energy. That is, the saints being witnesses in the world of the power of holy love instead of selfishness. Salt is the consecrating principle of grace. If that is gone, what is to preserve? Salt is rather grace in the aspect of holy separateness unto God than in that of kindness and meekness, though, of course, these are also inseparable from grace. If the salt has lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? If I have meat without salt I can salt it, but if there is no saltiness in salt, what can I do? What a character we have here of an unspiritual church or an unspiritual saint! Like the vine which represented Israel, good for nothing at all but to dishonour the Lord, its owner, and be destroyed. Mercy, it is true, may recover us, but as saints we should have the savour of Christ. Whatever enfeebles attachment to Christ destroys power. It is not gross sin that does it, which, of course, will be met and judged, but it is the little things of everyday life which are apt to be chosen *before* Christ. When the world creeps in the salt has lost its savour, and we show that a rejected Christ has little power in our eyes.

The Lord keep us in the path with Christ, where all is bright and blessed. If the film of this world has been drawn over our spiritual vision, hiding Christ from us, He alone can remove it.

Chapter 15

We have seen the Lord showing out His own rejection in grace, followed by an entirely new order of things. The Church brought in subsequently is not an age, properly so called, but a heavenly episode between the ages. There are three ages spoken of in Scripture: The age before the law; the age under the law; and the Millennial age. Christ was “made under the law,” and that age is not finished yet. The disciples said to Him, “What shall be the sign of Thy coming and of the end of the age?” That was the age when He was there, but when they rejected Him the age was suspended. As He straitly charged Peter to tell no man He was the Christ, saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected” (Luke 17. 25). Therefore He says to them, “Ye shall not see Me till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord” (Mark 11. 9). We who form a part of the Church of God, and not having anything to do with the earth, are in no sense an age, but are a heavenly people united to Christ above during the suspension of this age, filling up the gap between the Lord’s leaving the Jews and His return to them again. So in Romans 11 we have the olive tree with some of the branches broken off and others grafted in. This is a tree with its root in the earth, and consequently could have nothing directly to do with the Church in Heaven. Some of the branches were broken off and some left; but this could never be said of the Church, the body united to its head at the right hand of God. The Church, of course, does fill up a certain place and time, but it is during the suspension of the age to which Christ came. Characteristically we belong to that which is above and beyond anything connected with this world. It is grace that has set us there, and that is not of the earth but of Heaven.

In chapter 15 we find the Lord rising above Jewish dispensation altogether to the full display of God’s own nature—love—in the Gospel. At the close of chapter 14 He takes up the professing system in its responsibility. “Salt is good, but if the salt have lost its savour” it is good for nothing. Thus He shows what *man* is. Then in chapter 15 come publicans and sinners, and we have the display of what *God* is. Here God is dealing with lost man in grace. Sinners who owned their sins and came to repentance were those who justified God. “Wisdom is justified of her children.” God is vindicated in His ways, whether in condemnation or salvation of a sinner. The publicans and sinners justified God, being baptised of John, while the Pharisees rejected His counsel against themselves. All that is wanted to justify God is that He should show Himself, and this is what the Lord now does. He manifests what God is in grace, and this it is which makes the chapter ever so fresh and full to our souls. The heart that has been awakened never tires of such a chapter.

Then in chapter 16 He shows the responsibility of those who are thus dealt with. The earth was given to the children of men, and God looked for fruit. He first dealt with man as to what he ought to have been on the earth, but there was *entire failure*. Now there comes out another thing, *entire grace*, which is irrespective of all that man was, and takes an absolutely heavenly character. Divine love is its source, and its character is heavenly. Revealing Heaven, it puts man into connection with it, and the people so put must be a heavenly people. Why so? Because this world is all gone wrong; it has fallen from God, and is become the “far country.” Hence its riches are of no value, but a great hindrance unless used in a heavenly way, and chapter 16 shows how they should be used. Chapter 15 shows the sinner called out by grace; that which follows shows what He who is so called out is to be as a heavenly man. This world is a scene of evil, and that which attaches to it is now ruin and not blessedness (see the rich man and Lazarus). Adam had a place in this world, and Israel had a place in it, but now that is all gone, and grace has come in, lifting those who are the subjects of it into

another state of things altogether. Christ is justifying God. His nature being love, it was His joy to manifest grace to sinners. It is not here the joy of those brought back, but God's own joy in bringing the sinner back to Himself. This gives the tone to Heaven. "There is joy" there in the poor wretched sinner brought back.

I have no doubt we have in these three parables the unfolding of the ways of the *Trinity*. In the first is shown the Son as the Good Shepherd going after the sheep. In the second, the woman lighting a candle and searching diligently till she find the piece of silver, we have the painstaking work of the Holy Ghost lighting up a testimony in this dark world. The third is the Father's reception of the returning sinner when brought back. In this, the prodigal son, we find the work *in the sinner*, but in the two previous ones it is the sovereignty and the activity of grace which go out in love to find that which was lost, and bring the sinner back without his having anything to do in it.

THE LOST SHEEP.

4-7.—This persevering energy of love is in the Shepherd Himself. The Good **Shepherd cares for the sheep**, and gives it no trouble in getting home; He carries it on His shoulders. Herein is seen the perfect grace in which the Lord Jesus has so charged Himself with bearing our every burden, our every trial and difficulty, all along the road. Christ is thus the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. Then mark, in verse 6, the peculiar character of this joy. "He calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying, Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost." There could not be a more genuine picture, or a fuller expression, of a person being happy than this. Joy always speaks out.

THE LOST COIN.

8-10.—In the second parable we have the same general principle. The painstaking of the Holy Ghost is shown in the acting of the **woman who sought the lost piece of silver**; the piece of silver could have neither trouble nor joy itself. The difference in the two is that in the first the Shepherd bears all the burden; in the second it is the pains taken in *finding* the lost piece, proving the woman cared enough for it to take all this trouble to search it out. Thus does God's love act toward us to bring us out of the dark world to Himself. What a work it is to bring man's heart back to God!

"'Twas great to speak a world from naught;
'Twas greater to redeem."

THE PRODIGAL SON.

11-32.—If we look at man as he is in himself, he could never get back to God. But look at what *God is in Himself*, and who or what can resist His grace? Still it is the joy of the finder, and not of the thing found. "Rejoice with *Me*, for I have found My sheep—My piece—that was lost." And in the **case of the returning prodigal**, who made the feast? Not the young man, but the father, saying to those in the house, "Let us eat and be merry, for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." All caught the joy of the father's heart, the servants, etc., all except the unhappy, self-righteous elder brother (the Pharisee, the Jew), to whom the father replied, "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again." It is the joy God has in receiving a sinner back to Himself. In the parable of the prodigal son by itself the full glory of grace is not seen, as these three parables set it forth together. The case of the *sheep* is the Shepherd charging Himself with the whole burden of the sheep; the *silver* is the painstaking of the Holy Ghost. Before actual departure there was moral departure. When the young man left his father's house it was but a display of the evil in his heart. He was just as wicked when he asked for his portion of goods and crossed his father's threshold as when he ate husks with the swine in

the far country. He was, doubtless, more miserable then, but his heart was gone before. One man may run further into riot than another, but if we have turned our backs upon God we are utterly bad. In this sense there is no difference.

The moral evil was just the same with Eve. She gave up God for an apple. She virtually thought the devil a much better friend to her than God, and took his word instead of God's. Satan is a liar from the beginning, and at the Cross the Lord Jesus proved this. It cost the Lord His life to prove that God was good. Christ came to contradict the devil's lie, which man believed, and under which the whole world is lying. Grace and truth came by Christ, and, at all cost, were set up by Him on the Cross. Man can do without God, and from the beginning the whole world has been a public lie against God. Who could unriddle it? Look at creation, how it groans under the bondage of corruptions! Look at providence, how can I account for the goodness of God when I see an infant writhing in pain? How can I reconcile the two things? The villain prospers, the good man suffers. When I see Christ on the Cross I see what God is. Death came on man by reason of sin. But Christ takes my sin on His own sinless person, bows His head in death upon the Cross, and thus sets aside the lie of Satan, "Ye shall not surely die." Thus was God's truth re-established here below in the work and person of the Lord Jesus, and nowhere else. In Him I see *holiness, truth, and love*, no matter at what cost.

14.—The natural man is just like this prodigal. He spends his substance in the far country and ruins himself. A man having £5000 a year and spending £20,000 will seem very rich for the time. But look at the result. He is a ruined man. The moment man departed from God he sold himself to Satan, and is spending his soul, his heart, away from God. He even spends what God has given him against God, and when he is thoroughly spent, and has nothing to live on, he begins to be in want. **"There arose a mighty famine in that land,"** and all the world feels that. Every sinner does not go to the same length of eating the swine's husks, but all are in the same condition of ruin. Every man has turned his back upon God, though all have not run to the same excess of riot, nor fallen into the same degradation. The famine never draws back to the father's house. The prodigal joined himself to a citizen of that country, not his father's country.

16. - "He would fain have **"filled his belly,"** and **"no man gave to him."** Satan never gives; that is found where God's love is, who spared not His own Son. When the prodigal thinks of his father's house, the whole work is morally done, though he is not back there yet. He turns, his heart was changed, and thus his whole desire was to get back to his father's house from whence he had departed. He was not yet in the full liberty of grace so as to have peace and happiness, and he says to himself, "Make me as one of thy hired servants." He is brought to a sense of his guilt, and what was it? Feeding with the swine? No; that was the fruit of it, but his guilt was in leaving his father's house, turning away from God. When he came to himself he desired to return. This was truly a right wish, but the form it took in his mind, from his not yet knowing grace, was a *legal* one. **"I am no more worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants."** But the father does not give him time for that.

20.—We hear nothing more about hired servants. For when he was **"yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion on him, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him."** He could not have been a servant with the father's arms round his neck. It would have spoiled the father's feelings, if not the son's. It was the joy of Him who was receiving back the sinner to Himself. And it is the knowledge of this which gives peace to the soul. Nothing else does. If a man does not know love he does not know God, for God is love. The full revelation of God is what we have in Christ. "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me?" (John 14. 9). God acts from the joy and delight He has in Himself in

receiving back the sinner, and therefore He does not think of the rags, but of the child He has got back again. What right has man to call God in question when He indulges His own heart in the outflow of love to the sinner? You will never get peace by the mere act of coming back, but by learning the Father's mind about you. Could the prodigal get peace as he was coming back if the father had not met him? No; all along the road he would be questioning: How will he receive me? Will he be angry with me? Will he spurn me from his presence? And if he does, what will become of me? "But when he was yet a great way off his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck, and kissed him." If not so, he would have trembled even to knock at the door. When the father's arms were on the son's neck, was he defiled by the rags? No; and he will not have the son bring rags into the house, but orders the best robe to be brought out of it. God sends His own Son out of Heaven, and clothes the sinner; and thus arrayed the young man could bring credit to his father's house. And surely if we are so clothed with Christ we shall do credit to God; and in the ages to come He will show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Christ Jesus.

23. - **"Let us eat and be merry."** It is not: Let him eat and be merry. Again, he says, "It was meet that we should make merry and be glad." There was but one exception to the delight in the house. The elder brother (the self-righteous person) was angry, and would not go in. God had shown what He was in Himself, by His Son, in thus receiving the prodigal, and now He would show what they were in themselves. We know the Pharisees murmured from the beginning, and the elder brother had no communion with his father, for if the father was happy, why was not he happy, too? He was angry, and would not go in. If such a vile person as the publican gets in that makes my righteousness go for nothing. It is truly so. For where God's happiness is, there self-righteousness cannot come. If God is good to the sinner, what avails my righteousness? He had no sympathy with his father. He ought to have said my father is happy, so I must be. There should have been communion in the joy. "Thy brother is back." That ought to have rung on his heart, but no.

28.—Then see the perfect patience of God's grace. The father goes out and **entreats him**. And do we not all through the Acts see God entreating the Jews to be reconciled, although they had crucified His Son? So Paul, in 1 Thessalonians 2. 15, 16, says that the Jews filled up the measure of their sins by forbidding the apostles to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved. It is all selfishness in the elder son. "Thou never gavest me a kid that I might make merry with my friends." To which the father replies, **"Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine."** The oracles of God, the covenants, the promises, God gave to the Jews, but He will not give up the right to show His grace to sinners because of the self-righteous selfishness of the Jews or of any one else. "It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found."

Chapter 16

1. - **“There was a certain rich man, which had a steward;** and the same was accused unto him, that he had wasted his goods.” Man generally is God’s steward; and in another sense and in another way Israel was God’s steward put into God’s vine-yard, and entrusted with law, promises, covenants, worship. But in all Israel was found to have wasted His goods. Man looked at as a steward has been found to be entirely unfaithful. Now, what is to be done? God appears, and in the sovereignty of His grace turns that which man has abused on the earth into a means of heavenly fruit. The things of this world being in the hands of man, he is not to be using them for the present enjoyment of this world, which is altogether apart from God, but with a view to the future. We are not to seek to possess the things *now*, but by the right use of these things to make a provision for other times. **“Make to yourself friends of the mammon of unrighteousness.”** It is better to turn all into a friend for another day than to have money now. Man here is gone to destruction. Therefore now man is a steward out of place.

THE UNJUST STEWARD.

2. - **“Give an account of thy stewardship,** for thou mayest be no longer steward.” He is discharged from stewardship, has lost his place, but not the things of which he has the administration. Here is something far better than the alchemy which would turn all into gold. For this is grace, turning even *gold* itself, that vile thing which enslaves men’s hearts, into a means of showing love and getting riches for Heaven. To Israel God is saying: “You have failed in the stewardship, therefore now I am going to put you out.” In chapter 15 the elder brother, the Jew, would not go in; and here, in chapter 16, God is putting the Jew out of the stewardship. With Adam all is over, but we have a title in grace to use, in a heavenly way, that to which we have no title at all as man.

11. - **“If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?** If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man’s, who shall give you that which is your own?” Our own things are the heavenly things; the earthly things are another’s; and if you do not use your title in grace in devoting in love these earthly temporal goods, which are not your own, how can God trust you with the spiritual things which are “your own?” Our own things are all the glories of Christ. All that is Christ’s is ours, for “we are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold” (1 Peter 1. 18). We were bought with a price, it is true, not with money, but “with the precious Blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1. 19). God has not given us eternal life in order that we might be getting money. “No man can serve two masters,” and if you want to be rich you cannot be seeking to serve God. We have to do our duty in this world, but it is never our duty to serve mammon and desire riches.

Now He goes on to show that there are these everlasting habitations, when the grand results will appear of what has been done here. The old thing is fleeting away and the new coming in. The Jew, who refused to come to the feast, is loosening the law while *rejecting grace*. (See chap. 15, verses 18, 19.)

THE RICH MAN AND LAZARUS.

19. - **“A certain rich man, clothed in purple.”** The thought here is Jewish, and the great principle is that all God’s dealings as to distributive justice on the earth were no longer in force, and that now He only deals in grace. He draws aside the veil to show the result in another world. The rich man had his good things here, he belonged to the earth, and the

basket and the store belonged to him. His treasure was on earth, and his heart there too. But look into the other world and see the result - "torment." The good things have changed now. **"The rich man died and was buried; and in Hell he lift up his eyes, being in torment."** "And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores," "and the beggar died." Was he buried? Not a word about it, for he belonged not to the earth, **"he was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom."** He who had the "evil things" down here was carried to the best place in Heaven. Then mark, it was not the afflictions, sores, etc., of Lazarus made him righteous, any more than the riches of the rich man made him unrighteous. God having done with the earthly things, no earthly circumstances are a mark of God's present favour or the reverse; though, no doubt, God's dealings with Lazarus were the means of bringing down his pride, breaking the will, and so preparing him for the place He was going to take him to.

31. - **"If they hear not Moses and the prophets."** Here this solemn truth comes out that even the resurrection of Christ will not convince them; for if they refuse to hear God's Word as they have it, they will not hear the testimony of God, even though One rose from the dead; and we know they did not.

This chapter is to let in the light of another world upon God's ways and dealings in this. The whole world is bankrupt before God, so that man is now trading with another's goods. When man rejected Christ he was turned out of his stewardship. This is man's position. We should, therefore, dispose of everything now in reference to the world to come, according to this permission in grace revealed in chapter 16, to use the things of which we have the administration. If we are serving mammon we shall not get the blessing of serving God in the sense of God's gifts, for it is retributive justice here in a sense. If you are not faithful in another man's, who will give you that which is your own? If you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? If you are loving money, you cannot have your heart filled with Christ. We are not to be "slothful in business," but "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," and for this He opens Heaven to us. Not as He said to Abraham, "Unto a land that I will show thee." He *has shown* Heaven unto us, having opened it to us in grace. It is the revelation of grace that gives power over earthly things. May the Lord keep before us a living Christ as our light for guidance and salvation to walk and trust in!

Chapter 17

We have seen the great principle of divine grace in contrast with self-righteousness, and the Jewish economy, which refused its Messiah, the Son of God, set aside to make way for bringing to light life and incorruption through the Gospel.

1. - **“Then said He unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offences will come; but woe unto him through whom they come.”** We enter here on the spirit and way of serving, now that the world to come was let in upon the conduct and faith of the disciples in this world, for none could serve two masters. God is carrying on a work—in a little child perhaps—but it is His own work, and individual faith is needed in the path of a rejected Christ. Among those who professed to follow Him and His glory on the principle of faith there would be, alas, many scandals. It was not now, nor yet, to be a reign of judicial power when the Son of Man would gather out of His kingdom all scandals and them which do iniquity. Satan’s power is permitted; the exercise of faith is required. It is a time of proving by the prevalence of evil that which lasts because of God. The Cross must be taken and self denied. It is a hard lesson, but blessed when learned. The Cross and the glory are always connected. The Cross must be on the natural man, not on sin merely, so as to break the will. Christ had no will, showing perfectness; but we need the Cross practically as the means of communion by breaking down that which hinders. Then, again, the whole system of the world is a stumbling-block. There is not one thing in it which is not calculated to turn the heart from God. Take the merest trifle, dress, vanities in the street, flattery of man, of brethren perhaps, all tend to elevate the flesh. What a different thing is Heaven opening on a rejected Saviour! And this is our light and pathway through the world, for now the Heavens are opened to faith, as we pass through it to Him whom we see in glory. There is an active, energetic flow of God’s love in carrying on souls. Is our walk a witness? Take care you are not a stumbling-block. You may say a person must be very weak to feel such or such a thing. But it is the very reason why he is to be cared for. The Lord give us never to hinder but to help the weak! These things are the stumbling-block of the enemy, and the man by whom they come is so far an instrument of Satan. The Lord loves His little ones. Better for that man that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he cast into the sea than that he should offend one of them.

INSTRUCTION IN FORGIVENESS.

3.—But suppose a person does something to stumble you, what then? **“Take heed to yourselves.”** Your part is to forgive. Take heed to yourselves, jealous and self-judging. **“If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.”** What! if he trespass often, “seven times in a day?” Yes, if he “seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, thou shalt forgive him.” Watch incessantly yourselves, and see to it that the spirit of love (the power of unity and the bond of perfectness, as we know from elsewhere) be not broken, nor the spirit of holiness, that the peace be not false. Blessed path! What condescension to our weakness and danger in the introduction of grace, and the moral judgment of present things, which are the aliment of the flesh and the domain of the world! Watchfulness against self and grace to others bring us through, rising like a life-boat above all breakers.

5-10. - **“Lord, increase our faith.”** In such a position there would be need of faith and the energy proper to it. The apostles led of God, though perhaps seeing but the brighter part of the difficulty, and with a confused sense of this new position, pray for an increase of faith.

The Lord answers by setting forth the fulness of its energy. For faith realises a power which is not in the person, and thus acts without limit. He applies it also, though in general terms, to the removal of the obstacles of a system which might present the form of what was good and great, but fruitless. In every need we may draw upon God. All consists in looking simply to Him. All things are possible to him that believes. For it is God accomplishing His will, and He has willed to accomplish it by man and to honour Himself in man, after being dishonoured of Satan in and by man; but this in faith according to His will, till the Lord Jesus returns in power and glory. God is at work, and if you are co-workers under Him you could believe that He is, and say: "Let this be done and this." Is it nothing to wield God's power? If you know not what it is to be opposed by Satan you will feel how blessed it is to call in the power of God. Your place and work may be very humble—outside—no matter what, still you need God's power to be little. What the Lord says in verses 7-10 is not applicable to a careless servant. If he has neglected his work he is a *slothful* one. But I am an "**unprofitable servant**" when I have done all that I am commanded. Am I neglected? It is to try me. Something needs it. Perhaps I want to learn that God can do without me. Now that Christ is rejected God is at work. If He uses me it is a great honour. If He lays me by because self was elated it is a great mercy. He is saying, as it were: "Be satisfied with Myself, be content to know I love thee." Are you content with His love? Do you want man's honour or your own? Remember that when you have done all it is the time to say "unprofitable servant."

THE TEN LEPERS.

11-19. - "**Ten men that were lepers.**" The history which follows shows that when God brings in new power those who have had the previous privileges are the last to rise above them into what is better, but there is a fate wrought of God in the heart which sets free from the subsidiary forms thrown round God's will in the past economy. Thus recognising God in Jesus, it carries the soul beyond the law of a carnal commandment, and associates it with Him in whom is the power of an endless life. It occupies us with His person who is above all, planting us not in dishonour of the law ("yea, we establish the law" through faith), but in the liberty wherewith the truth—the Son—makes free. All were cleansed by the Word of divine power. The nine went on to show themselves to the priests, acting on the word of Jesus, and thus far in faith. But **the Samaritan stranger** perceived God's glory in what had taken place, and so turned back to Jesus and aloud glorified God. The others owned the power which had come, but remained in their religious habits and associations. He, less pre-occupied with outward institutions, returned to the source of power, not to its shadow and witness, which nature always uses to hide God. He had experienced divine power in Jesus, and instead of merely enjoying the gift, he most humbly, but in the boldness and propriety of faith, went back to own the Giver. "**He fell down on his face at His feet giving Him thanks.**" He wanted no priest. The priest did not, could not, cleanse, but only discern and pronounce a man clean. Evil had levelled the Jew and the Samaritan. They were alike cast out of the presence of divine communion by the leprosy which afflicted them. But He who healed lepers under the law was He who gave the law, and the word of Jesus at once recognised the law and manifested the Jehovah who craved it. The gratitude of faith was a readier reasoner than the instruction of the law; for the blessing afforded by the work and presence of Jesus was to the nine the means of keeping up Jewish distinction, to the tenth it was the evidence of divine goodness. To him, therefore, it was complete deliverance. He has by faith arrived in grace at the fountain head from which the law itself proceeded, and was let go in peace, made whole by his faith, having liberty from God and with God, giving thanks and glorifying Him, and withal knowing how acceptable it was in His sight.

How many reasons might have been pleaded for going on and not returning to Jesus! How might the nine Jews have said: "You are ordered to go and show yourself to the priest." But

faith goes straight to the heart of God, and there finds all grace and a dismissal in the liberty of grace. To him who returned to Jesus, cleansed and with heart-felt thanks, the priests were left behind. In spirit and figure the healed Samaritan was passed into another system by faith—the grace and liberty of the Gospel. It is blessed thus to be at the source of power and goodness, and there only does God put now those who believe. If under the law before, we are become dead to it by the body of Christ that we should belong to Another—to Him who is raised from the dead. It is this way alone that glorifies God, however men may plead the latter. Thus only can we joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received, not the law, but the reconciliation. In Him, thus known and enjoyed, we have all and more than all than the priests ever conceived. We have communion with the Father and Son by faith in God fully revealed.

19.—We have to do with Him in Heaven now, not with a temple and priests on earth. “**Arise, go thy way.**” You have found the person and glory of the Lord. You are beyond the priests and the temple, your faith has pierced the veil and found One greater than both. The rest went their way cleansed to be under the law. Stupified by Judaism, they did not return to glorify God. All this, at the point of the Gospel we are arrived at, is full of importance. It is another light thrown on the passing away of the law and of that dispensation.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

20.—In the next verses the question was actually raised as to the coming of God’s kingdom. The Pharisees asked when it should come, and the Lord places them on their plain responsibility. “**The kingdom of God cometh not with observation,**” or outward show. It should not be said, “Lo here!” or, “Lo there!” for that kingdom was then there among them. The King was speaking to them. Ought they not to have known Him because He came in grace? If He had humbled Himself to know their sorrows and to die for their sins, was that a reason for not discerning His greatness and moral perfection manifested in ten thousand ways? Did not His holy love to the poor and guilty prove plainly enough who He was? If man’s heart had not been opposed to all that was the delight of God in the kingdom, if his eye had not been blind to all that was lovely and of good report, he would have felt that the lower Christ stooped the more wonderful were His works.

21.—To His disciples He had other things to say. He was rejected and leaving them. Suffering awaited them. Trying as their position might now be as the companions of His rejection, the days would come when they would long in vain for one of those days when they had enjoyed blessed and sweet intercourse with the Son of Man. They would as Jews in the land feel the difference. Then Satan, to allure and deceive in that day, would lead men to say, “**Lo here!**” or, “**Lo there!**” but the disciples would know its falsehood. There was no hope for the nation which rejected Christ. The King had been there, but was refused; He was no longer “here” or “there.” This day the Son of Man would be as the lightning flashing from one quarter under Heaven to another. But first He must suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation, *i.e.*, the unbelieving Jews.

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN.

24. - “**So shall the Son of Man be in His day.**” It is evident that while the Lord takes this name of Son of Man to His disciples as revealing a relation higher and wider than that of Messiah (the link of which was broken and gone in the nation’s ruinous rejection of Him), the whole of this instruction is Jewish, and shall find its accomplishment properly in a godly remnant of the latter day. The Christian part is not spoken of here, for that is association after a heavenly sort with Christ, and we have its great moral outlines, at least, in Luke 12. Here we are on the ground of responsibility, not of heavenly grace. We must separate the Church’s

place *with* Christ from the government of the world *by* Christ. The very character of the predicted delusion confirms this distinction. For if men said to the Christian “Here is Christ” he would instantly know that it was of Satan, because *we* are to meet Him, not here or there on earth, but in the air (1 Thess. 4). But this is not the case when you come to the government of the world. There the hope rests on Jewish ground, and then the witnesses for God must go through tribulation such as has never been. Now, unless expressly forewarned they would naturally look here or there for the Deliverer. For in that character His feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives, and He shall come to Zion, and shall come out of it. “Jehovah shall send the rod of Thy strength out of Zion: rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies.” All this differs from the Christian’s hope and his desire meanwhile, for we do not want our enemies destroyed, but converted, and we are looking to be taken from them all to Heaven with the Saviour, instead of waiting for Him to join and exalt us under His reign upon the earth.

30. - **“In the day when the Son of Man is revealed.”** But, again, the subject here is neither the past siege of Jerusalem nor the future judgment of the dead. Titus’ capture of the city was not like the lightning, but a long, fierce, hardly-contested struggle. Nor were the Jews up to the moment of the final stroke in a state of ease and carnal security, resting on the continuance of things as they were, as in the days of Noah and Lot. Suddenness of judgment is its first feature, certainty is the next, discriminating certainty, neither of which things could be fairly said of the Romans. Without or within, at rest or at work, men or women, it mattered not, God would burn up the chaff and preserve the wheat, the one would be taken and the other left. Next, there is a local, earthly stamp, which excludes the scene from that of the great white-throne judgment. For there is no resemblance between the judgment of the dead and the deluge or the fate of Sodom. It is the end of the age, not of the world, and is a judgment on a temporal people, and more especially on their city. For they were not to return into the house if on the house-top, and if in the field they were not to turn back. None of these things could be said of the dead, any more than the bed or the mill. It would be no time for human motives, artifices, or concessions (v. 23). Faithfulness to the Lord and His testimony would be the true and saving wisdom. The day of the Son of Man’s revelation was in question, His judgment of the quick, and especially of a generation which has rejected and caused Him to suffer.

37.—If they asked, **“Where?”** the solemn word for conscience was, where the body, the corpse was, the swift, inevitable judgments of God would fall.

Chapter 18

We saw from verse 20 to the end of chapter 17 that the kingdom of God was presented, first, in the person of Jesus as a question of faith, not of outward show, nor of a “lo here!” or, “lo there!” And, secondly, in the way of judgment, which should deliver the remnant by the execution of divine vengeance on their enemies. The first eight verses of our chapter complete the prophetic warning, and show that the resource of the righteous in the last days will be prayer. Nevertheless, though the parable has that special application to the future oppression of God’s witnesses who will then be found in Jerusalem the instruction, as usual with this Gospel, is made general so as to suit any or all kinds of difficulty by which men might be tried.

THE UNJUST JUDGE.

1. - “And He spake a parable unto them, to this end, that **men ought always to pray, and not to faint.**” Faith would be put to the test. If God were looked to, and not merely the blessing, men would not faint, though there was no answer. They would go on, always looking up, though all seemed against them. The widow represents those who have no human resource; their resource would be constancy in prayer. Such will be the godly seed in Israel, for it is the remnant, not the Church, which is here meant. They will plead with the judge to avenge them of their adversary. Their patience and confidence may be sorely tried, but they will not cry in vain.

6, 7. - “**And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith.** And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him?” He may be slow in taking up their cause; but when once He shall rise up a short work will He make on the earth. Meanwhile patience must have its perfect work. In Jesus it had its full perfection. There was the rejection and the reproach of men, the forsaking of disciples, the power of Satan, the cup of God’s wrath. But He went through all to the glory of God. In detail we, too, have to be sifted, and to find all circumstances against us, but God for us, yet more than if we had outward help, miraculous power, the Church all right. Even joy may hinder our entire dependence on God, making us forget practically that the flesh profits nothing. When no circumstances lead you to have any hope, is your hope then in Him? The flesh may get on for a long while, as in Saul; but faith only can wait with all against it. It is then the divine life depending on divine power. Thus it was in Christ pre-eminently. “I believed, therefore have I spoken” (2 Cor. 4. 13). He went down into the dust of death, and has introduced a wholly new order of things. And we, having the same spirit of faith, we also believe, and there-fore speak. “Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature” (2 Cor. 5. 16, 17). Christ is dead, risen, and now set down at the right hand of God. Having this life, we are put to the test practically to learn the lesson of death and resurrection, where nothing but God can sustain. In the parable there are two considerations. If the unjust judge hear and act for the defenceless, be the motive what it may, will not God? But this is far from all. God has His affections, not only His character, but objects of His delight. “And shall not God avenge His own elect?” It never can become the righteous God, who taketh vengeance to make light of evil or let the wicked go unpunished. For then how shall He judge the world? He notices the cry from the oppressed day and night, and it is the cry of His own elect.

8. - “**I tell you that He will avenge them speedily.**” But will there be the faith that expects His interference? They will cry from distress, and God will hear. Nevertheless, the question is

raised: Will there be when the Son of Man cometh that faith on the earth which is founded on God known in peaceful communion? Will it not rather be the cry of the righteous in bitterness of spirit, a cry forced out of them, and not the cry of desire?

THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

9. **“Two men went up to the temple to pray.”** We have next the moral features of, and suited to, the kingdom, the characters which are in harmony or discord with the state of things introduced by grace. The Pharisee and the publican set forth, not the doctrine of atonement or of justification by faith, but the certainty that self-righteousness is displeasing to God, and that lowliness because of our sin is most acceptable in His sight.

11.—The Pharisee does not set God aside. He **“stood and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank Thee.”** But then he thanks God for what he is, not for what God is. The only hope of the publican was in God Himself. He was very ignorant, no doubt, but he had the right spirit to get at God. Light had broken in and shown he was a sinner, and he submitted to the painful conviction, and confessed the truth of his state to God. He was cast on God’s mercy to his soul. He dared not appeal to justice, he did not ask indifference, but that mercy which measures the sin and forgives it. The revelation of grace had not yet come in, the work of reconciliation was not yet done, so that the publican stood “afar off;” but his heart was touched, and God was what he wanted. If a soul is brought to a sense of sin now it need not, and “tight not, to stand afar off. The grace of God that bringeth salvation has appeared. Nevertheless, though he did and could not thus know grace, the publican gives God and himself their true character. It was not full knowledge, but the knowledge as far as it went was true.

14. - **“I tell you this man went down to his house justified rather than the other;** for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” Universal truth! but where so shown as in Jesus? For if the first man, exalting himself, was abased to Hell, He who was God made Himself of no reputation, humbled Himself to the death of the Cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him. In one sense men cannot humble themselves, because they are sinners already, and cannot go lower; a saint may. True humility is forgetfulness of self. This is illustrated yet more by the incident that follows.

15. - **“And they brought infants unto Him,** that He would touch them.” It is the lowliness of real insignificance, as the former was because of sinfulness. Who would be troubled with beings of such little consequence? Not the disciples, but Jesus. The Lord delighted in them, and that is the spirit of the kingdom of God. And here, too, a general moral maxim comes out. If a man is to enter that kingdom all confidence in self must be broken down, and the truth be received simply as a little child hears its mother. If it is not so, God and man have not their place. When He speaks all I have to do is to listen. This is the humility of nothingness, as the other was on account of sin.

THE RICH YOUNG RULER.

18, - **“And a certain ruler asked, . . . What shall I do to inherit eternal life?”** Here is the question of doing in order to obtain eternal life, not salvation for a lost one, but that which searches the heart to the bottom. The young man was a lovely character, looked at as a creature. For if there are the ravages of sin in the world, there are traces of God there too. This ruler did not see God in Christ. Morally attracted, he came to learn to do good, without a doubt of his own competence. In Jesus he only saw a perfectly good Man, and one therefore eminently able to advise and direct him in the same path. Sin, on the one hand, and grace on the other, were altogether ignored by him. He knew neither himself nor God. There is no man good. All are gone astray. Man is a sinner, and needs God to be good to him. He is

incompetent to do the good which satisfies God. The Lord took up the young ruler on his own assumption that he could do good for the purpose of bringing out what he was. The good Master that he had appealed to puts to the test what his heart really is.

22. - **“Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast; . . . and come, follow Me.”**

Would he give up self-importance? After all he loved his riches too well. **“He was very sorrowful, for he was very rich.”** Had not such things been promised as a blessing to the Jews? Christ shows them to be a *snare*. But then they do much good. Nay, are they good for your heart? It is not that they may not be used in grace; but the man did not know his own heart. Good is not there, nor the strength to produce it. Every motive which governs man is rooted up by the Cross. But all within is bad, and I can never work a thing fit for God out of bad material. I need God, therefore, who can give me a new and holy nature, who can be merciful to me because He is above all sin. The spring of all good is that it flows from God and not man. It is an impossibility, as far as man is concerned, that any should be saved. Sin has ruined man and all his hopes. If one looks at the means he can avail himself of they are wholly useless to save him. But “the things which are impossible with men” (Luke 18. 27), said the Saviour, “are possible with God” (Mark 10. 27). Such is the sole foundation for the sinner.

28. - **“Lord, we have left all and followed Thee.”** If Peter is quick to speak of the devotedness of the disciples in leaving all and following Jesus, the Lord shows the certainty that every loss for the kingdom’s sake will turn into manifold gain, both now and in the world to come.

DEATH AND RESURRECTION FORETOLD.

31-33.—But He binds it all up with what was coming on His own person. They were going up to Jerusalem, but for what? He, the Messiah, **“shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they shall scourge Him, and put Him to death.”** All hopes must end here: “Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more” (2 Cor. 5. 16). Even He, if He is to deliver the lost, must come down to the dust of death. Christ has no association with sinful man. How then can He deliver? He must die for us; He cannot take corruption into union with Himself. A *living* Christ, we may reverently say, could not deliver us, consistently with God’s nature and character; redemption was a necessity. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” But if it was the only means of a holy salvation, man’s full wickedness came out in the rejection and death of Christ. He hated what is in God and He who is God—hated both the Son and the Father. All question of human justice is settled and negated for ever.

34.—Alas! **“the disciples understood none of these things,”** neither His shame and death, nor His resurrection. It was the accomplishment of what the prophets had written concerning the Son of Man. But they knew not what He said nor what they wrote. The death of Christ would manifest what man was, and what God was; His resurrection would evince the power of life that can deliver the dead. But He was not understood. Verse 34 closes that part of our Gospel which shows the bringing in of the new and heavenly dispensation. With verse 35 we enter on the historical account of the Lord’s final intercourse with the Jews. “Son of Man” was the general character of the Gospel, but now, in the midst of Israel, He takes up that of Son of David. Jericho was the first place Israel had to conquer when they crossed the Jordan, and a special curse was pronounced against it. But Israel had not walked in obedience, and the Messiah enters not as the King in outward glory, but as the rejected Jesus of Nazareth, with blessing for the remnant that received Him in faith.

HEALING THE BLIND MAN.

35. - “**And it came to pass that as He was nigh unto Jericho.**” It is not *come* nigh, as if it were necessarily His first approach, but a general expression, just as applicable to His being nigh on His leaving the city. (Cp. Matt. and Mark.)

35. - “**A certain blind man sat by the way side begging,** and he cried, saying, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” He was rebuked by many, but there was the *perseverance* of faith, and he cried so much the more, “Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.” Here was a sample of the gathering to the Name that Israel rejected. The eye of the blind was opened then, as it will be in the remnant by and by.

Chapter 19

1-10.—Next we have the account of “**a man named Zacchaeus**,” for the Spirit of God did not tie Luke to the mere order of time, and morally viewed it was the fitting sequel to the healing of the blind man. Found only in this Gospel, it is a striking illustration of the grace which receives a man, no matter how low, and in the face of Jewish prejudices. For a publican, a rich chief of the publicans, was justly an object of abhorrence to those who regarded him as the expression of Gentile dominion. All was wrong through sin, and Israel was not humbled. Still it was a sad position for an Israelite, however honest and conscientious Zacchaeus might be in it. But it was the day of grace, and “**he sought to see Jesus**.” There were difficulties, hindrances in him and around; but faith perseveres in spite of opposition. As the blind man was *bent* on his object, so was the rich publican set on seeing Jesus. This marks the working of God’s Spirit, the apprehension of the worth of the object. We want it and more of it, we know enough to want more. It is an appetite produced by the Holy Spirit. It is a terrible thing if we as Christians have not this craving, this hungering and thirsting after a greater enjoyment of God, for where this is not, deadness and apathy of soul have come in.

CONVERSION OF ZACCHAEUS.

5.—Jesus came to the place and saw him, and said unto him, “**Zacchaeus, make haste and come down**; for to-day I must abide at thy house. And he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully.” He had not yet the full knowledge of Jesus, but his desire had been met, and he had joy. It was neither law nor glory, but a hidden Messiah come in full grace. There was abundant evidence who He was, but in grace He was come down where they were. No matter what people thought. Finding Jesus is everything. Zacchaeus had the answer to the want which divine grace had created. Grace does not give at first the knowledge of Christ’s work; there may be little or no understanding that we are made the righteousness of God in Him. Hence the first joy often wanes, because, when conscience is accused, I want the consciousness of that righteousness. The first joy is constantly that of discovering that we possess the felt need of the soul for Christ; but the full question as to righteousness may still have to be met in the conscience, though, of course, every believer in possessing Christ does knowingly possess divine righteousness. Nevertheless, much as there is to learn, there is joy. New interests are awakened, new desires arise, a new insight is obtained into good and evil. When there is a deep sense of what it is to be lost and saved the world (man) is a light matter. But when the pressure on the conscience is removed too often nature resumes a sort of place, and then Christ is not all and everything to the saint .

Zacchaeus’ heart is opened. There is confidence which tells itself out. There might be ever so much honest effort to satisfy conscience in his false position, but, after all, what a place it was! Men murmured. The Lord passed all over. Self-defence was needless. The Lord did not accuse, and speaks of nothing but the salvation that was that day come to the house.

Zacchaeus was a son of Abraham, and the Son of Man was come to seek and to save that which was lost. What could a Pharisee object? There had been a work with the conscience of Zacchaeus, but the Son of Man was come, and salvation was the word. He *brings* it . He gave what Zacchaeus had little thought of. He was come to meet the need He had created. He was come to *seek*, *i.e.*, to produce the desire; and to *save*, *i.e.*, to meet that desire.

NEARING JERUSALEM.

11.—The Lord was now “**nigh to Jerusalem,**” and so He added a parable to correct the thought that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear, for Jerusalem is the city of the great King, and the question of His rejection would be closed there. He shows, on the contrary, that He was going away, going to a far country, to Heaven, where He was to receive the kingdom and to return. The time was not come to set up the kingdom on earth. Meanwhile, the business of His servants was to trade with the money He delivered them. When He returns, having received the kingdom, He assigns them places according to their faithfulness; for in Luke it is a question of man’s responsibility; in the corresponding parable of Matthew God’s sovereignty is the point. Difference of *gifts* appear in Matthew, difference of *rewards* in Luke. In Luke each servant receives a mina from the Lord; in Matthew all who gained in trading enter alike the joy of their Lord.

13.—Here the whole force is *occupy*. “**Occupy till I come.**” Our position is serving a rejected Saviour till He comes again. We are not yet to share in the glory of the kingdom. When He returns all will be disposed of impartially, and there will be that which answers to authority over ten cities and over five. The righteousness of God is the same for us as for Paul; but as there is very different service, and different measures of fidelity, so there will be speciality of reward. No doubt it is grace that works, still here there is reward of faithful service. The secret of all service is the due appreciation of the Master’s grace. If one fears Him as an “austere man” there is unfaithfulness, too, even on one’s own principles.

26. - “**Unto every one which hath shall be given**” is a universal principle. When through grace there is the realisation in our souls of the truth presented to us we are of those “who *have*.” But if a truth comes before a man, and he talks about it without its being mixed with faith in the heart, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. Truth, if it reveals Christ, humbles me and deals with the evil within. Then it is not only Christ as an object outside me, but a living Christ *in* my soul. Knowledge, which has not power over the conscience, only puffs up. If truth be not acted on it troubles the conscience. But how often one sees a conscience, having lost the light, quite easy at a lower standard than before, rejoicing that it has lost its trouble, though the light of truth be lost with it! The soul has sunk below that which had exercised the conscience, and thus the whole standard, principle, and life are lowered, and opportunities of winning Christ lost for ever. Holding fast the truth—Christ—I have Him as it were a part of myself, and learn to hate the evil and to delight in the good, so that I get more till I grow up in Christ into the measure of the stature of His fulness. Common duties do not rob us of Him; from these the heart returns with fresh delight into its own centre. It is the heart clinging to vanity that spoils our joy; it is anything which exalts self and lowers Christ, an idle thought, even if allowed in the heart. As to the citizens, the Jews, on whom He had rights as King, their will was against Him, not only hating Him there while among them, but, above all, sending the message after Him, “We will not have this Man to reign over us.” Unsparring vengeance must take its course on them in His presence.

ENTERING JERUSALEM.

28.—Jesus entered Jerusalem as Messiah. His rights as Lord of all were to be asserted and acted on (29-36). He presents Himself for the last time to Israel, in the lowliness of grace, which was of far greater importance than the kingdom. This gives rise to the most marked contrast between the disciples and the Pharisees. The whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with loud voice, saying, “**Blessed be the King that cometh in the Name of the Lord: peace in Heaven and glory in the highest.**” Some of the Pharisees appeal to Him to rebuke the disciples, but learn from His lips that if these were silent the very stones would cry out. There must be a testimony to His glory (vv. 37-40) .

When Jesus was born angels announced it to the poor of the flock, and the heavenly host praised God, saying: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace”—good pleasure in men. Such will be the result, and the angels anticipate it without reference to the hindrances or to the means. But Christ was rejected here below; and now the disciples say, “Peace *in Heaven* and glory in the highest.” When the question of power is raised in order to establish the kingdom there will be war then (Rev., 12). In fact there can be no peace in Heaven till Satan and his host are cast out. Then will the King be established in power when the obstacles shall be taken out of the way. Psalm 118 celebrates this, His mercy enduring for ever, spite of all the people’s sins. It is the song of the latter day. If God sends peace to the earth in the person of His Son it is in vain, not as to the accomplishment, but as to present effect. Meanwhile to faith there is peace in Heaven, and when this is asserted in power against the evil spirits in the heavenly places there will be blessing indeed. Oh, what a time will it be! What a relief to the working of God’s grace! For now it is ever toil and watching. What, always? Yes, always; and that is not the rest. But then it will be, as sure as God takes His great power and reigns. “The Lord shall hear the Heavens” (Hosea 2) . There will be an unbroken chain of blessing, and that, too, on earth. It will not be one “building, and another inhabiting,” but blessing flowing down and around to the lowest and the least. Till then, as now, the word is suffering in grace, not victorious power. Never fear persecution, it will make your face shine as an angel’s. But God could not be silent if His own Son were cast out. He might leave Him to suffer, but not without a testimony. If there were no others the stones would speak. And so if we are faithful and near to Christ, that will turn for a testimony.

WEeping OVER JERUSALEM.

41-44. - “**He beheld the city, and wept over it.**” Here we have, not the cursing of the fig tree, but the spirit of grace in the Lord’s weeping over the city. The counsels of God will surely be accomplished, but we ought also to know His real tenderness in Jesus. Those tears were not in vain, whatever the appearances. It was the time of Jerusalem’s visitation, but she knew it not. We ought, as having the mind of Christ, to know when and how to interfere spiritually. We are the epistle of Christ, whereby the world should be able to read what God is. Christ manifested Him perfectly. But what did He find in the people? See verses

45, 46.—God declares His **house to be one of prayer**. Men, the Jews, had made it **a den of thieves**. It was a terrible moral estimate, but this is the true way to judge, *i.e.*, having God’s Word to take facts as they are. We are ignorant and morally incapable of judging without the Word of God. Let the eye be fixed on Christ and our judgment be formed on things around by the Word.

Chapter 20

1-8.—The first question raised was by the scribes as to **the authority of Christ** and its source. Jesus questions them about the baptism of John: “Was it from Heaven or of man?” They reasoned without conscience. They owned their incompetency rather than acknowledge His Messiahship. The simple child of God receives the Word as certainly as Christ gives it. Reliance on God’s Word is the only sure ground. How can you be certain? *God has said it*. If God’s speaking requires proof, I must have something more sure and true than God. Is the Church? Alas! alas! If God cannot speak so as to claim authority without another to accredit what He says, there is no such thing as faith.

PARABLE OF THE VINEYARD.

9-16.—The parable of **the husbandmen** sets forth the Lord’s dealing with Israel, to whom the vineyard was first let, and upon the rejection of “**the Heir**” the gift of it to others. Nor was this all. The rejected stone becomes the head of the corner. Whosoever fell on that stone should be broken; but on whomsoever it fell utter destruction would be the result. The past sins of Jerusalem illustrate the first; for the second we must wait for the execution of judgment when the Lord appears.

19-26.—The question of **tribute to Caesar** was very subtle. They used the effect of their own wickedness to tempt the Lord. Abstractedly, the Jews ought not to have been subject to the Gentiles. And, moreover, the Messiah was come, the Deliverer of Israel. If He said obey the Gentiles, where was His delivering power? If He said rebel they would have had an excuse to deliver Him to Pilate. Because of Israel’s sin God has broken down the keystone of nations, and given power to the Gentiles. The Jew has been rebellious under the sentence, and ever craving deliverance from their thralldom. But the Lord answered with divine wisdom. He put them exactly in the place where their sin had put them; Caesar’s things are to be rendered to Caesar, and God’s things to God.

MARRIAGE AND THE RESURRECTION.

27-38.—After settling the question as to this world between God and the people He next meets the Sadducean or sceptical difficulty as to the next world. “**In he resurrection, whose wife shall she be?**” The Lord shows the place of the risen saints in entire contrast with the world. The idea of a general resurrection is set aside. If all rise together, there is uncertainty, a common judgment; but if the saints are raised by themselves *because* they are children of God, leaving the rest of the dead for another and distinctive resurrection, a resurrection of judgment, all is changed. No passage of Scripture speaks of both rising together. The resurrection is that which most of all distinguishes, and this for ever. It is the grand testimony to the difference between good and bad. The saint will be raised because of the Spirit of Christ that dwells in him, the application to his body of that power of life in Christ which has already quickened his soul. It is a resurrection from among the dead, as was Christ’s. So here, “they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that age,” for such it is, “and the resurrection from the dead, . . . they are equal to the angels, and are the children of God.” Luke adds another characteristic point omitted elsewhere: “**All live unto Him.**” It is the present blessed living unto God of those who have died and await the resurrection from among the dead.

DAVID’S SON AND LORD.

41-44.—The Lord puts His question: “**How is David’s Son David’s Lord?**” This was just what the Jews could not understand. It was the hinge on which turned the change in the whole

moral system. He had taken the place of the holy dependent One, a pilgrim as others, and He had drunk of the brook by the way. He was going on in meekness and quietness, but living by the refreshments which came from God His Father. Thus having emptied Himself, humbled Himself, He is now exalted by God. This great universal principle, “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted, and he that exalteth himself shall be abased,” is fully exemplified in the two Adams. The first Adam, man’s *nature*, would *exalt itself* to be “as God,” until in its full ripeness anti-Christ will exalt himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped. Satan tempted man at the beginning to make himself like God, and at the end God shall send them strong delusion to believe a lie. Satan not being able to exalt himself in Heaven will attempt to do it through the seed of man, but the end shall be abasement (Isa. 14. 12-15). In the second Adam we have Him who was God humbling Himself, going down, becoming obedient unto death, even the vilest, and then we see that humbled One going back to the place of power at God’s right hand, but as *Man* as well as God. God highly exalted Him, that at the Name of *Jesus* every knee should bow. Having been obedient all through, in humiliation, He is exalted to be David’s Lord. This took Him out of the line of Jewish promises, though as David’s Son, of course, He had them. The Jews did not understand the Scriptures, and fulfilled them though not understanding them. God’s ways have gone on through all, manifesting His grace and patience towards man. He placed man on the earth, and then sent law, prophets, etc., until man gets to the end in rejecting all, God tries man, and then brings in the new Man, who is the fulfilment of all His blessed counsels—the second Adam. Then He takes up the second Adam as the Heavenly Man into a heavenly place, and all now depends, not on the responsibility of man, but on the stability of God. Life, righteousness, and glory descend from Heaven. Is it life that is needed? God gives the life of Christ in resurrection. Is it righteousness? It is a divine righteousness that God gives. Is it a kingdom? It is the kingdom of Heaven. All flows down, not simply from God in grace, but from the place which man has in glory, from the counsels of God about the Heavenly Man in glory. He has first taken Him up, and thence the blessing flows down. The Man Christ Jesus has fully met all man’s responsibilities. This is the reason of the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel, and also that of the kingdom to come. The Gospel is the power of God, and the kingdom is to be set up in Heaven. The King is gone into the far country, and when He returns it will be to bring in the kingdom of Heaven. All the counsels of God now take their centre and seat in Heaven. Thus, in the largest way, the turning point in all the plans and counsels of God is Jesus being set at the right hand of God. All the character, the stability, and the perfectness of our blessing takes its source from the exalted Jesus. The character of it is heavenly; the stability is what God has done; and the righteousness that fits me for it is God’s.

The Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, has come down to bear witness to Him on which the peace of the soul rests, even on the accomplished righteousness of Him who is taken up into glory. His office is to work within, and make us manifest what God is down here. All this we have as the result of Christ, instead of accomplishing the promises as David’s Son, bringing them in as David’s Lord.

Mark the moral blessedness of this general principle: “He that *humbleth himself* shall be exalted.” Christ humbled Himself, not was humbled, that is another thing. “He that humbleth himself shall be exalted.” That is what we are to do—take the lowest place. We cannot do this till we are Christian;; but it is our glory to take the lowest, and hear Him say “Come up higher.” “He hath left us an example that we should follow His steps” (1 Peter 2. 21). The Lord Jesus has been rejected as David’s Son. He will come forth as David’s Lord.

Now, while He is thus hidden, we see the Church’s place. We are “hid with Christ in God” (Col. 3. 3), and have our portion by faith, as united to Him, while He is out of sight. The Holy

Ghost having come down gives us a place as associated with Him in all the blessedness of the Father's house, and in all the glory which He has to be displayed by and by.

The place of Eve was one of union with Adam in the dominion over all things (Gen. 1. 26-28; 5. 2). We find the Church in the display of Christ's glory only as by grace the bride and companion of Christ, never as part of the inheritance. Viewed even individually, we are "joint-heirs with Christ." It is of the last importance to the saints in these days to apprehend the distinct place which we have as one with Christ, the Heavenly Man.

Chapter 21

At the close of chapter 20 and the beginning of chapter 21 we have a most instructive, though painful, contrast between the selfish hypocrisy of the scribes, whom He condemns before the people, and the real devoted love of “**the widow casting in two mites**,” whom He singles out for honour. Remark also that the Lord knows how to separate the intention of a sincere soul from the system that surrounds it, judging the whole state of that with which the individual is associated. Observe, further, the difference of giving one’s living and one’s superfluity. It is easy to compliment God with presents, and thus really minister to self; but she who gives her living gives herself in devotedness to God, and proves her dependence on God. Thus the two mites of her who had these only expressed all this perfectly, for there was need and everything else to hinder, while the applause of men and the pride of the donor found no place here. For Jewish splendour the act had little worth; but the Lord saw, and bore witness of the poor widow, blessed in her deed.

5-8.—The account which the Lord gives in this Gospel of **the sorrows of Jerusalem** is also, like the preceding, much more allied to the simple fact of the judgment on the nation and the change of dispensation. It differs much from Matthew 24, which fully refers to what is to arrive at the end; while our Gospel bears more than the first two on the then present time and setting aside of Jerusalem. Hence, Luke plainly sets forth the siege and destruction by Titus and the times of the Gentiles. Let it be observed also that the question in verse 7 extends only to the predicted destruction. Consequently in what follows we have the judgment on the nation, taken as a whole, from its then destruction till the times of the Gentiles (with whose economy this Gospel is so much occupied) be fulfilled. Nation should rise against nation, signs from Heaven and sorrows on earth follow. And before all these the disciples would be objects of hostility, but that would turn for a testimony instead of destroying theirs. They were to go on testifying, while the unhappy devoted city where they were filled up its iniquity. The Lord would permit trial, but not a hair of their head would be lost. But this would close. The sign given here is in no wise the abomination of desolation, but an historical fact—Jerusalem encompassed with armies. Its desolation now approached. They were then to flee, not to return. These were days of vengeance (it is not said of the unprecedented tribulation, as in Matthew, which is only in the latter day) . All that was written was to be fulfilled. Great distress there was in the land, and wrath on this people. Slaughter first and captivity afterwards wrought their cruel work of devastation, and Jerusalem till this hour abides the boast and prey of Gentile lords, and so must it be till their day is over.

DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

8-19.—In these earlier verses the Lord dwells on the dangers, duties, and trials of the disciples before the sack of Titus. Specially were they to beware of a pretended deliverer, and of the cry that the time, *i.e.*, of deliverance, was at hand. Neither were they to be terrified by wars or commotions, any more than seduced by fair promises. These things must first be, but the end not immediately. Besides, it was not only confusion and woes and signs of coming change and evil outside. Before all these they them-selves were to be in affliction and persecution for Christ’s sake.

20-24.—In these verses comes the actual judgment of the city and people, already judged virtually by His rejection. This extends down to our own days in principle. But all is not yet fulfilled. For in verse 25 begins the Lord’s description of the closing scene—a judgment not on the Jews merely, but on the Gentiles also, for the powers of the Heavens, the source of

authority, shall be shaken, as in Haggai 2 and Hebrews 12. This is not said to be immediately after the siege of Titus; but, on the contrary, room is left for the long course of treading down of Jerusalem under Gentiles, till their times are run out. It is in Matthew that we must look for the great tribulation of the last days, occupied as the first evangelist is with the consequences of Messiah's rejection, especially to Israel. Therefore, it is said there, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days"—*i.e.*, the short crisis of "Jacob's trouble" yet to come. Here, however, after mention of the times of the Gentiles it is said that "there shall be signs in the sun and moon and stars, and upon the earth distress of nations with perplexity, the sea and waves roaring, men's hearts failing them." Men were astounded because they saw not the end, and trembled as they were dragged along to some unknown, awful conclusion. For principles were at work, they knew not how, dragging them along whether or no. The coming of the Son of Man disclosed all the scene to the disciples. But it is clear from the circumstances, and especially from the character of the redemption spoken of (28), that it is a question, not of Christians, but of earthly disciples, and of an earthly deliverance by judgment here below. The Lord in mercy turns the terror of man into a sign of deliverance for the remnant of that day.

THE COMING KINGDOM.

31, 32 are interesting in this point of view here, because they furnish remarkable evidence, first, that the kingdom of God does not mean the Gospel of His grace; and, secondly, that this generation cannot refer to the space of time from the prophecy to the destruction of Jerusalem. (1) For when they see these things coming to pass (and He had spoken of the final, universal trouble for the whole habitable earth, and not merely of what has befallen the Jews), they are to conclude that **the kingdom of God is nigh**. Now, even if it were only the Romans taking away their place and nation, and, still more, if it include the latter-day trouble, it is undeniable that the Gospel had extended far and wide before the first. In fact, the manifestation of its influence was declining rather before that time, as we see in the later epistles. But the things here seen were signs like the budding of the trees, and the kingdom of God is evidently to be at the coming of the King, when the Lord God Almighty takes His great power and reigns. That there was a partial, analogous judgment when Jerusalem fell is true, but verses 25-28 ought to leave no doubt of a wider, subsequent judgment, with signs which introduce, not the sorrows of the Jews, but the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. (2) For a similar reason "this generation" does not apply to a mere lifetime, but is viewed morally, as in Deuteronomy 32, Psalm 12, and many other scriptures. It is here expressly put at the close, after not only the fall of Jerusalem, but the totally distinct scene of Christ's coming in power and glory.

THE ENDURING WORD.

33. - "**Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.**" This expression is very solemn. Deeper interests were involved than a casual change as to Jerusalem. The time was wrapped up in purposed obscurity, but nothing more sure than the facts predicted. The Lord had provided for His then disciples what was needful, but also in the written Word for the like times to come. Still, though the principle be always true, verse 34 clearly applies to a day to come on the earth. The privilege is to escape the judgments and stand before the Son of Man. This again is earthly, not the rapture to Heaven. The great moral principles, of course, remain true for all; specially indeed for those who, by virtue of a higher calling, can enjoy them in a more excellent way.

37, 38.—The Lord yet returned to give testimony, walking and working in the day; but His resting-place was there, whence He did depart, and where His feet shall stand in that day.

Patient in service, He taught **daily and early in the temple**; at night He was separate from the judged city. His time was now come.

Chapter 22

1, 2. - **“And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill Him.”** How was the carnal mind shown to be enmity against God in rejecting Christ! Wickedness was summed up and brought out in all—people, priest, rulers. If a friend, he is a traitor; if disciples, they either fled when danger approached or denied Him when near. The religious chiefs who ought to have owned the Messiah took Him to the infidel power of the world. He who was in the place of judgment washed his hands, owning His innocence, but gives Him up to man’s will and rage. Thus man’s evil was brought into complete juxtaposition with that which was perfect, and this in putting Him to death. It is no use to look for good in man. Not that there are no amiable traits of nature, but God has no place at all if man is put to the test. Along with this is the picture of the Lord’s perfect patience through it all.

THE BETRAYAL OF JESUS.

Not man only, but Satan was there in temptation. It was the power of darkness as well as man’s hour. And the Lord Jesus passes through this scene of men’s wickedness and Satan’s power; His heart melted like wax, but the effect always being the manifestation of perfectness. An angel strengthens Him; for He was really Man, but perfect Man, enduring all that could try Him, and nothing brought out but perfect grace and perfect obedience. Whenever there was sorrow His love surmounts the suffering to help and comfort others.

3-6. - **“Then entered Satan into Judas.”** It is a solemn thought that the nearer to Jesus, if there is not spiritual life, the more a man resists God, and the more sure and sad an instrument of the enemy he becomes. If truth has been presented and not received nowhere has Satan so much power. This is a sample of Luke’s manner as to dates. The entrance of Satan into Judas was what was morally necessary to present here; not so the particulars. Strictly, he put it into Judas’ heart then, and entered after the sop was received. Covetousness was the means used; but though they plotted to betray and crucify Him in a corner this could not be. They were obliged to accomplish it according to God’s purposes.

THE LAST PASSOVER.

8-13. - **“Go and prepare us the Passover.”** Then the light from behind the scene makes a passage. It is the Lord; and no matter what He suffers, or what is before Him, yet we find the divine knowledge and power. There is the chamber. What calm and peaceful dignity! It is no effort, nothing to display a character. All yields before the unwitnessed authority of this rejected Saviour—all but that to which it had been most manifested, the unrenewed heart of man. To the householder, unknown it seems to every eye but one, it was enough to hear, **“The Master saith to thee.”**

14.—How blessed to see such perfect human affections combined with His divine knowledge of all things. **“With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer”**—like one leaving his family and first desiring a farewell meeting. When we see the divine glory in the person of Christ we find the human affections shining out. (Cp. Matt. 17. 27.) It is this which gives Him a power and charm which no object else has, so that God can delight in man and man can delight in God. The Lord breaks every link with the old thing (16). It is not setting up the kingdom here, but setting up man with God when the old connection was impossible. He was taking a new place where flesh and blood could not enter. His death and resurrection introduce a new relation with God. The Lord distinguishes here between the paschal lamb and the wine, and both from the institution of His Supper. He entered in the

fullest way into all the feelings of Israel, the Israel of God, into the interests of the people as such, till His rejection put them on other ground, and divine favour passed into another scene by the resurrection, becoming Himself the Substitute, the true paschal Lamb. His disciples held the foremost rank as to this fellowship, as we have Hushai the king's friend. With them He desired the last testimony of parting and love. But while thus expressing His affection to them He assumes manifestly (v. 18) the Nazarite character, which was always His morally, but now externally and painfully: **"I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God come."** He postpones His joy with them as in the common enjoyment of the kingdom till then.

THE LORD'S SUPPER.

19, 20.—He institutes the memorial of His better redemption, of His self-sacrificing dying love. If He separated Himself now to God in His joy, it was not want of love to His disciples, but its fullest display. It was to be done "in remembrance" of Him. We *remember* Him suffering, dead, absent; we *know* Him as a present living Saviour. The new covenant is established in His Blood. We cannot in all the joy of fellowship with Christ above forget what brought us into it. On one side, it is **a body broken and blood shed**; on the other, it is Himself and all the perfectness of love in dying for us. We are united to Him as a risen Christ, but He calls us to remember Him as a dead Christ. The blessedness of this last is in the work He did alone, by virtue of which I am put in union with Himself, alive again for evermore. As to man's part in it (vv. 21, 23) it was treachery and wickedness.

THE CALL TO SEPARATION.

28.—The Lord then distinctly sets forth this calling to walk in His own lowliness, and not as the world. Earthly grandeur was recognised among the Jews, but now it was sentenced, like all their system, as the rudiments of the world. All other greatness, though under the form of being benefactors, was worldly. He was one that served. The grace of His heart sets them right without a reproach. He lets them know that whatever high place they sought He took a low one. He might have said: "Nothing will break down this horrid selfishness." Yet says He, **"Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations."** And He is the same now. What we should seek is to have as much of the burden of the Church as we can. Suffering thus with Him, His heart goes on with us.

31-34.—Peter was bold enough in the flesh to enter temptation. But it is impossible for man to stand where it is a question of good and evil. He is a sinner, and cannot go through that trial. If God judges flesh comes to nothing. There is the weakness of human nature, but, besides, Satan's title and power over man, who had brought out his own condition. in God's presence and come under death as the judgment of God. I may have learned in grace that the flesh is thus profitless, but it must be learned by intercourse with the enemy if not with God. **For Simon, the Lord prayed that his faith should not fail**; all his self-confidence must perish. Nor did he distrust Christ like Judas, who had no faith. What enabled him afterwards to strengthen his brethren? He discovered that there was utter badness in himself when he meant best, and that there is perfect grace in Christ even when he did worst.

35-38 show an entire change of circumstances. Previously He had protected them and supplied all as Messiah disposing of everything here. That was now gone since the Righteous One was being more and more rejected. He had come, able to destroy Satan's power, but it was the Lord, and man would not have Him. That is the condition the world is in. He must be reckoned among the transgressors. What link could there be between God and man? Humanity is a condemned thing because it refused Christ. You may find a scrupulous conscience as to putting the money in the treasury, but no conscience in betraying and

crucifying Him. But it is in a rejected dead Christ that faith delights. The Christ that man scorns, it requires faith and grace to own. But the disciples still rested on man's strength, not on Messiah crucified in weakness, and said "**Here are two swords.**" The Lord in saying "**It is enough**" alludes to their words, and implies that they did not enter into His mind. He did not want to say more.

THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE.

39-46. - "**Pray that ye enter not into temptation.**" There are siftings needed to exercise us and to judge flesh. Christ, of course, did not need this, but dealt with all in communion with His Father. To Him it was a path of obedience, a blessed opportunity of doing God's will; to Peter it was Satan's power. Christ did not speak of the wickedness of the priests, the will of the people, or the injustice of Pilate, but of **the cup His Father gave Him**. There was positive intercourse with God about the trial *before* the time came. And so it must ever be. It is late to put the armour on when we ought to be in the battle. A man living with God, when he gets into trial goes through it, in his measure, as Christ did. He stands in the evil day, because he has been with God when there was no evil day. On the Cross it was not a question of communion; in the garden Christ is in communion with the Father, as to Satan's power, which was about to fall on Him. He felt all, but succumbed under nothing. Thus instead of entering into temptation He was in the highest exercise of spirituality accomplishing the will of God in the most difficult circumstances and the most perfect submission where it cost everything.

Our Father never can lead us into sin, but He may into temptation, *i.e.*, into the place of sifting, where the flesh is exposed, when this is needful, because hardness, or levity, or inattention to His patient warnings has come in. It is the last, and often necessary means of self-knowledge and discipline. Though it is great grace that He should take such pains, yet .seeing our weakness and the terribleness of the conflict with the enemy, it well becomes us to pray that we may not be cast into the furnace. In such times a bad conscience drives to despair. The flesh in its undiscerning carelessness meets the trial in uncertainty, or carnal opposition, and falls. If, on the other hand, trial comes we learn our position before God—watching, prayer, entreaty, spreading all before Him in child-like confidence, but submissive desire that His will be done.

The Lord was thoroughly *Man* in this, for **an angel appears and ministers, strengthening Him**. For the conflict of His soul was great; but it urged Him, in the realisation of the trial, to pray more earnestly. The effect of this is to see more clearly the power of evil and the sorrow, and that so as to act on the very body. He was in agony Himself, but always says "**Father.**" He is, and speaks, in His relationship as Son; not yet the victim before God, but the sufferer in spirit, feeling all the depths of the waters He is passing through, but crying out of them to His Father. Satan tried to stop Christ with the difficulty when he could not beguile Him with the pleasure. But He went through all with His Father. At the Cross was another thing, the power of God against sin.

47-53.—It is blessed to see these two things brought together—patience with men, and yet power to stop everything. Having been in an agony with God, He is calm before man. When **the servant's ear was cut off** He puts forth His hand to heal. What a picture of man, what a picture of God, if we look here at Christ!

PETER DENIES HIS LORD.

54-62.—When we tremble before men it is when we have not been with God. Peter breaks down, proving the deceitfulness of the flesh. In Jesus, suffering as He was, there was nought to disable the perfect and simple action of grace at each moment required. When **the cock**

crew He turned and looked on Peter, who remembered His word, went out, and wept bitterly.

63-71.—The Lord spent the night, not before His judges, who took their ease till morning before they judged the Lord of glory, but with the men whom they employed, **the object of all injury and insult**. Then when it suited the convenience of the Jewish rulers they brought Him to their council; but the Lord knew it was not the time of testimony, and left them to their weakness. The presenting of Messiah to the Jews was finished. From this the Son of Man was to be seated at the right hand of God. All was settled with God, they could go on. They draw the right conclusion, and He conceals nothing. He was the Son of God. They must be guilty, not of mistake, but of condemning Him because He was the Son of God and owned it.

Chapter 23

1-25.—Religious iniquity had now only to lead on the world to finish the wickedness in which itself had taken the lead. The civil power must give in to the wilful evil of the apostate people of God. This is the history of the world, and, of the two, the religious side is always nearest to Satan. The **chief priests** manifested their enmity by their accusation, which was calculated to arouse the jealousy of the governor, charging on Christ what was entirely false as to Caesar, but with the subtle groundwork of that which they knew (reckoning on His truth) He could not deny.

CHRIST BEFORE PILATE.

The guilt of the Jews was complete, as was also that of the Gentiles, for **Pontius Pilate** declared Him innocent, and desired to release Him. Cruel enough himself, the Roman governor disliked cruelty in others, but he would not go so far as to save Christ from the malice of His enemies. It would have cost something to do this; it threatened his interest, and Pilate gave way. The one thing that is strong in the world is enmity against Christ.

But there was another form of evil to be introduced, to wit, **Herod**, the apostate king of apostate Israel; and in rejecting Jesus all are friends, however jealous and divided. How terrible the union between the fourth beast and God's external people? But if **the Gentiles** failed shamefully in protecting the just, and hence fell into basely unrighteous judgment, the activity of an evil will was with the **Jews**. Three times the opportunity of a relenting voice was given; but while the governor's indifference was as plain as the disappointed insolence of Herod every time the cry of the people increased in ardour for the death of the Messiah. Pilate, therefore, **released the guilty Barabbas**, whom they desired, to appease the Jews, and "**delivered Jesus to their will.**"

26-31. - "**They led Him away.**" It was a terrible time and full of violence. It mattered little whom they met if they could only force them to help in their iniquity. Their hour was struck, and all fell into the same mass of rejection and insult of Christ, save that the Jews acted with more knowledge. The forms of privilege became sorrows and harbingers of terror, they must be laid low, for all was untrue now. The natural feelings, touched by affecting circumstances, as we see in the weeping daughters of Jerusalem, did not change this. They understood neither the Cross of Christ nor the ruin which awaited themselves. One may be affected with compassion, as if one were superior to Christ, and fall under the judgment consequent on His rejection and death. No humiliation of Jesus put Him out of His place of perfect capability of dealing with all others from God. Alas! it was not only on Pilate and Herod, nor on the chief priests that judgment was coming, but on the women that lamented Him, unconscious of their own state, which was under condemnation. Neither natural conscience, nor natural religiousness, nor natural feelings will do, nothing short of the glory of God in Jesus. And if He, the living and true Vine, who indeed bore fruit to God, was thus dealt with, what must be the lot of the fruitless and unprofitable, for such branches were they? Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear? Man rejects the green tree, and God rejects the dry. Life was there in the person of Jesus, and they would not have it, and are therefore given up. It cannot be had now but through a dead and risen Christ.

THE PLACE CALLED CALVARY.

32-43. - "**And when they were come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him.**" There is the setting aside of all they looked for here in present deliverance, for Christ

must die. But if we are also to see how low man can go morally we learn, at the same time, that Christ in His grace can go lower still. "Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and *die*, it abideth alone." Therefore, whenever you see an attempt (and it is the attempt of man's religion) to connect a living Christ before death and resurrection with living sinners be sure there is error. It unites sin with the Lord from Heaven, and it denies that its wages is death. Had Christ delivered Himself, as the rulers, with the people, said in derision, He would not have delivered us. He must pass through death and take a higher place, even in resurrection, and there He takes us. *Per se* the incarnation cannot bring life and redemption to those who are dead in trespasses and sins. We need to be set beyond all in resurrection life in Christ.

39.—Thus, then, in spite of the grace of Jesus in intercession, Jews and Gentiles joined in mockery of the crucified. Yet God had prepared even here the consolation of His mercy for Jesus in a poor sinner. But no sorrow, no shame, no suffering brings the heart too low to scorn Jesus; **a gibbeted robber despising Him** (30). There is an instinct, so to speak, in every unrenewed heart against Jesus, which was not quelled even by that power of love in which He was going down into the deepest humiliation to suffer the wrath due to sin. Say not that you are one whit better than this wretched man. "There is none righteous, no, not one; none that understandeth; none that seeketh after God. They are *all* gone out of the way, they are altogether become unprofitable" (Rom. 3. 10, 11). In two words, there is "no difference." You are as bad in God's sight as the railing, impenitent thief. See now the fruit of grace in the other. Grace works in a man who was in as low a condition as he who, notwithstanding his own dying agony and disgrace, had pleasure in outraging the Lord of glory; indeed, both had done it (Mark 15. 32). But what more blessed and certain than the salvation of this thief, now that he bows to the Name of Jesus? He is going to Paradise in companionship with the Lord whom he owned.

THE TWO ROBBERS.

It is often said that there was *one* saved in this way, that none might despair, and *but one*, that none might presume. The truth is that this is the only way whereby any poor sinner can be saved. There is but one and the same salvation for all. There was evidently no time for him to do anything had that been the way, but all is done for him. That very day his knees were to be broken. How could he get into Paradise? Christ wrought his deliverance through His own death, and his eye was opened in faith of what Christ was doing.

40.—Nor was it only that Christ's work was wrought for him—the ground on which his soul rested for salvation. There was a mighty moral work wrought in him through the revelation of Christ to his soul by the Spirit who convinced him of his utter sinfulness. "**Dost not thou fear God,**" is his rebuke to his railing fellow, "**seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we, indeed, justly.**" It was not all joy. Conscience had its place. There is a real sense of good and evil, for he has got in spirit into God's presence, and this, making him forget circumstances, elevates him into a preacher of righteousness. And if he owns the rightness of his own punishment in honest confession of sin, what a wonderful testimony he bears to Christ! "**This Man hath done nothing amiss.**" It was just as if he had known Christ all his life. He had a divine perception of His character. And so with the Christian now. Have you such jealousy about the spotlessness and glory of Christ that you cannot help crying out when you hear Him slighted? He believed that He was the Lord, the Son of God, and so could answer with assurance for what He had been as a man. As completely a man as any other, the holy obedience of Christ was divine. "This Man hath done nothing amiss." What a response in the renewed heart to the delight of sinlessness! His eye glances, as it were, over the whole life of Christ; he could answer for Christ anywhere, because he has learned to know himself.

42.—Then he says, turning to Jesus, **“Lord, remember me when Thou comest in Thy kingdom.”** As soon as he can get rid of what was said, when he has done with his testimony to the other thief, his heart turns to Christ instinctively. How undistracted he was! Was he thinking of his pain, or of the people around the Cross? As is always the case, where God’s presence is realised, he was absorbed. In the extremity of helplessness, as to out-ward appearance, he hears the Shepherd’s voice, and recognised Him as the Saviour and King. He wants Christ to think of him. The judgment of men was that Christ was a malefactor. The weeping women saw not who He was. But no degradation of circumstances could hide the glory of His person who hung by his side. He owned Jesus as the Lord, and knew that His kingdom will certainly come. The other malefactor thought only, if he thought at all, of present deliverance; but this one saw the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. His mind was set, not on being free from bodily pain, but on the loving recognition of Christ in glory. He looks not to earth, nor nature, but to another kingdom, where death could not come. There was not a cloud, not a doubt, but the peaceful, settled assurance that the Lord would come in His kingdom.

TO-DAY IN PARADISE.

43.—And the Lord gave him more than his faith asked. There was the answer of *present* peace. It was not only the kingdom by and by, but, **“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.”** As if He said: “You shall have the kingdom when it comes, but I am giving now soul salvation; you are to be associated at once with Me in a way far better and more than the kingdom, blessed and true as it is.” For indeed the work was accomplished on the Cross which could transport a soul into Paradise. If the Saviour had taken the sinner’s place, the sinner is by grace entitled to take the place of the Saviour. The poor thief might know but little of Christ’s work and its effects, but the Holy Spirit had fixed his heart on the person of Christ. The words of the Lord (43) imply the atonement, by virtue of which we are made fit to be His companions in the presence of God. The work of Christ is as perfect now for us as then for him; it is as much accomplished for us as if we were already caught up into Paradise. How distinct this is from anything like progress of the soul to fit it for Heaven! And how wonderful that such a soul should be a comfort to the Saviour! He had come into the condemnation; yea, and wrath was on Him to the uttermost. And now the converted thief was a bright witness of perfect grace and eternal salvation through His Blood.

THE NINTH HOUR.

44-49.—The scene was closed which let in the light beyond through the portals of a heart now purged by faith, and the darkness proper to the hour took now its suited course—specially over Israel, it would seem. **“And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst.”** Thus the way into the holiest was made manifest by the act which had its place in this darkness, and God in the grace of Christ’s sacrifice shone forth upon the world. Darkness of judgment as it was to one, the light broke through, and access was opened within the veil. All was finished, and the Lord with no hesitating voice, but aloud cried, **“Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.”** This was not Jewish blessing (for the living, the living, they shall praise thee), but it was much higher. It was sonship, death overcome, and the occasion merely of presenting the spirit safe, happy, confident, notwithstanding death, into the Father’s care and presence. This is an immense principle, and, short of resurrection, of the highest possible importance. Death in the hands of Jesus—what a fact! The centurion in the course of duty struck at least in natural conscience glorified God, and owned a righteous Man on the Cross. The masses were troubled and went away,

auguring no good. Those who knew Him, and the women from Galilee, were more nearly interested, but in fear stood afar off.

50-56.—But the providence and operation of God, the righteous judge, **took measures for the body of the Holy One**. If the more prominent witnesses were set aside, others feeble in the faith are found active and faithful in the post of danger, confession, and attachment to the Lord. How often the difficulties which frighten some force others forward! So was it with Joseph of Arimathea, for Jesus must be “with the rich in His death.” The women, too, in true but ignorant affection, make useless preparation, awaiting the just Jewish time for a Lord who had passed far beyond their faith. The resurrection was soon to usher in the dawn of a bright morrow; for the honour of the grave, like the intentions of the women from Galilee, was of a Jewish character, and all this was now closed in death.

Chapter 24

1-12.—What now occupies our evangelist is the risen Man again with His disciples, and the testimony to the world founded on the resurrection—this new truth and power above all the principles of natural life. The door of the Cross is shut on all that man in the flesh is, and the new thing is introduced in this risen Christ.

THE RISEN MAN.

Resurrection is an entirely new condition; but even the Jew could not have the sure mercies of David without it. Man, lawless and under law, has had the sentence of death pronounced on him. He may pride himself on his natural powers, but he is without God. He has rejected the One who came to him, a Man in perfect, divine grace, and in so doing has fully shown what he is. Therefore says the Lord, “Now is the judgment of this world” (John 12. 31). An entirely new ground appears, and this is here brought out in Christ Himself. Our bodies are still the same, but the life, character, motive, means, end are altogether new in the Christian. “Old things are passed away, and all things are become new.” The women, preoccupied with their own thoughts and affections, come with their spices to anoint the dead body of Jesus, while He was already living in the perfume of His work and offering before God, having effected all which placed man anew before God the Father, the last Adam in living acceptance. Then they were thrown into an unlooked-for difficulty at first, for they did not find the Lord’s body. Neither did they know He was risen. They understood not that there was neither judgment nor sin remaining. There may be real and great love to Jesus without understanding this. But soon the question was put which involved the answer to all. **“Why seek ye the living One among the dead?”** These women, faithful if ignorant, were not forgotten of the Lord, and He whose ways are grace has preserved their memorial and their early seeking of the Lord, thence to bear the message to the apostles themselves. But to them they were as idle tales. Peter’s heart, broken and contrite, was the more affected by what he heard, and he ran to the sepulchre, and having seen the linen clothes laid aside there, went away wondering. Surely it was a marvellous secret, baffling and rising above all human thought!

Luke’s statements of circumstances are always *general*. In John we have more details, especially developing Mary Magdalene’s devoted affection to His person, but showing also how little she as yet knew of the power of God in resurrection.

THE EMMAUS JOURNEY.

13-27.—The touchingness of this interview with the Lord on the journey to Emmaus need not be spoken of. How the Lord draws out all their thoughts! But He is here altogether as a Man, and presenting the truth they speak Jewishly. How naturally their minds rested always in the same circle! He was a prophet, and they hoped He might redeem Israel. The fact of the resurrection occupied their attention, but it had no link with the counsels of God. They were astonished, and, like others before them, there they rested. Christ takes up quite other ground, though it was only in the way of intelligence and not yet the power of the Holy Ghost. **“O fools,”** says He, **“and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have written.”** These He expounds, and opens their understanding to them, for though viewed completely as Man, He operates divinely and spiritually on their mind. “Ought not,” said He—was it not the counsel of God plainly revealed in His Word? What He presses is the mind of God in the Scriptures relative to the Christ. This was an immense step; it took them out of their egotism and the egotistical character of Judaism. Their thought was of the redemption of Israel by

power. They had no idea of a new and heavenly life, though, of course, they had it. Even as to the Christ death must come in if God were to be vindicated and man really blessed, and so Moses and all the prophets had taught. **“Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?”** not set up His kingdom down here, but “enter into His glory.”

28-32.—Then we have a most graphic account of the scene at Emmaus. **“He made as though He would have gone further.”** Why should He, to their eyes “a stranger,” intrude? **“But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.”** And it came to pass, as they sat at meat with Him, He took bread, and blessed, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him: and He vanished out of their sight.” This was not celebrating the Lord’s Supper with them; yet was it taking up that part of it, the act of breaking the bread, which was the sign of His death. He was not now merely as the living bread that came down from Heaven, but as He had said, “This is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world” (John 6. 51), not which I will *take*, but *give*. He did take flesh, of course, in order to give it; but it was His death that became the life of the world. For Jew or Gentile there was no other way. The condition of man was such that he could be quickened only in connection with the Cross. All that was in man, as a child of Adam, was under sentence of death and judgment. Christ, by grace, entered into the place of man, came where I am, that I might be on equal terms with Him, as far as acceptance with God; His broken body shows me that I have got that which brings me to God. A dead sinner can find life and divine favour only in a dead Christ. So the Lord had taught in John 6. To eat His flesh and drink His blood must be in order to have life. It was not any longer a question of His bodily presence merely as incarnate. Redemption was absolutely necessary and faith in it. Christ is to be fed upon, not alone as a living Messiah, nor only as One alive again for evermore in resurrection; but, besides that, as He who died, His body broken and blood shed in atonement. Thus it was the Lord was known to the disciples at Emmaus, though it was not the Lord’s Supper. Their hearts had been opened by what encouraged them in connecting the truth of God with the facts of human unbelief and Christ’s rejection, and thus turning the cause of their despair into joy and peace by the sight of the counsels of God in it. But His actual revelation was by the affecting circumstance of personal association in the breaking of bread. It was Himself who broke the bread. There could be no mistake. He was gone in a moment, **“vanished out of their sight.”** But His object was gained. They had life through His death. And He was risen. The body was a spiritual body, and had flesh and bones, which a spirit has not. He had shown them not only the fact, but its necessity. Why does He not say “did,” but “must rise from the dead?” Because all the sentence must be passed on the first Adam. All that I have now is in the last Adam. I am not only quickened, but quickened together with Christ, having all trespasses forgiven. Christ, by His death, puts them away for all who believe, and for such, all that belonged to the first Adam is clean gone. This is power over the principle of sin, which as a fact is still within. And hence the apostle bids the believers reckon themselves dead to sin. In the power of the Holy Ghost giving me the consciousness of new life in Christ I am to mortify my members here below, because I have to apply the death of Christ to my old nature. The monkish principle tries to kill sin in order to get life, but the apostle shows that we must have life by faith in Christ in order to treat sin as a dead thing (Rom. 6,7,8).

34.—The holding of the disciples’ eyes was of importance. To have recognised Jesus would have been, in their state, to have satisfied their thoughts. The Lord, on the other hand, engaging their hearts by all God said of Him, furnished them with scriptural intelligence; and then in the act of intimate friendship, which recalled the great truth of His death, brought to mind His great deliverance. “We walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5. 7). Filled with the concentrating event which began a new world, they hastened back to Jerusalem, where the

eleven and others were occupied. **“The Lord,”** said the latter, **“is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.”** Then the two told the tale of their wondrous journey, and still more wondrous recognition of Jesus in breaking of bread. The Lord was proving that there should be independent witnesses.

JESUS IN THE MIDST.

36.—Thus their hearts were prepared. Yet in the fact of this new thing, “the beginning, the first-born from the dead,” there was that to which earthly hearts could ill assort themselves. **“Jesus Himself stood in the midst.”** The Lord presents Himself as the very same Man all through and in every way. In His intercourse with the two it had been just the same; all was human, though what no man ever was, and what none but God could be, was shown in and through it. Here also His hands, His feet, His previous wounds are presented.

41-43.—He takes of **fish and of an honeycomb**, and eats before them. Two sentiments had overpowering possession of the disciples—joy to see Himself again, and astonishment. The Lord presents the truth of resurrection, not as a doctrine, but in living reality, thus restoring their souls and making them know Him most familiarly, risen indeed, but yet a Man properly and truly.

44. - **“And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures.”** This showed the standing before God in justification of life and liberty. But another thing was wanted before men—*power*. This is not the question before God, where the Christian stands as Christ stands, “accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. 1. 6). But the testimony of the Christian here below, whether preaching or anything else, needs power to be given. This power was promised to the disciples, but even yet they must wait for it. We must not confound service of any kind with standing. The power of the Spirit is requisite to live before man—power over and above regeneration, and distinct from spiritual understanding. This last is needed to give us the apprehension of our standing in Christ; and when He opens our understandings to understand the Scriptures it does not puff up. It is a revelation *of* Himself, and leads to communion *with* Him. Yet the other want still remains. Even this knowledge is not necessarily power. The testimony and purpose of God in the Word has to be fulfilled. The great truth of a suffering, risen Christ reaches out to the Gentiles. In Matthew His association with the Jewish remnant is taken up. Consequently He meets them in Galilee after, or before, His resurrection, and thence flows the commission to go and disciple the Gentiles. But all this is dropped in Luke. Jerusalem, Emmaus, and Bethany, above all, are prominent, for thence He ascends to Heaven, where He has to do with poor *sinners*. The testimony was to begin at Jerusalem expressly. The riches of His grace must be shown first where there was the deepest guilt. The Cross broke this link with the Jews as a Jewish Messiah, but opened the door of repentance and remission of sins, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.

THE MASTER GLORIFIED.

45-53. - **“And ye are witnesses.”** He came in the need of power. **“And, behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.”** This all-important index of Christ’s exaltation could only be obtained for man by the reception of Jesus in Heaven when redemption was effected. The Holy Ghost had ever acted in creation, in providence, in revelation, in regeneration, and in every good thing, but He had never been given before. That hung on the glory of Jesus. To

that the Holy Ghost could become a servant in man, for it was the divine counsel and perfection of love.

Meanwhile, before this endowment, they returned with great joy to the city which their Lord had left. Their hearts were filled with the influence of this great fact, that their Master was glorified, though it was still associated with Jewish thoughts. And these two elements reproduce themselves in the Acts, particularly in the earlier part.

THE END

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