

Handfuls On Purpose

By

James Smith

For

**Christian Workers and Bible Students
Outlines, Readings, Studies, Thoughts,
Illustrations, Hints.**

Book G

PREFACE

WITH the eighth volume I feel constrained to **offer my** sincerest thanks to all who have so heartily assisted **in** making these books known to those who have been longing for such help **as** they afford, and who have been in turn truly thankful to God for them. Testimonies as to their usefulness have been innumerable.

One of the best proofs of their suitability to meet a felt need is the ever increasing demand for them by those who are busy in the thick of the fight. The assurance that many Christian workers have found them strengthening, and refreshing to their own souls, has brought much refreshing to the heart of the author. It was with this object in view that they were first offered for publication. It is but a small and ordinary matter to present thoughts to the mind, but it is, in our way of thinking, a very great matter to be able in any measure to ~~put~~ **put some** freshness and inspiration into a weary, languid **heart**. The Word of God, as revealed in the "Scriptures of Truth," is the infallible weapon of the Holy Spirit. Our strength and our victory lie in getting into the citadel of God's mind, and in allowing and reckoning on the current of His will flowing through us, and so accomplishing His own merciful and gracious purposes with us. In His will, in His work, and in His way there is no failure and no defeat.

Brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His all-conquering might. Take that sword, the Word of God, which is the only sword the Holy Spirit believes in and uses, "Praying always with all prayer in the Spirit, and supplication for all saints, and for me."

Yours sincerely in His service,

JAMES SMITH

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Old Testament Studies

DEEP CALLETH UNTO DEEP.

PSALM 42, 1-7.

THE key words to this pathetic Psalm are, "My Soul" and "My God." These are two great deeps, and the one calleth unto the other. The natural phenomenon referred to in v. 7, "Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of Thy waterspouts," may have awakened this line of thought and expression. The deep, dark cloud, calling unto the deep sea, by the voice of a whirlwind, creating a waterspout, that may have burst in the hills, flooding the river, and again making for the deep of the sea. Two deeps ; one above, and one beneath ; the God of heaven, and the soul of man. "As the hart panteth after the waterbrooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God." Deep calleth unto deep.

I.-MAN'S SOUL IS A GREAT DEEP. As a spiritual and immortal being, there is in him almost fathomless depths.

1. There is a great deep of NEED, "My soul thirsteth." This deep saith, satisfaction is not in me. No. Apart from God "darkness is upon the face of the deep." The Godless soul of man is but a yawning

gulf of emptiness and thirst. This well is deeper than Jacob's.

2. There is a great deep of POSSIBILITY. In another place the Psalmist says, "The heart is deep" (Ps. 64, 4). There is a great depth of capacity in it for pain **or** pleasure, weal or woe. The depth of its capacity is the depth of its possibility. Who can reckon up the full capabilities of a human soul?

3. Man's soul is also a great deep of RESPONSIBILITY. Being an immortal spirit, eternal consequences are involved in its thoughts and actions.

II.-GOD IS A GREAT DEEP. The Living, Almighty, Self-existent and Eternal God. Who can by searching find out the limits of the Almighty?

1. HIS THOUGHTS are deep (Ps. 92, 4). His thoughts are perfectly consistent with His character. They come out of the great depths of His Infinite mind.

2. HIS WISDOM and KNOWLEDGE are deep. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable." (Rom. II, 33-34). God is *the* "deep thinker," and in the great depth of His wisdom and knowledge there is for us an unsearchable depth of **riches**.

3. HIS LOVE is deep (Eph. 3, 18-19). We need to be rooted and grounded in it, to be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is its breadth, and length, and *depth*, and height. His love is as deep as His fathomless heart. The love that gave Jesus to die.

4. HIS RESOURCES are deep. He clave the rock and gave them water to drink out of the great depths (Ps. 78, 8-15). In Christ, our Spiritual Rock, there

Deep Calleth unto Deep.

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dwelletth all the fulness of God. He is able to do exceeding abundantly.

III.-THE ONE DEEP CALLETH UNTO THE OTHER. The deep of man's need calleth unto the deep of God's fulness ; and the deep of God's fulness calleth unto the deep of man's need. Between our emptiness and His all-sufficiency there is a great gulf, but, thank God, it is not yet fixed. Deep calleth unto deep. The deep mercy of God needs our emptiness, into which it might pour itself. Man needs God, God needs man. Nothing can fully meet the depth of our need but the depth of His Almighty fulness. out of His depths hath He cried unto me : Out of my depths have I cried unto Him (Ps. 130, 1). This is the mind and work of the Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth the deep things of God. Then, my soul, ' Launch out into the deep,' and " dwell deep."

THINGS TOUCHING THE KING.

PSALM 45.

The King referred to here, who is called " God," and whose throne is " for ever and ever," can be none other than the Messiah. The heart of the writer is so filled with the riches of such a soul-warming vision that it *overflows* like a boiling pot (v. 1, R.V.). A full heart makes a ready or eloquent tongue. A clear soul-ravishing sight of the glories of Christ, and His Bride, the Church, is the best preparation for a powerful testimony (Acts 4, 20). Note what these " things " are.

I.-HIS BEAUTY. " Thou art fairer than the children of men ; grace is poured into Thy lips " (v. 2).

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He is the chiefest among the thousands, in earth or in heaven. His mouth is most sweet, because of the grace that has been poured into His lips. No man ever spake like this Man. He is fairer than the children of men, because He is the express and unsullied image of the heavenly Father, full of grace and truth.

II.-HIS SWORD. “ Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh, O most mighty ” (v. 3). Beauty and might are gracefully wedded in the Person of Christ. On his lips, grace ; on His thigh, a sword. The Word of God is either grace that saves, or a sword that severs. This sword is two-edged dividing and discerning (Heb. 4, 12). During these days of grace and salvation, the sword is upon the *thigh* of Him who is most mighty, but the time shall come when it shall be in His *hand* (2 Thess. 1, 8-9).

III.-HIS CAUSE. “ Because of truth and meekness and righteousness ” (v. 4), Christ, in vindicating truth, meekness, and righteousness, is vindicating His own character and our need. He is the Truth. He is meek and lowly in heart. He is the Lord our righteousness. The untruthful (not true to God, and men), the proud, and the self-righteous, are opposed to the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ. To love the truth, to possess a meek spirit, and to act righteously is to be in harmony with His will, in line with His purpose, and in the likeness of His character.

IV.-HIS ARROWS. “ Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the King’s enemies ” (v. 5). The King knoweth His enemies. His arrows are sharp, and they

Things Touching the King. 13

go straight to the *heart*, where the enmity and deceit lurks. They cut so deep that no earthly remedy can heal the wound (Acts 2, 37). These arrows are as swift as light, as straight as truth, and as unerring as the wisdom of God. Sooner or later they shall reach every heart at enmity with the King.

V.-HIS THRONE AND SCEPTRE. “ Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever ; a sceptre of equity is the sceptre of Thy kingdom ” (v. 6, R.V.). The seat and method of His government are eternally the same. His throne is the symbol of eternal dignity, and His sceptre of everlasting righteousness. Every attribute of His kingly character is in favour of righteousness, and opposed to wickedness (v. 7). This is He who was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Therefore God hath anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied. His Divinity is undeniable.

VI.-HIS GARMENTS. “ All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces ” (v. 8). All His vestments have an unmistakable heavenly fragrance about them, because they are His. He is in them. His presence gives a new perfume to every environment. All the doctrines of His Word are as His sweet-smelling garments, that speak of the fulness and freeness of the riches of His grace. Although our eyes see Him not, yet are we conscious of the nearness of His presence by the fragrance of His garments.

VII.-HIS QUEEN. “ At Thy right hand doth

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stand the queen in gold of Ophir ” (v. 9, R.v.). The queen of the Kingly Son of God is the Church, which is the Bride of the Lamb ; her destined place is at His “ right hand,” and her adorning is with the purest golden glory. Through His grace He will present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. Seeing that the marriage of the Lamb is coming, it becometh the Bride to make herself ready (Rev. 19, 7-8).

VIII.-HIS DAUGHTER. “ The King’s daughter in the inner part of the palace is all glorious” (v. 13, R.v., marg.). This Bride occupies the unique relationship of being both queen and daughter. He calls her “ My sister, My spouse.” She is a daughter because born of God ; she is a queen, because, with Him (Christ) she is seated in heavenly places, crowned with honour and glory. In the inner palace of the King she is now *all* glorious, who once like Him, and for Him, was despised and rejected of men (Isa. 61, 10). She can now truly say, “ The King hath brought me into His chambers ; we will be glad and rejoice in Thee ” (Ca. 1, 4). Have you accepted His loving invitation, and put on His proffered wedding garment ? (Matt. 22, 11).

PRICELESS POSSESSIONS.

PSALM 46.

This is the song of the Christian warrior. All who have put on the whole **armour** of God, to resist the principalities and powers of evil, will, like Luther, sing it often. Each note of this Psalm is an inspiration. There are in it—

Priceless Possessions.

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I.-AN INFALLIBLE REFUGE. “ God is our refuge and Strength.” The life that is “ hid in God ” is surely as safe as God can make it. The eternal spirit of man needs the “ Eternal God as a Refuge ” (Deut. 33, 27). To hide in God, is to hide in His Love, and in His Mercy, and in His Power. This means not only perfect safety, but also perfect self-abandonment to God, to His will and work.

II.-AN IMMOVABLE CONFIDENCE. “ Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed,” etc. (vv. 3-4). What has the removing of the *earth* to do with a soul that is dwelling in **God** ? His house is built on the eternal Rock, therefore the rain, floods, or winds cannot shake it (Matt. 7, 25). The Lord, in whom we trust, is “ Mightier than the noise of many waters.” Let not the din of the world’s tumult drown this sweet note of restfulness.

III.-AN INFINITE SUPPLY. “There is a river, the streams whereof make glad the city of God ” (v. 4). New rivers of delight flow out for the soul that has found its refuge in God ; they drink now of “ the river of *Thy pleasures*” (Ps. 36, 8). They are led by the still waters of God’s great thoughts, and refreshed and strengthened by the living streams of eternal truth. The supplies for the new man are found in his new hiding place (Isa. 32, 2) .

IV.-AN UNFAILING COMFORT. “ God is in the midst God shall help ... He uttered His voice ... The Lord of Hosts is with us ” (vv. 5-7) His abiding presence is our continual protection, and

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the guarantee of rest in service (Ex. 33, **14-15**). When God, by His Spirit, is in the midst of thee, and when He uttereth His voice, then the earth, and the things of the earth melt.

V.-AN ASSURING PROSPECT. “Come, behold . . . what desolation He hath made . . . He maketh wars to cease,” etc. (vv. 8-9). There is here a backward look and a forward look. He hath made desolations of men’s works and ways in the past, and He will yet break, and cut to pieces, the instruments of destruction, and make wars to cease, unto the end of the earth (Isa. 2, 4). The angelic song at the Nativity, “Peace on earth and goodwill among men,” will yet be perfectly fulfilled at the coming of the King.

VI.-A PEACEFUL ATTITUDE. “Be still, and know that I am God.” Only those who have faith in God can possibly be still, when circumstances are apparently adverse. But it is in this stillness of soul that we learn to know God. “In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength” (Isa. 30, 7-15). Stand still and see the salvation of God. Hush, and let God utter His voice.

VII.-A TRIUMPHANT RESULT. “I will be exalted . . . I will” (v. 10). The Lord above shall be exalted in that day, when He becomes the Refuge and Strength of His people. It is so now, in our individual experience ; it will be so then, in His coming kingdom, when He shall be all and in all to His own.

THE GREAT CHANGE.

PSALM 51.

David had grievously sinned, and Nathan, at the command of God, had done for him what the Holy Spirit does for us. "Convinces of sin." The penitential language of this Psalm is always appropriate on the lips of a soul passing out of the agonies of conscious guilt, into the joys of forgiving grace.

I.-CONFESSIONS. Here it was deep and real. "I *acknowledge* my transgressions." There was no further attempt to cover it up. "Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned." He is conscious that his secret sin was an open insult to the name and character of God, as every sin is. "Thou desirest truth in the *inward* parts" (v. 6). He feels now more keenly than ever that God looketh on the heart. Hypocrisy, like faith and truthfulness, is a thing of the heart (Luke II, 39). It is to such confessors that the Faithful and Just One gives forgiveness and cleansing (I John I, 9).

II.-PETITIONS. Where there are such confessions there will also be petitions. The vessel of the heart needs not only to be emptied of the evil, but filled with the good. His first petition is for the—

I. MERCY OF GOD. "Have mercy upon me, O God" (v. 1). Nothing but mercy can meet his case, and that mercy must be the mercy of God. No convicted sinner would dare to ask for justice or righteousness, only the self-righteous are presumptuous enough to think of this. Then he pleads for—

2. CLEANSING FROM SIN. "Wash me thoroughly . . . and cleanse me from my sin" (v. 2). The remedy must be as thorough as the disease. Wheresinabounded, grace did much more abound. God's infallible cure for the guilt and pollution of sin is "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son." (1 John 1, 7).

3. EXPIATION FROM GUILT. "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean" (v. 7). "Expiate me by a sin offering" is another rendering. The hyssop had to do with the blood of the lamb (Ex. 12, 22). God's forgiveness is always on the ground of expiation. If the conscience is to be purged from dead and sinful works, it must be by "the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God." (Heb. 4, 19).

4. REGENERATION OF HEART. "Create in me a clean heart, O God" (v. 10). The remedy would not be perfect that only dealt with past sins and present guilt; the *heart* which is "deceitful and wicked" must be changed. The clean heart is a new creation. It is a heart destitute of the love of sin, and filled with the love of God. It is a condition described in the New Testament as being "born again" (John 3, 3).

5. RENEWAL OF SPIRIT. "Renew a right spirit within me." With the new heart comes the new spirit within us, and upon us (Ezek. 36, 25-27). There cannot be the right spirit where there is not the clean heart. The hearts that were purified by faith were filled with the Holy Ghost (Acts 15, 8-9). The absence of the right spirit is the evidence of indwelling sin.

The Great Change.

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6. RESTORATION OF JOY. "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation" (v. 12). As a backslider, this joy had faded out of his life, but with the new heart and right spirit it was sure to return. At least, the way was open now for the return of this bright bird of Paradise into his life. Sorrow may endure for the night of confession, but joy cometh in the morning of forgiveness and renewal. There is a joy in His salvation, a joy that should never be lost.

7. PRESERVATION BY HIS POWER. "Uphold me with Thy free Spirit" (v. 12). Now that he has been set free from the law of sin and death, he longs to be *kept* in this condition of spiritual freedom. "Hold Thou me up." As one who had been burned with the fire of sin, he now dreads it. Although we have had the cleansing power of His blood, we still need the upholding power of His Spirit. He is able to keep us from falling.

III.-RESULTS. Where there has been a decided work of grace, signs will follow. He had—

1. A DESIRE TO WIN SOULS. "Then will I teach transgressors Thy ways ; and sinners shall be converted (turned) unto Thee" (v. 13). When, by experience, we have learned "Thy ways," we have something worth teaching ; something that transgressors need to know. It is a great work to convert a sinner (Jas. 5, 19-20). If God hath blessed us, it is that we might be made a blessing. He that winneth souls is wise.

2. A DESIRE TO PRAISE GOD. "O God of my salvation ; my tongue shall sing *aloud* of Thy righteous-

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ness;” and again, “ O Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall shew forth Thy praise ” (v. 15). Those saved by the Lord have a double debt to pay. They are debtors to the unsaved—to teach them **His way**—they are debtors to God, to praise Him. “ **Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me**” (Ps. 50, 23).

A BLESSED EXPERIENCE.

PSALM 57, 1-2.

In these two verses the way of salvation is set before us in a very expressive manner. Observe there is—

I.-DANGER. “ Until these calamities be **over-past**.” Saul was threatening the life of David, but his danger was nothing compared to the danger of those who are under the threatening judgments of God. His wrath against sin is a terrible calamity for the sinner (John 3, 36).

II.-PRAYER. “ Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me.” This is the language of one who is very sensible of his danger and need. Mercy is the crying need of those who have been awakened to a sense of their real condition. “ God be merciful unto me, the sinner.”

III.-PROVISION. “ The shadow of Thy wings.” How gracious is our God, that He should stand, as with outstretched wings, waiting and willing to receive and shelter all who take refuge beneath them. “ O Jerusalem ... how often would I have gathered ... **as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings** ”

(Matt. 23, 37). The shadow of His wings means the shadow of God.

IV.-FAITH. “ My soul trusteth in Thee ; yea, in the shadow of Thy wings will I make my refuge.” The outspread wings of divine grace can only save those who trust and accept. “ Ye would not ” was the only hindrance in the way of Jerusalem sinners being saved. If the Israelites could not enter into the joy of the Promised Land, it was “ because of unbelief ” (Heb. 3, 19).

V.-DELIVERANCE. “ I cried unto God . . . that performeth all things for me.” God’s salvation is perfect. **He** performeth every needed thing. It is His way, that when He begins a good work in you, to perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1, 6). Salvation is of the Lord.

WAITING UPON GOD.

PSALM 62, 1-8.

Twice in this Psalm does David speak of his soul “ waiting ” or being “ *silent* unto God ” (R. v., marg.). This silence is profoundly significant. It is about as ominous in us as when it was in heaven for the “ space of half an hour.” It is so difficult for us, at times, to be perfectly still before God, as an instrument whose silent cords wait the divine touch. Let us think of—

I.-HIM, ON WHOM WE SHOULD WAIT. “ My soul waiteth upon God.” My soul, pause and think of Him at whose door thou dost wait. He that cometh to God, must believe that He is, and that **HE**

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is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. wait on Him as the Israelites waited on the moving of the Pillar of Cloud. To move without Him is to move without the promise and the presence. To wait God's guidance and *incoming* for power and progress, is as the seaman, waiting on the rising of the tide, and the deepening of the river channel, that he may go forth in safety with his precious cargo.

II.-WHY WE SHOULD WAIT ON GOD.

Because of what He is. "He only is my Rock, my Salvation, my Defence" (v. 2). It may seem an awkward figure of speech to be waiting on a "Rock," but the sense is of tremendous importance. It is to wait on the coming of irresistible strength and stability. He alone is to be our Strength, our Saviour, and Defender. I need Him as "my Rock" (Strength), to stand in the midst of all the evil forces of the world. I need Him as "my Salvation," to deliver me from the subtle temptations and lusts of the *flesh*. I need Him as "my Defence," to save me from the wiles and fiery darts of the *devil*. "My soul wait thou *only* upon God" (v. 5).

III.-HOW WE SHOULD WAIT. We should wait as those who expect the fulfilment of His Word, and the manifestation of His character. "My expectation is from Him ... I shall not be moved." (vv. 5-6). It is the believing and expectant heart that looks for the opened windows of heaven, and the poured-out blessing (Mal. 3, 10). "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Ps. 81, 10). It is only when every other door is closed, and every vain desire of self silenced,

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that we are in a position to prove Him, and to say truly, " My expectation is from Him." When we are thus shut up to faith in Him, we may also say, " I shall not be moved." They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength.

IV.-THE RESULT OF WAITING UPON GOD.

There will be a clear and encouraging *testimony* to His faithfulness. " Trust ye in Him at all times, pour out your heart before Him ; God is a refuge for us " (v. 8). From experience he can say to the people : At all times, trust Him, for all things *pour out* your heart to Him ; for He is a refuge, and a present help to those who wait upon Him. They that wait upon Him are blessed, and made a blessing to others.

THIRSTING FOR GOD.

PSALM 63, 1-8.

This is the language of the Psalmist while wandering in the wilderness of Judah. It is an experience which is typical of those who have discovered their real need in the wilderness of this world's unsatisfactory pleasures and profits.

I.-THE NATURE OF THIS THIRST. " My soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee " (v. 1). It is the thirst of an aching spirit, and an impoverished life. Man is a soul ; he is a spirit. There is a yawning gulf within his being, that all the material blessing of the world cannot fill. This *soul* thirst is an internal evidence of its kinship with God,

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II.-THE OBJECT OF IT. “ My soul thirsteth *for Thee* . . . longeth for *Thee*.” Only those who know God will thirst after Him. The hart panteth after the waterbrook, because it knoweth the refreshing efficacy of the flowing stream. There are souls that are smitten with intense thirst, but they know not what they really need, so they rush to the broken cisterns, that can hold no water. They will not acknowledge that it is God they need. O living, restless soul, it is the living, restful God you need (Ps. 42, **2**).

III.-THE CAUSE OF IT. “ In a dry and thirsty land, where no water is.” The land in which we dwell is in itself a dry, thirsty place-there is no water in it ; absolutely nothing belonging to it that can meet this deep soul-need of man. Our best environments, apart from the enjoyment of the presence of God, is but a howling wilderness to the awakened. A **clamouring** emptiness, that only mocks the true hunger of the **soul**. This world offers the thirsty one everything but the one thing needful.

IV.-THE MOTIVE OF IT. “ To see Thy power and Thy glory ” (v. 2). This is a bold and large demand. What a satisfactory vision ; to see the power and glory of God ; to see the power of His saving grace and the glory of His matchless character. In the sanctuary of His Holy Word, this refreshing revelation is made. In the Person of His Son, His power and glory can be seen. If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink (John 7, 37).

V -THE CONFIDENCE OF IT. “ My soul shall

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be satisfied as with marrow and fatness ” (v. 5). Where this thirst has been created, it is the forerunner of rich and lasting blessing. God Himself becomes the portion of whosoever so seeks Him. He makes them to drink of the river of His pleasures (Ps. 36, 8). The soul is not to be satisfied with theological bones, but with marrow, and fatness ; the “ *finest* of the wheat.”

VI.-THE GUIDANCE OF IT. “ My soul followeth hard after Thee ” (v. 8). When once the thirsty roots of a tree find the river, they follow after it. Those who have found soul-satisfaction in God will abide by the “ Fountain of living waters.” If we have found in Him full salvation, let us follow hard after Him in consecrated service. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.

JOYFUL IN GOD.

PSALM 66.

The soul that has thirsted *for* God, and found satisfaction *in* Him, will surely make a joyful noise *to* Him. We may shew forth our joyfulness in God—

I.-BY PRAISING HIS NAME. “ Sing forth the honour of His name ” (v. 2). His *name* is all that He Himself is (Isa. g, 6). Sing out His glorious grace ; His everlasting love and Almighty power. It will take all eternity to shew forth all the honours of that wonderful name.

II.-BY GLORIFYING IN HIS WORKS. “ Come and see the works of God ” (v. 5). The Lord hath done great things for His people Israel (vv. 6-7). Has he not

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done great things for us ? His work of salvation is both “honourable and glorious” (Ps. **xxx**, 3). Think of the pit out of which ye have been digged, and let your joy in God abound.

III.-BY CONFESSING HIS FAITHFULNESS. “O bless our God ... which holdeth our life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved. Thou hast tried us ... Thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place” (vv. 8-12). There have been temptations ; there has been the furnace of trial, that has tested us as silver. There have been the “net,” the “fire and water,” but, praise His name, the end has been “a *wealthy* place.” He is faithful who hath promised.

IV.-BY YIELDING TO HIS CLAIMS. “I will go ... I will pay ... I will offer” (vv. 13-15). “Go” into His House of *worship* ; “pay” the vows of *consecration* ; “offer” the sacrifice of service. The joy of worship ought to be accompanied with the joy of sacrifice and service. Arise, and go up to Bethel, the place of vision and consecration.

V.-BY PERSONAL TESTIMONY. “Come and hear ... and I will declare what He hath done for my soul” (v. **16**). Those who have no testimony for God, know nothing of the joy of God. It is those who have “received the Atonement,” that joy in God, through the Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5, 11). The Psalmist’s testimony is three-fold. First.-To the fact of his own joyfulness. “He was extolled with my tongue” (v. **17**). Second.-To the fact that God does answer prayer. “God hath attended to the voice of my prayers” (v. **19**)

Third.-To the fact that an unclean heart hinders prayer. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (v. 18) . "Make a joyful noise unto God."

A CRY OF DISTRESS.

PSALM 69, 1-5.

This Psalm ought to be read, on our knees, as coming from the lips of the suffering Son of God. In the opening verses we may hear the cry of a soul in utter desperation for the salvation of God. The reasons for it are very apparent. There was a sense of—

I.-DANGER. "Save me, O God ; for the waters are come in unto my soul " (v. 1) . His soul is like a vessel in a stormy sea that had sprung a leak. The waters of sorrow and fear have come in upon him. He had been struggling hard to keep them out, but has failed. The waters have prevailed, and the danger is great. A ship in the sea is natural, but the sea in a ship is dreadful.

II.-HELPLESSNESS. "I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing " (v. 2). In the deep miry sea of sin a man can do nothing else but *sink*, for there is absolutely "no standing " there. A man must get out of this horrible pit before his feet can stand on the rock. The law of sin and death, like the law of gravitation, can do nothing for us while in the miry deep. "There is no standing."

III.-HOPELESSNESS. "I am come into deep waters, where *the* floods overflow *me*" (v. 2). The waters came into his soul, now he is come "into deep waters."

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And, like one sinking within the tide mark, the billows begin to clash over him. The figure used here is most expressive to describe the sinner's inability to deliver himself from the guilt of his own sin. He might as well attempt to turn the tide as the wrath of God against sin.

IV.-WEARINESS. "I am weary of my crying." He speaks now as a child that has grown utterly tired and exhausted by its own efforts. We are not heard merely because of our much crying. We have to get to an end of our praying self, as well as our working self.

V.-THIRSTINESS. "My throat is dried." This figure is that of a man ready to perish in a burning, sandy desert. His crying has brought only a deeper sense of need. Floods overflowing him, yet dying of thirst. These are the agonies of a soul struggling for deliverance from worldliness and sin (Isa. 55, 1-2).

VI.-BLINDNESS. "Mine eyes fail while I wait for my God." He is now like one on a watch-tower, whose eyes are weary and dim through eagerly straining after something that he has failed to see. No hopeful discovery can he make. In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.

VII.-ENEMIES. "Mine enemies ... are mighty" (v. 4). They are also numerous as "the hairs of mine head." The enemies of the human soul, in its quest after God and salvation, as mighty as "Principalities, Powers, and Wicked Spirits." And more in number than the hairs of the head. It is a great escape from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God. The whole condition, then, is one of intense impotency

A Cry of Distress.

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and hopelessness, apart from the grace and power of God.

VIII.-CONFESSION. “ O God, Thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins ” (v. 5). Confession is needed. Our sins are there, there in our own hearts, like drowning waters ; there around us like the deep mire. Our foolishness must also be confessed ; in getting into the mire and hoping to save ourselves by an agonising effort. God *knows* it, therefore hide it not. Make full and frank acknowledgment to Him.

IX.-PETITION. “ Save me, O God ” (v. 1). “ My prayer is unto Thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time (v. **13**) . . . Deliver me out of the mire . . . and out of the deep waters (v. **14**) . . . Draw nigh unto my soul and redeem it ” (v. 18).

1. It was offered to the right One. “ Unto Thee, O Lord.”

2. It was for the right purpose. “ Salvation and deliverance out of the mire.”

3. It was in the right season. “ An acceptable time ” (2 Cor. 6, 2).

A JOYFUL TESTIMONY.

PSALM **71**, 15-24.

There is in it—

I.-SALVATION. “ My mouth shall shew forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation ” (v. **15**). How could he shew forth His salvation if he had not experienced it ?

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II.-RESOLUTION. “ I will go ... and I will make mention ” (v. 16). The saved ought to go, and go in “ His strength,” making mention of His character (Rom. 1, 16).

III.-CONFESSION. “ O God, Thou hast taught me” (v. 17). This is a thankful acknowledgment of His grace and wisdom. It is the privilege of the saved to be “ taught of God” (John, 14, 26).

IV.-PETITION. “Now also when I **am old...** forsake me not ; until I have **shewed** Thy strength and Thy power ” (v. 18) . This is a grand “ Old Age Pension,” to be able, when “ grey-headed,” to shew forth the strength and power of God. Why should the aged lose their spiritual freshness ? The Vine is still the same, if the branch abides it will be fruitful.

V.-ADORATION. “ O God, who is like unto Thee ? ” (v. 19). Those who have witnessed, and experienced, the great things of God, cannot but be filled with adoring gratitude.

VI.-EXPECTATION. “ Thou ... shalt quicken me again ... Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side ” (vv. 20-12). He had seen “ great and sore troubles,” so he expects to receive great and precious blessings. This is the language of one who knows by experience God’s searching, gracious methods with His own.

VII.-EXULTATION. “ I will praise Thee ... will sing with the harp ... My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing unto Thee ... My tongue shall

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also talk of Thy righteousness all the day long ” (vv. 22-24). Oh, how great, how satisfying, is the goodness of our God. Taste and see. He is the Fountain of Life. Bless the Lord, O my soul (Ps. 103, z-4) .

THE MILLENNIAL REIGN.

PSALM 72.

This wonderful Psalm is called “ A Psalm of Solomon,” but a greater than Solomon is here. The reign of Solomon, the king’s son, was doubtless one of comparative peace and righteousness, but “ All kings did not fall down before him,” nor did “ AU nations serve him,” nor shall “ the whole earth be filled with his glory.” But all will be literally fulfilled when the Son of God appears in power and great glory. What are the characteristics of this blessed age, as revealed in this Psalm ? There will be—

I.-UNIVERSAL RIGHTEOUSNESS. “ He shall judge Thy people with righteousness ” (v. 2). This righteousness is the righteousness of God (v. 1). The righteousness of men is as filthy rags compared with this. “ Behold a king shall reign in righteousness ” (Isa. 32, 1). The law shall come from His lips, and shall never be thwarted by the selfish cross-purposes of man. “ He shall break in pieces the oppressor ” (v. 4). The greed of the miser and the haughty pride of the tyrant shall be crushed by the power of His judgment. The poor in spirit shall be the blessed ones in His kingdom (Matt. 5, 3). All presumptuous rule and authority shall be put down when he reigns.

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II.-UNIVERSAL REVIVAL. “ He shall *come* down like rain upon the mown grass ; *as* showers that water the earth ” (v. 6). *He*, like the rain, shall come *down* from heaven. He shall come down in a time of great need *upon the mown grass*. Grass that has been mown is in great danger of being burned up at the roots. He shall come as *showers* that water the earth. Showers indicate distinct seasons of definite blessing. The effect of long-delayed rain is the renewal of the whole face of Nature ; the result of His coming upon a mown humanity will be a mighty reviving and refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Everything shall live whither this river **cometh** (Ezek. 47, **9**).

III.-UNIVERSAL PROSPERITY. “ In His days shall the righteous flourish ; and abundance of peace ” (v. 7). The burden of national armament will, then, be rolled away (Isa. **2**, 4). Righteousness, not force, will be the popular governing principle in “ His days.” Wickedness, and deceit, in every form, like unclean bats, will not be able to shew face in the bright day of His glory. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.

IV.-UNIVERSAL DOMINION. “ He shall have dominion from sea to sea, and ... unto the ends of the earth ” (v. 8). Every other kingdom shall be broken in pieces (Dan. **2**, **24**). Then shall the heathen be given Him for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession (Ps. **2**, 8). He came that “ the world, through Him, might be saved ” (John 3,

17). Every knee shall yet bow to Him, and every tongue confess Him as Lord.

V.-UNIVERSAL SUBJECTION. “ The kings . . . shall bring presents . . . and other gifts. Yea, all kings shall *fall down* before Him ; all nations shall *serve* Him. His enemies shall lick the dust ” (w. 9-11). The tongues of many scoffers are eloquent now, but they shall lick the dust when He cometh (Micah. 7, 17). The world needs a Ruler. As the queen of Sheba, hearing of the fame of Solomon, came to prove him, so shall the kings of the earth be constrained to come to Him who is the King of kings, and Lord of lords. The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of *our* Lord, and of His Christ (Rev. 11, 15). He shall reign for ever and ever.

VI.-UNIVERSAL BLESSING. “ There shall be an handful of corn . . . the fruit shall shake like Lebanon . . . the city shall flourish like *grass* of the earth. His name shall endure for ever . . . and men shall be *blessed in Him*. All nations shall call Him blessed ” (w. 16-17). When the city flourishes like the grass, there will be no place found for the slum. Men are blessed in *Him* now by faith, men shall be blessed in Him then by sight ; and so blessed that all nations shall call Him blessed, because He is the universal Blesser (Eph. 1, 3). Then will be fulfilled the angelic saying in Luke 2, 14.

VII.-UNIVERSAL GLORY. “ Blessed be His glorious name for ever ; and let the whole earth be

filled with His glory ” (v. 19). The glory of this name which now transfigures the soul, will then transfigure the world. For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea (Hab. 2, 14). This is the work of Him who is “ glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.”

A GREAT PROBLEM SOLVED.

PSALM 73.

In judging things by their outward appearances, the Psalmist says, “ My feet were almost gone ; my steps had well-nigh slipped ” (v. 2). These are “ perilous times ” for the trusting soul, when the Providence of God seems to contradict the Word of God. As in the vision of Ezekiel, so in God’s dealing with men, there are “ wheels within wheels.”

I.-THE PROBLEM. It was great and complex. Here are some of the things that staggered his senses.

1. He saw the prosperity of the wicked (v. 3).
2. He saw that they had “ no bands (pangs) in their death ” (v. 24).
3. He saw that they are not “ troubled ... and plagued like other men ” (v. 5).
4. He saw that “ pride was to them as a chain ornament about their neck ” (v. 6, R.V.)
5. He saw that “ they have more than heart could wish ” (v. 7).
6. He saw that they “ speak loftily and set their mouth against the heavens ” (vv. 8-9).

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7. He saw that they were wilfully ignorant of God, saying, “ How doth God know ? ” (v. 11) .

Then he adds, with something like irony in his tone, “ Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world ” (v. 12). Is it in vain, he asks, that I have “ Cleansed my heart and *washed my hands in innocency* ? ” (v. 13). Does it matter nothing what a man is ? Is there no principle of righteousness over-ruling the affairs of men ? Does it pay best to be wicked and God-defiant ? “ For all day long have I been plagued ” (v. 14). The problem of the sufferings of the righteous, and the prosperity of the wicked, is ever before us. Judged from a merely mundane standpoint, the mystery is insoluble. The man of the world, whose eyes stand out with fatness, can say, sneeringly, “ How doth God know ? ”

II.-THE SOLUTION. “ When I thought how I might know this, it was too painful for me ; *until* I went into the sanctuary *of* God, and considered their *latter* end ” (vv. 16-17, R.v.). The whole situation is, indeed, “ painful,” apart from the revelation of “ the sanctuary of God.” But when considered in the light of that revelation from God, which bears directly upon “ this *latter* end,” things are seen in their true perspective. In His light we see light clearly. Things take on a new and different character when seen in the light of Eternity. Temporal prosperity may only be the primary and deceptive symptoms of a fatal disease. In this holy and enlarged vision He saw-

I. That they were “ set in slippery places ” (v. 18).

2. That they would be “ cast down into destruction.”

3. That they would “ become a desolation in a moment ” (v. 19, R.V.).

4. That they would be “ utterly consumed with terrors.”

5. That God would “ despise their image ” (v. 20). This new view withers up the roots of envy. Who would covet the position of a man who was to be famous for an hour, and a fool for a year ? The wicked have their portion in this life, but are miserable bankrupts in the end (Luke 16, 25).

III.-THE SOUL RESTED. Having now seen the puzzling problems, as it were, with new eyes, he makes full confession of his “ foolishness ” and “ ignorance,” and declares himself as a *beast* before God. Beastly eyes can only see the earthly and the outward (v. 22). The ungodly live but the life of the “ brutish man ” (Ps. 92, 6); but why should the godly judge such things, from a *brutish* man’s standpoint ? Having discovered his mistake, and acknowledged his foolishness, he proceeds to reckon up the blessings which belong to him as a man of God, in contrast to the portion of the man of the world. What are they ?

1. He has the companionship of God. “ Nevertheless, I am continually *with Thee*, Thou hast holden me by my right hand ” (v. 23).

2. He says, “ Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel ” (v. 24).

3. He is sure that God will “ Afterwards receive

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Him to glory.” This is a very different *afterward* than that referred to in verse 18.

4. He feels that there is “None upon the earth that he desires beside Thee ” (v. 25). The brutish man knows nothing of this *earthly* blessing.

5. He is confident that although his “flesh and heart faileth, God is the strength of his heart and his portion *for ever*” (v. 26).

6. He knows by experience that it is “good *for him* to draw near to God ” (v. 28). It is good for us that we can draw near to *Him*.

7. He testifies “I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all Thy works ” (v. 28). Social problems seen in the light of God’s sanctuary must lead to a fresh and fuller declaration of the mighty *works* of God.

CONDITIONS OF BLESSING AND FAILURE.

PSALM 81, 8-16.

These words in this part of the Psalm are of tremendous significance, as they contain God’s own testimony unto His people as to what He expected from them ; as to what they should have expected from Him ; and as to why they failed to receive His choicest blessings.

I.-A MERCIFUL ENTREATY. He pleads with them (i) to “*Hearken* unto Me ” (v. 8). He must have the attentive ear, if divine wisdom and power are to be imparted. (z), “There shall no *strange god* be in thee.” He entreats that nothing should be allowed to

take His place in the heart's affection, or as an object of confidence. It is surely easy to yield all for Him, when He offers to be all to us. (3), To "Open *thy mouth wide* and I will fill it" (v. 10). A "wide mouth" means large expectations. The proof that He is able, and willing, to meet the largest demand that our faith can make, is in this: "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt." He who can save to the uttermost, can satisfy to the deepest. Harken, Believe, Expect.

IL-A GRACIOUS PURPOSE. The love that delivered our souls from the pit of sin longs to enrich us with the gifts of His grace. He says, "Oh that my people had hearkened unto Me, and walked in My ways" (v. 13), then He would have done three things for them. 1. He would have *subdued their enemies* (v. 14). Victory would have been theirs if they had followed Him. It is *dishonouring* to Him that His people should be in bondage to the powers of darkness. 2. He would have made the *haters of the Lord submit unto Him*. (v. 15). They would have been used in bringing their souls to God. His people's unbelief hindered Him from subduing and conquering His enemies. A solemn lesson for us. 3. He should have *fed them* also with the *finest* of the wheat, and satisfied them with honey out of the rock (v. 16). His purpose is to subdue enemies, save sinners, satisfy saints.

III.—A SORROWFUL COMPLAINT. "But My people would not hearken to My voice; and Israel would none of Me" (v. 11). They rejected His *word*

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by not hearkening to His voice, and in rejecting His word they rejected *Himself*, “ would none of Me.” How gracious is our God, that He laments the lack of opportunity to bless His people. His word and Himself are so vitally connected, that to refuse the one is to reject the other.

IV.-A MISERABLE CONDITION. “ So I gave them up into *their own* hearts’ lusts ; and they walked in *their own* counsels ” (v. 12). To be “ given up ” by Him, because of stubbornness and unbelief, means utter defeat in the presence of the foe ; the enemies are *not* subdued. Sinners are not converted unto God, and there is no feeding on the “ finest of the wheat ” no glad satisfaction, with “ honey from the rock.” A powerless, and a fruitless Church, is the painful evidence that God’s voice is being unheard and unheeded, and that we are “ walking in *our own* counsels,” guided by the wisdom of men, to the neglect of the wisdom of God. Those who are more anxious for the words of men than the Word of God, are preferring chaff to the wheat. Men fed on chaff make poor soldiers. God’s desire is to make His people “ more than conquerors.” “ Hearken diligently unto Me, and eat ye that which is good.”

THE REASON WHY.

PSALM 86, 1-7.

Here are seven reasons urged by this petitioner why God should answer him. There are many objective reasons arising from God’s own character and promises. but those here are all subjective. There is—

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I.-MY NEED. “ O Lord, hear me ; for I am poor and needy.” Our poverty and helplessness is a powerful plea at the door of infinite mercy and grace.

II.-MY GODLINESS. “ Preserve my soul, for I am godly ” (v. 2). This is no empty boast ; to be godly is to seek the glory of God. This godliness is profitable as an agreement in prayer. Many ask amiss for lack of it.

III.-MY FAITH. Save Thy servant that *trusteth* in Thee. Faith can honestly make an appeal to the faithfulness of God. His trusting *servant* shall doubtless triumph in His saving power (Isa. 26, 3).

IV.-MY IMPORTUNITY. “ For unto Thee do I cry all the day long ” (v. 3, R.v.). This is another powerful element in prayer. Has not our Lord declared that “ because of his importunity he shall give him as many as he needeth.”

V.-MY WHOLEHEARTEDNESS. “ Rejoice the soul of Thy servant ; *for* unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my *soul* ” (v. 4). The soul of true prayer is the lifting up of the soul (1 Sam. 1, 15). An undivided heart is a conquering heart.

VI.-MY EXPERIENCE. “ For Thou, Lord, art . . . plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon Thee ” (v. 5) His past experience and knowledge of the character of God is another reason for expecting present help.

VII.-MY ASSURANCE. “ I will call upon Thee ; *for Thou wilt answer me* ” (v. 7). “ I will, for Thou

wilt." This is the confidence that is never put to shame. Believe, and thou shalt see.

A WORKER'S PRAYER.

PSALM 90, 12-17.

This Psalm, which begins the fourth section of this book, is entitled "A Prayer of Moses, the man of God." The petitions offered in these closing verses are **sug-**gestive of the Christian worker's needs. He prays **for—**

I.-INSTRUCTION. "Teach us to number our days, that we may get us an heart of wisdom" (v. 12, R.V.). **Wisdom** is the principal thing (Prov. 4, 7); those who are taught to number their days of service on earth will seek it, and they that are wise redeem the time. We need divine teaching on this point to save us from folly and frivolity.

II.-RESTORATION, "Return, O Lord, how long?" Fellowship with Him has been lost, and the loss is keenly felt, which is a hopeful sign. The Lord is ready to return to the help of His servants "when He seeth that their power is gone," and there is none to help (Dan. 32, 36). The restoration of His presence is the restoration of the soul.

III.-SATISFACTION. "O satisfy us early with Thy mercy." His mercy can satisfy, and it will come early when there is true repentance toward God. His compassions fail not. His purpose is to satisfy (Ps. 36, 7-8).

IV.-COMPENSATION. "Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou **hast** afflicted us." This

is a **bold** request. But the height of our joy will be according to the depth of our mourning (Ps. 126, 5-6). The depth of the valley is measured by the altitude of the hills. The arm that is strong to smite is equally strong to save. The long night of trial will surely have a long day of triumph.

V.-MANIFESTATION. “Let Thy work appear and Thy glory ” (v. 16). He is but a poor servant of God who does not intensely long for the unmistakable *appearance* of His work and glory. This is the clamant need of the Church in these back-sliding days. His servants ought to see His working, and to have His glory upon them (R.v.).

VI.-SANCTIFICATION. “Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us ” (v. 17). Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power, **in the beauties of holiness** (Ps. 110, 3). The sum of God’s character is “Holiness.” The Holy One of Israel. As the flower is beautified by the sun, so must all be adorned with the glory of His presence. This is the will of God, your sanctification.

VII.-CONFIRMATION. “Establish Thou the work of our hands upon us.” Our *work* needs to be established by God, as well as our *feet* (Ps. 40, 2). What is the value of our work, if the Lord is not working with us, and **confirming** the work? (Mark 16, 20). “**My** speech and my preaching,” says the Apostle, “was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of **#he** Spirit and of power.” This was the divine confirmation that “their faith should not stand

in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." How are we to know that our work is of God, if *He does not bear witness, as* of old, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to His will ? (Heb. 2, 3-4).

THE FRUITS OF LOVE.

PSALM 91, 14-16.

“ Because he hath set his love upon Me, therefore ”

I.-I WILL DELIVER HIM. The first fruit of a surrendered heart is salvation. Freedom from the guilt and power of sin. The law is fulfilled in one word, “ Thou shalt love.” David set his heart on God ; see how God delivered him ! (1 Sam. 17, 50). So with Joseph, Daniel, and Paul.

II.-I WILL EXALT HIM. “ Set him *on high* ” (v. 14). After salvation comes exaltation ; or rather, to be saved is to be exalted : taken out of the fearful pit. If we have been crucified with Christ we have also been raised together with Him.

III.—I WILL ANSWER HIM (v. 15). What an inspiring promise this is ! Let your requests be made known unto God. Here is His own assurance that if you have set your love upon Him, He will answer you. If love to Him is our motive, then we shall not ask amiss (Jas. 4, 3).

IV.—I WILL BE WITH HIM. This is the promise of His fellowship in the day of our trouble. If He is with us then we can fear no evil (Ps. 23). God knows

that His abiding presence is a continual necessity for guidance, strength, and victory.

V.-I WILL HONOUR HIM. We honour Him by setting our love upon Him. So “ Them that know Me I will honour ” (1 Sam. 2, 30). Seek the honour that comes from God only ; and His special favour will be manifested in your life (John 12, 26).

VI.—I WILL SATISFY HIM. He shall be satisfied with “ length of days ” (marg.), which, to us, implies the privilege of everlasting joy and service. Our days upon the earth, if lived in His love, will be as long as are needful for the honour of His name. He gives to His own eternal life, and they shall be satisfied when they awake in His likeness.

SING UNTO THE LORD.

PSALM 95, 1-8.

There are many groans in the Psalm, but there are **also those spontaneous outbursts of wholehearted praise** to God, that could only come from souls full to overflowing with love and thankfulness. “ O come, let us sing unto the Lord ”—

L-HOW SHALL WE SING UNTO THE LORD ?

1. JOYFULLY. “ **Make** a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation ” (v. 1). That Rock was Christ (1 Cor. 10, 4). He is worthy to be praised. Be joyful, not doleful, in the Lord.

2. THANKFULLY. “ Let us come . . . with thankfulness ” (v. 2). Have you not very much to be thankful for ? Think of what He has done *for you, in you,*

with you, and promised *to you*. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.

H.-WHY SHOULD WE SING UNTO THE LORD ? Because—

1. He is OUR SALVATION (v. 1). He Himself is our salvation, and this salvation is firm as a “ Rock,” He is *ours* because we have trusted Him, and are safe.

2. He is GREAT. “ The Lord is a great God, and a great King ” (v. 3). He is our loving God, and everlasting King (Jer. 10, 10) ; the God of our salvation, and the King of our redeemed lives. “ One is your Master, even Christ.”

3. He is STRONG. “ In His hand, deep places ; the strength of the hills is His ” (w. 4-5). The strength of the hills is His, and He is yours, in whose hand the deep places are. All power is given unto Me. “ Go ye therefore ” (Matt. 28, 18-19).

4. He is HOLY. “ O come, let us worship . . . let us kneel before the Lord our Master ” (v. 6). Ours is a holy privilege to kneel before HIM, and worship. We are not only workers, but worshippers. The spirit of humble adoration is our best fitness for service. It is on bowed knees that the victory is gained (Ezra 9, 5 ; Dan. 6, 10 ; Eph. 3, 14).

5. He is GRACIOUS. “ We are the people of **His** pasture, and the sheep of **His** hand ” (v. 7). How gracious is our God to call us the people of **His** pasture, and the sheep of **His** hand. How green and refreshing His pastures are ; how safe and happy are the sheep that’s guided, fed, and protected by His hand. See

how God pastured His people even in “ the wilderness,” and led them into the green fields of Canaan. “ I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am *known of mine.*”

NOTES IN THE NEW SONG.

PSALM 98.

In the last verse of Psalm 96 we read :“ He cometh, for He cometh to judge the earth.” In the first verse of Psalm 97: “ The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.” Now this Psalm begins with “ O sing unto the Lord a new song ... for His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory.” (1), The COMING ;(2), The REIGNING ;(3), The REJOICING. In this new song there is the—

I.-Note of WONDER. “ He hath done marvellous things ” (v. 1). “ Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders ” (Ex. 15, 11 ; Rev. 15, 3). The Incarnation, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection are wonders of the highest order. Wonders of grace.

II.-Note of VICTORY. “ His right hand, and His holy arm hath gotten Him the victory.” His holy *arm* may represent His Son (Isa. 53, 1). His right *hand*—the Holy Spirit. By His arm and hand is *salvation* accomplished (R.v.). It is Christ that redeemeth ; it is the Spirit that quickeneth.

III.-Note of MERCY. “The Lord hath made known His salvation ” (v. 2). He has not only provided salvation by grace, but has also published it abroad in mercy. Every invitation of His Gospel, every copy

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of the Bible, every Spirit-inspired messenger, is a proof of God's desire that men should know the joyful sound of His salvation (Isa. 45, 21-22; Mark 16, 15).

IV.-Note of FAITHFULNESS. " He hath remembered His mercy and His faithfulness " (v. 3, R.V.). He who was faithful to the Israel of God, will be faithful to the Church of God. Faithful is He that called **you**. What His mercy hath promised, His faithfulness will perform. Believe ye that I am able to do this ?

V.-Note of GRACE. " All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God " (v. 3). This, of course, is prophetic, and will be actualised when " The Lord reigneth." See the abounding grace of our God in seeking the salvation of " all the ends of the earth." All flesh shall see the salvation of God (Luke 3, 6). Meanwhile, whosoever calleth upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

VI.-Note of PRAISE. " Make a joyful noise unto the Lord ... rejoice and sing praise " (v. 4). This note of adoration is the keynote of the " New Song," (Rev. v. g-12). Because the Salvation of God has been great and marvellous, let the praise be loud and long.

VII.-Note of HOPE. " For He cometh to judge the earth : with righteousness ... and the people with equity " (v. 9). We, according to His promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (2. Pet. 3, 13-14). The whole creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, when

the children of God enter into their glorious liberty (Rom. 8, 21). This is the self-purifying hope (1 John 3, 3). O sing unto the Lord this new song.

THE " I AM'S " IN PSALM 119.

It has been said that this Psalm " Contains the anatomy of experimental religion, the interior lineaments of the family of God." Its twenty-two sections, are so many strings of pearls, linked together by the letters of the Hebrew Alphabet, and representing every phase of Christian experience. It is a song of joy and rejoicing in the **Word of God**, which is referred to under ten different names. Luther set a high value on this Psalm, declaring that he " would not take the **whole** world in exchange for a leaf of it." Note some of the "**I AM'S**."

I.—" I AM A STRANGER IN THE EARTH " (v. 19). There is nothing in all the earth that can fully meet the needs of a " Man of God." He has not where to lay his heart, as Christ had not where to lay His head. Holy men of old " All died in faith declaring plainly that they **seek** a country " (Heb. 11, 13-14). The man of the world is no stranger in the earth, it is his home ; but the Christian's citizenship is in heaven.

II.—" I AM A COMPANION OF THEM THAT FEAR THEE " (v. 63). Strangers in a foreign land, who have come from the same country, naturally draw one to another (**Mal.** 3, 16). These, in fellowship with God, should be found in fellowship with one another. Surely those who are to be our companions in eternity

The " I Am's " in Psalm 119. 49

should be our choice companions now. Such a testimony is greatly needed.

III.--" I AM BECOME LIKE A BOTTLE IN THE SMOKE" (v. 83). Through adverse circumstances I am like a shrivelled " Wine-skin " (Josh. 9, 4). A bottle in *the smoke is* in the place of trial and testing ; while in this evil world, the Christian must come into contact with its smoky influence, and must patiently endure as seeing Him who is invisible like the Hebrews in the fiery furnace : and like Job.

IV.—" I AM THINE, SAVE ME " (v. 94). Though in the smoke of perplexity and helplessness, it is comforting to be able to say " I am Thine." Thy property, (Acts 20, 28), Thy workmanship (Eph. 2, 10), He can as easily save us in the smoke, as the youths in the furnace of fire, and also from it, without the smell of it on the garments.

V.—" I AM AFFLICTED ; QUICKEN ME" (v. 107). " He suffered ... that He might succour them that are tempted " (Heb. 2, 18). Divine *quicken-
ing* is the remedy for a sorrowing, sinking soul. The affliction may be heavy, but with His " abundant life " there will be an easy victory. He quickens the languid heart by His word of promise and spirit of power.

VI.—" I AM AFRAID OF THY JUDGMENTS" (words) (v. 120). Every truly quickened soul will tremble at His Word, and into such, He will look, (Isa. 66, 5). It is a characteristic of the tender obedient child. All heaven must be astonished at those who do

not fear the Lord (Rev. **15**, 4). This is not the fear that hath torment.

VII.—“ I AM THY SERVANT” (v. **125**). Thy willing slave, since Thou hast ransomed me from the slavery of sin (Rom. 6, **16-20**), as Thy servant, “ give me understanding,” teach me what Thou wilt have me to do-not my will, but Thine be done.

VIII.--” I AM SMALL AND DESPISED” (v. **141**). This is his own, and the world’s estimation of the servant of God. Small, compared with the full stature of Jesus Christ, and despised as He was ; but fear not thou *worm* Jacob ; I WILL HELP thee saith the Lord. He can use small things.

THE “I WILL’S” IN PSALM 119.

I.—“ I WILL PRAISE THEE” (v. 7) ; (“Give thanks unto Thee ” R.V.). To this great end are the people of God formed (Isa. **43**, 21). The qualification for it is “ Uprightness of heart.” The means to this end is the saving grace of God.

II. - “ I WILL OBSERVE THY STATUTES,” (v. 8, R.V.). An heart that is right with God, will be attentive to His words. The observer of the times must be an observer of His truth-to be wise.

III. - “ I WILL MEDITATE IN THY PRECEPTS ” (v. **15**). The ungodly are not so ; they would cast these cords from them, but His Words are deep, and sweet to the obedient heart. “ Thy words were found and I did eat them.” The result was joy and rejoicing (Jer. **15,16**), **see** John **1**, **14**.

The " I Will's " in Psalm 119. 51

IV.—" I WILL DELIGHT MYSELF IN THY STATUTES " (v. 16). The meditating heart will soon be a delighted one. Ainsworth reads it " I will solace and recreate myself." His words both comfort and renew, in midst of life's worries and sorrows.

V.—" I WILL RUN THE WAY OF THY COMMANDMENTS " (v. 32). Those who " observe, meditate and delight " in His Word, will soon be found running in the way, with an heart greatly enlarged. " Following afar off," or " Faint yet pursuing," is the condition of many. They who run this race keep looking unto Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life (Ezra 7, 9).

VI.—" I WILL WALK AT LIBERTY " (v. 45). Augustine said " I gave my will to mine enemy, and he made a chain, and bound me with it." Those who give their will to Christ are free indeed (John 8, 31). Sin is slavery ; Obedience to His Word is Liberty (**John 8, 34**).

VII.—" I WILL SPEAK OF THY TESTIMONIES ... AND NOT BE ASHAMED " (v. 46). Those who walk at liberty through Him, will surely speak freely for Him (Dan. 3, 16-81.) It was so with Paul (Rom. 1, 16). Preach the word, and be not ashamed, remember (Mark 8, 38 ; Rev. 21, 8).

VIII.—" I WILL GIVE THANKS AT MIDNIGHT " (v. 62). Blessed are all they who can rise **up** in the midnight of their sorrow and gloom, and give

thanks unto the Lord. See Acts 16, 24, 25 ; the darkness and the light are alike to Him.

IX.—“ I WILL NEVER FORGET THY PRECEPTS ” (v. 93). No, never ! for Thy words have brought light, and life, and sustenance to my soul. They shall guide me into eternity and abide with me there. “ They are spirit, and they are life ” (John 6, 63). I shall never forget them, because I shall never forget THEE.

SOME “I HAVE’S” IN PSALM 119.

I.—“ I HAVE GONE ASTRAY LIKE A LOST SHEEP ” (v. 176). A lost sheep can do nothing else but go astray (Isa. 53, 6). Think of what we wander from, in going astray-from God and His Word : think of where we wander to. The Shepherd’s purpose is to seek and save the lost.

II.—“ I HAVE SOUGHT THEE WITH MY WHOLE HEART ” (v. 10). This is the right object, sought in a right manner (Ps. 27, 4). For the sheep astray, there is only the “ wormwood and the gall ” (Sam. 3, 19) of weariness, danger, and disappointment. In Him is life. Seek the Lord.

III.—“ I HAVE REJOICED IN THE WAY ” (v. 14). In the way of His testimonies there is joyful deliverance, His ways are ways of righteousness. Faith leads into the promised land of the “ unsearchable riches of Christ.” Stand, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way (Jer. 6, 16).

Some " I Have's " in Psalm 119. 53

IV.—“ I HAVE DECLARED MY WAYS ” (v. 26). “ My ways,” no matter how crooked, foolish and fruitless they have been, it is good to declare them all in His ear. We must declare **His ways** to others, but our own wayward ways to Him.

V.—“ I HAVE CHOSEN THE WAY OF FAITHFULNESS ” (v. 30, R.V.). This is a courageous and needful choice. He hath chosen to be faithful to us ; why should we not *choose* to be faithful to Him ? The choice is to be made, between faith, and faithlessness ; between Barabbas and Christ. He stuck to His choice (v. 31).

VI.—“ I HAVE REMEMBERED THY NAME ” (v. 55). The Name of the Lord is a wonderful solace “ in the night of trouble and perplexity ; ” for what God is, that is His name (Ex. 34, 5-7). As ointment it has been poured forth in the person and work of His Son.

VII.—“ I HAVE BELIEVED THY COMMANDMENTS ” (v. 66). This is a noble confession. What mischief and failure are constantly being produced in Christian living for lack of faith in the Words of God. The Lord hath promised, and “ I have believed.” Can we so say ?

VIII.—“ I HAVE REFRAINED MY FEET FROM EVERY EVIL WAY ” (v. 101). There are many evil ways that may look pleasant and profitable, but are not in keeping with His Word. We **walk** by faith, not by sight. The **easy** way may be an evil way, like Bunyan's pilgrims in By-path meadow. It was

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“easy going,” but it led to Doubting Castle. To “keep His Word,” we must refrain our thoughts and actions from the ways of the ungodly.

IX.-“ I HAVE LONGED FOR THY SALVATION ” (v. 174). The daily Salvation of the Lord is an experience much to be longed for. We should long for it in all its fulness. Those who hunger and thirst after such righteousness, shall be filled. We also long for the salvation of the Lord, when we long for the salvation of the sinner. Surely the saved will long for this. Those who long for His coming again long for His final salvation.

MY SOUL, A WEANED CHILD.

PSALM 131, 2.

1. My Soul is as a Child-helpless. But confident in a Mother's love, having had experiences of her special care.

2. My Soul is as a *weaned* child-Suffering. The mystery of an unexpected refusal ; a new method of treatment.

3. My Soul is as a weaned child-submissive. The gift denied, but the Mother embraced. The rest of faith and love.

REASONS FOR PRAISE.

PSALM 138.

“ I will praise Thee with my whole heart ” (v. 1).

1. Because Thou *Answeredst* me (v. 3).

2. Because Thou didst Encourage me (R.V.).

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3. Because Thou wilt Revive me (v. 7).
4. Because Thou shalt **Protect** me (v. 7).
5. Because Thou wilt **Perfect** that which concerneth me ... (v. 8).

SELF-EXPOSURE TO GOD.

PSALM 139, 23-24.

1. **Search** me, for I seek Thy Salvation.
2. **Know me**, for I seek Thy Fellowship.
3. **Try me**, for I seek Thy Service.
4. See me, for I seek Thy Comfort (R.V. marg.).
5. **Lead** me, for I seek Thy Guidance.

PRAYER AND ARGUMENT.

PSALM 143, 8-11.

1. Cause me to **Hear** : for in Thee do I trust (v. 8).
2. Cause me to Know : for I lift up my Soul unto Thee.
3. **Deliver** me (for) I flee unto Thee to hide me (v. 9).
4. **Teach** me : for Thou art my God ... (v. 10).
5. Quickenme : for Thy Name's Sake ... (v. 11).

A TESTIMONY.

PSALM 144, 1-2.

Blessed be the Lord, for He is—

1. My Strength in my helplessness.
2. My Kind One (marg.) in my destitution.
3. My Fortress : my refuge of Safety.
4. My High Tower in my days of darkness.
5. My Deliverer, when my enemy oppose.

6. My Shield : when fiery darts are about.
7. My Confidence :“ In Whom I trust.”

PRAISE THE LORD.

PSALM 146, 8-10.

Here are seven reasons why He should be praised :

1. **He looseth the Prisoners.** The prison speaks of guilt and bondage. Christ came to preach deliverance to the Captives (Luke 4, 18) . Whom the Son makes free are free indeed. See Acts 12, 7.

2. **He openeth the Eyes of the Blind.** This implies moral and spiritual darkness. The “ recovering of sight to the blind,” was another feature of Christ’s mission (Luke 4, 18). Believe and thou shalt see.

3. **He raiseth the Bowed-down.** Those like the woman in the Gospel who “ could in no wise lift up herself” (Luke 13, 11), bowed with the burden of grief or guilt, the deformity of sin, He raiseth up-by His Word of cheer and Arm of Power (2 Cor. 7, 6).

4. **He Loveth the Righteous.** Those who are **right** with Himself, and for Himself, will be loved by Him (John 14, 23). He draws nigh, to those that draw nigh to Him.

5. **He Preserveth the Stranger.** He deals with the stranger, as with the fatherless and the widow (Deut. 27, 19; Jer. 7, 6-7). Alike, helpless and destitute, “ Ye are no more strangers ” (Eph. 2, 19).

6. **He Upholdeth the Fatherless and Widow** (R.V.). His loving heart beams through His merciful eyes. Our helplessness is no hindrance to His power.

7. *He returneth Me Way of the Wicked upside down.*

He disapproveth the devices of the crafty (Job 5, 12). The *way* of the ungodly, with all its pleasures and expectations shall perish (Ps. 1, 6). Upside down is a very positive and complete change.

WISDOM'S CALL.

PROV. I, 20-29.

The book of Proverbs is said to "Represent the very science of practical philosophy." It is divided into two sections ; Chapters I.-IX., WISDOM'S WAYS, and chapters X.—XXXI., WISDOM'S WORDS. These words "The fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of knowledge" (v. 7) may be taken as the keynote of the book. They occur thirteen times. These Proverbs are literally "Comparisons" in practical "parables." The WISDOM personified here (8, 12) stands for the highest intellectual sagacity, and the purest moral character, and finds its perfect fulfilment in the Person and Character of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is "The Wisdom of God," and who is "made of God unto us, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption." In this cry of Wisdom, let us hear the cry of Christ. We can hear in it the voice of—

I.-COMPASSION. "Wisdom crieth without .. in the streets, in the openings of the gates" (v. 20). The message is for the "man in the street," as well as the ruler at the gates. It is the compassionate cry of infinite mercy and fulness (John 7, 37). This voice seeks to ring in every street, city, and county. It is the

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cry of God's Evangel to a perishing world. Three classes are addressed—the "Simple," the "Scorner," and the "Fool." The weak, the wayward, and the worthless : He came, not to call the righteous, but sinners.

II.-REPROOF. "He crieth ... how long, ye simple ones ... Turn you at my reproof" (vv. 22-23). These three classes are typical. (1). The SIMPLE are rebuked for being easily led ; yielding themselves thoughtlessly to the influence of others, and not taking time to "Stand still, and ask for the good old paths." They are the willing dupes, in mind and heart, to unprincipled or ungodly men. (2). The **SCORNER** is reprov'd for his delight in scorning ! Taking pleasure in ungodliness is about the climax of human guilt. Such glory in their shame, for the sake of a fetid applause, they receive from a corrupt humanity. (3). The FOOL is charged with "hating knowledge !" At enmity with Wisdom. He loves the darkness rather than the light, which is abundant proof of his madness. He hates Wisdom, because it is opposed to his supreme folly. Such are the attitudes of many toward Christ.

III.-ENTREATY. "Turn ye at my reproof" (v. 23). Wisdom, like Christ, calls, and entreats, but will not compel. "Turn ye." The responsibility is with the hearer. He appeals to the will : to the reason. "Come now, and let us reason together saith the Lord." Regeneration is the work of the Spirit, but *conversion*—turning about—is the work of man. "Repent, and be converted," is His command. "Turn ye ! turn ye, for

Why *will* ye die ? ” Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life. Your face is away from Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life ; turn you at My reproof.

IV.---PROMISE. “ Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, and I will make known my words unto you ” (v. 23). He will meet the real need of the Simple, the Scorned, and the Fool, by imparting to them His own regenerating Spirit, and making them to receive and understand His precious, soul-satisfying words. He promises, not to change their circumstances, but to transform their character. God's law is perfect, and so is His remedy for the silly, sneering, sinful souls of men. Salvation is of the Lord.

V.-LAMENTATION. “ I have called, and ye refused . . . and would none of my reproof ” (w. 24-25). This is the language of wounded love, like that in Matt. 23, 37. His “ call ” was refused, His “ stretched out hand ” was disregarded, His “ counsel ” was set at naught. His “ reproof ” they would have none of. His “ Call,” His “ Counsel,” His “ Entreaty,” and His “ Reproof ” had been alike fruitless, because of the stupidity and hardness of their heart. He willeth not the death of any, but how sad that many should prefer death to life.

VI.-JUDGMENT. “ Because . . . ye refused . . . I also will laugh at your calamity.” “ I will mock when your fear cometh,” etc. (vv. 26-29). There is nothing more certain than this, that fear cometh upon all the ungodly sooner or later. Those who have wil-

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fully rejected His call of Mercy, will find their Call of Fear rejected. Christ had His Calamity on the Cross, the Christ-despiser will have his when He sees Him on His Throne. The depths of the horrors of perdition may partly explain the depths of the horrors of the Crucifixion. Here deep calleth unto deep. Man's crowning crime is : that he hates the knowledge of God, and chooses not His fear (v. 29). Behold now is the day of Salvation ; now is the seed-time of eternal life. In vain shall we call upon Him in the winter of Judgment, if we neglect the summer of His Grace and Mercy.

WISDOM'S PRECIOUSNESS.

PROV. 3. 13-20.

Christ is the Wisdom of God, and to them that believe He is precious. Those who have put on Christ have such an adorning that all the material glories of earth are not to be compared with it. " She is more precious than rubies." From these verses we may learn something of her, or **His**—

I.-GREATNESS. The Lord **by** wisdom hath founded the earth " (v. 19). " In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, ... All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1, 1-4). " O Lord, how manifold are Thy works, in wisdom **hast** Thou made them all." God, by Jesus Christ, created (Eph. 3, 9). God, by Jesus Christ, Redeemed.

II.-RICHES. " Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left riches and honour " (v. 16). The

treasures of true Wisdom are the treasures which belong to Jesus Christ. "Length of days," "Riches," "Honour." Everlasting life, unsearchable riches, and the Right Hand of God. In Him is Life, and the treasures of Wisdom and knowledge, and all the fulness of God ; He is crowned with glory and honour. With long life doth He satisfy those to whom He hath shown His Salvation (Ps. 91-16).

III.-INFLUENCE. Wisdom has a mighty influence.

1. On the HEART. "Happy is the man that findeth Wisdom " (v. 13). The yoke of Wisdom is easy, her burden is light. To find the Wisdom of God is to find rest to the soul, light to the eyes, and joy to the heart. To find Wisdom (Christ) is to find the holy, blissful, all-conquering will, and mercy of God. A man cannot make such a find without being renewed in the whole inner man.

2. On the LIFE. "The merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver " (v. 14). Those who find Wisdom, find a new object in life, and a new sphere of action. To trade with Christ, and work for Him, is more profitable than the best investment on earth. "The gain thereof is better than fine gold."

III.-DESIRABILITY. "All the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her " (v. 15). It is not possible for you to desire anything better than this. Paul knew this when he said : "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ." You may desire great and many things, but the affections of

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the heart can never be set on a more worthy and needful object than the Wisdom of God, as revealed in His Well-beloved Son. Wisdom's ways "are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (v. 17). By faith Moses desired the better part, when he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt. Christ is the gift of God, covet earnestly this best gift. Those who have Him, though poor, yet can make many rich, as having nothing, yet possessing all things. "Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get Wisdom. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee" (4, 7-8).

IV.-ACCESSIBILITY. "She is a tree of life to them that *lay hold* upon her" (v. 18). How can I, so weak and foolish, get possession of this Wisdom? It is not for scholars, but for sinners. *Lay hold* on eternal life. She is not only life to those who lay hold upon her, but "a *tree* of life," a well of water springing up; not only a stream of blessing, but a *fountain* within; Accessible! Yes. Whosoever will may come. Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out. Incline thine *ear* unto Wisdom, and apply *thine heart*; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness (see chap. 2, 1-6). Now then, "take fast hold of Wisdom, let her not go; keep her, for she is thy life" (4, 13). "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of men" (8' 4).

WISDOM'S CHARACTER.

PROV. 8, 12-36.

Here again, as in chapter 2, 20-23, we have in the opening verses of this chapter a revelation of Wisdom's

agonizing attitude towards men. The voice of Wisdom, like the light of the sun, is unto all men. This voice, like the voice of the sun, may be silent, but it is withal the Voice of God, because it is the voice of Character. The world may close its ears to the cry of the Christ, but it cannot stifle that pleading voice. "Unto you O men, I call ; and my voice is to the sons of men." How Christ-like are the characteristics of Wisdom. Observe—

1. *Wisdom's Personality.* "I wisdom dwell with prudence" (v. 12). Here the Personality is divine ; qualities are claimed which belong properly to the Eternal Son. God is Love, God is Light, and God is Wisdom.

2. *Wisdom's Powers.* "I have strength. By me kings reign, and princes decree judgment" (W. 14-16). His name shall be called Wonderful, the Mighty God. The Everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of earth, never is weary ; and He giveth power to the faint, and increaseth the strength of the helpless (Isa. 40, 28-29). There is no power but of God. All power is given unto Me.

3. *Wisdom's Offer.* "Those that seek me diligently shall find me" (v. 17, R.V.) If any man love Me, he shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself unto him. Heavenly Wisdom is imparted to the open, diligent heart. Christ reveals Himself as a reward to the diligent seeker. Ye shall find Him when ye shall search for HIM with all your heart (Jer. 29, 13). Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God. Behold, now is the accepted time.

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4. *Wisdom's Wealth.* “*Riches* and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold ” (vv. **18-19**). Her *riches* can only be given with *honour*; her durable riches with righteousness. Christ's unsearchable and eternal riches are connected with His holy and eternal righteousness. To be eternally rich we must be eternally right. In Him all fulness dwells. “ Wherefore do ye spend money (wealth) for that which is not bread ? and labour for that which *satisfyeth not*. Hearken diligently unto Me,” etc. “I counsel thee to buy of Me, gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rith ” (Rev. 3, **18**).

5. *Wisdom's Grace.* “ I lead in the way of righteousness ... That I *may cause* those that love me *to inherit substance*. And I will fill their treasures ” (w. **20-21**). Not only are her hands full of riches, but her heart is full of love and mercy, seeking to lead others into the joyful possessions of her treasures. It is not difficult for the anointed eye to see Jesus here. He leads into Righteousness, that He might lead into an incorruptible inheritance. Oh ! the riches of that Grace which “ causes us to love Him ” that we might be made partakers of His infinite riches, and so have the treasury of the heart filled out of His fulness (Rom. 5, **17**).

6. *Wisdom's Testimony.* The wonderful language used in this passage (vv. **22-31**) could only come *truthfully* from the lips of one who was, and is, co-equal with God.

He was possessed by Jehovah in *the* beginning (v. **22**).

He was *exalted from* everlasting, or ever the earth was (v. 23).

He was brought forth, **before** the fountains, the mountains, or the hills (vv. 24-25).

He was present when God **prepared** the heavens, etc. (vv. 26-29).

He was **with** God as a Master *Workman*, and was daily His delight, rejoicing always 'before Him (v. 30, R.V.).

His delight was with the Sons of Men (v. 31).

This was the Word that was made flesh, and dwelt among us. This is the One, who being in the form of God, took upon Him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross.

7. **Wisdom's Counsel.** “**Now**, therefore, my sons, hearken unto me ; for blessed are they that keep my ways” (v. 32, R.V.) “This is My Beloved Son, Hear ye Him.” What a privilege to hear His words, and to receive His invitation. Oh, the madness of turning a deaf ear to Him. The blessing that maketh rich is to be found in Him, His ways are ways of pleasantness, as well as safety.

8. **Wisdom's Promise.** “For **whoso** findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord” (v. 35). **Life** and divine *favour* are alone to be found in Him who is the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God. “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life, no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.” I am come that ye might have life. He that hath the Son hath life.”

9. **Wisdom's Warning.** “He that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul. All they that hate me love death ” (v. 36). To sin against God is to make for

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self-destruction. To kick against His **goadings** is to wound our own feet and prefer death to life. We sin against Him when we refuse to believe His Word and submit ourselves to Him. In so sinning against Him, against His love and merciful pleadings, we wrong our own soul by compelling it to abide in a condition of spiritual darkness, guilt, and condemnation. Your sin of unbelief and rebellion may not wrong God, but is a terrible wrong to your **own soul**.

WISDOM'S PROVISION AND INVITATION.

PROV. 9, 1-6.

In this chapter we have not only the pressing call of Wisdom, but also the clamorous invitation of Folly (v. 13). The foolish woman seeks to *imitate* her who is the expression of the Wisdom of God. The wonder-workings of God will always have their counterfeits in the workings of the devil. The one leads to the heights of heaven, the other to the "depths of hell" (v. 15).

WISDOM'S PROVISION. The provision indicated here is sevenfold. There **is**—

1. **The House.** "Wisdom hath builded her house" (v. 1). **It** is a house of Refuge, and a place of holy and heavenly fellowship. It is large, and in every way fitted for its great purpose, and perfectly becoming the character of the builder. See Eph. 2, 20-22; 1 Pet. 2, 5.

2. **The Pillars.** "Wisdom hath hewn out her seven pillars." The pillars indicate strength and **sta-**

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bility. Seven is the perfect number. This building is supported by that which is perfect in character. Here are seven pillars which belong to this spiritual Temple, The Lord God : (1), "Merciful"; (2), "Gracious"; (3), "Long-suffering"; (4), "Abundant in goodness and truth"; (5), "Keeping mercy for thousands"; (6), "Forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin"; and (7), "Will by no means clear the guilty" (Justice). Ex. 34, 6. The doctrines of Jesus Christ are pillars of truth, and are as stable as the attributes of God.

3. *The Sacrifices.* "Wisdom hath killed her beasts." Wisdom hath made her sacrifices. Ample provision could only be made through the shedding of blood, the forfeiture of innocent life. God so loved the world that He gave His Son. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. He hath put Him to grief. In this sacrifice there was the pouring-out of divine love, and life. WISDOM hath done it, although man in his ignorance and pride of intellect would protest against it.

4. *The Wine.* "Wisdom hath mingled *her* wine." The wine mixed by the wisdom of the world can only bring "woe, sorrow, contention, babbling, wounds, and redness of eye" (23-30). This is neither worldly wine, nor a worldly mixture. It is Wisdom's own wine, and Wisdom's own mixture. The wine is pure, and the spices are pure, the blend is the richest that thirsty, languid souls can ever drink. Christ's wine of joy is mingled to suit each individual case. It is always a wholesome mixture. The Lord hath another mixture for a different class of people (Ps. 75, 8).

5. The Table. “*Wisdom* hath furnished her table ” (v. 2). The wisdom of God hath put upon the table of His grace every needful blessing. His table is well furnished. My God shall supply all your need. Many don’t realise their manifold need, and so cannot appreciate the value of Wisdom’s provision.

6. The Servants. “ Wisdom hath sent forth her maidens ” (v. 3). The feast being ready the heralds of His grace are sent forth with free invitations. Wisdom hath her own servants, as well as her own house, and a table. Salvation is of the Lord.

7. The Call. “ Wisdom crieth upon the highest places of the city.” It may be the servant’s voice, but the call is that of “ Wisdom.” We are ambassadors for Christ. It is God that beseeches by us (2 Cor. 5, 20). The call is urgent, it is from the *highest places* of the city that all may hear. It is a Call. 1, To *Turn*. “Turn in hither.” It implies conversion from the broken cisterns of the world to the well-furnished table of the Lord. 2, To Come. “ Come, eat of My bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled ” (v. 5). Come and eat of that which the Wisdom of God has so abundantly provided, the bread of strength, and the wine of gladness and inspiration. 3, To *Forsake*. “*Forsake* the foolish and live ” (v. 6). Folly saith : “ Stolen waters are sweet ” (v. 17). The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord. 4, To go. “ *Go* in the way of understanding ” (v. 6). Having turned to the Lord and received of His gifts, we now go in His way, learning

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of Him. He shall guide you with all truth when you follow Him, leaning not on your own understanding (3, 4-7). Come and take, then go and work.

ETERNITY IN THE HEART: A KEY TO ECCLESIASTES.

CHAPTER 3, II.

Newberry's rendering of this text enables us to see the meaning of this book in a clearer light. "He hath set *eternity* in their heart, *without* which no man can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end." The word translated "world" here only occurs in one other place, where the meaning is ages, or eternity. This book deals with "things under the sun": the mundane things of earth, seen in the light of Nature's revealer. The "Preacher" begins with "Vanity of Vanities," then proceeds to demonstrate the truthfulness of his convictions. He gave "his heart to search *out*," and to "see all the works that are done under the sun," and to "prove" his *heart* with every earthly good. He made "great works," and "withheld not his *heart* from any joy." Yet he pronounced it "all vanity and vexation of spirit." So deeply did he drink of all the waters of the world's pleasures that he said: "What can the man do that cometh after the king?" (2, 12). What man can have any chance of satisfying his heart with the material things of earth, when *he*, the richest and wisest man on earth, failed? Why did he fail so miserably after such an earnest, favourable and exhaustive experiment? Here is the answer: "God hath set eternity in the heart." That which

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belongs to eternity cannot find its counterpart in those things which are only temporal. Although there is "a time" to every purpose *under* the heavens, there is nothing circumscribed by time that is not "vanity and vexation of spirit" to that which is eternal. As God hath set eternity in the heart, He means to set eternal things there. Observe—

I.-THE FACT OF IT. "Eternity is in the heart." In its very constitution, as the workmanship of God. The heart, here, may stand for man's essential character, as distinct from the lower animal creation. When Duncan Matheson prayed, "Lord stamp eternity upon my eyeballs," he was uttering words which revealed the most profound characteristic of the human soul. God hath set eternity in the heart by setting there the *thought* of it, the desire after it, *kinship* to it, and *capacity* for it.

II.-THE EVIDENCE OF IT. The evidence of this truth is apparent in the universal belief in immortality found among the early Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians, Hebrews, Hindus, Chinese, South Sea Islanders, Druids and Celts. But perhaps one of the most convincing proofs of it may be seen in the universal *restlessness of the human heart*. Towards the things of this world, like the sea, it is ever crying: "Give, Give," and never fully satisfied therewith. One of the wealthiest men in modern times declared to a friend "I am not to be envied; How can my wealth help me? I would give you my millions if you could give me your youth and health." Youth and health in themselves

could only enable him to repeat his own and Solomon's abortive experiment. "Man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which *he possesseth*," but in the things which God possesseth. Surely the *capacity* of the human heart for the love and fellowship of the eternal God is an argument of no mean force. The heart's desire, in its truest and best moments, is for the "things which are eternal." Even pagan philosophers have acknowledged this. "The presage of a future life," says Cicero, "is most discoverable in the greatest and most exalted souls." When the glamour of sunny circumstances vanishes in some calamity or domestic affliction, then the deeper and more enduring instincts of the soul assert themselves.

III.-THE PURPOSE OF IT. "Without which no man can find out the work that God maketh." It takes the attribute of eternity in the heart to contemplate the character of God and His work Eternity in the heart is—

1. A *Witness* to the Eternity of God. It has been set there as a testimony to the fact of His eternal Personality, and man's kinship to Him.

2. A *Protest* against Worldly-mindedness. Just as a man can profit nothing by gaining the world, and losing his life, so the eternity in the heart can only be deceived by loving and resting *on* the things of *time*—he layeth up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God (Luke 12, 19-21). Those who "mind" earthly things" are enemies of that Cross which stands for heavenly and eternal things.

3. An *Incentive* to seek eternal things. The fact that God hath set eternity in the heart, is surely meant to be a powerful incentive to seek those things which are above. "Like draws to like."

4. An *Evidence* of God's love. Let the deep in the heart call unto the deep that is in God. God hath set that deep there that He might fill it out of the deep of His own infinite fulness.

5. A *Warning* against the neglect of Salvation. To neglect eternal salvation is to choose eternal death. Eternity is in your heart whether it is found or lost. "Son, daughter, give Me thine heart." He who hath set eternity in it is best able to meet and satisfy its every need.

THE SONG OF SONGS.

CHRIST'S DESIRABLENESS,

CHAPTER I, 4.

This "Song of Songs which is Solomon's" is seldom sung by self-seeking souls. To many carnal Christians it is either too mystical or spiritual to be of any practical interest. It is a Song parable of Love, or spiritual friendship, and must be interpreted as such. The language is uniformly metaphorical, perhaps, that it might be easily and growingly applicable to spiritual relationships. The two leading personalities assume the character of Bridegroom and Bride, suggestive at once of Christ and the Church. This is confirmed by the *intenseness* of the language used throughout by both parties, revealing deep and tender feelings. The first

to speak is the Bride. This sudden outburst of burning desire reveals—

I.-HER ESTIMATION OF HIS CHARACTER.
She declares that—

1. His *love* is better than wine. She knew this because she had had some experience of it. Wine here stands for the exhilarating and luxurious pleasures of the world. But His love is more effectual, coming from a better source, and producing better and more lasting results. Wine is man-made, love is of God (Rom. 8, 38-39).

2. His *Name* is an ointment poured forth. His name is His character, a precious ointment, that contains all the ingredients needed to heal the wounds of humanity (Acts 3, 16). This ointment hath been *poured forth* in Word, and in blood, that its efficacy may be tested and enjoyed (2 Cor. 8, 9). This pouring forth of saving virtue implies God's generosity and man's opportunity and responsibility. "Therefore do the virgins (pure hearts) love Him," while the harlots pass Him by. It is to the glory of Christ that He is loved by the purest of minds. The *savour* of His name is eternally satisfying (Acts 4, 12). "Unto you which believe He is precious."

II.-HER DESIRE FOR HIS APPROVAL.
She longs for—

1. His *Personal favour*. "Let Him kiss me," etc. Him . . . me. Her aching heart, empty and lonely, yearns for a token of *His love*. Nothing else can satisfy. It is not enough to hear of His love, or see others re-

joining in it, " Let Him kiss me." Personal contact needed. His kiss is a token of affection, favour, and friendship. This grace can only come from Him. God breathed into Adam-kissed him-and he became a living soul. Matt. 4, 4.

2. **His Personal Influence.** " Draw me, we will run after Thee " (v. 4). Having been reconciled, she longs to follow. Christ is God's magnet to draw souls to Himself (John 6, 44). His influence over the life should be an unceasing draw. He draws by His Word and His Cross, wherever He is " lifted up." This prayer of the Bride is a proof of her love for Him, and devotion to Him. Her self-denial will affect others, " we will run." The more powerfully our lives are influenced by Christ the more swiftly shall we run after Him, and the more likely are we to move others. It is better to draw than to drive. If His influence does not draw us after Him, there are other influences that will certainly draw us from Him. He will have a willing people in the day of His power.

III.-HER EXPERIENCE OF HIS FELLOWSHIP. Her prayer has been answered. He has drawn and she did run, and the results have been abundantly satisfying. We now find her—

1. **Companying with Him.** " The King hath brought me into His chambers " (v. 4). These chambers represent His own personal possessions. All His unsearchable riches are at her disposal. His peace, His rest, His joy, His wealth, what a portion ? These present possessions represent the full Salvation Christ

desires to give those who lovingly follow Him. *He* brought her in, she never could have entered His chambers without His liberty and guidance. The way into the Holy of *Holies* is now open to every blood-washed, Spirit-led soul (Phil. 3, 12-14).

2. **Rejoicing in Him.** “ We will be glad and rejoice in Thee.” With loving kindness has she been drawn, and with infinite plenty hath she been satisfied. The Bridegroom did it all for her, so she will rejoice in Him. It is always with gladness and rejoicing that anyone is brought into this King’s palace (Ps. 45, 15). There is no night there ; it is a banqueting-house, with a canopy of love. All my springs, both the upper and nether-for soul and body-are in Thee.

3. **Testifying of Him.** “ We will make mention of Thy love” (v. 4, R.V.). His love, like Himself, cannot be hid. His love, like Jonathan, constrained Him to strip Himself for our adorning (2 Cor. 8, 9). Shall it not also constrain us to speak forth its praise ? At this world’s “ Babel Streams ” the heavenly minstrel can only sit and weep if he has no other fountain opened. Make mention of His love, for it is better than the world’s wine. It is not a plant that grows among the weeds of Nature’s garden, it is an exotic from above (Rom. 5, 5). The “ *upright* ” love Him, although the learned and the fashionable may reject Him (1 Cor. 6, 29).

“ O cold ungrateful heart, that can from Jesus
turn,
When living fires of love within His heart doth
burn.”

HER CONFESSION AND APPEAL.**CHAPTER I, 5-7.**

L-HER CONFESSION. “ I am black, but comely.” To many this is a seeming contradiction, if not a perfect absurdity, but it is a very fit expression of the two-fold nature of the Bride’s character, even although she has been brought into His chambers of wealth and beauty. She describes herself **as**—

I. “ **Black as** the tents of Kedar.” These tents of Kedar, or of the Bedouin, who led a nomadic life in Arabia, were blackened by the sun, and uncomely. Like our own carnal mind it is black, and can be nothing else.

2. “ Comely as the curtains of Solomon.” The graceful and costly curtains of Solomon could only be seen from within. The king’s daughter is all glorious within, if the outward appearance should look black in the eyes of others. In the **flesh** life there is no good thing, but in the Spirit life there is the beauty of the Lord. While in our sins, we, like the Ethiopian in his native land, were unconscious of our blackness. But wondrous grace, her blackness did not disqualify her for receiving His Comeliness. See **Ezek.** 16, 14 for the secret of perfect beauty.

II.-HER EXPLANATION. She suffered from different causes. “ I am black,” she says, **because**—

I. “ The sun hath scorched me” (v. 6, R.V.). Look not with disdain upon me. I am black because I have been long and severely exposed. If we had been

born and brought up in Africa the sun would have blackened us too. How many are born into conditions where they are morally blackened ere they know what it means. Christ does not despise us although the complexion of our character may have been changed by exposure and sin.

2. "My **Mother's sons** were incensed against me " (R.V.). Her "Mother's sons " may represent those unspiritual church members, which are her professed brothers and sisters. They don't like her dusky appearance ; they are grieved and angry that **she** should have such favour shewn her by the King. The proud and the jealous have no appreciation of the **grace** of the Lord Jesus Christ. Persecuted by your own household.

III.-HER OCCUPATION. "They made me the keeper of the vineyards." This looked like a very lowly task for the bride of a king. She offered no objections ; she willingly gives herself to the service of the thankless for His sake. Although the task was common and arduous she humbly accepts the situation. Those who love the Lord and are beloved by Him will have their pride and patience tried in their service for Him. " Mine own vineyard," she says, " have I not kept." Was she to blame for this ? We think not. The word " But" supplied here, which is not in the Hebrew, has had much to do with the misunderstanding of the statement. A free rendering might be "They made me guardian of that which belonged to others, and so devoted was I to their interests that I sacrificed my own. She made herself of no reputation, denying

herself for the good of others. This is the true attitude and business of the Church. In this Christ Himself has set us an example. "He saved others, Himself He could not save." Self-forgetting love is the chief mark of the Bride of Christ and the real motive to all missionary enterprise. There are, of course, those who are so engrossed about the vineyard of the body that they neglect the vineyard of the soul.

IV-.HER APPEAL. "Tell me, O Thou whom my soul loveth "(v. 7). It was first " Kiss me," then " Draw me," now it is " Tell me." This indicates progressive experience. The appeal is to Him who is the object of her soul's love. There is " none other name " to her. Those who love the Lord must love Him with the *whole* heart. She makes three requests—

1. Tell me where Thou *feedest* Thy flock. This implies that He has a *flock*, and that He feeds them. His flock was given Him by the Father, redeemed by His blood, and fed by His Word. He feeds them among the green pastures of His revealed truth. He feeds His flock where He Himself is, as the Bread of Life (John 14, 21).

2. Tell me where Thou *resteth* Thy flock at noon. His people need rest as well as food. She feels her need of both, and seeks after them. Rest at noon from the burdensome heat of wearisome toil and oppressive circumstances. Where does He rest them ? Under the shadow of His love and faithfulness.

3. Tell me . . . Why should I be as one *that is veiled*, beside the flock of Thy companions ? (R.V.). To be

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a **veiled** one is to be one unknown to others. The Lord has many **companions**—*Sunday* companions—to whom this devoted Bride is unknown. She asks, “Why should I be as one unknown to them, who company with Thee?” Her heart yearns for fellowship with all who profess to love her Beloved. But alas, the true Bride of Christ is still as a **veiled** one to those who have only the form of godliness denying the power. Why it should be so is often a wonder to the sincere follower of Christ.

HIS ANSWER AND ENCOURAGEMENT.

CHAPTER I, 8-II.

In verse 8, the Bridegroom gives His gracious answer to the Bride’s urgent request, “Tell me.”

I.-HIS WORDS OF APPRECIATION. “O thou fairest among women.” He knows how to speak a word in season to the weary. What constitutes beauty in His sight may be unattractive to the purblind multitude. To her *He* is the “Chiefest ; to Him *she* is the “fairest.” The deciding factor is love and personal devotedness. So is it with Christ and His Church.

II.-HIS WORDS OF COUNSEL. In answer to her question He now tells her—

1. *Where she is to go.* “Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock.” The *footsteps* of His flock in every age have been the footsteps of **faith as** taught in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. To “go forth” in this direction implies a definite act of the will, and a readiness to be separated from all that would hinder,

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It is along this path that He feedeth His flock. "Seek the old paths, where is the good way," and beware of the "New" (John **14**, 6). New revelations, and *New* theologies that are not in accordance with the "foot-steps of the flock" are to be rejected and avoided.

2. *What she is to do.* "Feed thy kids beside the shepherd's tents." The kids are the young of the flock in which she has become specially interested. Personal devotion to Christ leads to an earnest desire after the good of others. Our Lord's "**Lovest** thou Me" was accompanied with "Feed My lambs," and always is. The kids were to be associated with the flock, and so are to be fed "beside the shepherd's tent." Their tents were pitched for the convenience of the flock. The place where the shepherd feeds his sheep is the place where to feed the lambs, and what is "green pastures" to the one will be "green pastures" to the other. There is but **one** Lord, one faith.

III.-HIS WORDS OF COMPARISON. "I have compared thee ... to a steed in Pharaoh's chariot" (v. g. R. v.). This is His comparison, and must be full of significance. It **suggests**—

1. *Soundness.* The King would have no blemished steed in His chariot. The blind and the lame had no place there. In God's service, moral, spiritual, and intellectual soundness is required. Salvation from the deformity of sin **needed**—

2. *Dignity.* The royal steed must be dignified in its every action. A slovenly, cumbrous gait does not become such. The servant of Jesus Christ must walk

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worthy of the Lord. "Lift up your heads." Your citizenship is in heaven.

3. *Strength.* Pharaoh's chariot steed is no weakling; **it is** clothed with power, and can smell the battle afar off (Job 39, **25**). Paul's soul was prancing like a steed when he said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me."

4. *Activity.* **Always** ready for action is another characteristic of the full bred, highly-developed steed. Liveliness of disposition belongs to the perfect man in Christ Jesus. "Ready to every good work" (Titus 3, **1**). Always abounding in the work of the Lord.

5. *Submissiveness.* *The* steed in the kingly chariot, with all its pomp and power, is very sensitive and obedient to the guiding hand. So is the Bride under the constraining love of Christ and His Holy Spirit. Willing and Obedient.

6. *Honours.* The steed of Pharaoh's chariot was called to Royal service. It was associated with the king for his work and pleasure. Bearing him whither he would. We are also co-workers together with Him, who is King of Kings. Called to bear His name among the heathen (Acts **9, 15**). **Take My** yoke upon you.

THE BLESSED FELLOWSHIP.

CHAPTER I, 12-17.

After the Bride's request and the Bridegroom's answer and encouragement, comes a season of refreshing communion.

Handfuls on Purpose.

I.-WHERE ? “ At the King’s table ” (v. 12). The King has a table—that which displays His marvelous provisions—the Word. The King “ sits ” at His Table ” (R.V.) ready to welcome each invited guest. It would be an unsatisfying table if the King Himself were not there. Such is the “ Lord’s Table ” (Luke 12, 37). The Scriptures, as the table of the King, testify of Him. Great God, what a spread.

II.-HER EXPERIENCES. She declares, *while* the King sat at His table—

1. That His *spikenard* sent forth its fragrance (v. 12, R.V.). As this sweet-smelling shrub, in a congenial atmosphere poured forth its fragrance, so in the warmth of His presence, her afflictions flowed out copiously. When His Spirit is received in fulness, then the love of God, and love to God, will be shed abroad in our hearts.

2. That *her Beloved* was to her as a bundle of myrrh. The more love we have for Christ, the more fragrant and precious will He become to us. Not only myrrh, but as a bundle of it. We are told that Eastern ladies carried myrrh in their bosoms to impart fragrance to the person. Christ in the heart, makes a fragrant life. To some He is but a “ root out of a dry ground.” To them that believe, He is precious.

3. That His position was *on her heart*. “ A bundle of myrrh . . . that lieth betwixt my breasts ” (13, R.V.). Betwixt the breasts is the seat of the heart—the place where Christ delights to rest. He dwells in the heart by faith (Eph. 3, 17) .

III.-HIS WORDS OF COMFORT TO HER. Now the Bridegroom responds to the glowing testimony of the Bride. She has honoured Him ; He honours her. He says—

1. “ Thou art fair ” (v. 15). She has become very pleasant in His eyes. Those to whom Christ is precious, are precious to Christ. The more beauty we can see in Jesus, the more of His beauty will be seen in us. To be fair in His sight is better than being fashionable with the world.

2. “ Thine eyes are as doves ” (R.V.). The eyes are expressive of character. In those eyes He sees simplicity and purity. The dove nature is seen in the dove’s eyes. How different are the eyes of the hawk and the fox : the eyes of the unclean and the deceitful. Her whole nature had been subdued into the purest and tenderest devotion. This is the beauty which the King so greatly desires (Ps. 45, 11).

IV.-HER WORDS OF RESPONSE TO HIM.

She says—

1. “ Thou art fair, my Beloved, yea pleasant ” (v. 16). Fair and pleasant characterises the Bridegroom. Beautiful to the eye, and pleasant to the heart. He satisfies the vision and meets all the needs of the soul.

2. “ Our couch is green ” (R.V.). The resting place of these mutual beloveds is as pleasant and refreshing as the Love of God. They rest in His Love. They have both been made to lie down in green pastures.

3. “ Our House has beams of cedars ” (R.V.). The house of the Church, in which both Bride and Bride-

groom delight, being built on a Rock ; its beams are strong and enduring. Cedar wood is the most durable of timbers-sometimes called shittim wood. The superstructure is built to *Stand*.

4. "Our Galleries are firs" (R.V., Marg.). The galleries may refer to steps of ascent, or to a series of balconies for outward prospect. The fragrant firs and the enchanting outlook, that widens the horizon, as they arise, platform above platform. Such is the progressive experience, and growing delight of those who abide in fellowship with Him. Three times over, she uses the word "Our" not "My." What have we, that we have not received from Him, and what is Ours, is also His. It is mutual enjoyment.

TIMES OF REFRESHING.

CHAPTER 2, 1-7.

In His Chambers, and in His Presence, she is in **the enjoyment** of rich refreshing. "In Thy Presence is fulness of joy." The conversation is the sweetest and **most** endearing. **Notice—**

I.-HER CONFESSION. "I am a Rose of Sharon, a Lily of the Valley" (R.V.). These words are often quoted as spoken by the Bridegroom, but they are the words of the Bride, and express her lowly opinion of herself. The Rose of the plain and the Lily of the valley were only common, modest flowers. She feels that in herself, she is no better than others. But God hath chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom (Jas. 5, 2 ; 2 Cor. 8, 9).

II.-HIS APPRECIATION. "As a Lily *among thorns*, so is My love among the daughters." A lily is the symbol of beauty, of purity, and of humility. To Him, she is a lily arrayed in a beauty more glorious than that of Solomon's, but her position on earth is as one "among thorns." Thorns represent the uncharitable, uncomely, unprofitable, and hurtful. Their tendency is to choke the Word of life-their end is to be burned. The lily is *among* the thorns, not of them, as the wheat grows among the tares. There were saints in Cesar's household. Their position is one of suffering and testimony.

III.-HER BLISSFUL TESTIMONY. Observe that it is all of Him. She refers to—

1. *His Character.* "As the tree (citron or orange) among the trees ...**so is** my Beloved among the sons" (v. 3). She is a lily among thorns, He is an orange tree among the fruitless trees of the wood: the sons of men. He is "the Tree of Life." None ever found "nothing but **leaves** " **here**. **This tree with its** thick deep green foliage, and ever ripe and luscious fruit is the coveted place of shelter and refreshing to the **weary**-burdened, thirsty pilgrim (Isa. 32, 2). This unique tree yields its fruit every month. Let him that is **athirst**, come.

2. *His Shadow.* "I sat under His shadow with great delight." There are other shadows, like Jonah's gourd, under which we may sit with fear. Only under *His* shadow can we sit with "great delight." Here only is security, love, power, and satisfaction. The fruit of His **labour** and suffering is sweet; Pardon, peace, and hope. It is sweet to the taste of a weary, hungry,

Handfuls on Purpose.

thankful heart. Many have their taste so depraved by eating the deceptive apples of Sodom, that they desire not the fruit of the Tree of Life.

3. **His Banqueting Howe.** This is suggestive of joyful company, and abundant provision. The House of Prayer is a banqueting house, where the soul is refreshed and strengthened with His grace and truth, being filled with the Spirit. "He brought me ! none else could. He leads *me* into the place of fulness of blessing."

4. **His Banner.** "His banner over me was love." This banner is the symbol of His conquering love ; under it she has a triumphant entrance. Our liberty of access comes through His prevailing love. "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." This King sets His banner over all His possessions. It is the banner of love, because all the forces of love in His Kingdom are represented by it.

5. **His Hands.** "His left hand under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me." She who has such a warm place in the heart of His love, will not fail to have a secure place in the hands of His power. His left hand for support, and His right hand for protection. "Underneath are the *everlasting arms.*" He fainteth not. The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by Him (Deut. 33, 12). None is able to pluck His loved ones out of His hand (John 10, 28-30).

PROOFS OF HIS LOVE.

CHAPTER 2, 8-13.

"The voice of my Beloved" (v. 8). She hears His voice ; it is the voice of love, a love that delights to manifest itself in unmistakable words and actions.

1. He Comes. "Behold, He cometh." The great distance which separated Him and her, could only be bridged by Him, through infinite love. He comes powerfully, "leaping upon the mountains." He comes *joyfully*, "skipping upon the hills." He comes to seek and to save.

2. He Stands. "He standeth behind our wall." There is no wall that can keep Him out, but "*our* wall." The wall of indifference and unbelief. Yet He condescends to stand behind it. Break down this wall, and you will see the King.

3. He **Looks**. "He looketh in at the windows" (v. g, R.V.). He takes advantage of every opening to get into touch with our needy souls. No lover can be more interested in his sweetheart than He is about His own. Every desire after Him is a window through which He can look into the soul.

4. He **Reveals**. "He sheweth Himself through the lattice" (R.V.). It is the fondest longing of His gracious heart to shew Himself, in all the wealth of His character, to the lonely loving heart. "He that loveth me ... I will manifest Myself to him" (John 14, 21).

5. He **Speaks**. "My Beloved spake" (v. 10). She has no doubt at all that it is **His** voice she hears. What other voice could be so sweet, so surpassingly charming? There is no mistaking it.

6. He **Invites**. "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away." He has come that He might take her to Himself, and into the fair summer land of His Grace.

Handfuls on Purpose.

“Come away,” away from all that harms or hinders, into His ways and works, where there is peace and power. As sinners we go *to* Him, as disciples we go *after* Him, as friends we go *with* Him.

7. He *Encourages*. The characteristics of spring mentioned here (w. **11-13**) are metaphorical of the new life. It is spring-time in the soul, when the Sun of Righteousness casts His warm reviving beams upon it. All the blessings of this new life have their source in Him. In these words of cheer, spoken to the Bride by the Bridegroom, we have “The Gospel of Christ,” which assures us that-

(1)* “The winter (of Death) is past ” (v. **11**). You hath He quickened who were dead. All in Christ are a new creation ... **All** things are become new (**2 Cor. 5. 17**). Passed from death into life, from winter into summer.

(2). “The rain (of Judgment) is over and gone.” As Noah, after the flood, stepped out into a new world, so Christ, by His death on the Cross, brings us **out** of condemnation into the glorious liberty of “newness of life ” (Rom. 8, **1**).

(3). “The flowers (of promise) appear on the earth.” After the death and resurrection of Christ, the promises of God, spring up in fresh beauty and power, as plentiful as the flowers of the field. “The promise is unto you,” pluck these precious gifts, and make your life beautiful and fragrant.

(4). “The time of Singing (Praise) is come.” It well becometh the mornings of spring to be vocal with

song. The dawn of the new morning of spiritual life is a time when every bird within the cage of our being is set a singing, "Praise ye the Lord," sing and make melody in your heart, for the Lord hath done great things for you.

(5). "The voice of the turtle (Holy Spirit) is heard in our land." While the flowers of promise appear *in* the earth-offered to all, the assuring voice of the Spirit only is heard in our land. To receive the promised Spirit, as the Comforter and Guide, we must know the Power of His **Cross**, (Gal, 3, **13-14**).

(6). The season of Fruitfulness is at hand. "The fig tree ripeneth her green figs, and the vines are in blossom" (v. 13). There is now the prospect of a priceless ingathering. This is the stage referred to in John **15, 16**. Blessing for others must be one of the results of our Union with Him (**Hosea** 14, 8).

(7). The Call is repeated. "Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away." Arise, don't keep sitting in the place of darkness and doubt. Thou art "my love, the joy of my heart," come away into the full enjoyment of all this Heaven-sent Spring brings within your reach. In His Presence is **fulness** of joy. Wilt thou go with this Man?

MUTUAL DELIGHT.

CHAPTER 2, 14-17.

To her, He is the "chiefest among the thousands," to Him, she is the "fairest among women." The fellowship of such must be sweet. Observe **here**—

I.-HER SECURITY. As His own *dove*—the emblem of purity and affection—she is—

I. “In the *clefts* of the Rock,” for *safety* (v. 14). She dwells on high (Isa. 33, 16), far above the reach of the cruel fowler, in the cleft of the Rock of Ages, kept by the power of God. The strength of Hills, which is His, is also hers.

2. “In the *secret places* of the ascent” (Newberry), for *progress*. Her position is one of safety, her privilege is one of advancement. The Rock of defence is frequently associated with the secret place of privilege (Ps. 27, 15; Isa. 33, 16). The power of the Spirit is associated with the blood of the Cross. As sons, we are in the cleft of the rock, as servants, we are “in the secret places of the stairs.”

II.-HIS LONGING FOR COMMUNION. He desires of her two things, He says—

I. “Let Me see *thy* countenance ... for it is comely.” Comely with the beauty that He has put upon it, by satisfying her heart with His love and goodness. Lift up thy face unto God—His heart yearns to see His own light in your eyes, and to have fellowship with thee. Then—

2. “Let Me hear *thy* voice, for it is sweet.” It is sweet to Him to hear *thy* voice in prayer to Him, in praise of Him, and in testimony for Him. The voice may be weak and trembling, but to Him it is sweet. Let Him hear it often, for there are so many other voices that must be harsh and painful to His gracious ear.

III.-HIS CAREFULNESS OVER THEIR POSSESSIONS. “ Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vineyards, for our vineyards are in blossom ” (v. 15, R.V.). The vineyards may represent spheres of service. Into the sacred enclosure foxes, or false teachers, have come (Ezek. 13.4). There are also “ little foxes,” playful, innocent things in a way, but they spoil the vines. The Bride and Bridegroom are co-partners in this business ; what touches the vineyard, affects them both. If we are vitally united to Christ, we shall be vitally interested in His cause. What is to be done with the foxes ? “ Take them.” Deal with them as foxes.

IV.-HER JOYFUL CONFESSION. “ My Beloved is mine, and I am His ” (v. 16).

1. **His, by Grace and Choice.** His, because He hath set His love upon me, and hath chosen me as His own. He loved me, and gave Himself for me.

2. **His, by Faith and Self-surrender.** “ I am His ! ” He gave Himself for me, and I have given myself for Him. Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price. This is a union that is indissoluble in death or eternity.

3. **His, until the Day break.** Just now, her sphere of action, in fellowship with Him, is among the shadows : but when that great “ day ” dawns, these shall “ flee away.” She is His, as really in the place of suffering, as in the day of glory. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadows . . . I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me (Ps. 23, 4).

4. **His, *until* He comes again.** “ Turn, my Beloved, and be Thou like a young hart upon the mountains of division ” (R.V., Marg.). The young hart can speedily overcome the hills and valleys, which separate. When Christ comes again, He will come “ quickly” the mountains that presently hide His visible presence, and *divide* His waiting people, will flow down at His Appearing. The cry of the Bride is, “ Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.”

A SORROWFUL NIGHT.

CHAPTER 3, 1-4.

These verses tell us of a lost fellowship, and a mid-night search.

1. **The Search.** “ I sought Him.” Why ? What had happened ? Something had separated these lovers. When the Holy Spirit is grieved, fellowship with the Lord is broken. She sought Him because she was deeply sensible of her loss. The more precious the Lord is to us, the more sorrowfully shall we miss His presence.

2. **The Time.** “ By night.” It is always night to the loving heart when He is not there. Distance from Christ implies darkness ; for He is the Light of Life.

3. **The Manner.** (1), She sought Him on His bed. The bed is a place of ease and inactivity. But He is not found here ; for the search is still in a slothful fashion. (2), She sought Him in the **Street**, she is out of her bed now, and into Society. But even in the city, she is seeking for the living among the dead. Lost fellowship

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with Christ is not restored in this manner. (3), She sought Him among the Watchmen (v. 3). "Saw ye Him?" Alas, even the Watchmen of Zion are not always in personal touch with Him. She has also to pass them by.

4. **The Discovery.** "I found Him whom my soul loveth" (v. 4). When her own plans and methods and efforts had been exhausted, He revealed Himself unto her. She made this joyful discovery when alone. **Mary** made a like discovery after a somewhat similar search (John 20, 11-16), "I found Him." There was no possibility of her mistaking another for Him. He only could satisfy her loving, trusting heart.

5. **The Result.** Having found Him, she says- (x), "I held Him." She held Him fast, with the heart grip of faith, like one clinging for very life. She held Him, conscious of her own need, and of His inexpressible preciousness. (2), "I brought Him into my mother's house." If He had been earlier brought into her mother's house, she might have saved herself this time of weary searching. Fellowship with Jesus Christ is sweet, but it is all the sweeter when He is brought into the home circle. If you cannot bring your mother and your brethren to Jesus, bring Jesus to them.

HIS BED, HIS CHARIOT, AND HIS CROWN.

CHAPTER 3, 7-11.

These words, "Bed, Chariot, Crown," are all emphasised in the Hebrew.

I.-HIS BED. “Behold, His bed.” His bed represents the place of divine rest.

1. *It was well* defended. “Threescore valiant men are about it.” The place of His rest is strongly protected. “He shall not fail, nor be discouraged.” Neither the power, the number, nor the devices of the enemy can disturb the rest of the Lord. To enter into His rest is to be saved indeed. “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.” His defenders are all “expert in war” (v. 8).

2. *The reason why.* “Because of fear in the night.” We wrestle not against flesh and blood ... but against the rulers of the *darkness* of this world (Eph. 6, 12). The foes that seek to disturb His rest, and ours, are mighty, but they that are for us are greater. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.

II.-HIS CHARIOT. This is His “Car of State” (R.V., Marg.). Like the Salvation of the Lord—

1. *It was devised by the King.* “King Solomon made himself a chariot” (v. 9). The plan, the purpose, and the material were all his own devising. So was it with the Chariot of the Gospel. The whole scheme of Redemption is according to the choice and mind of God. Man’s thoughts have no place here.

2. *It was costly.* “He made the pillars thereof of silver, the bottom of gold.” Solomon was not only the wisest, but the richest man of the age, he only could provide the materials for such a costly Car of State. Silver and gold stands here for preciousness and perfection. The means of our Salvation was indeed a

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costly provision. Not silver and gold, but the precious blood of Christ.

3. *It was comfortable.* It was “inlaid with love” (R.V., Marg.). The covering was the purple of royalty, but the lining was that of love. This phrase in itself is ample warrant for seeking spiritual significance in this Song. In this wonderful chariot there is Love all around. What a blessed experience. You have to get inside to know what is the length, the breadth, the depth, and the height of this love, which passeth knowledge.

4. *It was for others.* “For the daughters of Jerusalem” (v. 10). O ! ye daughters of Zion, this is the royal provision for you to take you to the King’s palace. Written all round the Chariot of our Salvation, are these words, “Whosoever will, may come.” If any man enter in he shall be saved and satisfied.

III.-HIS CROWN. “Go forth . . . and behold King Solomon with the crown” (v. 11). Yes ! the chariot paved with love leads to the vision of the crowned King.

1. *When did He receive it?* It was “in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart.” When Christ was resurrected and enthroned, it was the day of His betrothal to His redeemed Bride, and a day of great gladness to His heart.

2. *Who gave Him the Crown?* “The crown where-with His Mother crowned Him.” The *Mother* is the embodiment of Love and grace. God is Love. Love sent Jesus Christ, the Son, and love crowned Him.

“On His head are many crowns.” Behold your Bridegroom cometh, crowned with glory and honour. Go forth to meet Him, and to be for ever with Him.

HER PERSONAL BEAUTY.

CHAPTER 4, 1-6.

“Behold, thou art fair, my Love : behold, thou art fair.” This is not the Bride’s own estimate of herself, but His. The features of the physical body are here used as a similitude of the Church’s moral beauty. The outward appearance is taken as an analogy of the inward character.

1. Her **Eyes** are like dove’s. Meek and affectionate. The love of her heart beams out in her eyes. “The light of the body is the eye.” Like Him, she is meek and lowly in heart.

2. Her **Hair** is like a flock of goats. Her hair as a veil of covering gracefully hides her person, as a flock of goats on Mount Gilead. The Bride is modest, not self-assertive, and even her modesty is majestic as the stately march of a flock of goats.

3. Her **Teeth** are like a flock of ewes that are newly shorn (v. 2, R.V.). Numerous as a flock, and clean as a newly-shorn lamb. The teeth of the Bride are not set **on edge**, after the sour grapes of the world. They are not spoiled by eating that which is not good (Isa. 55, 2). They are not like lion’s, for devouring one another.

4. Her **Lips** are like a thread of scarlet. They have a healthy colour, and are well defined, because they speak the language of the Crucified One. The lips of

those who preach the “ blood of His Cross ” must become like a thread of scarlet.

5. Her *Speech* is comely. Because it is seasoned with the salt of His Spirit, and because it is the *language* of a faithful loving heart. The speech of those who speak of Him, who is altogether lovely, must be comely. No corrupt communication can proceed out of her mouth.

6. Her *Temples* are like a piece of pomegranate. They are well developed, and indicate the highest wisdom. Her Bridegroom is made unto her wisdom and righteousness. Those that are Christ’s are wise in Him.

7. Her Neck is like the tower of David (v. 4). Strong, straight, and dignified. She is not stiff-necked. The carriage or bearing of the Church of Christ ought to be in keeping with her glorious destiny as the Lamb’s wife. Why should the saint walk with his head bowed to the earth, as if he were the conquered foe of the world ?

8. Her *Breasts* are like young roes which feed among the *lilies* (v. 5). The breast is the symbol of *Affection*. They are like “*young* roes,” because they possess all the vigour of youth, and all the warmth of a first-love. These affectionate desires have pleasant pastures : they “ feed among the lilies.” He satisfieth the longing soul with good.

9. Ker Purpose. “ I will get me to the mountain of myrrh . . . until the day break and the shadows flee away ” (v. 6). The “ mountain of myrrh,” and “ hill of frankincense ” fitly represent “ heavenly

places in Christ Jesus.” This is the abiding place of His people now, until the day of His Appearing break, and the shadows of this earthly life of sorrow and suffering flee away before the glory of His Presence.

HER CHARACTER AND INFLUENCE.

CHAPTER 4, 7-15.

The many titles given here by the Bridegroom, to the Bride, are a revelation of His high appreciation of her character and preciousness to Him. His invitation is most expressive, “Come with Me” (v. 8). His heart longs for unbroken communion.

1. Come and *Walk* with Me (Col. 1, 10). Agreement.

2. Come and *Talk* with Me (Luke 24, 17). Prayer.

3. Come and *Work* with Me (1 Cor. 3, 9). Service.

4. Come and *Suffer* with Me (Luke 14, 26-29). Fellowship.

5. *Come* and Rejoice with Me (Matt. 2.5, 21). Reward.

6. Come and *Dwell* with Me (John 14, 2-3). Glory.
Now observe the various titles used as indicating her character in His sight.

I.-HER CHARACTER. He speaks of her—

1. As a Friend without spot. “Thou art all fair, my friend : there is no spot in thee” (v. 7, *Newberry*). The Church is Christ’s friend in this present evil age, and should be holy and without blemish before Him in love (Eph. 5, 27).

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2. As the *Companion* of His Choice. "Come with Me . . . from the lion's dens ; from the mountains of leopards " (v. 8). Christ has not only chosen us, but by following Him, we are delivered from the power of those spiritual lions and leopards whose dens are still in high places (Eph. 6, 12).

3. As a Sister and Bride. He calls her " My Sister, my Bride (v. 9). " Spouse " should always be read "Bride " (R.V.). This double relationship comes by birth and **betrotal**. Like Eve, the Church is " bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh "-Sister-and also God's gift to Him as an helpmeet-Bride. His Incarnation and Resurrection explain these two facts.

4. As a **Garden** enclosed (v. 12). A garden enclosed is a place of private pleasure and profit. The Church is Christ's own private and delightsome property. It is well enclosed, protected by the walls of His almighty power and everlasting love. Separated unto Him.

5. As a *Fountain* sealed. There are treasures and possibilities connected with the Church that have not been revealed. Our life is hid with Christ in God. " When He shall appear then shall we also be manifested with Him.

6. As a **Well** opened. " A well of living waters and **streams** from Lebanon " (v. 15). While about her there is much that is as yet sealed, or hidden from the eyes of others, there is also much that cannot be hid. The Church of God is a channel through which **flows** streams of living waters. **In** each redeemed and **satis-**

fied soul there is a well of water springing up into everlasting life (John 4, **14**).

II.-HER INFLUENCE WITH HIM. What a confession the Bridegroom makes when He says to her : “ Thou hast *ravished* My heart ” (v. 9). This is the only place where this word is used in the Bible. He had yielded His whole heart to her and she had taken it *away* (R.V., Marg.). How had she succeeded in so captivating and keeping His heart ?

1. With her *Looks*. “ Thou hast ravished My heart with one of thine eyes.” Being single-eyed, her whole body was full of heavenly light. Looking unto Jesus with the clear confident eye of faith is delightsome to Him.

2. With her *Love*. “ How fair is thy love ... better is thy love than wine ” (v. 10). Our eye will never ravish His heart, unless He sees our heart in it. Be not deceived, He is not mocked. He who loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, desires to see of the travail **of His soul, and to be** satisfied in it.

3. With her *Lips*. “**Thy** lips, O My Bride, drop as the honeycomb” (v. 11, R.V.). The words of her testimony are sweet to Him. The Bridegroom was sanctified in her heart, so she was ready always to give a reason of the hope that was in her (1 Pet. 3, 15). Let the redeemed of the Lord *say so*, for no other lips have such a sweet story to tell as they, Honour the Lord with thy lips.

HER PRAYER AND HIS ANSWER.

CHAPTERS 4, 16 ; 5, 1.

I. THE PRAYER. The Bridegroom has just been comparing her to “ A garden enclosed ... with

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plants ... and pleasant fruits .. with trees of frankincense ... and chief spices ” (4, 12-15). Now her intense desire is that she, as a garden, might be worthy of Him ; and abundantly pleasing to Him, so she prays—

1. For the Coming of the Wind. “ Awake, O north wind, and come thou south ” (4, 16). The *Awakening* and the ripening influence of the Holy Spirit are urgently needed if our lives are to be fruitful unto God. As the “ North wind,” He convicts ; as the “ South,” he comforts and guides into all truth, that we may grow in grace and knowledge.

2. For the Outflowing of the Spices. “ That the spices thereof may flow out.” The spices-or new graces of the character-would not flow out if they were not there. It takes the wind, or breath of the Spirit, to make them flow out right over the walls, in *testimony* to the riches of His grace (Zec. 4, 6).

3. For the Satisfaction of her Beloved. “ Let my Beloved come into His garden and eat His precious fruits ” (R.V.). She acknowledges that as a garden she is His ; and that all she has, and is, are for Him. What have we that we have not received ? It is His desire and should be our delight that He should come into our lives and make personal use of all the products of the Holy Spirit in us. Ye are not your own. The fruits of the unrenewed life are but sour grapes to Him.

II.-THE ANSWER. To her anxious request He gives a speedy reply—

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1. He comes. “ I am come into My garden ” (v. 1), He comes into His garden : into the sacred enclosure of the heart, and there manifests Himself, claiming it as His own. “ My garden.” When we yield ourselves unto God, our members will become weapons of righteousness for Him.

2. He accepts. “ I have gathered My myrrh, I have eaten My honeycomb, I have drunk My wine,” etc. He has willingly and joyfully accepted for His own use, all that had been so freely offered Him. What is consecrated to Him will surely be accepted by Him, and used for the honour and glory of His name.

3. He invites. “ Eat, O friends : drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.” See now His eager desire that others should share His precious provision. Let all who are *friendly* to Christ, shew their friendliness by accepting of His proffered blessings. Eat. Christ’s gifts cannot be received too freely, there is no danger of excess here. “ Drink abundantly ” (Rev. 22, 17).

HER SLOTHFULNESS AND ITS SORROWFUL RESULTS.

CHAPTER 5, 2-8.

After a season of “ abundant ” feasting and fellowship, there is the danger of yielding to selfish ease (v. 1). Let not His abounding grace lead to self-confidence and apathy. The experience here is that of a backslider. Why should backsliding follow times of refreshing ?

1. *Her Sleep.* “ I sleep, but my heart waketh.” This describes a condition of spiritual inactivity while

the conscience is still awake. This is not the sleep of death (Eph. 2, 1), but of indifference and neglect. Beware of sinning wilfully after that ye have believed.

2. *Her Awakening.* The voice of my Beloved knocketh, saying, "Open to Me." She knows that it is His voice that knocketh, but she only hears it in a dreamy fashion. How tender is His call. "Open to Me, My sister, my love, My dove." The door of self-sufficiency now stands between her and Him. See Rev. 3, 17-20.

3. *Her Excuse.* "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on?" etc. (v. 3). A very little thing is an excuse for a backslider. She had put off her coat, and washed her feet, with the intent of self-indulgence. How should she be disturbed, and *her* purposes thwarted? She has fallen from her first love.

4. *Her Repentance.* "I rose to open to my Beloved" (v. 5). Her *heart moved* when she saw His hand put in by the hole of the door (v. 4, R.V.). When her heart moved she moved. Backsliding always begins with the heart. If there is even a hole in the door, His merciful hand will find it out, and seek a wider opening.

5. *Her Discovery.* "I opened to my Beloved, but my Beloved ... was gone" (v. 6). While she opened the door her hands and fingers "dropped with myrrh" (v. 5). His gracious act in putting His hand on the lock made it very pleasant for her to open to Him, but when His fellowship is lightly esteemed it will be with-

drawn. Be not deceived, God is not mocked (Heb 12, 17).

6. Her *Self-reproach*. “**My** soul failed when He spake ” (v. 6). He had spoken to her (v. 2), but instead of instant obedience, she began to make excuse (v. 3). Now, like Peter, she mournfully remembers her guilt and failure. She knows exactly where the sin lay. She had preferred selfish ease to obeying Him.

7. *Her Miserable Condition*.—

(1). Fellowship broken, “ I sought Him but could not find Him.” Sin leads to separation. We may not be conscious of it at the time, but when the Spirit is grieved our communion with Christ is interrupted.

(2). Prayer unanswered. “ I called Him, but He gave me no answer.” If we would ask and receive, we must **abide** in Him (John 15, 7). She has ceased to be right with Him, so her prayers do not avail (Jas. 5, 16).

(3). Testimony lost. “ The watchmen found me smote me . . . wounded me . . . took away my vail from me ” (v. 7). So changed was she that the city watchman did not know her. Stripped of her vail, she was brought to both sorrow and shame. Backsliders will always suffer in a measure from faithful watchmen, they must be reprov'd and rebuked, and made ashamed of themselves that they might more keenly feel their guiltiness in disobeying their Lord and Redeemer.

8, *Her Appeal*. “ I charge you . . . that ye tell Him that I am sick of love ” (v. 8). She was cast

down, but not destroyed. She pleads with those who are in touch with Him to speak to Him on her behalf—to pray for her. The Lord turned the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends. It is a Christ-like ministry to make intercession for transgressors. **It** is wise to seek the help of others, that we might be lifted into a higher, Christian experience. “Brethren, pray for us.” But one must needs be “sick of love” to make such a request as this.

HER DESCRIPTION OF HIS PERSON.

CHAPTER 5, g-16.

These “daughters of Jerusalem,” as nominal professors, do not help the Bride in her search for her Beloved (v. 8). They acknowledge her character as the “fairest among women,” but to them her Beloved is no more than any other beloved. It is only a matter of personal choice and devotion. But their question, “What is thy Beloved?” etc., stirred up her deeper emotions to give this full and glowing testimony to His matchless beauty, and incomparable character. She **knows** Him, whom she has believed.

1. **He is white and ruddy (v. 10).** As a Nazarite He was “whiter than milk, and more ruddy than rubies” (Lam. 4, 7). White and pure as the Son of God, ruddy and healthy as the Son of Man. Divinely pure and beautifully human.

2. **He is the Chiefest among thousands.** In the building He is the chief Corner-Stone. Among the brethren He is the First-born. Among the resurrected

Handfuls on Purpose.

He is the First-begotten. He is the Alpha and Omega. The First-born of every creature.

3. **His head is as the most fine gold.** Here is perfect purity of thought and the perfection of wisdom. His thoughts are not only pure, but very precious.

4. His **locks are bushy and black.** His is the beauty of divine youthfulness and strength. The same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

5. His **Eyes are as doves' (v. 12).** They are full of tenderness and compassion. They are also "fitly set." They see things in their true light (2 Chron. 16, 9).

6. His **Checks are as a bed of spices (v. 13).** Lovely, fragrant, *attractive*. There was that about our Lord that drew and fascinated. Even the children were influenced by it. He is fairer than the children of men.

7. **His Lips are** like lilies. They are pure and full of grace ; for grace hath been poured into them (Ps. 45. 2). They drop sweetness.

8. **His Hands are as rings of gold. (v. 14, R.V.).** Precious and endless in their working. How manifold are Thy works (Ps. 104, 24). I have graven thee upon the palm of My hand (Isa. 49, 16). Into Thine hand I commit my spirit (Ps. 31, 5. 2 Tim. 1, 12).

9. **His Body is as bright ivory (R.V.).** Ivory, "overlaid with sapphires," is surely symbolic of purity and incorruptibility. God would not suffer His Holy One to see corruption. On the mount of transfiguration it was seen to be overlaid with sapphires shining like the sun.

Her Description of His Person. 107

10. *His Legs are as pillars of marble (v. 15).* They are strong and unfailing. He is the Rock, His work and ways are perfect (Deut. 32, 4). He fainteth not.

11. *His Aspect is like Lebanon (v.R.).* There is a unique dignity about His general appearance that makes Him pre-eminent among the sons of men, as Lebanon among the hills.

12. *His Mouth is most sweet (v. 16).* Never man spake like this Man (John 7, 46). Never man had such a message as this Man. His mouth is most sweet, for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead ; full of grace and truth.

13. *He is altogether lovely.* All the loveliness of God is revealed in Him. What is more lovely than love. God is Love. He that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God.

Now, says the Bride, “ *This* is my Beloved, and *this* is my Friend.” Who **would** not covet such a relationship ?

THE ANXIOUS INQUIRERS.

CHAPTER 6, 1-3.

It is not to be wondered at that after the Bride’s magnificent testimony to His “ altogether lovely ” character (vv. 10-16) we should immediately meet with seeking souls. If Christ, in all His glorious fulness, was more frequently preached, there would be no dearth of results.

Handfuls on Purpose.

1.—**THE INQUIRERS.** These are the daughters or virgins of Jerusalem. They are nominal professors, members of the visible Church, who are as yet strangers to Jesus Christ. Their lives are morally clean, but they have no personal experience of His power and fellowship.

1. Whom they seek. They seek her *Beloved*. “Whither is thy Beloved turned aside? that we may seek Him with thee.” They seek Him of whom they have just heard. Him who is so full of grace and truth, the Mighty to save, and to satisfy. Hearing should lead to seeking. Whom seekest thou? (John 20, 15).

2. Where they seek. “Whither is thy Beloved gone. O thou fairest among women.” They seek Him through her, who has been made fair through His comeliness put upon her. Her *fairness* was her likeness to Him, which made her testimony all the more effective. Those whose character has not been beautified by the grace of Christ will not be privileged to win souls.

II.—**THE DIRECTIONS GIVEN.** She is able to tell them where He can be found. He is—

1. In His garden. “My **Beloved** is gone down into His garden” (v. 2). He delights to wander in the garden of His Word, the “Scripture of Truth.” There ye shall meet with Him. Every book of the Bible is a “bed of spices.”

2. Feeding His flock. “My Beloved is gone down . . . to feed (His flock) in the gardens.” Here He refreshes and strengthens His people, who, like Him, take delight in this garden. “Thy Word was found, and

I did eat it.” Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

3. Gathering lilies. “Gone down into His garden . . . to gather lilies.” His loved ones are like lilies (2, 2), here He gathers them, receiving them to Himself, and making them a delight to His soul. He who gathers the lambs in His arms says, “Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.”

III.-HER PERSONAL TESTIMONY. “I am my Beloved’s, and my Beloved is mine” (v. 3). I am His, because I have given myself to Him. He is mine because He has given Himself for me. He is mine, because I have accepted Him ; I am His because He has accepted me. We should be able and ready to give a reason for the hope that is in us to all those that ask. Such personal testimony is always encouraging to anxious inquirers.

SYMBOLS OF HER UNIQUE CHARACTER.

CHAPTER 6, 4-10.

It would seem that each time she extols His virtues, speaking of the goodness and loveliness of His character (vv. 2-3), He in turn extols the virtues of the Bride. They who honour the Lord shall be honoured by Him. To her, “He is altogether lovely” (v. 16). To Him, she is “the choice one” (v. 9).

1. *Beautiful as Tirzah* (v. 4). Tirzah was a royal residence, a place renowned for its *beauty* (1 Kings

Handfuls on Purpose.

14, 19). The Church, true and clean, is a beautiful and delightful residence of her Lord. "I in you." The beauty of the Lord our God upon us.

2. *Comely as Jerusalem.* "Zion," like the Church, is "the perfection of beauty" (Ps. 50, 2). Beautiful for *situation*, none so favoured and honoured as she. Like Jerusalem, she is well protected, the mountains of God are round about her. The comeliness of her God is upon her (Ezek. 16, 14).

3. *Hopeful as the Morning.* "She looketh forth as the morning" (v. 10). Her prospects are bright. Her cause is as the shining light (of the morning) that shineth more and more, until the perfect day dawns. She has a blessed hope (Matt. 13, 43).

4. *Fair as the Moon.* The moon is the chief light of the world in the absence of the sun. Ye are the light of the world. "Occupy till I come." The moon's fairness is but the reflection of the unseen sun. So the Church.

5. *Clear as the Sun.* While the moon is not so brilliant as the sun, it is equally faithful in fulfilling its appointed mission. The Church ought to be as clear as the Christ in its doctrine, motives, and life. This one thing I do.

6. *Terrible as an Army* (v. 10). This word "terrible" here and in v. 4 only occurs once elsewhere in the Bible (Hab. 1, 7). It means *Awe-inspiring* as **bannered** hosts. There are tremendous possibilities in "bannered hosts." Banners here are the symbols of unity, conviction, courage, and confidence. The Church

Symbols of Her Unique Character. 111

in its goings forth on its divinely-inspired mission, with its unfailling resources, its God-given **armour** and unconquered Leader, should be an awe-inspiring sight. Is this what the Church is to-day ?

THE BRIDEGROOM'S VISIT.

CHAPTER 6, 11-13.

1. *The Place.* " I went down into the garden of nuts." The Church, as a whole, is compared to a garden, and His people to nuts, whose lives are sweet to Him, and well protected. Our life is hid with Christ in God. He " went down." AU His dealings with us implies a going down on His part. He humbled Himself.

2. *The Purpose.* " To see the fruits " (v. 11) . And whither the vine flourished, and the pomegranates budded. He came seeking fruit, and to see how His green plants prospered. The tree that is planted by the rivers of water should bring forth fruit **in its season** (Ps. 1, 3). Every tree planted by our Lord has **river** privileges, and is therefore without excuse. In Me is thy fruit found. See John 15,1-5.

3. *The Effect.* " Or ever I was aware, My soul (desire) set Me among the chariots of My princely people" (v. 12, R.v.). Suddenly, His chief desire was to identify Himself with the martial movements of His beloved and princely people. Those who would bring forth fruit unto Him, by their life and testimony, shall have the joy-inspiring presence of their Lord and Saviour. " Lo, I am with you." Pentecost is the **expres-**

sion of His sudden desire to go forth with His princely people in their service for Him.

4. *The Cdl.* “ Return, return, O Shulamite ; return, return, that we may look upon thee ” (v. 13). “ Shulamite ” is the feminine for Solomon, and might be rendered, Return, O Solomonite. She is called by the King’s own name, as the disciples of Jesus Christ was called “ Christians ” first at Antioch. Perhaps this call is in response to her anxious inquiry in chapter 5, 8. If His soul is to abide with His princely people, they must with their whole soul return to Him. Fruitfulness is conditioned by His abiding in us, and we in Him.”

5. *The Question.* She now ventures to ask : “ Why will ye look upon the Shulamite ? ” (v. 13). What will ye see in her ? She has nothing that she has not received worth looking at. It is all by the grace of God that we are what we are. Although “ in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” Yet He desires to see His own comeliness and workmanship in us.

6. *The Answer.* His reply is wonderful. He sees, as it were, “ The advance of two companies ” (R.V., Marg.). There are before His eyes two great and happy companies, constituting the whole redeemed family of God. A joyful company in heaven, and a joyful company on earth, both singing the song of the conquering blood of the Lamb. Rejoice in the Lord.

WORKERS TOGETHER.

CHAPTER 7, 10-13.

In the first part of this chapter He gives another description of the personal virtues of His Bride. He

begins with referring to her “ beautiful feet,” and ends with comparing her mouth to wine that causeth “ the **lips** of those that are asleep to speak ” (v. 9). The testimony of the Church ought to lead to the awakening of those that are asleep to speak forth the praise of His glorious Name. There is **here**—

1. *Confession.* “ I am my Beloved’s,” and His desire is toward me” (v. 10). Joyful and fruitful service is impossible until our own personal relationship with Christ is properly adjusted. If His desires are to be toward me, and His love fill My heart, He must be the beloved of my soul. I must be wholly His.

2. *Consecration.* “ Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the field,” etc. (v. 11). Her heart is now enlarged, so she longs to go forth into the field of missionary service. She knows that without Him she can do nothing. She says, “ let us go. The “ fields,” the “ villages,” and the “ vineyards,” may represent three aspects of service. The evangelist, the pastor, and the teacher. Whether our work is in the open field, gathering the villagers, or ministering to the vineyards, we equally need the presence and power of our loving Lord with us.

3. *Resolution.* “ *There* will I give Thee my love” (v. 12, R.V.). If we do not give Him our love, *then*, in the place of service, with all its trials and difficulties, we are giving him nothing. The love of Christ must constrain us. Are there not those who are more ready to give Him their labour than their love. Here in this

world of sin and sorrow, He gave us His love, here, amidst the toil and strife, give Him thy love.

4. *Satisfaction.* “At our doors are all manner of precious fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for Thee, O my Beloved” (v. 13, R.V.). In union with Him, the fruits will be precious and plentiful. The workers’ souls will be abundantly refreshed, and fruits will be “laid up” for their Lord and Master, that He may see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied. Just now, we are workers *together* with Him !

LOVE’S LONGING.

CHAPTER 8, r-5.

Wherever there is intense love, there will be unmistakable proof of it.

I.-HER PASSIONATE DESIRE is seen in her longing.

1. To have the liberty of a *Sister*. “O, that Thou wert as my brother, I would kiss Thee, yea, and none would despise me” (v. 1, R.V.). She is eager to make a public profession of her love and devotion to Him. It is so becoming to shew love for a brother, without provoking the sneer, or suspicion of others. Why should the public expressions of our love to Christ lead to ridicule, any more than to a brother or a sister ? The world understands natural, but not spiritual relationships.

2. To bring Him into her *Mother’s house*.

The “Mother’s house,” or household, may represent the Assembly of His people. The Church at

Laodicca had great need of one such to bring the rejected Christ inside. The household of faith should profit by the special individual experience of each.

3. To *cause Him to drink* of spiced wine. There is a burning desire to refresh and cheer His *soul* with the best. What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits ? The wine of our natural love, spiced with the divine love shed abroad in our hearts, is ever pleasing unto Him.

4. To have her whole person *supported and protected by His power*. " His left hand under my head, His right hand should embrace me " (v. 3). The more we know of the love of Christ, the more shall we seek to trust Him. Those who have taken refuge in the Eternal God shall have underneath them the everlasting arms (Deut. 33, 27). The *head* that is resting on His hand shall be without anxious thoughts (Matt. 6, 25).

II.-HER NOTE OF WARNING. " I charge you . . . that ye stir not up my Love until He please " (v. 4). She warns the daughters of Jerusalem against saying or doing anything that would tend to produce disturbing influences. True love to Christ is jealous for His Will and Work. We must learn to wait on Him, " until He please."

III.-HER MANNER OF WALK. "Who is this that *cometh* up from the wilderness leaning upon her Beloved ? " (v. 5). The virgin daughters ask this question, one of another, as they look at the walk of the Bride with the Bridegroom. **Observe—**

Handfuls on Purpose.

1. Where she is ; “ In the wilderness.” It is a picture of “ the Church in the wilderness ” (Acts 7, 38). In the world, but not of it. Pilgrims and strangers on the earth.

2. Where she was going ; “ Up from the wilderness.” This is not our rest ; we look for a city, whose builder and maker is God. Up from the sphere of service and suffering to the place of rest and reward.

3. How she went ; “ Leaning upon her Beloved.” Walking with Him, and resting on Him, is the Christian pilgrim’s joy and privilege.

THE BRIDEGROOM’S WORDS OF COMFORT.**CHAPTER 8, 5-7.**

This is one of the most impressive passages in the whole Book. It contains His definition of His own love. He **declares**—

I.-WHAT HE HAD DONE FOR HER. “I awakened thee ” (v. 5, R.V.). The first impulse of the new life came from Him. “ He first loved us.” He found us asleep, and insensible to His nearness, His grace, and His goodness. You hath He quickened who were dead.

II.-WHAT HE DESIRES TO BE TO HER. He pleads with her to set **Him**—

1. “ As a Seal upon her heart.” When Christ Himself is fixed on the heart, then the actions of the life become as His signet, revealing the impress of His character (Hag. 2, 23). When this seal is on the heart,

The Bridegroom's Words of Comfort. 117

then every thought and feeling is stamped with His image.

2. "As a Seal upon her arm." When the arm is made bare for service, the Seal of His authority and power should be visible. The Seal of Christ and of His Holy Spirit must first be in the heart for life and love before it can be on the arm for power and service.

III.-WHAT HE HAS FOR HER. Infinite love.

1. A love that cannot die. "It is as strong as death." Death is strong, but it is not stronger than His love. The strength of this love is the strength of the lover.

2. A love that cannot be quenched (v. 7). Although the enemy comes in like a flood, it cannot quench this love, which is indeed "A very flame of the Lord" (v. 6, R.V.). A fire that shall never go out. "I have loved Thee with an everlasting love." The many waters of sorrow and suffering cannot quench it. Herein is love (1 John 4, 9-10).

3. A love that cannot be drowned. "Neither can the floods drown it." It cannot be extinguished, neither can it be overwhelmed or buried in the depths. It will succeed in manifesting itself.

4. A love that cannot be bought. "If a man would give all the substance of his house for it, he would utterly be contemned." (v. 7). A man can no more purchase the love of God, than he could purchase the Son of God. All the *substance* of man, moral or material, is utterly worthless as a price for His love. God doth not sell

His love, He commendeth it toward us, while we are yet sinners (**Rom. 5, 7-8**).

A PLEA FOR OTHERS.

CHAPTER 8, 8-10.

She has just had another and a fuller revelation of His unquenchable love, and the result of it is : anxiety for others. When the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, we will fall in love with the loveless.

I.-THE BRIDE'S INQUIRY. It was regarding " a little Sister " (v. 8). Although the unconverted are *lower* in standing than the children of God, there is still kinship between them-Sisters.

1. The Sister's defect. " She hath no breasts." The breast is emblematic of *Affection*. She hath no love in her heart. This is a most lamentable condition to be in, but it is exactly the state of every unrenewed soul. No love for Jesus Christ.

2. The difficulty. " What shall we do for our Sister in the day when she shall be spoken for ? " Yea, even she will be spoken for by Him whose name is Love, and who died for us even while we were yet sinners. What shall we do for her, who is so loved by Thee, and who has no love in response to Thee]? This is a problem that is still with us. He loves the loveless, " I called . . . ye refused."

II.-THE BRIDEGROOM'S REPLY. There are two possible results.

1. She may be built up. " If she be a *wall*, we will build upon her a palace of silver " (v. 9). If there

is any *stability in* her, and if she is willing to receive all that we can give her, then the breasts of her affection will be lifted up like a “ turret of silver ” (R.V.). Love begets love, we love Him because He first loved us.

2. She may be nailed up. “ If she be a door, we will enclose (fix) her with boards of cedar.” If she prove as unstable, and as easily moved about with every wind, as an unfixed door, through which all or anything may go, then we will nail her up, and make her to feel her bondage and helplessness. If souls are not won by love, then they will be condemned by the law. The Bride and Bridegroom co-operate in the work of winning souls.

III.-HER PERSONAL TESTIMONY. She now gives a little bit of her own experience—

1. “ I am a wall ” (V. 10, R.V.). I am steadfast and trustful. I will not be moved. I know whom I have believed. This is not vain boasting.

2. “ My breasts are like towers.” My affections, she says, rise up unto Him like towers in the skies. She loves Him with all her heart.

3. “ I, in His eyes ... found peace ” (R.V.). Where there is stability of purpose and a heart of love, there will be the enjoyment of His favour and peace (Col. 2, 7). By the grace of God, I am what I am.

CLOSING WORDS.

CHAPTER 8, 11-14.

In the closing words of this matchless Song we have reference made to—

Handfuls on Purpose.

I.—**THE KING'S POSSESSION**, “Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon,” which means “the place of a multitude” (v. 11). The Church, or vineyard of the Lord, is in the place where the multitude is, because it is intended to be a blessing to the multitude.

1. What He did with it. “He let out the vineyard to keepers.” This vineyard needs to be kept, and all called of God and empowered with the Holy Spirit, are put in trust with the affairs of their Lord and King. They occupy for Him.

2. Why he let it out. “For the fruit thereof.” The purchase of this vineyard cost Him much (Acts 20, 28). Those who reap the advantage of it, are responsible to the King. Mark **13**, 34.

II.—**THE BRIDE'S RESOLUTION**. “My vineyard, which is mine (myself) is before me ; Thou ... must have a thousand”-the full amount. Each worker in the vineyard will have reward-two hundred, but **Thou must have** a thousand. Honour must be given to whom honour is due ; but the Lord must be exalted far above all.

III.—**THE BRIDEGROOM'S IN JUNCTION**.

1. To whom spoken? To her “that dwelleth in the gardens” (v. 13). She who dwelt in the clefts of the rock” (2, 14) now dwells in the gardens of separation and delight. The rock for safety, the vineyard for work, the garden for pleasure.

2. To what purpose ? He says to her, “The companions hearken to thy voice : cause Me to hear it.” It is good that others should hear our voice in testi-

mony, but it is better that He should hear it in praise and prayer. Thy Redeemer loves to hear thy voice. Cause Him to hear it often.

IV.-THE FINAL INVITATION. This book of “**Unvailings**,” like the book of “Revelation,” closes with an earnest cry for the coming of the Bridegroom in His power and glory. “Make haste, my Beloved ” (v. **14**). Come quickly, “like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains.” This is the attitude of a faithful loving, longing Bride. This is our hope. “For our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we wait for a **Saviour**, the Lord Jesus Christ, who **shall** fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of His glory, according to the working whereby He is able even to subject all things unto Himself.” (Phil. 3, **20-21**, R.V.). Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

New Testament Studies.

THE INFANT CHURCH.

ACTS I.

The infant Church was mighty in its infancy. The present-day snare of *precedency* was unknown in those early days of simple, child-like trust, when everything seemed to be sprinkled with a dewy resurrection freshness. May this newness of life be ours. To this end let us look at some of those features which characterised the members of the infant Church, and let us ask ourselves whether we as His sheep have the same marks upon us?

1. *They were in fellowship with their Risen Lord.* “To whom He *showed Himself* ... and assembled together with them ” (verses 3 and 4). The resurrection of Christ was an unquestionable fact to them. He had now become their very life. “Christ our life.” They had each personally experienced the power of His presence—a presence which not one of the unbelieving ever knew. Do we know what that means?

2. *They received the promise of the Holy Ghost.* “Ye shall be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence ” (verse 5). This great “promise of the Father ” (verse 4) is made to every heaven-born child of God, and should be as definitely accepted as the promise of eternal life. This promise was not given that they might be more fully justified before God, but that

God might be more fully justified in them before the world (Ezek. 38, 16). *See* Acts 19, 2.

3. *They were obedient to His Word.* “ Then returned they unto Jerusalem, . . . and went up into an upper room ” (vv. 12-13). The Lord had told them to wait for the fulfilment of the promise, so they had come to wait. They did not gather together to discuss the manner, the time, or extent of the promised out-pouring, but to WAIT. They had made up their minds simply to do their Master’s bidding, and leave the rest with Him. “ Go thou and do likewise.”

4. *They were united in Spirit.* “ These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication ” (verse 14). Why should they pray when they had His sure word of promise ? Was not the very certainty of the promise a powerful incentive to wait and to pray ? A Pentecostal day will come at any time when there is the same unity of spirit and persistent, believing prayer (Matt. 18, 19-20).

5. *They honoured the Scriptures.* “ Peter stood up and said, Men and brethren, this scripture must needs be fulfilled,” *etc.* (vv. 15-20). Peter and the one hundred and nineteen that were with him had no difficulty at all as to David being the author of Psalm 69, and that he spoke prophetically under the guidance of the Holy Ghost (2 Tim. 3, 16). He who handles the Word of God so as to foster discredit has grieved the Holy Spirit, and done the work of the devil.

6. *They brought their difficulties to the Lord in prayer.* “ Thou, Lord, knowest the hearts of all :

Handfuls on Purpose.

show whether of these two Thou hast chosen ” (21-24). Two had been named to fill the one office. They were quite willing to sink their own individual preferences, and accept him whom the Lord should commend. As it was then, so is it now. Only the called of God will succeed. If any man lack wisdom let him ask of God. The infant Church was mightier than the *aged* Church of the present day. Why ? Well, Why ? The clamant need of the church is :—

1. A new revelation of the Risen Christ.
2. A fuller experience of the power of His Resurrection.
3. An unwavering faith in His Word.
4. A fresh baptism of the Holy Ghost.
5. The spirit of unity amongst believers.
6. Believing prayer.

THE EMPOWERED CHURCH.

ACTS 2, 1-13.

A praying Church will always be a powerful Church. The true and real influence of a Church does not consist in the number or social position of its members, not in the stateliness of the building, nor in the largeness of its contributions, but in the presence and *power of the Holy Ghost*. Where the ministry of the Spirit is absent, the Church is but a breathless body. “ It is the Spirit that quickeneth.” **Observe—**

1. **Where they were.** “ They were all with one accord in one place ” (v. 1). They were in “ one place ” **just** because they were all of “ one accord.” This is a condition of heart that is absolutely necessary to the

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receiving of the power of the Holy Spirit. To be filled with the Spirit we must be emptied of all self-seeking and uncharitableness. When brethren dwell together in unity, then the Lord will command His blessing.

2. **When the Blessing came.** “ When the day of Pentecost was fully come.” According to the type, that was fifty days after (Christ as) the sheaf of first-fruits was presented as a wave offering (Lev. 23, 15-16). God’s workings are always in harmony with the “ fulness of time ” (Gal. 4, 4). He does nothing prematurely ; there is an eternal fitness in the divine seasons. There is an *earthly as well as* a heavenly counterpart in all the arrangements of Him whose work is perfect. The Holy Ghost is still ready to come upon all those who are **ready** to receive Him. They that wait upon the Lord shall exchange strength.

3. **How the Blessing came.** “ Suddenly, as a mighty, rushing wind, and as cloven tongues of fire ” (vv. 2-3). It did not come through a process of growth or development ; it was not evolved out of their own inner consciousness ; it was the direct gift of the Father in answer to their believing prayer, and in fulfilment of His own gracious promise. It came as “ mighty wind ” and as “ tongues of fire,” symbolic of a personality that cannot be limited or controlled by the mere will of man (John 3, 8).

4. **To whom the Blessing came.** “ It sat upon *each* of them, and they were *all* filled with the Holy Ghost ” (vv. 3-4). God is no respecter of persons ; every waiting, believing heart was filled with the Spirit.

They each received the like gift, although the *manifestation* of the power in their individual lives was different ; yet it was the same Spirit. The lesson undoubtedly for us is that every believing disciple of Christ may and should be “ filled with the Holy Ghost.” More than that, each one in that upper room baptised of the Holy Spirit was perfectly conscious of the fact. In this respect between the first century and the twentieth there is no difference (Luke II, **13**). The same God is rich unto all that call upon Him.

5. *The Effects Produced.* These were twofold : (1) Upon themselves. “ They were filled, and spake with *other tongues, as* the Spirit gave them utterance.” They were possessed and controlled by the mighty power of God. As earthen vessels they were charged with heavenly treasure a precious gift that is for ever hidden from the *worldly-wise* and revealed only unto babes (Matt. II, 25). (2) Upon others. “ Many were amazed and marvelled ;... others mocked ” (vv. 7-13). The coming of the Holy Spirit is always certain to be a telling innovation. There is no hiding of His power. It is such an unearthly movement that ungodly philosophers are all amazed and in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this ? (2 Cor. IO, 4). This was in truth a “ wealthy ” church, it was rich in spiritual power and fruitfulness.

THE WITNESSING CHURCH.

ACTS 2, 14-36.

“ This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof *we all are* witnesses ” (v. 32).

A quickened Church, or a quickened soul, will be certain to give Jesus the pre-eminence. Had not Christ said that "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He shall glorify Me?" (John 16, 13-14). The Church or the individual that is not glorifying Jesus Christ as the crucified and risen Son of God cannot be filled with the Spirit. We are assured of this, that the Holy Ghost will not give His glory to another than Jesus Christ, in whose name He has come, and whose work He seeks to continue on earth. So when "Peter, filled with the Spirit, stood up with the eleven and lifted up his voice" it was to preach "Jesus and the Resurrection." Spirit-filled men have no other theme. We shall note, briefly, the outstanding features of Peter's Pentecostal testimony, and here he speaks as the mouthpiece of the whole Church. He testified—

1. *To the Transformation of his Brethren.* "These men are not drunken, as ye suppose" (v. 15). There was undoubtedly a very marked change in their behaviour. They were intoxicated sure enough, but not with the world's wine, as they supposed, for they were filled with the new wine of the Kingdom of God. But the *natural man* cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him (1 Cor. 2, 14).

2. *To the Fulfilment of Prophecy* (vv. 16-21). At the marriage at **Cana**, the best wine—the gift of Christ—was kept to the *last*. So in "these last days" the best wine has been given in the coming of the Holy Ghost. Between this promise made to Joel and the

fulfilment there lay twenty-four generations ; but **His** faithfulness faileth not. The Spirit has been given, but "*all flesh*" have not yet been touched with the flame of this life-quickenning fire. But surely this also will come to pass. Let us join the Lord's **remembrancers**, and pray for it. The testimony of a living Church must be to God's faithfulness to His Word.

3. *To the Divine Approval of Jesus of Nazareth.*- "A man approved of God" (v. 22). The works that Jesus did were the works that no other man could do (John 15, 24). His "miracles, wonders, and signs" were incontestable evidence of His holiness and super-human power, of His actual oneness with the invisible and almighty Father (John 14, 10-11). This Man approved of God still waits His approval of men.

4. *To the Guilt of Rejecting Christ.* "HIM . . . ye *have taken*, and by wicked (lawless) hands have crucified and slain" (v. 23). Peter, filled with the Holy Ghost, knows no fear, and sees no contradiction between "the determinate counsel of God" and the terrible lawlessness of those who crucified His Son (Luke 22, 22). After Pentecost, the first act of the Holy Spirit upon the ungodly was to convince of murder. What is sin? Sin is lawlessness, rebellion, usurpation.

5. *To the Power of His Resurrection.* "It was *not* possible that HE should be holden of death" (v. 24). He who claimed to be "the Resurrection and the Life" proved His claim by rising from the dead (John 10, 17). As it was not possible for the powers of death and hell to hold Him, neither is it possible for them to hold those

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who by faith are in Him (John 5, 24-25; 2 Cor. 4, 14). A witness to the power of His resurrection must have a resurrection experience (1 Peter 1, 3).

6. *To the Inspiration of David.* David spoke concerning Christ, for he “ foresaw the Lord *always* before his face ” (v. 25, and Ps. 16, 8.) As the One who, according to the promise of God, “ He would raise up to sit on His throne ” (v. 30). To deny the prophetic character of the Psalms *of David* is to reject the testimony of the Holy Ghost by whom Peter now was speaking (Luke 24, 44). Those moved by the Holy Ghost are “ holy men ” and are never moved to declare things which are inconsistent.

7. *To the Certainty of Christ's Exaltation.* The coming of the Holy Spirit was not only the fulfilment of a promise, but also the guarantee that He who had been crucified was now “ by the right hand of God exalted ” (vv. 33-36), and made “ both **Lord** and Christ.” Although all authority has been given Him, He still waits with outstretched arms to give “ gifts unto men ” (John 1. 12). When Christ's death, resurrection, and exaltation are firmly believed and emphatically preached signs and wonders will be done in His name.

THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL.

ACTS 2, 37-47.

Peter's sermon was in the power of the Holy Ghost, so there were “ signs following.” There **was**—

1. *Deep Conviction.* “ When they heard they were pricked in their heart ” (verse 37). “ They felt

the nails wherewith they had crucified Christ sticking fast in their own hearts as so many sharp daggers." When the Spirit of Grace is poured out, sinners are sure to see Him whom *they have pierced* (Zech. 12, 10). He came to convince of sin (John 16, 8). How shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach with convicting power unless they are sent ?

2. **Open Confession.** " Men and brethren, what shall we do ? " This burning question (Acts 9, 6 ; 16, 30), wrung from Spirit-pierced hearts, declares this fact, that salvation must come from God. " What shall I do ? " A convicted sinner never knows of himself what to do. It is not in man. But when frank and full confession is made the guiding light will speedily dawn (1 John 1, 9).

3. **Plain Directions.** " Repent and be baptised every one of you, ... and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, for the promise is unto you " (vv. 38-40). Peter's word was not, " Reform, and be more civilised," but " Repent, and be baptised." To *repent* was to change their minds completely regarding Jesus Christ, whom they rejected ; and to be *baptised* implied the renouncing of the old life, and an open confession of Christ as their Lord. In doing this they would receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, that they might be endued with power to overcome the world and be witnesses unto Him who died and rose again. Have you received the Holy Ghost *since you believed*, " for the promise is unto *you* ? " (v. 39).

4. **Joyful Reception.** " They gladly received His Word " (v. 41). The offer of " the remission of sins "

through repentance was like cold water to a thirsty soul ; they gladly received it. No condemned criminal ever received a free **parden** more willingly than they accepted the offer of mercy. This is **the Gospel** that God is commanding all men everywhere to repent and believe. Three thousand brought in, “ but yet there is room.”

5. *Steady Progression.* “ They continued steadfastly in doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread, and in prayers ” (v. 42). They were God-made converts, and so the true signs of an inward transformation are clearly evident. These were-love for the *Word*, love for *one another*, love for their *absent Lord*, and love for **private** and public *payer*. Being grafted into the living Christ, they became possessed with His Spirit, and grew in grace and in the knowledge of their Lord and **Saviour** .

6. *Hearty Co-operation.* “ They were together and had all things common ” (vv. 44-45). This, perhaps, not of necessity, but because of their warm **affection** for one another, and practical mutual interest. This spirit is very beautiful, and reveals the wonderful influence the love of God has when shed *abroad in* our hearts, Jesus Christ had given His all for them ; now they were prepared to give their all for Him and for one another (Eph. **5,2**). What hinders the continuance of this spirit of brotherhood ? Lack of faith in God, worldliness, and selfishness.

7. *Great Jubilation.* “ Gladness of heart ; praising God ” (vv. 46-47). Repentance is the narrow gate that leads into the happy home of a heavenly Father’s heart. The hearts that were pierced with conviction

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now praise God for salvation. Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning (Acts 10, 43).

This Gospel in the power of the Spirit is still the power of God—

To pierce with conviction the heart of sin.

To compel men to confess their need.

To bring the joy of forgiveness to a believing heart.

To keep in fellowship those who obey.

To turn self-denial into a great delight.

To fill the heart with praise to God.

To make the life a testimony for God.

A WORK OF POWER,

Acts 3, 1-26.

“Is Christianity a failure ? ” We might as well ask is the sunshine a failure ? The **Christianised** paganism that is being substituted for Pentecostal life and power is a failure because it offers hungry souls stones for bread-it never touches the unutterable need of the human heart. It was very different with Peter and John, filled, as they were, with the Spirit of prayer and of power. In this chapter we have :—

1. **A Picture of Need.** “ A certain man lame . . . laid daily at the gate ” (vv. 2-3). He was both *poor* and *helpless*. But he was willing to be laid in **the way** of getting help-“ at the gate called Beautiful.” He was not too proud to beg or to lay his deformity in the path of prayer. If he had been ashamed to confess his need he probably never would have experienced the healing power of the name of Jesus.

2. **A Work of Faith (vv. 4-6).** Peter and John said, “Look on us!” and the lame man, having such a door of hope opened, gave heed unto them “expecting something.” Men filled with the Holy Spirit are sure to awaken expectancy in the minds of others. They had neither “silver nor gold,” but they had something infinitely better; they had faith in the saving name of the risen Christ. Calvary and Pentecost are God’s remedy for lame and helpless humanity.

3. **A Miracle of Grace.** “Immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength” (vv. 7-g). Having been healed through the power of the name of Jesus (v. 16). He gives an unmistakable testimony to it by “**leaping, walking,** and praising God.” Then did the lame man leap as a hart (Isa. 35, 6). When a poor, lame, hopeless soul comes into contact with Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, there will be a joyful transformation; the **place** of the beggar is forsaken for the place of the worshipper (v. 8).

4. **An Awakening of Wonder.** “All the people ran, ... greatly wondering.” Peter said, “Why look ye so earnestly on us?” (vv. 11-12). The amazed and bewildered people could only see the **instruments** that were in the hands of the invisible wonder-working Saviour. Peter and John were the channels of a “power and holiness” not their own, but Christ’s. All power is given unto Him, and Pentecost means the imparting of that power to His disciples, for the glory of His name.

5. *A Charge Of Guilt* (w. 13-16). Peter, quick to take advantage of this sudden awakening of interest, charged them with the “denial of the Holy One,” and “killing the Prince of Life,” then declared that “faith in the name of Him whom they had killed had made “this man strong.” Thereby proving that God had raised Him from the dead. Every redeemed and healed soul is a witness to the fact of Christ’s resurrection (2, Tim. 1, 10).

6. *An Offer of Mercy* (vv. 17-21). We think we see the tear in Peter’s eye when he said : “Now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it . . . Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” Their sins were very great, but the *blood* of Jesus Christ, whom they had crucified, was able to cleanse them all away. By thus repenting the times of refreshing from His presence would come unto them.

7. *A Word of Warning*. “Every soul that shall not hear that prophet shall be destroyed ” (vv. 22-23). To despise the messenger of the Lord is to despise Him that sent Him (Luke 10, 16). He that heareth these sayings of Mine and doeth them shall be likened to a wise man. Hear, and your soul shall live.

THE CHALLENGE AND THE DEFENCE

ACTS 4, 5-23.

In preaching “Jesus and the Resurrection,” Peter and John were thrusting the sword of truth right into

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the hearts of the king's enemies. If Jesus who was crucified has risen again then they are the vilest sinners on the face of the earth, for by consent they had killed the Holy Son of God. If Christ is not risen, then all preaching and faith are alike vain (1 Cor. 15, 14).

1. *The Challenge.* “ By what power, or in what name, have ye done this ? ” (vv. 5-7, R.V.). The power was self-evident in the healed man ; the name was a mystery. Was it Satanic or Divine ? The challengers were numerous and influential. “ Rulers, elders, scribes, the high priest, and as many as were of his kindred.” How could they rejoice in the healing of this lame-born beggar, when their own personal dignity was in danger of being lowered in the eyes of the people ?

2. *The Defence.* Peter being “filled with the Holy Ghost ” was ready to give a faithful and courageous reply (vv. 8-12). His searching words were to ring out to “ all the people of Israel ” that it was through the power of “ the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified,” that this man was made whole, and that he was a standing witness to the resurrection of Jesus, and to their own guilt. The stone which they had cast aside as unfit for use had been lifted up by God and made both the foundation and the *chief corner* of a new and better structure. On this foundation only spiritual living stones could be built, and by this “ Head of the corner ” both Jews and Gentiles were to be made one. “ All one in Christ Jesus.” Other foundation

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can no *man* lay ; “ for there is *none other name* under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.”

3. The Results. (a) They marvelled at the boldness of Peter and John (v. 13). But they had to confess that, although they were “ unlearned and ignorant men,” they had stamped on their characters the features of Jesus. God had chosen the foolish things to confound the wise (1 Cor. 1, 27). The treasures of God’s grace are still hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed to humble, trustful babes (Matt. 11, 25). (b) They were silenced when they beheld the man that was healed standing with them (v. 14). Transformed lives by the power of the Risen Christ are the best apologetics for Christianity. In the cause of Jesus Christ, words are mere empty prattle, without the power of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 4, 19). (c) They were moved by a guilty fear (vv. 15-18). They could not deny that “ a notable miracle had been done,” but they were anxious that it should “ spread no further !” What amazing perversity ! By their speaking in **the name of Jesus** great good had been done, but they would “ command them not to speak any more in the name of Jesus.” They could speak as long as they liked in their own name-as long as no souls were saved -but they were not to preach Christ and Him crucified in the power of the Spirit, for that would work such revolutions as would upset their peaceful theories, and spoil the regular quiet and decorum of their manner of worship. The descendants of these unbelieving formalists are still among us ; who would rather have the

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order and quiet of a graveyard that the stir of a revival by the Spirit of God. (d) They let them go (vv. 19-23). Peter and John would not lower the banner one single inch, for they “ could not but speak the things which they had seen and heard.” Being “ let go ” they found their own company—those who were possessed by the same Spirit—members of the same heavenly family. To which company do you belong?

THE APPEAL TO GOD.

ACTS 4, 23-31.

“ Being let go they went to their own company.” It is an old saying that “ fowl of like feather flock together.” Just as when the needle is set free from every hindrance, it will gravitate to the pole, so those hearts kindled with the same spiritual flame will be powerfully attracted one to another. This love for those who love the Lord is an evidence of heavenly kinship, and a mark of our separation from the world. As soon as Peter and John had “ reported,” they all fled together in prayer to their city of Refuge, which was the God of their Risen Lord. Prayer is the secret of all strength and consolation, while as servants we suffer for His name. Let us notice some things about this appeal :—

1. **It was Believing.** “ Lord, **Thou** art God.” They did not pray into unresponsive space, they talked into the very ear of God. “ He that **cometh** to God must believe that **He is.**” Their God was the God

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“ which **made** heaven, earth, sea, and all **that** in *them is*.”
The God of creation, not of evolution.

2. *It was United.* “ They lifted up their voice to God with one accord ” (v. 24). They had already proved the value of united prayer. They would trust to see the power of it again. They seemed never to forget the words of their now Glorified Master. “ If two of you shall agree,” etc. (Matt. **18, 19**). United believing prayer is one of the mightiest weapons God has put within the reach of His people. Every Church, no matter how small, has this sword of overcoming power hanging at its girdle. O that it were unsheathed. Alas, that it hath slept so long in the scabbard of unbelief.

3. *It was Scriptural* (vv. q-28). These holy men of God, possessed by the same Spirit which taught the prophets of old, are neither afraid nor ashamed to make mention of David as the author of Psalm 2, and to interpret his words as the infallible testimony of the Holy Ghost. It will give power to our petitions if the Word of God dwells in us richly. The Polychrome Bible is the gallows on which Higher Criticism will yet be hanged.

4. *It was Definite.* “ Now, Lord grant that with all boldness they **may speak** Thy Word” (v. 2g). How could they speak the **Word of God** with boldness, if they did not know assuredly what was the Word of God ? They prayed for, and expected, an immediate answer. “ Now,” they spread out their needs as Hezekiah did the letter, and with the same sudden, overwhelming manifestations (Acts **14, 3**). There is a great difference

between *saying* prayers and making a direct personal appeal to God for a present declaration of His saving power.

5. *It was Christ-Honouring.* “ That signs and wonders may be done by the name of Thy Holy Child Jesus ” (v. 30). They were far more concerned about the honour of Christ than the honour of the Church. This is always characteristic of Spirit-filled lives. If the **NAME** of Jesus does not get the prominence, signs and wonders will not be done by the “ stretching forth of His hand.” Our self-sufficiency will always paralyse the wonder-working hand of the Holy Spirit.

6. *It was Answered.* “And when they prayed the place was shaken ; they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and spake the Word of God with boldness ” (v. 31). To be filled with the Spirit is God’s answer to all our needs as His servants and witnesses. There is a great difference between speaking the *Word of God* and giving the opinions of men about it. The one is the wheat, the other is the chaff (Jer. 23, 28). The order here is Suggestions, Praying, Shaking, Filling, Testifying.

TESTING TIMES.

ACTS 4, 32-37 ; 5, 1-16.

The power of a Church will be according to the measure by which that Church is filled with the Holy Ghost. When a Church is of “ one heart and of one soul,” it is an evidence that there is no controversy among them ; then they look every man “ not on his own things ” (4, 32-37). The proof that we love God

is that we “ love our brother also.” The story of Ananias and Sapphira is an unquenchable beacon of warning to all who would live godly ; it is like some terrible hand with five dreadful fingers. Here they are—

1. *Human Deceitfulness.* Ananias and Sapphira had beautiful names, but they had crooked and deformed natures. Like the other disciples, they sold their possession, but, unlike the others, they “ kept back part of the price.” They put on the sheep’s skin, but they were still goats at the heart. They went a *long way* in the Christian life in laying a part at the apostles’ feet, but they went the wrong way in pretending that they were giving all. Like Achan, they hoped to enrich themselves by deceiving the Lord. The heart must be “ deceitful above all things,” for it would deceive the very God of Heaven.

2. *Satanic Influence.* “ Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie against the Holy Ghost ?” (v. 23). This “ Liar from the beginning ” still seeks to deceive by filling *the heart* with thoughts that are opposed to the Spirit of God. Beware of his “ fiery darts “-those burning desires to honour self more than God. With regard to the service of Christ, *first* thoughts are usually best. Their first thought was to give all, their second was to *keep back part* of the price. Whatever would *hinder us* from seeking *first* the Kingdom of God and His righteousness is of the world, the flesh, or the devil.

3. *Unexpected Detection.* It must have been an awful awakening to Ananias when he had laid the money at the apostles’ feet, expecting their benediction,

to hear instead those soul-piercing words, “ Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie against the Holy Ghost ? ” The sins of the **heart** cannot be hidden from God any more than the blood of a murdered Abel. Men **filled** with the Holy Ghost, like Peter, are quick to detect the lying spirit of the devil in a false professor. Try the spirits, whether they are of God (1 John 4, 1). Remember Lot’s wife, and also the man without the wedding garment (Matt. 22, 12) .

4. **Divine Judgment.** “ Ananias, hearing these words, fell down, and gave up the ghost ” (v. 25). There was but little time, between the flash of conviction and the stroke of vengeance. He may not even had time to say, “ God be merciful to me, a sinner.” He that **hardeneth** his neck shall suddenly be cut off. He that covereth his sin shall not prosper. He may go a long way round about, but some time, and that suddenly, the great searchlight from the Throne of God will break in upon him, bringing irretrievable self-condemnation and death. Let false professors beware, for no human disguise will ever hide a heart-lie from Him who is the Truth.

5. Fatal **Disappointment.** It is extremely sorrowful to think of his wife coming in about “ three hours after, not knowing what was done,” expecting, perhaps, to find her husband exalted to a place of honour, and with the same lie on her lips and in her heart, to be met with the same sudden and overwhelming retribution. God is no respecter of persons ; the same sin meets with the same condemnation. Sapphira may have been a

beautiful woman, as her name indicates, but outward comeliness is no shelter for inward deceit. This startling vindication of the holiness of God had a very salutary effect in putting a wholesome fear into the hearts of many (v. 13), and magnifying the power of God in the life and testimony of the apostles (John 14, 12).

APOSTOLIC BOLDNESS.

ACTS 5, 17-42.

One of the most pronounced effects of Pentecost was the bringing of the disciples into a closer and more vital relationship with Jesus as their risen Lord. By this fiery baptism were they all made "one body," and, planted together in the likeness of His death, were also made in the likeness of His resurrection (Rom. 6, 5-6). So that they now knew Him in the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings. No one can enter into the heaven-born *fellowship* of **His** sufferings who **has** not entered into the soul-sanctifying power of Pentecost. The disciples were not able, nor were they asked, to take their God-given stand for Him, who was the Truth and the Crucified, until they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. Neither can we without the same equipment.

1. **They suffered for Him.** They were put "in the common prison" (v. 18). They well knew that it was their love and their likeness to Jesus Christ that brought this persecution upon them ; it was "for His name." If any man would live godly he must suffer. The words of their Master were now being fulfilled in them (Luke 21, 12). The rulers were filled with in-

dignation and fear for the doctrine of the apostles had filled Jerusalem, and, if true, it proved them to be the murderers of the Son of God (v. 28). Those who preach a doctrine like this, that drives guilt and condemnation home to the hearts of self-righteous men, will also know what it is to suffer.

2. *They were encouraged by Him.* “ The angel of the Lord brought them forth and said, “ Go, stand and speak all the words of this life ” (w. 19-20). Those who are faithful to God, their Saviour, have miracles of mercy wrought for them that others can never understand. This new deliverance and fresh commission must have been a mighty buttress to their faith. They were to go and speak to the people all the words of **THIS LIFE**. This life, which was divine and eternal, and **was** offered to all who repent of sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (1John 5, 11). Those who would speak *all* the words of “ this life ” will always have plenty to speak about, and these are *the words* that *the people* need.

3. *They were devoted to Him.* “ Behold the *men* whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people ” (vv. 21-25). They were not disobedient to the heavenly vision, These Spirit-taught men knew nothing worth living for apart from doing the will of God. The desire to please Jesus Christ was the overmastering passion of their souls. One is your Master, even Christ, and if we are true to Him, we shall speak out, and live out, all His revealed will. To substitute our own thoughts for the “ Words of this Life ” is to deny the Lord, and to become false witnesses.

4. *They were fearless for Him.* “We ought to obey God rather than man,” etc. (vv. 29-32). Although they had just escaped from prison they were not afraid to look the enemies of Christ in the face and say, “God hath raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. The Spirit of God had come to “convince the world of sin” through the lips and lives of those in whose heart He dwells. The sin-convicting power of the Holy Ghost is hindered and thwarted by the downright poltroonery of many of Christ’s ambassadors. The fear of man bringeth a snare, not only to the soul of the preacher, but also to the Gospel which he preaches.

5. *They were joyful in Him.* “They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name” (vv. 41-42). They did not lift up their hands in pious horror at the thought of doing anything to bring *shame* upon their own name if Jesus was to be honoured thereby. Only those filled with the Spirit can take pleasure in reproaches for Christ’s sake (2 Cor. 12, 10). We are not ashamed of our Scottish martyrs who suffered as Christians, but we may well be ashamed of those who are ashamed to suffer for His name’s sake (1 Peter 4, **13-16**).

SERVING AND SHINING.

ACTS 6, 1-15.

The portion before us here may be divided into two sections :-

1. A NEW TRIAL. The number of the saved had grown rapidly, and so the work of administering

help to the needy ones was becoming increasingly difficult.

1. **The Complaint** (v. 1). The Greek-speaking **jews** “murmured because **their** widows were neglected.” This neglect could not be wilful. It is pleasing to note how careful these early brethren were about the interests of their sorrowing, suffering sisters.

2. **The Remedy.** “Look ye out men full of the Holy Ghost,” etc. (vv. 2-4). There are two important lessons for us here, the first is, that to minister “the Word of God” is a more urgent business than doling charities to the poor ; and the second, that even for the simple work of distributing gifts among the needy the filling of the Holy Spirit was needed. The Lord would not have the poor of His people relieved in **the manner** in which a man may relieve the hunger of his dog ; but in the tenderness and compassion of the Spirit of Grace, that the receiver may be doubly blessed thereby. It is not of God that the poor among His flock should be constantly reminded of their pauperism. All those who have seen that God-inspired work among the orphans at Bridge-of-Weir must feel thankful to God for the absence of the very smell of the “charity-workhouse” system.

3. **The Results.** “They chose Stephen, a man full of the Holy Ghost ... and the Word of God increased” (vv. 5-7). These seven men, whom they had “looked out,” were not chosen because of their social position or scholarship, but because they were “filled with the Spirit ;” this is the indispensable equipment for accept-

able service in the eyes of the glorified Christ. The Word of God is sure to increase in power and fruitfulness through the ministry of such men. If the " Word of God " is not increasing in its hold upon the hearts and lives of its hearers it is because it is preached in the spirit of doubt and fear, instead of in the power of the Holy Ghost.

II. A NEW TESTIMONY.-Stephen's *face* became a witness to Stephen's *faith*.

1. See Him Serving. Being " full of faith and power, he did great wonders " (v. 8). The secret of Stephen's wonder-working influence is an open one, and within the reach of every servant of Christ. He had two mighty hands-" faith and power "-and with these it became easy for him to do great things. This strength is not something we may put off or on, like a garment, it belongs to the constitution of our spiritual manhood (Acts 1, 8).

2. See *Him Suffering*. Stephen was never more like his Master than when they sought false witness against him (Matt. 26, 59). Truly they hated him without a cause. In this fiery trial he was filled with a wisdom and spirit that " they were not able to resist," thus experiencing the fulfilment of the Lord's promise (Luke 21, 15). Men filled with the Holy Spirit are sure to stir up the enmity of the carnal mind. But greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world (1 John 4).

3. See *Him Shining*. All those who sat in judgment on him " looking steadfastly, saw his face as it had

been the face of an angel." The glory of his transfigured soul-by the indwelling Spirit of God-shone through his eyes as the windows of that body of his which was the temple of the Holy Ghost. This was a new witness to the sanhedrim, of the resurrection and glorification of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they crucified, and in whom Stephen trusted. It is the Spiritual *Life* within us that is the *light* that shines through us. "The life is the light of men." Let your light so shine. But our light will be darkness, unless, like Stephen, we are filled with the Spirit of Life (2 Cor. 3, 18). Covet earnestly the best gift.

APOSTOLIC CHARACTER.

ACTS 7, 51-60.

Stephen's **defence** is a masterpiece of spiritual policy and power. He did not begin his address by saying, "Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart." No ; but with these very courteous words-" Men, brethren, and fathers, hearken." He that winneth souls is wise. We might observe here :—

1. *His Knowledge of Scripture.*-This Spirit-filled man had a clear and comprehensive grasp of the doing and purposes of God in Old Testament history. The knowledge of the will of God will always be a mighty weapon in the hand of anyone full of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God will have but little to work on, unless our hearts are filled with the words of God. This is the secret of successful prayer (John 15, 7). It is the

honest heart which hears the Word and keeps it, that brings forth fruit (Luke 8, 15).

2. His **Faithfulness**. “ **Ye** stiffnecked . . . ye do always resist the Holy Ghost ” (vv. 51-53). A man filled with the Spirit cannot but be courageous, for the Kingdom of God ; the truth burns like a fire in his bones, while sin, and the things of eternity, stand out before his anointed eyes in the clear light of Him who sits at the right hand of the Father in heaven. They are in an awful condition who **resist** the Holy Ghost by the stiffness of their wills and the hardness of their hearts. They may be “ cut **to** the heart ” (v. 54) by a faithful testimony, but unless they are “ pricked in. the heart ” (vv. 11-37) they will “ gnash with their teeth,” and die in their sins.

3. **His Vision**. While “ they gnashed on him with their teeth,” he saw the “ glory of God.” Our heavenly Father has always rich compensation for His suffering children. Seeing “ Jesus standing on the right hand of God ” is a wonderful balm for the wounds made by the teeth of the enemy. This revelation **to** Stephen is the vision that is ever before the mind of those who, like him, are enabled by the power of the Holy Ghost, through faith, to look up “ steadfastly into heaven.” It is the work of the Spirit to reveal the things of Christ to the believing heart (John **16, 14**). To have the vision of the soul filled with the glory of the exalted Redeemer is to have the life consciously “ hid with Christ in God.”

4. **His Martyrdom**. “ They stoned Stephen, call-

ing upon God and saying ... Lord, lay not this sin to their charge ” (vv. 57-60). This first martyr for Christ was a witness to that overcoming grace of God in the heart which constrains to pray for them “ which despitefully use you.” If the death of Stephen was but the means in the hand of God of sending the goads of conviction into the soul of that “ young man whose name was Saul ” (9,5), then it was a death that has helped to open up a channel of life and blessing to the world. The Kingdom of Jesus Christ never suffers defeat through the killing of His followers. The blood-stained prayers of those saints who suffer martyrdom for His name’s sake, God in grace will mightily avenge, “ The blood of the martyr is the seed of the Church.”

5. His Mercifulness. “ He kneeled down and cried, Lord lay not this sin to their charge.” The love of a merely natural heart never constrained any one so earnestly to seek the highest good of those who were committing the greatest personal wrong. This last cry of the dying martyr is a convincing proof of the transforming power of the love of Christ in the heart. This merciful spirit manifested in Stephen’s last breath toward those sin-blinded murders is the spirit Jesus Christ has sent into the world to seek and save it. “ This sin ” which they were committing was an awful one. They were destroying the temple of the Holy Ghost. If Stephen had not been filled with the Holy Ghost he would not have been stoned. “ Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me.”

THE CITY'S AND THE CHURCH'S NEED.

ACTS 8, 1-25.

We may learn from this portion :-

1. ***That Persecution is not an Unmixed Evil*** (vv. 1-5). If the Church at Jerusalem had been allowed to remain in the very comfortable position into which they had settled down (chap. 4, 32) it would have been a long time before "the regions beyond" would have had the Gospel of Christ preached unto them. The wind of persecution "scattered abroad" the good seed of the Kingdom, which sprang up into fresh harvests of souls for the glory of God. What is true in the history of the Church is true also in the individual experience, so that we may glory in tribulations (Rom. 5, 3; Matt. 5, 11-12).

2. ***That the Great Need of a City is Christ.*** "Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ unto them . . . and there was great joy in that city" (vv. 5-11). No field of labour could possibly look more unpromising than Samaria did at that moment. Simon the sorcerer, an agent of the devil, had got the people by the ears, for "they all gave heed unto him, from the least unto the greatest," and were completely bewitched by him. They were so carried away with "lying wonders" that they had no *wits* left for sober judgment. What better are the multitudes in our cities and towns to-day, who are bewitched by the deceitfulness of riches, the excitement of gambling, the love of pleasure, the allurements of Satan, and the deceitfulness of a heart at enmity with God. Slum souls, grovelling in the mire

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of iniquity, loving the darkness rather than the light. Philip, being full of the Holy Ghost, preached Christ unto them. Holy Ghost men have no other remedy but God's to offer sin-blinded souls being driven into perdition. He did not preach science and philosophy, history, morality, or the "learned results of criticism." He preached CHRIST, as the sin-bearing Redeemer, and *unclean* spirits were cast out and useless, crippled lives were healed and restored, "and there was great joy in the city." The joy of souls emancipated from the deluding powers of darkness.

3. ***That all Believers Should Receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost (vv. 14-17).*** Samaria had "received the Word of God "-the message of life declared to them by Philip, through Christ-but as yet the Holy Ghost "had fallen upon none of them." They had been converted, but they had not yet been anointed. To Peter and John the receiving of the Holy Ghost was as definite a blessing as the receiving of the forgiveness of sins. In apostolic days the gift of the Holy Ghost accompanied the remission of sins. Paul's first question to the Ephesian converts was, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" (Acts 19, 1). He was anxious that they not only should be disciples, but that they should be powerful witnesses for Christ. The receiving of the Holy Ghost is as absolutely necessary for service as the receiving of Christ is for salvation.

4. ***That the Power of God cannot be Purchased with Gifts.*** Simon said, "Give me this power," and offered to purchase the gift of God with money (vv. 18-25). The

power of the Holy Ghost cannot be given as a *reward* for anything that man can do or give ; it is the “ Gift of God.” Is it not possible for us to be offering this prayer of Simon’s in another form ? We would not, perhaps, say, “ Give me this power,” for I am rich, but in our hearts we may have been saying, “ Give me this power,” for I am clever, or for I am earnest. God does not barter with man about the Holy Spirit. Let your prayer be, “ Give me this power,” for I am *weak* ; and believe that ye receive, and ye shall have (Isa. 40, 29-31 ; Luke 11, 13).

SOUL-WINNING.

ACTS 8, 26-40.

There are several examples set before us here, to which we shall do well to take heed. There is an example of—

1. *Anxiety of Soul* (vv. 27-28). It was no trifling curiosity that brought this Ethiopian nobleman, this chancellor of the exchequer, up to Jerusalem to worship. He was, doubtless, an earnest seeker after the soul-satisfying truth of God, and as an honest, anxious inquirer, he had, meanwhile, laid everything else aside that he might seek this one thing needful. He came to Jerusalem that he might *hear* ; he searched the Scriptures that he might see. Those who seek with all their heart will speedily find (Jer. 29, 13) .

2. *Obedience to God*. When Philip received the call to “ Arise and go . . . he arose and went ” (vv. 26-27). His desire was to do the will of God, whether

that was in the quiet of "the desert," or in the excitement of a mighty spiritual revival. He went out, like Abraham, by faith, not knowing whither he went. This was God's way of meeting those Spirit-begotten longings that were in the heart of that anxious Ethiopian pilgrim. In some way or other the earnest prayers of the needy will be answered, while they use the means within their reach. God could have blessed the eunuch without Philip's aid, but it hath pleased the Lord to make those who are filled with the Spirit *co-workers together with Him*.

3. *Enthusiasm for Souls*. At the bidding of the Spirit "Philip *ran* thither to him" (v. 29-30). Only those whose hearts have been enlarged by the Spirit of God will run in the way of His commandments. Men filled with the Holy Ghost will always be at home in dealing with an anxious soul. Real enthusiasm in the work of God is a rare accomplishment in these cold, intellectual, critical days. Those who would be wise to win souls must be willing to "run and join *themselves* to their chariots;" to get alongside of them, not as unfallen angels, but as fellow-pilgrims to eternity, seeking, by the help of the Holy Spirit, to lead them to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

4. *Faithfulness to the Bible*. The anxious Ethiopian was reading the prophet Isaiah at chapter fifty-three; Philip, filled and guided by the Holy Ghost, began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus" (vv. 32-35). We have teachers among us now who are evidently filled and guided by another spirit, for they would gravely rebuke the modern Philips for such

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a misuse of the Bible. But “*AU* Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for *doctrine*.” And “they are they which testify of Me,” said the Son of God. Philip preached unto him *Jesus*. Who else can meet the need of a sin-smitten soul ? What other *preaching* could be of any avail ?

5. *Readiness to Confess*. “Faith cometh by hearing.” The eunuch heard the Gospel from the lips of Philip, and believed and was saved. Now, he was ready and willing to be cut off from his own religious beliefs and habits, and to confess Christ in baptism. To him it was an outward sign of his inward fitness to join the family of the redeemed in the House of God on earth, and be numbered with the joint-heirs of Christ. Faith should always be accompanied with confession (Rom. 10, 9-10).

6. Happiness *in Christ*. “He went on his way rejoicing” (v. 39). Being justified by faith, he had peace with God, now he goes on his way rejoicing in hope (Rom. 5, 1-2). The darkness is passed, the true light now shines in his heart. What a change Jesus brings into the life when He is received and trusted. The great majority of business men go on their way plotting and scheming, instead of rejoicing, because they are strangers to the blessedness of the man whose sins are forgiven (Ps. 32, 1-11).

SAUL'S CONVERSION.

ACTS 9, 1-19.

The claims of all other religions can be met by mere outward conformity, but Christianity demands the re-

generation of the inner man. Even unconverted men like Saul, as touching the law, may live blameless lives in the sight of men, but the converted man is one whose whole heart has been *turned* to God. The process is here exemplified in the experience of Saul. We see him—

1. **As a Rebel.** “Saul yet breathing out threatenings,” etc. (v. 1). *Yet*, after all the evidences he had had of the resurrection of Jesus Christ in the life and testimony of Stephen, witnessing the triumphant death of a Christian is seldom enough to slay the enmity of the human heart against the revealed will of God.

2. **As a Prisoner** (w. 2-4). He was apprehended by a “light from heaven.” The search-light of God was turned upon this religious burglar on the way to Damascus to rob the Church of its living treasure. There is nothing the evil-worker dreads more than the *light* (John 3, 20). From this moment Saul could speak of himself as the “prisoner of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1). Like many another sinner, he was apprehended “suddenly.” The light of truth flashed into the heart by the power of the Holy Spirit is still God’s way of subduing rebels to Himself. The pressure of the light was so overwhelming that he fell to the earth. This light, like the Word of God, was quick and powerful, sharper than any **two**-edged sword (Heb. 4, 12). The weapons of our warfare are not carnal.

3. As an Inquirer. “Who art Thou, Lord ?” Along with the arresting LIGHT there came a “voice, saying, Why persecutest thou Me.” When the **truth** comes in the power of the Holy Ghost there is always a

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voice with it, making the sinner feel that it is with **HIM**, not *it*, that he has to do. This question reveals the terrible blindness of Saul's heart and mind—he knew Him not. How could he possibly *know* Him and live at enmity with Him. It was very different with Stephen (vv. 6-55). But light from the Lord is sure to lead to an honest inquiry after Him.

4. *As a Convert.* “ Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do ? ” (v. 6). “ Trembling ” at the discovery of his past sin and guilt, “ and astonished ” at the greatness of the Lord's mercy and grace, he asks this question, as a true penitent, ready and willing to yield himself to do His will. This is conversion. Not the talking about religious duty, but the entire surrender of the whole being to the person and service of the Lord Jesus Christ. Saul repented at once, as soon as he discovered the error of his ways (Matt. 18, 3). As a disciple he was easily *led* (v. 8).

5. *As a Worshipper.* “ Behold he prayeth ” (v. 11). Saul had frequently said his prayers, but now he prayed. Now his renewed heart yearned for fellowship with the risen Lord, who had revealed Himself to him. A young convert once said--” Before I was converted I prayed to myself, but now I pray to God.” Those who don't know Jesus Christ as their own personal Saviour can only draw nigh unto Him with the lips ; they worship they know not what.

6. *As a Witness* (vv. 15-19). Before this he was a vessel fitted for destruction, but now “ he is a chosen vessel “-having been cleansed and transformed by the

grace of God—" to bear My Name," as precious treasure " before the Gentiles." As a vessel, he was made strong, for he was to " suffer great things " for His Name's sake. He was often cast down, but not destroyed. As a vessel, he was made meet for the Mā S - ter's use, being " filled with the Holy Ghost " (v. 17). We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us. Saul's conversion and equipment for Christ's service has been given for a *pattern* to them which should *hereafter* believe on the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 1, 16). Be ye filled with the Spirit.

SAUL'S TESTIMONY.

ACTS 9, 20-31.

Paul, in writing to the Galatians, refers to his conversion in very striking language. He says—" It *pleased* God, who called me by **His grace**, to **reveal** His Son in me, that I might preach **Him**." The words here put in *italics* give us the whole Gospel in brief. Saul was not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

1. **A Courageous Stand.** "Straightway he preached Christ as the Son of God" (v. 20). It was impossible for Saul to be a Unitarian, or for any one who, like him, has been transformed in heart by the power of the resurrected Christ. He who was an enemy to Jesus, now becomes one of His most successful recruiting sergeants. He was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ (Rom. 1, 16).

2. **A Suggestive Question.** " **Is** not this he that destroyed them ?" etc. (vv. 21-22). **Yes** ; this is he, yet

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it is not he, for Saul the persecutor has died, and Saul the preacher has been quickened from the dead. The lion has been converted into a lamb, and a religious icicle has suddenly become a flame of holy fire. Henry Martyn said--" If I could see a Hindoo convert, I would see the dead raised." Who can explain the process of resurrection ? So is every one that is *born* of the Spirit (John 3, 8).

3. A Vigilant *Enemy*. " They watched the gates day and night to kill him " (vv. 23-25). The more "Saul increased in *strength* " the more bitter did the enemies of Christ become. All those who would grow in grace may be prepared for a growing opposition in some quarters. The subjects of the " Kingdom of God " will surely be despised by the subjects of the " Kingdom of Satan." But the servant of Christ need fear no evil, there will always be a " basket " or a hole in the wall for them in time of need. It is said that " man is immortal till his work is done."

4. A *Confession of Discipleship*. " He assayed to join himself to the disciples " (v. 26). When Saul offered himself as a member to that Church of Jerusalem which he had so lately persecuted, " they were afraid of him "—perhaps thinking this was another of his dodges to catch them—" and believed not that he was a disciple." But as he had been brought into the fellowship of Jesus Christ, he longed for the fellowship of the saints. It is a certain sign of discipleship when we love the people of God, and seek the company of the redeemed.

5. A *Brotherly Act*. " Barnabas took him and de-

clared unto them how he had seen the Lord ” (vv. 27-28). This “ son of consolation ” did a most gracious work in smoothing the way for this new convert. There are disciples still who seem slow to believe the testimony of those who have been *suddenly* transformed by the grace of God. It will ever be a blessed and Christ-like ministry to help those who are misunderstood.

6. A *Confirming* Testimony. “ He spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus ” (v. 29-30). The fact of Saul being changed was very soon apparent. **Hewas** now doing the same work for which Stephen was stoned, and in the same fearless and powerful manner, because he was animated by the same heaven-born motives. (Gal. 1, **15-16**).

7. A *Grand Result*. This result was five-fold. (a) They had *peace* (v. 31, **R.v.**). How sweet this calm was after the fiery tempest of persecution. How sweet peace is after the inward battle of sin and unbelief. (b) They were *edified*. Built up in the holy faith, strengthened by the study **of the** Scriptures. (c) They *walked in the fear of the Lord*. Their daily life was lived in the presence of Him who said--” Lo, I am with you **alway**.” (d) They had the *comfort of the Holy Ghost*. The promised Comforter had come (John **14, 16**), they had received Him, and were now experiencing the blessedness of His indwelling. (e) They were *multiplied*. Success is absolutely certain to any Church bearing these characteristics. Peace, wisdom, comfort are still being eagerly sought after by the restless “ men of the world.” O, that they could see these blood-bought gifts exhibited in the lives of Church members to-day.

THE VICTORY OF FAITH.

ACTS 9, 32-43.

For a time the name of Saul drops out of the record, and the halo of divine glory is seen on Peter. To him was given the keys of the kingdom, and he used them well in opening doors for others. He came down to see the saints. "How sweet to mingle with such kindred spirits here"—and the poor paralysed Æneas was able to bless God for his visit. "He had kept his bed for eight years" (v. 33). Like a man sick and paralysed by sin, he was utterly helpless and hopeless, apart from the saving power of God. "Peter said unto him, Jesus Christ maketh thee whole." This bold declaration recalls Peter's unstaggering faith in his risen Lord, and, according to his faith, so was it done unto him. Peter knew that it was glorifying to the name of Jesus that he should venture much in Him.

HIS VICTORY AT JOPPA.—

1. *Why he Went.* The disciples sent unto him two men desiring that "he would not delay but come" (vv. 36-38). They had been suddenly plunged into sorrow through the death of their beloved Dorcas. What a mercy that Peter, the man of Pentecost, was only a few miles off. The more we are filled with the Holy Spirit, the more shall we be able to minister the consolation of Christ to the needy.

2. *What he Saw.* With tearful eyes the widows showed him "the coats and garments which Dorcas made." While the great battles of Roman Emperors

have been forgotten, the gracious deeds of Dorcas are being held in everlasting remembrance. Every "Dorcas Society" is a monument to her immortal memory. Whatsoever we do *for the glory of God* shall be as gold and silver and precious stones ; all the testing fires of time and coming judgment shall never be able to efface their beauty, or dim the memory of them in the mind of God (1 Cor. 3, 11-14).

3. *What he Did.* The several acts of Peter here in raising Dorcas from the dead may be suggestive to us as to how we may be successful in restoring souls to the new life which is in Christ. (a) "He put them all forth" (v. 40). This was a work that God only could do, so he gets alone with God. Everything that would in any way distract our faith in Him must be put out. (b) "He kneeled down and prayed." Special definite prayer is needed. Peter's whole soul was centred on this one thing. When Elijah prayed for rain we may be sure that at that time he prayed for nothing else. When a beggar cries for everything he usually gets nothing. (c) He called on her by name. "Tabitha, arise!" It is not enough that we speak to God, we must speak to the people, and speak to them *personally*, and as if we expected them to hear and believe at once. Peter did not say, "Tabitha, I hope you may see your way to get up soon," but, "ARISE!" In the name of the Risen Christ, arise from the dead. (d) He gave her his hand and lifted her up. This is a beautiful touch of real *sympathy* and tenderness. If we would *Lift up* new-born souls, we must not only speak the

truth, but speak it in love. As soon as she “saw Peter,” she felt the uplifting power of his compassionate hand. (e) “He called the saints and presented her alive.” He would have them all rejoice in this victory through the grace of God. The result was that “many believed in the Lord.” Such results are sure to follow where there is definite, prayerful dealing with God for the deliverance of souls from the power of death.

DIVINE PREPARATION.

ACTS IO, 1-23.

Cæsarea was the headquarters of the Roman Governor. Cornelius was captain of the one hundred Italians who formed the bodyguard. The Jewish and the Gentile streams meet and mingle in Peter and Cornelius. The time had come for the overflowing of the river of grace that had so long been limited to the narrow channel of Israel. “It was the bursting of the chrysalis, in which the life has been preserved indeed, but confined.” Let us look at—

I. CORNELIUS THE PETITIONER.—

1. *His Character.* “Devout, feared God, gave alms, and prayed *always*” (v. 2). This is a very brief biography of a great man, who dared to be holy in the most unlikely circumstances. Do we wonder that his influence was such that all his house feared God? A man may be a brave soldier, and yet be a religious coward.

2. *His Vision* (vv. 3-6). He who prays much will see much. God is ever ready to unlock the treasures

of His grace to the humble seeking heart. The vision came about the ninth hour—the hour of prayer (chapter 3, 1). It brought him a message of personal assurance (v. 4), and also a plain word of direction (v. 5). When God answers our prayers there is no doubt about it, everything is so perfectly clear and God-like.

3. His *Obedience*. As soon as the heavenly messenger was departed, he sent to Joppa, about thirty miles off, for Peter (vv. 7-8). The willing and trustful heart will never seek a more convenient season than now. It is such joy to the man of prayer to *know* the will of God that it becomes his delight to do it.

II. PETER THE PREACHER.—

1. *His Call to Cæsarea*. “ Send to Joppa and call for Peter ” (v. 5). God could easily have made the angel His messenger to bring to Cornelius all the light and comfort he needed, but He chooses *redeemed* ones to be co-workers together with Him in the preaching of the Gospel.

2. *His Love of Prayer* (vv. 9-10). Time never hangs heavily upon those who delight in secret fellowship with the Lord. While the dinner was being cooked, Peter was pleading, perhaps, that his way might be made plain as to where he should next go to preach Christ.

3. *His Strange Preparation* (vv. 11-23). The vision of the “ great sheet ” or “ vessel ” let down from heaven was certainly intended as a revelation to Peter of the gracious purpose of God to gather all sorts into

His kingdom, through faith in Christ Jesus. When the hungry apostle saw this strange lot, and was asked to receive them, he refused to have anything to do with them. He would have no fellowship with the "common and unclean." But these, "all manner of four-footed beasts, wild beasts, creeping things, and fowls of the air," represented all manner of sinners, wild sinners, creeping, grovelling, earth-worm sinners, and intellectual, high-flying sinners, but no longer "common or unclean," for God hath cleansed them by the blood of Christ, through faith in His name. They were all one *in* the "vessel," even as we are "all one in Christ Jesus," both Jew and Gentile. The little "creeping thing" was equally safe with the strong beast or the fowl of the air, all tied up together in the bundle of life. They were taken from the earth, but their abode was in the heavenlies ; they were sent back to the earth as a testimony to the cleansing power of God. Wild beasts and creeping things, such were some of you, but ye are washed.

The effect of this vision on Peter was that he was now ready and willing to preach the Gospel to *every* creature (vv. 42-43).

THE APOSTOLIC GOSPEL.

ACTS 10, 38-44.

It was a very warm reception Peter got from Cornelius. No medical professor ever had a more hearty welcome from any pain-stricken patient. He received him as one shut up in a besieged city would

receive the General of the relief force. Blessed are the feet of them that bring good tidings. " He fell down at his feet " (vv. 23-26). Then Peter went in and " talked with him." As they each rehearsed their individual experience, it became abundantly clear to both that God had been guiding them, and that they were both brought together to witness a very definite manifestation of His grace and power (vv. 27-33). Peter's vision prepared him to go wherever God should send him. The vision of Cornelius prepared him to receive all that God should give him (v. 33). In this we have a very decided example of how God may prepare a people and a preacher when times of reviving are about to come from His presence. The spring of blessing began on both sides in secret prayer, where every heaven-born revival has its human origin. Peter never preached to a more interested audience than this, and although the meeting was small, the results were mighty and far-reaching, because he preached unto them, **JESUS**.

1. *Jesus, the Anointed One.* " God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost " (v. 38). This anointing took place at Jordan when the Spirit of God, like a dove, lighted on Him (Matt. 3, **16**). " Him hath God the Father sealed," who was His eternal Son, and into whose hands the salvation of sinners and the glory of the Father have been committed.

2. *Jesus, the Compassionate One.* " Who went about doing good." Having been " anointed to preach the Gospel to the poor " (Luke 4, **18**), His pitiful eyes

were ever on the look-out for humble, needy souls, that He might bless them with His good. O, the depth of that GOOD that was in Him.

3. *Jesus, the Mighty One.* “Healing all that were oppressed of the devil.” He preached deliverance to the captives, for He had come that He might destroy the works of the devil (1 John, 3, 8). The devil oppresses with the burden of darkness, of doubts, and of hopeless despair, affecting the mind, the heart, and future prospects. He not only delivers from the **thral-**dom of the devil, but *heals* the wounds sin and Satan had made. He was mighty, for the Almighty One **was** with Him (v. 38 ; John 14, 10).

4. *Jesus, the Suffering One.* “Whom they slew and hanged on a tree” (v. 39). What condescension and gracious self-emptying is this ? He who delivered others from the oppressive death-grip of the devil submits to be oppressed to death at the hands of men. They slew that loving, tender heart of His with their pride and unbelief before they *hanged* that weak, exhausted body on the tree. He suffered for us, the Just for the unjust.

5. *Jesus, the Risen One.* “Him God raised up the third day.” “God loosed Him from the pangs of death, because it WAS NOT POSSIBLE that He should be **holden** of it” (Acts 2, 24). The love of God for His Son and for those for whom He died, made it *impossible* that death should keep Him. Being raised from the dead, He is “*declared* to be the Son of God *with power*” —with power to save and keep all who believe on His name.

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6. *Jesus, the Exalted One.* “ Ordained of God to be the Judge of *quicks* and *deads* ” (v. 42). All judgment hath been committed unto the Son, because He is the Son of *Man* (John 5, 22-27). In 2 Cor. 5, 10 we have the judgment of the quick-those *alive* unto God. In Rev. 20, 11-15 we see Him judging the dead-those who have died in their sins.

7. *Jesus, the Universal Saving One.* “ *Whosoever* believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins ” (v. 43). “ Through His name ” the door of Mercy and Access has been thrown wide open, and through this open door the voice of divine entreaty is now being heard in the Gospel. When this door is shut no man will be able to enter in (Luke 13, 24-25).

The effects of Peter’s sermon were most manifest. He preached Jesus, and “ signs and wonders ” followed (vv. 44-48).

PETER’S TESTIMONY.

ACTS 11, 1-18.

Every new move of the Spirit of God is likely to stir up doubtful *questionings* in the hearts of some conservative Christians. The Church has not yet learned to hail with joy any Spirit-directed innovation that brings glory to God in the salvation of sinners. They contended with Peter for having fellowship with Gentiles, although they knew that they had “ received the Word of God ” (w. 1-3). We ought always to be liberal-minded as the Holy Ghost is, otherwise we are narrow-minded. Where did we learn that the Gospel

was only to be preached on a certain day in the week, in a stated place at a fixed hour ? Is not the Church of God an army on a campaign against the enemies of Christ and of righteousness ? Would any nation permit its army to fight only one day in the week, and allow its foes to do their deadly soul-destroying work all the other six days ? Peter had carried the holy war into the enemies' country, and had gained a glorious victory, but was now gravely charged with imprudence by those who had preferred to stay at home. Peter's defence is beautiful for its humility and simplicity. If it was analysed we might find in it—

1. *A Spirit of Prayer.* “ I was in the city of Joppa praying ” (v. 5). Those who are possessed by the spirit of prayer will always find a time and place for the purpose of prayer. Yes, “ in the city,” as well as out of it. If the fire of divine love has been kindled in the heart, flaming tongues of holy desires will leap God-ward.

2. *A Heavenly Vision.* This “ vessel, let down from heaven by four corners ” (v. 5), was to Peter, as we have seen, a revelation of the purposes of God in relation to the Gentiles. The secrets of heaven are still revealed to those who wait upon God in secret prayer. Such exchange their *own* weakness for the uplifting strength of His manifested will (Isa. 40, 31).

3. *A Definite Commission.* “ The Spirit bade *me go.*” Men of faith and prayer hear voices and see visions that other mortals are quite incapable of understanding (2 Cor. 12, 4). Under the guiding Spirit of

God things will also be done that will look foolish and absurd in the eyes of the worldly wise. We cannot be filled with the Spirit to excess.

4. *A Special Preparation.* “ He showed us how he had seen an angel in his house ” (vv. 13-14). Cornelius was also prepared like Peter for fuller blessings through prayer. The soil of the centurion's heart was made ready for the seed of the Word. “ He shall tell thee words, wonder-working words, words whereby ye shall be saved.” Words, in the power of the Holy Ghost, are spirit and life.

5. *A Divine Manifestation.* “ As I began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them ” (vv. 15-16). The Spirit who bade him go sealed Peter's testimony for Jesus by His coming down in mighty power upon the hearers, baptising them into the mystical body of Christ, and so making of twain, one new man.

6. *A Silencing Question.* “ What was I, that I could *withstand* God? ” (vv. 17-18). Well done, Peter ! That was a dexterous stroke with the sword of defence. What could he do, being caught in the rush of that heavenly wind that “ bloweth where it listeth.” He could no more withstand the pressure of the Spirit of God than Saul of Tarsus could withstand the “ light from heaven.” “ When they heard these things they held their peace and glorified God.” They saw the hand of God in it, and they had grace enough to praise Him for it, although they themselves had no hand in it. Is this the grace wherein we stand ?

THE REVIVAL IN ANTIOCH.

ACTS II, 19-26.

Antioch was the eastern capital of the empire. There was a great exhibition on in this metropolis, not of human art and industry, but of the mighty saving grace of God. Such an unprecedented show, that it was well worth the while of Barnabas going all the way from Jerusalem to see it. Those who would travel back in the line of history to the purity and power of primitive Christianity must take care that they don't lose their way in that "valley of the shadow of death," called "The Dark Ages." The pure light of the Gospel shines most brightly at the dawning of this new day:—

I. THE REVIVAL AT ANTIOCH.—

1. *The Origin of it.* "The persecution that arose about Stephen" drove those nameless disciples "as far as Antioch." In this case the wrath of man was made to praise the Lord (Ps. 76, 10). They thought evil against the Church, but the Lord meant it for good (Gen. 1, 20). The things which happened unto them fell out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel (Phil. 1, 12).

2. *The Means of it.* There was first the "preaching of the Word" (v. 19), "preaching the Lord Jesus" (v. 20). There was, second, "the *hand*' of the Lord with them." The Word of the Gospel of Christ is the weapon in the hand of the Holy Spirit (1 Thess. 1, 5). We preach Jesus, and the hand of the Lord

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works wonders, Thus we are labourers with God (1 Cor. 3, 9).

3. **The Results of it.** “ A great number **believed** and turned unto the Lord.” The turning of the heart to the Lord is the evidence of having believed. The great end of all preaching should be to turn men unto the Lord. John Owen said, long ago, that “ Ministers are seldom honoured with success unless they are *continually aiming at the conversion of sinners.*” This is a true witness.

II. THE VISIT OF BARNABAS.—Observe—

1. **What He Was.** “ He was a good man, full of the Holy Ghost and of faith ” (v. 24). He was an all-round good *man* (Acts 9, 27), baptised with the Holy Ghost and full of faith in the Gospel, which he preached, expecting direct results. These are the elements which constitute the *gift* of the evangelist.

2. **What He Saw.** “ **He saw** the Grace of God ” (v. 23). A Roman philosopher could only see in this movement “ a vile superstition,” where the Spirit-anointed eyes of Barnabas saw “ the grace of God.” A man’s inward character determines what he shall see. The Athenians saw, with great pride, their many gods ; but Paul saw “ the city wholly given to idolatry.” There are things which can only be “ spiritually discerned,” and the “ Grace of God ” is one of them. When *you* go into a city, what seest thou ?

3. **What he Felt.** “ He was glad.” His heart was filled with joy at seeing the work of God prosper,

although he had no hand in it. A man's *character* is unmistakably revealed by what saddens or gladdens him. As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.

4. *What he Did.* "He exhorted them all ... to cleave unto the Lord." To cleave unto Him as the branch does to the vine (John 15, 4). As a helpless child would do to its mother; and as a *faithful* follower and friend, "with full purpose of heart." Be ye steadfast and unmovable (1 Cor. 15, 58). He also sought for Saul to help him in the work (vv. 25-26). It is a great matter to be able to set others to work for God. It was here and at this time, that disciples were first called Christians. What a sweet, suggestive title. They were called after the name of Christ because they had believed on Him, and turned to Him, and were now, with full purpose of heart, *living* for Him. Would that all who are called Christians in our days had these marks of the sheep of Christ. How sad to have a name to live, and yet be dead.

PERSECUTION AND DELIVERANCE.

ACTS 12, 1-17.

The infant Church was not rocked in the cradle of ease, or nursed in the lap of luxury. It had early to face the fiery baptism of persecution. Herod thought that he had done a fine stroke of business when he discovered that the killing of James with the sword had "pleased the Jews" as well as himself. So he proceeded to gain further honour by apprehending Peter also. But

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He that ruleth in the heavens said, " So far, but no farther." Herod had already got **to** the end of his tether. Look at Peter—

1. **His Perilous Condition.** Peter was kept in prison, guarded by sixteen soldiers (w. 4-5). The sentence of death seemed hanging over him ; in **himself** he was utterly helpless and hopeless. Such is the condition of all those who are under the power of the god of this world (John 3, 18).

2. **His Faithful Remembrancers.** " Prayer was made without ceasing unto God for him " (v. 5). Thank God, all the forces of earth and hell cannot close the door of prayer—this highway to heaven—this secret blood-stained path into the very audience chamber of the King of kings. We may not be able to speak to our friends personally, who are suffering **affliction** for the cause of Christ, or who may be led captive by the devil at his will, but we can speak to God on their behalf. The prayer of faith will **save**. Many have been pulled out of the fires of sin, as Peter was pulled out of prison, by " effectual, fervent prayer."

3. **His Peaceful Submission.** " That same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers " (v. 6). That same **night** that Herod was to bring him forth to condemnation and death Peter's mind was so calmly resting in the good will of God, that he went to sleep as sweetly as a babe in its crib, rocked by a loving mother's hand. It is well known that Argyle, the martyr, had to be awakened out of his sleep that **morn-**

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ing he was executed. **Easy** lies the head that wears a crown of holy **innocency**. Even on the cold, damp pavement of a dungeon the Grace of God can make us to lie down as in green pastures.

4. **His Supernatural** Deliverance. “ The angel of the Lord came,” etc. (v. 7). Soldiers are poor clumsy things in the presence of an angel, yet not more clumsy than the ways of men are, compared with the ways of God. His salvation is perfect. There was the **Divine Presence**. “ The angel of the Lord ” in personal touch with the needy one. There was the **Light shining in the prison**. Into the place of darkness the light of heaven came (2 Cor. **4, 6**). There was the smiting of the prisoner, the awakening touch of the Messenger of God. “ When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will convince.” There was the **call**, “ Arise up quickly ! ” God hath commanded all men everywhere to repent, and believe the Gospel. There was the **offer of liberty**. “ His chains fell from his hands.” The Gospel of Christ offers liberty to the captives ” (Luke 4, **18**).

5. **His Instant Obedience**. “ And so he did.” Peter was wise enough neither to argue nor object. He was profoundly conscious that “ Salvation is of the Lord, and that his privilege was to trust and obey. Salvation had come to his prison-house ; he gladly accepted it as God’s message to his soul. Be ye not disobedient to the heavenly vision.

6. **His Perfect Assurance**. “ **Now** I know of a surety that the Lord hath delivered me” (vv. **10-11**). No conqueror ever had a more triumphant march than

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Peter had from the State prison to the street. Those soldiers in charge of his life remained blind and dumb as he passed them by, and the ponderous gate swung open at his approach. How could he be anything else than SURE that he was saved, after such an experience of the mighty power of God (Dan. 6, 22). Do you know of a surety that the Lord hath delivered you ?

7. *His Joyful Testimony.* “ He declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison ” (vv. 12-17). It was a wonderful story that Peter had to tell ; the story of God’s salvation is always so. While Peter continued knocking at their door, it was God’s answer to their prayers seeking admission, but they would hardly believe it. Those who have been delivered by the Lord should not be ashamed to confess Him by telling how great things He hath done for their souls.

THE CALL OF BARNABAS AND SAUL.

ACTS 13, 1-12.

After a missionary *in* China had been showing them the folly of idols, and had preached Jesus to them, one old man said--” Stop and tell us, for we *cannot find the door.*” How sad to think of the multitudes who are groping in the dark for the door of eternal life and cannot find it. How shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they preach except they be *sent*. The Holy Ghost is very desirous to thrust out labourers ; pray ye Him. The young Church at Antioch had grown in number and power. Among the notable converts was

Manaen, who had been a companion of that **Herod** who ordered the death of John the Baptist, and who mocked the Lord Jesus Christ, “ setting Him at naught.” But by the grace of God he was plucked as a brand out of the fire. As the members of this Church “ served and fasted,” the Holy Spirit met their real need by pressing home to their hearts this message of definite direction, “ Separate Me Barnabas and Saul.” Perhaps they had been waiting on the Lord for special guidance, as to how they might further the cause of Christ when this unmistakable call **came**—

1. *It was a Divine Call.* “ The Holy Ghost said,” etc. (v. 2). They were as surely “ called of God ” as was Aaron. As all *fitness* for this service must come from Him, so also must the *call*. The Holy Ghost *will* never choose a man possessed by the spirit of the world as an ambassador of the Kingdom of Christ.

2. *It was a Personal Call.* “ Barnabas and Saul.” There was no room for questioning as to whom the Lord meant, neither was there any occasion for envy or jealousy. The Holy Spirit divideth to every man severally as He will (1 Cor. 12, 11). Not everyone that saith Lord, Lord, is fit for the service of God. “ No man taketh this honour unto Himself but he that is called of God ” (Heb. 5. 4).

3. *It was a Call to Separation.* “ Separate Me,” etc. Barnabas and Saul were to be separated unto the Holy Ghost, that He might breathe the will of God through them, as He had done with the *holy men* of God in old time (2 Peter 1, 21). To be used of the Holy

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Spirit we must be separated from the world, and entirely yielded unto HIM, as vessels meet for His use. But we are not to suppose that those who *remained* in Antioch were not separated unto God. We can live the separated life anywhere by living for His glory.

4. *It was a Call to Work.* “For the work whereunto I have called them.” Only those who are *new* creatures in Christ Jesus can have a hand in the work of this “new creation.” We are not called to ease and idleness, but to be “workers together with Him,” who hath called us into this holy calling. Have we entered into this work whereunto God, the Spirit, hath called us? Or are we idlers in His vineyard?

5. *It was a Call which met the Approval of the Brethren.* “They sent them away” (v. 3), but not without “fasting and prayer.” It would be a great blessing to the Church and the world to-day if the Church was anything like so willing to recognise, and send forth, those who have been called of the Holy Ghost to do the work of an evangelist. By their fruit ye shall know them. These holy men were “solemnly ordained,” not with dinners and toasts! but with “fastings and prayer.” There were no “hip, hip, hurrahs!” but there was a solemn doing of the will of God. Many modern ordinations are a scandal to the cause of Jesus Christ.

6. *It was a Call, Followed by Mighty Deeds.* How can we believe that we are called and empowered by God if “signs and wonders” worthy of God are not being done through us in His name? (vv. 5-12). Two

wonders were wrought here by Barnabas and **Saul**,
(a) The overcoming of the sorcerer. This “ child of the devil ” and “ enemy of all righteousness ” was smitten with temporary blindness. The *works* of the devil were destroyed. *(b)* The conversion of the deputy (v. 12). The salvation of the governor of the island, and the silencing of Elymas, the enemy of God, were surely works worthy of the Holy Ghost, unto whom Barnabas and Saul had been separated.

THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

ACTS 13, 13-43.

Paul and Barnabas had penetrated to the far away Antioch in Pisidia, and on the Sabbath day they quietly took a seat among the worshippers in the synagogue. Being asked, as strangers, if they had a word for the people, “ Paul stood up ” and delivered such a “ word ” as they had never heard before. This first recorded address of the great Apostle to the Gentiles may be entitled, “The Goodness of God.” Paul may have taken the pattern of it from that great address of Stephen’s, which must have been to him most memorable. He deals with—

I. THE GOODNESS OF GOD REVEALED IN HIS DEALINGS WITH ISRAEL.-(1) *They were Chosen* (v. 17). God had been pleased, through grace, to make them His people, chosen, not for good in them, but as the monuments of His mercy (Deut. 7, 6). (2) *They were Delivered* (v. 17). When they were

strangers in the land of Egypt, "with an high arm He brought them out." He saved them from the house of bondage. (3) *They* were *Preserved* (v. 18). For forty years His long-suffering patience bore with their murmurings and unbelief. Yet, as a people, they were kept from perishing (Ps. 95, 9-10; 2 Peter 3, 9). (4) *They had a place Prepared for Them* (v. 19). Seven sinful Canaanitish nations were cast down and destroyed, that they might have a possession. The forces of iniquity have all to be overcome ere the children of God can enter into their inheritance. (5) He *Supplied Their Need*. He gave them judges, a prophet, and a King. Then He *raised up* David, a man after His own heart (w. 20-22). David was a type of Jesus Christ, as a man *raised up* by God, to do His will among the people. Paul, true to his mission, at once links on the Christ to the seed of David, and shows **next**—

II. THE GOODNESS OF GOD REVEALED IN HIS SON JESUS CHRIST.-(1) He was Given *According to Promise* (v. 23). He was the rod out of the stem of Jesse, and the branch out of his roots (Isa. 11, 1). Prepared in eternity, and raised up in the fulness of time as a Saviour. (2) *He was Heralded by John* (vv. 24-25) **as** the Baptist with the Holy Ghost and fire, whose shoes he was not worthy to loose. (3) *He was Condemned by the Rulers* (vv. 26-29). Paul makes it clear that Christ was slain by those who found "no cause of death *in Him*," thus bringing out the awful enmity of the natural heart against the Holiness of God. (4) *He was raised from the Dead* (v. 30). This was a

startling dogma for the apostle's hearers. Dogmatic was he? Yes ; as dogmatic as the Son of God. He spake as one having authority (1John 1, 1). If a man cannot speak dogmatically on these great verities of the Gospel, then let him hold his peace, for he has no message from God to the people ; and there is plenty of sickly namby-pambyism in the world already. (5) *He was Preached by Eye-witnesses of His Resurrection (w. 31-37).* We have not followed cunningly-devised fables. The resurrection of Christ is quite in harmony with His unique life and testimony. Christ's death and resurrection are the two pillars of the bridge of **GRACE**. (6) *He is now able to Save all who Believe (vv. 38-39).* "All that believe are justified. This is another blessed dogma (Rom. 3, 28). No. The law of Moses could never do this. It is through His blood the forgiveness of sins come (Eph. 1, 7).

III. THE WARNING AGAINST DESPISING THIS GOODNESS.-" Beware, therefore," etc. (vv. 40-41.) Despisers are sure to perish. God is still working this work of salvation in our days, in the hearts and lives of all who believe. Yet there are many who still "despise, and wonder, and perish" in their unbelief, although a man saved and transformed by the power of this Gospel-declare it unto them. Behold, therefore, the "goodness of God" as exhibited in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of Men, and let thy heart be bowed and broken by repentance. These words of Paul were to many as good news from a far country, so they wanted to hear them again the

next Sabbath. No other story can bear to be repeated so often as this.

RESULTS OF PAUL'S PREACHING.

ACTS 13, 42-52.

Somehow or other, wherever these first preachers of the Gospel went, they succeeded in creating a stir. If they "turned the world upside down" it was because the world was wrong side up. **Men** who have been made, as it were, into new bottles, and filled with the new wine of the kingdom of God—the Holy Spirit—cannot possibly act as ordinary mundane mortals. They are intoxicated by a new possession that excites to a holy enthusiasm for the eternal honour of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is impossible for a man full of the Holy Ghost to be cold and formal; the Word of God burns in his bones as an unquenchable fire; he cannot but speak the things which he has seen and **heard**. The effects of Peter's sermon were emphatic and varied—

1. **There was a Desire to Hear.** "The Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath" (v. 42). The Gospel had been so preached that morning that a real thirst had been created in the hearts of many to hear it again. There were many anxious inquiries at the close of Peter's address (v. 43). "After meetings" are no new thing.

2. **There was a general Awakening.** "The next Sabbath day there came almost the whole city together to hear the Word of God" (v. 44). It must have been

an intensely interested audience that Paul and Barnabas addressed that day. We should see the multitudes oftener crowding together “to hear the Word of God” if they were sure that the Word of God was going to be preached. Much of the present-day preaching does not seem to stir up any interest whatever in the Word of God. Multitudes of sermon hearers are in total darkness as to what the Bible teaches.

3. *There was Bitter Opposition.* “The Jews were filled with envy, and spoke against Paul,” etc. (v. 45). There was no fear of Paul ever bringing himself under that woe that comes upon those of whom “all men speak well of.” The proud, envious Jews, like the Prodigal’s “elder brother,” could not rejoice in that Grace of God which saves sinners and transforms them into sons. Those who would preach “the Word of God” must be prepared for the “contradiction and blasphemy” of self-righteous, religious sinners, who are entirely out **of sympathy with God in the salvation of the lost.** **But** their opposition only stirred up the apostles to greater boldness, and to bring a more direct charge against them (v. 46). How sad to think of those who, in the pride of their heart, judge themselves unfit to receive everlasting life as the *gift* of God’s grace through Jesus Christ, His Son.

4. *There was Joy among the Gentiles.* “They were glad and glorified the Word of the Lord” (v. 48). See Rom. **15, 9-12.** These “other sheep” which were **not of** this Jewish fold were heartily glad to get into those life-giving pastures of His Word. The hungry Gentiles

are fed, which the self-satisfied Jews are sent empty away. To the poor the Gospel is preached with God-honouring results. "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life."

5. There **was** Apparent **Defeat**. "They expelled them out of their coasts" (v. 50). It is melancholy to think of "devout and honourable women" lending their influence to such an unholy and dishonourable cause. They may cast out the servants of God, but they cannot cast out the seed of the Word that has been sown in the hearts of the people. No ; the purpose of God in the lives of His chosen and consecrated servants can never suffer defeat. All things work together for good to them that love God (Rom. 8, 28).

6. **There was Grace Triumphant**. "The disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost" (v. 52). When the preachers were expelled from them God gave them a greater blessing in filling them with the Holy Ghost, and so sealed them unto the day of the final redemption (Eph. 1, 13). These young disciples were rejoicing over a new found treasure, which they knew would enrich them during all the ages that were yet to come, while these persecutors had yet to reckon with that dust which the apostles shook off their feet against them.

MISSIONARY EXPERIENCE.

ACTS 14, 1-20.

In Iconium, Paul and Barnabus "so *spake* that a great multitude believed ... boldly in the Lord," so

that He “ granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands ” (vv. 1-3). Signs and wonders are not likely to be *granted* where the Word of God is so preached that a great multitude are sent to sleep. Preaching “ boldly *in the Lord* ” -not in the strength of our carnal wisdom and fleshly energy-will certainly be accompanied with the witness-bearing power of the wonder-working presence of God (Heb. 2, 4; Mark 16, 20). Wherever God grants signs and wonders to be done, you may look for persecutions (vv. 4-6). The rulers of darkness will always oppose a violent disturbance of their kingdom.

I. AN EXAMPLE OF FAITH.-This man, who had been “ a cripple from his mother’s womb,” was a picture of *helplessness* (vv. 8-g). He had never walked, and in all likelihood never hoped to walk. Such liberty and joy were not seemingly for him. Have we ever thanked God for the use of our feet. But this same man “ heard Paul speak,” and that faith which “ *cometh* by hearing ” sprung up as a new-born faculty in the sorrowful soul of the cripple. He hears, and he believes, that the Risen Saviour is able to heal him. See, there is a new light in his eye, it is the light of that new hope that *is* born of the Spirit of God, through the preached Word. He has “ faith to be healed,” and the Spirit-taught apostle is quick to perceive it, and calls him to “ Stand upright on thy feet ! ” (v. 10). And he “ leaped and walked.” He leaped before he walked, not only for joy, but perhaps also because he had never yet learned to walk. This great change was none the less real because it came *suddenly*

II. AN EXAMPLE OF FOLLY.-When these idolatrous Lycaonians saw the well-known cripple leaping and walking, they foolishly supposed that *their gods* had come down in the likeness of Paul and Barnabas. The gods of idolaters are deaf and dumb and dead. How could they heal a poor cripple, and where could they “come down” from ? (vv. 11-13). But from their blind enthusiasm, let us solemnly learn how possible it is for us to be very earnest over religious notions that are only imaginary and delusive. How thankful we should be for the written Word of God, which is as a light shining in darkness, whereunto we do well to take heed. Any amount of “ oxen and garlands ” will never make a wrong thing right. They called Barnabas, Jupiter ; and Paul, **Mercurius** ; but these heathen Galatians are not the last of those who have attempted to adapt the things of God to their own idolatrous practices (Jude 4).

III. AN EXAMPLE OF FAITHFULNESS.-It is possible that Paul and Barnabas may not have understood the people when they spake “ in the speech of Lycaonia,” but as soon as their purpose of sacrifice was known they were quick to make a vehement protest against all forms of man-worship. They “ rent their clothes ” as an outward sign of inward horror-of hearts rent with agony at the thought. So jealous were they of the honour of God, that nothing pained them so deeply as that they, as the servants of Christ, should have the place in their thoughts and minds that their Lord and Master alone should have. The longing of their hearts and the object of their lives was to “ turn them from

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these vanities unto the Living God ” (vv. **14-18**). They were “men of *like passions* with themselves,” but what a difference the grace of God had made. Elijah was a man of like passions as we are, but how few of us can pray as he did (James 5, 17). How differently Herod acted when the people worshipped him. “He gave not God the glory,” and immediately the angel of the Lord smote him (Acts 12, 22-23). Seek the honour that comes from God only (Dan. 4, 37).

IV. AN EXAMPLE OF FICKLENESS.-In a few days after they “stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead ” (v. **19**). There is not much between the world’s honours and its frowns, between its “garlands ” and its stones. To-day they cry, “Hosanna !” to-morrow, “Crucify !” What a Friend we have in JESUS, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

HELPING THE SAINTS.

ACTS 14, 19-28.

“Once was I stoned ” is the name of one of the medals Paul received for his faithfulness to Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 11, 25). There is not much between the praises and the anathemas of an ungodly crowd (vv. 18-19). Woe be to them who seek their happiness in the favour of men, instead of the favour of God. It was perhaps while Paul lay outside the city of Lystra, as one dead, that he had that “unspeakable ” experience of being “*caught up* into paradise,” so that whether “in the body or out of the body he could not tell ” (2 Cor. 12, 3-4). If so, see how the Lord can compensate His

suffering servants that they might be able to “glory in tribulations also.” After preaching the Gospel in Derbe and making many disciples (v. 21, R.V.), they began their great return journey, which was crowded with holy deeds and crowned with abundant results.

1. *They Confirmed the Souls of the Disciples* (v. 22). This is a very needful work, if young believers are to be saved from backsliding. To confirm a soul in the faith is to strengthen that soul against the temptation and assaults of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Deal tenderly with young converts, show them the whole **armour** of God, and tell them how to put it on. Give them line upon line, and perhaps a little of your own experience, if you have any.

2. *They Exhorted to Continue in the Faith.* The Christian fight is a fight of *faith*. FAITH, fighting against feelings, failings, and appearances. As ye have therefore received the Lord Jesus-by faith-so walk ye in Him. Continue trusting in the promise of God against everything that seems opposed, and so make God true, if it should make every man a liar. This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. There is a great need for *faith*, for it is “through much tribulation that we enter into the kingdom of God” (v. 22). In the world ye shall have tribulation, but faith clings to Him who hath said, “Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”

3. *They Ordained Elders in every Church* (v. 23). It was needful, in the absence of the apostles, that suitable and trustworthy men should be elected as rulers

and teachers. They would likely be appointed by the vote of the people. All men are not fit to *rule* and to “labour in word and doctrine.” Since the beginning there have been those who, through divine grace, and a more entire consecration of themselves to God, have become better qualified for spiritual service than others. Covet earnestly the best gifts.

4. *They Commended them to the Lord.* After being called they were handed over to the Lord as His own private property that He might use them as it may seem good in His sight. Do you think this would be a hardship ? It is glorious liberty. Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price.

5. *They Preached the Word (v. 25).* Oh, what a Word was this that filled and fired their souls with an unquenchable desire to labour and suffer for the salvation of men and the glory of the name of Jesus Christ. From the day of Paul’s conversion to the day of his translation you never find him “ off duty.” He was as much a witness for Jesus out of the pulpit as in it. “ To me to *live* is Christ.”

6. *They Rehearsed all that God had done WITH THEM (v. 27).* It was a wonderful story of grace they had to tell. The Lord had done not only great things for them, but great things *with* them. There be many who are ever ready to tell us what God has done *for* them, but we long most of all to hear what God has been able to do *with* them. If you are saved, God hath wrought a great work for you. If you are consecrated, God will do a great work with you.

THE DISPUTE ABOUT WORKS.

ACTS 15, 1-35.

I. THE CAUSE OF THE DISPUTE (vv. 1-2).—

It arose about as to whether the Gentile converts should be circumcised “ after the manner of Moses ” or not. Those brethren that came down from Jerusalem were so strong in their arguments for it as to make it “ necessary to salvation.” These nameless men, which disturbed the peace of the Church with this controversy, are the forerunners of a class still extant, who are not famous for spirituality of mind or success in the Lord’s work, but who are for ever ready to put those right who are being greatly owned and blessed of God. The most unspiritual are usually the greatest sticklers about forms. Paul and Barnabas, who had seen so much of the grace of God, hotly opposed this attempt to bring them back into bondage. So keenly did Paul feel it that in writing to the Galatians shortly after, he says : “ If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing ” (v. 2).

II. THE CONFERENCE AT JERUSALEM.--It

was agreed to submit the case to the General Assembly at Jerusalem (vv. 2-21). So the evangelists hastened thither. After they had given their report, “ declaring **all** things that God had done with them,” the burning question was at once introduced by certain converted Pharisees, who had enough of their old nature still in them **as** to make it hard for them to believe that *Gentiles* could be saved “ without the works of the law.” After “ much disputing,” Peter rose up and addressed

the Assembly as one clothed in the authority of God. He spoke of what his eyes had seen of the power of the Gospel among the Gentiles, how God had "given them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us," putting no difference between them, "*purifying their hearts by faith.*" There was great stillness in the court when Barnabas and Paul again addressed the audience (v. 12) on the special subject before them, taking care to show that the wonderful works wrought among the Gentiles were the works of God. The river of His grace is always too broad for the narrow channel of man's pride or prejudice. The next to speak is James—a man deeply taught in the Scriptures. He shows from the Word that it was the purpose of God to take out of the Gentiles "a people for His name," and takes the further liberty of submitting to the Church the divine programme of the present dispensation. A people "for His name" are now being taken out, through the preaching of the Gospel of Christ. This is James's **first** point. The second is the return of the Lord: "After this I will return." *Third*, the restoration of Israel: "Build the tabernacle of David." *Fourth*, the Millennium: "That the residue of men might seek after the Lord" (vv. 14-17). In closing his magnificent address, he makes this wise proposal: That the Gentile converts should not be troubled about forms that were not vital to their life and usefulness, but that they should be asked to abstain from those heathenish practices that were so common around them (v. 20).

RESULTS.—James's motion was car-

ried unanimously. Letters of congratulation and sympathy were sent by special messengers to all those affected by this controversy. It was a cause of great joy to them when they heard that “ it seemed good to the Holy Ghost to lay no unnecessary burden upon them ” (v. 28). The goodness of the Holy Ghost in this respect is not always acknowledged by those who rule in some ecclesiastical courts. The true object of Church government is not to advocate or elaborate men’s opinions, but to find out the mind of the Holy Spirit of God, and to do it. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is *liberty*.

THE CRY OF THE HELPLESS.

ACTS 16, 9-15.

Paul and Silas had been “ *forbidden of the Holy Ghost* to preach the Word in Asia,” and when they assayed to go into Bithynia, the “*Spirit suffered them not.*” These are facts full of deep significance to every servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. They reveal how completely the Holy Spirit has control over their lives. It is the mission of this Great Teacher come from God to guide us into all truth, and to carry on the work of God through the lives of those who are wholly yielded up to Him. Our subject may be divided into three **parts**—

1. *The New Call.* “ Come over into Macedonia, and help us ” (v. 9). It now became plain to Paul why the Holy Spirit had been closing other doors in his face. Macedonia needed the *help* that Paul and Silas, apostles of the Cross of Christ, were able to give.

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What **help** could **they** have given if they had not been possessors of the grace of God and the knowledge of His saving power, through the death and resurrection of His beloved Son. The best help anyone can get is to be lifted out of a life of sin and hopelessness into a life of holiness and victory. How the vision came to Paul we need not stop to inquire, it was simply the Lord's way of revealing His will to His servant (Rom. 10, **14-15**). May we not hear this cry for help, in a muffled fashion, rising in one form or another from every grade of social life to-day ?

2. **The Immediate Response.** They at once obeyed, " assuredly gathering that the Lord had called them to preach the Gospel unto them " (v. 10). Paul and the Gospel were so vitally joined together that an open door to him meant an open door for the Gospel of Christ. When Paul said, " To me to live is Christ," he was stating not an article in his creed, but the all-absorbing principle of his heaven-born existence. Let us beware of being disobedient to any heavenly vision that may be beckoning us into new spheres of service, or into higher and fuller experiences of the deep things of the Spirit of God. It is only those who, like Paul and Silas, have had their lives enriched with the grace and power of Jesus Christ that can render the **help** that is needed to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death and despair.

3. **The Blessed Results (v. 13-15).** They were not long in finding out the place of prayer. It may have been a spot by the river-side, set apart as a public

oratory, because of its natural adaptations. In this roofless "house of prayer" Paul and Silas sat and spake the wonderful words of life to the women which resorted thither. The interest centres in a "certain woman named Lydia, *whose heart the Lord opened.*" She had been a worshipper of God, but now the door of her heart was opened to receive the message of the Gospel, sent to her by the Lord, through His servants. Take note that the "Word of Salvation" sent from God to man is not so much for the head as for the *heart*. With the heart man believeth unto righteousness. The open heart will always be "attentive unto the things" spoken by the servant of God, and God is sure to open hearts for the reception of the message that *He hath sent*. Another evidence of the open heart is a willingness to confess Christ and a love for the fellowship of the people of God (v. 15). We can never work out our own salvation until God hath worked it in us. Some hearts are opened as with the gentle kiss of light (2 Cor. 4, 6), others have been broken open as with a rod of iron. To open the heart to the Lord is to give Him the control of all the springs of the life. Son, give Me thine heart.

THE JAILOR'S CONVERSION.

ACTS 16, 16-40.

These incidents remind us of a picture gallery, where you have different scenes grouped together, and that, perhaps, strike you most by way of contrast. Shall we look at each separately ?

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1. *A Picture of Demoniac Possession.* “ A damsel possessed with a spirit of divination ” (v. 16). How sad to think of this nice-looking young woman, wholly given over to the control of a deceitful, wicked spirit. She was the property of several sin-hardened wretches, who probably sold her half-mad ravings as the oracles of God. What she cried after the apostles on their way to the prayer meeting was quite true (v. 17), but then the words had such a hollow, fiendish ring about them that “ grieved ” Paul ; so, by faith in the name of Jesus Christ, he “ commanded the evil spirit to come out of her.”

2. *A Picture of Selfishness and Cruelty* (v. 19-24). “ When her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone,” because the poor girl was now delivered from the soul-maddening power of the devil, instead of being thankful to God for such an emancipation, and because her salvation touched their pockets, they sought the ruin of the servants of God. “ The love of money is the root of all evil.” The spirit that possessed her masters was no better than the spirit which possessed the deluded damsel ; for greed of gain they would traffic in the *souls* of their fellow-creatures.

3. *A Picture of Heaven-Bow Happiness.* “ Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God ” (v. 24). Although lying in the deepest, darkest hole of that miserable prison, with bleeding backs and aching limbs, the joy of the Lord so filled their hearts that they were able also to “ glory in tribulation.” What but the grace of God could make anyone sing in such circumstances.

“ The prisoners heard them.” Might not this have been one of the reasons why God permitted His servants to be cast into prison, These fellow-prisoners also share in the victory which God wrought, for “ everyone’s bonds were loosed.”

4. *A Picture of Divine Intervention.* “ Suddenly there was a great earthquake,” etc. Paul and Silas *resisted* the devil in the damsel, but no doubt they *prayed* for those who had despitefully used them and persecuted them (Matt. v. 44). Having calmly and joyfully trusted in God, the mighty, wonder-working hand of God is now stretched out for their deliverance. Truly, when they prayed “ the place was shaken.” This was a fulfilment of Psalm 10, 15.

5. *A Picture of Sudden Conversion* (vv. 27-31). It was a very dark moment in the experience of the jailor when he drew out his sword intending to commit suicide ; but it was immediately followed by the brightest experience he ever had. “ He called for a light ” that might guide his feet into the inner prison of the suffering saints, but when he cried, “ Sirs, what must I do to be saved ? ” he was calling for another light that might guide his feet into the paths of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Then they told him words whereby he and *all his house* should be saved (v. 31). Just as he had been saved from self-destruction through the word of the apostle—“ Do thyself no harm, for we are all here ”—so can he be saved from the power of sin and the wrath of God by “ believing on the Lord Jesus Christ ” (John 3, 16).

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6. *A Picture of Joyful Fellowship* (vv. 32-34). What a change. A few hours before this the jailor was fastening their feet in the terrible stocks. Now he is bathing their wounds, taking them into his house, and spreading the best he has before them, eating with them, “and rejoicing, believing in God with all his house.” He had been suddenly awakened out of his sleep, but now he was at one with the servants of God, and with them enjoying an early hallelujah breakfast—such a scene as would do credit to a modern Salvation Army “glory feast.”

SPECIAL MISSIONS.

ACTS 17, 1-14.

It was a long journey from **Philippi** to **Thessalonica** (about 100 miles) for two men who had just lately been beaten with “many stripes.” But as the sufferings of Christ abounded in them, so also did the consolation of Christ (2 Cor. 1, 3-6). About one year after this Paul reminds the Thessalonians that their entrance unto them was after they “had suffered and were shamefully entreated at Philippi” (1 Thess. 2). It was often at great personal sacrifice that these early apostles preached the Word.

I. EXPERIENCES AT THESSALONICA.—

1. *Where they went.* There was a synagogue of the Jews there, “and Paul, as his manner was, went in.” There seems to have been no synagogue at Philippi, the only recognised place of worship being the place by

“ a river side, where prayer was wont to be made ” (chap. 16, 13). The manner of this evangelist, wherever he went, was to seek out the “ house of prayer,” because there was there liberty given for prayer and exhortation.

2. **What they did.** “ Paul reasoned with them out of the Scriptures.” He proved to them, from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms that Messiah must suffer death and be raised again from the dead, and that Jesus of Nazareth, whom he preached, was that same Anointed One. “ This Jesus whom I preach.” This preacher was never ill off for a text. He was so in love with Jesus, as his Redeemer and Lord, that he could glory in no one else. No one can preach the Gospel of Christ as it ought to be preached, unless it is the all-absorbing passion of their soul.

3. **How they succeeded.** “ Some believed, and some were moved with envy ” (vv. 5-9). The Gospel, in the power of the Holy Ghost, is either a savour of life or death, of justification or condemnation, according as it is received or relected. In either case a change of attitude toward God will take place. If the enmity is not slain thereby, it is likely to be embittered. “The baser sort ” are always ready to oppose the Kingship of Jesus.

II. THEIR EXPERIENCES AT BEREА.—In obedience to the Word of their Lord, “ If they persecute you in one city, flee to another,” they set off by night for Berea, a distance of sixty miles. They found the people here—

1. **Open-hearted.** “ **They** received the Word with all readiness of mind ” (v. 11). Their minds were not

sealed with prejudice ; they were quite prepared to give this new doctrine a careful and favourable consideration. The minds of many Gospel hearers are like a well-trodden footpath in a field ; the seed may fall on it, but it never gets a chance of entering *into* it. There is no readiness to receive the Word.

2. *Noble-hearted.* “ They searched the Scriptures daily whether these things were so.” A willingness to bring all teaching to the test of the “ Scriptures of truth ” is an evidence of nobility of mind (v. 11). What could be more noble than a soul eager to know and obey the mind of God ? There is something fatally wrong with our thoughts and opinions if they cannot stand the test of God’s revealed will as found in His Word. If we are building on a sandy foundation, surely the sooner we find out our folly and danger the better.

3. *Honest-hearted.* “ Therefore many of them believed” (v. 12). Having been convinced of the truth of Paul’s teaching, after searching the Word for themselves, they were honest enough to believe it. When a good and honest heart hears the Word, it keeps it and brings forth fruit with patience (Luke 8, 15). Be honest with God. If any man will do His will, he shall know whether the teaching is of God (John 7, 17).

PAUL AT ATHENS.

ACTS 17, 15-34.

The reason why Paul came to Athens is stated in the previous verses. It may simplify the lessons here just to put them in this modern form—

1. **The Preacher.** Paul. A man learned in all the wisdom of the philosophers, A man who had been soundly converted by God to a special revelation of Jesus Christ. A man with a definite commission from the Risen One. A man who had already suffered much in the service of Christ. A man with a soul ablaze with love for his fellow-men, who knows no fear, and who is prepared to face all the wisdom of the Greeks, in the name of his Lord and Master. A preacher who has always a message, and who is never ashamed to tell it out.

2. The Preparation. “ While he waited, his *spirit was stirred* in him ” (v. 16) . The city was stocked with thirty thousand gods, many of them magnificent works of art. But Paul was no mere sight-seer. He looked upon things in the light of the revelation of God in Christ and of eternity. While others could only see Grecian handiwork in Athenian “ devotions,” this man of God saw “ the city wholly given to idolatry.” The man whose eyes God hath opened will look upon “ the things which are unseen.” In many of our towns or cities there are signs of “ religious devotions ” that are not of God enough to stir the spirit of any preacher who has the heaven-lit eyes of the apostle.

3. **The Pulpit.** “ Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars’ Hill ” (v. 22). That was after he had been in the synagogue and the market place preaching unto them “ Jesus and the Resurrection.” As the lonely evangelist stood in the midst of that open-air court, while the Athenian dignitaries rested on these rock-

hewn seats, he was occupying the leading pulpit of the city. It was a bold stand that he took, but he believed that the Lord who stood by him, was worthy of the highest place in this philosophical centre. Paul counted this a great privilege for his Master's sake.

4. The Audience. “**Ye** men of Athens ” (v. 22) . No preacher ever addressed a more critical congregation ; they made it their life's business to inquire into every new thing (v. 21) . In the Epicureans, he had a company of high-minded Rationalists, whose god was their belly ; the Stoics extolled virtue, but denied human responsibility and **future** judgment. In them Paul was face to face with the wisdom of Socrates and Plato, but in him they were face to face with the “ wisdom of God.” The world by wisdom knows not God.

5. The Sermon. It was not read, it was poured out of a burning heart. The *subject* was “ HIM.” Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship,, **Him** declare I unto you. This preacher always found a short **cut to Christ** because he gloried in Him (Gal. 6, **14**). The **Heads** of this wonderful sermon are very clear. He preached (a) The Existence and Creative Power of God. “ God that made the world,” etc. This was a blow at the Epicurean theory of evolution or “ chance.” (b) The Spiritual Character of God (v. 25). He is not **worshipped** “ with men's hands.” Out of the **heart** are the issues of life. (c) The Universal Brotherhood of Man. “ Made of **one blood** all nations.” (d) The overruling Providence of God. He hath determined the times before appointed (v. 26). (e) Man's Need of God, “ They should

seek the Lord.” (f) The Universality of the presence of God. “ He be not far from every one of us ” (v. 27 ; Isa. 55, 6). (g) That God Himself is the source of all Life. “ In Him we live, and move, and have our being ” (v. 28). How much more fully is this truth realised by those whose “ life is hid *with Christ* in God ? ” Then came the *Application*-(a) Something we ought *not to do*. “ We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold,” &c. (b) Something we ought to do. We should *repent*, for “ God hath commanded all men everywhere to repent ” (v. 30) ; and “ because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world by Jesus Christ ” (v. 31 ; Rom. 2, 16).

6. *The Results*. (a) Some mocked (v. 32). The doctrine of the resurrection and final judgment cut at the roots of their selfish lives and false philosophy. What made Felix tremble, made them *mock*. Any fool can do that. (b) Some hesitated. “ We will hear thee again,” they said. They wavered, and lost their opportunity, for they never heard him again (v. 33). (c) Some believed. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth.

PAUL AT CORINTH.

ACTS 18, 1-17.

Athens was perhaps the hardest field in which the apostle had ever attempted to sow the good seed of the kingdom. The wisdom of this world is one of the strongest forts of the kingdom of Satan. Paul writes no epistle to the Athenians. When he visited Corinth, the

capital of Achaia, he must have found it a busy and populous centre of commerce. Let us look at him here—

I. AS A TENTMAKER.—“ Because he was of the same craft he abode with them and *wrought*” (v. 3). It was a principle with Paul that if any man “*would* not work, neither should he eat.” Rather than burden anyone with the responsibility of his board and lodgings, he would labour night and day (2 Thess. 3, 8). Paul was *courageous* enough to preach the Gospel to the Athenian professors at the Mars’ Hill University ; he was also *humble* enough to act as a journeyman tentmaker in the workshop of Aquila. *Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord.*

II. AS A REASONER.—“ He reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath ” (v. 4). Paul did not reason with them merely to bring them over to his way of thinking, or to prove his own superior scholarship ; he reasoned with them “ *out of the Scriptures*” (chap. 17, 2), that he might bring them over to the mind of God concerning His Son Jesus Christ. If the will of God, as revealed in the Scriptures of truth, has not become the governing and impelling factor in our lives, then is our preaching vain, and men will remain in their sins. Many preachers nowadays, instead of reasoning out of *the Scriptures*, go out of the Scriptures to *reason*. Instead of giving the people bread, they offer them luminous dust.

III. AS A WITNESS.—“ He testified to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.” He not only could reason

with them over an open Bible, but he could also give his own *personal* testimony to the Messiahship and saving power of Jesus, who was called Christ. Had he not seen Him, and heard Him, and been transformed by His wondrous grace ? (Acts 9). Mere finger-Post preachers may be *correct*, but they are always cold, and stiff, and lifeless. God never sent anyone to preach Christ who had *not* first Christ revealed in them (Gal. 1, 16) . “ We speak that we do not know.”

IV. AS A PROTESTANT.-“ When they opposed . . . he said, Your blood be upon your own heads ; I 3m clean ” (v. 6). He protested against the unreasonable opposition and wilful blindness of these Jews by turning his ministry specially to the Gentiles. That very dust that he shook off his raiment will remain as a witness against them. It is a very solemn thing to grieve the Spirit of God, so that the message of the Gospel, which is the message of Life, is turned into a sentence of death (Ezek. 3, 18-19).

V. AS A SOUL-WINNER.-“ Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed ” (vv. 7-8). His turning away from the Jews was the salvation of these Gentiles. If you don't come into the marriage feast of the Gospel, another will, for every seat will be occupied when the King comes. But the apostle's testimony among the opposing Jews was not in vain ; it never was. Among the converts he had “Crispus, the *chief ruler* of the synagogue.” My Word shall not return void.

VI. AS ONE BELOVED BY GOD.-“ Then spake the Lord to Paul,” etc. (vv. 9-10). If there was

any lingering doubt or fear in Paul's mind as to the wisdom of turning away with the Gospel from his own kinsmen, this message from the Lord would give him perfect rest. There was in it (1) a word of cheer, "Be not afraid;" (2) a word of counsel, "Speak and hold not thy peace;" (3) a word of assurance, "I am with thee;" (4) a word of *promise*, "No man shall hurt thee;" (5) a word of *hope*, "I have much people in this city." They are always blessed who are heaven's favourites.

VII. AS ONE DESPISED BY MEN,-"The Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul" (w. 12-17). Woe unto you when all men speak well of you. The more intently anyone seeks the glory of God in the salvation of souls, the more bitter will those self-righteous religious formalists become. They beat Sosthenes in the presence of a careless governor (Gallio), but as to Paul, it happened unto him just as the Lord had said. "No man shall set on thee to hurt thee." Be thou faithful.

PAUL AT EPHEBUS.

ACTS 19, 1-20.

Paul did a great service in bringing Priscilla and **Aquila** to Ephesus. Next to winning souls, there is no greater work than putting others in the way of doing better service for God. Jealousy is a cruel monster that would hinder us from rejoicing in the success of others. It was surely the guiding hand of God that brought **Apollos** into contact with these two deeply taught disciples (chap. 18, 26). If they were not eloquent themselves, they were able, by the grace of God, to sharpen

the sword of the mighty Apollos. He knew only John's baptism, and evidently was a stranger to the mighty baptism of the Holy Spirit. He was a fervent, eloquent, diligent believer in the Lord, but he lacked what many preachers still lack, a definite baptism of the Holy Ghost. Apollos was not too proud to sit at the feet and learn of those who were less scholarly, but more deeply spiritual, than himself. Humility is a characteristic of **all** who are prepared to be used in the work of God.

Paul, having again visited Jerusalem, returned to Ephesus. His heart must have been cheered in finding there "certain disciples" (v. 1). His first question was a searching one—"Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" He did not wish these young believers to be, like Apollos, strangers to this gift of the Ascended Christ. The apostle knew that without this they were in great danger of backsliding, or of living fruitless and powerless lives. It was well that he did, for they had not even heard of the Spirit of Pentecost, having only known the "baptism of John." But as soon as they heard of this second *blessing* they at once yielded themselves, that they might receive it. "Then the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues." No one ever yet received the baptism of the Holy Spirit without signs following. It is impossible for anyone to be filled with the Spirit and yet no supernatural works following. How will ever the world be convinced that God is in us if no God-like wonders are being wrought?

The Church of God will never be anything else, in the eyes of an ungodly world, but an impotent thing,

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beating the thin air until experimentally this great truth is grasped. God will not give His glory to another on earth save the Holy Spirit. This is a question of urgent and tremendous importance for every believer in Jesus Christ. "Have ye received the Holy Ghost *since* ye believed?" Pentecost must follow Calvary in the experience of every one that would honour God by a life of *service*. And we say it in all tenderness, the will of God is not being done in the lives of those who are not filled with the Spirit.

For two years Paul spake of the "things concerning the kingdom of God" (v. 10). Some believed not, but all that dwelt in Asia *heard* the Word of the Lord Jesus. Whether men received the message of God or not, Paul sounded out the "Word of Life." He did not seem to trouble himself much about *results*. He knew the Word would not return void to Him who sent it. His great business as a preacher was to make men *hear*.

The miracle of the "handkerchief" seemed to excite the jealousy and emulation of the vagabond Jews; they, too, would work miracles for their own glory in the name of "Jesus, whom Paul preached" (v. 13), but the demon-possessed "overcame them and prevailed against them." The victory of the man with the evil spirit over those would-be exorcists was proof enough that they were not sent by God, and that they were not possessed by the Holy Ghost. No one can be a match for the devil in his own strength. The powers of darkness will always prevail against those who are not in themselves right with God. "Jesus I know, **and** Paul I know, but who are ye?" said the demon. It is **a**

startling fact that devils know no enemies but those filled with the Spirit and in living touch with God. It is by “He that is in you,” who is “greater than he that is in the world,” that we overcome the world, the **flesh**, and the devil.

WORLDLY WISDOM.

ACTS 19, 21-41.

“No small stir” was created in Ephesus through the faithful testimony of Paul. When the Word of God is preached in the power of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, it is as a two-edged sword piercing and dividing asunder the things that affect both soul and spirit. It is the flash-light of the Eternal Throne of God cast upon the iniquitous thoughts and acts of men, and is always sure to produce a consternation when it suddenly falls upon those who love the darkness rather than the light.

Demetrius became almost demented when he saw that his idolatrous “craft was in danger.” It mattered nothing to him how many souls were being blessed of God, in being redeemed out of heathen darkness, so long as his purse was not affected. This silversmith, like many others, could be very religious so long as it brought him a good income. He showed real “worldly wisdom” in gathering together “the workmen of like occupation” to protest against the teaching of Paul. It would be good for us if we were half so earnest in contending for the truth as those men were for their heathenish superstitions.

In connecting “this our *craft*” with the “great goddess Diana,” Demetrius did a magnificent stroke of

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business. His craft and his god were to stand or fall together. Is there not a more urgent lesson here for every Christian worker ? Is our work for Christ so vitally connected with Him that His honour waxes or wanes according as we succeed or fail in His service ? As through the work of Demetrius and his associates' images of their god were made and circulated among the people for the glory of Diana, so, through the work of Paul and his companions in labour, images of his God were being created and circulated for His glory and honour in those souls that had been transformed by the Holy Spirit. Here the powers of the kingdom of Satan and the forces of the kingdom of Christ meet in terrible conflict. Do we wonder that " the whole city was filled with *confusion* ? " These enemies of God were blinded by the smoke of their own guns. In their desperation they caught two of Paul's companions and made a rush for the public oratory (theatre), that their triumph might be all the more conspicuous. Paul, the fearless, would at once have faced those lions in their own den, but his trustworthy friends advised him not to " adventure himself " (v. **31**). The scene in the theatre was like the troubled sea casting up mire and dirt. " Some cried one thing, and some another." Confusion reigned ; for the greater part of the mob knew not for what reason they had come together. But like all other narrow-minded, sin-blinded bigots, they could say one thing, and for the space of two hours they kept saying it: " Great is Diana of the Ephesians !" What is the use of us crying up the greatness of our God if we ourselves act like a lot of silly imbeciles. It is easy to

preach on the *faithfulness* of God while we show by our acts that we are living in unbelief. The town clerk seemed to be a man worthy of his honourable position ; faithful, clear-headed, and reasonable. He knows how to manage the tumultous crowd by first speaking a word of praise for the world-renowned city and its goddess (v. 35). Then, in substance, he declares, seeing that the God which ye worship is the greatest that ever came from heaven, and that the things which ye believe are infallible, and “ cannot be spoken against,” ye ought to show the reality of your faith by being calm, and not doing anything rashly. How very applicable all this is to those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Is He not great ? Did He not come down from heaven ? Has He not spoken things which cannot be overthrown ? Ought we not then to be “ quiet, and do nothing rashly ? ” He that believeth shall not make haste. When we know that greater *is* He that is for us than all that can be against us, surely we can well afford to be quiet and do nothing rashly. They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.

A MIDNIGHT MEETING.

ACTS 20, 2-12.

One prominent characteristic of the great apostle of the Gentiles was his intense carefulness over young believers, that they might be established in the faith (v. 2). He counted no personal sacrifice too great so that they might be made strong in the Lord, to live and witness for Him. It is not enough that we are saved :

we are saved to serve. We fail in our ministry if we do not lead young converts into the secret joy and power of His service. It is a great matter to lead a soul into the saving knowledge of Christ, but it is an equally important matter to lead a soul into active work for God. A soul yielded to Christ is a soul saved, but a life given to Him is a life saved. We are not rewarded at last for being saved, but for works done in His name and for His glory. It might help us to grasp the teaching of this portion more easily if we look at—

1. **The Speaker.** “ Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow ” (v. 7). His stay at Troas was short, only “ seven days,” but it was a memorable time. Who could ever forget a sermon by Paul ? When the soul of a preacher is aflame with heaven-born fire, the bread of life is sure to be served in season. It is possible even to preach the truth in such a way as to sicken even a hungry soul. The Gospel of the Love of God must be served hot if men are to receive it gladly. We feel perfectly sure that Paul would give no countenance to read sermons.

2. **The Time.** “ The first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread.” The “ first day of the week,” which is our Sabbath, is a day for which we should continually thank God. It is the memorial of Christ’s resurrection, and the “ breaking of bread ” was the memorial of His death. Paul seems to have waited the whole week to get this opportunity of ministering the Word to them. Were there no Sabbaths, how few, even in our own Christian country, would ever

think of going to hear the Word of God. Let us pray that the sanctity of it may be long preserved.

3. *The Place.* “ The upper chamber, where there were many lights ” (v. 8). Ever since Pentecost, the *disciples* seem to have a special liking for the “ upper room ” (chap. 1, 13). Being an all-night meeting, they had need of lights, but perhaps the “*many lights*” suggests the willingness of all the disciples to provide abundance for the occasion. The natural consequence would be the heating of the atmosphere to an excessive degree, which may partly account for the window being open, and the sleepy young man falling over.

4. *The Speech.* “ Paul continued his speech until midnight ” (v. 7), and after taking some refreshment, he “ talked a long while, even till break of day ” (v. 11). The people who *clamour* for short sermons are not likely to be found at a midnight meeting. From the attitude of some modern church-goers, you would think that they look upon listening to the preaching of the Word of God as a kind of penance that should be made as short as possible. They are perfectly satisfied with the smallest crumb of the heavenly bread for their souls, then they go home and have a dinner with five courses. It is quite true that there are some sermons long at five minutes, while others are short at fifty. Everything depends on the man and the message.

5. *The Interruption.* “ Eutychus sunk down with sleep and fell from the third loft ” (v. 9). This young man suffered severely for his “ first sleep in the kirk ; ” he nearly lost his life. Are there not *multitudes* in our

own days who are running the risk of losing their souls through the same drowsy habit, and with only about the tenth part of the provocation that befel Eutyclus ? Immediately Paul ran to the help of the unfortunate man, and by “ embracing him ” restored him again to consciousness, to the great comfort of the disciples. Are there not-in another sense-many *fallen* ones lying within our reach who might be *restored* to a new and better life if only they were *embraced* by the arms of Christian love and faith ? We shall never be successful in “ lifting the fallen ” unless we can take them into the affections of our hearts.

A PERSONAL TESTIMONY.

ACTS 20, 13-27.

Paul's company sailed into Assos, he arranged to meet them there, preferring himself to walk the distance, which was only a few miles ; perhaps that he might have a quiet time of meditation by the way, or that he might have some further opportunity of preaching the Gospel. A true Christian can enjoy the presence of God in the highway, just as much as anywhere else. It is said of a certain man of God that he used to walk along the road with his hat off, so conscious was he of the nearness of the presence of the Lord. Paul faithfully kept his appointment, as every honourable man should, (v. **14**). There are some who always study to be late. If they cannot be notable in one way they will in another. It is he that is faithful in the least that will be honoured in the much.

To save time they passed by Ephesus and halted at Miletus, from whence Paul sent for the Ephesian elders, that he might leave with them his last parting message. His words to them were in the form of a personal testimony. It was no egotism that moved the apostle to give them this perfect photograph of his own spiritual character as a servant of Christ. We feel profoundly thankful to him for it, as it gives us a true picture of what every servant of the Lord Jesus Christ should be. Let us carefully look at it.

1. *He was Humble.* “ Serving the Lord with all humility ” (v. 19). There is no room for pride, or selfish boasting where the Spirit of the “ meek and lowly in heart ” rules. The Lord can never be *serv*ed in any other way but in “ all humility of mind.” Brokenness of spirit is an essential condition even of *fellowship* with Him, and there can be no real service for Him out of the communion of the Holy Ghost. His humility is further seen in his working with his hands for the support of himself and those who were with him (v. 34). He was not ashamed to call himself “ the least of the apostles ” and to declare that it was “ by the *grace of God* I am what I am.”

2. *He was Compassionate.* He served the Lord “ with *many tears* and temptations ” (v. 19. “ He ceased not to warn every one night and day *with tears* ” (v. 31). Paul’s ministry was not a cold, formal, glass-eyed business. His words were moist with the heart-dew of divine love and tenderness. Many preachers use the words “ I tell you,” but how few can add, “ even

weeping.” (Phil. 3-18). We might as well throw stones at the people, as *heartless* words of wisdom. The truth must be spoken in love. The man who cannot weep over the enemies of the Cross of Christ fails to make *full proof* of his ministry. We can weep over our own sorrows and losses, and if the interests of Jesus Christ were as real to us we would also weep over His. Servant of God, is your *heart* right ?

3. *He was Faithful.* “ I kept back nothing that was profitable,” etc (vv. zo-zr). He taught from house to house, both Jews and Greeks, preaching *repentance* towards God, and *faith* towards our Lord Jesus Christ, and shunned not to declare the *whole counsel* of God (v. 27). Paul had no theories of man to defend, he had a revelation of God to declare. It is a most lamentable fact that one of the most prominent doctrines of this great apostle-repentance toward God-has almost died out of the modern sermon. To seek popularity, and the praise of men, instead of to declare the whole counsel of God, is to become a traitor to Christ, and a stumbling-block to the souls of men. Only the *faithful* shall be rewarded (Luke 19, 17).

4. *He was Submissive.* “ I go bound in spirit unto Jerusalem ... but none of these things move me ” (w. 22-24). Although Paul had the witness of the Holy Ghost that “ in every city bonds and afflictions waited for him,” there was no offence in his heart at this painful providence. In nothing that the finger of God touched was he offended. He believed that *all things* work together for good to them that love God

(Rom. 8, 28). “ Bonds and afflictions ” are not in themselves evidences that we have erred, and so need them as *chastisements*, they are often conditions necessary to the discipline of the soul, for further and deeper experience of the things of God. Our Lord’s sufferings were in **no** sense corrective, but served, in one way, as a **background for the manifestation of His glorious character.**

5. He was Devoted. “ Neither count I my life dear unto myself, that I might finish the ministry ... of the Gospel of the grace of God ” (v. 24). To publish the Gospel of the grace of God was a thing more dear to Paul than his own life. It was his meat and drink to do the will of his Redeemer and Lord. He could say, “ To me to live is Christ.” The Gospel is never preached as it ought to be, unless by those who are more desirous to glorify God than themselves. He who seeketh “ great things for himself ” is morally unfit for the service of Christ. If any man would come after ME, let him deny **himself.**

6. **He was Courageous.** “ I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God ” (v. 27). No “ fear of Man ” could fetter the tongue of this faithful witness. A full-orbed Gospel had been revealed to him, and at any personal cost he was determined that not one ray of it should be hindered from shining through him. The perfect love with which the heart of Paul was filled cast out all fear. He loved the Lord Jesus Christ and the souls of men too intensely to keep back anything that was profitable (v. 20). It is a base and false charity that shuns to declare the whole counsel of God.

FAITH AND FAILURE,ACTS 21, **1-36.**

“**St.** Paul was a great trader of Christ both by land and sea.” So said John Trapp, and it is a most suggestive saying. No merchant could more urgently push his wares than Paul pushed the things of the Kingdom of God. Wherever he went, whatever he did, it was always as an ambassador for Christ. To him religion was no cloak, to be thrown off or on as occasion demanded. It was the bone and sinew and vital breath of his being. As Saul, he was crucified with Christ ; as Paul, he had no existence but in Him and for Him. “ To me to live is Christ.” Note here some further things about **him**--

1. *His Sorrowful Prospect.* While on his way to Jerusalem, he was warned at least twice of dangers, and of certain imprisonment, if he should go there at that time (vv. 4-11). **He** knew before this-by the Holy Ghost-that bonds and afflictions awaited him in every city (vv. 20-23). In his unconverted days, he “ profited much in the Jew’s religion ” (Gal. 1, **14**) in that he was honoured and praised of men ; but all was sacrificed for Him, who had called him by His grace, and who had promised to show him what great things he must suffer for His sake. He was called into the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings.

2. *His Fearless Faith.* Paul’s reply to their united entreaty was short and decisive. “ I am ready ” (v. **13**). Ready, not only to be bound, but to die for

the name of the Lord Jesus. The secret of peace and victory in the face of all trial and persecution is to connect the NAME of the Lord Jesus with it. He who can say confidently, "Who shall separate me from the love of Christ?" will also be able to add "We are more than conquerors through Him." "I am ready." What a ring of unshattering confidence there is in this. How much has been lost politically, commercially, *morally*, and spiritually for the want of being *ready* when the crisis came. It was "they that were ready" who went in when the Bridegroom came; they who were *getting ready* were shut out.

3. *His Powerful Testimony.* "He declared what things God had wrought among the Gentiles" (vv. 17-20). Having arrived at Jerusalem, and having been warmly welcomed by the brethren, Paul gave them another chapter out of his life's book, thrilling with the wonders of the grace of God. Those who by faith attempt much for God, **will** have experiences that will glorify God (v. 20). If we would see the wonder-working power of God, we must needs "launch out into the deep"—into the deep of God's fathomless grace, and the unsearchable riches of His Son. Believe and thou shalt see.

4. *His Compromising Meekness* (vv. 21-26). Seeing that there were so many in Jerusalem who believed that Paul's teaching led the converts to "forsake Moses," the elders persuaded him to show his devotion to the law of Moses by shaving his head, and joining himself with those four men who were about to present themselves as observers of the law of the Nazarite

(Num. 6, **13-18**). This was intended to shut the mouths of those who madly *cavilled* against the apostle's preaching, and showed the great humility of Paul, when he submitted to it for their sakes. He was willing to be made all things ... that he might save some.

5. *His Conspicuous Failure* (vv. 27-31). The very means he used to disarm the enemy became the cause of *offence*. He had shaved his head through the fear of man ; now he is caught in the snare. We cannot but think that, in his willingness to please the brethren, and perhaps to justify himself in the eyes of men, he for the time being failed to " stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made him free." But in any case trouble was sure to come upon him in Jerusalem, for the Holy Ghost had already witnessed to this, and the beloved Paul seemed in no way disappointed with the terrible consequences.

6. *His Rescue by the Soldiers* (w. 32-36). This was a sad scene. The worshippers of the temple of God going about to kill him, whose body was the temple of the Holy Ghost. Religious formalists are always at war with the Spirit of God, for where the Spirit is there is liberty. The chains of the Roman soldiers were more merciful than the tongues of these hypocrites. But a man of God is immortal till his work is done.

PAUL'S DEFENCE, A GOSPEL.

ACTS 22, 1-21.

Paul's life is an exhibition of what the grace of God can do. Even in the most trying and unexpected cir-

cumstances, he could possess his soul in patience. See his beautiful courtesy, “ *May I speak unto thee ?* ” (vv. 21-37) and note his wonderful wisdom and courage when he asked, as a “ Jew of Tarsus and a *citizen* of no mean city,” he might be allowed to speak to the people. What a blending of giant strength with child-like simplicity. Having received permission to speak from the stairs of the castle, he addresses the religious rabble, not as blood-thirsty enemies, but as “ Men, brethren, and fathers.” His defence takes the form of a personal testimony. He is not so anxious to justify himself before the people as to show them what great things God had done for him. He refers to himself **here**—

1. *As a Learned Jew* (v. 3). He was no ignorant bigot, no prejudiced Gentile, but a Jew born in the famous *free* city of Tarsus, and educated at the feet of the great Gamaliel : a Hebrew of the Hebrews. Paul's natural gifts and high-class training made him one of those men that were not to be easily deceived.

2. *As a Zealous Persecutor.* “ I persecuted *this way* unto the death ” (v. 4). *This way* refers to the way of Christians, the way he now walked. In carrying out the unenlightened conviction of his heart, he thought he *ought* to oppose the things connected with the name of Jesus (Acts 8, 3). The “ I thought ” of the unregenerate man is always contrary to the mind of God. There is a religious enthusiasm that has not been kindled by the holy fire from heaven, but by the fire of hell.

3. *As a Conquered Foe.* “ I fell unto the ground ” (vv. 6-7). A sudden burst of soul-convicting light from

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the presence of the glorified Saviour, overwhelmed the haughty Saul ; smiting him to the earth. What other power could have arrested such a sinner and subdued such a determinate will ? When God speaks it is with convincing power. What can speak more effectively than *light* ? By the light of His Word He still brings rebel souls to the dust. Is not My Word a hammer and a fire, saith the Lord. With this hammer God, the Spirit, can break the rocky heart to pieces.

4. *As a Humble Inquirer.* " And I answered, Who art Thou, Lord ? ... What shall I do, Lord ? " (v. 8-10). Those questions reveal a radical change in the mind and heart of Saul, but between the first and the second there comes the revelation of *Jesus* Himself to his soul. When anyone is ready to obey the light and the voice of God's Word they will not be left long in ignorance of the saving power of Jesus. But, Who art Thou ? should be followed with, What shall I do ? for we are saved to serve (Luke 1, 74).

5. *As a Comforted Believer.* " Brother Saul, receive thy sight " (vv. 11-13). At first he " could not see, for the glory of that light " had blinded his eyes to every earthly object. The light of the glory of God is always an eye-blinding light to the glory of this world. " *Brother Sad.*" How soothing this salutation would be, coming from the lips of the saintly Ananias ; and as an evidence that the Lord, whom he had met, desired to bless him, he received his sight, a new sight for the new world into which he **had now** entered. With him old things had passed away, and all things had now become new.

6. *As an Instructed Disciple.* " God hath chosen thee, that thou shouldst know His will ... and be His witness unto all men " (vv. 14-16). He was called to be a witness to the resurrection of Christ, as one born out of due season. The Gospel which he preached was not received of man, but by the *revelation* of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1, 12). Through Ananias he learned more fully the purpose of God in calling him. Have we learned all that God, by His grace, means us to be and to do ?

7. *As a Divinely Commissioned Apostle* (w. 17-21). It was while praying in the temple that the vision of God came, saying, " Make haste ... out of Jerusalem. ... Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles." Is it not usually while praying that the vision of God's will is made known ? (Acts 9, 11 ; 30). Ask and ye shall receive. As a " chosen vessel," Paul was not sent on his own charges, but was filled with the wealth and power of the name of Jesus (Acts 9, 15). He was divinely called, divinely commissioned, and divinely equipped. So is it with all the true servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A DAY OF TRIAL AND A **NIGHT OF** CHEER.

ACTS 23, 1-24.

After spending a night in the rocky fortress of Antonia, Paul was brought down to answer for himself before the chief priests and all their council. The leading points in this portion will perhaps be more easily grasped if we put them thus—

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1. *An Honest Confession.* "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day" (v. 1) . To have a conscience "void of offence toward God" was the constant ambition of the apostle (chap. 24, 16). There are some whose consciences are seared as with a red-hot iron, through their many refusals to obey the Word and will of God. A good "conscience," is one in perfect harmony with the mind of God, and is the guarantee of a blissful life.

2. *A Holy Indignation.* "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall," etc. (vv. 2-4). This may seem harsh, but the pure righteous soul of the prisoner was so grieved that the man exalted to administer *justice* should, through personal hate, order him to be smitten "contrary to the law." The high priest's business was to condemn the wicked, and not to smite the righteous (Deut. 21, 5). We are told that in the beginning of the Jewish wars this same priest was actually smitten to death by a captain of the Jews.

3. *A Skilful Attitude.* "But when Paul perceived," etc. (v. 6). Paul was a man whose eyes the Lord had opened, and so was quick to take in a situation. He was wise as a serpent, but not so poisonous, because he had also the harmlessness of the dove. In declaring himself a Pharisee, and a believer in the resurrection, he was stating that which was absolutely true, for none could be more jealous for the truth of God than he.

4. *A Divided Jury.* "There arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees" (vv. 7-10)

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Before this they both cried, "Away with this fellow from the earth," but now the Pharisees attempt to justify Paul by saying, "Perhaps an angel hath revealed it to him." This was also a side-thrust at the Sadducees, who denied the existence of angels and spirits. We have here an old exhibition of a modern sin, that of putting partyism, personal passions, and interests before the truth of God and the general cause of righteousness.

5. A Divine Encouragement. "The night following the Lord stood by him and said, Be of good cheer, Paul" (v. 11). It was a blessed night, luminous with the glory of His presence, and his soul comforted with His word of promise. How easy it is for the faithful Saviour to meet the need of His suffering saint. He can speedily turn our prison house into a "palace beautiful." While Madame Guyon was lying in a French prison, she said "the very stones of her prison shone like rubies in her eyes." He knows how and when to speak a word to the weary.

6. A Dastardly Plot (vv. 12-15). These forty fanatics, who bound themselves neither to eat nor drink until they had killed Paul, doubtless thought that they were doing God's service, but such take good care never to consult God about it. There is no night black enough to hide such murderous plans from the eye of the Lord. The counsel of the wicked shah come to naught, their words shah not stand (Isa. 8, 10).

7. An Unexpected Discovery (vv. 16-24). This son of Paul's sister was a brave young lad. He evidently

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had overheard the plot, perhaps those cruel men were so intent on their fiendish purpose that they paid no heed to the boy near by. The boy *heard, believed, and acted* at once. To go up to the castle on a prisoner's behalf was a bold venture, but love constrained him. His timely effort was crowned with success. He was the means of saving the life of his beloved uncle. *Procrastination* is not only the "thief of time," but it is also the thief of souls and of heaven. What thou doest, do quickly.

PAUL BEFORE FELIX.

ACTS 24, 1-27.

The journey from Jerusalem to Casarea was over sixty miles. To Paul it was a triumphal march out of the clutches of his would-be murderers. The Lord knows how to deliver the godly. Five days later the high priest with the elders, and the orator, Tertullus, arrived as the accusers of the prisoner. The priest and the elders had made the bullets, and hired this eloquent orator to fire them ; but he missed the mark, for Felix had knowledge of "that way." Look at—

I. THE ACCUSATION.--After Tertullus had spoken some flattering words to the voluptuous Felix, he launched four terrible charges against the holy apostle. (1) *A Pestilent Fellow*. A man whose character is thoroughly diseased, and a danger to the morals of the people. (2) *A Mover of Sedition*. A disturber of the national peace, and an enemy to the Roman Government. (3) *A Ringleader of the Nazarenes*. A religious fanatic,

A man who has gone crazy over the supposed resurrection of Jesus who was crucified. (4) **A Profaner of the Temple.** A rank heretic. A man who has no regard for the true worship of God. The charge was as foul as the prince of darkness could make it. The image of the "father of lies" was stamped upon it.

II. THE DEFENCE.-Paul makes no attempt to flatter the governor, but is glad to mention the fact that Felix had been for "many years a judge of the nation," and was well able to understand the nature of the case (vv. 10-11). (1) **He Denies the Charge (vv. 12-13).** What else could he do but hurl their hate-kindled darts back to their own bosoms with the challenge that they "cannot prove the things whereof they accuse me." (2) **He makes a confession of his faith** in the Word of God (v. 14). Of his *hope* toward God, and the resurrection (v. 15). Of the *purity* of his aim in seeking "always to have a conscience void of offence" (v. 14). Because of the true, child-like simplicity of his character, Paul could not but speak out the deep and tender feelings of his soul. These things formed the very tissue of his spiritual life. (3) **He gives an Explanation (vv. 17-21).** He tells, in simple, truthful language, what in reality did happen. The *truth* always suits best, and the honest and the upright love it.

III. THE DEFERMENT.-When Felix heard these things he made up his mind to do nothing till Lysias, the chief captain of the Roman band at Jerusalem, should come and explain matters more fully to him (vv. 22-23). Meanwhile Paul was to have liberty and

the privilege of seeing the friends who may call on him. The honest man has scored a victory.

IV. THE PRIVATE HEARING.-Felix, willing to entertain his wife, who was a Jewess, and also evidently believing that Paul's name was one to conjure with, sent for him, and had a private interview, which reveals : (1) *A Courageous Prisoner*. Called to explain to them the cause of his "faith in Christ," he did not fail to *reason* with them of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." He took this quiet opportunity to rebuke the noble sinners personally. Truly, he sought not great things for himself. (2) *A Cowardly Judge*. Although he trembled at the truthful words of his blameless prisoner, yet he "sent for him" and "bound him," just as he thought it might bring gain or honour to himself (vv. 26-27). But Paul lived before another Judge, whose mercy and grace had never failed him (Acts 23, 1). Those who dare for Jesus Christ, can dare to stand alone. Felix was convicted-he trembled-but he was not converted. His conscience condemned him, but his stubborn will, through fear of man, or of *woman*, refused to yield. He proposed to consider this matter when he had a more convenient season. How readily we are to forget that there are two sides to a "convenient season." We cannot make a spring season at will. A farmer may have more time to sow his seed in the winter, but what would it profit him ?

The most convenient of all seasons for getting right with God, is when His Word is pricking us to

the heart, and when we are trembling under the power of it.

PAUL'S APPEAL UNTO CAESAR.

ACTS 25, x-12.

Paul had now been two years in prison. A new governor had just arrived (Festus) to take the place of Felix. This was a new opportunity for those "Chief of the Jews" whose hearts were still full of murderous hate at the apostle, and they were quick to take advantage of it—

1. A *Cunning Plot*. They sought the favour of Festus that they might persuade him to send for Paul to Jerusalem, so that they might have a chance of killing him by the way (vv. 2-3). They were not privileged to kill Paul, but they were surely guilty of murder in the sight of God. "He that *hateh* his brother is a murderer." The Lord looketh upon the heart.

2. A *Reasonable Proposal*. It must have been very disappointing to these enemies of the apostle when Festus refused to yield to their sinister request (vv. 4-5). *Cæsarea*, being the Roman headquarters, was the proper place for trial. As many of them as were able—having sufficient time and means—and we may add, sufficiently hardened in heart, could go with him and "accuse this man." But it was not *justice* these Jewish rulers wanted, it was the *death* of him who preached "Jesus and the Resurrection."

3. A *Renewed Charge*. The next day, after **Festus** arrived, Paul was brought out for the third time to be

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examined. The complaints of the Jews were many and grievous. They were as numerous and as black as so many lying tongues could make them, but not one of them could they prove. It has been said that "truth seldom goes without a scratched face." He who Himself was the TRUTH had a face more marred than any man's. Those who live at enmity with God will always love the darkness rather than the light. Christ said they hated Me *without a cause*, and they will also hate you.

4. *A Renewed Denial.* All the vile charges they brought against Paul could not bring the faintest tremor to his heart, or blush of shame to his cheek ; he had not "offended in anything at all." Those who live before God with a goodconscience need fear no evil (chap. 23, 1), for greater is He that is in *them* than he that is in the world. It is the Spirit of God in the believer that wars against the wicked spirit that works in the children of disobedience (Eph. 2, 2).

5. *A Strange Request.* Festus said to Paul, "Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem to be judged ?" Why does the judge ask the prisoner as to where he might be judged ? He is now wavering, and, being desirous to favour the Jews, he becomes "double-minded and unstable in his ways" (Isa. 1, 6-8). Those who would have the light of truthfulness to shine in their lives must, in heart, walk in the light.

6. *A New Weapon.* When the wide-awake apostle saw that his judge was likely to be bribed over to the side of his bloodthirsty enemies, he unsheathed an unexpected, but mighty, weapon of defence. "I appeal

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unto Cæsar." As a Roman citizen, not proved to be a criminal, he had this right. When Festus answered, "Unto Cæsar shalt thou go," it was another victory for the man of God. The finger of God is clearly seen in this. Had not the Lord told him just a little while ago that he must witness of Him at Rome (chap. 23, 11). **Now** he has the promise of being taken there free of all charge, to preach the Gospel in Rome also. Truly, God moves in a mysterious way, making all things work together for good to them that love Him.

PAUL AS A WITNESS FOR GOD.

ACTS 26, 1-32.

When King Agrippa came to Cæsarea to salute Festus, the new governor, he was told the story of Paul, the prisoner ; how the charges brought against him had not been proven, and how he had "appealed to Cæsar." Festus was quite pleased that Agrippa should **hear him** on the morrow, in the hope that this might help him out of the "unreasonableness" of sending a prisoner to Augustus without being able to "signify the crimes laid against him." So Paul is brought out once more and permitted to speak for himself. The apostle's defence was the story of his conversion-this was always his apologetic for Christianity. Like the sword of Goliath, "there is none like it." It so affected Festus that he thought Paul had gone mad through "much learning ;" **it so** touched the conscience of Agrippa that he said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Chris-

tian.” Look at Paul’s defence, then, as revealing the characteristics of a true Christian—

I. HE IS A CHANGED MAN (vv. 9-15).—Once he did many things contrary to the name of Jesus. Now he was His bond-slave. The change was radical and complete, wrought not by the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but of God. He was born from above. No one can be a Christian without being “born again.” A new **nature** is needed before we can see the things of the kingdom of God, or enjoy the fellowship of Christ, the only begotten of the Father.

II. HE IS AN EMPOWERED MAN.—Empowered by the Lord Jesus Christ to be a witness unto Him by opening the eyes of sin-blinded men, and turning them from the power of Satan unto God (vv. 16-18). God does not send us a warfare on our own charges (Acts I, 8). The evidence that a man is sent by God is that he does the work that none others can do by their own strength and wisdom. **Signs** must follow those who **believe**.

III. HE IS AN OBEDIENT MAN.—“I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision ” (v. 19). To be disobedient to the heavenly call is to seal our own spiritual doom. Neither did he dishonour Him who had called him by **immediately** conferring with flesh and blood (Gal. I, 1516). He settled the matter right off with the Lord Himself as to what he would do.

IV. HE IS A DIVINELY HELPED MAN.-
“ Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue

unto this day” (vv. 21-22). He had been often persecuted, but never forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. He had experienced the promise of his Lord—“ I will never leave thee.” Every *faithful* servant of Christ will be able, at the close of life, to raise an Ebenezer to the honour of His name. Hitherto hath the Lord helped us.

V. HE IS A DEVOTED MAN.—“ Saying none other things than those ... that Christ should suffer” (v. 23). Paul was wholly yielded up to the interests of Christ and His cross. He meant it when he said, “ To me to live is Christ. I am determined to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” Unless our lives are entirely yielded up to Him our testimony for Him will be powerless and fruitless.

VI. HE IS A MISUNDERSTOOD MAN.—Festus said, “ Paul, thou art beside thyself ; much learning doth make thee mad ” (v. 24). The *natural* man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness unto him. To those who are in a perishing condition “ the preaching of the cross is foolishness ” (1 Cor. 1, 18). The disciple is not greater than his Lord. Did they not say of Christ, He hath a devil and is mad ? (John 10, 20).

VII. HE IS A COURTEOUS MAN.—“ I am not mad, *most noble* Festus.” Honour to whom honour is due. The grace of God will always teach a man to be civil. There is no man on earth who can better afford to honour the nobility than the Christian, for he himself has been exalted into the ranks of the blood-royal of heaven. Children of God.

VIII. HE IS A FAITHFUL MAN.-“ King Agrippa, believest *thou* the prophets ? ” This personal appeal to the king must surely have come to him with startling suddenness, while it reveals the simple, fearless courage of the man whose heart God had transformed, and perhaps a real longing for the spiritual and eternal well-being of Agrippa. Paul had always an eye on his Master’s business ; pulling men out of the fire of sin.

IX. HE IS A SATISFIED MAN.-When Agrippa confessed that he was “ Almost persuaded to be a Christian,” see how quickly Paul shows him that it is the better part. “ I would to God that thou and all . . . were altogether **such as I am**, except these bonds ” (v. 29). There was not a richer or happier man in Cæsarea than Paul. The peace of God was in his heart, and the unsearchable riches of Christ were his.

PAUL’S SHIPWRECK, OR THE POWER OF FAITH.

ACTS 27, 1-44.

The taking of Paul the apostle to Italy was one of the most important and far-reaching undertakings ever attempted by the powerful Government of Rome. The coming of that lonely prisoner was the coming of the Ambassador of Heaven to establish a new and everlasting kingdom among the Gentile nations of the earth. It was the planting of that new tree, the leaves of which will ultimately heal the nations. Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth. We cannot go into detail

here, but will seek some spiritual lessons from the outstanding features. We note—

I. A PERILOUS POSITION.-“ Exceedingly tossed with tempest ... neither sun nor stars ... and all hope taken away ” (vv. 17-20). We can scarcely imagine a more agonising predicament. Such is a true picture of those who have been awakened by the Holy Spirit to a real sense of their guilt and danger as sinners in the sight of God. Tossed with fear and alarm, without seeing any guiding light, and all hope of salvation taken away. At that time ye were without Christ, having no hope (Eph. 2, 12).

II. A MERCIFUL REVELATION.-“ The angel of God stood by me, saying, Fear not, Paul ... God hath given thee all them that sail with thee ” (vv. 23-24). The effectual, fervent prayer of this righteous man hath availed much (James 5, 16). It was doubtless in answer to Paul's earnest pleadings that this answer was given. What a victory of faith it was. Are we not reminded here of God's answer to the cry of Christ's heart, “ I will give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance ? ” All who sail in the same boat with Jesus Christ will be eternally given to Him.

III. A FAITHFUL PROCLAMATION.-“ Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer, for I believe God ” (vv. 22-25). It was a “ glad and glorious Gospel ” that Paul had to preach to those whose souls were sinking in despair. It was, indeed, the *Gospel of Salvation*. “ There shall he no loss of any man's life.” It was a Gospel of *cer-*

tainty to Paul, for he adds, “ I believe God that *it shall be*, even as it was told me.” Such is the Gospel of Christ to all who, like Paul, have received it as a revelation from God. Only those who *believe* the Word of God have any Gospel of *certain salvation* to preach.

IV. A NECESSARY CONDITION.--” Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved ” (v. 31) . Paul warns the soldiers that if the *sailors* are allowed to desert the ship, they could not be saved (v. 30). There is no inconsistency between the sovereign grace of God and the responsibility of man in the use of prescribed means. The promise was that “ all would be saved ;” the condition was, “ *abiding* ” in the ship. The Gospel of Christ offers salvation to all, but the condition is, believe in Him and abide in Him.

V. A COMPASSIONATE EXHORTATION.- “ Wherefore, I pray you to take some meat, for this is for your *health* ” (v. 34). No shepherd could be more careful over his flock than Paul is over those 276 fellow-passengers. He seeks not only their salvation, but their *health* and comfort. But God’s order is salvation *FIRST*, then health, and better houses if you will. The Holy Ghost is the agent in every God-sent revival, and He *never* begins with the *social* conditions of men, always with their sinful, sorrowful spirits. But here note that eating, as well as *abiding, is a* condition of full salvation. “ Thy *Word was* found, and I did eat it.”

VI. A WONDERFUL TRANSFORMATION.- “ Then were they all of good cheer ” (v. 36). What a contrast between the experiences mentioned in verse

29, "all hope taken away," and verse 36, "good cheer." What has made the difference? The *promise* of salvation. After they had got the assurance that none of them would perish, they were able to eat with gladness of heart. It is so with all those who, by faith, receive the promise of God in Christ Jesus (Acts **16, 31**). Those who have had their feet taken out of the fearful pit of despair and planted upon the rock of God's Word will have the "good cheer" song put in their mouth (Psalm 40, 2-3).

VII. A PERFECTED SALVATION.-"And so it came to pass that they escaped all safe to land" (v. 44). Not all in the same way; not all at the same time; but all enjoyed the fulfilment of the same promise of deliverance. If they had not been obedient and abode in the ship, they would not have got the "boards" and "broken pieces" to float them ashore. It is always safe to trust God and obey His will. "None perish that Him trust." Christ shall lose none of those whom the Father hath given Him (John 6, 39); in some way or other all shall come safely to the heavenly land. But how shall we escape if we *neglect so* great salvation. From Paul's action at this crisis we may learn the value and power of individual faith in God.

PAUL AMONG THE BARBARIANS.

ACTS 28, 1-10.

"They all escaped to land." This seems to have been the third time that Paul had "suffered shipwreck"

(2 Cor. 11, 25). There are few who have ever had such vivid glimpses of heavenly things as Paul, and few who have ever had to *suffer* so much for the cause of Christ. It would appear that every new spiritual experience needs its counterbalance of suffering. We observe here -

I. UNEXPECTED KINDNESS.-“ The barbarous people showed us no little kindness ”(v. 2). Although the inhabitants of this island were not **Romans**, they were not savages. They had the “ milk of human kindness ” in their hearts. The fire was a welcome sight to those who had just come out of the sea into the drenching rain and biting cold. The Lord has many a way of scattering crumbs of comfort to those who fear His name (John 21, 9). Doubtless Paul looked upon this fire as if it had been kindled by the hand of Jesus Christ.

II. HUMBLE SERVICE.-“ Paul gathered a bundle of sticks.” The great apostle of the Gentiles did not think it beneath him to go a-searching for fuel to help to dry the clothes of those soldiers and sailors who were his companions in tribulation. He had learned from his Master that the way to be greatest of all is to be the servant of all. The deeper our experience is of the greatness of God’s grace the more generous and attentive shall we be to those **little** things that minister to the good of others. Paul did not need to be told to “*mend the fire* ” before he did it. “ Consider one another to provoke unto love and good works.”

III. ANOTHER TRIAL.-“ There came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand, and he shook

off the beast into the fire.” Why should the self-humbling effort of the apostle to comfort others be rewarded with the sudden grip of a poisonous viper ? Why ? Paul does not know, but he believes that “ all things work together for good to them that love God.” Those who would sacrifice themselves for the warming up of their shivering fellow-creatures need not be surprised although the heat should bring to life some torpid snake that will seek to fasten itself to that hand of mercy. Is it a temptation to sin, either in thought or act, shake the slimy thing off into the fire from whence it came, and possess your soul in patience.

IV. FALSE JUDGMENT.-These islanders, judging by appearance, thought first that Paul must be a murderer, then they believed him to be a god (vv. 4-6). When the viper succeeded in catching him, they condemned him, but when he conquered the viper they adored him. There is not much between the frown and the favour of those who know not the truth as it is in Christ Jesus. The world is always ready to applaud those who succeed, and is quick to believe in the worthlessness of the man who happens to become the prey of that venomous snake called calumny. It was such a viper that came out of the heat and fastened on Joseph while in Potiphar’s house, but he shook it off, and felt no harm (Gen. 39, 13-14). The devil often spoils his pictures by using a brush that is too big.

V. GENEROSITY REWARDED.-Publius was entertaining an angel unawares when he received Paul and lodged him and others for three days (v. 7). He

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was amply recompensed for his kindness in the healing of his father by this mysterious prisoner. In some way or other God will compensate those who give even a cup of cold water to His disciple. Paul the prisoner was **still** Paul the apostle. No circumstance in which he was placed could ever mar his authority or stain the purity of his apostolic mantle.

VI. NEEDS SUPPLIED.--" They honoured us, and laded us with such things as were necessary " (v. 10). They had lost their all by the shipwreck, but now, because of the merciful wonder-working power of Paul, all their needs for the journey to Rome were supplied. Truly the presence of this man of God among them was the salt that saved them from the corruption of death. The ungodly do not know how much they owe to the presence of those who believe in God. Judgment could not fall upon Sodom until Lot was taken out (Gen. 19, 22). When the " preacher of righteousness " was shut up in the ark then the flood came.

PAUL'S MINISTRY IN ROME.

ACTS 28, 11-31.

The entrance of Paul into Rome, although unknown and unheeded by the multitude, was a greater event than the coming of an army of soldiers or the arrival of a fleet of battleships. He was as a corn of wheat cast into the ground to die, but destined to bring forth such fruit as would be a blessing to the nations of the earth. The possibilities of one single life, wholly yielded to God, and possessed by His Holy Spirit, are, for us, incalculable.

Paul's life and testimony have been given as an *example* to them who should hereafter believe (Phil. 3. 17).

I. THE CHEERING SALUTATION.-When Paul saw the brethren who had come to meet him, "he thanked God, and took courage" (v. 15). Appii Forum is about twenty-seven miles from Rome, but some of the weaker brethren could only go the length of "the Three Taverns," a distance of seventeen miles. The angel-like ministry of encouraging the hearts of God's tried and suffering servants is quite within the reach of all the brethren who care to make a little self-sacrifice for their sakes. Don't wait till they come to you for sympathy, go and meet them. There are wonderful comfort and consolation in *mutual* faith and love (Rom. 1, 12).

II. THE PRELIMINARY CONFERENCE.—After three days Paul, who was "suffered to dwell by himself, called the chief of the Jews together," etc. (vv. 16-22). Although he had suffered so much at the hands of his Jewish brethren, yet his heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel was that they might be saved (Rom. 10, 1). He tells them of his sufferings in Jerusalem, and the reason why he was "bound with this chain." They had heard about this sect that was "everywhere spoken against," and were desirous of hearing from his own lips what he had to say about it. No man on earth could better tell them the story of the Gospel of Salvation.

III. THE STORY TOLD.-On the day appointed for this special purpose "there came many to him into his lodging," etc. (v. 23). Has there ever been **any-**

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where such a “lodging-house” gathering as this? A prison turned into a church, the prisoner the preacher; the subjects were “The Kingdom of God and the Things Concerning Jesus.” The arguments are drawn from Moses and the prophets, and the sermon lasted “from morning till evening.” Once more, note that Paul, ever since his conversion, knew *nothing among men* save Christ and Him crucified. Why should it be otherwise with preachers now?

IV. THE DIFFERENT RESULTS.-“Some believed, and some believed not” (v. 24). Yes, thank God, “some believed.” Wherever Christ is faithfully preached some will believe and be saved, while others will prefer, through unbelief, to remain vessels of wrath, instead of being changed into vessels of mercy. The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness. No matter how clearly the word of salvation is preached, it will not profit unless the *hearing* of it is mixed with *faith* (Heb. 4. 2). By grace are ye saved through faith.

V. THE FINAL MESSAGE.-These are solemn and decisive words recorded in verses 25-29. They contain Paul’s last words of warning and rebuke to his impenitent brethren according to the flesh. They had eyes and ears, but they failed to use them in a proper manner, because their *heart* had become gross and sensual through pride and self-righteousness (v. 27). There are none so blind as those who don’t want to see. Those who have “pleasure in unrighteousness” will not believe the truth, but will readily believe a lie unto their own condemnation (2 Thess. 2, x1-12).

VI. THE TWO YEARS' MINISTRY.-For two whole years in his own hired house, and with a soldier to guard him, Paul kept an open door for inquirers after the "things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ." With all confidence he preached, "no man forbidding him." Here several of Paul's richest epistles were written. How much the Church of God owes to Paul's imprisonment eternity alone can reveal. It was out of Bedford jail that Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" came. It is often out of the depths of our deepest trials that our richest fruits are found.

THE BLISSFUL LIFE.

PSALM 100.

The metrical version of this psalm has been recognised almost by universal consent as the churches' National Anthem. It is a psalm of blissful experiences. There is-

I. A BLISSFUL KNOWLEDGE.-"Know ye that the Lord He is God." It is a great thing to **know** assuredly that the Jehovah of the Bible, **in whom** we trust, is the God of the whole earth, and of the whole universe.

II. A BLISSFUL RELATIONSHIP.-"It is He that hath made us, and we are His." "We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture" (R.v.). With regard to our character, we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2, 10). With regard to our safety and provision, we are the **sheep of His pasture** (John 10, 27-28).

III. A BLISSFUL SERVICE.-“ Serve the Lord with gladness, come before Him with singing ” (v. 2). You would almost think from the appearance and tone of some religious meetings that we should serve the Lord with sadness, and come before Him with whining. His service is joyful when His servants are holy and hopeful.

IV. A BLISSFUL FELLOWSHIP.-“ Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise ” (v. 4). To enter within His gates and courts was to come into the place of personal communion. Since our Great High Priest went into the holiest, through the *rent* veil, this privilege of fellowship is now ours continually.

V. A BLISSFUL OBJECT.-“ His Name ” (v. 4). As there are fathomless depths of riches in Nature, so are there boundless depths of spiritual wealth in **His Name**. His Name **is** Wonderful. His Name is a Strong Tower. To know His Name is to trust in Him.

VI. A BLISSFUL TESTIMONY.-“ The Lord is good ; His mercy is everlasting. His truth endureth ” (v. 5). The Lord is good-He is **Love**. Can anything be more desirable ? His mercy lasts; it is neither fickle nor uncertain. His truth stands unchanged and unchangeable. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. “ Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.”

REASONS FOR BLESSING THE LORD.

PSALM 103, 1-5.

Call upon thy soul to bless the Lord, to bless His holy Name, **because**--

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I. HE PROVIDETH ALL HIS BENEFITS.-

“ All His benefits !” What does this all mean ? Nothing that would benefit man hath He kept back. In the gift of His Son He hath pledged Himself to supply all our need (1 Tim. 6, 17).

II. HE FORGIVETH ALL INIQUITIES.—Be-

cause of His infinite compassion, He keeps mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity. He must either punish iniquity or forgive it, He cannot change its character. Light can have no fellowship with darkness.

III. HE HEALETH ALL DISEASES.—*Ini-*

pities refer to acts, but the *disease* to the polluted spring from whence the acts came. Every part of man’s moral nature is diseased. “ In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.” But His healing power, the blood of Christ, cleanseth from all sin. See Ps. 107, x7-22.

IV. HE REDEEMETH FROM DESTRUCTION

(From *the pit*, R.V., Marg.). He not only forgives and heals, but delivers from the sphere of darkness and disease ; brought into a purer atmosphere, into the Kingdom of His own dear Son, and so saved from unclean and destructive influences.

V. HE CROWNETH WITH LOVING KIND-

NESS.-The loving kindness of God makes a very beautiful and comfortable crown for the head. Those who have been *healed* of all their diseases will be crowned with honour in their life and testimony (Ps. 5, 12).

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VI. HE SATISFIETH WITH GOOD.--" All His benefits " are spread out for the **blood-washed** soul. They shall be " made to drink of the river of *His pleasures*" (Ps. 36, 8). The pure in heart shall see God. God only can satisfy with good, and only those saved and healed by the Lord can be satisfied with that which is pure and good. The carnal mind cannot love the things of God. Redemption implies capacity for good.

VII. HE RENEWETH LIKE THE **EAGLE**.—The eagle renews its youth by an outward regeneration. The soul that has been saved and satisfied is regenerated both within and without. Those born from above have youth renewed, because they are a new creation in Christ Jesus.

BELIEVERS' PRIVILEGES.

PSALM 105, 1-4.

In these few **verses** there is a seven-fold privilege indicated.

I. GIVING THANKS TO **HIM**.—" O give thanks unto the Lord." The giving of thanks implies the consciousness of great favour bestowed. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift."

II. CALLING UPON **HIM**.—" Call upon His Name." Liberty of access to *Him*, and to plead His own Name, is a greater privilege than we have ever yet realised. John **14, 14**.

III. WORKING FOR **HIM**.—" Make known His deeds among the people." His mighty acts of **grace**,

in Christ Jesus, are well worthy of being made known. The people are perishing for lack of such knowledge. Preach the Word.

IV. SINGING TO HIM.--" Sing unto Him, sing psalms unto Him." Yes, make a joyful noise unto the Lord, who hath done such great things for us. In heaven, with thundering voice, the harpers harp with their harps (Rev. 14, 21). Worthy is the Lamb now to receive the praises of our hearts and lips.

V. MEDITATING ON HIM.--" Meditate ye on all His wondrous works" (R.V., Marg.). There is a time to speak, and a time to sing, but there must also be a time to *think*. " Think on these things." One of our Lord's last words to His disciples was : " Remember Me." See Malachi 3, 16.

VI. GLORYING IN HIM.--" Glory ye in His Holy Name." To glory in His Name is to glory in Himself. We may well glory in Him, who is all glorious in Himself, and whose love and grace have been poured into our desolate lives, that we might be saved and satisfied.

VII. TESTIFYING FOR HIM.--" Seek the Lord, and His strength. Seek His face evermore." Those who have seen His blessed face, in Jesus Christ, cannot but counsel others to seek it. His face is His favour, it is worth seeking for, it is for "evermore." The Lord and His saving strength is the clamant need of the human soul. " Seek the Lord while He may be found."

THE GOD OF DELIVERANCES.

PSALM 107.

In this psalm we have a four-fold picture of “ the redeemed of the Lord ” (v. 2).

I. FROM WEARINESS TO REST (w. 4-8).— Here are three words which fitly express the substance of each section—Destitution, Petition, Salvation ; or, Need, Prayer, and Deliverance.

1. THEIR DESTITUTION. They were “ wanderers in the wilderness,” as those who had lost their way, in “ solitary ways,” bye-paths, perplexed and wearied. They were “ hungry and thirsty,” their souls **clamouring** for what they could not get. “ Their soul fainted in them,” sank down in despair. Utter failure of works.

2. THEIR PETITION. “ Then they cried unto the Lord ” as a last resort. Shut up to faith. Heaven’s ear, like heaven’s door, is always open to the cry of need.

3. THEIR SALVATION. “ He delivered them.” He only could. How ? By leading them forth by “ the *right way*.” Led into truth, out of error and deception, that they “ might go to a city of habitation,” to a place of fellowship and plenty. Oh, praise Him for His goodness.

II. FROM DARKNESS INTO LIGHT (vv 10-15)—

1. THEIR CONDITION. They were sitting “ in darkness,” they knew not where they were. They

were “in the shadow of death”—a place of imminent danger. “In affliction and iron”—a condition of painful bondage. And this because they “*rebelled* against the words of God ” they were defeated; “heart *brought down* with labour.” They were helpless. “None to help.”

2. THEIR PETITION. “Then they cried unto the Lord.” It was high time. What a mercy that they had some one to cry to who is mighty to save.

3. THEIR SALVATION. “He saved them ... brought them out of darkness ... and broke their bonds asunder.” In His deliverance there is light and freedom. Eph. 5, 8; Luke 4, 18. Oh, praise the Lord for His goodness.

III. FROM SICKNESS TO HEALTH (vv. 18-21).—

1. THEIR CONDITION. “Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat.” They were so sick of their old life and its pleasures that nothing belonging to it was enjoyed. “They drew near unto the gates of death.” Dying of starvation. Results of deep conviction.

2. THEIR PETITION. “Then they cry unto the Lord.” This is the cure for those that are sick of the world and its mocking pleasures. Isa. 55, 2.

3. THEIR SALVATION. “He saved them.” He despised not any. How this was done. “He sent His Word, and healed them.” His Word *believed* is always efficacious in the soul (Matt. 8, 8). He “delivered them from their destructions.” His *healing* powers rescue the life from death and destruction.

Handfuls on Purpose.**IV. FROM DANGER TO SAFETY (vv. 23-31).—**

1. **THEIR DANGER.** “They stagger like a drunken man.” Driven to and fro, tossed with tempest. Mental bewilderment. They are “at their wits’ end.” At the point of utter despair. Undone. “Their soul is melted.” All courage and hope gone. Woe is me. Who shall deliver me ?

2. **THEIR CRY.** “Then they cried unto the Lord.” It takes a lot to make some men stagger God-ward.

3. **THEIR DELIVERANCE.** “He bringeth them out,” as He brought Israel out of Egypt when at their “wits’ end.” “He maketh the storm a calm” when He comes aboard the troubled soul (Matt. 8, 26). “He bringeth them into their desired haven.” Whom He bringeth out, He desires to bring in. Out of the Kingdom of Satan into the Kingdom of His dear Son. Oh, that men would praise the Lord for His goodness and wonderful works.

THE WORKS OF THE LORD.**PSALM III.**

As is the workman, so is the work. The works of the Lord are—

I. **GREAT (v. 2).—**They are as unsearchable as Himself, All His works praise Him, because they are a credit to the Worker. This is evident in His work of Creation, Redemption, and Providence (Ps. 104, 24). His work is great in every sense as to quality, variety, utility, and Eternity.

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II. DESIRABLE. “ Sought out of all them that have pleasure therein ” (v. 2). His *works* are expressions of His *thoughts*, and such thoughts are very deep and precious (Ps. 92, 5). What depth of thought there is in the Redemption by Jesus Christ. How earnestly this work is sought out by all them that have pleasure therein. It is a profitable search.

III. HONOURABLE.—“ His work is honour and majesty ” (v. 3, R.V.). There is a becoming dignity about the work of Creation and Redemption that reflects great honour on the Worker. The salvation of Jesus Christ by the Cross brings eternal glory to His Name. “ The Lord is holy in all His works,” and notably in the work of the Cross.

IV. MEMORABLE.—“ He hath made His wonderful works to be remembered ” (v. 4). His works of grace and mercy in behalf of His people are to be held in everlasting remembrance. Who can forget the day of their conversion to God, the day of deliverance from guilt and sin, and the dawn of His light and peace in the soul ?

V. POWERFUL. “ He **shewed** His people the power of His works ” (v. 6). Israel saw the mighty power of His working in their salvation from Egypt, in their passing through the Red Sea, and across the opened Jordan, and in the downfall of the walls of Jericho. But what hath God wrought *for us*, and in us ? Hath He not shewed us the power of His work by the Cross for us, and by the Holy Spirit in us ?

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VI. TRUTHFUL. “ The works of His hands are truth and judgment ” (v. 7, R.v.). They are in perfect truthfulness to the needs of the case. His work of grace and of salvation is exactly what we need, and all we need. Just and true are the ways of the King of saints (Rev. 15, 3). He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

VII. ETERNAL. “ They stand fast for ever and ever ” (v. 8). Man’s works, like himself, will wither like the grass, but the Word and work of the Lord shall stand for ever. Our righteousnesses rot like filthy rags, but the work of His regenerating Spirit, the renewing of the Holy Ghost, stands fast for ever. I give to My sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish. It is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. “ His work is perfect.”

WHAT SHALL I RENDER?

PSALM 116.

“ What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits toward me ? ” (v. 12). This is a deeply personal and sensible consideration.

I. WHAT ARE HIS BENEFITS TOWARD ME ? There is—

I. AN INCLINED EAR. “ He hath inclined His ear unto me ” (v. 2). He hath not turned His ear away from me, but, like an anxious father, He hath bent His head to listen to the cry of His child. What a

precious privilege to have the listening, sympathetic ear of God.

2. DELIVERANCE FROM DEATH (v. 3). "Thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling" (v. 8). We have this victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15, 55-57; Rom. 6, 23).

3. BOUNTIFUL TREATMENT. "The Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee" (v. 7). Out of His own fulness and in infinite grace hath He supplied all your need. Luke 15, 22-23.

4. FREEDOM FROM BONDAGE. "Thou hast loosed my bonds" (v. 16). The bonds of sin, doubt, and fear have been snapped. Liberty to serve with gladness the Great Deliverer.

II. WHAT SHALL I RENDER UNTO HIM ?

1. I WILL LOVE HIM (v. 1). "We love Him because He first loved us." I will yield Him the affection of my heart because He hath loved my soul out of the pit of corruption.

2. I WILL CALL UPON HIM. yes. "As long as I live" (v. 2). This is a very expressive way of shewing our gratitude to GOD. This method would not serve with man.

3. I WILL REST IN HIM. "Return unto thy rest, O my soul" (v. 7). I will shew my confidence by resting my soul entirely in Him. This He desires. Matt. II, 28-29.

4. I WILL WALK WITH HIM (v. 9). I will order

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my daily life in **all** its details as before His eyes. To this life was Abraham called (Gen. 17, 1). I will choose Him as my constant companion (2 Cor. 5, 7).

5. **I WILL SPEAK FOR HIM (v. 10, R.v.)**. I will testify to what He hath done for my soul. My lips shall speak His praise, and my tongue shall not be silent.

6. **I WILL TAKE FROM HIM (v. 13)**. We render honour to Him by taking more from Him. This is not after the manner of men. I will shew Him how much I appreciate His grace by drinking more deeply of the “Cup of Salvation.”

7. **I WILL OFFER TO HIM**. “I will offer to Thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving ... I will pay my vows unto the Lord.” (vv. 17-18). The sacrifice of thanksgiving may not seem a very costly gift, but it is well pleasing unto God (Heb. 13, 15-16). Render to Him the calves of your *lips* (Hosea 14, 2). And let the vows of devotion and service made to Him be duly paid in *the presence of His people*.

Bible Readings.

FAITH.

MARK II, 22.

Consecration to God and faith in God ought to characterise every servant of God. And who can tell the limits of the possibilities of such ? There are many believers in Jesus, but few consecrated to Him. Fewer still who actually prove His faithfulness in fulfilling all His promises.

I. THE NATURE OF FAITH.-Faith is the substance of things hoped for, etc. (Heb. **II, I**). Faith acknowledges the things unseen, and acts as if they were visible. So Noah built the ark (v. 7). So Moses forsook Egypt (v. 27). " Seeing Him who is invisible." "**Blessed is he who hath not seen and yet hath believed** " (Isa. **20, 29**). Through faith Jacob coveted the birthright (Gen. **25, 31**). And because Esau could not see its value he despised it and sold it. " Oh, I see it " is not equivalent to " Oh, I *believe* it." For with the *heart* man believeth (Rom. **10, 10**). God judgeth the heart. A clear head is no evidence of a believing heart.

II. THE OBJECT OF FAITH.-" Have faith in **God** " (Mark **II, 22**). Means must be used, but means must not be the object of trust. They are but the ditches we dig. God must fill them (2 Kings 3, **16**). God can be trusted to fulfil every promise He hath

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made, for “ God is faithful ” (1 Cor. 10, 13). He says, “ I *will not* suffer My faithfulness to fail ” (Ps 89, 33). And again, “ My covenant I will not break. Nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips ” (Ps. 89, 34). How, then, can His *power* be doubted. *Nothing* shall be impossible with God. “ Is anything too hard for Me ? ” (Jer. 32, 27). The object of our faith is “ One who cannot lie,” One who cannot change, One who cannot fail.

III. THE GROUND OF FAITH.-The WORD OF GOD which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Peter 1, 23). “ He that believeth as the *Scriptures hath said* ” (Isa. 7, 38). Every word of God is *purified* (Prov. 30, 5). There is no dross, nothing to be put away. To be received just as it is given. We are to desire the sincere milk of the Word. Many seek to boil it down before receiving it. They attempt to refine what God has already purified. The Word is not only pure, but “ sure.” “ Sure Word of prophecy.” The Word of the Lord shall stand for ever (Isa. 40, 8). Because it is already “ *settled in heaven* ” (Ps. 119, 89). Then the ground of our faith is as faithful and true as the Object of it.

IV. THE EXERCISE OF FAITH.-Abraham believed God (Rom. 4, 5), and went out, not knowing whither he went (Heb. 11, 8). He had but “ His Word,” as we have. Caleb believed God when he said “ Let us go up at once and possess it ” (Num. 13, 30). God had promised to give them the land, and he believed, although the difficulties were great and numberless

Peter believed when he said, " Nevertheless (although there seemed nothing but failure), at *Thy* word I will let down the net" (Luke 5, 5). His *word* was all he had, but it was enough. And he even ventured to walk on the sea with a " Come " from Jesus. Paul exercised faith when he said, " I believe God, that it shall be *even* as it was told me" (Acts 27, 25). Do you ?

V. THE ENCOURAGEMENT OF FAITH.—Believe and thou shalt see (John II, 40). Did Abraham not believe and see when made rich ? And Caleb ? Peter believed and saw a great draught. What was Joshua's testimony ? " There failed not aught which the Lord had spoken. All came to pass " (Josh. 21, 45). What was Solomon's testimony 400 years after ? " Blessed be the Lord, there hath not failed one *word* of all which He promised " (Kings 8, 56). Again, in Mark 14, 16, we read, the disciples *went forth* and found, as He *had said* unto them. If they had not gone forth they could not have proved the truthfulness of His word. Is there a single case where faith has been disappointed in all the Revelation of God ? And if not, will there ever be one ?

VI. THE NEED OF FAITH.--Have *faith* in God. He cannot do many mighty works through us, because of our unbelief. " If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed *nothing* shall be impossible unto you" (Matt. 17, 20). *All things whatsoever* ye ask, believing, ye *shall* receive (Matt. 21, 22). " *All things* are yours, for ye are Christ's." This is either true or it is not true. If it is not true, we can have no confidence in God.

If it is true, then why is it not our experience ? Might Jesus not say to us : “ O fools and slow of heart to believe *all* that I have spoken. Let the question be faced. “ Believe ye that I am able to do this ? ” (Matt. 9, 28). If He can say to you, “ Great is thy faith,” you may also expect that it shall be unto you, “ even as thou *wilt*.” (Matt. 15, 28).

VII. THE RESULT OF FAITH.-Many wonderful results are recorded in Heb. II. It would be impossible to mention all the possibilities of faith, since it is written, “according to *your* faith it shall be done unto you.” There is no limit given. We are straightened in ourselves. “ If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth ” (Mark 9, 23). Elias prayed, and it rained not by the space of three years and a half. He prayed again, and the heaven gave rain (James 5, 17-18). Hezekiah trusted in the Lord God, and there was none like him (2 Kings 18, 5). There are none to-day like those who trust God.

A CONSECRATED LIFE.

I SAMUEL 3.

In looking over the facts recorded regarding the early years of Samuel's life, they seem suggestive of the experiences of a soul that has been born of God, and wholly devoted to Him. We see him—

I. ASKED OF THE LORD (chap. 1, 20).--Hannah looked upon Samuel as one given from God in answer to many tears and much bitterness of soul (v. 10),

after being mocked and misunderstood by him who should have sympathised and helped (v. 14). How much do we owe to Christ, to His tears and prayers, and bitterness of soul, for our life from above. How little we think of our being given to Christ by the Father in answer to His prayers. "Born from above" is true of every child of God. We must believe that we are the "given" of God. One of the "All that the Father hath given Me." Our *citizenship* made sure.

II. CONSECRATED TO THE LORD (chap. 1, 28).—He is now given back to the Lord, to belong to Him, "as long as he liveth." That which is truly God's ought not to be withheld from Him. "I live, yet not I, but Christ in Me." This life, then, should be given back to God "as long as he liveth." "Ye are not your own." Keep not back part of the price. Hannah's conduct with her first and much loved child might seem hard to the carnally minded, but she could say, "My heart rejoiceth" (chap. 2, 1). Those who surrender all to God can always rejoice. Every child of God ought to be wholly God's. If we are the gifts of the Father to His Son Jesus Christ, for what purpose is it ?

III. MINISTERING BEFORE THE LORD (chap. 2, 18).—He was but a young minister (being a child). It was but little he could do. It was but little he knew, for the Lord had not yet revealed *Himself* to him (chap. 3, 7). But although he was both weak and ignorant, that did not hinder him from doing what he could. He believed although he understood little. Jeremiah said, "Ah, Lord God. I cannot speak, for I am a child"

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(Jer. 1, 6). God wants us to be children first, before we are men in service (child-like spirit). But the willing child will become the wise man. It is in our *weakness* we must come. He gives power to the weak.

IV. WAITING ON THE LORD (chap. 3, 10).—The Lord had spoken twice to Samuel, and he ran to Eli. He is not the only one who has run to man at the voice of the Lord. Paul says, “Immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” To know His will, we must *wait* on Him with open ears. Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth. It is a good point gained when we are willing to know what the will of the Lord is, but *waiting* is willingness in practice. How natural for us to run out and in and serve man, but how different to be silent before the Lord.

V. TAUGHT BY THE LORD (chap. 3, 11-14).—While waiting Samuel learned what the will of the Lord was. Those who are taught in the deep things of God are those who wait much on God. To be unwilling to wait is to be unwilling to be taught, and just to do our own will. When God teacheth, the ear shall tingle that hears the tidings. The word *of the Lord* will not be in vain. Paul’s preaching was “in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power.” The divinely commissioned will be divinely taught, the Bible is a dry book to those who wait not.

VI. WITNESSING FOR THE LORD (chap. 3, 18).—Though he at first feared (v. 15) to shew the truth to Eli, yet afterwards he told him every *whit*, and *hid nothing*. Could he be a faithful servant and keep back

part of the truth ? Many Gospel hearers might justly complain that the half has not been told them. The preachers either have no vision (v. 15) or else they fear to shew it. How can a man be a witness if he has had no vision. He is like a servant out of work ; he may busy himself here and there, but he has no reward from his labour. The faithful will know God's counsel, and will declare it all (Acts 4, 20).

VII. WALKING WITH THE LORD(chap. 3,19).—
“ The Lord was with him, and did let none of His words fall to the ground.” If we are faithful to God He will prove Himself faithful to us. “ He dwells *with the* humble and the contrite ” (Isa. 57, 15). We cannot climb to abiding fellowship with God. It is not the result of our efforts, but the flowing forth of great grace into the depths of the broken spirit. As the waters abide in the deep so will God dwell with the humble.

VIII. ACKNOWLEDGED AS OF THE LORD (chap. 3, 20).—“ And all Israel knew that Samuel was a prophet of the Lord.” How did they know ? Just because he declared the truth of God. And God **was** with him. The one that lives in the presence of God will be acknowledged as belonging to God. “ They took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus ” (Acts 4, 13), when they saw their *power* and *boldness* (see margin, v. 20) . Faithfulness to God is what all expect from a servant of God. If the world sees not this, the conclusion must be either we are hypocrites, or else there is no God.

IX. PRIVILEGED BY THE WORD OF THE

LORD (chap. 3, 21).—“The Lord *revealed Himself* to Samuel by the *Word of the Lord*. The Word is the instrument through which we must know Him. It is the Christian’s telephone, and our ear must be attentive to His Word if we would know His mind and will. We cannot know Himself apart from this. In shutting out His Word we shut the appointed means of communication between our souls and God. “They have rejected the Word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them ? ” (Jer. 8, 8-g).

DIVINE ENCOURAGEMENT.

The Lord Jesus Christ never sends anyone a warfare on their own charges. He takes the responsibility of supplying all the need of those who go forth at His bidding to do His will (Phil. 4, 19). No man ever attempted to run a greater business than the apostle of the Gentiles, because no man was ever more deeply convinced of the wealth and wisdom of his **PARTNER** in the business. Lo, I am with you. In the following texts we have a six-fold revelation of how Paul was encouraged by his Lord and Master in his great missionary labours.

I. BY A SPECIAL CALL TO SERVICE (Acts 22, 18-21).—It was *while praying* in the temple at Jerusalem—shortly after his conversion—that he heard this definite call from God—“Depart, for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.” No one has ever accomplished any great work for Christ who has not been conscious of a distinct call from Him to do that

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work. The service of God, like any other *Governmental* service, implies a definite engagement, and a mutual understanding as to terms. The Holy Ghost, as God's representative on earth, is the only agent authorised by Him to hire labourers for His vineyard (Acts 13, 2 ; Heb. 5, 4). He was encouraged

II. BY A SPECIAL WORD OF PROMISE.-

“ Be not afraid ... for I am with you” (Acts 18, 9-10). Faith in the promise of His presence is the secret of courage and boldness in the service of the Lord. He does not say that no man shall oppose thee, but “ No man shall *hurt* thee ”—as a witness for Him. This promise was fulfilled to the letter. He was often thrashed and imprisoned and maligned, but as a *witness* for Christ no man or devil was able to hurt him. He finished his course with joy, because he fought the good fight in faith. Hiding in God, no weapon that is formed against us can prosper. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord (Isa. 54, 17).

III. BY A SPECIAL MESSAGE OF CHEER.-

“ Be of good cheer, Paul, for thou must bear witness also at Rome ” (Acts 23, 11). The news that a fortune had been left him would not have been half so cheering to the heart of Paul at any time as that he was going to be permitted to preach the Gospel of Christ in Rome also. How very considerate our Lord is. He is always ready in one way or other to drop into the troubled hearts of His servants some word that brings consolation and comfort. He knows how to speak a word to the weary. This Good Shepherd is specially careful

over those sheep whose lives are endangered through following Him. The Christian life should be one of "good cheer," because every good thing is ours in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8, 28).

IV. BY A SPECIAL ASSURANCE OF SALVATION.-" Fear not, Paul. God hath given thee all them that sail with thee " (Acts 27, 23-24). What a gift this was ! What a triumph of faith and prayer ! What an encouragement this would be to him, in his future ministry, to expect great things from God, and to look for many souls for his hire. Blessed is he that believeth, for there shall be a performance of those things which were told him from the Lord (Luke 1, 45). They that are wise win souls.

V. BY A SPECIAL IMPARTATION OF POWER.-" The Lord stood with me and strengthened me" (2 Tim. 5, 17). *Five* times he did receive forty stripes, save **one**, and six times did the Lord manifest Himself to him in times of need. When all men forsook him (v. 16), and were ashamed of him and his testimony, his faithful and glorified Master stood by him, as one despised and rejected with him, but mighty to save and to help. Many a foreign missionary knows what this means when they have been left to stand alone for the cause of Christ.

VI. BY A SPECIAL SUPPLY OF GRACE.- " He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee " (2 Cor. 12, 9). The Lord was not pleased to remove the thorn, which was to Paul as a " messenger of Satan," but He was greatly pleased to give him as much of His

grace as would enable him to triumph gloriously over the affliction. The servants of Christ must not expect the source of every difficulty and sorrow to be removed ; but they must expect “ grace sufficient,” like the incoming tide, to lift their souls like a ship above the threatening rocks. Who would not glory in their infirmities to be a partaker of the power of Christ ?

ETERNAL LIFE.

“ He lives who lives to God alone,
And all are dead beside ;
For other source than God is none,
Whence life can be supplied.”

I. THE SOURCE OF THIS LIFE.—

1. IT COMES FROM THE ETERNAL FATHER (Jer. 10, 10, marg.). He who inhabiteth eternity is the Fountain of this living water. The living God, and King of eternity. Born of God.

2. IT IS OFFERED THROUGH THE ETERNAL SON (Rom. 6, 23). “ The same was in the beginning with God ” (John 1, 2). “ The Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us.” This is that eternal life ; the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep.

3. IT IS BEGOTTEN BY THE ETERNAL SPIRIT (Heb. 9, 14). “ You hath He quickened who were dead.” It is the Spirit that quickeneth. Salvation is of the Lord.

4. IT IS ORDERED BY AN ETERNAL PURPOSE. Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world

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(Eph. 1, 4). Promised before the world began. A precious truth demanding simple faith (Heb. 11, 3).

5. IT IS SUSTAINED BY ETERNAL THINGS (2 Cor. 4, 18). The things of this world cannot satisfy the desires and affections of this eternal and God-given life (Col. 2, 1-3).

6. IT IS DESTINED FOR ETERNAL GLORY (1 Peter 5, 10). It has come from God, and is going to God.

II. THE POSSESSION OF THIS LIFE.-

1. IT IS NOT INHERITED BY WORKS (Matt. 19, 16). By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in His sight (Rom. 3, 20). To offer works as a price is to make God a debtor (Rom. 4, 4).

2. IT IS THE PROMISE OF GOD. (1 John 2, 25). The promise of the true God that inhabiteth eternity. This promise is the word of life. He speaks and it is done.

3. IT IS A GIFT (Rom. 6, 23). Divine life can alone come from God. It must be given for it cannot be bought. What was lost through sin can only be attained through grace.

4. IT IS IN CHRIST (1 John 5, 11). It hath pleased God that this fulness should dwell in Him ; in Him who is alive for evermore. He that hath the Son hath life.

5. IT IS RECEIVED BY FAITH (John 3, 15). Not of works, lest any man should boast. This is the work of God that ye *believe*. Grace shuts up to faith

6. IT CONSISTS OF KNOWING GOD (John 17, 3). The living they praise Thee. I know whom I have believed. I know My sheep and am known of Mine Whom sayest thou that I am ?

7. IT CONSISTS OF HAVING GOD (John 6, 54). "As many as received Him," etc. (John 1, 12). Knowing and having the Eternal One is being in possession of eternal life. It is not having hope, but having the Christ who is our hope.

III. THE FULNESS OF THIS LIFE.-This fulness is seen—

1. IN THE SOURCE FROM WHENCE IT COMES (Isa. 57, 15). The unchanging and Almighty One. This blessing comes from "the high and lofty One" like the cool, refreshing stream which flows from the high and lofty hills, crowned with eternal snow.

2. IN THE PURPOSE OF THE GIFT. God so loved the world that He gave His Son (John 3, 16). He knew all that the world needed, and He knew that in giving His Son, He was giving the world everything it needed.

3. IN THE LIFE OF CHRIST (1 John 1, 1-2). What love and wisdom, grace and power, were manifested in the life of Jesus! All fulness dwells in Him who is the image of the invisible God.

4. IN THE PROMISES OF GOD (John 10, 28). What promises are ours in Christ! Having given us His Son, how will He not with Him also freely give us all things?

5. IN THE LIVES OF GOD'S PEOPLE. Those who

have subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens (Heb. 11, 33-34). His riches are seen in His kindness towards us (Eph. 2, 7).

IV. THE POWER OF THIS LIFE.-It is eternal, and so possesses all "the power of an endless life" (Heb. 7, 16). This life has in it—

1. A SIN-HATING POWER (John 12, 25). It being a holy life-divine nature-it instinctively abhors that which is un-Christ-like.

2. A WORLD-DESPISING POWER (I John 2, 15). This eternal life, born and nourished by things unseen, cannot love this present evil world.

3. A SELF-FORGETTING POWER (Mark 10, 30). A life that finds its highest good in being good and doing good. The life of Jesus manifested in our mortal flesh (2 Cor. 4, 11).

4. A SINNER-LOVING POWER. Although sin is hated, the sinner is loved for Jesus' sake. "Love your enemies, pray for them that persecute you."

5. A HOPE-INSPIRING POWER (Titus 1, 2). Each individual believer, standing before God, resting in His will, is a confirmed and joyful optimist.

6. A DEVIL-CONQUERING POWER. In this eternal life there is such a power of *resistance* when exercised by faith that the devil must flee from you (James 4, 7).

7. A GOD-GLORIFYING POWER. Having been made alive unto God, we must glorify Him in our bodies

and spirits, which are His, and look for the time when He shall be glorified in His saints, and admired in all them that believe (2 Thess. 1, 10).

THE SAYINGS OF JESUS: A REVELATION OF HIMSELF.

Each saying of Jesus is a ray of divine light. The sun can only be seen by the light which itself emits. So Jesus, the Light of the World, can only be understood by "the sayings concerning Himself."

I. THE SAYINGS OF JESUS REVEAL THE DIVINITY OF HIS OWN CHARACTER.—He manifests Himself—

1. AS THE FIRST AND THE LAST (Rev. 1, 8). A striking declaration of the eternity of His Being.

2. AS HAVING POWER OVER DEATH AND HELL (Rev. 1, 18). The keys are the emblems of authority. He carries them, because through dying He has purchased the right.

3. AS THE FULFILLING OF PROPHECY (Rev. 22, 16). As David's Lord, He is the Root ; as David's Son, He is the Offspring ; as the predicted Messiah, He is the Bright and Morning Star.

4. AS THE SACRIFICE OF SIN (John 12, 32). The lifting up of the brazen serpent was typical of the lifting up of the bruised Son that wounded ones may be healed.

5. AS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD (John 8, 12).—He will be better understood as our Light, when we have received Him as our Life.

6. **As** **THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE** (John 14, 6). He is the Life to save, the Truth to satisfy, and the Way to walk.

7. **As** **THE BREAD OF LIFE**. He is the Bread of God (John 6, 33), satisfying all the claims of God. He is the Bread of Life, to satisfy all the wants of man. Also, angels' food.

8. **As** **THE SOURCE OF FRUITFULNESS** (John 15). Everything the branch needs may be found in the **Vine**—**Abide**.

g. **As** **THE SOURCE OF POWER** (Matt. 28, 18). The power is in Himself ; abiding in Him we abide in power.

10. **As** **THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE** (John 11, 25). He alone can resurrect dead souls into life. He will resurrect the bodies of His saints into the glorious image of His own eternal life.

II. REVEAL HIS OWN RELATIONSHIP TO THE FATHER.—

1. **HE WAS SENT BY THE FATHER** (John 8, 29). He who sent Him was with Him. He who sends us has also promised to be with us.

2. **HE IS LOVED BY THE FATHER** (John 5, 20). This love is manifested **in** the Father showing Him **all** things. Is not Christ's love to **us** exhibited in a like fashion ?

3. **HE HAD THE AUTHORITY OF THE FATHER** (John 5, 22). Those who honour not Him honour not the

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Father. The Father's authority is despised when Christ is despised.

4. HE POSSESSED LIFE LIKE THE FATHER (John 5, 26). The life of Christ, like the Father's, is a life-imparting life, He is the author of life.

5. HE WAS INDWELTBY THE FATHER (John 14, 10). The Father's works were wrought out in Him. "It is God who worketh in us."

6. HE WAS SUBMISSIVE TO THE FATHER (Matt. 26, 29). The evidence of an indwelling Christ is a will entirely yielded to Him.

7. HE ALWAYS PLEASED THE FATHER (John 8, 29). He pleased not Himself. If we can truly say, "I seek not mine own glory," we may please Him too.

8. HE MANIFESTED THE NAME OF THE FATHER (John 17, 6). "Ye are the epistle of Christ."

9. HE FINISHED THE WORK GIVEN HIM BY THE FATHER (John 18, 4). The finishing of the work is to us as it was to Him, the gaining of a victory.

10. HE YIELDED HIS SPIRIT TO THE FATHER (Luke 23, 46). Home is sweet when the will of the Father has been done, and His name glorified. Surely now those longings expressed by the loving, suffering Son will be fully satisfied (John 17, 1).

III. REVEAL THE NATURE OF HIS OWN MISSION.—

1. HE CAME NOT TO BE MINISTERED UNTO (Matt. 20, 28). The great ones of the earth love to be lionised

and feasted. He came to give what the world needed—“ His life.”

2. **HE CAME TO GLORIFY THE FATHER** (John 17, 4). The goodness of God is made to pass before us in Christ His Son. He magnified the Father’s name in the presence of the people.

3. **HE CAME TO SHOW US A LIFE OF FAITH** (John 5, 30). He could say, “ The words that I speak, I speak not of Myself.” His faith was in His Father, and so the Father acted through Him. May Christ so dwell in our hearts by faith.

4. **HE CAME TO REVEAL A LIFE OF SELF-DENIAL** (John 8, 50). So truly human was Jesus Christ that he might have sought His own glory, but He did not. He came to seek and to save that which was lost.

5. **HE CAME TO MANIFEST PATIENCE IN POVERTY** (Matt. 8, 20). Godliness, with contentment, is great gain. Gain won through faith.

6. **HE CAME TO SUFFER AND TO DIE** (Mark 8, 31). This was a necessity laid upon Him, because of the love He had for us. “ He bore our sins in His own body.”

7. **HE CAME TO OPEN A NEW WAY** (John 10, 9). The Good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep, that He might become the Door into the pastures that are ever green.

8. **HE CAME THAT HE MIGHT BECOME THE HEAD OF THE CORNER** (Matt. 21, 42). Despised and rejected of men, God hath highly exalted Him. Among the ten thousand stones in the building He is the chiefest.

g. **He** CAME, **AND** **He** WILL COME AGAIN (**Matt.** 25, 31). His promise is, "I will come again" (John 14, 3). It will be a personal appearing. "This same Jesus" (Acts 1, 11). He comes in His glory to raise the dead, to change the living, to take vengeance on them who obey not the Gospel, to destroy Antichrist, to restore His people Israel, to rule the nations, to reward the faithful, and to bring in everlasting righteousness. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

THE HOLY GHOST OUR TEACHER.

There are two great personalities which are much forgotten in these days—the devil, the father of lies; and the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth.

I. A DIVINE TEACHER IS NEEDED.—Every sinner needs a Divine Saviour; every saint needs a Divine Teacher. "He shall teach" (John 14, 26) ought to be as real to us as "He shall save" (Matt. 1, 21). This great Teacher is needed **because—**

1. THE THINGS OF **God** KNOWETH NO MAN (1 Cor. 2, 11). Every unregenerate man is ignorant of the things of God. Man cannot find out God by *searching*; **only by revelation**. This revelation is by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2, 11).

2. **THE NATURAL MAN** CANNOT RECEIVE THE THINGS OF **God** (1 Cor. 2, 14). Not only has the Holy Spirit to *reveal* the things of God, but He must also change the heart, and give the **nature to receive** them.

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3. HOLY MEN OF OLD WERE TAUGHT BY THE SPIRIT (2 Peter I, 21). Holy men to-day must have the same Teacher. He shall guide you into all truth (John 16, 13).

II. A DIVINE TEACHER HAS COME.—

1. HE WAS SENT BY THE FATHER IN THE NAME OF THE SON (John 14, 26). Both Father and Son are deeply interested in the education of His children. This gift implies that there is much more for Christians in this life than mere salvation from wrath.

2. HE HAS COME TO INSTRUCT (Neh. g, 30). Two things every Christian ought to be—clean and wise. Ignorance of the things of God is an evidence of a grieved Spirit.

3. HE SEARCHETH ALL THINGS (I Cor. 2, 10). This Teacher is all-sufficient ; the deep mysteries of God are known to Him and revealed by Him.

4. HE ABIDETH IN YOU (John 14, 17). “ Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost ” (I Cor. 6, 19). He is always at hand, so that “ Ye need not that any man teach you ” (I John 2, 27).

5. HE SPEAKETH IN YOU (Matt. 10, 12). He must speak through us before He can speak to us. It is not ye that speak, for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

III. THE CHARACTER OF HIS TEACHING.—

He is the Spirit of wisdom, counsel, and knowledge (Isa. II, 2). This text will be best understood by reading it backwards.

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1. **HE SHALL NOT SPEAK OF HIMSELF** (John 16, 13). Like Christ, He makes Himself of no reputation. Does this feature of our Teacher **characterise** us? Not I, but Christ.

2. **HE AWAKENETH THE EAR** (Isa. 1, 4, R.v.). Lord, give us the hearing ear. Ears some have, but they hear not. Why? Asleep.

3. **HE USES THE WORD** (Eph. 6, 17). Being the Spirit of truth He delights in the word of truth and seeks to guide us into the truth.

4. **HE RECEIVES THE THINGS OF GOD FOR US** (John 16, 14). All the fulness is in Christ; the Spirit receives and takes of the things of Christ that He might show them unto us.

5. **HE SHOWS THINGS TO COME** (John 16, 13). Now, since Christians are beginning to honour the Holy Spirit, they are beginning to understand "things to come."

6. **HE BRINGS TO REMEMBRANCE** (John 14, 26). He writes the truth in the heart and recalls it to our minds when needed. His memory never fails Him. Filled with the Spirit is the cure for a bad memory.

7. **HE DIVIDES HIS GIFTS** (1 Cor. 12, 8). "He divideth to every man severally as He will." (1 Cor. 12, 11). Covet earnestly the best gifts. Who teacheth like Him? (Job 36, 22).

IV. THE PRIVILEGES OF THE TAUGHT.—

1. **THEY KNOW HIM** (Eph. 1, 17), not only as

their **Saviour**, but **as** their daily sufficiency and coming King.

2. **THEY KNOW WHAT IS FREELY GIVEN THEM** (1 Cor. 2, 12). They have, by faith, laid hold on the unsearchable riches of Christ. To such the promises are precious.

3. **THEY ARE QUICK TO UNDERSTAND** (Isa. 11, 3). Being taught of God they have the mind of God, and so quickly apprehend His will.

4. **THEY SPEAK IN WISDOM** (1 Cor. 2, 13). The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word **was** in my tongue.

5. **THEY HAVE AN HOLY UNCTION** (1 John 2, 20). The heavenly breath is felt where the Spirit is. Paul judged not by the speech but by the *power* (1 Cor. 4, 19-20).

6. **THEY NEED NO OTHER TEACHER** (1 John 2, 27). Whether we read or hear the Word of God, let us sit at His feet. Learn of Me.

7. **THEY ARE HELPFUL TO OTHERS** (Isa. 1, 4, R.v.). This is the secret of a useful life-God working in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

THE MISSION FIELD.

I. LOOK AT THE FIELD.—

1. **THE FIELD IS THE WORLD** (Matt. 13, 30). The Church is in the world, that it might be a blessing to

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the world. The seed of the kingdom is sufficient for, and suitable to, every part of the field.

2. **A WORLD IN BONDAGE** (John 5, 19, R.V.). Possessed and polluted by the evil one. The thorns and briars of sin are the natural fruits of the soil.

3. **A WORLD UNDER CONDEMNATION** (Rom. 5, 12). All have sinned ; all are guilty ; all under death, that He might have mercy upon all.

4. **A WORLD LOVED BY GOD** (John 3, 16). That God does love the world is abundantly manifest in the gift of His Son. Why He did love such a world is a mystery to man and an eternal praise to God.

5. **A WORLD ATONED FOR BY CHRIST**. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world (1John 2, 2). He is the mercy-seat, where the broken law is covered, and where all may meet with God.

6. **A WORLD IN IGNORANCE OF GOD** (I Cor. 1, 21). It is sad to think of the millions still in ignorance of God's love and of Christ's atoning death. The soil cannot but be fruitless for good while it is yet destitute of the good seed.

7. **A WORLD READY FOR HARVEST** (John 6, 35-36). Christ saw the field already white in His day, because He saw already the grace and power by which this great work could be done. Alas ! that so little should be yet gathered in. " Oh, where are the reapers ? "

II. LOOK AT THE WORK: -

It is said that when the Duke of Wellington was asked if it was worth while sending missionaries to a certain people, he said : “ What are your standing orders ? ” Well, here they are--

1. GO INTO ALL THE WORLD (Mark 16, 15). The great Redeemer had His eye and heart on every part of the field when He gave His life a ransom for all.

2. BE WITNESSES UNTO ME (Acts 1, 8). This implies more than mere testimony. We cannot be true witnesses of Christ's transforming, cleansing, keeping power, unless we have in heart been renewed, possessed, and transformed.

3. TEACH ALL NATIONS (Matt. 28, 19). All nations need the knowledge of Christ. Christ is sufficient for the needs of all nations.

4. PREACH THE GOSPEL (2 Cor. 10, 16). The tidings of the Father's love ; of the Saviour's sufferings and triumph ; of the Spirit's presence and power ; of the coming of the King.

5. DECLARE HIS GLORY (1 Chron. 16, 24). Declare the glory of His character ; the glory of His resurrection ; the glory of His future kingdom.

6. BID TO THE MARRIAGE (Matt. 22, 9). Don't forget to give each and all a hearty invitation. God is no respecter of persons. Whosoever will may come.

7. PRAY THE LORD OF THE HARVEST (Matt. 9, 28). Pray **HIM** to thrust out labourers into His harvest. Pray Him to thrust out those who are waiting on money

to send them. The Church is waiting on the *means* to send them. "Pray *Him* to send," and the means will be sent with them.

III. LOOK AT THE WORKERS.—

1. **THEY ARE POSSESSED** (John 17, 23). The vessel needs filling before it can be a blessing. Paul had the Son revealed in him before he was called to preach Him. Moses had the vision before he received his commission (Ex. 3, 1-10).

2. **THEY ARE SENT** (John 17, 28). Sent as the Father has sent the Son. What does that mean? Think of where Christ came from, what He came to do, and how He did the will of His Father.

3. **THEY ARE FAITHFUL** (Acts 8, 4). Though scattered abroad by persecution they preached the Word everywhere. Faithful to Him who called them. Ye serve the Lord Christ.

4. **THEY ARE TAUGHT** (Jer. 1, 7). He who dwells within teaches how and what to speak. Out of your **hearts** shall flow rivers of living water. This spake He of the Spirit.

5. **THEY ARE DEBTORS** (Rom. 1, 14-15). We are debtors to all classes, inasmuch as we have that committed to us (the Gospel) which all need. We owe the unsaved the Gospel. The Lord give us grace to pay our debt.

6. **THEY ARE COURAGEOUS** (2 Cor. 10, 16). They went into the regions beyond, where the Gospel was as

yet unknown, not boasting in the fruit of other men's labours. Dare to be a Daniel.

7. **THEY ARE SUCCESSFUL** (Acts 17, 6). The world needs to be turned upside down, for just now it is wrong side up. Its feet, instead of its face, are turned to God. Who is sufficient for these things ? Greater is He that is in you.

IV. LOOK AT THE ENCOURAGEMENTS.—

1. **THINK OF THE WILL OF GOD** (1 Tim. 2, 3-4). It is His will that all be saved. He willeth not the death of any. In seeking the salvation of men we seek the fulfilment of His will.

2. **THINK OF THE SUFFERINGS OF CHRIST** (Gal. 1, 4). How precious is that shed blood in the eyes of God the Father ; how powerful is that blood to cleanse.

3. **THINK OF THE GIFT OF THE SPIRIT** (Acts 1, 8), which proves a resurrected Saviour and an accepted Advocate. By the Spirit's presence the living Saviour, in all His love and power, abides within us.

4. **THINK OF THE POWER OF THE GOSPEL** (Rom. 1, 16). The message we have to proclaim is the divine complement to human need. It is God's panacea for the woes of the world.

5. **THINK OF THE PROMISE** (Matt. 28, 19-20). "Certainly I **will** be with you." This was God's answer to Moses. "Who am I ?" The question is **not** "Who am I ?" but, "Who is He that is with me ?"

6. **THINK OF THE REWARDS** (Mark 10, 29-30). "Ye

shall receive wages." What a fee ! Heaven's coin paid in grace by the hand of the King.

7. THINK OF THE DIVINE PURPOSE. All the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of God. All kings and nations shall yet serve Him. The kingdoms of this world shall yet become the kingdom of our Lord and of **His** Christ. Be not weary in well-doing.

REWARDS.

What manner of love is this ? that God should so love us as to give up His Son to die for us, and then reward us for every little thing done for Him. Oh, the grace of God-it is grace upon grace. Look at—

I. THE REWARDER.-Rewards are usually given according to the dignity of the rewarder.

1. THINK OF **His** GREATNESS (Col. 3, 24). The Lord Himself is the rewarder. The world was made by Him and for Him. He inhabiteth eternity. He speaks and it is done.

2. THINK OF **HIS RICHES** (Gen. 15, 1). **Is it** earthly blessing ? The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. Is it spiritual gifts ? The **fulness** of the Godhead dwelleth in Him. He who *was rich* became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be made rich.

3. **THINK OF HIS GOODNESS** (Matt. 6, 4). How sweet are these words : "**Thy** Father Himself." The Father who gave His Son, how will He not, *with Him*, freely give us all things. O how great is Thy goodness !

4. **THINK OF HIS FAITHFULNESS** (Phil 2, 8-10). The One who, for God, became a worm and no man, is exalted by God with a name above every name. We see Him enduring the cross, and we see Him crowned with glory and honour (Heb. 2, 9). Having been faithful to His only Son, He will be faithful **to** His every son.

II. THE REWARDED.-Not every one will have their works rewarded. The wood, hay, and stubble will be burned. If any man's work abide, he shall receive a reward (1 Cor. 3, 12-15). Rewards are given **to**—

1. THE EARNEST SEEKER (Heb. 11, 6). Not those who seek rewards merely, but **Him**—" My soul thirsteth for the living God."

2. **THE CAREFUL WORKER** (1 Cor. 3, 13-14). Take heed how and what ye build. Remember the testing fire. Be **diligent in this business ; be fervent in spirit-red hot.**

3. THE CHEERFUL GIVER (Matt. 10, 42). The Lord loveth a cheerful giver. Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily. The least thing done in Christ's Name will be rewarded.

4. THE RIGHTEOUS SOWER (Prov. 11, 18). Jesus Christ was the righteous Sower. What a reward He has received ! (Heb. 2, 9). Let us follow His example (Ps. 126, 6).

5. THE UPRIGHT DEALER (2 Sam. 22, 21). The

Christian ought to do his business as in the sight of God, with an equal balance and with clean hands.

6. **THE HUMBLE WALKER** (Prov. 22, 4). The reward of humility is riches and honour. Christ humbled Himself, wherefore God highly axalted Him (v. 29).

7. **THE STEADFAST BELIEVER** (Heb. 10, 25). Whatever hinders your confidence in God is robbing you of a great recompense of reward. Listen not to the tempting devil. This is the victory—even our faith.

8. **THE GODLY SUFFERER** (Matt. 5, 11-12). Jesus Himself, as our Captain, was consecrated through suffering. We suffer with Him that we may be also glorified together.

g. **THE FAITHFUL WARRIOR** (2 Tim. 4, 8). On God's side the battle is the Lord's ; on our side it is the fight of faith. Be faithful unto death and gain the crown of life.

III. THE REWARDS.—

1. **THEY ARE GREAT** (Gen. 15, 1). Will be according to the greatness of the Giver. To have Himself is to have an exceeding great reward. "If He is mine, then all is mine."

2. **THEY ARE SURE** (Col. 3, 24). Because they are of the Lord. He is faithful that hath promised.

3. **THEY ARE VARIED. Every man shall receive according to his own labour** (1 Cor. 3. 8). In this case it will not be "every man his penny." The penitent thief cannot expect the reward of the laborious Paul.

4. **THEY ARE SUFFICIENT** (Matt. 25, 21). Doubtless everyone will be abundantly satisfied with their own reward. His "well done" will be enough for this. But what **is** meant by "the joy of the Lord?"

5. **THEY ARE ETERNAL** (2 Cor. 4, 17). These are laurels which never wither; blessings which **perish** not with the **using**. Who can count the value of "an eternal weight of glory?"

6. **THEY ARE TO BE COVETED** (2 John 8). Men will beguile **us** of our reward if they succeed in beguiling us away from lovingly serving the Lord. Press on toward the mark for the prize.

IV. THE REWARDING.—

1. WILL BE ACCORDING TO OUR WORKS (1 Cor. 3, 13). He shall reward every man according to his **works** (Matt. 16, 27), not according to **his** profession.

2. WILL BE OPENLY (Matt. 6, 4). Secret acts for Christ are **not** to be only secretly rewarded, although the faithful worker gets many a secret reward.

3. **WILL BE IN THE PRESENT TIME** (Luke 18, 29-30). The rewards are not all reserved for us in heaven. Daniel's self-denial was rewarded with heavenly wisdom (chap. 1).

4. WILL BE IN THE LIFE TO COME (Rev. 22, 12). When clothed upon with our house which is from heaven, we will be the more able to receive and enjoy heavenly blessings.

5. WILL BE WHEN HE COMES (Matt. 16, 27). The great rewards are bestowed when the Rewarder **Him**.

self appears. When He comes *for* His saints they shall receive the newbody-the eternal fitness. **When He comes** with His saints they shall be rewarded with honours.

6. **WILL BE DURING HIS REIGN** (Rev. 20, 4).
 Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world?

7. **WILL BE THROUGH ALL ETERNITY** (2 Cor. 4, 17).
 Where I am there shall ye be also-“ For ever with the Lord.” Hallelujah.

APOSTOLIC CHRISTIANITY: AS SEEN IN
 THE ACTS.

I.-APOSTOLIC FAITH.

The history of the Prodigal in **Luke 15** is pretty much the history of the Church. Now that she “ begins to be in want,” she must needs “ Arise and go back ” to her original sphere of power and prestige. What did those early saints believe ?

- 1 **They** believed in the **DIVINITY** of Jesus
 Christ 3, 16
- 2 They believed in the **ATONING** work of Christ, 20, 28
- 3 They believed in the **WORD** of Christ 27, 25
- 4 They believed in the **GOSPEL** of Christ 8, 5
- 5 They believed in the **NAME** of Christ 3, 16
- 6 They believed in the **PRESENCE** of Christ ... 18, 9-10
- 7 They believed in the **POWER OF THE HOLY**
 SPIRIT, 1, 8: 2, 38: 8, 15: 10, 44-45: 11, 16: 15, 8

II.-APOSTOLIC PRAYER.

- 1 They Prayed at stated times 3, 1
- 2 They Prayed, believing in Much Prayer 6, 4

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- 3 They Prayed with great Simplicity 4, 24
 4 They Prayed, expecting an Answer 4, 29-31
 5 They Prayed and Fasted together, 10, 30 : 15, 3 : 14, 23
 6 They Prayed and received Revelations,
 7, 55-56 : 10, 9-11 : 22, 17
 7 They Prayed before parting, 13, 3 : 20, 36 : PI, 5

III.-APOSTOLIC COURAGE.

They had **courage**—

- 1 To Preach doctrines that were despised 4, 2
 2 To Rebuke sinners in high places 4, II : 5, 30
 3 To Speak the whole Counsel of God 20, 27 : 4, 20
 4 To Stand amidst Persecution 8, I
 5 To Live above the fear of man 5, 29 : 4, 19
 6 To Hazard their lives for Christ's sake, 15, 26 : 20, 24
 7 The Secret of this Courage ... Acts 1, 8 : 13, 4

IV.-APOSTOLIC POWER.**I.—THE NATURE OF THIS POWER.**

- 1 It was not Social power 2, 7
 2 It was not Monetary power 3, 6
 3 It was not Intellectual power 4, 13
 4 It was Spiritual power.. 1, 8 : 6, 10

II.—THE MANIFESTATIONS OF THIS POWER.

By the Power of the Holy **Ghost**—

- 1 The Coward is made Courageous 2, 14
 2 The Sinner is Convicted and Humbled 2, 37-38
 3 The Persecuted is Satisfied with Glory 7, 55
 4 The Perplexed is Answered and Guided, 8, 29 : 16, 9
 5 The Convert is Empowered for Service 9, 17-20

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- 6 The Servant is Separated and Sent **13, 2-4**
- 7 The Enemy is Fearlessly Denounced **13, 9-10**

V.-APOSTOLIC TESTIMONY.

There is no uncertain sound here. They **testified—**

- 1 That Jesus was *the Christ, the Son of God..* **2, 36** : g, 20
- 2 That God raised *Him from the dead* 3, **15** : **4, 33**
- 3 That His Name has power to heal *through Faith* * **3, 16**
- 4 That Salvation is Only in His Name 4, 12
- 5 That Christ is the *God-Ordained Judge* of all, 10, **42**
- 6 That all believers are *Justified from all things*, 13, 39
- 7 That all believers should *receive the Gift of the Holy Ghost* **2, 39** : **19, 2**

VI.-APOSTOLIC SUCCESS.

They **succeeded—**

- 1 In Receiving the Promise of the Father, 1, 4 : **2, 4**
- 2 In Converting sinners unto God 2, 41 : **4, 4**
- 3 In Working Miracles of Grace **3, 7** : **16, 18**
- 4 In bringing Answers to their Prayers, 4, 31 :
12, 5 : 16, 26
- 5 In Spreading their doctrine abroad **5, 28** : 42
- 6 In Getting immediate result through preaching
Christ * **8, 5-8** : g, **20-21**
- 7 In Raising persecution because of their faith-
fulness 4, 21 : 13, **50-52** : 14, 2 : 17, 32
- 8 In doing the work given them to do **26, 18**

THE BLESSED HOPE.

TITUS 2, 13-14.

We don't hope for what we already possess. Every Christian has Forgiveness of Sins, Peace with God, and Eternal Life.

This blessed hope is characterised as—

- 1 A Good Hope 2 Thess. 2, 16
- 2 A Sure Hope Heb. 6, **18**
- 3 A Living Hope Peter 1, 3
- 4 A Saving Hope Rom. 8, **24**
- 5 A Purifying Hope * 1 **John** 3, 3
- 6 A Comforting Hope 1 Thess. 4, **18**

It is the blessed hope of—

- 1 The Individual Acts 1, 11
- 2 The Church John 14, **1-3**
- 3 The Servant** **Luke** 19, **13**
- 4 Of Israel Rom. 11, 26
- 5 Of Creation Rom. 8, 22-23

THE ARM OF THE LORD.

As revealed in Isaiah.

The Arm of the Lord is symbolic of Christ, as His *hand* is of the Holy Spirit.

- 1 His Character, as Jehovah's representative, Isa. 40, 10
- 2 Salvation through Him Isa. 40, 11
- 3 Condition of Salvation, "Trust" Isa. 51, 5
- 4 The Call Isa. 51, 9-10
- 5 The Unvailing Isa. 52, 10
- 6 The Appeal "..... Isa. 53, 1

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- 7 The Testimonya Isa. 59, 16
8 The Final Victory Isa. 63, 12
Cursed be he that maketh *flesh* his arm (Jer. 17, 5).

APOSTOLIC EXAMPLE.

ACTS 20, 19-28.

“ Be ye followers of me,” said the apostle, “ Even as I also am of Christ ” (1 Cor. 11, 1).

He is an example for us—

- 1 In Humble Service for God v. 19
2 In Faithfulness to the Word of God v. 20
3 In **Shewing** the right attitude toward God .. v. 21
4 In being Taught by the Spirit of God vv. 22-23
5 In Patiently suffering the will of God v. 24
6 In Preaching the Kingdom of God v. 25
7 In boldly Declaring the whole Counsel of God, v. 27
8 In Caring for the Church of God v. 28

PETER.

The Biography of Peter is singularly instructive for every follower of Christ.

- 1 His Call. The first of the Twelve Matt. 10, 2
2 His Courage Matt. 14, 28
3 His Confession Matt. 16, 15-16
4 His Impulsiveness Matt. 17, 4 ; John 18, 10
5 His Self-Confidence Mark 14, 29-31
6 His Indifference Mark 14, 37
7 His Cowardliness Mark 14, 54
8 His Denial Mark 14, 68-71
9 His Repentance Mark 14, 72

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- 10 His Forgiveness Mark **16, 7**
 11 **His** Faith John **20, 2-4**
 12 His Love John **21, 7**
 13 His Devotion John **21, 15**
 14 His Boldness Acts **2, 14**; **4, 19-20**
 15 His Power Acts **3, 6**; **5, 3**
 He was a man of like passions as we are : **Be of good cheer.**

WORK FOR CHRIST.**ACTS 9, 6.**

- 1 The Field is Large **Matt. 13, 38**
 2 The Need is Great **Job 4, 35**
 3 The Time is Now Gal. **6, 10**
 4 The **Call is** Urgent **Matt. 20, 6**
 5 The Work is Varied **Matt. 13, 34**
 6 The Partner is Almighty **2 Cor. 6, 1**
 7 **The** Means are Provided Luke **19, 13**
 8 The Reward is Sure Dan. **12, 3**

SPIRITUAL GROWTH.**MATT. 6, 27-28.**

- 1 Growth implies *life*. Life is a Mystery John **3, 3**
 2 Growth implies *favourable Conditions*.
 3 Growth is *natural*, where there is life.
 4 Growth is gradual. "First the blade."
 5 Growth is not the result of *Effort*" Consider the lilies" (v. 27).
 6 Growth implies healthy *activity at the roots*. Receiving much.
 7 Growth is needful to *perfection of character*.

Outlines on the Twenty-Third Psalm. 289

THE SHEPHERD AND THE SHEEP.

I.—“THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD” (v. 1).

1. WHO IS THIS SHEPHERD ? “Jehovah.” Who *was*, and is, and is *to come*. The title occurs 7,600 times. Jehovah Rohi. “The Lord my Shepherd.”

2. HOW HE HAS BECOME A SHEPHERD. “All have gone astray” (Isa. 53, 6). He came to seek and save the *lost*.

3. WHAT HE HAS DONE FOR THE SHEEP.
He has entered the door of the fold John 10, 2
He has given His life *for* the sheep John 10, 11
He has given His sheep *eternal life* John 10, 28
He has given them the proof of eternal security,
John 10, 29

4. WHO ARE HIS SHEEP ? It is characteristic of them *that*—
They *hear* His Voice v. 27
They *knew* Him v. 14
They *follow* Him v. 27

II.--“I SHALL NOT WANT” (v. 1).

1. WHO SHALL NOT WANT ? He who can truly say, “The Lord is my Shepherd.”

2. WHY HE SHALL NOT WANT.-Because the Lord *is* his Shepherd, and HE is rich in possessions, wise in administration, strong to defend, and gracious to give.

Handfuls on Purpose.3. **WHAT IS IT TO BE IN WANT ?**

- It is to be like **Belshazzar** when weighed in the
balance Dan. 5, 27
- It is to be like the **Prodigal** in the far country,
Luke 15, 14
- It is to be like the **Foolish Virgins** without oil,
Matt. 25, 8
- It is to be like the **rich man** in hell Luke 16, 24

III.—“ **HE MAKETH ME TO LIE DOWN** ” (v. 2).

These words **imply**—

1. **PLEASANT FEEDING.** “ **Green pastures.**” The pastures of God’s Word are always fresh, tender, satisfying.

2. **PEACEFUL RESTING.** He maketh me to *lie* down. Resting implies not only satisfaction, but a conscious feeling of perfect security.

3. **GENTLE CONSTRAINING.** “ He *maketh me* to lie down.” What gracious compulsion His is.

4. **PLEASANT WALKING.** “ **Beside the still waters.**” (“ **Waters of quietness,**” **marg.**). The Scriptures of truth, the Lord’s day of rest, the sweet hour of prayer, etc.

5. **FAITHFUL LEADING.** “ **He** leadeth me.” He leads into the fulness of blessing. “ My soul followeth hard after Thee” (Ps. 63, 8).

IV.—“ **HE RESTORETH MY SOUL** ” (v. 3).1. **WHEN IS RESTORATION NEEDED ?**

When in a **Weak and Fainting** condition.

When in a **Sinful and Backsliding** state.

Outlines on the Twenty-Third Psalm. 291

2. WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF BACKSLIDING?

Following afar off, through fear or shame.

Discontent and Restlessness with the leading of God

Growing disregard for the fellowship of saints.

Secret neglect of His "green pastures" and preference for the thoughts of men.

3. HOW IS RESTORATION EFFECTED? "He restoreth."

By the Shepherd's look Luke 22, 61

By the Shepherd's crook Ps. 119, 67

V.-"HE LEADETH ME, FOR HIS OWN NAMES SAKE (v. 3).

1. THE LEADER. "He leadeth"—

By the Word of His mouth.

By the Example of His Life.

By the Promptings of His Spirit.

2. THE LED. "He leadeth *Me*."

Because my eye is on Him.

Because I believe in Him.

Because I yield to Him.

3. THE PATHS. "Paths of Righteousness (Rightness).

Into the path of Peace.

Into the path of Prayer.

Into the path of Power.

4. THE PURPOSE OF HIS LEADING. "For His own Name's sake."

For the Sake of His Word.

Handfuls on Purpose.

For the Sake of His Work.
For the Sake of His Will.

VI.—“ I WILL FEAR NO EVIL” (v. 4).

1. TESTING EXPERIENCE. “ The valley of the shadow of death.”

The valley of temporal Adversity.
The valley of severe bodily or family Affliction.
The valley of bitter persecution.

2. BLESSED ASSURANCE. “ I will fear no evil.”

I will fear no evil place World
I will fear no evil thing Flesh
I will fear no evil one Devil

3. JOYFUL TESTIMONY. “ Thou art with Me.”

Thou art with me as the Way.
Thou art with me as the Truth.
Thou art with me as the Life.

VII.--“ THEY COMFORT ME” (v. 4).

The “ Rod and Staff ” comfort because they are His and they are His *all the way*.

1. THE COMFORT OF HIS ROD (club).

It was their *Weapon of defence* against the enemy.
It was the **Breaker up of their way** among thorns and briars.

2. THE **COMFORT** OF HIS STAFF (Crook).

With it they were rescued from danger.
Under it they were *numbered* for safety.

The rod and the staff are emblems of the Power of the Spirit, and the assuring character of His Word.

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VIII.—“ THOU PREPAREST A TABLE BEFORE ME ” (v. 5).

1. WHAT? “ Thou preparest a *table*.” A table tells of forethought and fellowship.

2. WHO? “ *Thou* preparest.” This preparation is perfectly consistent with His character.

3. WHERE? “ In the presence of mine enemies.” Shepherds sometimes cut *down* branches to feed the flock.

4. FOR WHOM? “ Before *me*.” Personal experience of His special care.

IX.—“ THOU ANOINTEST MY HEAD, MY CUP RUNNETH OVER ” (v. 5).

There is a vital connection between the anointed head and the overflowing cup.

1. **THE ANOINTEST HEAD.** (*Oil* a symbol of the Holy Spirit)—

Is a sign of man's separation unto God.

It is the Seal of God's Consecration (filling) of man, for His Service.

2. **THE OVERFLOWING CUP.** The overflowing Cup is the result of the overflowing oil.

It means a life of abounding satisfaction, “running over.”

It means of Life of **Blessing** for others. The overflow is not waste, but for the salvation of others.

It means a Life of Joyful Testimony. “ My cup **runneth over**.” No wonder when “ the Lord is the portion of my cup.”

Handfuls on Purpose.

x. — “SURELY GOODNESS AND MERCY SHALL FOLLOW ME ” (v. 6).

When we can say, “ He *leadeth* me,” we may confidently say, “ Goodness and Mercy shall *follow* me.”

1. THE PILGRIM’S ATTENDANTS.

“ Goodness ” to gather up the *precious* results of our lives.

“ Mercy ” to cleanse and forgive the faults and its failings.

2. THE PILGRIM’S CONSOLATION. “ All the days of my life.”

All the dark and stormy days.

All the bright and fruitful days.

3. THE PILGRIM’S HOME. “ The House of the Lord.”

The house that has been prepared by the Lord.

The house where the Lord Himself dwells.

Time is but the dressing-room of Eternity.

4. THE PILGRIM’S CONFIDENCE. “ *I* will dwell in the House of the Lord for ever.”

He knows Him in whom he has believed.

He believes and expects what He has promised.

THE REVELATIONS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

JOHN 16, 12-14.

- 1 He Reveals the Pierced Saviour **Zech.** 12, 10
- 2 He Reveals the Way into Truth John 16, 13
- 3 He Reveals the Love of God Rom. 5, 5
- 4 He Reveals the Things of Christ John 16, 14

The Revelations of the Holy Spirit. 295

- 5 He Reveals the Things God hath Prepared, 1 Cor. **2, 10**
- 6 He Reveals the Valley of Need Ezek. 37, 1
- 7 He Reveals the Path of Service Acts 8 29

ALL ONE IN CHRIST.

HEBREWS 2, II.

- 1 In Christ we are Possessed by one Life . . . John **15,5**
- 2 In Christ we belong to One Body . . . 1Cor. 12, 12-14
- 3 In Christ we are joined by One Spirit 1Cor. **6, 17**
- 4 In Christ we are Secure on One Standing, John **17, 21**
- 5 In Christ we are Stones of One Building . . . Eph. **2, 22**
- 6 In Christ we are Members of One Family, Eph. **3, 14-15**
- 7 In Christ we are Parts of One Temple . . . Eph. **2, 21-22**

“LET US GO FORTH.”

HEBREWS 13, 13.

I. WHAT FROM ?

From the Formality of a Powerless Religion.

From the Pleasures of a Sinful World.

From the Deceptions of a Self-centred Life.

2. WHAT TO ? “ Unto Him.”

Unto Him as those who believe in Him.

Unto Him as those who are separated to Him.

Unto Him as those who are prepared to Suffer with Him.

Unto Him as those who will Testify for Him.

QUALIFICATIONS FOR SERVICE.

1 Come to Christ ,I..... Matt. II, 28-29

2 Go for Christ Matt. 28, 19

Handfuls on Purpose.

- 3 Trust in Christ*.....Matt. 28, 20
 4 Act like Christ John 13, 14-15

THE PLEASURE OF THE LORD.

- 1 With regard to His Enemies Ezek. 33, 11
 2 With regard to His Son*.....Isa. 53, 10
 3 With regard to His Word Isa. 55, 11
 4 With regard to His Gospel 1 Cor. 1, 21
 5 With regard to His Service Gal. 1, 15-16
 6 With regard to His people 1 Sam. 12, 22
 7 With regard to His Purpose Luke 12, 32

THE PRECIOUS CHRIST.

1 PETER 2, 7.

1. THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST. "He is Precious." In Him is Costliness, Rarity, Adaptability.

2. TO WHOM CHRIST IS PRECIOUS. "Unto you... which believe." His sweetness must be tasted to be known.

3. WHY CHRIST IS PRECIOUS TO THE BELIEVER.
 Because He is their Life Col. 3, 4
 Because He is their Sustenance John 6, 55
 Because He is their Peace Eph. 2, 14
 Because He is their Character 1 Cor. 1, 30
 Because He is their Example 1 Peter 2, 21
 Because He is their All-sufficiency 2 Cor. 8, 9

PAUL'S THREEFOLD TESTIMONY.

ACTS 27, 23-25.

- 1 As to His Life. "Whose I am."
 2 As to his Work. "Whom I serve."
 3 As to his Creed. "I believe God."

A SATISFYING SIGHT.

I JOHN 3. 2.

- 1 Who shall we see ? See Him.
- 2 Who shall see *Him* ? “ We shall.”
- 3 How shall we see Him? “ As He is.”
- 4 What will be the effect of seeing Him ? “ We shall be like Him.”
- 5 Is this quite certain ? “ We shall.”

SEVEN PRAYERS IN MATTHEW 8.

- 1 The Cry of Misery. “ If Thou wilt Thou **canst** make me clean ” * v. 2
- 2 The Cry of Compassion. “ Lord, my servant lieth at home sick,” etc.v.5-6
- 3 The Cry of Faith. “ Lord speak the word only ” v. 8
- 4 The Cry of Procrastination. “ Suffer me first ” v. 21
- 5 The Cry of Fear. “ Lord save us, we perish ” ...v. 25
- 6 The Cry of Opposition.. “ What have we to do with Thee ? ” v.29
- 7 The Cry of Rejection. “ They besought Him that He would depart ”v. 34

BACKSLIDING.

JER. 8, 5. REV. 2, 4-5.

I. SOME OF ITS CAUSES .

- 1 The fear of man. Ashamed to confess.
- 2 Worldly associations in business or companionship.
- 3 Unequally yoked with unbelievers in marriage.

U

- 4 Yielding to the desire for what is *new* rather than profitable.
- 5 Maintaining an unforgiving spirit toward another (Mark II, 25-26).
- 6 Harbours unclean thoughts and feelings.
- 7 Refusing to make confession to God when conscious of having sinned.

II. SOME OF ITS EVIDENCES.

- 1 Neglecting the Word of God as the bread of life.
- 2 Little desire for secret prayer and communion with God.
- 3 Growing fondness for worldly pleasures.
- 4 Satisfied with present attainments in spiritual things.
- 5 Trifling excuses for neglecting Christian fellowship.
- 6 Tendency to discontent and fault-finding.
- 7 Decreasing anxiety for the salvation of others.

III. **THE** REMEDY.

Return. Repent. Confess. Renounce. Perform.
Jer. 8, 5 ; Rev. a, 4-5.

THE CHRISTIAN'S RELATIONSHIP.

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ we are **related**—

- 1 To the Father as CHILDREN,
John 20, 17 ; Matt. 6, g ; Rom. g, 26
- 2 To the Son as SERVANTS, Matt. 23, 8-10 ; John 13, 13
- 3 To the Spirit as TEMPLES, 1 Cor. 6, 19-20, and as
CHANNELS, John 7, 38
- 4 To the World as WITNESSES, Acts I, 8 ; John 17, 18
- 5 To one another as BRETHERN, Matt. 23, 8 ; Heb. 2, 11

Our Privileges.

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MEMBERS OF HIS BODY.

EPH. 5, 30.

The Church, as His Body, is **all** that is *visible* of Christ to the world. *In* one Spirit are we all baptised into one body.

- 1 As Members we enjoy one Gracious Privilege
John 15, 5
- 2 As Members we have one **Unquestionable** Security
Col. 3, 3 (“ in Christ”)
- 3 As Members we obey one Sovereign Will ... Eph. 5, 23
- 4 As Members we are energised by One Mighty Spirit I Cor. 12, 7-11
- 5 As Members we are united in working out One Great Purpose 2 Cor. 6, 1
- 6 As Members we have a special care one for another I John 3, 16
- 7 As Members we are specially cared for by the One to whom we belong Eph. 5, 29

OUR PRIVILEGES.

JUDE 20-25.

But ye beloved—

- 1 Building on the Faith of God.
- 2 Praying in the Spirit of God.
- 3 Keeping in the Love of God.
- 4 Looking for the Mercy of God.
- 5 Manifesting the Compassion of God.
- 6 Active in the Work of God (v. 23).
- 7 Hating garments that are unlike God.
- 8 Kept by the Power of God.
- 9 Faultless in the Presence of God.

Gospel Outlines.

CHRIST AND THE COMMON PEOPLE.

MARK 12, 37.

Three times over in this chapter the enemies of Christ try to “catch Him in His words” (vv. 14, 23, 28). The result in each case is, as it **always** has been, utter defeat. “The common people heard Him gladly.” This is Mark’s interjection, right between the “Sayings of Jesus” (vv. 37-38), and there is a world of revelation in it.

I.-THE COMMON PEOPLE. Who are they ? They were in Christ’s day, as they are largely now, “Sheep without a Shepherd.” Society is composed of three classes. The intellectual, the monied, and the labouring poor-Wit, Wealth, and Work. The heart of humanity is somewhere near the centre of the “common people” who take things at their surface value.

II.-THEY HEARD HIM GLADLY. Why? There is no specific reason given, but much is implied. To the poor the Gospel is preached. The Gospel of Christ, like the Sabbath, was made for man, and is specially suitable for the masses. It was the learned who sought to entangle Him in His talk (v. 13). Some of our modern scholars are very active in the same vain business. They heard Him **gladly**—

Christ and the Common People. 301

1. BECAUSE HE TREATED THEM FAIRLY. He shewed no respect of persons. He did not talk of them as the "dregs" or "scum" of Society, or as those belonging to the "vulgar throng," or as members of the "many headed beast." He dealt with them as "men" because in His eyes "All souls are precious."

2. BECAUSE HE SPOKE TO THEM PLAINLY. He talked like one of themselves. The philosophers of Greece and Rome kept the common people in brutish ignorance. Jesus Christ had the "tongue of the learned," not that He might speak great swelling words of man's wisdom, far beyond the reach of the ignorant multitude, but that He might "know how to speak a word in season to him *that is weary*" (Isa. 50, 4). He was wiser than the wisest, yet His language was child-like in its simplicity.

3. BECAUSE OF HIS SYMPATHY. He could not look upon the hungry multitude without having "compassion on them" (chap. 8, 2). His heart was in all that He said. Love is ever more powerful than logic.

4. BECAUSE OF HIS TEACHING. He knew what was in man, and His words were abundantly fitted to meet man's need. He knew that there was sin in man, and also much weary restlessness, and inexpressible thirst. So He said, "If any man thirst let him come unto Me" (John 7, 37). The burdened and heavy laden were lovingly offered His rest (Matt. 11, 28). Our poet Burns once told a friend that "the gift of grace in Christ was far too good news to be true." But this Gospel of Christ is absolutely true.

5. BECAUSE HE SPOKE WITH AUTHORITY. There was no note of uncertainty in His teaching. 'He did not speculate. He declared the truth. He had a message from God to *men*, and He knew it, and fearlessly delivered it. So must His servants speak, if they would honour Him and win men for God. "We know in whom we have believed."

But note that "hearing Him gladly" is not enough. It is possible to hear Him gladly, and ultimately treat Him madly. "The glow of a warm impression is one thing, the sturdiness of an enduring principle is another." The "common people" can cry "Hosanna" to-day and "Crucify" to-morrow. The stony-ground hearers receive the Word with gladness, yet bring forth no fruit (Mark 4, 16-17). It is not He that heareth gladly shall be saved, but "He that **heareth** and believeth" (John 5, 24).

COUNT THE COST.

LUKE 14, 28.

Man is not a mere creature of circumstances, like a plant. Christ expects us to act as reasonable men, and to sit down and count the cost before starting any very serious undertaking. This "tower" referred to stands for beauty, safety and prospect, and is applicable to all "character builders" (v. 27). We cannot count the cost until we have first the vision of some great possibility before us. No wise man desires his life to end like the tower of Babel, in shame and confusion. To live the Christian life is indeed a great and

solemn undertaking. Many begin this tower and seem not able to finish, bringing themselves into ridicule, and the tower into a laughing stock. Count the cost.

I.-THE COST OF BEING A CHRISTIAN. It is costly. It costs some more than others. Natural temperament, early training **and** environment may influence greatly. Whatever the price, it must be paid. We must count **on**—

1. GIVING UP ALL SIN. Christ gave Himself for us that He might “redeem us from all iniquity” (Titus 2, **14**). Sin is the worst of all investments. Every scheme in which it has a place is rotten. The wicked must forsake his ways.

2. SURRENDERING THE **WILL**. “What *wilt Thou* have me to do?” must be the attitude of the soul. We must count what it will cost the self life to put Christ first in everything, **and** to seek first His Kingdom.

3. SEPARATION FROM THE WORLD. We are to go after Him bearing His cross (v. 27). By His cross the world is to be crucified unto us, and we to the world (Gal. 6, **14**). When we find our all in Christ it is easy to give up all for Him. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

4. OPPOSITION BY THE WORLD. The world that hated Him will hate you also. Noah by his work of faith condemned the world (Heb. 11, 7), and no doubt the world condemned him. Abel had to suffer because his works were righteous. In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be **of** good cheer, I have overcome the world.

5. TEMPTATION BY THE DEVIL. The ungodly are not tempted as the Christians are. Through the lust of the eye and the pride of life he still offers his subtle illusions. But Christ is able to deliver and **succour** the tempted.

6. SELF-DENIAL. “ If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself.” The Christian life is a life of faith in the Son of God, and so must be a life of *self*-denial. “ Not I, but Christ.” Christ counted the cost when He came forth to live the life of the Father among sinful men. As the Father sent Me, so have I sent you.” But consider **also**—

II.-THE COST OF **NOT** BEING A CHRISTIAN.

If the soul's wealth of capacity and power is invested in the things of this world, utter and eternal bankruptcy will surely follow. Can you afford this ? The business of a Christless life is an awfully expensive one. He shall suffer loss. What a loss ! The loss **of**—

- 1 The Forgiving Love of God the Father.
- 2 The Saving Power of Christ the Son.
- 3 The Comforting Presence of the Holy Spirit.
- 4 The Assuring Promises of His Holy Word.
- 5 The Joy of Service in His prevailing Name.
- 6 The Blessed Hope of seeing Him, and being like Him.

7 The Glories and Rewards of His Everlasting Kingdom and Presence.

COUNT THE COST. What did it cost the prodigal to come ? His rags and his wretchedness.

THY WORD IS A LAMP.

PSALM 119, 105.

An unquestionable light is in it, adapted and suitable for every age. No modern light can equal it. It is as **Pollock** says, " This lamp from off the **ever-lasting** Throne." It is—

I.-A **READING** Lamp. A lamp for reading the mind and thoughts of God, and also for reading our own hearts.

II.—A **HEATING** Lamp. An incandescent glow that bums like a fire in the bones (Jer. 20, 9).

III.—A **TRAVELLER'S** Lamp. A lamp for my feet, and a light for my path. It is equally useful in every country and clime.

IV.-A **MINER'S** Lamp, suitable for the deepest pit of sin, and the darkest places of work and service. Proof against the black damp of the evil heart.

V.-A **SAFETY** Lamp. Sir Humphrey Davy's discovery has in no sense lessened its value. Can be used in the most dangerous places. C.H. 4 gas of the world has no damaging effect on it. It is not only a Safety, but a Saving lamp.

VI.-A **LIGHTHOUSE** Lamp. It stands aloft and its beams shine out over the dark waters of a needy world. To neglect its warnings is to suffer shipwreck. It is a divine **Search-light** flashing out in the darkness of this sin-shadowed earth.

Handfuls on Purpose.

VII.-A NIGHT Lamp. Gentle enough to shine with its mellow flame in the sick-chamber, bringing heaven's light into the weary heart, and brightening the pale face, with the eternal hope that is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Ps. 23).

SON, REMEMBER.

LUKE 16, 25.

On the authority of Christ this "*certain* rich man " must be taken as a real historical person. This startling appeal is made to his memory.

I.-MEMORY IS A MARVELLOUS GIFT. Loss of memory means loss of all usefulness, of all dignity and responsibility ; it is the loss of our identity. The brain itself is a mere pulp, it is the mind that remembers, now and in eternity.

II.-MEMORY IS THE STOREHOUSE OF THE SOUL. " Son, remember." Its capacity for storage is tremendous. Be careful what you put into it, as such goods may be required again. It may be a palace of precious keepsakes, or a chamber of horrors. It is a museum of records of events, the reference book for a coming judgment. It is the seed plot of this life, and of that which is to come.

III.-MEMORY IS AFFECTED BY THE STATE OF THE HEART. "Son, remember." What we are choosing now is determined by what we love. If we love the world then our hearts will be set on it. We remember most clearly what we have loved most dearly. Our youthful impressions, because of their intensity,

usually abide longest with us. Some set their hearts on “ things above,” while others “ mind earthly things.”

IV.-MEMORY IS THE REPRODUCTIVE FACULTY. “Son, remember.” It supplies the evidence for the final judgment, and may be one of “ the books which will be opened in that great day.” When a **Christless** man dies he has “ nothing left but a majestic memory.” We never speak of a *sinful* memory ; it may be weak or strong, but it is not in itself sinful, as it is but a mirror that reflects back what has been set before it. “ Son, remember that thou in thy *lifetime receivedst*,” etc. Here “ Remembrance wakes with all her busy train, swells at the heart, and turns the past to pain.” Peter wept when he thought thereon. Soul, remember that this is thy lifetime, and that the best of all “ good things “-the Gospel of **Christ**— is within your reach. Receive Him, and then your sins and iniquities will be remembered no more.

REVIVAL.

“ Wilt Thou not revive us again ?” Ps. 85, 6.

1. **THE NEED OF REVIVAL.** The need is apparent wherever there is Coldness, Languidness, and Fruitlessness.

2. **THE SOURCE OF REVIVAL.** “ Thou.” It is God, the Spirit, that quickeneth. No artificial appliances will bring a revival in Nature.

3. **THE MEANS OF REVIVAL.** “ *Wilt* Thou not ?” The fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much. James 5, 17; Ps. 65, 9 ; Isa. 40, 28.

Handfuls on Purpose.

4. THE SUBJECTS OF REVIVAL. "Us." It is a personal need.

5. THE EFFECT OF REVIVAL. "That Thy people may rejoice in Thee."

ATTENTION.

HEBREWS 2, 1.

We are called upon here to give heed to—

1. Our *Privilege*. "*Things* which we have heard." Precious things revealed to us by the Gospel.

2. Our *Duty*. "*We ought* to give earnest heed." Hear, and your soul shall live. Strive to enter in.

3. Our *Danger*. "*Lest* at any time we should let them run out as leaking vessels " (margin). In at the one ear and out at the other. Hold fast that which thou hast.

GLORYING IN THE CROSS.

GAL. 6, 14.

We glory in the Cross because in it we see—

- 1 The Fulfilment of Prophecy. Gen. 3, 15. Isa. 55. Dan. 9, 24-26.
- 2 The Love of God Exhibited 1 John 3, 16
- 3 The Love of Christ Declared. . . John 15, 13 ; Gal. 2, 20
- 4 The Removal of that which was against us, Col. 2, 14
- 5 The Redemption price for our souls Gal. 3, 13
- 6 The Way of Escape from our sins . . . 1 Peter 2, 24
- 7 The Foundation of our Peace established,
Col. 1, 20 ; Eph. 2, 16

Apt Illustrations.

SECRET SINS.

There is an insect that has a very close resemblance to the “bumble bee,” but which is a terrible enemy to it. Because of its likeness, it sometimes finds its way in a fraudulent manner into the bees’ nest, and there deposits eggs. But when these eggs are hatched the **larvæ** devour the **larvæ** of the bees. It comes in as a friend and helper, but turns out to be a devouring enemy. Such is that secret sin harboured in the heart. It eats away the vitals of the spiritual life, and effectually destroys the power of growth and usefulness. It is all the more dangerous when it comes in the likeness of a friend and helper in the work.

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS.

“Men tell us sometimes,” says Drummond, “there is no such thing as an atheist. There must be. There are some men to whom it is true there is no God. They cannot see God, because they have no eye.” When the fool says in **his heart**, there is no God, it would appear that in his foolish heart he believes what he says, because he has actually no capacity for seeing God, because of the blindness of his heart. That **purity** of heart which sees God, is a God-given **eye** to see Himself.

Handfuls on Purpose.

FORMALITY.

There is **a** variety of apple called "Apple-John," which is considered to be in *perfection* when it is shrivelled and withered. There are also those who believe in an apple-John religion, which to them is perfect only when it is thoroughly dried up of all spiritual power and utterly destitute of the sap of life and growth. The trees of the Lord are full of sap.

SPIRITUAL EDUCATION.

True education is not the cramming of the mind with different ideas, but the developing of our capacities, so that their real character may be brought out to the best advantage, and the highest purposes of our lives accomplished. In the caterpillar **all** the rudiments of the butterfly may be seen, but a great change is needful to liberate the higher faculties, and make the caterpillar that new creature it seeks to be. Jesus Christ said, "Learn of Me." He educates by regenerating the character and opening the way for the full development of all the capacities of the new man. To learn of Christ, then, is to be conformed into His likeness, and so be able to fulfil all the purposes of God in the new life.

TENACIOUS SELF,

Perhaps the most ferocious animal in creation is the "hamster rat." When it takes a grip, rather than yield it will allow itself to be beaten in pieces with a stick. If it seizes a man's hand, it must be killed before it will

quit its hold. How like this "hamster rat " is our own proud, unyielding, sinful self. That selfish spirit, that would cling to and suck the life out of the new **heaven-**born nature, will not quit its hold until it has been put to death.

LIFE-GIVING BREATH.

In South America the wind from the marshes comes charged with the germs of intermittent fever, and often the most deadly cholera accompanies *stillness* in the atmosphere. A storm is the best purifier of the air, and the inhabitants long eagerly for it. From the marshy places of our lower nature the fever of lust and unsanctified passion comes. The stillness of inactivity and do-nothingness is always favourable to the cholera of doubt and unbelief. The great preventive is the soul-stirring breath of the Holy Ghost. When He comes as a mighty, rushing wind, the whole atmosphere of the life is purified.

THE TREASURE HUNT.

What a flutter was created in the minds of many by the £20 prize offered by the proprietor **of a** Scottish paper to the one who **finds** the hidden medallion. With what eagerness have many been searching night and day, heedless of who sees them, or of what others may think. They are seeking for treasure which they believe is within their reach. Although only one can possibly get the prize, yet hundreds will search. The treasure of "eternal life " lies hidden in the open field of God's Word, and although every searcher *may* find this prize, how few there be that seek it.