

No.

31.

"IF YE THEN BE RISEN WITH CHRIST, SEEK THOSE THINGS
WHICH ARE ABOVE, WHERE CHRIST SITTETH ON THE
RIGHT HAND OF GOD." COL. 3. 1.

A GLORIOUS CHURCH.

(EPH. 5. 27.)

An Address (revised) at

61, Upton Lane, Forest Gate, E.

30th March, 1914.

by

PERCY W. HEWARD.

Correspondence welcome:
Scriptural literature for Believers
Gottlieb-Daimler-Str.1 – 74343 Sachsenheim – GERMANY

A GLORIOUS CHURCH (EPH. 5. 27).

An Address by Mr. P. W. Heward,

At Forest Gate, 30th March, 1914.

We turn back, beloved friends, to Eph. 5, and there in the 27th verse the words strike us, "A glorious church". The words have a certain power in their sound, a glorious church, and if by grace our hearts can enter into the Scripture, there is more than a rhythm of sound, there is a depth of Truth which awakes a height of praise, - "A glorious church". Are we surprised to find this word? Everything that God does is glorious, there is no half-heartedness in His love, there is no half-completeness in the triumph of His beloved Son, He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. There MUST be a glorious church. The word "glorious" found in this passage is somewhat unusual. It occurs twice over in Luke's Gospel and also in the Epistle to the Corinthians, but there are many other words from the same root. One of these occurrences, Luke 7. 25, will give something of the meaning. The Lord is speaking to the multitudes about John, and He asks if they went out into the wilderness to see a reed shaken by the wind, and Himself answers the question. Then He asks another, Did they go out to see a man in delicate garments having been clothed? This question also He answers, Behold those in glorious apparel (here is our word), those who are in glorious apparel are in kings' palaces,

they are the friends of kings, they are not in the prisons of kings, where John was found. You have thus reached the meaning of the word "glorious". It suggests a visible glory, the glory of an earthly monarch and of his court. That will somewhat explain Eph. 5. The passage in 1 Cor. 4. 10, is very solemn. The apostle is rebuking those at Corinth who reigned before the time, and who lived in a ruined world as if the millennium had appeared. We, says the apostle, are foolish because of Christ, but ye are broadened in Christ; we are strengthless but ye are strong. Ye are in glory, (it is the same word), but we are dishonoured, without any honour at all:- hence we see that the term which God uses is the exact opposite of dishonour. The glorious church will have no dishonour at all in this aspect. There will be a striking contrast with all the dishonour which has taken place on the earth. The redeemed of the Lord may have been trodden down, the redeemed of the Lord may have been robbed of their earthly possessions, they may have been slain, there will be nothing of this in that Day. A glorious, manifestly glorious church. But, oh, beloved friends, we want that the whole of our meditation this evening should be heartsearchingly practical. Are we, by grace, included in the prospect of this verse? If so, what does it mean for us? and, further, how should we act correspondingly now? Are we included in this verse? How can we find out? Not by impulses, not by changeable sentiments, but by Scripture, spiritually applied. Scripture

describes those who will share this glory, We read in the very context, "Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it, that He might present it to Himself". We have a beautiful order. He loved - that is first; it was not our love to Him. We love, because He first loved. Christ loved, but love is active, love is expressive, and love is costly. He loved and gave, and thus we have the right order. Loving, giving. But though it is precious to notice He gave Himself for it, though it is well to emphasize atonement, we need also to bring into prominence the way in which God prepared His people for the glory, "That He might sanctify and cleanse". We are told about this mode of sanctifying - the washing of water by the Word. That is how the Lord is making His people ready for the glory. They should not be sanctified and cleansed were it not that He loved them, they would not be sanctified and cleansed had He not given Himself for them. His love is the source, atonement is the foundation; sanctification is the effect; and then the climax, - the GLORIFICATION that He may present to Himself a glorious church. Here is the history. It begins with His love, - you cannot go back further! Said Moses to the people of Israel, The Lord did not set His love upon you because ye were this, or because ye were that, but because the Lord loved you. The effect was the cause, in that case. You cannot go

further back than the love of a loving God Who loved the unlovely and unlovable. He loved, therefore He gave, then the sanctifying and cleansing which are so necessary and lastly the presenting. Beloved friends, is this OUR history? if so, we shall be in that glorious church; we shall be in that glorious nearness to our beloved Lord. Can we say with one of old, "The Son of God Who loved me and gave Himself for me?" What is the evidence? Scripture is plain that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. If we, in utter guiltiness and helplessness, have rested, with a sense of sin, upon Him Who died for sinners, the Divine promise is not an uncertainty. God keeps His Word. This is the record that God has GIVEN to us eternal life. If we have been brought low enough to receive an absolute gift to which we did not even contribute one good wish of our own, if we have been brought low enough down to receive an absolute gift simply in mercy, then we have been brought to know the record that God has GIVEN to us eternal life, and that life is in His Son, - and the present evidence is a sanctifying and a cleansing. If we seek to avoid the Word of God, where is the proof that we have been born of that Word? If we desire not the control and leading of the Spirit of God if there is not God's sanctifying and separating from evil, if we do not enter into Isaiah's utterance when He saw the King, the Lord of hosts, - if we cannot say that by the grace of God we abhor that which is evil, we may well doubt if we have ever passed out of death into life! "If any one is in Christ, there is a new creation, old things are passed away, new things

have come into being and all things are out from God, Who hath reconciled us unto Himself by Jesus Christ". Here then is the test as to whether by grace we are found among those who will be in that glorious church. Intellect will not place us there, social position will not place us there, reformation will not secure this, - these things will not suffice, attendance at meetings and interest mentally in the Truth will not avail, unless there is a living relationship to the Lord Jesus, unless we are resting entirely for salvation upon His love, and HIS giving. If we have not the present evidence of all this in a Divine sanctifying and cleansing, we may well wonder if we were ever among the called of Jesus Christ. But if, by grace, and without boasting, but with a humility that He Himself causes, we can say that we have come into that precious Saviour, and that we have found in Him our ALL, and that there is a growing up unto Him in all things, then we may have the prospect here continually, and how priceless such a prospect is, - a glorious church. Notice the description of it, beloved friends, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but holy and without blemish. You see we have a three-fold description positively and a three-fold description negatively. In all, a sixfold view of that which is the effect of His finished work. The three positive words are, glorious holy and without blemish, the last, in measure, a negative word; and then we have the threefold DEFINITE negative - NOT having spot, or wrinkle, or ANY such

thing. Here is a wonderful description, but it is what we should expect, for if Christ presents to Himself that for which He gave Himself, (you notice the word "Himself" twice over)- if He presents to Himself that for which He gave Himself, (a complete "Himself" in both cases) we may anticipate that which He presents will be glorious. Anything else would deny the perfectness of His work, anything else would detract from the glory of the Lord of Glory. If He is the Bridegroom, the bride must be made similar unto Himself, How could He present to Himself that which was marred by spot or blemish? How could He have at His side that which was defective? Nay, there will be no incompleteness in His finished work. Having loved and having given Himself, He will secure a complete accomplishment of that which He has desired and purposed. The church will be glorious, dazzlingly glorious. We think of Adam, he was created, it would seem with light, around him. He sinned and lost it, and man so far from being glorious now, requires a covering that reminds of sin. But in that Day - glorious; not simply the halo of a picture, but the reality of the Lord's working, will be seen. The church in glory will not only be in a sphere of glory, but glorious in accord with that sphere, holy and without blemish. The Holy One of God was a Lamb without blemish and without spot. He will make His people like to Himself, for He gave Himself to cover them with Himself and that they might be conformed to His image and then presented to Himself, and be with

Himself for ever. Here is the prospect, all the "ups and downs" of trials can never interfere with a Divine purpose. Shall tribulation, peril, or the sword separate from the love of Christ? Shall the creature defeat the Creator? Nay, in all things we are more than conquerors and are persuaded that nothing can separate. Ye are Christ's, said Paul to the Corinthians, and therefore, ye shall be presented to Christ, is the argument of this passage. But we must notice those other words concerning the removal of every spot. Ah, if we take the two words "having no spot" and "without blemish" we see a striking allusion to the sacrifices, just as believers are said to be a kind of "firstfruits" of His creation. The firstfruits was the acceptable sacrifice, and we are accepted in the Accepted One. Not having spot,- on most earthly things there are very manifest defects. Aye, even greater things than those of earth are permitted by God to have defects at the present time that we may learn how far sin has reached. The sun has its spots, and the moon has its apparent disfigurements. "Not having spot". We remember the Song of Solomon, "Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee". Balaam was constrained to say of Israel, that God did not behold perverseness in the nation. Here is a typical passage that can be applied to the redeemed now, when they are viewed as made to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. But soon it shall be applied to them when they are made to STAND beside Christ Jesus. Made to sit IN Christ Jesus, is our

security. Made to stand together, is our glory. At the present time, believers have spots and blemishes. Thanks be unto God they are not those who are spoken of in 2 Peter. We read concerning such, they are spots and blemishes. There is a vast difference between the two aspects. We HAVE spots and blemishes, but if we are born from above, we ARE not spots and blemishes. Believers have defects, but they also have grace, and grace is to be emphasized first. They have an old nature, the flesh, but they have a new nature, and thereby they are expected to seek and have a victory in daily life, for the Spirit desires against the flesh, says the apostle, to hold believers back from doing the things they would naturally otherwise. Here then we have brought before us that though believers can never say, "I am without any blemish" - "I am without any spot" - except in Christ, - they can look forward to the future when they shall be without any spot or blemish at all because of Christ. Then we have the word "or wrinkle". This is an unusual expression, and the idea is, I believe, without any shrivelling up, and it suggests to us a twofold thought. There shall be no shrivelling up of the complete church, there will not be one absent believer, the Lord does not love and lose. He does not love to leave. He LOVES-to keep, and loves to KEEP, - His people shall reach the glory, not any shrivelling up, If there were one child of God absent from the complete company, if salvation were received and then salvation were lost, there would be some shrivelling

up somewhere in that body, but there cannot be, not having spot or wrinkle. The wrinkle, is, moreover, the mark of worry, weariness or age. There shall be no sign of any of these things in the glory. There will be an endless vigour and youthfulness, if I might so characterize it. There will be an endless deliverance from all that would distract; no wrinkle, a wondrous beauty of the Lord's people. Not having spot, or wrinkle, or ANY such thing. One delights in the use of the word "such". Sometimes the apostle employs it to speak of certain persons he would rather not name, because of their condition. Sometimes it is found because he would be unwilling to leave anything out of an enumeration, (e.g. Gal. 5. 21, 23). Thus it is here, "Or any SUCH thing". There will only be other such things, as the glories described. There will be only contrasts with ruin. "no SUCH thing" as failure. Ransack your vocabulary for all words explaining defects, and put "not" in front of them. Not any "SUCH" thing, because there will be an assemblage of contrasted blessednesses. Not any SUCH thing. Oh how complete will be the work of our beloved Lord!

So we come to consider our present attitude, as to such an unveiling of grace. Did the Lord love us? Then let us love Him. Did He give Himself for us? Then let us devote ourselves to Him to-day. Is He sanctifying and cleansing? Let us be glad, even though the washing of water may remove that which we thought was good, but which was only the dirt of our own way. Will He present us to Himself? Let us now present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy,

acceptable unto Him, our reasonable service. Will there be then glory? We all with unveiled face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord are now being changed into the same image:- not outwardly for the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of the Lord, and the soul has been quickened, and so we are being changed from glory until we reach glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord. Will there be in that Day a condition of spotlessness? Let us keep ourselves unspotted from the world to-day. Will there be no wrinkle or any such thing? Beware of all the worry that disobeys the Lord's command, "Be anxious for nothing". "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint". Will there be an holiness? "Ye shall be holy" now, is the Divine promise-command. Will there be a blemishlessness? The Holy Spirit instructs us that we should be without blemish now, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom we shine as lights in the world. Thus are we drawn to anticipate the glories of that Day in a spiritual counterpart, and may I point out that the Holy Spirit in Eph. I, used very similar words to the individual believer. We have seen in this passage the collection of believers, but in the 4th verse of the first chapter, we read, "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy ONES, and without blemish ONES before Him". Collectively

the saints will have this wondrous glory. Individually they are to be characterised in the same way, then let them seek individually now to illustrate something of the future. It is true that the united-witness aspect we do not see on earth as in Paul's day, I mean, a united church. We do not see a multitude of one heart and one soul,

and though God

has been pleased in measure to chasten, He has not been pleased to cast off. We cannot count on self or on systems, but we can count on the Spirit of God, and if individually we seek to walk with God, we shall find we are not alone. The path may be one of giving up, but it is a path of fellowship with the Lord. If we seek to be "unmixed", as the Holy Spirit words it in Phil. 2. 15, if we seek by grace to be those who dwell in the truth and dwell with our Lord, will not He, Who in remnant times granted that weeping Ezra had an assembling of others to where he was weeping, will not He grant that others who tremble to-day at the Word of the Lord will go forth unto Him without the camp bearing His reproach, for here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come? With our eyes upon the returning of the Lord, and His dazzling glories we look off the things that would naturally ensnare and exercise their powerful and harmful attractiveness. The things of earth are tinsel, but the gold of THAT land is good. If we have an affliction it is light and but for a moment, the recompence of the reward will more than out-weigh it, the glory of that day

will make the sufferings of this day to be forgotten. Let us be those who by grace look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen, for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal, - and by grace it is still possible to endure as seeing Him Who is invisible.

Further literature, concerning the Lord, gladly sent (international) to exercised believers for personal perusal, and **passing on** to God's glory, some also in German, Spanish, Russian, Polish, Czech, Romanian:

- "To Testify the Gospel of the Grace of God." -

COPIES FREE (as the Lord enables) on application to:
Scriptural literature for Believers
Gottlieb-Daimler-Str.1 - 74343 Sachsenheim - GERMANY