

Lessons for the Wilderness

Thoughts on some typical incidents of Israel's deliverance and pilgrimage.

**"In the desert God will teach thee
What the God that thou hast found:
Patient, gracious, powerful, holy,
All His grace shall there abound."**

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Preface

The thoughts in these papers were written during a long sea voyage from Great Britain to Melbourne, in 1882. The writer trusts that the Lord may use them for edification and blessing, and for His own glory.
Wellington, N.Z. April, 1883.

Chapter 1

Initiatory Lessons

In the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians (1 Cor.10: 11), we are told that the incidents which happened to God's earthly people, Israel, contain special lessons for our own souls. "They were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come." "The things which happened to them, happened for types," and are used for us to that end. As Christians, therefore, we come in under the final dealings of God before the Lord comes; and judgment will then take its course. The Lord stays that solemn day of reckoning with the world, whilst gathering out of

it a people for His name. When that action of His Grace closes, the day of the judgment of the Quick has arrived, by which He will cleanse His kingdom from all things that offend and from them that do iniquity, and will bring in that day of blessing, long looked for in the Millennial earth.

Before touching upon the *Lessons for the Wilderness* presented in these “things which happened to them,” I desire to say a little on the preparation of the People and their deliverance, which placed them in the Wilderness as a place of trial and exercise of heart, for Forty Years. I desire to do so, because there are so many of God’s people who do not stand in the consciousness of His full salvation. There is a feeling at times in their souls, which they would hardly like to admit or to analyze, that all is not well. It may be an undefined sense of hesitancy when they challenge their own hearts, or are challenged by others; a feeling which they cannot well account for nor define, but still there it is. The truth is, they have never reached the fact of their own hopeless ruin and guilt in the sight of God. Were this so, we would not find such thoughts intruding at all. The heart turns back upon its experiences, which haunt it even in its brightest moments, and they feel that all is not as it should be.

I am sure there is in such a state of soul, the want of being candid and open with God (at the bottom). There is an effort to conceal or to gloss over these moments; to forget them, until they make their unpleasant companionship painfully felt. What I mean by being candid and open with God is this: that we have never fallen down before Him and poured into His ear the truth of these unhappy experiences which are shut up in our hearts, and sought His grace to remove them forever.

Have you, my reader, ever gone, in the secret solemn moments of intercourse with God, and told out to Him this marring hindrance to your full peace and joy? Possibly you may never have done so — and yet perhaps you hope it will come right some day, and thus the harassing thought has never been brought out between your soul and God. No wonder, then, you are not free.

Do not expect, with such fancied concealment on your part, that God will pass such over, and give you to enjoy His grace all the same. Of course I am well aware *He* knows all about it. So does the parent who is aware that his child carries an unhappy secret in his heart. But he longs, too, that the child should open his heart and bring forth the secret (which the parent knows), and talk to him about it in the confidence which love inspires, for love truly known always inspires confidence. It is impossible to love a person truly without confiding in him.

But to return. What a wonderful thing it is to have self, with its sins and backslidings, its fear of death as its wages, and of God’s judgment at

its end, all cleared away; and God, in His perfect love, taking possession of the whole vision of the soul! How free then is the spirit of the child of God. What rest then does he enjoy. How the Spirit of God witnesses with his spirit that he is a child. There is no painful questioning whether or not such is the case; but there is the freely flowing testimony of God's Spirit with his that this is a clearly-settled thing. All is free and bright between him and God. His will is broken: he submits himself; he drops into the arms of love, and rests in the grace that saves. He worships and adores without effort and without check; and his heart goes out freely without a thought to God of self. The Lord is before his soul; both in what He has done, and what He is.

Let us now look back somewhat on the things which happened to Israel.

They were slaves in Egypt. Here was both their condition and position before Him — in bondage as to the one, and on the other in the territory where Satan ruled. We may ask the question here, What does Egypt signify? Just as Syria, and the Wilderness, and Canaan, have their spiritual and typical meaning, so has Egypt. It is not man in nature as God made him; nor is it man in nature fallen (that is Syria). Egypt is man in nature, fallen, and captive under the power of the enemy. Hence an Israelite redeemed and in the possession of the land, coming to worship the Lord with his basket of firstfruits, should own this as his former state and say, "A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous: and the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage: and when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression: and the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt, with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm" (Deut. 26: 5-7). Man in nature had fallen, and he was under the enemy's power; God alone could now deliver.

But first He must show that *He had interposed*. Israel groaned by reason of her taskmasters; but Israel's groans were groans of misery, not cries to Him who alone could help. For when his Deliverer came, Israel would have none of Him: Moses must be refused. Israel must reject her Saviour, as well as Egypt refuse his claim. When this was so, and that "boasting could be excluded" in all — then and then only will He interfere. We never really know the Gospel, until we see that we have rejected Christ!

This is the state of things in Exodus 2. God's Deliverer appears now for the first time. Affection for His people was the spring that moved his soul! "It came into his *heart* to visit his brethren the children of Israel"

(Acts 7: 23). “He spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren,” and he “slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand.” Again he went out the second day, and seeing two men of the Hebrews striving together, he said unto him that did the wrong, “Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow?” “But he that did his neighbour wrong, thrust him away, saying, ‘who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?’ For he supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them, but they understood not.” Then Moses fled away: the figure of a rejected Christ.

There is now another thing which must be established ere we learn fully the Gospel. We have had in ch. 2 a rejected Christ in figure, now in Exodus 3 we have the “strange sight” which Moses turned aside to see, at the back-side of the desert, after his forty years. “The Angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire, out of the midst of a bush; and he looked and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, *why the bush is not burnt!*

Let us repeat this expression of wonder — “Why the bush is not burnt!” Let us put it in another form, if we may; and say, “How can God, who is a ‘consuming fire,’ burning up all that is contrary to His Holy Being, reveal Himself without consuming?” Here was the grand question, Can He “who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity,” have to do with man otherwise than by judgment in righteousness? Yes; most surely He can and has done so; He has revealed Himself in Christ! And Grace now reigns, through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord! Such is the gospel. The very foundation of all is this imperishable basis. And mark well, beloved reader, it is as the God of resurrection, He thus interferes (Luke 20: 37). This great fact comes out plainly in the Lord’s reply to the Sadducees. He says, “Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”

Here, then, we find a marvellous group of divine principles clustering together, for the spiritual mind. A rejected Christ, and the God of Resurrection, revealing Himself through Grace in righteousness, as the foundation of the Gospel! Who could have conceived such a group of truths, here in type presented to us, but One who is divine and whose Book is divine?

But when we turn to the New Testament — to the Antitype, what wonders there await us! In the Epistle to the Romans — where the soul’s great questions are settled for each one individually, we find the deep foundations laid in these very truths. That Epistle begins with a rejected Christ. We read of “The gospel of God . . . concerning His Son Jesus

Christ our Lord, (which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh); and declared the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection of the dead” (Rom. 1: 1-4). Here we have the Heir of David according to the flesh, cast out and slain; but raised from the dead by the God of resurrection. And when the apostle would tell us of the great work which flows from this, he adds, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is God’s righteousness revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Rom. 1: 16,17). Here then we have the group of divine reality — which we meet in type in the book which first unfolds redemption.

Surely this must be so: God’s principles, whether taught us by types or facts, are always the same. How much more precious, of course, are the facts — it is on these we rest. The types edify and confirm the soul which is settled on the never-changing facts. It is there our souls may rest assuredly. We are not called to rest on promises as to these things. The truths of the Gospel are facts — divinely attested and satisfying to God and to him who rests there.

Chapter 2

Initiatory Lessons

When we come, further on in this book, to examine the details from the night of the Passover until the morning of praise (Ex. 12-15), we find that all are based upon these opening thoughts of Exodus. The details give us the varied features of the great facts of redemption, as learned by each soul and entered upon by faith. They are faith’s lessons, laying hold of what the Gospel is. The former great truths are really the work for us; and the learning of such is the work in us, by which we enter on and realize all that God has done in Christ.

Next comes the first great initiatory lesson for the soul, with whom God is about to deal. (Ex. 3: 14) When Moses would come to Israel, and they would say to him, “What is his name?” “What (said he) shall I say unto them?” “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM; and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.” Now, here is the first thing for the soul’s acceptance — *God is!* He is not afar off, but near. One out of whose presence we cannot escape. One in whose presence we ever are. Do we act on this as if we believed it, my friends? Does the poor fool who says in his heart, “There is no God,” believe this? How do his actions speak in reply? Just in this solemn way — that they are performed without reference to God at all! Who could sin with impunity, consciously in the presence of God? Not even the most depraved. He dare not commit his iniquity there. But his life is formed

upon the principle that there is no God. He does not say this with his lips; but his *heart* says it. He would love to think that his desire is true, and that when he died he would be as the beasts that perish and cease to be.

Here I would pause on that solemn thought — the heart of man! “The *Law*” says of it, “Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, is only evil continually” (Gen. 6: 5). The “*Prophets*” testify, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” (Jer. 17: 9). The “*Psalms*” bear witness that “The fool saith in his heart, there is no God” (Ps. 14: 1). The “*Gospels*” — in the words of Jesus, record that “Out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness” (Mark 7: 21, 22). And the “*Epistles*” tell us the same, in words of even deeper import. “The Gentiles walk in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them because of the blindness of their hearts” (Eph. 4: 17, 18). It is the one universal testimony of every section of the Word of God.

But as the “heart” of man is the spring of evil, so it is the channel for good; and when cleansed of God it is where “Christ may dwell.” “Out of its abundance,” for good or evil, it “speaks.” “With the heart man believes unto righteousness;” it is “purified by faith”; the “pure in heart see God.” It “cleaves with purpose of heart to the Lord.” God’s love is shed abroad in it. It is a good thing that it be established in grace. When God said, “Seek ye my face,” my heart said, “Thy face Lord will I seek.” God would say too, “My son give me thine heart.”

But we must return to this initial lesson of the soul. God reveals Himself as the great “I AM,” the self-existing God, beside whom there is none. Let us act according to this revelation, and act always so as to prove that we believe it. There is none who can say, “I am that I am” but He. Where is the man who is not double-minded at times? Does he tell me all that is in his heart? Nay; not even to his best beloved on earth! Paul as a saved one can say “by the grace of God I am *what* I am.” I am what grace has made me. But even he cannot say “I am *that* I am.”

Blessed be God there is a Man of whom God hath said this, even when under the very wrath of the Cross. But He stands in this alone, as in all else beside. When He cried, out of those mighty depths, “He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days; I said, O God, take me not away in the midst of my days,” what was the reply? It was then the glory of the self-existing One is expressed; “Thy years are throughout all generations. Of old thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; and as a vesture

shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed. But *thou art* (see Hebrew and Greek) and thy years shall have no end” (Ps.102: 23-27 and Heb. 1: 10-12 and 13).

What then must be the first expression of the soul which has to do with God? It exclaims “God is!” “He that cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb.11: 6). God says of Himself, “I am.” He says to Jesus, as Man in weakness, “Thou Art”; and the believing soul bows in faith saying, “He is!” This is the grammar of divine realities!

We see the result of this in Ex. 4: 29-31. We find in those verses a lovely expression of the sinner’s true attitude when first he has to do with God as a Saviour; when he has been seized with the reality of God before his conscience. He has not yet learned His work of Grace, nor has he experienced aught but the great fact that God has interfered. “God has visited the children of Israel.” “He has heard them; He has looked on their affliction.” What deep soul trouble might be saved were those two points grasped with a firm and mighty tenacity! “*God is*”; and “*God has visited us, and looked upon our affliction!*”

What now is the soul’s true response to these things? “Then they bowed their heads and worshipped!” This was faith’s obedience. It was not obedience to a claim from Him. It was not obedience to the law. It was not the obedience of love. Obedience to the law owns God’s authority. The obedience of love is the soul’s service of gratitude to Him who loves us. The former may honour His authority; the obedience of love may express the devotedness of a heart to Him. But nothing can honour God like the “obedience of faith.” It accepts the fact that He has revealed *Himself* as a Saviour

What a pity that this lovely expression should be obscured by a weak rendering in that most excellent of all translations, our honoured and beloved English Bible. If we refer to the two passages where only it is found (viz. Rom. 1: 5 and 16: 26), we see how much we lose in not having the true thought given us. After unfolding the substance of the Gospel, as in the person of Christ, the apostle turns (Rom.1: 5) to his own connection with it: “By whom (he says) we have received grace and apostleship for obedience of faith among all nations, for his name.” The Gospel is thus presented for obedience of faith. The other passage represents the Church — the mystery as revealed also for obedience of faith. Paul’s two-fold ministry, as many are aware, is thus presented.

Now this was faith’s obedience in Israel. God had revealed the fact that He had interfered, and faith accepted this without a “but” or a doubt! This is refreshing to the soul. Would that we saw such now-a-days.

But mark, now, that if in Israel we see that blessed effect of the news through Aaron, we see the opposite effect in Pharaoh — this man who solemnly witnesses to the terrible fact that God hardens those who harden themselves against Him. He shuts them up to that which they desire. “Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness” (ch. 5: 1). Be (as it were) a fellow-worker with God to that blessed end. What then was the reply of Pharaoh? What the reply of many who hear the testimony of grace, day after day? “Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?” Terrible reply of a soul who has never stood in aught but unbelief and defiance before Him. “I know not the Lord.” Thus speaks the pride of man, who hardens his neck against the Blessed God — “I know Him not.” For these two things God will take vengeance when Christ returns. He will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels — taking vengeance on them that *know not* God; and that *obey not* the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ”; and “who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe in that day” (2 Thess. 1: 9, 10).

Chapter 3

Preparation for the Journey

I pass over the “signs and wonders, in the land of Ham” and the varied compromises of the enemy. I come now to the moment when all was approaching that solemn night of judgment: that crisis when all was brought to the final test; and every pleading voice was hushed in the dark and terrible night of judgment.

Yet God would not strike, without a warning word, even those who had hardened their necks against Him. Moses conveys this last and final testimony to Pharaoh in these words — “Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt: and all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the first-born of the maid servant that is behind the mill, and all the first-born of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more” etc. (Ex. 11: 4-6). The voice was heard for the last time, but never to be repeated.

O the solemnity of those “last words” of God at times to souls! The like perhaps had often been spoken in the ears of those who have refused them; but they little calculated that they never more should be heard. “The day of visitation” was past, and Egypt knew it not. This was her condemnation. The helm of the ship was put “up” or “down”; her course

was changed, the voice was unheeded, and then she rushed on to her final doom! In the midst of judgment Pharaoh sought to flee *from* the Lord (Ex. 14: 25). It was now too late to flee *to* Him. And the day is fast approaching when the great men, and the mighty men of the earth will call upon the rocks to fall upon them and mountains to cover them, as they seek to flee, with souls guilt-stained forever, *from* the face of Him that sits upon the throne, and *from* the Lamb; because the great day of His wrath was come, and none would be able to stand (Rev. 6: 15-17).

I must not dwell on the chapters which follow. Suffice it that a few words may be said to lead us to the moment when Israel sang the song of Moses and of victory!

At midnight God would pass through the land in judgment; in the evening Israel were to slay the Lamb. There are two striking points before us as to the people here. First: their history would now *begin with* God; as He said, "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months." And next: the blood of the Lamb, and it alone, could answer His claim. Here we learn in type two things — so frequently presented to us in the New Testament Scriptures. We find them in the Lord's discourse to Nicodemus in the third chapter of the Gospel of John. 1. "Ye must be born again," said the Lord to this man of the Pharisees; and 2. "The Son of man must be lifted up." This new birth would be to him, as to Israel, "The beginning of months." All before this was ignored; God would have none of it. And then again, "Take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood, . . . and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood"; "And when I see the blood, I will pass over you." "And the people bowed the head and worshipped"

This was not the grand and solemn rite of the Day of Atonement, when blood was placed on the *Throne of God*. It was not a scene where the *High Priest alone* — standing for God, wrought that great work for Him, as for the people. Not so; every individual soul whose house was in that land was active ere this solemn moment of judgment arrived. *Each* should slay the Lamb himself; *each* should personally and individually appropriate the blood as his only shelter from the sword of the destroyer. Here it was that *each* one entered upon and learned and appropriated that precious work of Christ. The moment the eye of *each* saw that blood flowing from the slain Lamb, and his hand grasped the bunch of hyssop — emblem of his soul's humiliation — and the truth of his repentance, and sprinkled the blood, he re-entered his house, sure and certain that he was sheltered with what God had accepted and that which alone would meet the destroying angel's sword. God's provision and God's own acceptance of it were the ground of his unchanging peace.

This was faith: faith in God's provision to meet His own demands: faith in His certain promise that all was well — all depended on this. Impossible that God could look on him other than white as snow. Why was this? Because He would never despise the value of the blood of Christ.

The night of terror came, and there was heard in Egypt "A great cry"; "for there was not an house where there was not one dead." The first-born was dead in every unsheltered house: the Lamb in every house which was sheltered by its blood! Judgment had been passed on all; the *Lamb* had borne it for the people of God. *Egypt* had borne it for themselves. Each was irrevocable, and its issues never changed.

I desire my reader's reply to a question. Do you believe that that precious blood has been shed; has been presented to God by Jesus? Do you believe it has met His claims? Is this enough for you? Has it met your need? I ask you to answer this question in conscience before God; and when it is answered, I ask you to rest on that blessed and eternal fact. Never more can your sins be imputed to you. Never more can that blood be shed; never more can it be presented to God. All has been done, once and forever. Its efficacy remains eternally the same; you are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot — foreordained indeed before the foundation of the world, but manifest in these last times for you. By Him we believe in God Himself: who not only gave His Son for us, but when His Son had died, He raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God (cf. 1 Peter 1: 18-21).

What part had they in all that had gone before? Just but one small link which was only to their shame. "The bunch of hyssop," — the humiliation of their soul — bringing each down to the very spot to which all that work applied, the link which appropriated all that was provided; the touch of faith of the hem of the garment of Christ!

Here I would remark, that there may be no misapprehension as to the import of the type, that in no way does hyssop point to Christ. It is remarkable that whenever the Lord is presented in Himself alone in type in Scripture, we never find this symbol mentioned. See the early chapters of Leviticus, where all those varied offerings of sweet savour, and for sin and trespass, are passed in review; no mention of hyssop is found there. But the moment we find an offering where the sinner is seen appropriating it, or being placed under its value, to cleanse or to restore — there we find the hyssop. We have noted this when Israel appropriated the Paschal blood. We see it when the leper is cleansed, (Lev. 14) when the unclean is restored (Num. 19). We learn it in the words of a soul in the depths of

humiliation about its sin in Ps. 51, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean,” but never when Christ in His perfect blessedness appears.

Chapter 4

Preparation for the Journey

However, Israel must not only be sheltered in the place of judgment; but he must be redeemed out of the place of death. Without this last all was incomplete; until this was done they still stood in the old place of bondage, and there was no song of praise. All was silence on the Paschal night; “every mouth was stopped and all the world guilty before God.” There was no communion with the Judge. They were delivered from His claims on that solemn night. They must now be delivered from the claims of the Enemy; they must therefore be removed from the place of death where Satan’s power held sway. They must be delivered from the fear of death, through which they had been all their lifetime held in bondage (Heb. 2). The “midnight” of judgment had now passed, but another “night” of anguish must be endured; and the “morning watch” must come, when the Lord would look out unto the host of the Egyptians to trouble them; and the sea must return to his strength, as the “morning” itself appeared. Israel could then sing songs of deliverance because they were saved that day out of the hand of their enemies! (Cf. Ex. 14: 20, 24, 27, 30.)

How many souls (and thank God that there are so many), who know this *shelter* from judgment to come, but have never realized, nor even heard of, the full results of *redemption*. They have never in conscience left the old status in which they stood as sinners. How many there are who could say, “I am a poor sinner, and the blood of the cross is my only hope”; who could not say, “I am a poor saint, but the judgment seat of Christ is the resting place of my soul.”

Now here it is where souls are often feeble indeed. They have no soul deliverance at all. Israel has *started* with their kneading troughs on their shoulders, and their unleavened dough; but they have not *left* the land of slavery. They come to Pi-Hahiroth (“the gate of liberty”) only to find it a place of anguish and fear.

Oh, my beloved reader, hearken to one who knows it well, in my dwelling somewhat on that most common state of soul amongst the children of God. I refer to that want of liberty to avoid the evil and do the good; that want of freedom from self, which so mars the service, and worship, and joy of souls. How often have we come together to read Scripture, and we have drifted from some bright and blessed theme, to what we so well know as the state of soul in Rom. 7. Why is this? Alas, because souls are not free! I remember once at a reading, one being

asked, in a reply to a question on that chapter, "If he was ever dissatisfied with himself." How quickly was the reply given affirmatively to the question. "What (said the speaker) does that prove?" "Simply that you are not free – not yet done with self at all." he had never fully exchanged self for Christ before God, both to break the bonds of evil under which they writhed; and to bring forth the fruits of good which they longed to perform.

God would have us find Him both the Deliverer from the thralldom of the one, as well as the Strength by which alone, as working in our weakness, we can do the other. God has accepted Christ, both as to what He has *done*, and what He *is*, for what flesh in us has *done*, and what self *is*. Here faith rests. But faith is not always simple; we hearken to the suggestions of our own hearts, and faith gets clouded and dim. The fact is we have not yet bowed to the great truth that *we are dead unto sin in Christ!* Here then, is the difficulty.

There are two great parts in learning the salvation of God. First: that "*Christ* died for our sins, according to the Scriptures," and second: that *we* have died to sin in Him. We must learn both in order to be free. A soul exercised and convicted of its sins and guilt, on hearing the first of these great truths rejoices in the news and is sensible of forgiveness through His blood. Yet after a time when it begins to learn the evil of its nature, which is unchanged, it passes through far deeper exercises in another way, and the struggle begins — a struggle lasting often for years of bitter anguish; yet never at the same time losing what it had first learned of the work of Christ. Taught of God in this, He does not ignore what the soul has received, while leading on to further light. It was a question of faith in His precious blood which brought forgiveness for its sins. Now it comes to a question of *experience*, which always contradicts in us what God testifies. This is a striking and marked effect of the Spirit of God working in a soul. The testimony of the Spirit *for* us, as in Christ, contradicts that of His testimony *in* us, as of ourselves. How then are both testimonies to be reconciled? The soul must be passed through experiences of the most bitter kind, so as to have its confidence in self broken. It must be reduced experimentally to that sense of powerless inability to deal with what it finds within, or to do that which is well pleasing in the sight of God, and to learn to look to Christ alone and at self no more forever. All this is not learned in a moment, though Christ's work is known in bearing our sins.

In short, beloved reader; it is the effort of the soul, which having *begun* with Christ for forgiveness of its sins; now seeks to *carry on* the work, of which it still finds the need, in its own supposed strength. It would now quell this evil working of flesh, curb that propensity, reduce into order an evil nature, which may not show itself outwardly in the form

of sins, yet works inwardly to the deep anguish of the soul, and with all this, it desires and tries to do what pleases Him.

Have we never experienced this? Have we never found this “law of sin in our members, warring against the law of our mind,” and instead of giving us liberty, bringing us into captivity to its power? Take an evil temper for instance. One finds it part of our very being and so wound round our heart that although it may not show itself to others, it embitters the soul to its possessor — than which there is hardly any experience less easy to endure. We think we have power to deal with its workings; we strive, we pray about it, we cry to God; yet no answer comes. We see that it is not a Christian state that it should be unconquered there. We are at our wits’ end, and find no issue. What would not the soul give at such a moment, to break its bonds and be free? Trial after trial is put forth to snap the cords that bind us; they chafe our souls and remain unbroken. Effort after effort fails, as each is put forth to produce the good we long to do, yet we find it not. Service, if we are called upon to serve, is labour and sorrow. Perhaps we may have to conceal this bitterness in our own bosom rather than stumble others whom we would serve. Perhaps too our pride sustains us, and we bear our anguish alone. We put on a fair face to those around with this canker in our heart untold. The Enemy presses upon us; we find no escape. What more fitting cry can burst forth from the inmost experience of our soul than that furnished us by God’s Spirit — “O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” {Rom. 7: 24}.

Alas, having *begun* with Christ, we then thought to carry on the rest ourselves — we supposed we had strength — have we not? At last we have come to the point, when we cease to struggle. *Surrender* becomes victory, and we are free! We may not at the moment be able to define how the soul has emerged into this liberty, but there is holy calm. We have learned one salutary lesson: we never got out of our bitter anguish, until we found we could not; that Christ would not *help us*, but that He can *deliver*. We ceased to struggle, we dropped our efforts, we turned away hopelessly from self; our eye was turned to Him Who died and rose; we learned that *we* too had died in Him, and we are free! Simple faith could never have brought us to that condition. Self must be, in experience, broken in all its pretentiousness; whether as to freeing itself from the bondage of evil, or as to the strength to work that which is good. It is a *saint* who learns “that in me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing.” Surely, one might suppose that although as *sinners* there was no good thing, or acceptable, performed by us — still that as *saints* there would now be some good found. Perhaps we unconsciously acted as if this were so. We supposed we now had power. But the lesson had been forced home by humiliating experience and failure on our souls, that even as

saints no good thing can be found in us, nor ever can be; and that our efforts to bring forth good are but the denial that this is so.

“Ye are dead,” the Spirit says of us; but Experience says “impossible”; until forced to learn it thus; and faith bows in liberty to this great deliverance and reckons itself dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, in Jesus Christ our Lord” (cf. Rom. 6: 11, with Col. 3: 3).

In our typical chapters in Exodus, we see all this in some measure (12-15), but there is one point which deserves special notice here. You will remark that before this night of anguish was pressed upon Israel’s soul in Ex. 14, “The Pillar of Cloud” came down to be with them and to lead and guide. This points in type to a most important element in the history of the soul. It is this — that in the state of soul which we have just commented upon — the Spirit of God, as a seal, may be there, all the time. Nay, I would press the fact that it is so. Some would seek to have it that the Spirit could not be there until *deliverance* was known; to such I would reply, you are making the *slate of soul* of the person — that which God seals with His Spirit, and not the value of the *precious blood* of Christ in which it stands. A person passes at times* through much of the very experiences we have touched upon, and yet has never lost the sense of what he possessed, before he entered upon them. He knew his sins were forgiven through the precious blood shedding of Christ, and it was *this* — *the value of the blood* — which God sealed. The *oil*, or Spirit, was always put first *on the blood*, not on the man, when the leper was cleansed (Lev.14: 17). To this agrees all the teaching of the Word of God, whether of the types in the OT or the examples or doctrines in the New.

{*I do not say that all do. The case of each varies much. In this God is Sovereign.}

The Paschal blood having been shed in Egypt, and before the people stood on the sands of the wilderness — God had come down to be with them. This was in type the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the blood of Christ having prepared the way, a witness to and seal of its value in which they stood.

I do not further dwell on the experience of Israel in what followed. We have touched on that of souls in the antitype already. I would only add that Israel too must taste the bitter waters of death to every hope from themselves. They too must “stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord.”* The *Lord* must fight — not they! The *Lord* must speak — they must hold their peace! *They* must cease to struggle, and the Lord must think for them.

{*They must stand still and see the *salvation* of the Lord *after* the cloud came down. Most of FGP's contemporaries, whose writings we value, regarded sealing with the Spirit to coincide, typically, with deliverance across the Red Sea. That was the salvation of the Lord (cp. Eph. 1: 13). That was how the power of the taskmaster was broken (cp. Rom. 7: 24; Rom. 8: 2). Cf. Also 2 Cor. 3: 17. It was on the wilderness side of the Red Sea that the song of redemption began. See *The Salvation of Jehovah*, by W. T. Turpin, etc. [RAH]}

How strikingly the contrast is seen between Ex. 14: 10 and Ps. 78: 53! In the former we read, "the Egyptians marched *after* them, and they were *sore afraid*"! In the latter — "And he led them on safely, so that they *feared not*; but the sea overwhelmed their enemies." In the former we see the weakness of man exposed, but in the latter the thoughts of God as to the new man revealed!

Does not this lead us to a happy conclusion so often taught us in the word; that God looks at the soul in whom He is working by His Spirit, as marked out for acceptance in Christ even at the very moment when He is forced to pass it through the deepest pressure, that the evil of the flesh may be known? And its powerlessness to cope with it experimentally learned? How dearly did Joseph love his brethren! How earnestly did he prepare their hearts to learn this, at the very moment when he was speaking roughly to them, and putting them in ward! Believe it, my brethren, there is no exercise of soul through which we pass, but which has its bright and glorious end, when we shall learn if we do not even now, what God's end is. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and ye have seen the end of the Lord, that the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy (James 5: 11).

The Red Sea does not in type go further than their death to all their foes. I look at these chapters, as before noticed, rather as the *people learning* experimentally and in detail the value of the work of Christ. Just as in the NT Christ's work was *done* in the Gospels on the cross; while in the Epistles, the details of its value are *taught* us. Nought but death in them could deliver from him that had the power of death, nor lead them out of the place of judgment and this too by leading them into it! They pass down into death (in figure); and once there the enemy's power is stayed. They are not said to "come up" out of the Red Sea; for this we must have the Jordan. "Going down" and "coming up" are terms in Scripture, which each apply only to Egypt and Canaan; not to the Wilderness, nor to the Red Sea.

Chapter 5

The Threefold Chord of Praise

Exodus 15 is the first song ever sung — which we hear of in the Word of God! Never had souls stood in the consciousness of God's salvation before this time. We search in vain in the Book of Genesis for a record of redemption. We know, of course, how trustfully the patriarchs walked with God and rested in His promises; but we do not read of their songs of praise. They walked with Him as an accepted people walk; and no question was raised of a condition from which it needed the power of redemption to deliver. The first song bursts forth from the heart of Israel, with its threefold note of praise. We may expect to find therefore in this song, which inaugurated these dealings of the Lord in salvation, God's true thoughts of the order of praise.

Ex. 19: 4, gives us the comment of God on this chapter and on the great work celebrated there. We read, "I bare you on eagles' wings and brought you unto myself." This is the foremost thought in the salvation of God. It was not that eventually they might not learn that that same work had brought them to their longed-for Land. Nay: it was the basis of every blessing onward to the end.

But we would not for a moment admit that a soul who had realized its being in "heavenly places in Christ Jesus," was more fully brought *to God* than at the shores of the Red Sea. Of course it is quite true that there was much to learn and to realize, and there might not be that full sense of a heavenly portion in one who had sung this song, as in one who had traversed the Land and had taken possession of all upon which the sole of his foot had trodden. But I would have my reader be careful not to weaken the grand fact that in what is typified by the Red Sea for us, we are brought *to God Himself!*

This is seen most clearly in the book of the wilderness, which is so sweetly full of grace — the First Epistle of Peter. There we are in the wilderness most distinctly, for he does not lead us to our "heavenly places in Christ." In 1 Peter 3: 18, we read, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us *to God.*" Not, remark, to Canaan, or heavenly places, but "to God." This exactly fits the expression in the antitype, "I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto *myself.*" This is just as it should be. We may and doubtless shall, get all that follows, but the first great thing is this: "*we are brought to God.*" Nothing can add to this for us.

There is a lovely allusion to this in Deut. 32: 11; and to the figures of what the "eagles' wings" signify. Indeed the gospel of the glory speaks in this figure with great significance. In this grand and touching passage we read, "As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him (Israel), and there was no strange God with

him!” The Lord asked Job (39: 27-29), “Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off.” On the crag of rock, inaccessible to man, she builds her nest, and rears her young. The time arrives when she would teach her young ones to gaze upon the sun, and soar from the rock themselves. Then she “stirreth up her nest and fluttereth over her young.” The young ones must dare the space mid-air below, and she flings them off the rock! They flutter and sink down toward the abodes of man. They near the fowler’s arrow. She swoops in her might of wing from the height above, she “spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings.” The fluttering eaglet rests its pinions on the tried strength of the parent wing; the fowler’s dart can reach the eaglet’s life only through her own. Thus she teaches them to soar, and rise and gaze, as none other can but she,* on the bright and glorious sun. Thus we are taught as “the way of an eagle in the air” (Prov. 30: 19) to walk above the world and to gaze on Christ on high, sure that as He lives we live also. We learn too that “They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isa. 40: 31).

{*It is said that if any of the young cannot through weakness of vision gaze upon the sun, they are rejected from the eagles’ brood.}

But in this first song of praise; we find three distinct notes of harmony. How frequently these are reversed. Yea, even the last note taken up, and the rest forgotten! This should not be. When at the first, certain things come before us in Scripture, such initiatory references give us the roots of those varied branches and developments that follow. Some would suppose that the first thing for which we should praise is our *own* blessing. Gratitude for the love that has so fully saved — should cause the saved one’s heart to praise.

Let us rather see in what order these notes of thanksgiving flow from Israel’s heart that day.

1. The first is — “the Lord”! So much is self forgotten that the Deliverer alone is seen! This is as it should be. “Sing ye unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea! The Lord is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will prepare him an habitation; my father’s God, and I will exalt him. The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name!” (Ex. 15: 1-3). How blessed, yet how simple. How profound, and yet how suited was the first note from the redeemed! How glorious would be the gatherings of His people, were their souls so free that *He* were the burden

of their song! Not the mere effort that such should be, but the full heart telling out His blessedness! Out of its abundance pouring forth its praise!

2. Next we have the *Enemy*! Those forces of might whom He had subdued! (Ex. 15: 4-12). “Pharaoh and his hosts hath he cast into the sea . . . the depths have covered them; they sank into the bottom as a stone. Thy right hand hath dashed in pieces the enemy . . . Thou didst blow with the wind, the sea covered them; they sank as lead in the mighty waters.”

3. And last of all they turn to their *own* portion — the blessedness and inheritance of the *people* whom the Lord had redeemed (Ex. 15: 13-17). “Thou hast led forth the people whom thou hast redeemed; thou hast guided them in thy strength into thy holy habitation.” These are the three notes of praise. Here is the divine order, the manner in which the Spirit of God would lead the full rich song. But this needs that full salvation should be known. Not merely known as a fact; but that the soul had entered upon its joyful possession. What else could suit the heart of God? What else could be the outflow of a heart that had read His? When John at Patmos heard Jesus named, his heart burst forth in such notes as these. God gave a voice, by His Spirit, to the hearts of those who knew His Son. When those words (Rev. 1: 4, 5), were written in the “Isle called Patmos,” on that Lord’s day — “Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of kings of the earth, — a *person* was before the disciple whom Jesus loved. All was forgotten but One! The heart burst forth with joyful exultation, “Unto *him* that loveth us”! Here was the first note of this song. The Lord was there. The second, like that in Ex. 15, was *His victory over our Enemies*. He “washed us from our sins in His own blood.” The last note in true divine order was the *result for us*: He “hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father”: just the order of Israel’s song. How could it be otherwise? If Israel’s threefold note of praise was dictated by the Spirit in Ex. 15; their divine order marked out in true and heavenly harmony; surely His Spirit, in dictating a song for God’s heavenly ones, must ever lead them in like and kindred notes of praise!

Chapter 6

The First Three Days in the Wilderness, etc.

“So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; and they went out into the Wilderness of Shur: and they went three days in the Wilderness, and found no water. And when they came to Marah they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter: therefore the name of it was called Marah.”

“And the people murmured against Moses, saying, What shall we drink? And he cried unto the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet.” (Ex. 15: 22-25).

This passage presents to us a very distinct and striking moment in the history of the people of Israel. We have — The First Three Days in the Wilderness, which lead to the trials of faith.

In this we learn what the *world* is now to us, as a place of trial and exercise of heart. Let us examine them in detail.

“They went three days in the wilderness and found no water.” One would suppose that all would now be well. God has wrought for us such a complete and glorious salvation, that we never should hear of sorrow more: He is about to bless us now all the way through. O, my reader, how many there are who are disappointed in this; who have started with the thought that all would now be well. Again we read, “And when they came to Marah, they could not drink of the waters of Marah, for they were bitter” (Ex. 15: 22, 23). The song of praise is changed into the murmurings of Israel!

Now, like other things in Scripture, the first moment, when anything is presented to us, gives to it its character onwards to the end. This is seen in these “first three days.” Was the wilderness to be like this all the way? Yes, reader, never to change! The only question is, “*What* the bitter waters are for each day ?” not, “Shall they cease in the step which follows, or in days which come after, to the end?” Nay; they never cease here below! If the cross has redeemed our souls, we must take up *our own cross, daily*, and follow Christ to the end.

Alas, how many of us rejoice in that which the cross has wrought; rejoice too in hope of the glory: while we have not yet learned to glory in tribulations also by the way! How often, instead of tribulation working patience, it works *impatience* by our restless wills!

Here then is the picture of our circumstances — we can neither find the water; nor drink it when it is found. A Christian learns the joy of God’s salvation, and with bright and fervent step he starts on his journey; and trouble comes. Bad times set in; losses in business supervene; former friends become cold; employment is not to be had: his children have no bread. Something seeming to answer is found. It turns out “bitter water.” Deeper losses follow: or his employer takes advantage of his dependence to oppress; to use words to him which would not be permitted, were he not in his power. Perhaps the voice of slander is spoken in secret. His

heart is crushed, yet his bread depended upon his work: his children and wife need daily food. It is Marah for that soul.

But the Lord *showed Moses a tree* and he looked upon it, and then He showed him *how to use that tree*, to make the waters sweet. How was this? We gaze upon the cross — the tree: we learn a new use for it now. It had cleansed us from our sins; and even our sinful selves had there disappeared, in redeeming love. God saw us by it “dead with Christ.”

But now we place that cross by faith in the bitter waters, and what ensues? We ourselves are gone! The old man that would resent the bitter circumstance, was crucified there; and we learn to accept our own death to all. We suppress the resentful reply to the bitter word. We “keep silence when the wicked is before us,” even though our “sorrow is stirred,” and our heart is “hot within us.” We bow to the lesson as the training of *our* God. We look up: we rejoice; we glory in the sorrow. The tribulation works patience; impatience vanishes; the waters are made sweet: we learn to hold ourselves as dead; our evil nature is suppressed, leaving room for the new man alone to act. We *had* learned the meaning of “Peace I leave with you”; that peace which Christ had made; we *now* learn “My peace I give unto you” — that rest of spirit when drinking the bitter waters made sweet, and we find rest under the yoke of Christ: we submit; nay, we glory in those very things — finding our joy in God alone; the waters become sweet by such divine alchemy.

These are the “trials of faith.” These are the lessons that teach us what the “world” is. And here I may say that the exercises of soul, which led to the discovery of our own helplessness, are not confined to those which preceded deliverance. I believe we have them, in other ways, all through our path. Where is the exercised soul who has not gone through such experiences as to all through which we pass? The gaining of our daily bread: the affairs of life: everything in fact, bears that in it in which we learn our own powerless condition. Then comes in another power, which is not of man, but which works in his conscious strengthlessness the “power of his resurrection.” And it is God who works in us by this, both to will, and to do of His good pleasure.

Chapter 7

“By-paths and Straight Paths”

We come now to the “First three days of the journey” (Num. 10: 29-33). But we must turn aside for a moment to look at Israel’s by-paths — and the Straight Paths by which God would lead.

The entire journey in the Wilderness is comprised in twelve chapters which are found in the middle of the book of Numbers (10 — 21). The previous chapters give us a prefatory unfolding of certain things, connected with the arrangement of the camps of Israel, around God Himself, in their midst, in His Sanctuary. The remainder of the book giving other instructions, some of which look onwards to their dwelling in the land.

The *first* step onwards, gave a character to their whole path. We see in it the effort of flesh to find a path for itself in the Wilderness apart from that marked out of God. Flesh cannot walk in His paths; but seeks a by-path — an easier way, which seems right, and seems to lead in flesh's vision, to the same end. It proves but a snare, which must be retraced to the very spot where it turned aside, there to re-enter God's true path, which alone is sure to reach the goal.

Let us examine this carefully. If we remark the order in which the Camp set out on its onward progress, it was unlike that prescribed in the earlier chapters of the Book of Numbers, where the Sanctuary was in their midst. Here the Ark went in advance of the whole, followed by the tribes of "Ephraim," "Manasseh," and "Benjamin." (Num. 10: 21-24). But immediately the conduct of the people is described: chapter after chapter of failure is presented to us. They turned aside quickly out of the way; yet God forsook them not.

Since then nearly three thousand five hundred years have passed away, and the failure of that moment has never yet been recovered. Still — that is *morally* the very spot to which God will eventually lead back their erring hearts before they are restored in the end. Great and marvellous are Thy ways, O Lord!

When we turn to the eightieth Psalm — one of those heart breathings of His people in the last days which are hastening on; there we see — in those pleadings of His Spirit in their exercised souls — that He has that moment of Numbers still before Him. He ever remembers that scene, for He knows all and never forgets. We read — "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock: thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth. Before Ephraim, and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up thy strength, and come and save us. Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine: and we shall be saved . . . Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts: look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine and vineyard which thy right hand hath planted . . . Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the Son of man, whom thou madest strong for thyself. *So will not we go back from this: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.*"

The awakened soul of Israel returns in spirit to that first step of departure from the Lord. Their hope is alone in Him, and “the Son of man” — the man of God’s right hand becomes their resource and confidence, in the day when the Lord of Sabaoth turns their hearts to Himself, and causes His face again to shine upon them, and they are saved!

O what lessons for the redeemed soul! What warnings are here for us! What faithfulness to Himself and to us, do we find in all God’s ways! How small a beginning it was, which led to such mighty results, such mighty unfoldings of God! Let the way be long or short, the bye-path must be re-traced: the soul must be brought back in spirit: the first buddings of evil must be laid bare to their roots, that the soul may judge with God’s vision and wisdom, its path and ways to their spring. Such is the nature of the “Bema (or Judgment seat) of Christ” (2 Cor. 5: 10) when this is not done in this life here. But O, how blessed, that the deepest recesses of our hearts, will all be then laid bare; our motives and springs will then be known; and these very things that were so humbling to us while here, will be found, as under the hand of God, to have been made to work together for good for them who love God, who are the called according to His purpose. O God, there is none like Thee; and there is no people like thine, O Lord!

When the Camp set forward on its journey, the Ark of God went before, leaving its ordinary place in their midst. God departs from the ordered way, in sovereign grace; and instead of being surrounded to be cared for and guarded by the People, He goes before to care for them. “When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow, for they know his voice.”

“And they departed from the mount of the Lord, three days journey; and the Ark of the covenant of the Lord went before them in the three days journey, to search out a resting place for them” (Num. 10: 33). And this is His care for us in our wilderness path. He gathers us around Him, going before us by the way, in the varied expressions of His love for us. At times to “Remember Him” in the sign of His death; at times for the ministry of His word; at others to wait on Him in prayer. These are the oases in the wilderness — the green spots of refreshment where He would dispense His care, and give us to realize His Father’s love.

How often are our eyes turned upon some human prop at such moments as these. How little do our hearts look up to Him and to His stores of goodness; we would rest upon other broken reeds rather than on Him. It is not that we should refuse, by this, the instruments and channels of His grace. How often does the heart in seeking to keep from human props, run into the other extreme, and ignore the very channels by which He would refresh our souls. But such is man, ever seeking a way of

his own devising, rather than the blessed Lord's ordered way. We see here how even His servant Moses is at fault, just when His love was being so brightly expressed in the Ark advancing before the hosts of Israel. It was then that Moses leaned upon an arm of flesh, a natural help, in seeking to have a child of the desert — his "father-in-law," to be for them "instead of eyes." But God must now be all for them.

The Priests went forward bearing the Ark of God; wrapped in its coverings. First the Vail, then the Badger Skins, and then the heavenly blue. They went the three days journey — the Ark going before: the feet of the priests left their momentary mark in the sand of the desert, and Israel followed where these footfalls fell; thus were they strangers and pilgrims in the earth. Many had traversed these paths before; many have done so since that day; many a child of the desert had trodden the same solitudes; but *they* were not strangers and pilgrims there. What constituted the others such, and only this, was the presence of the Ark of the Lord — the Christ of God. We are only strangers and pilgrims where we are His, and He is our guide, and we follow Him. We may fail and stumble by the way, but this is what singles His own out from the common herd of men, and gives them that character of strangers here, and pilgrims journeying to a better land!

Chapter 8

The First Three Days on the Journey

Numbers 11 and 21

Now come the First three days of the journey, which lead to the testings of faith; will Christ, the heavenly manna be enough; will He be all-satisfying to their heart? Let the reader and the writer of these lines answer the question for themselves! Do you ever wish for aught that God has not bestowed? Is the Christ of God all your desire? Alas, alas; how many a heart afar off now from God, has begun by desiring something which God had not given! People will reply, if you ask, What is the subject of Num. 11? "Tis the story of Israel loathing the manna." Nay, my friend, there is no word about "loathing" here. God's Spirit will give us the true reply — "we should not *lust after evil things*, as they also lusted" (1 Cor. 10: 6). This was the first departure of the Church of God from Christ.

In this we learn something of what the "flesh" is. It never can be satisfied with Christ, our only portion here. "Our soul is dried away" is the language of flesh. "There is nothing at all but this manna, before our eyes."

When first the manna was given “It was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey” (Ex. 16: 31). But its ‘virgin’ whiteness is now changed: its colour is not the same to their eyes: its taste was now “the taste of fresh oil.” All was changed. The footsteps of Christ marked the way; the Lord (rising up early) spread abroad the dew around the camp before it stirred — on the dew He spread the manna — the food of God — Christ incarnate. That was all! They had to gather it carefully before the sun was up. They might search in vain for a large piece: it could not be found. Seeking for signal interventions of God often show where we are. Have we gathered up all the smaller (but there is nothing small with God) interventions of his hand all the day long? We would then find the immensity of His supply.

Forced to be content, (alas that we should say so) with God’s provision, flesh again resents; and “the people . . . ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it.” Would angels have done so, my brethren? (For “man did eat angel’s food.”) I answer, No! But this tells its own terrible tale. Some have sought to evade the solemn lesson here recorded, by referring to Ex. 16: 23 — seeking thereby to prove that this was right in Israel and of God. Alas, how it betrays our unspiritual state! Things *were* allowed and passed over too of the Lord, while Israel was still “under grace,” which brought down the heavy hand of God in judgment afterwards, when they were “under law.” Witness even this passage; as well as the giving of the quails in Ex. 16 in grace, and in Num. 11 when there fell thousands of the people for asking and receiving them. It speaks to our souls of the present hour with trumpet tongue. It is the character of the day especially, in which we live. Christ can never be palatable to flesh, and then man must seek to suit Him to the flesh in man, by some other mode. Is this never done, reader? What are all the efforts put forth to make Christ suit the natural mind of man, in the preaching, and teaching, and books, and efforts of the present day? If some of us have not got that which appeals to the senses in a religious way, by architecture, and music, and painting, and the arts of man; there are other ways. A book must have a choice cover: it must have pictures, and narratives to thrill the senses, or the like. There must be “services of song,” to entertain the “camp followers” — the “mixed multitude” which mingle with the host of the Lord. There must be revival preachings; flags, and music, diagrams and models, and the manna must be mixed carefully withal, so as to make it palatable to the flesh! Alas, alas, what a picture surrounds us! What a moment is before us when they grew weary of God’s bread, and sought to make it palatable to hearts whose cry was — “we remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely: the cucumbers and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic. But now our soul is dried away; there is nothing at all, beside this manna before our eyes.”

Look around us on every hand. Look in our midst from gathering to gathering of God's saints. Look, each one — into his own heart, and say, is not this the picture of what we see, and what we know? The Church of God; the saint of God does not say deliberately — 'He is not enough.' But her actions, our own individual actions, tell the tale. We are like Israel, seduced by our own flesh and enticed; or by those who have no portion with us; and having hearts ready to be drawn away. We mingle Christ with the devices of the flesh, so as to make Him the common food of man. We thus dishonour Him; and unspiritualize our own souls.

Do I speak too strongly in one word which I have written? My brethren, I would that I were able to portray the scene with the vivid colours of marked reality, which lies around on every hand today. A scene so strikingly pictured in the type before us. It is for us, on whom the ends of the ages are met, that such have been written in the Word of God. O, let those who are true to Him set their whole being against such things. Do we not know that when a truth of divine revelation is brought down to the intellect of man, that it is absolutely lost? It is no more now of God. Often have our hearts been pained to think that some chapter, some divine truth which it has taken us years to learn from God; and some one comes, presents it to unspiritual souls, who had never given it a thought hitherto, by a diagram or a model, or the like, and in half-an-hour it is picked up in the intellect: the edge of the truth is destroyed; its interest is gone. It is reduced to the human mind and lost!

Now let us remark the apparently broken manner in which v. 9 is thrown into the narrative of Num. 11. The infidel would say, Ah, yes; it was a scrap of some other writing then extant, which the collator of these books put in, mistakenly, here. Thus the most touching beauties of Scripture are lost on such minds. The very things which cause the soul of the renewed man to bow down with praise but serve to draw out the evil folly of the infidel heart — so blind in its enmity, to that priceless gift — the Word of God!

“And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.” Wondrously lovely are these words. They fall like dew upon the soul, in the midst of such a scene as the former part of the chapter describes. Man's heart is exposed here; but that of the Lord disclosed. Did He withhold His open hand? Did the six hundred thousand men, besides women and children, hunger next day? Did the manna cease that night? Has God Himself now changed? This little verse of two lines is the touching and lovely answer. How blessed to read in it the character in which He spake of Himself after their wayward hearts had been exposed. How still more wondrous the word He speaks through the last prophet of Judah, whose utterance closed the Word of God till Jesus came — “For I am Jehovah, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob, are not

consumed.” (Mal. 3: 6). He waited for three thousand five hundred years ere He would say these words: till man, till Israel, till Judah, till the Remnant brought back from Babylon, till all, had corrupted their way. *Then* He tells forth what He ever is — the resource of faith — the unchanging God! If God would change, nothing would be secure: there was nothing left on which to rest. It is joy to the soul to know this: that with Him there is no variableness, nor shadow of turning.

Reader, does your soul delight in this, that *God never changes*? If you know Him, you will find it the rest of your spirit for ever. Did He change toward us through the cross? Nay, I say; in Him there is none! Jesus offered to Him that which *met* His holy being *without changing* it, and thus let His changeless nature free! Free too, to bless according to the dictates of a heart evermore the same. Surely we too can say, “Because He changes not, therefore we are not consumed.” It reminds us of Him who revealed Him — even Jesus: Who when the Spirit of God shows us every previous ordinance and covenant and sacrifice set aside in the Epistle to the Hebrews, He brings in Christ to replace them all, and when He has brought Him in He keeps Him in for ever! He would not close the book without this word, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever” (Heb. 13: 8). Jehovah was that great and fearful, that unutterable name, of old; Jesus (Jehovah the Saviour) the imperishable name — taken in time, to be borne for eternity!

But at the closing moments of their journey we find another scene, when the manna is again refused. The true scene when they “loathed” the light bread from heaven. Some might suppose that *this* was but a repetition of the former test, now at the end of the journey; as *that* had been at the beginning. To the infidel it is but food for his mocking heart, in his brief hour, at the expense of the Word of God. To the believer in Christ, it again tells forth another of those signal lessons of Scripture, at which his heart bows down with praise to Him, who has hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes. O let us ever be but babes, so that we may be divinely wise.

How many souls, do you suppose, of manhood’s age were here in this scene, who had come out of Egypt with Moses? Without taking account of Moses himself who never entered the land, there were but *two*! These were “Caleb the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua the son of Nun!” Of the others we read — “Their carcasses had fallen in the wilderness”; all had died. They had had their test and had been found wanting: they had said, “would God, we had died in this wilderness,” and God gave them their desire. They could say (in Num. 11) we remember the flesh-pots of Egypt. Here (in Num. 21) there is no trace of such a word. Then it was the testing of the *fathers*; here it was that of the *children*; such could not say “*we remember*”; alas they say — “*we loathe*”!

Are there not those amongst us who had come forth to Christ in these last days, through many exercises, and with the loss of all things, with earnest hearts refusing the allurements of the world? We have found somewhat of the desert's toil; but have not our hearts often returned to Egypt and longed for those things behind us, which fed our nature there? Let my reader answer if this be so. But there has grown up (as with Israel) a generation among us who had not been then alive to those things which feed the flesh; many too have been born in the wilderness, to speak as men; they have been brought up from the first on the manna, the pure bread of God. They have not purchased the truth with the wrenchings of heart with which their fathers had. It has cost them nothing, but tacit assent, often without an exercise of soul.

These are here before us, in Numbers 21.

They had come to the borders of the sunny land: a few steps more, and they were in possession of all. They might have gone in with the idea that they were of a different race with their fathers, who had died: they might have taken credit for this. Surely, they might have exclaimed, 'we never loathed the manna,' 'we never longed for the flesh-pots of Egypt.' 'We were brought up on manna, on Christ and His truth alone!'

They had just come up to Kadesh, on the very borders of the Land; but between them and it, was a small strip which belonged to Edom, through which was "the Kings highway" (Num. 20: 17, etc.). Edom refused to let them pass that way; and God ordered that it should be so; for it was not the way for the redeemed to enter into Canaan. They were then turned back for two years to have *their* testing, and to disclose what was concealed within till now. "They journeyed from Mount Hor, by the way of the Red Sea, to compass the land of Edom"; they had to pass down south around Mount Seir — Edom's possessions; and turn them northward by the eastern side of Jordan, and pass into the Land through its dried up waters, after the Ark of God. Death and resurrection is the only pathway thither.

And now the latent truth comes out; now the springs within are reached: now the children's hearts have had their test. At once we read of those who might have thought truly that Christ was enough till now; "our soul loatheth this light bread." "Where is boasting now?" "It is excluded." "Every mouth is stopped," my reader. We learn to judge our own hearts and not those of others. Our spirits are humbled: we become slow to speak; slow to wrath. We distrust ourselves; we cling the more to Christ. We are dumb; we have to leave it all with God, and Christ is all to us now and for ever. These "First three days on the journey," lead, then, to the testings of faith: they disclose to us what the "flesh" is in ourselves, as in those also in whom there is nothing else but "flesh" in the sight of God.

Chapter 9

The Two Trumpets of Silver

Redemption being complete, the Christian is looked upon in three distinct conditions, which are never confounded, in the Word of God.

First: he is seen as possessor of eternal life in Christ; “God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.” This gift of God is founded on the fact, that all his guilt is put away; his sins and iniquities are remembered no more. Death is no more for him the wages of sin, but the entrance upon his eternal rest. But with all this he is down here on earth; he has no new *place* with God; he has received a *nature* suited to that new place; but not that *place* itself.

Second: he is also brought into heavenly places in the Person of Christ: He hath “quickened us together with Christ; and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2: 6). In this he has a new *place* with God.

Third: there is a journey between these two points. A race to be run: a goal to be reached; though reached already if he looks at himself as in Christ. He has so to run meanwhile, that he may attain; to run with patience the race set before him, looking unto Jesus. He must press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. To labour to enter into God’s rest. To hold fast the beginning of his confidence steadfast unto the end (cf. Phil. 3; Heb. 3, 4, 12; etc.). He has no present but what is future, in looking at this triplex condition in which he is seen.

To understand this triplex view of the christian state, is of great importance in the understanding the Scriptures, and rightly profiting by their teachings. There are warnings, and exhortations addressed to him while in the race, which would not apply to his standing before God. These warnings and “ifs” of Scripture try his heart if unsettled in redemption, as they would seem to him to make the end far from sure.

Israel had this triplex condition too. But they did not begin as we, with a new *place* with God; they had to reach it at the close. We have already begun with this new place, in Christ in heavenly places: yet we run to reach the goal, and the fruition of all. We are *seated* in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; yet we are *running* the race to win Christ, and be *found* in Him! This is our heavenly calling of which we are partakers, as holy brethren in the Lord.

Israel was brought by redemption, *out* of Egypt; and he was brought *into* Canaan. But he had also to pass *through* the Wilderness to his rest. The book of the Wilderness (Numbers) unfolds this journey as many are aware. The NT, speaking generally, is for the most part occupied with that journey, onwards to the end: the Epistle to the Ephesians only, leading into the having Canaan as a present thing in Christ. This is assumed however, in all the Epistles, as true of every true Christian. The Epistles to the Hebrews, and those of Peter are occupied with the pilgrimage, and the journeyings of the people of God, in a special manner.

Before the journey commenced (cf. Num. 10: 11), Moses was commanded to make Two Trumpets of Silver: “Make thee two Trumpets of Silver: of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps” (Num. 10: 2). The visible and open guidance of God by the Pillar of the cloud and of fire, was there by day and by night continually. This *all* could behold. Even the most unspiritual in the Camp beheld the constant unvarying presence of the God of Israel. Then came the testimony of His word in this type before us, rendered as occasion needed, by those who received the communications and were near enough to be in the secret of His mind, as then revealed. This was given through those Silver Trumpets, by the varied notes which were sounded. Then again, the Ark of the Covenant went before the camp, to seek a resting place for them in the Wilderness.

Those three things expressed the guidance of God to Israel — “At the *commandment* of the Lord they journeyed” as directed by the movements of the Pillar of the Cloud. His “*Word*” sounded on more special occasions, by means of the Trumpets of Silver. There *Himself*, as the true Ark of the Covenant; and he that followed would “not walk in darkness but have the light of life.” These are seen in the antitype in 1 John 2: 4-6. First we have His *commandments*; then His *Word*; and then *Himself*.

But there was more in the Silver Trumpets than all this. In this book of Numbers, we find that they are the only Instruments which the Lord directed to be made in this Book, in the Wilderness journey. They were made of *Silver*; while in Exodus, the things which were made there were all of *Gold* or of *Brass*. The former presenting God’s essential righteousness; the latter, that righteousness when it dealt with man in responsibility. The sockets of the boards of the Tabernacle, with some fillets and hooks, were made of silver, and they only. I believe we must always interpret by the context, in seeking to know the meaning of these typical things. It will not do to lay down one hard line in such cases, and insist that each must mean, in all places, and books of Scripture, the same. To do so we would suffer much loss in the lessons of the Word.

The silver may point, as some say, to redemption, when the book in question treats of such. But in Numbers where it is the journey that is before us, and these Trumpets the means by which the God of Israel communicated with His people; the Silver Trumpets present to us — first, the “Trumpet” is the testimony of His Word: while the “Silver” is the immutability of His ways. This is echoed in the Wilderness book of Hebrews. 1st. The word of God, confirmed by His oath; and 2nd. The immutability of His ways. “Wherein God, willing (counselling) more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath,” etc. (Heb. 6: 17).

The Silver here then has this meaning — the immutability, or unchangableness of His ways; so abundantly proved during their eventful journey. This was the basis of His actings, and His command, testified by Aaron and his sons, by means of those Silver Trumpets.

We read of four distinct blasts or notes of these Trumpets in Numbers 10; and we find these notes echoed by the Spirit in the Epistle to the Hebrews. Here, the people were under the leadership of Moses and Aaron, the Apostle and High Priest of Israel, in their earthly calling. There, the Christian assuredly is under the leadership of Christ — the Apostle and High Priest of the holy brethren — Partakers of the heavenly calling.

The first note of the Trumpets in Numbers was “For the calling of the Assembly” of Israel; when they were to be gathered together for the varied exigencies of that day. In Hebrews this finds its antitype in the words, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another, and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10: 23).

The second blast was “For the journeyings of the camp.” “At the commandment, of the Lord they rested in their tents, and at the commandment of the Lord they journeyed.” How blessed to know that no movement was undertaken; or no halting place was chosen in the desert, but “At the commandment of the Lord,” clearly and distinctly announced in their ears. How few of His people can clearly say, “I am as certain of my path here, or there; or I am as sure I have halted in the very spot indicated, ‘by the commandment of the Lord,’ and not by the desire of my eyes, or the longing for change, or the slothfulness of nature, emanating from my own deceitful heart.” No matter where the direction of the journey pointed, “at the commandment of the Lord,” or how much delay there seemed to be, till another order for the march was sounded from the resting place; *Canaan* alone was the goal! “For the journeying of the camps” the note was sounded, and it had this end alone in view; just as those antitypical blasts of the Trumpets are re-echoed in Hebrews: “Let us labour therefore

to enter into that rest”; “Let us run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith.”

The third occasion on which we read of the sound of the Trumpets is “an alarm” – They have translated this word in Ps. 89: 15, as “The joyful sound.” But it was both. For it was heard both when the enemy was astir, and to the accustomed *ear* it was a “joyful sound”: the Lord of Hosts was with His people: no enemy could take them unawares. But it was “an alarm” too, for it stirred up the faithful to the need of vigilance against a watchful foe: and to the enemy it was the “alarm” of impending defeat and ruin.

Who of the saints has not quailed before the warning of Hebrews? How often have we seen the exercised soul trembling and uneasy as the “alarm” sounded in those solemn verses in Heb. 6 and 10. The sound of the Silver Trumpet was echoed in the conscience of the questioner; and yet the “alarm” when explained and interpreted by the mind of the Spirit, proved to be but a “joyful sound” to the weakest faith: though fatal to unbelief.

“Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the Trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifice of your peace offerings, that they may be to you for a memorial: I am the Lord your God” (Num. 10: 10). This was the fourth “blowing of Trumpets” in the desert — the “days of gladness” were there marked; and over the “Burnt-offerings” and “peace-offerings” the sound was heard. How full is the end of Hebrews (ch. 9 - 12) of the worth of Him in whom all the offerings found their answer “once” and “for ever”! It is a day of gladness we are called to there, to “Eat the fat, and drink the sweet; to send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for the day is holy unto our Lord; neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the Lord is your strength” (Neh. 8: 10). Or as the Epistle to the Hebrews would put it — “To do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased (Heb. 13).

Thus we find the Numbers with its types, and the Hebrews with its interpretations, fitting themselves together with the perfection of God’s communications to our souls. “The things which happened to them happened for types, and are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are met” (1 Cor. 10: 11).

The *Trumpet* then, characterized the starting point of the journey of the people of God. O, if they had hearkened to its joyful sound they would have known the “Blessedness of the people that knew” this; “They shall walk,” says the Psalmist, “O Lord, in the light of thy countenance” (Ps. 89: 15).

Chapter 10

“The Trumpet And The Rod”

Then came the journey. Alas, each step was but failure and turning aside “as a deceitful bow.” In the chapters which follow we do not find even one that is free from sorrow and ruin. What a witness are they not against us! What a testimony too, to the faithful unchangeableness of God! And God permitted them to advance, step by step, in this downward path; He never left nor forsook them all the while. At last when the deepest spring in their hearts was reached, in Num. 16, in the rebellion against the Royalty of Christ, as seen in Moses (“King in Jeshurun”), and against His Priesthood, as seen in Aaron, by Korah and his company, God’s hand must now strike, and strike it will. “Hereby shall ye know (said the Lawgiver), the Lord hath sent me to do all these works; for I have not done them of my own mind. If these men die the common death of all men, or if they be visited after the visitation of all men; then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up with all that appertaineth unto them, and they go down quick into the pit: then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord (Num. 16: 28-30).

This was complete apostasy. This was the last and final sin: “the great transgression.” This is what Christendom has for her doom: she will “perish in the gainsaying of Core” (“Korah” Jude 11).

Now comes the never-failing resources of God. How truly these things speak to us; how they recall to us that nothing happens, absolutely nothing, which has risen so high or gone so deeply down as to find His resources fail. How then is it that He, who cannot brook sin, will bring in to the Land a people, who have thus gone to these lengths in ruin? How can the plague be stayed that had begun? Who could stand between the living and the dead? None but our Great High Priest — not one! Priesthood alone can bring a failing people in, consistently with Him who will not sanction their failure and who never fails Himself. This was His resource: the Rod of Priestly grace (Num. 17), triumphant over death, which laid its deep and broad foundations by resurrection, in a sphere where its buds and blossoms and fruit — the fruit of the almond tree could flourish; apart from the storms of sin, and murmuring, and judgment. Where it could be “shown” to the Lord as that which He had chosen to lead an unfaithful, and a failing people into the Land.

Yes, my reader; we have been redeemed from the deep ruin in which we lay: when our guilt cried out for its due — the vengeance of God. We have set out in the desert with a nature which hates sin and loves and enjoys all that is in God Himself. We have another nature which takes

advantage of the very fulness of the grace in which we stand, and makes it but the occasion for outraging the grace, and living in the sin it loves, if allowed. But God has His way of dealing with us, who still have the tendency to return to the hole out of which we have been digged. He has His way of holding us up in the joy and blessedness of all that our better self delights in. This is by the Priesthood of Christ — who “ever lives to make intercession for us.” Never, for one moment, are we from under that. Rod of Grace. Never will His purpose for Christ’s glory change, and this is the manner in which He works, day by day, to bring us into that good land, where sin, sorrow, and sighing are things of the past for ever.

The *Trumpet* and the *Rod* then were the extremes of the path in the Wilderness. The one was the testimony — the commandment of the Lord, which began the journey, and was to have guided them all through the way. The people hearkened not to it, but turned aside. “They tempted and provoked the Most High God, and kept not his testimonies; but turned back and dealt deceitfully like their fathers: they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images (Ps. 78: 56, etc.).

Then it was, when they had gone to destruction (Hormah), that His own unfailling resource was brought forth. His soul turned to the Man of His right hand at the end of their path of shame. The Rod that budded and bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds was brought forth from the Sanctuary, to lead and guide; to take away the *murmurings* of the people that He might not take away *themselves*. The *Rod* came forth last when destruction was pending over them. The *Trumpet* was first heard, then at last the *Rod*, and it never failed.

But let us examine more closely this “thing which happened unto them.”

We will turn to the Hebrews — our wilderness book. Let me call it the “Book of the Trumpet and the Rod.” There the Christian is viewed as in the desert — where he follows his “heavenly calling” out of this scene, and after Christ — the Forerunner who has “entered within the veil” ; “into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us.” In the first chapter we find the Lord Jesus *coming forth from God*, at the close of all His testimonies, as the Messenger or Apostle; God spoke in the person of His Son. Then His glories pass before us; He is the effulgence of His glory; the express image of His subsistence. The upholder of all things by the Word of His power; the appointed Heir of all things; the maker of the worlds; the purger of sins: better than the Angels, because He is who He is; He is the object of their adoration; God speaks to Him as God (Heb. 1: 8-9). Jehovah addresses Him as Jehovah, in the day of His affliction (Ps. 102)

In Hebrews 2 we find Him as Man; fitted to be the High Priest because of this; *going back to God*, and crowned with glory and honour when He sat down on high. As Apostle He had come from God to us (Heb. 1); as High Priest He had gone back from us to God, when He had passed through his pathway of suffering, and made at its close propitiation for our sins (Heb. 2).

Then in Hebrews 3 we are to “consider Him” in these characters, as leading His people through the Wilderness, as Moses the Apostle from God, and Aaron the Priest, had done at another day.

The whole profession of Christianity is looked upon then as professedly in the journey from the Cross to the glory, and in the wilderness where thousands would fall and never reach the goal; as Israel’s carcasses fell in the wilderness. Being thus looked at as in the way, we find the “*if* we hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end.” “Today *if* ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” “We are made partakers of Christ *if* we hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.” Here the “*if*” and the warning comes in most suitably as on the journey to the rest of God.

Now you will always find, I think, that an “*if*” is used in false Christianity to disturb *true* souls, who are not thoroughly settled in grace, instead of in the way that God uses it, against the flesh. They will say, ‘O don’t be too sure; salvation is not such a certain matter as you think; a great deal depends on oneself; there are conditions. Don’t you see how many times an “*if*” is used, and a condition pressed upon us, etc., etc.’ Now I think God uses an “*if*” to make us dependent and trustful in Him, and His faithful love, and never uses it to disturb the faith of the simplest child of God.

Suppose I was walking on the parapet of a great high building with my little child by the hand. I felt the awful danger of the place for him, and said, as he looked down and shivered with fear, “My little son, if you fell down there you would be smashed to pieces: don’t pull away your little hand from mine.” The child looks up into my face and says, “Father, *you* will hold me fast, *you* have no trace of a thought in your heart of letting me go, though you warn me.” “No, my child,” I say, “not a trace: but I want to keep you alive to the danger, and keep up the sense of dependence on me, in your heart.”

This is the way God uses an “*if*.” He keeps the soul alive to the sense of the danger of the place we are in; the power of the enemy; the treacherousness of our own hearts; the faithfulness of His; our constant need of dependence on Him. Surely all this is right and well: and this dealing meets the case, and the present need of the true heart, on the

journey: while it vindicates the care of God, under whose conduct all profess to be, but who alas are often only the mixed multitude — the “camp followers,” of the true people of God.

Now when we come to Heb. 4 He applies all these preceding chapters to us. The Apostle had come to us from God (Heb. 1). The Priest had gone back from us to God (Heb. 2). The people were under His conduct in the way, in these two characters (Heb. 3). The Spirit would then exhort, “Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it (Heb. 4: 1).

Suppose I meet my reader, and find that although he has professed to be journeying to God’s rest, and that all his aims and hopes were there; yet his daily life and ways do not answer practically to the ways of a stranger in this scene; and a pilgrim to that other. Suppose I find him going on with the world and its spirit, and settling down on his lees; bringing up his family for the earth; placing them in it; allowing ways that were unsuited to his heavenly calling: Well, I say, you may be all you profess, but, if I were you, I would “fear.” You most assuredly “seem to come short” of it. Take care: many profess, and many fall by the way and never get in at all. Israel all came out of Egypt, but they fell in the Wilderness, and never reached the goal. There is no question raised here about a true soul going in. “We which have believed do enter”; no doubt about that; but you should remember Israel. They heard the report from the spies: the gospel of the rest of Canaan — in their day, and never got in. The word preached by the spies did not profit them, because it lacked the divine mixture of faith: “it was not mixed with faith in them that heard it.” “They could not enter in because of unbelief.”

Now here we break off suddenly in the chapter to meet the difficulty which a godly Jew would experience about this “rest of God” being still a future thing. He would naturally say, “Well: I thought God had rested when He created the world. Does it not say that in the seventh day God rested from all His works which He had created to make?” Oh yes, says the writer, “God rested *from* all his works.” And surely He did; but sin broke through His rest. He only rested *from* creating, but never rested *in* the works of His hands. Sin came in immediately, and disturbed His rest, and left Him with these alternatives 1. to destroy all by judgment; or, 2. to let all remain in its ruined state, as fallen with man, whom He had placed over all; or 3. to begin to work again. He refuses to destroy them by judgment, and will not allow it to remain so; and so we find Him again a Worker, making coats of skins for Adam and his wife, and He has never rested since that day.

Men seek religiously to keep a sabbath as a day of rest. Well, I say, you have not God with you in that fancied rest. He is a worker since the

third of Genesis; and never has been a rest, and never will, till the new Heavens and new Earth come, wherein dwelleth righteousness. The Lord Himself when here, was accused of breaking the Sabbath, when He had cured the paralyzed man at the Pool of Bethesda; and His reply to the accusers was this “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.” Now the Spirit works; and by-and-by the rest of God — Father, Son, and Spirit will come, and then only will God rest.

There was one other difficulty to be met for the convert from Judaism. They read in Joshua 12 that the Land had rest from war. This the writer meets by telling them how their prophet King sang, hundreds of years afterwards, the words of the 95th Psalm, “Again he determined a certain day, saying in David, ‘Today’ (after so long a time) as it is said, ‘Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.’ For if Joshua had given them rest, then would he not afterwards have spoken of another day.

Adam had broken up the rest of Creation by his sin; Israel had broken up the rest of Canaan by theirs, and so God wrought, in His infinite patience and grace, and will to the end, until the time foreseen in v. 9. “There remaineth therefore a keeping of a sabbath” — a rest of God — for His people.

This break therefore disposes of the difficulties.

Now the exhortation — the blast of the Silver Trumpet — is heard, “Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.” God has retreated into Christ, and there His rest is now; and will be displayed for all His own at that day.

How abruptly we again break off at verse 12 of our chapter. But no: it is the word — the blast of the Trumpet of Silver that is heard — the Word of God: quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword. It pierces the joints and marrow: it discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart. It deals with every movement of the *will* of the flesh. All is laid bare under that which is His “eye,” looking down and discovering thoughts in your heart, my reader, that did not emanate from Him: intentions for today — for tomorrow — that have not Christ before them, and the goal — the rest of God. The Word comes in and stops them all.

Do you welcome that as a “joyful sound”? If you are an honest pilgrim you say, ‘Yes; it is a joyful thing to me to have my soul searched out; every corner of my heart laid bare: every secret corner exposed and brought into the light of God’s presence by His living Word.’ Still, you add, it is disheartening, to have that detector of my thoughts and intentions ever pressing down its searching and breaking power into my soul. Yes,

but had Israel rejoiced in the blast of the Silver Trumpet they had never fallen, so to say, in the Wilderness, and God has this in His mind for you.

But you will remember that the *Trumpet began* the journey with Israel; and when all had gone to ruin, then God's resource of the *Rod* was brought forth at the *end*. But how is it for you? The Trumpet sounds — the Word of God speaks with its searching notes to the soul, and lays all bare: then *at once*, the Rod of Priesthood, is introduced. *He puts the Trumpet and the Rod together at the beginning of the journey*, that the one may deal with the *will* of the flesh that would break away from Christ; and that the other may uphold the *weakness* of the renewed soul, prostrate under the searching power of the Word. How blessed! He does not look for the failure to become apparent before He interferes. No. He would carry His people through *without* the failure, and bring them in safety to that Land of rest.

But one might say, as he reads Heb. 4: 14 — “Seeing then that we have a great high Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession;” he might say ‘That great person cannot know what a poor weak thing like me has to pass through. I have a wicked heart: He had not: He could resist the temptations of the enemy: He was pure and perfect: He was the Son of God.’ How touchingly the next reassuring verse reads, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our weaknesses:” but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace for timely help” — (see Greek). Much better indeed than “help in time of need.” Better to be sustained in answer to our cry of weakness before we fail, than even to find a strong arm reached forth to raise us up again when we have turned aside from Him. The cry goes forth from the sense of need; the strong right arm is around us in that strength which is made perfect in our weakness; and we can say, “Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me”; and “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe.”

{*Cf. 2 Cor. 13: 4 where the same word is found as to Christ.}

Chapter 11

“The Water of Purification”

When the Lord introduced the Rod of Priesthood as His unfailing way of bringing in a failing people home to glory, all hung from that moment on it, whether to sustain, to restore, or to meet their need. The details of its establishment in the Type, and its varied provisions and exercises are found in Numbers 17- 20.

In Numbers 17 we find Priestly *authority established* in Aaron and his sons: and in Numbers 18 Priestly *service to maintain the people in communion*; they should bear the iniquity of the Sanctuary, and of their priesthood before the Lord. With them rested the charge of the Sanctuary — God's dwelling — and of the altar — the place of intercession for the people. There are things which those in this place of nearness to God — His priesthood, now have to sustain; which others — who keep the more distant place, and enter not upon its exercise (though all His people are Priests) — have not to bear. We see this amongst the people of God even now. Those who have never entered on their Priestly place in practical power, do not sustain the reproach of Christ as those who have done so; although the former enjoy the result of this nearness of the latter; and partake of the spiritual communications vouchsafed to those who are in the secret of the Lord.

Still, the most holy things of the offerings of the Lord — the varied details of the sacrifice of Christ (Num. 17: 9); as well as the best of oil and wine (Num. 17: 12, 13), first ripe fruits of the Land, are their portion. That is, they feed on Christ's work, and Christ's person in a manner, and in the midst of the Holy things; which those who keep in the greater distance lose.

You see this illustrated constantly in the spiritual saint; as also in the unspiritual, who holds truth in a carnal way. And, it is grief to say, there is much truth held carnally by the people of God. You will see those who do not doubt their salvation, and yet who plainly are unspiritual saints. Then when trial comes; or some intervention of God's hand to break up the fallow ground of their hearts; they have to go through much deep exercises and fears — finding they have to do with God in a way that their lives had never experienced.

Yet all the while faith is not lost: Christ has sustained it in their souls by His unceasing Priestly grace. "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: " yet they have to be sifted like wheat. Well, if the sifting out of the chaff leaves the pure grain behind; and well, if when converted they may strengthen their brethren.

In Numbers 19 we find another feature which flows from Priestly service; that is, in a certain sense, *advocacy* to restore and purify when defiled. And I may here remark that in Numbers 20, we find the exercise of Priesthood with regard to the needs and murmurings of the people; and at its close, the *perpetuity* of it touched upon in the stripping of Aaron and the clothing of Eleazar; a living Priest goes up to Mount Hor, from the presence of the people; and a living Priest comes down — re-appearing without a break, in their sight.

Num. 19 is the *only* reference to the work of Christ we find in the journey of the people through the desert. This is most significant and instructive. In fact it is the key of the book. The *Redemption* of Israel out of Egypt gives character to the book of Exodus. The *propitiatory* work of the great day of atonement (Lev. 16) characterizes the Book of Leviticus after Priesthood failed. And the *maintenance, or restoration* of the unclean to communion, is peculiar to the Book of Numbers. Each are suited to the books in which they are found, as well as to the state of the people; and the aspects in which the Lord is seen.

I do not purpose dwelling too largely on the details of Num. 19; which are full of interest. Rather do I desire grace for a practical application of the truths there presented us.

One thing strikes us; there *never* was a return to the blood sprinkling of redemption on the night of the Passover in Egypt. The blood once appropriated by our souls, and satisfying to God, never needed to be applied again. Its efficacy was abiding and eternal. Just as we never find a recurrence of the application of the precious blood of Christ to our souls, in the teaching of the New Testament.

It is here then the great significance of this “water of purification” — mingled with the “ashes of the Heifer,” is presented to us. We will remark too that it was what we may term “Eleazar” work that we find here. It is not “Aaronic” service — pure and simple. The reason is this — that it is not the highest aspect of our Lord’s blessed work; but very necessary yet humbling (may we not say?) to Him; because connected with the failures of His people. Blessed service of love surely in its perfectness, for “his own.” Nor is it the greatness of His work, which the “bullock” would present; the perfection of His patient toil. Nor yet the passive, unmurmuring submission, as a “lamb without blemish or spot”; or as a “sheep before her shearers is dumb.” Here it is a lower aspect than all these: a “Red Heifer without spot, *wherein* is no blemish; and upon which never came yoke.” The *female* of the herd, yet inwardly and outwardly clean.

Remark too, the place where her blood was presented. It was not where the God and the High Priest meet, at the Brazen altar without, or at the golden Mercy-seat within; but where God and His people came together for *communion*, “before the tabernacle of the congregation.” The blood was sprinkled seven times there, just as a memorial of the basis of all.

The Heifer was then consumed. Ashes was all that remained: the irrefragable proof that our sins could never be imputed again. They had been — once, to Christ: He was consumed by the judgment which fell on

Him; and blood could not again blot out, what already blood had obliterated. Every portion of this sacrifice was burned outside the camp. There was not the smallest portion kept to be consumed before the Lord. It was more completely in every part consumed, outside the camp, than even the sin-offering in Lev. 4. The very blood was burned there also. The only thing reserved was as much of the blood as the Priest could take on his finger for a memorial and sprinkle seven times “before the tabernacle of the congregation.” She was slain too “outside the Camp.” How completely does this exclude the thought that aught of this sacrifice was atoning; or offered as a propitiatory offering to God. No: *all* was for the “unclean.” Every one too, in the chapter, who had to do with the ashes was defiled. The Priest who carried out the ceremony; the person who burned the heifer; the man who gathered the ashes; he who sprinkled the water of separation; or who touched the ashes; and whatsoever he touched who had thus touched them: all were unclean! There was but one thing undefilable, and that was the “Ashes of the Heifer.” Yes, reader; what a lesson is here. No one can have to do with sin, even in another, and be undefiled, but God, alone! When He touches sin He withers it; when man does so he either sympathizes with it, or is defiled!

But I must pass on. The ceremony of restoring the defiled or unclean, needs but few words But let us see for a moment what made it needful. With us it is sin; or the flesh revived in ourselves, or in another. The carnal mind; the unclean lust; the selfish covetousness of the soul; the angry word; the foolish thought. The opened ear which hears the sinful word, or slander. The slanderer himself; the liar; the profane. Are these things possible in the saint of God? Read Col. 3: 5, 8; or Eph. 4: 28-32; Eph. 5: 3-5, and say if God proclaims this; or read your own heart, reader, if you know it somewhat, and tell me what you think. One moment’s working of sin, in whatever shape it may be found, secretly or openly, and you are an unclean man; “cut off” from the fellowship of God’s Spirit, and of the Father and the Son; from the saints too, who are maintained in the communion which you have lost.

Of course you must be a saint to have lost it; and you must be a saint to be restored; both are true. If not a saint you never had it; nor could you be restored to what you never had. So that this does not interfere with your salvation. But I need not press this, in a day when salvation is somewhat truly known.

The sin committed suddenly in your presence, which you were not party to, has made *you* an unclean man, as well as him who committed it! This is solemn. If a man died suddenly in a tent (Num. 19: 14), all those present, or who came in, were unclean. How could they avoid this? you say. I reply — Will God lower His standard of holiness because man would excuse himself under the plea that he could not avoid it? Never, my friend.

He provides the way in which *you* shall be *restored*; but He will not declare you clean when it is not so. An “open vessel” too; your opened ear for instance, “which hath no covering bound on it” (Num. 19: 16), when your ear is not closed to all else but Christ; is defiled. But we must proceed.

“The grace of God in a man’s heart, is a tender plant in an unkindly soil.” It is like the “Sensitive Plant,” which when it grows naturally abroad, droops and closes its leaves even at the approach of the footstep of man, or the brushing of the dewdrops off the grass-plot near where it grows. The Spirit is grieved within us, and we need a “clean person” now to act. Where will such be found? He speaks Himself — our true “Clean One” — “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me” (John 13: 8).

Here too we find the “Bunch of Hyssop” in the hand of this “Clean Person”; not in our own. Each man’s hand grasped this in Ex. 12 for himself; each dipped it in the blood in the basin; each went forth and struck the lintel and two side posts of the door of his house — and each appropriated this as his only shelter from the destroyer. The poor thief on the cross did so in the depths of his humiliation when he bowed in faith and justified God for his righteous sentence and suffering. There God met him, and Christ took the lost sheep to His home rejoicing! But here all is changed. The Hyssop is in the hands of another. It is not man now appropriating Christ; but the Advocate about to bring the soul of the defiled to its true and real state of humiliation and judgment of self for its sin.

Does my reader ever suppose that when his soul has turned aside and been defiled, he would have turned back again, but for the advocacy of the Lord? When the sin has been committed, and its pleasure has gone; whose hand has grasped the Bunch of Hyssop, and has applied the remembrance of His anguish in bearing that sin away? Then again, with the water of His word mingled therewith, sprinkled it on that man whose back is turned on his Master, and sent him away to “weep bitterly”?

When David’s murder and adultery were accomplished, and he strove to hold his head high; and forget his crime, who sent Nathan the prophet, with the word of God to open David’s eyes, which lust had closed? Was it to restore David to His favour for which Nathan was sent? Nay, but to do a “third day” work (Num. 19: 12), and to bow his soul down in the agony in which we behold him prostrate on the earth, with the cry, “I have sinned against the Lord.” “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.” (Ps. 51: 7). This was true “third day” conviction. It was the deep sense in the soul of self loathing; and self judgment, in the sight of God, who had not *imputed*, but had *put away* his sin. There was no restored communion here: there was

anguish and sorrow. But on the “*seventh day*” the child of adultery died. And again the Hyssop is dipped in ashes and running water, and sprinkled upon the soul — prostrate man. Can he not now feel his hopes revive in God? His *real* state (not merely his *felt* state) has been reached. He can say, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit” (Ps. 51: 12). Now he can wash his face and anoint himself, and enter into the house of the Lord and worship. A man now who knows his own heart better, and has learned a deeper lesson of the heart of God! This was the “seventh day.”

Look at Peter. In high handed self confidence he denied his Lord, and when the cock crew — the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. He had not felt his sin, nor his departure from Christ ere this; but the look of Christ entered his soul — the “third day” had arrived for him; and bitter tears, which could never blot out his sin, disclosed to him the depths of his departure from the Lord, and the sense of being unclean and defiled. But for him there was a seventh day too. The joyous heart which girt his fisher’s coat unto him, and leaped into the sea to greet his Master, proves a heart restored; a “seventh day” reached; even before the springs of departure were fathomed in his soul in the interview which followed. Sin in him had triumphed for the moment over the grace of Christ; but grace in Christ had finally triumphed over his sin!

Well; “there *is* forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared.” But when we have tasted the bitterness of thus sinning against our God; and some taste this more than others: we learn to walk more softly and distrustfully of ourselves. But let me beseech of you my reader — Do not trespass upon the grace which restores thus. The conscience becomes blunted; the soul grows deadened, under the power of this sinning and repenting; the joy of the heart in Him is sapped and eaten away. He is surely faithful and just to forgive us our sins, yea, moreover, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness; but if so, the aged Apostle adds; “my little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.” Yet “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but for (the sins of) the whole world” (1 John 2: 1, 2).

Chapter 12

Nazariteship Amongst The Uncircumcised

Read Judges 13

The ordinance of the Nazarite Vow is found in its true and suited place, in the journeyings through the Wilderness; and is introduced in that book which treats of the itinerary of the people of God (Num. 6). Certain

directions of a (to us) typical character, are unfolded there, to be observed by those who separated themselves unto the Lord by this Vow.

I judge that it follows in marked order, after the subjects of the previous chapter, in which we find the cleansing of the camp where Jehovah dwelt, and more specially, later on, with the law of the bitter water of jealousy; which applies in principle both to Israel, and to the Church, in her responsible place: as also to the individual saint. The Church has given herself to another, when she had been espoused as a chaste virgin to Christ; and the Lord exposes the pollution of the flesh in her; and the man — Christ Himself, is thus guiltless of her iniquity, which she bears, in the Government of God.

Then, in ch. 6, we have special devotedness, in separation to God, by individuals, when the Church figuratively, as a whole, had gone aside. Just as in 1 Timothy we have the external Church in order as God's habitation, and in 2 Timothy the separation to God of individuals, when she had fallen without possibility of return as a whole.

However I only refer to this fact — not with any thought of entering upon details of the Nazarite Vow in Num. 6, but as noticing its place in the Wilderness, and the fact of Nazariteship then coming in, for the first time. We may remark that Nazariteship was a vow entered upon by individuals — voluntarily on their part; and not inherent, or characteristic of the person: and we may also add that in Scripture — with the exception of Christ — the true Nazarite — there were but three *born* Nazarites in the actual sense, known in the Word of God: namely, Samson, Samuel, and John the Baptist. As Christians we are looked upon as born into this condition as being in Christ.

I now turn in the first place, after these preliminary remarks, to the thirteenth chapter of the Book of Judges.

This Book comes after Joshua, where we have the people introduced into their earthly inheritance by Joshua; type of Christ in the power of the Spirit of God, leading His people into the realization of their heavenly inheritance in practical power. The Book of Joshua shows this energy in taking possession thereof; and also the decay of that energy in maintaining the same in the power of God.

Now Judges is the result of this; and gives us the history of the failure of Israel (or the Church in the antitype), in not putting out evil from their midst, and possessing the Land. The death of Joshua is the key note which begins the book. They were then left to work out their own salvation from the enemy. Analogous to this is the departure of apostolic power from the Church, which is left to work out her own salvation from the

enemy, with fear and trembling, in the absence of Paul; while God was there with them both — willing and working according to His good pleasure (Phil. 2).

The Church of God was set up on earth in heavenly blessing, and she failed from the beginning in realizing this; she went downwards in her course, till she has become what we see around us. Hardly a trace now remains of even the apprehension of what the Church of God is. The “World” has become the “Church” and as a consequence under God’s government, the responsible Church will be treated as the world; while God will remove *His own* before her judgment comes.

Now Judges is the history of this in Israel; and unfolds in type for us, God’s great principles to the end. From time to time, and at the cry of the people when oppressed under their enemies — God raised up Judges and Deliverers, which answered to the varied revivals in the Church of God by His suited instruments; and He wrought great deliverances for His people. They too, went on well for a time, during the life of the Judge, and then relapsed into their old ways. We find in this book exactly Twelve Judges — showing how completely God had wrought for their blessing. Twelve being the number of complete earthly ministration. The history closes with the sixteenth chapter: those which follow showing a state of things which had come in somewhere about the second chapter of the book. I judge that this portion of the book is placed last of all, for the special purpose of showing when the book closed its *history* in Judges 16 the *character of things* in which God was thus working all through for His people, in mercy. I notice this specially, as some would perhaps think that these closing chapters, owing to their place in the book, were the state which supervened *after* all the work of the Judges was done. A reference to the chronology of the English Bible will help to show the time when the circumstances occurred.

In examining the histories of these revivals we will see that the deliverers were, generally speaking, raised up at the cry to the Lord of the people. He heard their cry and sent His instruments to deliver them. This character of things closes in Judges 12. Up to this, the enemies were found amongst the Canaanitish Nations within; or some other adjacent tribes — scourges from without which had entered the Land: Midian, Moab, Ammon. and others, were in general their foes. They variously typify Satan’s power and the instruments he uses.

But when we come to Judges 13 we find other enemies — not of Canaan — under whom they groaned in complete bondage for “forty years.” *These people were the Philistines.* This moment of their history marks the *commencement* of Israel’s relations with these bitterest of foes. They had settled within their borders, but were neither of the land itself

within; nor were they scourges from without. This is to be noted well. The relations of Israel with these “uncircumcised” never ceased until David came: when he had taken the stronghold of Zion, the Philistines were finally subdued. Then was heard the sound of a going in the tops of the Mulberry Trees: the Lord went forth before His armies and discomfited them (2 Sam. 5). Similarly the enemy which answers to them in the midst of the Church of God, looked at responsibly on earth, will never be finally subdued until Christ — the true David comes; and then all will be complete victory.

What then was the principle and resource of God, after eleven Judges had been raised up, to meet this character of enemy, and deliver His own? It is seen in the twelfth of the Judges in Samson; in whom we see Nazariteship, or separation to the Lord: “He shall be a Nazarite to God from his mother’s womb!”

We will here remark too, that this Deliverer was not raised up at the cry of the people to the Lord: there was no cry then heard from them. Unlike the former answers to their cry, He interferes in this case unsought.

In the barren wife too, we see the constant sign in Scripture of the powerlessness of man, and the need of the power of resurrection; and God interferes in Sovereign mercy, Himself. He reveals a new principle to meet the state of things onwards, till David came. He does not raise up a Deliverer to *lead the people themselves* to victory over their enemies. They had sunk too low for this. There was now no restoration to a formal state proposed; no recovery was suggested in this new departure in the ways of the Lord. This Nazariteship therefore was complete separation, *even from the people of God*; while working out great deliverances for them the while, from their internal foes: and this in the midst of the people still, who were not separate themselves.

But I must look a little more closely at the character of this enemy, and who they were.

Like most principles, and facts unfolded in Scripture: we find that the first intimation of such, generally gives us a key to what afterwards grows from this root into the texture of the Word.

If we turn to Genesis 10, where the dividing of the nations of the world is before us — the peopling of the earth by the sons of Noah; we find (Gen. 10: 6-20) the descendants of Ham were Cush (the Ethiopian) and Mizraim (Egypt of which this is the Hebrew name), etc. Then in vv. 13, 14, “Out of Mizraim . . . came Philistim.” Here then is the root, and there, the branch — plainly before us. They were not merely man fallen and

under Satan's power, as Egypt represents: but they wandered away from that ground, and had crossed the Desert by what is termed "the way of the land of the Philistines." This "way" God would not allow Israel to traverse when leaving Egypt (Ex. 13: 17), "because that was near." It was in fact a "short cut," if we may so speak, across the Desert, and into the land of Canaan. It was not the true path for the redeemed — through the Red Sea and Jordan; through death and resurrection; by which alone the Land could be entered after a divine way, and possessed.

These "uncircumcised" (for this they are always termed); passed into the Land of Promise — wandering away from their own country, and entering into the place of blessing, without the title to possess it. They were not now of Egypt; nor were they of Canaan. They had left their own country, and were no more Egyptians: they had reached that other without the right to be there. They were not Israel; nor even were they those who were attached to Israel for blessing; but had "intruded into those things" which they had no title to possess. They were the bitterest enemies to the truth in that day — these "uncircumcised."

They were the seed of the natural world fallen, under Satan's power, and unredeemed; which stretched out into the place of promise, and laid hold on it without title; but they never absolutely possessed the promised Land. They may have "giants," and great ones of the earth, and by knowledge may seem to possess; but they never can.

They were thus the greatest enemies to the people of God. It may not be too much to say, that there is much to do with the natural senses in this class of enemy; for they have their "Five Lords" and "Five cities" too; but after all it is knowledge alone, without faith, or life, and there it perishes. It had intruded into those things it had not seen, vainly puffed up by the mind of flesh. (Col. 2: 18).

Can we not apply this solemn type to what is around us on every hand: yea, within us also? Can we not apprehend how, as truth is known, it may be received by the natural senses of man? The flesh — uncircumcised and unrenewed, may lay hold of divine things, yea of heavenly truth; and yet have no part or lot therein. The mind may work with divine revelation, and take it up in clearness; with precision and accuracy of expression; but there it ends. What greater enemy can there be, to the true work of the Spirit of God in the Church!

These were the foes which overflowed like a flood, and engulfed the people of God, in Judges 13. "The Lord delivered them into the hands of the Philistines forty years." Flesh — unredeemed, had taken possession of the divine place, and faith was silent, and cried not to the Lord. All was

death around at that day. Then God moves after a new fashion; and inaugurates a new thing — unknown before.

Indeed I may go further, and say, that all His vessels from that hour, until David came upon the scene, were raised against these hitherto triumphant foes.

1. Samson — in whom was the *Spirit of Nazariteship*, or separation to the Lord, was raised up — (note it well, my reader) to “*begin* to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.” He would only inaugurate the work — for he was not Christ! He might “begin” the work: the True David alone could finish it. It is to be noted here, in connection with this, that his name of Samson, means “Sun-like” — from Shemesh, the “Sun” of Righteousness Himself. The principle which he represents would be the *nearest* thing to Christ, in its verity and truth; and seen in His people, in Separation to God.

2. Then came Samuel — in whom was the *Spirit of prayer*, or dependence on the Lord; and in whom we see that great and mighty power first definitely established. His work was always against the Philistines, and *prayer* was the mighty lever wielded under God by him. His very name signifies “Heard of God,” as he himself was the child of his mother’s — Hannah — the barren woman’s prayer (cf. 1 Sam.1 — 7).

3. Then came Jonathan in the days of Saul, and in him we see the *Spirit of faith* in service. His hand wrought great victories over the uncircumcised (cf. 1 Sam. 13, 14).

I pass over poor Saul, who was anointed “Captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines.” His was the trial of flesh — set in the fullest advantages; a gift without life, in an unsanctified vessel. Alas, poor Saul! He never went against them, and at last he fell by their hand.

These three instruments taken together, give us the three-fold cord of true power in these days. *Separation to God; Dependence on Him; and the Energy of Faith in service!* All these must go together for a “Threefold cord is not quickly broken.” Poor Jonathan tried to serve without the other two: he never separated from Saul’s house, and after his lovely, fresh and successful service, he too fell by these very foes, and his body was nailed by the Philistines to the wall of Bethshan! (1 Sam. 28).

Chapter 13

Nazariteship Amongst the Uncircumcised

In the case of Samson we see how everything betokens God's hand working in sovereignty. He chooses the already dishonoured tribe of Dan; first among Israel which lapsed into idolatry (Judges 18). He can do as it pleases Him. Unasked, the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife and announces the birth — to her who had been hitherto barren — of this child. The details of the chapter are very lovely, in many ways, and especially bright in the fresh deductions of faith of the wife of Manoah. I would but notice in passing, three strong features which present themselves to us here. First, we have the Nazarite — the separated one, to the Lord. Next — after the offering of the Burnt-offering and Peace-offering — how the angel, whose name was "Wonderful" (cf. Judges 13: 18 with Isa. 9: 6), ascends up to heaven in the flame of the altar. And lastly, "These things" showed to Manoah and his wife.

Now here I would refer to the NT for a moment, with respect to the Nazariteship of Christ. In the earlier Gospels the Lord is seen in the power of the Kingdom — eating and drinking with the children thereof, if they would hear. In the Gospel of St. John this is all changed. He is an alien to His mother and her children; a lonely Man, from the very beginning of that Gospel; and "His own," are set aside (John 1: 11, 12). He is a Nazarite all the way through: gathering and leading a heavenly company of Nazarited ones to the Father's House on high. In John 17, where the acme of this is seen, we find in broad lines, these three things of Judges 13 come out afresh in all their intensity and reality. His people are separate: "They are not of the world, even as He is not of the world." He says to the Father, "And now come I to thee": He ascends on high, in the value of the Burnt-offering and the Meat-offering, in which they were accepted before the Lord. And "These things speak I in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves."

The Church of God was a Nazarited one. Instead of retaining this place, she "ate and drank with the drunken." But Christ was ever so; and when the Church has fallen as a whole, the only resource is *individual* Nazariteship — special devotedness to the Lord. The Church of God ever is united to Christ in glory; but to be *owned in such* a state, it requires that those who would be recognized *must be separate to Him*. There is no other way. They must be Nazarites; and they must keep the secret too of this, with the Lord. To be outwardly so, without inward separation; to pretend to Nazariteship externally, when not so before God, is terribly solemn. To have an outward character to maintain, while inwardly the conscience is not pure, is but to find, when the moment of testing comes, that we have lost our strength, and wist not that it was departed from us.

Samson's history — all the details of which I do not enter upon — suffice it for my present object, to notice its broad features, is divided into

two distinct parts; each ending with the sentence “and he judged Israel . . . twenty years” (see the end of Judges 15 and that of 16).

The first division of his history is embraced in Judges 13 - 15 of the book of Judges. In it we will notice how full of power is this Deliverer of his people. How complete is his victory over the Philistines. In all this portion we note too, that “The Spirit of the Lord” came upon him, in his mighty acts (Judges 13: 25; Judges 14: 6, 19; Judges 15: 14). And also we will notice that he is not accompanied by Israel in these acts. Nay, even the men of Judah come down to bind him and to deliver him into the Philistines’ hand!

How striking is all this to our souls; let the saints of God accept the path of Nazariteship in these days: it is true that God may be, and will be with them in power and blessing. That blessing may extend largely, and with deepest profit even to those too who have not separated themselves to the Lord; bringing deliverance also to them. But they are opposed to those who have taken this separate path. When the people of God are not separate to Him — they will not have those who seek His face, to act in faith and Nazariteship, because to do so is but to judge their own path as unsanctified to God. They would not refuse coalition, nor acts of outward power; but to separate from them and for their blessing too, only meets with their enmity and condemnation.

In the second division of his history all is changed! There is no trace there of the power of “The Spirit of the Lord.” Samson has lost the Nazarite place: the very common sense of man has departed from him, to his betrayal and defeat. He falls — never to rise again, into the hands of the Philistines. He is blinded by his foes; a proof to *them* at least, that Dagon is stronger than God! Have not God’s people done this? Have they not fallen into the hands of the uncircumcised? Have they not lost their Nazariteship — being mixed up with the worldly? And thus accepting the evil, they witness, alas, without the words, that evil is greater than good, that the world under which they are captive is stronger than God: saying — that there is nothing perfect here, “We are delivered to these abominations.” They are blinded and captive — and, unable to break their bonds. Only fit for the world to make mock at, and rejoice that their Nazariteship is defiled and destroyed. How well may the Scriptures say to such, “Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from among the dead, and Christ shall shine upon thee.” (Eph 5: 14).

But when the world — and “woe unto it”! has drawn away that which God had separated to Himself, by its allurements, it only brings upon itself the dire judgments of God, and its total ruin: and this too at the moment of its greatest triumph. When bound Samson is called to make sport before the Philistine Lords at Gaza, and when he leaned upon the pillars of the house

on which they stood, filled with these thousands of the foe, God heard his cry. And when he bowed himself with all his might — the house fell upon himself and on all that were therein; “So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life”: but he falls himself in their destruction.

Thus it will be with the world when God removes the Church from this scene, as when Samson himself was removed; more of her foes will be destroyed in her death, than she had done in her life; for her removal will be the sign for the crushing judgments of God on the professing Church, which alas is but the world!

Now analogous to these two sections of Samson’s history: the one, of Nazariteship in power and victory: the other, of Nazariteship lost, and of blindness and defeat: we find these two features plainly, in the two last messages to the Seven Churches in Asia, in the Revelation of Jesus Christ by John: namely, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

I do not enter upon the interpretation of the Seven Messages, which is familiar to many amongst the Lord’s people in these days. But only notice that these messages are divided into two great parts. Those two parts unfold the universal principle of God’s judicial dealings with *man*; with *Israel*; and with the *Church*, as a responsible body set up on the earth. He looks *back* at the primal order, or state, in which anything was first set up, and from which it had fallen. He gives space to recover this state if such may be. But *failing this* He looks *forward* — and revealing *Himself* in judicial power and glory, presents *this* as the measure and standard. As if to say, “Can you meet and answer me?” The state in which that which the subject of judgment was set up by His hand in perfection, is the one standard of judgment: and then the nature of God Himself being the other.

The first four messages to the Churches are founded on the former standard. He charges the Church that she had left her first love she had fallen from that state in which she had been established. Then comes the exhortation — “Repent, and do thy first works, or I will remove thy candlestick out of her place.” No response to this being made; we go further and hear the solemn words, “I gave her space to repent and she repented not”: therefore judgment must supervene.

The standard of judgment then changes. The Lord Himself was coming in. Can she meet the burning beams of His glory? Can she stand when He appears? Nay, all was now over, and the only thing that *faith* could do was this, “hold fast until I come.” This is the ground in the last three.

Then all is changed. The messages are now founded on this — that recovery can never be. Judgment must clear the scene, ere the glory appear, when Christ comes.

I would here remark what is of great importance to note well. That there is no “*Church ground*” (to speak in a Pauline aspect), in these messages. John is always individual, and never corporate in the divine teaching through him. They present moral states, or great moral features reviewed by the Lord; with His varied exhortations and ways of dealing with such; and the rewards to the faithful “who have an ear to hear.”

I do not think that such an expression as “Philadelphian ground” is therefore a true thought. Rather the reverse. It gives the impression at once of a corporate thing; and loses therefore the great value, in its true and moral aspect, as a moral state expressed by, and suited to the Lord.

There may be what we may term a ‘Philadelphian state’ seen, individually in souls, in the dark ages; or even now in the professing Church. Souls that are true; and walking in devotedness of heart — wherever found; and when walking up to the light and every gleam of it possessed, are truly “Philadelphian.” Knowledge is not Philadelphian in any wise; unless knowledge is found producing that truly blessed moral state, of which Christ can approve.

Are there none, my brethren, who would perhaps assume “Philadelphian ground,” who are anything but Philadelphian? Are there none, on the other hand, who know but little indeed of the light and truth which has been shed about our path in these days, and yet who walk unseen, with every gleam of light they possess shining out in devoted hearts and ways? At the same time they are mixed up with what others, with greater light, know is not the truth?

I do not say that such would *continue* to be so, did they refuse fresh gleams of light, shed upon their path. Nay; this would at once deprive them of the character of Philadelphia. They would be Laodicea in a moment then.

Philadelphia is indeed the Nazarite path: that moral Nazariteship which meets with the approval of Christ. All is victory with such a state. Yet it is a path in which the secret must be kept, between Christ and the soul. He knows and He alone: “I know thy works” — this must suffice the true heart. Such may be asked, “Tell me wherein thy great strength lieth!” but it is a secret not to be betrayed. This answers to the first part of Samson’s history.

But Laodicea follows. Alas, she is blind, as Samson, now. Her Nazariteship is lost. She still thinks herself “rich, and increased with goods, having need of nothing”; yet her strength is gone; she is blind and naked. She is counselled to anoint her eyes with eye-salve, that she may see. She is lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, but nauseous to Christ: He will spue such a state of things out of His mouth.

My brethren, there are lessons here for our souls! We may have to begin *de novo*; the days of our former separation may have been lost. But we can begin again! We have a God of mercy to deal with, who has unfolded what is well-pleasing to Him. The moment is coming when the Church of God will be removed, in her last stage here; then the judgment of the Philistines will take place. Then the “sound of a going” will be heard “in the tops of the mulberry trees,” once more; and the Lord will go forth to battle with His foes, and “The saints will be joyful in glory”: “The high praises of God will be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hands !”

Let Philadelphia then remember that He has said, “Hold fast till I come,” and, “Let no man take thy crown.” The day is coming when Christ the heavenly Nazarite, will say, “Eat, my friends, drink, my beloved.” When we shall know the meaning of the words, “Then shall the Nazarite drink wine” (Num. 6). The blessing of Joseph which ran thus, will then be Christ’s: . . . “The God of thy father who shall help thee; and by the Almighty who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, . . .the blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be upon the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was Nazarited (see Hebrew) from his brethren!” The Crown is shorn (as it were) of the only True Nazarite, when the days of His separation shall be at an end! (Cf. Gen. 49: 25, 26; Deut. 33: 13-17).

The days of the Kingdom will then have come, and those who have stood fast, and walked as Nazarites here, will then be owned. Those who separated themselves to David of old, in his days of rejection, gathering to him in the Cave of Adullam, and in the days of the Kingdom, they received their reward. But the brightest gems of his glory were those specially named, who had met these special enemies — “the uncircumcised.” If we consult 2 Samuel 23, when the Sweet Psalmist of Israel sung his lovely “Last words,” it was of those who had conquered the *Philistines* its substance most expressed.

Chapter 14

“Greater Works”

“Let your light so shine” (Matt. 5: 16).

“Greater works than these” (John 14: 12).

“The Candlestick” was one of those ordinances which stood alone, giving a character to the Wilderness Journey, in the Book of Numbers. We have already noticed several of these special things, some of them not even mentioned elsewhere, which are peculiar to this Book. Before the journey commenced, and the Levites were set apart to serve, the “Candlestick” was the first thing spoken of.

When the Lord addressed Moses, from off the Mercy Seat that was upon the Ark; — “And when Moses was gone into the tabernacle of the congregation to speak with him (God), then he heard the voice of one speaking unto him from off the mercy seat, that was upon the ark of testimony, from between the two cherubims: and he spake unto him: “And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou unto Aaron, and say unto him, When thou lightest the lamps, the seven lamps shall give light over against the candlestick.” (Num. 7: 89; Num. 8: 1, 2).

Here only, of all the furniture of the Sanctuary is the Candlestick found. Just as the Trumpets alone belong to this book; and the Rod of Priesthood; and the Ashes of the Heifer; and the Ribband of Blue; — The Candlestick — though heretofore directed to be made, stands alone. This is full of instruction for our souls. How blessed it is to find some grand apparent *difficulty* in the Word of God! Be assured that when something comes across our path there which seems irrational, and out of context; in fact something that we are afraid to entertain — tempted to fear some mistake; it is in such a place that the richest ore crops out from the Word; yielding to us its sweetest lessons!

But the mistake we sometimes fall into is, making efforts to master the difficulty at once, never giving a thought to the great fact that we may not yet be ready for the truths which are there. Our souls are not fit for the lesson, and we must wait; we must grow in fitness; we must not give the matter up as hopeless, nor as not being for us at all. But we must wait for God’s time, and look for light to Him. Jesus spake to His disciples, as they were able to bear it.

Have I not at times feared to make my difficulties known to another? Has not my soul trembled — tempted to think I had placed my confidence in some statement of the Word in vain? Yet I have waited on my God, and not in vain; ‘and, it may have been in years after, the truth was made clear in the Word, and my soul was filled with praise! The great thing is never to lose confidence in it: God will sometime make it plain to the exercised heart.

I do not say that there is such a difficulty here, in the ordinance of the Candlestick. There may be absurdity in the matter, to the soul of the infidel. He may sneer at the hopeless jumble which the word of God here, as elsewhere, presents, to him. He may found theories about disjointed narratives and of collected manuscripts, and other wise deductions while the beauties of Scripture, like the starry skies to the blind man, are lost upon him. Alas — he wants eyes to see!

How suitably then is the Candlestick here introduced. The people of God are about to start on their Wilderness journey (Num. 10); in their Levite character* they are about to be set apart to serve the Lord (Num. 8), and ere they start on their pilgrimage all must partake of the Paschal Feast — the symbol of the unity of a redeemed people (Num. 9). The *first* thing therefore is this, that they are to shine as the “Epistle of Christ — known and read of all men”! They are to “Let their light so shine among men, that they may see their good works, and glorify their Father, which is in heaven.” “Christ” is to be made known through them on earth, He is to shine out in all their ways: this on the one hand; but on the other, it is *their* works which are seen; but they are to shine so that men may trace them to the source of all — their Father in heaven revealed by Jesus; the Father of lights with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning! Here then most suitably is the Candlestick found.

{*The Church on earth has two characters. The first her *Priestly* one — all her Members being fitted to enter the Holiest — under their great High Priest to worship God. Then in the second place she has her *Levite* character — in which the service of the people of God is seen. All too, have this place.}

Remark too in this ordinance of the Candlestick — the seven lamps, lit up by the oil of the Spirit, are to shine where no light was, within the holy place, but “over against the Candlestick — the shaft of which was of beaten gold. The lamps were to shine so that *its* beauty should be seen.

In the inner Sanctuary, or “Holiest of all” there was no light needful: the God of Israel was the Light thereof: the glory “Shekinah-ed” there; and in that glorious light none could dwell. What a wondrous “shadow” was this of Him, who “dwelleth in the light to which no one can approach, whom no one hath seen nor can see,” to whom be glory for ever and ever ascribed! (1 Tim. 6).

But in the outer Sanctuary, or “Holy Place,” this light was there. “The candlestick shone over against the shaft thereof.” God would have a light to display His Son. And here it is of profound interest and instruction to us, to note that when the veil was rent which divided the Holy place from the most Holy, the now *blended light* still shined on — when both were but

one “Holy”!* The light of Him who sits upon the Throne or Mercy Seat; and that from the seven branched Candlestick, both combined; the light from the glory in the face of Jesus, and the light of the Spirit lit up in the Church of God on earth, formed one bright and glorious effulgence. The day will come when in the glorified Church on high (Rev. 21), we read, that “the glory of *God* did lighten it, and the *Lamb* is the light thereof”; and yet “*Her* light was like a stone most precious; like a jasper and a sardine stone.” This effulgence all combined will shine forth — “I in them, and thou in me: that they may be made perfect in one; that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me (John 17: 21).

{*It is deeply instructive here to note, that in the Epistle to the Hebrews the Holy place and the Most Holy are spoken of as *one thing* — under *one plural word*, which embraces both when applied to the antitype — the true heavenly Sanctuary. For us the vail is rent and all are one: the “Holy” and “Holy of Holies” (cf. Heb. 10: 19).}

If we turn to the Gospel of John (chs. 12 — 14) we have a lovely hint at this “Candlestick” — where the Lord unfolds the gift of the coming Comforter to His People, when He was going away.

He had entered Jerusalem as her King. “Hosannah! Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord,” resounded from the voices of “much people,” “which had gone forth to meet him” (John 12). They waved the branches of palm trees, and spread their garments in the way. The Romans looked on and were silent. The Greeks came up and laid hold on His followers, saying, “Sirs, we would see Jesus.” All seemed lifelike, and promised great things.

But the Lord was not deceived. He could not yet “silence the enemy and the avenger”; nor “rise to reign over the Gentiles”; nor bless His people as their King. Nay. “The corn of wheat must die or abide alone” (John 12: 24); but if it die, it would bring forth much fruit. Another scene must darken the world. The cross must ensue, and the judgment of the world must come (John 12: 31). But the end would be — “I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” No more an earthly Messiah seeking in vain to draw the Jew — “His own”; but a wider glory would shine from the cross: Christ must leave the earth: He “must be lifted up” from it — not yet to heavenly glory; but between the heavens and the earth — upon the cross, He would be no more merely the object to the Jew as walking here; but to draw all men unto Himself! He would thus — as the crucified, be the object for the world. The “Brazen Altar” must be satisfied; its claims must be set at rest for ever, ere He could pass into the holiest in virtue of the work there done.

When the camp stood at rest in the Desert, surrounded by the Tribes of Israel, it figured the dwelling place of God. When one approached God's dwelling place, he left the world outside. Inside the curtains which surrounded the Court of the Sanctuary, he met the Altar of Brass. It did not stand in the world outside, nor did it reach the dwelling place of God. Like the cross, it stood between them both — for the Mediator between God and man; the "Daysman," to stand between. But the sinner had left the world, and all hope from man behind, when he lifted his eyes to the meeting place between God and man. The cross where Jesus was lifted up, was this Brazen Altar. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me!" He would thus be the "Zaphnath-Paaneah"; the true Joseph — the "Saviour of the world" (Gen. 41: 45).

When the "Brazen Altar" was thus passed by, ere the saved one reached the presence of God, the "Brazen Laver" met him by the way. He must not only be cleansed according to the need of man; but fitted for communion according to the thoughts of God! The Laver met his daily need, and the defilements contracted by his feet were removed — that no soil might hinder his fellowship with the Father and Son. Jesus becomes the true Laver (John 13) to wash their feet, that they might have "part with me." "If I wash thee not thou hast no part with me."

When the Brazen Layer was now passed, the "Holiest" the "Father's House" — was entered (John 14) to prepare a place for those who had been cleansed. The vail was yet unrent till Jesus died; He enters it, as yet, alone. He would come again and receive them there Himself. But Jesus — "The way the truth, the life," must prove in death, by being rent in twain as it were, that "no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." This was the vail — His flesh.

In the "Holy" place "the Candlestick" was set to shine meanwhile. The oil was about to be given; the Spirit of God, the other Comforter should be bestowed. *Then* the lights of the lamps would shine over against the Candlestick. Jesus had declared the Father; "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father also." This was *natural* in Him and true. None but He — the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, had declared Him.

But a new thing would come. One which would be *supernatural* indeed. "The believing one on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do, because I go to my Father." This was the 'Candlestick.' The sevenfold light would shine from the believer, in the power of the Spirit, "over against the Candlestick." Believers would show forth the Son of God, as he had shown the Father!

These were not Apostles: doubtless they too were amongst those who would so shine; but we do not find Apostles named in John. It is “believers” of which He speaks here. Were this not so, they would lose the joy and blessedness of these Scriptures in John.

The “great work” of Jesus — so natural to Him; would be replaced by “greater works” in them. It was the Father known in the Son was His great work here. But when poor lost ones, now saved, would show forth Him, by the power of the Spirit given them: these things were beyond what man could do. The seven lamps would show their light, but they would shine when no light was seen, revealing the beauty of the shaft and knops and flowers of the Candlestick.

Look at Stephen — “Full of the Holy Ghost,” gazing steadfastly into heaven. The glory from the Holiest shone out upon him. The Lamp of the Candlestick was lit up on earth, and no power of Satan could quench the light. It was “Christ” that shone in him. It shone over against the Candlestick. He beholds his Master in the heavens, and he is like his Master in the darkness outside. His face shines, as a child of the resurrection, like the face of an angel. His words are like his Master’s prayer. He was telling forth, without the words, the virtues of Him who had called him out of darkness into His marvellous light.

Surely this was a “greater work” than Christ had done. With Him all was perfect; all shone out because it was within. But not so with us. If the God who caused light to shine of old out of darkness had lit a Lamp in our hearts, it is for the shining forth of the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4: 6).

But all this is “Because I go unto my Father.” All rests on Him. He alone can order the lights “without the vail of the testimony, in the Tabernacle of the Congregation . . . from evening until the morning before the Lord continually . . . He shall order the Lamps upon the pure Candlestick, before the Lord continually” (Lev. 24: 1-4).

May His own “Shine, as lights in the world, holding forth (exhibiting) the Word of Life!”

Chapter 15

The “Ribband of Blue”

“ . . . Upon the fringe . . . a ribband of blue” (Num. 15: 37-41).

The ordinance which now comes before us, in this remarkable book, is found in a parenthetical chapter, lying in the midst of the history of

Israel's conduct in the Wilderness; and is peculiar to the Book of Numbers alone (ch. 15). This chapter contains certain directions to Moses relating to things to be observed when they be come into the Land, which the Lord had given them. (We may of course except the verses from 32 to 36, where an instance had occurred of presumptuous sin in the Wilderness; and yet this incident was connected with the directions about sins of ignorance, and sins of presumption there given.)

The very position of the chapter has marvellous beauty for our souls. Israel had been sentenced to wander for forty years in the desert, until the carcasses had fallen there of those who had "despised the pleasant land," and who said, "Would God we had died in this wilderness." Some amongst them had sought to go up against the Amalekites and the Canaanites without the Ark, and were discomfited unto Hormah. This was told us in Num. 14. The rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, which was in reality apostasy, was then about to manifest itself. Just before this took place, this lovely chapter drops in, with its streams of refreshment for our souls — detailing the unchanging faithfulness of the Lord! He speaks to Moses in all the calm dignity of one who could not change, though Israel might destroy himself. God was faithful, and He had given them the Land. Nothing then could alter His purposes and promises to Abraham's seed.

Moses was to speak unto the Children of Israel, and say unto them, "When ye be come into the land of your habitations, which I give unto you!" (Num. 15: 2). Just as if nothing had occurred, and Israel was as faithful as He, those words are uttered; irrespective of all that had passed!

But it is always thus. Man may fail: the saints too may turn aside. The servant's heart may be wrenched as he beholds their ways; but God is the refuge of their heart and their portion for ever! It reminds us of the Corinthians, when in such a state that Paul had to turn aside on his way there, having heard of their sins. But before he ever touches upon this, his heart turns to God. He thinks of Him. Of his abiding faithfulness, spite of all; and he says, . . . "Who shall confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. *God is faithful*, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son." (1 Cor. 1: 8, 9).

Thus it is here (Num. 15): He would bring His people in; and would teach them in the Wilderness their practice for the Land! This is striking and remarkable indeed. It is something at which we may challenge our hearts and ask — Are we too sensible of the fact that we are taught in the Wilderness our practice for the glory? I have no doubt that our walk here determines our place in that glory. Yet on the other hand — I am sure "it will be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father" — as the Lord has said. But this does not alter the other fact in any wise. If we recall the scene of the Supper which they made for Jesus in Bethany, before He

entered upon His passion in Jerusalem (John 12), we see three souls there — the dead man, Lazarus raised from the dead, seated with Him at the feast: the Martha who had served Him at her own board, and loved her Saviour, still serving there: and the Mary who sat at His feet and heard His word; who fell at His feet in her sorrow now worshipping at His feet, in this typical scene of glory. We are taught by this that as each one had learned of Him and walked with Him in the sorrows of the eleventh of John, each took their place at the feast in Bethany with Him: Lazarus sat; and Martha served; and Mary, with her spikenard poured forth, worshipped!

So with His people now: they are being fitted here, slowly but surely, by His hand, for the place and service they shall occupy in His glory. What an incentive is this for diligence of soul!

How this reminds us of David's men of old, who came to him, a sorry lot indeed; but served and abode with him till his kingdom came, and then what glorious men surrounded, and ministered to his glory! What characters were their's: what deeds had they wrought long perhaps forgotten; but remembered, and recalled and detailed in their value to him, in the day when he "wrote up the people" (2 Sam. 23).

There is a touching significance too in this "Fringe" which was to be placed on the bottom of their garments; and the "Ribband of blue," coming in here, in the midst of instructions, which have to do with Canaan, and their practice there. Nothing could be plainer than the fact that this "Ribband of blue" was an ordinance for the Wilderness path; though not for it alone. It was that which was abstract and general, without having reference to place or circumstances. Yet here it is, in the midst of instructions for the Land. Why was this?

It is plain (and the more so when we apprehend its import), that this *heavenly* border, was to serve, to connect their earthly path with things of *another* scene! That while here below the heavenly blue was to link their practice with things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God!

Thus is the unchanging faithfulness of the Lord, linked with the heavenly walk of His own, as they are instructed in "things above," where their hearts, and their affections are also.

Let us remark too, that this fringe, with its border of blue, was not placed on those parts of their garments, which were conspicuous to the eye. They were placed on the border of the robe: "the hem"* which came *nearest to the ground*. They were to "look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart, and your own eyes."

{*That which the woman with issue of blood “touched,” when she was made perfectly whole by Christ. (Matt. 9).}

The smallest detail of life: that which was connected with the pathway, and came down to the common things of every day, were to be heavenly in their character. It was to call to their mind each day and hour, by its heavenly blue — that they belonged to Him who is heavenly “as is the heavenly, so are they” (1 Cor. 15: 48). They were to “remember,” and to “do” — to be obedient in all details.

It was not enough that they should themselves decide what was heavenly, and follow the dictates of their own heart. All was faulty unless done in obedience too: obedience to the commandments of the Lord. But there was more than this. Its result was seen in a holy and separate walk; “and be holy unto your God.”

And here it is when the New Testament in its antitypes reflects the types of the Old with such marvellous beauty. When we come to look at the practical directions which are found there, how the details enter on the smallest things of life, and are founded on the fact that the saints are connected with heaven and Christ.

Time would fail us to recount the thousand precepts which fill its pages: the commandments addressed to direct the life possessed. The directions given to the life bestowed upon the children of God. How different is this from the commandments of the Law. They were prohibitions to the flesh, out of which nothing but evil could come. They forbid its actions and its lusts. They required righteousness from an unrighteous man, and visited their curse upon all who did not answer to them. But the commandments of the New, are addressed to a new life given, which needs to be directed through an evil world. They are called commandments, because if we did everything *right* without *obedience*, it was worthless. This was the path of Christ.

This heavenly character comes out very strikingly in the Colossians: as in other places in the Word. But there, where the saints are not themselves [looked at as] seated in heavenly places in Christ, it is largely seen; though not less seen in the other epistles. The saint in Colossians, “risen with Christ,” is practically walking in a character suited to heaven where Christ sits at God’s right hand.

Remark, beloved reader, how all those relations of life *which Christianity owns*, are here addressed. Wives and husbands; children and parents; servants and masters; ministers and those ministered to, in their heavenly paths: the subject one always coming first.

We do not find in the New Testament, directions for kings, or rulers; statesmen or soldiers; or the great ones of the earth. There may be, and there have been saints in these relations, but God does not *recognize* them as such there. To be so but falsifies what Christianity is. It instructs the lowly, the subject ones of the earth, in their heavenly path; but great in the sight of God. Some of the relations it exhorts came in through sin (as servants and masters, etc.). It does not disturb them. It does not undertake to set the world to rights. It leaves all things as it found them for the present time; but it comes from heaven to sanctify the heart in these relations, that it may be “heavenly” and “obedient” and “holy” to the Lord. The servant to his master, though an unbeliever. The master to his servant though a slave. And this while gathering out of the world a people for the Lord.

How sad and solemn it is, when heavenly truth has but little power with the saints, when clearness of doctrine, held in the mind, has never sanctified the heart; when worldliness marks those who hold the highest truths which God has been pleased to reveal. When the conscience alas, is deadened by the very truths which should produce a separate, holy, obedient, heavenly path.

But I speak of nothing new in this. It brought forth those terrible “woes” from the lips of Christ. Those warnings which came forth with scathing distinctness against those who taught the precepts of scripture, and pretended to walk therein, but whose desire was to be “seen of men,” and not of God. Harken to those denunciations of Christ in Matt. 23 against the formalists and religionists of that day. Woe after woe is heard; and this touching rite of the “Ribband of Blue” is referred to with those words:

But all their works they do to be seen of men, they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments; they love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.

Is there not the spirit of this around us now, rather than the lowly heavenly grace of our Lord? Had they not changed by their formalism, that which was the expression of this — in the “border” of blue, into an emblem for self-exaltation and spiritual pride? That which God had given to produce a lowly walk, was used only to gain place and honour from man.

But Jesus is the same. And virtue comes out of Him now as then, when a lowly soul would touch the border of His garment by faith, whether for healing, or for fresh supplies of grace.

May the Lord apply these several Wilderness lessons on which we have meditated, to our souls; binding them all together, as one said to me once, with a true “Ribband of Blue,” that His name — the name of our heavenly Saviour and Lord, may be glorified in His people, while they are waiting for Him here below. F. G. Patterson.