

The Student of Scripture.

Edited by Percy W. Heward.

"I know that Thou canst do everything and that no thought can be withholden from Thee." Job. 42. 2.

A Word of Introduction.

Again we rejoice in God's sufficiency and grace. We are a weak people, yea, strengthless apart from Him (John 15. 5) But we are not thus "left". He is the Same (Heb. 13. 8) and our needs are met by One Who has riches and riches condescendingly at our service (Phil. 4. 19). The privilege of pleasing Him is real, and though we are conscious we have faltered and do falter, we are also conscious that He has not failed, and He has ever granted much through the instrumentality of His lovingly chosen weak instruments, cakes of barley bread, who are not worthy, nor sufficient of themselves to think anything of themselves. Such are you and I, if, by grace, among the called of Jesus Christ. God graciously brought Job and Paul to an end of themselves, and then used them mightily (2 Cor. 12. 9, Zech. 4. 6). May it not be so increasingly with us? With this desire, with this confidence in Him, are these pages sent forth. We trust in the living God. Your prayers are valued,—not irregularly but ever.

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Paul preserved from death.

IT is an encouragement to realize our times are in God's hand (Ps. 31. 15). It is not only true that no man laid hands on the Lord Jesus when His hour was not yet come (John 7. 30, 8. 20) but also His "followers" are wondrously protected. Nothing and no one can really "harm" (1 Pet. 3. 13): all things work **together**, for good to them that love Him, the called according to His purpose (Rom. 8. 28).

We have a striking illustration of God's overruling and preserving toward the end of the book of Acts in the life of God's servant Paul. The multitude were beating him in Acts 21. 32, but the chief captain just arrived in time. The wording of ch. 24. 7 seems to make clear that he was rescued out of the

hands of those who would have gladly seen him killed.

Next in Acts 23. 12, 13 over forty bound themselves under a great curse to slay him. But God caused an intimation, and, with it, deliverance. Thus we go further. The apostle could not choose his own ship when he was a prisoner, and he felt that the voyage would be perilous for lading, ship and lives (Acts 27. 10). "But God" stepped in, and there was the assurance, "God hath given thee all that sail with thee." When the attempt of the sailors to leave the ship would have caused trouble, Paul was used of God to emphasize His work by appointed needs (a striking "type" as to eternal salvation, Acts 27. 31), and the **soldiers** cut the ropes, only in **their** turn to endanger his life once more (verse 42). But God did not fail. On this fourth occasion, He was pleased to use the centurion (verse 43). When they escaped all safe to land a viper was the next means of attack, suggesting Satan's definite work (Acts 28. 3). But how could God's purpose be broken? There was "no harm" (verses 4 and 5). These repeated cases encourage our simple confidence in Him. May it not be only theoretical, but living. Yet let us never forget the four words Satan omitted, "to keep thee IN ALL THY WAYS" (Ps. 91. 11). Yes, we would not presume, but hear the words, "IN ALL THY WAYS acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3. 6).

COMING IN AND GOING OUT.

The Lord Jesus said:—

"I am the Door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and find pasture" (John 10. 9).

We call to mind, "Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out" (Deut. 28. 6). Caleb said:—

"And now, behold, the Lord hath kept me alive, as He said . . . as yet I am as strong this day . . . both to go out, and to come in" (Joshua 14. 10, 11).

Peter mentioned:—

"All the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us" (Acts 1. 21).

May we enjoy Psalm 121. 8:—

"The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore."

In our right rejection of **outward** profession (Rom. 2. 29), let us not make light of whatever is appointed by God outwardly. "With the **mouth** confession is made" (Rom. 10. 10). That cannot be **only** inward. And likewise baptism in water is not a matter of indifference, the Lord's Supper is not trivial. The danger with us all is to go to extremes, and be onesided. Most protests against error contain **another** error, because of this natural tendency, as to which we should pray earnestly and seek God's deliverance from Satan's wiles, that we may "grow up into Christ in all things."

THE WATERSHEDS OF LIFE.

We have all experienced them, though we may not have been always conscious at the time. Often we have seen more clearly afterwards. As two rivers may rise within a few feet and the mighty rivers fall into the sea thousands of miles apart, of one another, and the courses may become directly opposite, so is it with human experience. There was a moment when I met certain difficulties and my reaction to them affected the whole of my life. And so is it still. There are definite crises to which one is brought, and the result is a going forward, or a going backward. Some encouragement is given, and the life goes on brightly to God's glory: some discouragement is met, and the tendency to depression becomes fixed. An error in doctrine is embraced, and its effect gradually changes the whole view of truth. "If only" the teaching of God had been rightly realized, how different would the fruit have been! The channel flowed on, after its course began on **one** side of the mountain ridge. For a short time it seemed easy to divert it, but after a while there appeared a definiteness, and so is it for good or for evil, in some critical experiences of our lives.

These thoughts remind us of the watershed-crisis when one is born from above, and when the humbling, yet glorious, teaching of baptism is seen, when there is a stepping out from the worldliness of Christendom, and so forth. Such crises are marked. We also learn the importance of our actions toward others. One unguarded and provocative word may affect the whole future of a fellow believer more than we realize. Thus this meditation should lead us to be willing to use time to be a blessing, and to be concerned lest by a hasty sentence we misjudge and misdirect, or to cause a pendulum swing to evil. The sovereign overruling of God does not remove our responsibility and godly care. We little realize the "watershed" crises, and the moments when a little thing turns the scale, and means more than we can conceive.

I do not overlook the importance of little things accumulatively. As we "**abide**" in Christ we bring forth fruit and spiritual character is deepened. A thousand details contribute to one's "reaction" in a **moment** of critical temptation or encouragement. The little and momentous things of daily life are real and so we have a twofold view; and each aspect should awaken us to deep concern that we may contribute aright to the lives of the "one another" in the fellowship of the children of God.

Adam is not said to have been spiritual or to have lost spiritual life (1 Cor. 15. 45, 46): he "died" morally, and his dead soul and all the "dead in trespasses and sins" of Adam's race, are a striking witness of the need for a new **birth**, and a **spiritual** life, which shall not be lost (John 3. 3, 5, 10. 28).

Do I believe God, and therefore Roman 8. 28? Do I in **everything** give thanks? Or do I make exceptions?

LESSONS OF THE SACRIFICES.

When God said to Israel "Will I eat the flesh of bulls?" He showed that He did not desire the sacrifices because of any personal need, or any delight in an animal's death. Rather were there deep **spiritual** lessons for believing Israelites, prefiguring the way of salvation in Christ, and the same precious instruction abides for us, too. The sacrifices set forth the nature and goal and due reward of **sin**. It was against God, leading to death, and deserving judgment. How important is a right and solemn view of sin. We find this overlooked to-day. But God's gracious instruction did not finish there. We see an unveiling of the way of salvation. An innocent and perfect substitute must meet the need. And the Lord Jesus has fulfilled the type completely,—excelling the type, for, as the Obedient and Righteous One, He has been raised from the dead (Lev. 18. 5) and thus dieth no more, and because He lives, His redeemed live also. The lesson of the sacrifices, moreover, included results **beyond** this blessed aspect of substitution, for the savour of a sweet smell shows that God has **delight** in the work of His beloved Son,—the very need has brought a finished work beyond that which would have been required had man not fallen, but in that very work the extreme test of love has displayed love the more, and we rejoice **with** God, as the peace offering aspect indicates. Moreover, in the hands laid upon the sacrifice, resting the weight, we see a sense of sin, but also of full dependence and confidence. And in the privilege of the worshipper, and in the uniting together of those for whom the sacrifice is presented, and in the priestly access to the tabernacle, and in the blood on the altar linked with a type of prayer, and sometimes on the mercy seat itself, we see varied foreshadowings of our many blessings in Christ. But who can tell His fulness? The "nearness" by His precious blood (Eph. 2 and 3) is neither temporary nor only typical. It is eternal, and full of uncounted and overflowing blessings. The redeemed find in Him the Antitype of all the offerings. His inward and outward perfection shine out, and we are worshippers, fully accepted with all sins and trespasses removed, enjoying peace with God, and "no more conscience of sins." God's satisfaction in His beloved Son has become ours, and His delight ours,—to the **extent** we appreciate that which He **fully** beholds, as the Holy Spirit graciously gives a glad and growing consciousness of the fulness of, and in, Christ. May it be ours in worship, praise, prayer, meditation, daily life and witness to remember, realize and record the glories of the Lord Jesus.

"Consecrate" is, as the margin indicates, "fill the hand": filled waterpots, a filled house, filled persons are God's will, a half-filled heart or hand, and a divided interest cannot please Him.

The book of Psalms emphasizes thanksgiving again and again: it does not condone murmuring once: we should have the same character.

THE GOAL AND THE PATH.

Glorious indeed is the fruit of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ (John 12. 24). Let us observe the goal in Ephesians 4. In the original the Holy Spirit repeats remarkably the word "into" or "with a view to."

- (a) "With a view to **work** of **ministry**."
- (b) "With a view to building up of the **body** of Christ."*
- (c) "With a view to the **unity** of the **faith**."
- (d) "With a view to a perfect **man**."
- (e) "With a view to a measure of stature of the **fulness** of Christ" (recalling the word "fill" in the **opening** words that sum up all, verse 10).

We see the different "views," and the emphasis on the body, (b) the perfect man, (c) the fulness of Christ. Such is the goal, such is the climax.

Then at once the Holy Spirit adds a fuller explaining of the path:

- (a) that we be (present tense) **no longer**
 - (i) babes,
 - (ii) tossed to and fro,
 - (iii) carried about,

but (b) speaking the truth in love (that) we may have grown up **with a view to Him** as to **all things**.

It is very blessed to realize that whenever the goal is before us there is the appointed path thither. Is there the Lord's "eternal salvation"? There is. But it is for "them that obey Him" (Heb. 5. 9). Will His sheep never perish? That is blessedly true. But, He also says, "they hear My Voice" (John 10. 27, 28). In like manner, in Romans 6 we see "the **end** everlasting life," but we must have "**fruit** unto holiness" (Romans 6. 22). May we, then, never separate the **path** and the **goal** which He has joined. God will bring many sons into glory, but, as with the Perfect Captain of their salvation, there is an appointed "through." Thus all truth harmonizes, and God is glorified.

* "The," it seems to me, should be used if we translate "*The Anointed*," but as in English "Christ" means not "an anointed One" but "*the* Anointed," I have omitted. It is a matter of idiom, to reproduce the Holy Spirit's emphasis.

THE STANDPOINT OF THE LORD JESUS CONTRASTED WITH WHAT ISRAEL EXPECTED.

It is plain that the Jewish nation groaned under the Roman yoke. They **wanted** an earthly king (John 6. 15). There were those whose eyes were spiritually anointed (Luke 2. 38), but to most the idea of redemption was only earthly and national (Mark 11. 10). Even the disciples were expecting something of this character (notice Luke 24. 21 with Acts 1. 6, and also Matt. 11. 3).

The emphasis by the Lord Jesus on the fact that He would be "despised and rejected" was strange to most (Matt. 16.

21-23). The suggestion that the kingdom would not immediately appear (Luke 19. 11-27) destroyed many "Jewish" hopes. The fact that the Lord did not seek publicity (Matt. 12. 19) surprised not a few (John 7. 4). Men were used then to revolution (Acts 5. 36, 37). They did not understand the ways of God. Has it not always been so? His acts were made known to Israel, but His ways only to such as Moses (Ps. 103. 7). "Things kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matt. 13. 35) had special reference to the "mysteries of the kingdom of the heavens" (Matt. 13. 11), and a rejected people (Matt. 24. 9), a "little flock" (Luke 12. 32). Far from being "delivered" at once, rejecting Jerusalem was to be rejected awhile and burnt (Matt. 22. 7), and to remain trodden down during "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21. 24) its desolate temple being razed to the ground (Matt. 24. 2). Thus we see once more (a) God's ways are not man's (Isa. 55. 8, 9), and (b) His patience (1 Pet. 3. 20), but (c) the fact that He will finally fulfil all His purposes (cf. Hab. 2. 3). How blessed to **receive** the kingdom of God as a little child now and to have the glorious prospect of entering it, too (Mark 10. 15), when "the kingdom and patience in Jesus" (Rev. 1. 9) will become the kingdom and glory (1 Thess. 2. 12, Rev. 11. 15).

"HEALING ALL THAT WERE OPPRESSED OF THE DEVIL."

Acts 10. 38.

Your Father does not cause oppression,
'Tis Satan who would drag you down:
Children of God, claim your possession,
With loving kindness He doth **crown**.
Despondency is not your portion,
When you are saved by grace Divine:
Satan would aim at cruel distortion,
God's chastening hand has **love's design**.
Mount up in faith, dismiss the feeling
That you should know remorse and fear;
God grants His peace and rest and healing;
His voice, and not the tempter's, hear.
Triumph is yours, Christ's strength in weakness,
As you in Him by grace abide;
Amid the strain, give thanks with meekness,
And in Himself with joy confide.

"All things work **together**" (Rom. 8. 28): nothing is merely an isolated event. The oxygen and nitrogen in the air benefit me together,—I cannot have them separately: so with hydrogen and oxygen in water. Would I isolate them? No. Thus with my spiritual experience:—everything is blended in Divinely gracious and Divinely fitting proportion for my growth, and dependence, and praisefulness.

AARON—AND GRACE. LEVI—AND GRACE. THE NETHINIM—AND GRACE.

The service of God in the temple of old was associated primarily with these three classes, as Ezra 2 shows. As to the choice and calling of each, God's grace marvellously shines forth. That **Aaron** should be high priest after Exodus 32 is an amazing manifestation of mercy. And the Levites remind us first of Genesis 49. 5-7, then of Exodus 32. 25-9, and next of Numbers 18 on the background of "the gainsaying of Core" (Korah, Num. 16. 1, 19, 35, Jude 11). And what shall we say of the Nethinim, the "given ones," as the word signifies? They were the descendants of the **Gibeonites** and other "Gentiles" spared in mercy from the judgment they deserved, and thus a veritable parallel with Rahab. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5. 20). O that our hearts as well as our heads may realize this. This typical teaching must come with peculiar freshness to us who were Gentiles, and "strangers from the covenants of the promise" (Eph. 2. 12). It is a wondrous mercy to be "fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (Eph. 2. 19). But as we have seen, it is not only in this case,—in all three; concerning all who drew near to God there was an especial display of God's sovereign grace. Is not this a tender unveiling of **Himself**, and His character, and also a definite prophecy of the blessings of which Israel had the type, and we share the superabounding Antitype in Christ Jesus?

It is very beautiful to find such infinite grace not only in connexion with positions of service for men, but as to that which is beyond all,—drawing near to God (Ezek. 44. 15). We might have thought that God would permit one who had failed to have a lower position in the camp, but in His tabernacle and temple! Ah, that is wonderful indeed. We remember how the prodigal, or, rather, the "lost son," was not allowed to be as a hired servant but brought into the fulness of blessing. It is like unto God thus to work. And it is so spiritually. May our hearts humbly give thanks.

It is refreshing to see that the effect of grace is manifested in the life. Aaron was the saint of the Lord, in a context which reminds of his holy harmony with Moses as well as his separated position (Ps. 106. 16), and many Nethinim were enthusiastic for the will of God in the days of Zerubbabel and of Ezra (Ezra 2. 43-54, 8. 18, 20). God does not omit to record this. If we receive grace as Gibeonites, let us return obedience with gratitude. So will God be exalted.

The Address on the Mount begins with a happy blessedness, even as the epistles with "grace and peace." Our Father rejoices in the true joy of His children. There is no call to gloominess, though love is, (because it is love), sorrowful over sin. The very delight in His will draws to this, but such sorrow cannot kill the delight that begets it. "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing."

Reading.

HE references to "reading" in the New Testament are very striking. On five or six occasions in the Gospel according to Matthew the Lord Jesus spoke of it. Was this to the disciples? Let Matthew 12. 3, 5, 19. 4, 21. 16, 42, 22. 31 give the general answer. (In 24. 15 a parenthesis reminds us of our privilege of reading—like Daniel—ch. 9. 2). Is there not sometimes a designed contrast with "hearing," by spiritual ears, on the part of the disciples (Matt 13. 9, 16, 17, Rev. 2. 7, etc.)? Do we not need to have more than personal reading, even the present ministry, and application of the written words, in living power? "What the Spirit saith," "As the Holy Ghost saith," "The Holy Ghost also is a witness to us."

But we would never disparage true "reading" (1 Tim. 4. 13). The right condition is important, that we may not be alone. It is rather remarkable that the appointments as to "reading" in the Epistles concern New Testament "letters" or "books" (Col. 4. 16, 1 Thess. 5. 27, Rev. 1. 3), reminding us how these **continue** the primary testimony of "apostles and prophets" for us, even as the missionary-message of the gift of tongues in Acts 2. 8 is perpetuated in the Greek (not Hebrew) of God's later Scriptures. How infinite is the wisdom of His ways! The reading of Moses and the prophets, in the **Synagogues**, is before us in Acts 13. 15, 27, 15. 21, 2 Cor. 3. 15. How little we realize the fulness of **both** parts of Scripture (Luke 24. 27, 45). Though reading through Moses be rather linked here with synagogues and sabbaths, we rejoice in our privilege to emphasize continually the earlier books, as God's living message for us, since the veil is done away in Christ (2 Cor. 3. 14) and we behold what the Holy Spirit signifies there (Heb. 9. 8). The patience and comfort of these Scriptures are **for us** (Rom. 15. 4, cf. 4. 23, 24), and they were written **for us** (1 Pet. 1. 10, 12). Hence we are encouraged in private reading of the words of God's book, and searching daily (Acts 17. 11), and in the prayerful comparing of verse with verse, so often mentioned and illustrated in all the New Testament. But whether we be in our own rooms, or in the gatherings of saints, or testifying to others, let us seek the opened ear and heart of Lydia, that the tone and accent of the Spirit may be ours, that we may receive with meekness the engrafted word (Jas. 1. 21) which worketh in those that believe (1 Thess. 2. 13).

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"The counsel of the Lord that shall stand."

Proverbs 19. 21.

"God had brought their counsel to nought."

Nehemiah 4. 15.

A Word of Introduction.

WE live in a day of many advisers and counsellors, in a day, moreover, of quick change, and a day of surprises and unexpected events. But God is not defeated, and His counsel shall stand and He will do all His pleasure (Isaiah 46. 10) The prophets of old had calm rest in God. Why? "Say ye not a confederacy" or "conspiracy", as others then said, was God's message to Isaiah (8. 12.), "neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid; sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself, and let Him be your Fear and let Him be your Dread" (verse 13) It is this attitude of implicit confidence in God which has ever marked the MEN who WALK WITH HIM. Worry and uncertainty and bustle are natural if there is no realization of His all-sufficiency He knows and declares, the end from the beginning, and the vision will not be late (Hab. 2. 3.): it is for "an appointed time". God will not intervene earlier, but He will not fail at the right time. These pages are not mere Bible studies to help with information and sermon preparation. A willing all-round life of dependence on God is His call to all His redeemed.

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THE MESSAGE OF THE LORD JESUS AS TO THE WILL

I was much impressed by the words, "Ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15. 7) in the light of the preceding words, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you," and I learnt that "abiding" is the key. The Lord Jesus shows us that the true fruit of fellowship, and of receiving

the engrafted word, is NOT that we become "will-less," or that our will is broken, or bent, but beautifully brought to harmonize with the will of God.

And this leads us to understand, in a fuller way, some of His other references to the will, which are not always emphasized in our translation. We behold the ruin of the natural man in his will,—“They have done unto him whatsoever they **willed**,” Matthew 17. 12; “He delivered Jesus to their **will**,” Luke 23. 25; “Ye **will** not to come to Me that ye might have life,” John 5. 40; “The lusts of your father ye **will** to do,” John 8. 44. “Ye **would not**,” Matthew 23. 37; “They **would not** come,” Matthew 22. 3.

How important is the unveiling of God's children in John 1. 13: “Which were born, not of blood, nor of the **will** of the flesh, nor of the **will** of men, but of God” (cf. Rom. 9. 16; Isa. 53. 6).

And the Lord's loving test for His disciples concerns the will. “If any one **will** to do His **will** he shall know of the doctrine,” John 7. 17.

“**Will** ye also (to) go away?” John 6. 67.

“If any one **will** to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me, for whosoever **willeth** to save his life shall lose it,” Matthew 16. 24, 25.

“Whosoever **willeth** to be great among you, let him be your minister, and whosoever **willeth** to be chief among you, let him be your servant,” Matthew 20. 26, 27.

“Whosoever shall do the **will** of My Father Which is in heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother,” Matthew 12. 50.

And so we remember, with gladness, the disciples' prayer, “Thy **will** be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6. 10), and we return to John 15. 7, finding the secret of prevailing prayer “in the **Name**” of the Lord Jesus. It is not great ability I need, but a yielded will. Information and knowledge are not primary, but the real judgment of self-will in blessed and delighted conformity with His **will**. Have I not proved in my own experience that **this** is where I have failed? I have “wished” **this** or “set” my heart on **that**. Bunyan realized this in “My Lord Will-be-will.” O to be in such harmony with the Lord Jesus within, and “through and through.” The Holy Spirit indwells to transform our will. A Person indwelling has a gracious personal control. But am I a glad “Yes,” or a varying “Yes” and “No”?

Faith is like to a hand: (a) it **receives**, (b) it **takes**. Can we separate these two thoughts? Receiving is like “hearing,” taking compares with “listening.” May both attitudes be illustrated to God's glory. Faith does not “cause,” but it discovers, welcomes, and brings a condition to appropriate what our Father has ready and delights to bestow.

RELATIONSHIPS.

Our relation to the Lord Jesus is one of union, as members of His body, and branches in the vine, a living, dependent and responsive union, to be expressed more and more fully through communion in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our relation to the world is one of holy witness, for with this purpose we are sent into it, as a separated people. Any man-made “union,” therefore, is out of place: the very word “union” implies a “oneness” which union with Christ has blessedly destroyed. Our relation to fellow believers is that of co-members of the body of Christ, and brethren in one family. Our relation to companies of those who bear Christ's name is to be subject to His revealed will. If the gathering neither adds to nor takes from His appointment, but loyally, lovingly and spiritually maintains His will in the Spirit, it is our privilege, and responsibility, if in the locality, to recognize it as a local expression of “the body of Christ.” We do not thus become members of a new organization, but as members of Him, we **are** already included in that which is a miniature representation of Him, and to hold back would be to grieve the Holy Spirit, and to encourage division or schism.

If, on the other hand, the gathering definitely includes principles and practices that are not His will, in its warp and woof, or expects us to change, or omit, His will in some way or ways, or to include or exclude those who are not included or excluded by Him, we cannot **rightly** become a part of it, however **many** saints are within, or however **much** we love **them**, but, because of love to Him (and them), we must, with patience and humility, refrain. We would also seek the Lord's grace in the removal of that which is not His will, or if, alas, this fails, His work in enabling another gathering according to His own appointments.

SOME “QUESTIONS” OVERLOOKED, IT SEEMS, IN USUAL TRANSLATION.

“For is not my house so with God? For hath He not made with me an everlasting covenant?—ordered in all things and sure? For is not this all my salvation, and all my desire? For will He not make it to grow?” 2 Samuel 23. 5.

“Shall I lift up mine eyes unto the hills? From whence cometh my help?” Psalm 121. 1.

“Do ye sleep on now, and take your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand. Rise!” Matthew 26. 45, 46.

“What shall I say?—Father, save Me from this hour?—But for this cause came I unto this hour! Father, glorify Thy Name?” John 12. 27.

(We would welcome any similar suggestions. It is a privilege to obtain a fuller view of the meaning of God's words. Some may not know that the Divine originals are not punctuated. May the Holy Spirit's leading in this be ever realized.)

INTERVENTION OR INTERFERENCE ?

GOD is God. Any limitation of His glory is the denial of His Godhead. Heathen mythology—demonology—may have room for this in its “gods many,” exhibiting the sins of men on a larger scale. Being the product of the human mind they are men, “evolved,” but the God Who alone is God, and Whom we, by grace, know, is infinite and perfect. His majesty is beyond human expression, and reasoning. Yet He has revealed **Himself** to His redeemed, who have become, by covenant love, His own children.

Man does not want God to assert Himself—absolutely. Natural prayer often asks God to do what the one asking wants, and circumscribes Him to the will of the creature. True prayer desires God to work out all His Own purpose. “Thy will be done” is a wondrous petition. Faith never restricts God. Those who are without the knowledge of God withhold part and offer God part. The believer realizes God’s right to all. And God alone can be trusted. The natural heart does not like to trust God with all. It desires God to stop someone else, but not to stop “me.” It wishes God to intervene in world-warfare; but to lay low “my” warfare **against Him** would be viewed as “interference.” It is “intervention” when “I” want it, “interference” when “I” object. But this “I” attitude is the germ and embryo of all evil, the world is the aggregate of “I’s,” and all bitterness, quarrels and warfare are the result of the “I” attitude: self-will instead of God’s will is ruin.

Do I regard God’s control as interference? Do I restrict Him? Here are striking and searching tests. Do I want salvation from judgment afterwards, but not from sin now? Do I seek Christ as Saviour to help in troubles, but not as Lord to possess my whole life? Do I wish for Him on the Lord’s Day but not on working days of the week to control my business throughout? Do I view His alteration of my desire as interference? If I complain of my lot, if I grumble against others, if I am envious, if I am discontented, I blame God, and chafe against His perfect intervention. But to chafe is to begin that which brings forth rebellion. It is, in essence, unbelief, which actually doubts God. True love trusts Him implicitly, and praises Him unquestioningly, for He is perfect. “In **everything** give thanks.” To the believer God is never viewed as interfering, but as **intervening**, and a right heart attitude ever says “Amen,” and means it.

The Holy Spirit is not merely an influence. **He** lovingly enables those whom **He** indwells. The Spirit of God is really God, even as the Lord Jesus, and the wondrous fact of His work in the Church and in individual believers is not fully realized. He is grieved (Eph. 4:30), and thus we are weak

Messianic Passages—No. 6.

“The way of a Mighty Man in a virgin.”

Proverbs 30: 19, literally.

HAVE we become used to expecting references to the work of the Lord Jesus in Proverbs?—e.g., “By mercy and truth is atonement made for iniquity” (16: 6), “A Wise One will make an atonement” (16: 14), “In the light of the King’s countenance is life” (16: 15), “There is a Loving One Who sticketh closer than a brother” (18: 24). In chapter 30 Agur writes, “I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the **Holy Ones**,” adding, “What is His Name, and what is His Son’s Name,—when (if, or for) thou knowest?”

Our minds are therefore graciously opened, and expectant, and we would enquire (rather than dogmatise) on the verse before us. The three other things mentioned here tell of God’s use of means in varied spheres, and the word “way” is repeated. It is plain also that the preposition “in” is employed three times in the original, and we should choose this rendering (not “with”) unless the context indicates otherwise.

The word “mighty man” is for good and evil strength:—both seen in Jeremiah 17: 5, 7. The proud man is in **Habakkuk 2: 5**. But Messiah is thus described in Zechariah 13: 7, “The Mighty Man That is My Fellow, **saith the Lord of hosts**,” and possibly in Psalm 40: 4, if that begins the song concerning the One Who delighted to do the Father’s will.

The term “maid” is known to be “virgin,” occurring only in Genesis 24: 43; Ex. 2: 8; 1 Chronicles 15: 20, cf. Ps. 45 or* 46; Psalm 68: 25; Song 1: 3, 6-8, and Isaiah 7: 14 (“the Virgin shall conceive”). In none of these passages does it refer to one married, or to evil associations. We do not imply that grammar must reject the thought of a man taking a virgin to wife, but we need to enjoy the light of Jeremiah 31: 21 upon other passages. There we read, “A female (no allusion to ordinary marriage) shall encompass (a fitting description) a **Mighty Man**”—the same word as here. Thus there is no difficulty in using the words “Mighty One” of an infant. Job 3: 3 confirms this. This “**new thing**” comes in this very chapter of the “**new covenant**,” and beautifully harmonizes with the “sign” of “the virgin” (not only “a virgin”) in Isaiah 7: 14. Why should not the mystery of “the way” of Messiah ere He was born be set forth, especially in view of Ecclesiastes 11: 5 (“the way,” linked with “thou knowest not”)? This would be a fitting climax, even as the “King against Whom there is no rising up” in Proverbs 30: 31, where the unusual Hebrew may well suggest that none can stand against the Lord Jesus, the King of kings. Should we be surprised to find unexpected references to our beloved Lord in the Old Testament, written by the Holy Spirit Who was delighted and ever delights in Him?

* Subscription or superscription? See **Habakkuk 3**. A
made available

Nor can we wonder if they are veiled, until the time of unfolding. The emphasis on Messiah's mother, whether in Psalms 22 and 69 or Isaiah 49, is throughout definite, and the equal silence, as to an earthly father might well have prepared Israel for the virgin birth. How glorious is this appointed unveiling of Christ's sinlessness, humbling **us** to feel **our** contrasted sinful inheritance, "given from a father" (1 Pet. 1. 18, lit.). The glory of Christ is ever before our adoring hearts. Had He not been born thus, He could not have been a real Man on the one hand, yet entirely free from guilt on the other. Thus the precious fact of atonement is deeply involved, and we worship.

It may be some will ask, "But does not the next verse present a problem?" It cannot alter the meaning of the word "virgin," nor does it imply that the "way" in verse 19 is wrong because that of 20 is evil, any more than "the way of a ship." The **parallel** is said to be in connexion with "I know **not**." A contrast of right and wrong, of God's work and that of a sinner, is common in the book of Proverbs. The "way" of God always has a counterfeit. "Wisdom," invites to a feast in ch. 9. 1-6, and a foolish woman, with "stolen waters," does the same in ch. 9. 13-18. Messiah's birth was viewed as a mystery in God's use of a virgin, and the woman here, as in Revelation 18, may present a counterfeit, with the excusing of sin. It is remarkable that the false "church," in committing spiritual harlotry, has over-repeated the name of Mary, the prophesied virgin-mother of the Lord Jesus, but has not honoured her aright. Her own humble attitude is beautifully seen in the words, "My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour," "Mary kept all these things and pondered in her heart," "His mother kept all these sayings in her heart," "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do," May our holy attitude be the same, as we rejoice to see Him everywhere in Scripture, even though we know not all "the ways" of God (Rom. 11. 33-36). We do rejoice, however, that "God sent forth His Son, having become of a woman, having become under law, that He might redeem them that were under law, that we might receive **the sonship**" (Gal. 4. 4, 5).

The virgin birth of the Lord Jesus proclaiming Him as the promised Seed, **outside** Adam's covenant headship, was the sign that He would be the Antitype of all the sacrifices, the Mighty One delivering those whom He died to redeem, and making them members of Himself on "resurrection ground."

The test of real love to the Lord is not what we are in singing and in meetings, or on the Lord's Day, or when we have an emergency, and an opportunity to do something great, but what we are in common details, in the background, and among those who know us most, and see us often. Electric contact is not a succession of separate actions, nor is the abiding of the branch in the vine: our need is continuance.

CONDITIONAL OR UNCONDITIONAL?

Thoughts on Romans 8. 17.

MANY years ago I wrote a leaflet with this title. The subject is never out-of-date. We, the children of God, always need reviving (Isa. 57. 15). Grace and obedience are continually united in Holy Scripture, privilege and responsibility are constantly together. Ephesians 1. 3 leads to Ephesians 4. 6, and there is the finest of the wheat (and no straw) in the harmonious epistles to the Romans and of James. All truth is one whole, we rejoice in "sound doctrine," and do not speak of "doctrines," if we keep to the perfect language of the Holy Spirit, except when referring to error.

How shall we translate Romans 8. 17? "But if children, also heirs, heirs, on the one hand, of God: but joint-heirs of Christ, if really we are suffering together that we may also be glorified together." There is no doubt that all children of God are heirs (Gal. 4. 7), all "shall reign in life by One, Jesus Christ." "But"—The Holy Spirit Himself puts a "but" in connexion with a **further** heirship. Here it is not the joining word "and," and a pause would be well a pause of heart too. Let us search our ways—our selves. Are we living as God's children should live? Will all have the same position in the Kingdom? No. Luke 19. 17-19 is clear. And what about the seven unmentioned servants? "If we died together, we shall also live together: if we remain under, we shall also reign together" (2 Tim. 2. 11, 12). "Died" is a past tense, "remain under" a present.

Are we remaining under? Here is a promise with an "if." Shall we blot out the "if" from our heartfelt meditation on our Lord's will for us to-day? "The meek shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5. 5). What if I am not meek? Abraham had the promise of "the land," and will possess it in resurrection. Will Lot? He "chose" the plain of Sodom. He was "just Lot," but where are the promises as to the earth for him? Heirship "**in** Christ" is one thing, joint-heirship **with** is another. All believers are typified together by the one moon, but "one star **differeth** from another in glory." Will our work be burnt up? Shall we suffer loss (1 Cor. 3. 15)? "**Joint**-heirs with Christ if . . . !" Are we willing to suffer with Him, to go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach (Heb. 13. 13)? He is ready to welcome, are we ready to go?

Let us look at Isaiah 53. 12:—"Therefore will I divide (God the Father) for Him among the **many** (same word in verse 11)." All the "many" are included as "heirs of God": there is no mention here of the "**spoil**." "And **with strong ones** (not "the many") He (the Lord Jesus) shall **divide spoil**." Is not this a "joint-heirship" **with Him**, linked with His "Well done"? "**Some** thirty fold, **some** sixty, **some** one hundred." To which am I like? And you? Are we concerned—for this joy? Or are we willing to suffer loss now? We may not "as Esau" for one morsel of meat **sell** our birthright, but if earthly things hinder though we do not draw back to perdition (Heb.

10. 39), it is possible for a **righteous** one to draw back in measure, and lose giving the pleasure which God seeks from us (verse 38). O that it may not be so! The Holy Spirit indwells, and faithfulness is possible—"from this day and upward" (Hag. 2. 18).

DO WE TRY TO ANSWER OUR OWN PRAYERS?

How blessed to be in God's hand and will. We do not want to arrange for ourselves. But it is easily possible for "me" to ask God to undertake, and then to ask a Hushai to intervene (2 Sam. 15. 34), to commit my way to the Lord and then make my arrangements (Gen. 32. 9-12 with 13-23). Further, is it not easy to seek God's guidance, and then to feel a leading on the line of a natural wish, if I am not quite open before our Father? O that I may never suggest to myself, "Do this," and think it is the guidance of God, because my will is not really willing for His. I do not mean by this suggestion to awaken undue introspection. It is only a plea for honest childlikeness, and healthy frankness, whenever we draw near to God in earnest prayer.

But there is a true way in which I may be used in God's answer. "How?" do you ask. If I am praying for one thing, and living in a contrary manner, we all agree there will be failure. I cannot seek guidance aright if my eyes are not on the Lord (Ps. 32. 8). It is vain to desire instruction if my mind is made up. Hence we see the beautiful contrast, as we look for grace to be in the place of blessing, and to act in the line of our humble praying.

THE HAPPY ATTITUDE OF FAITH.

Our Lord and Saviour we would own,
Enjoy His will as we obey,
And thus His will, more fully known,
Learnt WITH HIMSELF, will mark our way.

'Tis easy Him our "Lord" to call,
But we would live responsive lives,
Know His upholding, lest we fall,
Faith never 'gainst His leading strives.

Our Lord and Saviour will return,
Then shall we see Him face to face,
More fully praise, more fully learn
The wonders of redeeming grace!

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The Student of Scripture.

Edited by Percy W. Heward.

"Thou hast done wonderful things; Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth" (Isaiah 25. 1.)

"They shall come, and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done." (Psalm 23. 31.)

A Word of Introduction.

PRAISE God for grace. It is deeply important to remember His eternal **PURPOSE**, and "the **COUNSEL** of the Lord that shall stand". Truly He says, "My **COUNSEL** shall stand and I will do all My **PLEASURE**" (Isaiah 46. 10, cf. Psalm 33. 10). It is because of this sureness the believer can rest in Him at all times and "not be afraid of evil tidings". It is with this confidence we are able to send forth these pages still. Wonderful, indeed, are His **THOUGHTS**, wonderful, indeed, are His **WORKS** (Psalm 40. 5). The prayerful and careful reader will observe that **PRAISE** is in the context of **BOTH** verses in our heading, and with this **OBJECT** the magazine goes forth. O that there may be such fruit for Him, and joy to Him, in Whom we have redemption through His blood.

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"THAT HE SHOULD GATHER TOGETHER INTO ONE THE CHILDREN OF GOD THAT WERE SCATTERED ABROAD."

John 11. 52.

How definite is the Holy Spirit's emphasis on this in the Gospel according to John. We think of the "one flock" (not "fold" which has an "externalism"), one Shepherd" of ch. 10. 16, and of the repeated reminder of oneness, or rather use of the word "one" which goes beyond "oneness" in the prayer of ch. 17. And our hearts rejoice that the very words of a Caiaphas are caused to bring this before our hearts. How we

see God's overruling, and that everything may be blest to waiting and longing disciples. Moreover, the ground of the unity is **not** humanity and its oneness in Adam, but the blood of Christ and a new oneness in Him. There is no universal Fatherhood: 'tis "the children of God" who are gathered together by **Christ's death**. Here we see God's purpose which shall be realized because it has been made sure through grace. Caiaphas may think of "our place and nation" and have **his** self-seeking, but the Lord Jesus shall possess not only Jerusalem, and **His** nation, but those of all nations united in Himself ("My people," "many," Isa. 53. 8, 11, 12). There is no doubt of His triumph. We rejoice, and would anticipate increasingly this privilege of being "one" among His redeemed locally, and pray for it to be manifested yet more and more in the earth. "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of **the** peace" (Eph. 4. 3, cf. 2. 14). "till we all come into the unity of the faith" (Eph 4. 13).

PRAYER AND FULNESS.

"Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven . . . the glory of the Lord **filled** the house," 2 Chronicles 7. 1, 2. "These all continued with one accord in prayer . . . they were all with one accord . . . and suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the **house** . . . and they were all **filled** with the Holy Spirit," Acts 1. 14, 2. 1, 2, 4.

"Wherefore I also . . . cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers . . . that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation . . . that ye may know . . . what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead . . . and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the **fulness** of Him That filleth all in all," Ephesians 1. 15-23.

"I bow my knees unto the Father . . . that He would grant you . . . to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be **filled** into all the fulness of God," Ephesians 3. 14-19.

"This I pray, that your love may abound . . . that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being **filled** with the fruits of righteousness," Philippians 1. 9-11.

"We . . . do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be **filled** with the knowledge of His will," Colossians 1. 9.

"Epaphras . . . labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and **fully** borne along in all the will of God," Colossians 4. 12.

"THE TWO HOUSES." 1 Kings 9. 10.

THE words may seem very ordinary, but they awaken the deepest thought, if our hearts are "tender," and "whole" before the Lord. What **were** the **two** houses? "The House of the Lord, and the king's house." The **order** is right, but we call to mind, "The house of the Lord . . . was he **seven** years in building it, but Solomon was building his own house thirteen years" (1 Kings 6. 38, 7. 1). The human chapter-break must not hide the searching message. We can hardly imagine such words being spoken of David, who was troubled when he dwelt in a house of cedar while the ark of the Covenant of the Lord was under curtains (1 Chron. 17. 1). Verily he set his affection to the house of his God (1 Chron. 29. 3, with 22. 5). Solomon failed in **love** (1 Kings 11. 1). Contrast "Demas hath forsaken me, having **loved** this present world," and "Unto all them also that **love** His appearing" in the same chapter (2 Tim. 4. 8, 10).

Psalms 132 is rich in meaning. We may have the right **order**, even as the Lord's Day **before** the week days, and **yet** be more "occupied" with our own arrangements than the Lord's interests. The former may take our time, our talents, and our thoughts, and have a first claim on us. We may persuade ourselves God is first, but is He? If we are concerned to live comfortably, or near our place of business, or near our "acquaintances," rather than thinking, "What opportunities will there be for assembling to God's glory?"—"What is the will of the Lord in these matters" (Heb. 10. 25).—is there not a danger signal? Our intentions may be good, but we often experience, "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak"—marvellous words of sympathy, and encouragement, as well as warning and loving reproof, from our ever gracious Lord. We **need** every help, we **need** Christian fellowship, we are more easily turned aside, or become listless, or depressed, than we realize.

Our hearts call to mind Hezekiah. How beautiful was his faith, and his devoted determination, when the Lord spoke to him in illness. "We will sing my songs all the days of our life in **the house of the Lord**," "What is the sign that I shall go up to **the house of the Lord**?" (Isa. 38. 20, 22). But Isaiah 39 does not mention the house of the Lord. "Hezekiah . . . shewed them the **house** of **his** precious things . . . there was nothing in all **his house**, nor in all **his** dominion that Hezekiah shewed them not," "All that is in **mine house** they have seen" (verses 2, 4). We mean well, but—we forget, we falter, we fail, we fall. "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26. 41). Our Lord knows more about us than we know about ourselves.

There is the same lesson with other words, "This is not to eat **the Lord's** supper, for in eating every one taketh before **his own** supper" (1 Cor. 11. 20, 21). How blessed the con-

trast, "Take now thy son, thine only son"—"Thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me" (Gen. 22. 2, 12). This was the power of God in the early Church, "Neither said any that ought of the things which he possessed was **his own**" (Acts 4. 32). They gave to the Lord, and therefore to members of His body. There will be fellowship among **saints** when the Lord is **first**. All the squabbles, and quarrels, and cliques, and divisions among children of God are accentuated because there is so small a realization of His members representing **Himself** to one another, that all the attitude and actions may become, as it were, within the "body," and thus like to the harmony and co-working of a healthy physical body. Why not?

To return to the word "house." "This people say the time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built" (Hag. 1. 2). There was **no** opposition. We flatter ourselves we are right, for we will, of course, take the "opportunity" when IT COMES TO US. But this was an inversion. The Lord said GO UP (verse 8). The **movement** was to be on the part of the people. "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in **your** **ceiled** houses, and **this house** lie waste?"—"Mine house that is waste, and ye **run** every man unto **his own house**" (verses 4, 9). Is this the cause of the spiritual leakage—"a bag with holes" (verse 6), and of the spiritual 'drought' (verse 11) TO-DAY? Thank God, it was changed then. "**They came** and did work in **the house of the Lord** of hosts their God," and the words sounded forth, "I am with you," "My Spirit remaineth among you," "consider now (lit., set your heart) from this day and UPWARD (Hag. 1. 14, 2. 4, 5, 2. 15, 18). (a) "Set your heart on your ways, (b) go up the mountain, and (c) bring wood, and (d) build the house, and (e) I will take pleasure in it, and (f) I will be glorified, saith the Lord" (Hag. 1. 8). Do we find a difficulty as to the needed parallel to-day? What is our real Centre? Who, or What, is **First**? Have we a concern for the Lord's own interests, an awakened concern, a growing concern? Have we not here the Lord's key to revival, and is not the Holy Spirit mightily impressing upon us our Lord Jesus and not self? "He shall take of **Mine**, and shall shew unto you" (John 16. 15).

* Notice how often the house of God is mentioned in the revival joined with the confession of Nehemiah 9 (ch. 10. 32-39—nine times). Nehemiah, as David, said "The house of my God" (ch. 13. 14).

Temptation does not advertise its real nature, nor its object: Satan's unseen servants have like to himself, many disguises and aliases.

* * * *

The better the affected motive for sin is, the more likely will it be to deceive, unless saints are discerning through close communion with the Lord.

THE INWARD AND THE OUTWARD.

IT is helpful to observe God's plan, and order, and the harmony of all His workings. The **twofoldness** which He has stamped upon nature, and upon our very body (with our two eyes and ears), has a deep meaning as to "fellowship," and much beyond. The tendency of the heart of fallen man is to extremes, we often overestimate **one** aspect. Hence many misunderstandings, and sinful misrepresentations. It may be profitable, and to God's glory, to ponder this subject, with a heart-longing for His spiritual food thereby.

In the inspiration of Scripture we have the precious **will** of God expressed in audible and written **words**. In our own life we have an unseen power within manifesting itself by the material and outward body, which God has graciously given us to use for Him, glorifying Himself. We are not like angels are,—our body remains. God has been pleased to give them varied appearances; He can make them a flame of fire, or send them as man. Thus we see even their **twofoldness** often when used in various parts of His service, but our own personal condition **all the time** impresses this on our hearts.

The inward part of our complex life needs the outward, and the outward is deeply affected by the inward. The spiritual uses the material, the material is dependent on the spiritual. The unseen operates through that which is seen, the seen requires the direction of the unseen personal, vital, essence. We may not understand all, but we are conscious of this appointed harmony. Do we not long that all should be in holy balance and proportion? Our inward prayer does not make **kneeling** and **voiced** petitions unnecessary: but how empty would the latter be without the unseen heart-desire **within**!

Baptism as a form is nothing, but if one is inwardly a disciple, let him express this by baptism in his Lord's own appointed way if not already fulfilled. The **Lord's** Supper cannot take place if I am inwardly living for **self**, but if He is Lord within and my life feeds on Him, let me seek for an assembly where His gracious will in the breaking of the bread can be carried out. Communion with God is precious when **alone**, but the fellowship of other believers also, whom I **see** in a meeting, is **delightful**. **Heart** to heart love does not hinder the godly shaking of the **hand** with a warmth begotten of the heart. So is it throughout.

If I seem to be too "spiritual" to be physically serving the Lord, there is something wrong. If I am too "ethereal" to be human and homely, I am quite missing God's will. "The Word **became flesh** and tabernacled among us." He, Who was God from eternity, was manifested in **the flesh**, and with His

outward members lovingly **touched** the infants and sick, and **uttered** words of grace, and **looked** upon the young ruler with a yearning love, and on Peter with tenderest grief. Who can measure the blessedness of the **outward** when it shows forth the **inward**? Romans 6 emphasizes this: Our members are to be instruments of righteousness. My tone of voice illustrates the same thought. I can say "Yes" with joy, or irritation, or hesitation: the word is monosyllabic and the same, but the **heart** is expressed by the **accent**, and that is produced **physically**. You know **me** largely through my **body**. The members can show **love** or the **reverse**. How are our **two** possessions—the inward and the outward—glorifying our Father together?

Every action is twofold. A right motive must accompany a right action or the whole is neutralized, and worse. I can do a "good" thing, in itself, with ruinous pride, or to win esteem. The Lord looketh on the heart. A good motive does not sanctify an act of disobedience, but the Lord sees both, and has perfect "scales." He never fails to see whatever is of Himself, and to Himself, even when mixed with dross, but how blessed when the inward and outward life are fully united to please the Father. This was manifest in the Lord Jesus. And there are glorious possibilities for us, as we distrust and deny self, and depend on the Holy Spirit's enabling—glorious possibilities. Let us never—NEVER—NEVER underestimate what God will do through yielded—gladly yielded lives.

"BY THE GRACE OF GOD I AM WHAT I AM."

1 Corinthians 15. 10.

Salvation is not what "I" wrought,
Nor even what I asked and sought:
Before my birth, God deigned to choose,
Redemption wrought; He will not lose.

'Tis by the grace of God I am!
I **was** condemned—God's spotless Lamb
My sin hath borne, and His am I,
Eternal love the reason why.

What am I? Ah no words can say
The fulness of His searchless "way":
Children of God, members of Christ
Whose blood for all His own sufficed.

His servant's words, inspired, unveil
Grace unexplained will e'er prevail:
I worship, and rejoice, and long
That **life** and **lips** may join in song.

"BETTER."

How impressive are verses as Proverbs 15. 16, 17, 16. 19, 17. 1, with Psalm 37. 16. How empty are earthly things without love, and vain the natural apart from the spiritual. Yet often we have sought, and seek, "the things that are seen," and seem to value the shadow, and almost forget the substance that abides. "He heapeth up,—and knoweth not who shall gather them" is a solemnizing word (Ps. 39. 6, with Eccl. 2. 18, 19; 1 Tim. 6. 7, 8).

"A dinner of herbs" with the "love" of **Christ** is, indeed, beyond "a stalled ox," or any grand festival, without Him. "A dry morsel" is not dry when grace is flowing and with it the true "quietness" of unworrying and untroubled faith. How often we underestimate the blessings we **have** (Eph. 1. 3), and overestimate that which will never satisfy (Isa. 55. 2). But these verses, in the Old Testament, remind God's children yet more fully in a dispensation of "strangers and pilgrims" (when life and immortality have been brought to light through the Gospel), of "the exceeding riches of His grace." "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I will say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4. 4).

It is helpful also to link the 5 blessings of our five verses and see how they are all ours unitedly "in Christ." Beginning with the psalm we have **righteousness**, and then in Proverbs the **fear** of the Lord, **love**, **humility**, and **quietness**. What words would more adequately describe an all-round believing life, and its happy harmony? We cannot value too much the link of Scriptures to show us the spiritual balance of a God-glorifying experience. May the heart-realization of this be ours to-day, and every day, as we "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 3. 18).

"BE YE NOT AS THE HORSE, NOR AS THE MULE."

Psalm 32. 9.

Am I "as the horse"? A horse may do useful work, but we do not want our service to be of this character. Why not? The horse does not normally show a knowledge of his master's **wishes**, nor, in general, respond to his master's **voice** and **look alone**, but needs "bit and bridle." "Religion" means a "binding back" (external): it may preserve from some outward evils, but it puts nothing within. Grace gives within. In the New Covenant the law is written on the heart (Heb. 8. 10). Am I religious, or am I "a new creation" in Christ (2 Cor. 5. 17)? God seeks love's inner devotedness: have I this? "I will guide thee **with Mine eye**" is in the verse before "Be ye not as the horse." How can I be guided by the Lord's eye if I am blind, asleep, looking in another direction, diverted to look at "everything," or driven? The attitude that befits a saint is graciously unveiled. Is it mine, or is it not? Our Father shows such wonderful love, and I respond with lack of love?

"EXCLUSION."

AMPUTATION is not the first thought, except in rare cases, and then only to spare other members. So is it with "exclusion." Amputation is only justifiable when unchecked poison will **spread** to other parts, and it cannot be prevented. If that poison can be **kept** to the one limb, seek to retain the member. This means so much to me; for all nature is God's appointed **parable**. Here is a poisoned finger: the poison is already spreading. What is the first thought? "Localize it." I grant, and rejoice to say, we can go further, and that God's miraculous healing of the physical and the spiritual alike is blessedly possible—in a moment. But our spiritual responsibility is to **keep under** the flow of poison. Thus in Scripture, exclusion is of those who **brought** evil doctrine (2 John 9. 11), and who spread it (Rev. 2. 14), rather than of those who were led astray. "Leaven" is linked with malice and wickedness rather than with being deceived. This has a deep bearing on a godly attitude to those who have become contaminated by contact, and who are ignorant and do not realize the issues.

Continuing to see God's gracious lessons in the physical for the spiritual, do we not recall such words as "His blood was in a healthy condition, else there would have been more serious consequences"? Exclusion may be the result of an **unhealthy** condition in an assembly that cannot restrain and localize the evil. This speaks to our hearts personally.

Men rightly do all they can, except when hurried, to spare a limb. Saints should never be flurried. There is wondrous music in the words, "Rather let it be **HEALED**." A local gathering is meant to be a miniature of the body of Christ, and there is a reminder of failure if any are brought in whom He has not brought in, or shut out when He has not shut out. **Both** incomplete representations of the body of Christ may exist, because of our limitations, but both are to humble us. The true condition to be sought is one that will **repel** those not "in Christ," and make ashamed, and lead to confession and cleansing, those who are in Him.

"What saith the Scripture?" reveals a deeply important attitude, if it is spontaneous. "It is written" sets forth the definite settling of all objections. And with this fixity let there be reverent realization of the Holy Spirit, lest there be pride in mental knowledge or a sense of unwilling compulsion. Only as our whole being responds to God is there full-orbed spirituality. Obedience of the hand, **or** of the brain, **or** of any **part** of our being is **not** the true obedience in which our Father delights.

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The Student of Scripture.

Edited by Percy W. Heward.

"He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." John 14, 21.

A Word of Introduction.

IS it "religion" we seek? No, a thousand times, No. Is it merely to hear knowledge of truth? No, 2 Peter 2. 20-22 is clear as to the vanity of this. The gospel of John opens with the seeking of a Person, where He, Who was found by the wise men and the shepherds, was the quest of Andrew and his friend John. Have we come to HIM? Do we know HIM? There is nothing impersonal in the gospel. Nor does the after-experience of a believing heart drift into the impersonal. The Lord Jesus is to be a personal Reality. And these pages are not sent as the organ of mere orthodoxy. We long that our doctrine may be right because received from Him, and in harmony and fellowship with Him. "Commandments" isolated from Himself beget legalism. "My commandments," all He hath said, and, yet more fully, "If ye LOVE ME, keep My commandments." It is this that our Lord Jesus lovingly brings before us to encourage, and we would gladly take His standpoint. If the fruit of reading this magazine is more love to Him and His words, it will abide. If the result is only finding out something fresh, and getting a subject about which to speak, it will be nigh empty, spiritually. The Lord Jesus did not say to Peter in resurrection "Knowest thou this?" but "Lovest thou Me?" He did not remind of failure with such words as "Why did you deny Me?" but drew to the positive affection which makes the one who "wept" more tender.

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JOY AND PEACE UNITED.

May we illustrate by a few passages?

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace . . ." (Gal. 5. 22, 23).
"The Kingdom of God is not meat and drink—but right-

eousness, and **peace**, and **joy** in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14. 17).

"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great **joy**. . . . Glory to God in the highest, and on earth **Peace** and good pleasure among men" (Luke 2. 10, 14).

"**Peace** be unto you. . . . Then were the disciples **glad**, when they saw the Lord" (John 20. 19, 20).

"To the counsellors of **peace** is **joy**" (Prov. 12. 20).

"Ye shall go out with **joy**, and be led forth with **peace**" (Isa. 55. 12).

"**Rejoice** in the Lord alway. . . . The **peace** of God . . . shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus . . . the God of **peace**" (Phil. 4. 4, 6, 7).

Nor would we forget "**My** love," "**My** joy," "**My** peace" in John 15. 9, 11, 14. 27.

Peace brings a real joy, not mere effervescence. Are peace and joy united in your life, and mine? As **fruit**?

"HE THAT IS DEAD IS FREED FROM SIN," OR "HE THAT DIED HATH BEEN DECLARED RIGHTEOUS FROM SIN." WHICH? Romans 6. 7.

WE praise God for the common translation of Scripture, and (may we not add?) for those in many languages, and would ever pray for translators. The man in the street sometimes unthinkingly says, "You alter your Bible," if a prayerful effort is made to bring out more fully the fulness of the original. His objection is parallel with one that we "altered" Swiss mountains if we try to show their beauty by more photographs from different standpoints.

The margin gives "justified." There is no doubt as to this, if we render literally. And it is known to many that the English "is dead" (unlike some other languages), **now** denotes a **state**, but the tense here used by the Holy Spirit indicates a **past** fact.* Quite a different expression is used when the **state** is before us (e.g., Eph. 2. 1, and the godly reckoning of Rom. 6. 11), as a glance at the original, or Young's or Strong's concordance, will show.

Hence we rightly render "He That died." Who is This? The next sentence would suggest the Lord Jesus, for it at once adds, "Now if **we** died **with Christ**." The singular speaks of Him again in verse 10 "In that **He** died." He died unto sin once," followed at once by the plural concerning us, "Likewise reckon **ye** yourselves."

But how can we say of the Lord Jesus that He has been justified? There is no difficulty if we truly realize that "justify" does **not** in itself mean "make righteous" one who is **not** righteous. It is **not** like the word "cleanse," which does imply impurity. Romans 3. 4 will make this clear. "That Thou mightest **be justified** in Thy sayings." Cf. Luke 7. 29, "All the people that heard, and the publicans, **justified** God."

Hence a righteous One is the very One **we** expect to be

justified (1 Kings 8. 32; 2 Chron. 6. 23, "justifying the righteous"). That which is abnormal, and unjust, **except on one condition**, is justifying the wicked (Prov. 17. 15). The **one** exception is when there is a perfect Substitute, in Whom the ungodly are both graciously and righteously justified (Rom. 4. 5).

The Lord Jesus is declared to be "justified" in 1 Timothy 3. 15, and Romans 4. 25 appropriately says "He was raised again because of our justification," His, by right, and ours, by grace, being **one** through His perfect work. Moreover, Isaiah 50 is plainly prophetic, and there we read, "He is near That justifieth Me" (verse 8). Thus God, That justifieth, reversed man's verdict and raised Him up (Rom. 4. 24, 25). Hence, as God the Father is the Justifier, and His beloved Son the Justified One, (even the Righteous One), we have "the righteousness of God" manifested, and Psalm 24. 5 is fulfilled, "He shall receive the blessing of the Lord, and **righteousness** (an award to One Whose perfect obedience has been recorded in verse 4) from the God linked with His Salvation" (cf. Ps. 22. 21; Heb. 5. 7).

It seems strange that the translation should have used the word "freed" here and here only, § since quite a different word (nearly always appropriately rendered "free") is found in verses 18 and 22 for "freedom" from the **slavery** of sin. That is **quite** another thought. The error in translation confuses the legal work **for** us, and the liberating work **in** us. Christ, the Perfect One, could, and did, take our place under law's penalty, but the **release** from slavery is in **our** experience as the result, and Romans 6 leads up to this. Thus it brings together justification and sanctification, **as ever**, that we who **died** with Christ and who **shall** live with Him (verse 8), may rejoice that **death** hath no more dominion **over Him** (verse 9), and then realize "**sin** shall not have dominion **over you**" (verse 14). All truth is practical, as the Holy Spirit teaches, and everything that Christ accomplished for us is to bring living and fruitful effects (verses 21 and 22) in our walk. Yes, we **are** quickened, and there is "the end everlasting life" (verse 22) that we may now no longer "live" in sin, but "in newness of life unto God" (verses 2, 4, 11). What a holy emphasis on a holy life to God's glory!

* Cf. "If ye died with Christ" (Col. 2. 20), not "if ye be dead"—see 3. 1, "if ye then be risen." Death has been followed by a spiritual application of Christ's risen life in reality, type (baptism), and confession. See 2 Corinthians 5. 14. "Then all died with Him" (cf. Rom. 7. 4).

§ Wycliffe and Tyndale were correct, "justified"—and yet the change was made. How we need to pray more as to "**revisions**," which may hinder!

A believer's character is often a greater testimony than his public ministry, or it can undo that ministry. "Take heed unto **thyself**, and unto the doctrine" (1 Tim. 4. 16).

Aaron's Action in Exodus 32.

Do we not well to ponder this from the standpoint of heart-searching? We can easily fall into the sin of regarding the attitude of another as openly setting aside God's claims, with the inference, "I would not act thus." But we are all led into some compromise more easily than we think, unless kept at the feet of the Lord. The enemy seeks to cause a self-complacency, or a self-confidence, even in those who would hate self-righteousness.

Why did Aaron ask for the golden ear-rings? Would it not seem that he wished to **delay** matters by asking for the gold that would take time to remove, and which, possibly, the people would be more averse to surrender, as these were a permanent adornment? Further, Genesis 35. 4 may suggest such ear-rings were often linked with idolatry. Would he thus covertly seek to show them their wrong condition? Would their **superstitiousness**, he thought, preserve them from the giving up, and thus, by a limitation of the gold he would accept, he would "save the situation" and frustrate the object. The tendency not to be truthfully outspoken, and to give "a secondary reason," for an action, to be unwilling to say plainly that which might offend, and to gain the time by hiding up,—are not all these things possible to us, if we are out of harmony with the Lord?

We notice definitely that though he made the calf, **he** personally never called it their "god," or even a symbolic reminder. "**They** said." We note how the angels of the assemblies in Pegamum and Thyatira both **tolerated**, and thus abetted, evil, in which there is no suggestion they **personally** shared. Why did Aaron make a calf? Was it **their** suggestion, and he was **afraid** lest they would stone him? Or did he choose this emblem to cause their repugnance? Or did he imply such a symbol could be adopted (as Romanism has its images), to "remind" of **sacrifice** to the true God? In any case, we see the awful sin, and downward path of **COMPROMISE**. It is **this** that searches us. For the **FIRST** step is the beginning of peril, illustrated a thousand times to-day.

Aaron's vacillating is seen in his building an altar, **and** saying "To-morrow." He would still give a delay, **hoping**, it seems, that Moses would return. A symbolic period (forty days) was nearly up. But all such attempts to **put off** the crisis were vain. Compromise is compromise, and compromise is sin. Aaron was left to instruct the people (Ex. 24. 14), who were to enquire of him, but they came to **command** him (Ex. 32. 1), and he yielded. He surrendered "responsibility," but this did not excuse guilt. His **language** was to undo that which his action had done:—"To-morrow is a feast **unto the Lord**." But such an attempt utterly failed, as it always does before God. He is holy, and truth must be maintained, and the Divine record is that "**Aaron** had made them naked," and "**they** made the calf which **Aaron** made" (Ex. 32. 25, 35).

May we learn the lessons, and be kept (with simple faith) in the path of love's obedience and leave the consequences of faith's determination with God, nor let the fear of men bring a snare that ruins **TESTIMONY**, however plausible it may appear.

"MUST."

There are precious "musts" in Scripture as John 3. 7, 14, 30, 4. 4, 9. 4. But there are dangerous "musts" which we find used by children of God. When a man of Israel says to me, "I must do this (against his profession) else I couldn't live," the question at once applies, "Is not the God of Abraham living?" But what about those who are begotten to a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, when they say, "I **must** do this," though their consciences are awakened? O the sad lack of witness if business at any time takes the pre-eminence instead of the Lord Jesus. We are so easily ensnared by the theory, "We must live, we cannot be too particular, it is only a little thing, it is not exactly forbidden; I don't want to be thought too peculiar; others are dependent on me; I don't like to do it, but otherwise I shall lose my situation possibly."

All these thoughts crowd in, yet faith remains faith. The matter in question may be "very small." The larger things are easily decided: there is the definite "No." We would rather lose our life than compromise regarding them. And thus in the smaller things the fuller test and testimony are found. When there is a measure of veiled compromise, and when many others, who are "earnest Christians" do "this" or "that," and when fellow believers suggest we should do it, then it is that we need grace to put the Lord first, **at all costs**. It may be a matter of some "union," or of some small action in business that at first troubles the conscience, or of the **Lord's Day**, and paid duties then causing one concern, and we hesitate, persuade ourselves the "times" are not ordinary, and, with dulled conscience, we gradually fail to feel any qualm, and, shielding ourselves, even lead others to the same attitude, and the whole standard of uncompromising loyalty to the Lord Jesus is lowered. Bread and butter, present-day circumstances, the fear of men, and pounds, shillings and pence take the place that, in love, we gave to Him, and in baptism we confessed to be His, and which, in spiritual healthiness, we own as His.

Let us seek grace not to separate the blessing from the Blessor, and value it for its own sake, nor to separate the service from Him Whom we serve, and make "it" the aim, instead of Himself.

POSSESSION.

IT is blessed not only to be possessed, but to possess. God laid His loving emphasis on this when He brought Israel, His possessed people, **out** that He might bring them in. The land was **His**, the land was to become **theirs**. And we have the excellent counterpart in Christ Jesus. In several cases we have a possession lost, and the Divinely appointed means of restoration is rich with blessing in its typical teaching of Christ. The leper **was** "without the camp": he could enjoy the possession of—**NOTHING**. But healed and cleansed, he was brought into the camp (Lev. 14. 8), and on the eighth day, symbolic of resurrection, he could enter "his tent" (Lev. 14. 8, 9). The teaching is deeply impressive, and encouraging. The one who fled to the city of refuge was given a place there (Jos. 20. 4), but only on the **death** of the high priest could he return unto "the land of his possession" (Num. 35. 28). The one who was waxen poor and deprived of his possession (Lev. 25. 25) could only come into this blessing by **redemption** or the jubilee (Lev. 25. 28). How significant are the words, "He shall return unto his possession."

In Christ I see the sacrifices for the leper all united, in Him the death of the High Priest, in Him the only redemption by One Who became near to His people (Lev. 25. 25, with Heb. 2. 14), in Him is the Antitype of jubilee blessings, which will be manifest for Israel when He returns. How could all these revelations of Himself be found in the earlier Scriptures, were they not God's gracious gift, with full inspiration, and full foreknowledge of centering all in the Lord Jesus. His work was no afterthought.

HAMAN AND ANTI-SEMITISM.

How high Haman became (Est. 3. 1). God permitted it. But why? Not to make it permanent. He spoke to Israel thereby: they were settled down in captivity. Mordecai did not take the standpoint of Saul the son of Kish (see Est. 2. 5, with 1 Sam. 15. 20) with regard to the Amalekite, the **Agagite**. God intervened—He works before He is seen to work. (His name occurs four times in **veiled** acrostic in the Hebrew of this book) The "third day" is emphasized (Est. 5. 1), and the evil of Haman, who aimed at "the people of Mordecai" (Est. 3. 6), recoiled on himself (Est. 7. 10). His ten sons (Est. 9. 7-10) prefigure Antichrist's ten kings in Revelation 17. 12-14. God is silent now, but not for ever. It is not the silence of ignorance, nor of weakness, nor of indifference. The times and seasons are in His Own authority (Heb. 1. 7), and anti-semitism shall be laid low firmly and definitely. It is deeply solemn when any children of God attach themselves to such a movement, even by **words** of harmony, or bitterness. "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem" is God's abiding command, and the watchmen are set on her **prophesied** walls, for believing prayer **stands** on the realized promises of our God (Isa. 62. 6, 7).

Faith—A Duty, or A Gift?

MANY children of God, with godly caution, misapply their concern, and increase severances by misunderstanding, and even imputing wrong motives or inferences to beloved fellow believers. Seek to **understand** a brother in Christ, and to know what he really **means**, before you "criticize" his doctrine. It may be he expresses himself badly: it may be he has been brought up in other surroundings, and uses some words somewhat differently from you, it may be that you, or I, hasten to conclusions, and then interpret all in the light of a hastily formed impression. This danger is real in every way. If I think much of anyone, I may easily become blind to his wrong actions, and interpret them more than excusingly. Hence flattery, and man-worship. In our avoidance of this let us not fall into the other sin. If I am "hurt" by a brother, coincidences may soon lead to misconstruing a dozen other actions. It is remarkable that as various verses of Scripture "seem" to confirm us, as soon as we have **fixed** on one wrong interpretation, so many things appear to "justify" our wrong judgment of another as soon as we are fixed on it. All these things suggest a lack of love, and a lack of prayer, against which we all need to guard.

How many have written condemnatorily of "duty-faith," and beautifully of sovereign grace. Yet may it not be they have sometimes understated the accountability of man to believe what God has spoken? How many, on the other hand, have said hard words of "predestination," and have thought they were doing God service, neither realizing or manifesting the fulness of absolute grace received. Almost all of us think we know, and that our logic is unimpeachable, and hence comes in pride, and with it impatience, then hurried criticism of others, and a breach will follow. Love is humble, and humility is loving. To esteem others better is not natural, to "love one another" is easy in theory, but do we always enjoy in experience what it implies?

"We know in part." What if we all err in measure? Are we not all liable to one-sidedness? A specialist easily falls into this attitude: a specialist becomes overbearing and harsh. Am I a specialist in part of God's truth, or growing up "into Christ in all things" (Eph. 4. 15)?

Faith is a duty: it is part of the law (Matt. 23. 23). It is foolishness and sin to deny **God** (Ps. 14. 1), and to withhold anything from God is sin. The heart should love Him, the mind should acknowledge Him. No action can be isolated: if I go **toward** evil I go away **from God**. Believing **not** God makes Him a liar (John 5. 10). Could any more grievous description of sin be given? And men are to be judged according to their works—including thoughts (Ps. 94. 11; Prov. 6. 18, 23. 7; Isa. 55. 7), and words (Matt. 12. 36, 37).

The attentive reader may have prayerfully noticed a contrast in the two sentences of John 3. 36, "He that **believeth on (into)** the Son hath everlasting life, but he that **believeth not** the Son shall not see life." And in 1 John 5. 10 we read, "He that **be-**

lieveth on (into) the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that **believeth not** God hath made Him a liar.' When the believer is before us, in this context, there is an added "into." Undoubtedly the child of God believes God (Acts 27. 25), but he also experiences a living appropriating, confiding faith that **enters into** the One believed, and knows a **living communion**. This is what many have described as "saving faith." **Such** faith is the gift of God ((Eph. 2. 8; Phil. 1. 29), it is the manifestation of a new life (1 John 5. 1), it is not among "dead works" (Heb. 6. 1), but part of the "new creation." But can **we** define just where, and how, and why, this new "life," in accord with God's purpose of eternal election, comes in?

Is it not better to **worship**? Analysis may often occupy our minds with trying to find what God has not revealed, and omitting to feed upon that which He has revealed. The thought of any merit is repugnant to a sinner saved by grace. It is not that we had anything worthy, or did that which was acceptable, and God, therefore, "rewarded" us with grace. We were "children of wrath even as others." We would praise for grace to the undeserving. We realize His perfection, and His right to choose, from a ruined race, and **why**? He chose those of us who now believe, though we find so much that is hateful in our natural character! We cannot boast, but only say—He loved, and we would praise. Thus we look for more miracles of grace, and as we go to sinners to tell of our Lord Jesus we rejoice to declare that all who feel their need will be welcome, for He has said so (Matt. 11. 28). And when any oppose, we may remind that they have **not** rendered that of which they are capable and for which they are accountable (in believing God and acknowledging Him), because of an opposed will; and, further, that they do not **desire** to be with God, yet blame Him that His salvation is not theirs. But our definite, humble and glad message to all must still be the Lord Jesus: as Paul of old we "preach Christ and Him crucified," and O that our joy and manner may be that of those who "know Him" and the power of His resurrection." Thus will there be fruit, to His glory.

I do not know **how** God blesses others through your prayers, but He does, including me. I do not think He will withhold blessings for which you are ready if I omit prayer, but I do know He will use even my prayer to help you. I do not for one moment suggest that souls who would have been saved will be unsaved if we fail to pray, but I am sure He blesses them through our prayers. Yes, it is a wondrous fact that sustained and definite prayer in the Holy Spirit has led to reviving. And God is the same to-day. We need not understand "why." It is our privilege to pray. One thing seems clear. If we fail God will work, and use others instead of us, but He is graciously willing to use us: are we unready and unwilling, or grateful for the grace and the privilege?

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The Student of Scripture.

Edited by Percy W. Heward.

"The Fruit of Lips, giving thanks to His Name."

Hebrews 13. 15

A Word of Introduction.

A PERIODICAL reminds us that a "period" has passed. Has it been full of praise to God? Many "things" have "happened", as men say. Have we walked with God, and talked of all His wondrous works? These pages are useless unless they glorify God. A day is wasted unless it is a "thanksgiving day". Men speak of "thanksgiving" for great things, as a harvest, the believer gives thanks in EVERYTHING, or should (1 Thess. 5. 18). Bible study as a mere curriculum is barren: obedience and praise, as we feed on God's words, must be the living result. Fruit, fruit, fruit:—a delightful word. Life, beauty, growth, refreshment, benefit to others, CLUSTERED evidences of God's grace WITHIN—each are among the precious thoughts. Fruit without life, moisture and blessing (received constantly) is not possible. Receive that you may give—what God delights to receive back—FRUIT.

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The Godhead of God.

Many, apart from the wicked one of Psalm 50, seem to treat God as if He were a man. This is a tremendous and increasing present-day peril: it invades the whole order of God's creative work and providence, and brings utter confusion. The authority of Scripture is undermined, the gospel is robbed of its glory, and there is discord instead of majestic harmony. Unless God is acknowledged as God, everything is in disorder, all is disintegrated. Isaiah asks with holy zeal, "To whom then will ye liken God?" and God Himself repeats the searching question (Isa. 40. 18, 25). If there were more reverence for God, and realization of His glorious majesty, how different everything would be! God is perfect in His attributes, perfect in their completeness, both

individually and collectively. Not one is missing, not one is defective. Do we think of knowledge? He knows **all**. I cannot learn completely even a small portion of one branch of knowledge: He cannot be ignorant of anything in all time and space. We all **forget** very much: He can never experience this failure. Nor is it that He has gradually attained knowledge: from eternity He knew the names of all His people, and all their future, their wishes, their circumstances. Their sins were laid on Christ before they were born, not one being left out.

In relation to Him all **our** thoughts of time fall short: past, present, and future were all equally before Him, or ever the earth was formed. Such knowledge is too wonderful for us (Ps. 139. 6), but any **other** conception would be foolish and infringe on His Godhead, and revelation of Himself, and involve contradiction and impossibilities. And not only does God know all that **is** and **shall be**, but also what would have taken place under **other** circumstances (Matt. 11. 21). The inner thoughts of all, and their reactions to all that comes, or could come, across their mind, are before Him. As soon as we realize that each **present** action of each man is partly affected by his temperament, by his environment, and by expected and unexpected actions of others, and that the temperament has been itself moulded by thousands of circumstances, each of them equally modified by countless activities of others, and that a man's environment has been, from birth onward, the result of Divine providence, acting upon myriads of unrealized details, we arrive at an infinity of problems, **unless we fully recognize the perfect and unlimited knowledge of One Who is absolutely God**. For all these influenced, or influencing, circumstances, and "related" causes, affect the degree of each moral quality of disobedience and thereby of punishment. Human judgment is inevitably based on results and approximations. One man kills another, and is a murderer: another does not kill because he restrains himself by fear of punishment: yet another is hindered by the superior force of an officer of law, or of the one who would have been his victim. How then can human judgment rightly apportion guilt?

But you say, "A near approximation is sufficient." Yes, for **man**, but not for **absolute** righteousness. If we decide that anything is correct to one millionth part mathematically, the uncertainty is negligible, but with God everything must be absolute, or it is not "righteous and true" (Rev. 15. 3): the **smallness** of a variation does not enter. Two thousand million persons acting in millions of ways, and themselves influenced by millions, in the past nigh 6,000 years, as well as the present, and likewise by unseen forces, angelical, and demoniacal, are an impossible problem **for all but God**. His perfect knowledge is entwined with perfect wisdom, and perfect judgment in righteousness, and thus we behold the necessary "harmony" of all His attributes. Not one of these can be isolated from another. We stand amazed, and adore. We realize, too, the absolute Deity of Christ, to Whom all judgment is committed (John 5. 22, 23).

It is this **blending** of attributes that solves our problems. The history of mankind and the inequalities beheld would overpower, and bring unrighteous confusion as a **finality**, if there were not One of infinite knowledge, and equally infinite wisdom, justice and power, knowing the bent of each hidden mind, and the potentialities of each heart, in each possible environment, and bringing a perfectly **right** goal in each case, causing all things to work together, either for His people's good, or a just retribution, so that even the wrath of men must praise Him.

The remarkable fact is that anything short of absolute Godhead would neither harmonize with true Deity, nor eliminate errors as to justice and proportion, which, **accumulatively**, would be able to subvert all. A recognition of absoluteness turns every ward of the lock, and fits with the full Godhead of God, and thus solving both problems **at once**, demonstrates yet more clearly its appropriateness. And the Book that alone reveals this must be the only consistent Book. The very inspiration of Scripture is thereby Divinely illustrated. All thoughts converge so exactly, and we have an unveiling that is **spiritually** fitting all, in the awe, worship, and gratitude to which it awakens and draws each humble and believing heart. The more we see of the theme the more we realize that everything comes in line, and is focussed on the **same** point of harmony, and that which glorifies God aright leads man to the true and right attitude, which alone is rich with blessing. Here is the fullest test of truth, which knows no contradiction.

Nature illustrates the need for God's absoluteness. Nothing therein is essential: God made all in wisdom. The moon depends on the earth, the earth on the sun, the sun depends on — what? When I walk across a room, how many **other** motions are involved, unknown to, or, at least, unfelt by me? But God has decreed the **inter**-relation of each and all so that appointed laws of nature, known and unknown, act and re-act to prevent disintegration, and this is the more marvellous since nature bears, in varied spheres, evidence also of an invasion by sin, yet the ravages are restrained, else there would be the undoing of the whole. "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further" (Job 38. 11).

Anything of mere evolution would involve lack of harmony, and thereby civil war in nature, and thus its dissolution; the very complication of **myriads** of forces making this the more self-evident. To conceive millions of blind powers in nature acting, and re-acting, inherently without personal direction, or superintendence, or design, or co-ordination, (so that physical events could be foreknown to a minute), would be a greater strain on **credulity** than all else. Nor could a limited Godhead, or a polytheism of opposing divinities, meet the case. The one solution is so appropriate, that it manifests its reality.

Remarkably in history also we view the same twofoldness which we have observed in nature, namely, (a) control and purpose, yet (b) the invasion of evil, withal held back from a full catastrophe.

Well may we, like Job, realize our nothingness, and confess our sin (Job 42. 1-6), if we attempt to argue, and so we come to feel that all complaint at our trials would be questioning God, and thus attacking His wisdom. **It is sin.** Let us live in our appointed spheres as worshippers and obedient children, nor seek vainly to get out of our depths. We are limited, God is unlimited. We can trust Him implicitly. This is what the natural man will not do. He thinks of God as such an one as himself, and boldly criticizes. The redeemed heart is lowly, and adores. How blessed to be in this condition. Here is the only wisdom. God is: God knows all: God upholds all: God will arrange all perfectly: our imperfect judgment and inferences can only bring confusion, and worse. Sin should make us ashamed to argue, grace silences selfish wishes, and Divine quickening leads to true wisdom, that sees the folly of presumption.

May I, in this connection, mention a fundamental fallacy?—"I should not do this, therefore God would not." Such words are often heard as to future punishment, but they would apply equally to **past** judgments, and to the very entry of sin. This brings us to the **essential** difference between God and man, so that in certain attributes, as **knowledge** and **judgment**, to imply a parallel with ourselves is usurpation of His throne. It is only in revealed and **appointed** spheres (e.g. kindness) that we have the **appointed** imitation (Matt. 5. 45), and in love to saints (Eph. 5. 1). But in knowledge, authority and righteous government, we cannot, and are not meant to be those who imitate. It is for us to realize God's place and reverently to keep our own. He is **over** all: we are, by nature, His creation, and His subjects,—by infinite grace, His children.

In this unveiling of God's glory, all chance and fatalism are set aside. As in nature there are varied and different movements of the same heavenly bodies, at the same time, but ordained and controlled, that chaos does not reign, so God has entwined the outworking of His purpose, and the activities of the will of man, within its permitted sphere, and He deals with each, and all, in perfect wisdom and rightness. No other solution is possible. Philosophy must fall as far short in explaining as science falls short in knowing, but the believer has the restfulness of **God's own key**, and there the truth stands impregnable. This is the only logical position, but, beyond logic, we have faith in a Person—"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

And here is the explanation of the activities and power of prayer. Indeed it was a question regarding this that was used of God to lead to these meditations:—Do our prayers change God's will, or do they only affect the one praying subjectively in his spiritual condition? The latter would be a precious "only," but neither question fully deals with the mystery of prayer. Not only are we in praying **brought to** a blessedly new standpoint, where God shows and gives us what would **not** have been ours in our earlier standpoint before the praying, but He still hearkens

to the voice of a man, and **answers** prayer remarkably. Yet He does not answer with surprise, re-arranging His purpose, but from eternity He knew all, and incorporated the prayers of His own in the working out of His purpose. **Limited** knowledge would make this impossible: the question comes up through a **natural** tendency to interpret everything from **our** standpoint of **our** limitations. As in other matters, the realization of the absolute Godhead of God removes the difficulty. The problems are caused by explaining God in terms of ourselves. How then will this affect our praying? First, it will increase our confidence. If we thought we could change **God's** will, we should be afraid to pray. But our prayer acts as our moving in a room, without **our** thought of the **other** complex movements of the universe, in many of which we are sharing. We are concerned with crossing the room and responsible for **that**: so in prayer: likewise we are responsible to pray according to the **revealed** will of God, and shall receive His answers as we are intensely in earnest. His many workings, secret to us, are safe in His authority, wisdom, love and might. They are never a hindrance to heart-prayer and holy importunity, any more than other movements of the earth, and of the solar system make us sit still, or careless as to our activity in walking wherever it is God's will to go. To say "I will simply let the earth move me," or to wait till we understand all, would be impossible madness for a normal living man: so in the matter of prayer, for one alive in Christ Jesus.

And thus we reach the unveiling of God's sovereignty and human accountability. These are entwined by One Who has **absolutely** perfect attributes to comprehend and entwine them. From the **human** standpoint we should mutilate one or the other, and conceive of contradictions; and the present tendency of the religious world is to exclude God and make man central. But the Divine and supernatural standpoint is vastly different. We are not to occupy ourselves with all the prior and unseen movements of God, whether we (to revert to the appointed parallels of nature) walk across a room, or bring the Gospel of Christ to a lost soul. To know **how** all motions are co-ordinated is **NOT OUR RESPONSIBILITY**. We **cannot** grasp all: the human mind **cannot** explain all: nor are we meant so to do. But we are privileged, and responsible, to worship and pray, and work, and speak, and live to lead souls to Christ. Are we in **earnest** as we should be? We would be much more earnest. Yet it is a joy to rest on One Whose boundless mercy has reached us, and Who has included the fruit of such mercy, manifested in our loving obedience, to bring others to the same knowledge of the same Saviour. We give thanks for electing grace: it never hinders our godly intensity: rather we are stimulated not to be discouraged for "He shall not fail nor be discouraged" (John 6. 37). His sovereignty in command impels us: His sovereignty in promise refreshes us: His sovereignty in all satisfies us.

The theory that prophecy of man's actions, (as of Judas or Antichrist), relieves such of accountability is a strange misunderstanding. Prediction of what **shall** be has no necessary **effect** on its occurrence, for He Who declares knew it **would** occur, in any case. Any questioning of this criticizes His Godhead. And if His overruling of the permitted actions of men is His controlling of the results of the will which is theirs in His wisdom, and He knows exactly what portion of choice, and relation of every pre-disposing cause and attendant circumstance, there is in every action, to deny His perfect declaration of their accountability is presumptuous infringing of His Godhead. And it is the more manifestly wrong so to do, for the one who criticizes is confessedly quite ignorant of the proportion of personal choice. Thus a little reflection will bring us to see that the recognition of God's unlimitedness in **every** attribute prevents any conflict of different parts of His ways, and causes a possibility of harmony which the believing heart realizes is more than a possibility, even a certainty. Then, with God's servant of old, moved by the Holy Spirit, we shall say, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor? or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things: to Him be glory for ever. Amen." And then the added exhortation fills our heart and lips, as those redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 11. 33-12. 1).

Whether we see all our path or not, we know that God sees: whether we understand all God's way or not, we rejoice that He understands: whether we feel all the blessing or not, we are conscious that the fact of God's grace remains. The measure of our acceptance is not the measure of our realization of it, but His: our sins were laid on Christ not according to our incomplete knowledge of them, but according to the precious words, "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Glory be to God:

Faith never looks at things as if they were everything, or even primary. They are only instruments in the Lord's hand. Whether attractive or the reverse, we see His loving use of them, and would think of Him first. Our joys are thus kept from producing undue excitement, and our trials from causing alarm. Success does not bring pride, nor "disappointment" depression. In all we see Him and His will first, and can meet "things" in His "grace and power."

"BEHOLD, I WILL DO A NEW THING."

God delights to call His children's attention to His "wondrous works" of grace. Every "behold" of His in Scripture is a signpost: may our eyes be kept open. Do we listen to His voice, and realize with the eyes of the heart, or treat the words as mere rhetoric? His promises are to affect our whole being: they are to be living to us. We have too little experience of this "beholding."

In the verse before us (Isaiah 43. 19), an entire contrast with Numbers 16. 30, we see what God will soon accomplish for Israel. There will be a definite change in the earth, itself and its wildernesses, when He brings back His redeemed remnant. Isaiah 41. 17, 18, 19 and 60. 10, 11, 12 illustrate. These exceeding great and precious promises should encourage us, and show how dear to Him Israel is, and how He hates anti-Semitism. It is a blessed thing to listen to His voice. "I will do." Man cannot do it: but He steps in. "I will do." If there is "no new thing under the sun," He rejoices in manifesting a "new creation" (cf. 2 Cor. 5. 17). We have the blessedness now in Christ, and Israel will be blest, as a nation, in that Day, when He pardons those whom He reserves (Jer. 50. 20). Do we believe this? Of course we do! But do we **show** our belief, by praise, and by joy, and by living in the light of Christ's coming? How searching is this question to our hearts.

"AFTER THE DEATH."

With such words the Holy Spirit begins Joshua and Judges, as well as a central chapter of the five books of Moses (Lev. 16). Is it strange? Surely not, when we see how Genesis ends with "a coffin in Egypt," and Deuteronomy shows the Lord's burial of Moses (34. 6), and Joshua with a twofold death (21. 30, 33). Sin has brought **death** into the world. Is there not a felt contrast when we read the ending of each of the four gospels concerning the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and when we find that Acts begins, "To whom also He showed Himself alive **AFTER HIS SUFFERING**" (Passion; Acts 1. 3)? Thanks be unto God, we have not now only a type as in Leviticus 16, but the Antitype, not only the earthly warfare and partial claiming of Joshua and Judges, but the heavenly victory and complete claim "in Christ Jesus." All Scripture, as Genesis 1. 1, with John 1. 1, and Malachi 4. 6, with Revelation 22. 20, makes clear, is written to manifest the purpose of God's grace and to reveal the glory of the Lord Jesus and His finished work with its fruitfulness. Our hearts cannot be too thankful for Him, and for His resurrection after His death and burial, and our union with Himself.

PRAYER.

Do not pray "at" any one: that is not real prayer: nor "to the audience" with human "wisdom of words" as if to impress. Remember the Hearer more than the hearers. Moreover, is it the leading of the Holy Spirit after a conversation with another believer, when there may have been difference of judgment, to take the opportunity to re-state **your** point of view, and thereby hinder a holy "Amen"?

Even "expository prayer" may easily usurp the place of ministry, and put the manward aspect in a wrong prominence. Believers are "edified" (as 1 Corinthians 14 makes clear) when our Father is **FIRST** before us. Let us remember, too, the danger of "Thou knowest that . . ." followed by statements of self-defence, and also recollect that **united** prayer is meant to be **united**. Hence do not seek to bring in that which you realize other saints do not feel to be God's will. Avoid speaking harshly of any in prayer, and likewise of broadcasting the faults of some under the guise of praying for their spiritual deliverance and revival. These are all perils, unless we are **subject** to the Lord, and truly **LED** that we may **LEAD** in true prayer aright.

GRACE ABOUNDING.

'Tis not what **we** have done
That made our peace with God:
'Twas His beloved Son,
Who gave for us His blood,
Amazing grace! And now we praise,
His will would love, and choose His ways.

'Tis not by human might
That we can do God's will,
Wisdom to act aright,
And strength His plan to fill,
The Holy Spirit gives each day,
And saints press on the heavenly way.

All glory be to God
For all we do and are,
Saved by Christ's precious blood,
Once ruined and afar:
Redeemed, brought nigh, we soon shall see
Our living Lord, Who set us free.

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The Student of Scripture.

Edited by Percy W. Heward.

Walk worthy . . . with all lowliness and meekness with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of the peace.
Ephesians 4. 1-3

A Word of Introduction.

DOCTRINE without practice becomes empty theory: "Christianity" without Christ is only a counterfeit. We need Himself, His life, power and fruitfulness. These pages are NOT to give bare information, NOR to encourage mere mental acumen, NOR to provide skeletons of sermons. They are to exalt the Lord Jesus, to tell of His glory, to attract His redeemed to Himself, to refresh our hearts with the realization of unity in Himself, to awaken loving concern for all His revealed will, to remind of His often forgotten words, to help missionary prayerfulness in the Holy Spirit, and to prepare for His Near Coming. The walk of a believer is deeply important. Differences, quarrels, irritability, variance among saints mar the testimony. Such sin leads to further sin. Only as there is practical godliness can we expect to understand what God our Father has caused to be written. Lack of love brings a haze over all the truth. "Abiding" in Christ induces a deep perception of His standpoint, and prevents a wrong attitude to a fellow member of Himself. Hence these pages go forth.

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TOUCHING THE LIPS.

Three times we have strikingly before us a Divinely granted touching of the lips or the mouth of a child of God, and this in connexion with empowered service unto Him. Isaiah was brought to feel and confess his unworthiness and need, and then the live coal—the live coal from the altar—was at once applied, and the words sounded forth, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine

iniquity is taken away" (Isa. 6. 7). How blessedly is the blending of the work of the Lord Jesus and of the Holy Spirit indicated even as by the blood and then the oil on the **cleansed** leper's ear, and our hearts rejoice to see that the lips where the blood is applied are the lips that say "Here am I," and these are the lips that give the witness—the **same** lips. O that we may learn, feel, and exemplify the meaning of all this, in the power of the Holy Spirit. In Daniel 10. 16 we notice that the prophet had felt his strengthlessness (verses 8, 16, 17), and he had become dumb. But **his** lips were touched, and he was conscious of the beginning and the maintaining of strength. Mark the added words, "He strengthened me," "Be strong, yea, be strong," "Thou hast strengthened me." **God is faithful!**

And if we have in these two passages the cleansing and the strengthening, we find in Jeremiah 1. 9 the Lord's touching, with the primary thought of giving His words to one who feels he cannot speak. O how we stand in need of power, and His freshness, and His own message! We cannot but be impressed with the fact that each passage sets forth the privilege of representing the Lord in holy service and testimony. Thus we see, in each case, one who is strengthless, and knows it, and we, too, own the necessity for His cleansing, power, and the suited words. Cannot we, although we are not prophets and writers of Scripture, experience grace from the same God of all grace? We can!

CONSISTENT FAITH.

Believing God, ourselves we doubt,
Our God can never fail:
In glad advance His triumph shout,
He must in all prevail.
Our fears, our feelings—what are they,
When God has pledged **His** word?
He shall **fulfil**—then, come what may,
We would be undeterred.
Press on—believe—with vision clear,
And joy that lifts the head:
The coming of our Lord is near,
He'll do all He hath said.
Like precious faith our hearts would seek
Each **precept** to believe,
That we may do, with faith ne'er weak,
Engrafted words receive.
So will each promise and command
Our faith delight to own,
Upheld by God's all-loving hand,
Would trust Himself alone.

Knowledge and Prayer.

"CAN I pray, if I do not know what is God's will?" Assuredly I can pray—"Thy will be done" (Matt. 6. 10). "Should I always know **what** is God's will, and, if so, **how** can I find it?" Let us ponder this second question first. God can use "a fleece" or any outward thing as with Gideon (Jud. 6. 36-40), but the usual key is **abiding** "in Christ" that leads to thinking in line with God's will (John 15. 7). It is NOT "I know God's will" by impulse or sign, or asking for His guidance as to one matter or another, but rather by the **whole life** being in harmony with Himself. That is precious: God seeks persons, not only isolated actions.

"Should I always know?" No. Let us ponder Romans 8. 22, 26, 28—"we know," "we know not," "we know," we know the state of groaning and expecting: we are sure God never makes a mistake: thus we look forward and upward. But we do not always know what is God's "best" for us to-day. What, then? Let us seek to be in fuller fellowship with the Holy Spirit's "groanings **which cannot be uttered**." Observe, "He That searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit," "He maketh intercession according to God," but **we** are not to know all. There are, in God's will, groanings UNSpeakable that we may enter into the privileges of childlike faith. Look again at these verses:—

26. "We know not, what we should pray, according as we ought."	27. "He knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit . . . intercession . . . according to God."
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How blessed the holy encouragement. There is One Who is dealing with all perfectly. Indeed, our **Triune God's** love and interest are here before us. The word "for" (on behalf of) illustrates this for our joy:—

"The Spirit . . . for the saints" (27).
"If God be **for** us" (31).
"He . . . delivered Him up **for** us" (32).
"Christ . . . maketh intercession **for** us" (34).

Glory be to God that such grace abounds. Now we realize the tenderness of the word "help": four letters in English, but seventeen in the original, and it suggests—(a) **taking hold**, (b) personal **interest** and identification, (c) a corresponding **fitness**, (d) acting **together**. What wondrous love amid our "infirmity" or "strengthlessness." Thus the Holy Spirit draws to affection, and not so much to knowing "**what**." The groanings are **unuttered**, so that we may not **know** all, but that our **love and feeling** may be deepened. We need more **heart**, not so much **brain** (proportionately) in our supplications.

The uniting words "likewise," "for we know not," "but," implies this attitude. We cannot "see," but we can "trust." If we do not know what we should ask, we know that all things work **together** for good to the loving believer. Hence our very **need** when our Father does not show us all is a blessed lesson in faith.

Let us not misuse God's gracious teaching by onesidedness. If we have a **promise**, let us claim it. If God puts in our heart to pray (2 Sam. 7. 27), let us believe that we receive (Mark 11. 24). If we walk with God, our "desires" are important to Him (Ps. 14. 5, 19), and our "requests" are to be brought in childlike, unworried love (Phil. 4. 6, 7). When our Father does not make **known** all, let us seek **intensity** in the Spirit, and rejoice in our Father's application of His groanings as He pleases. Thus shall we delight in a fuller all-round experience of the all-round privilege of real prayer.

DIET.

If I am occupied with eating "this" or "that," and with **fear** of indigestion, I shall not be in the condition to digest aright. The **means** of blessing will be made the centre of thought.

There are many things, in our natural life, which God has appointed to be, or become, unconscious or subconscious. So is it with heart-beating, and breathing, and speaking grammatically in our mother tongue, and the formation of letters when we write. The tendency of some is to become spiritually too introspective, or occupied with "means." We need grace to have a more simple, childlike, naturally-spiritual life. That which is "thought about" too much may become a forced effort rather than spontaneous fruit.

In our spiritual diet, had we need to have balance, yet not always to be thinking **how** the food will digest, and what we shall have. Rather let us have a **regular use** of God's varied messages in Scripture, and enjoying them, with healthy appetite, find the spiritual appropriation, and assimilation, and the building up of our spiritual life.

Occupation of mind with the mode of blessing will take our mind off the blessing, and still more seriously, off the Blesser. God works within beyond our knowledge, in the digestion of the food of truth He gives us. Fear of indigestion is, like other fear, a peril. May our hearts have a beautiful experience of the Lord's enabling in the true health of the soul, which, as that of the body, is the unconsciously-received fruit of all-round "living."

"Between Zorah and Eshtaol."

PLACE-NAMES may seem unimportant, but are they? God speaks to us by all, and the **beginning** and the **ending** of Samson's career in Judges 13. 25 and 16. 25 must searchingly impress the attentive heart. "The Spirit of the Lord" is first seen at work, but the goal is **burial** after a sad mixture of failure and sin with overruling. Dan is connected with the serpent in Genesis 49, and with organized idolatry in Judges 18. 30, and in the history of Samson we realize a broken testimony because of absence of self-judgment and self-control. We do not find Samson leading others in God's will: he is alone in victory over a thousand (Jud. 15. 13), alone in prison, alone in the laying low of Dagon and the Philistines, accompanied by his own death. He was a judge, but did not draw the people to the worship of God and His holy way and will. He "judged Israel," but it was "in the days of the Philistines" (Jud. 15. 20). Ominous words. How contrasted to "the prophecy of Christ." In His days Judah shall be saved (Jer. 23. 6, cf. Ps. 72. 7). Samson had no days of victory really **belonging** to him. Indeed, the men of Judah asked, "Knowest thou not that **the Philistines are rulers over us?**" He could not deliver Israel mightily because he was a captive to himself: he could not judge others resultfully, because he did not judge himself. "Solomon **loved**"—if only 1 Kings 3. 3 could stand without ch. 11. 1! The wisest was unwise through **love**. Samson "loved" Delilah (Jud. 16. 4). The strongest was weak, through **love**. How deeply important that the love of the Lord should be an all-embracing and all-stimulating power in the yielded life (John 14. 15, 21. 15).

The word "Zorah" speaks of "leprosy" and "Eshtaol" of "petition," and often we live **between** the two—a half-and-half experience. Yes, Samson had "petitions," he "called on the Lord" (Jud. 15. 18, 16. 28), **but** there was a leprosy as well, far too near. And contact means uncleanness. What power in prayer there would be if we were more separated unto the Lord. Let us not play with sin, nor have pleasures with Philistines (Prov. 4. 13).

Three women come before us in Samson's downfall. His godly mother was a contrast with all, and with the **next** "mother" in this book (ch. 17. 1-4). How much depends on the home, failure is recorded to urge us to **more** concern. Even godly ones have failed. Yet **Proverbs 22. 6 stands**. We thank God for the holy fruit of the training through Jochebed, Elizabeth and Eunice. Mothers, pray on, press on, plod on. God will not fail. It is well to be earnest at the beginning, but do not slacken. Unkind indulgence may be as harmful as offhand harshness.

To return, Samson was a Nazarite outwardly, but not inwardly. He did not deny "within," and he fell. In Judges 14. 16 we see his weakness in yielding to weeping, and again in ch. 16. 15. The schemes and money-love of Delilah, her treachery and misuse of influence disgust us, but what shall we say of Samson's trifling with his God-given strength? In chapter 16. 7 he spoke of "seven green withs" as if to hint his seven locks. Then after a second lie, his third was more suggestive (verse 13), and on the fourth occasion he played into the hands of his deceiver. "My strength will go from me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man."

He was made to sleep (verse 19). "While men slept, his enemy came." "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." Ah, dear believing reader, are not we in peril? Has any Delilah made us to sleep on her knees? O that we rather fall down on our own knees, and seek grace for watchful victory over the beginnings of sin. "He wist not that the Lord was departed from him." The long suffering of the Lord had been manifested, but if we trifle with His patience a crisis will at last arrive. "He wist not." Are we unmindful of God's warnings? Are we hoping to do service for the Lord, when we have lost our strength? True victory over the Philistines is not in the conflict, but in the victory over self that precedes. Warfare without worship will be defeat. Have we not proved that secret sin has meant open overthrow? Or, if God has borne with us, and limited the result, have we not found our inner departure from Him has paralysed our real power? Ah, beloved brother, you who preach His truth, do not our hearts sorrowfully confess this? We need the inner victory. There are more "Delilahs," and "semi-Delilahs," than we realize. And they are not always Philistines. Sin has many disguises, but sin is sin. Samson was blind before he was blinded. Are we?

The wreck of Samson is dishonour to God. The Philistines say, "Our God hath delivered Samson." O that we may not disgrace His Name. They say, "Call for Samson, that he may make us sport." A defeated Christian is the world's laughing-stock. The contrast is the path of the just that shineth more and more (Prov. 4. 18). An untarnished reputation is needful (1 Tim. 3. 7). God, in mercy, heard Samson's last cry, and His honour was retrieved in overruling, as when the ark was captured in 1 Samuel 4, and Dagon was laid low, but overruling is not what we desire. Our hearts long that God may work through us, and rejoice in us, and that all we are, and do, may be to His glory. Why should we grind in the prison house (the woman's menial task given to the one enslaved to evil women) and make sport for Philistines, when we should be the Lord's free men, and seeking the welfare of His people who are so often under the Philistines, partly, at least, through our misuse of privileges, which, rightly used, might be a blessing to them, and, above all, bring glory to Him Who has redeemed us for Himself? He is worthy of all our love. Let no Delilah share it, but let our love to His own be within our love to Him.

Some words and their suggestiveness.

GOD has used words with many helpful thoughts from nature, and general usage, since He has appointed nature as a parable of spiritual things, and also overrules language to His glory in our lives. For example, the two eyes, reminding us of fellowship, and of beholding, and showing joy or weeping, reveal much as to "the eyes of the heart" (Eph. 1. 18, lit.). Again, the word "grow" implies (a) life, (b) a working from within, (c) a receiving, (d) an increase, (e) the manifestation of this, (f) a continuance, and not merely a jerk, or an "up and down" experience. Nor can we forget the taking root downward and bearing fruit upward of Isaiah (37. 31). Likewise the word "walk" (so often in Ephesians) has many precious lessons. It tells of (a) life, (b) uprightness, (c) continuance, (d) a path-way, (e) going forward and, usually, (f) a purpose and goal. Its contrasts, too, are helpful, for we see the opposite of falling or sliding down or back, of lying down and sleeping, and even of sitting. "Walk" sets forth an activity. O that we may illustrate this in our spiritual goings, upheld by our gracious God (Ps. 17. 5). These connotations are rich in many words, and they should speak to our hearts.

Further, many words are crystallized pictures. Egyptian hieroglyphics are not the only pictorial representations, nor the Chinese—for example, "a thought" viewed as a "word" in the "heart." "Sincerity" is "without wax"—how different the patched up marble exposed by the sun's rays. O for true sincerity unto the Lord. "Holiness" reminds us of "wholeness," and we call to remembrance "the whole heart" of Psalm 119, and the praise of "all that is within me" (Ps. 103. 1). "Religion" is a "binding back": hence we well understand "it" is powerless, though "pure religion" is precious when there is first a Divine work within (Jas. 1. 27). How blessed is "salvation," putting a new life within, that it may have fruit without. "Religion" gives nothing, changes nothing in its character. Thus the glory of our Lord's use of the word "life," not "religion." There is not a mere "Christian religion." Men have their religions, but we have a Person, Who is living—Who says "I am He That liveth and became dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore." Who can measure the fulness of "Christ in you, the Hope of glory" (Col. 1. 27)?

Never overstate anything, even against one who opposes you, even though it will give you a "good point." Be thoroughly truthful. God's glory is involved in all your "little things." Do not believe anything more readily against those your flesh would "dislike" than against those you would "like." Do not spread that about which you are not sure: never sink to sinful propaganda, however seemingly advantageous. Love the truth, remembering your relation to the Lord Jesus.

SOME QUOTATIONS FROM THOSE CRITICIZING, ANSWERED IN THE EPISTLES.

ENGLISH printing uses inverted commas, but they are not in the Greek, and context is used often by God to indicate the quotation. In Romans 3. 8, introductory words are found:—“As we be slanderously reported and as **some affirm that we say** (1) Let us do evil, that good may come.” There are two other illustrations here:—(2) “Is God unrighteous Who taketh vengeance?” and (3) “If the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto His glory: why yet am I also judged as a sinner?” These are not the questions of God’s servant, but those which he sadly shows some dared to ask.

Romans 9. 14 has introductory words: “What shall we say then? (4) Is there unrighteousness with God?” At once a rebuke is given. So in verses 19 and 20, “Thou shalt say then unto me, (5) Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted His will?” **At once the reproof:**—“Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?”

I would suggest 1 Corinthians 8. 1 as a possible quotation, “We all have knowledge.”* There is a godly warning here also. Chapter 10. 29, 30 seems a case in point. The critic asks (6) “Why is **my** liberty judged of another man’s conscience? For if I by grace be a partaker, why **am I evil spoken of** for that for which **I give thanks?**” The “I” (self-choosing) life is manifest here, and that is condemned. 2 Corinthians 10. 10 has introductory words: (7) “His letters (say they) are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak and speech contemptible.” Is not this also the key to chapter 12. 16, “But be it so, I did not **burden** you: nevertheless, being **crafty**, I caught you with **guile**.” The apostle does NOT commend guile and deceit, but all is clear if we see here a witness against the sin that **said** he did not “burden” them but was “crafty” instead and “caught them with guile” and “made a gain.” There is holy irony, hence the “I” (what was imputed?) instead of a direct quotation. Would not this be in keeping with the truthfulness God’s servant ever urged?

As usual, we need to be careful that everything is in accord with “**all** Scripture.” That is also the test as to a passage being “figurative.” Any interpretation of “our own,” to suit our opinions, is wrong (2 Pet. 1. 20, 21). How we need prayerful humility and the comparison of the different portions of God’s one harmonious truth.

* 7. 40 may imply (I feel it does), they **boasted**, “We have the Spirit of God.” The “I also” may reprove this tendency still.

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