

The Lord's Host.

A few thoughts on Christian Position, Conflict, Hope.

"Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as the Captain of the Host of the Lord am I now come." Joshua 5: 13, 14.

Preface to Second Edition (revised).

The writer desires to commit the Second Edition of this little work to the grace of the Lord Jesus; praying for His blessing on all therein which may be found agreeable to His own blessed Word.

Introductory Remarks.

The Lord's Host, as of old with an earthly people, may fitly be used to distinguish those — now a spiritual people, whom He has redeemed. He has in His mighty love delivered them from the "world," the "flesh," and the "devil," through the redemption which He has wrought; putting them in full acceptance before God; an acceptance known and enjoyed by faith. This is the common lot of all who are His — of every child of God. "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men" (Eph. 4: 8). He first went down into the condition into which sin had brought man; into the "lower parts of the earth," broke asunder the last stronghold of the enemy; led captive those who were captives to Satan, and so perfectly and completely delivered them, that He can now use them against the enemy as instruments of His power.

Now, not only has He given us, by the calling of His grace, to be "holy and without blame before him in love;" but He has also seated us "in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" as to our present place before Him. Nor is this enough. It is not sufficient that we should possess these, our blessings, and our place by faith; He would also have us to realize consciously the wealth of our portion in Him.

Of what use would be all the riches of India, even to one who possessed it by an unchallengeable title, if he did not realize his possessions, so as to use and enjoy them? So with the things of Christ — "Our own things." We may be assured of it that they offer a wondrous field for diligence of heart, to realize and enjoy them, and to put others into possession of them also. But we may also be assured that this required purpose of heart, with a right condition of soul, and self-denial and devotedness: faithfulness, too, with that which is "another man's," that God may entrust us with the "true riches" (Luke 16: 11-12).

There is a wide difference between being, in the abstract, possessors of these heavenly riches, and the active realization and enjoyment of them, as of our place in union with Christ.

We shall hope, if the Lord will, to examine these things in detail; as also the activities of those who have entered upon their heavenly warfare — let us add — with diligent hearts; and we will then endeavour to exhort one another while it is called today, and encourage one another, or be encouraged, as the Lord may distribute to each of us in His own wise way.

We will divide our meditations, therefore, into three larger divisions, viz: —

1. The heavenly place, in Christ Jesus, which is ours as the people of God, through the redemption that is in Him.

2. Being there — the condition of soul which is needed, that we may realize our "own things." This will embrace three special phases: 1. The practical dealing with *flesh* and *self* consequent on our place in Him. 2. The condition of soul needed to meet the *enemy*. 3. How the *presence of the Lord* is ensured, and "*good success*" in our spiritual warfare. And,

3. The realization of our heavenly inheritance and the deliverance of others — in short, the activities of "the Lord's Host" under the leadership of a heavenly Christ.

The striking analogy between the Book of Joshua and the Epistle to the Ephesians and Colossians has been a fruitful theme of meditation and instruction at times amongst the Lord's people, even when the analogy has been but faintly seen. Our meditations will be based chiefly upon these Scriptures which offer such a rich field for the study of those who are His. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15: 4); and "All these things happened unto them (Israel) for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. 10: 11). Not only, then, have we the immense field of the "Law of Moses, and the prophets, and the Psalms," for our learning, patience, and comfort but we have in a special way, the "things" which happened unto Israel, under the specific dealings of the Lord, presented to us as warnings and encouragements by the way.

May He bless His people, and stir up their hearts' energies in the way that He can own and bless, for His name's sake! May we not only have divine sensibilities as to the truth, and to the blessedness of these things which pertain to Christ but may we have the divine energies also in

seeking His face, that we may know and enjoy the things that are freely given to us of God!

Part 1.

Chapter 1.

The Purposes of God, and the State of the People.

In the early chapters of the Book of Exodus we have a vivid illustration of the state of God's people as sinners, before redemption. They are in Egypt, a company of slaves and idolaters. Egypt gives us, in type, the world in its state of nature, fallen and under Satan's power. They were there in conscious misery, though apparently without any thought but present ease from the bondage under which they groaned. The "iron furnace of Egypt," with the lash of its taskmasters, and the clank of the chains of its slavery was felt, but God was unknown! Even when their cry "by reason of the bondage" was heard, it was not a cry to God. It reached His ears doubtless, for all things are naked and open before Him; His ear is never heavy, so that the groans of this scene do not reach Him. The poor prodigal (Luke 15) had got to the end of his means in the land of his slavery, but that did not bring him to his father, nor even "to himself;" nor did his heart cry to God for deliverance. To supply the want from which he suffered, he goes further away from God than ever. His *will* brought him away from his home at the first; his *need* took him further off still; his complete *misery* gave occasion for the display of his father's fullest grace!

So with a sinner. You will see one wasting health, talents, and energies, in the pursuit of some bubble which long eludes his grasp; when reached at last, it vanishes from his sight and affords no satisfaction to his craving heart. Then the prodigal goes further, and joins himself to a citizen of that country, but he finds the reality of the principles of that land — it never *gives*. Ask a man of the world to look back upon his life and tell you, when he was wasting his energies, and appearing so rich and happy, did it satisfy him? He will honestly answer you, No! His *want* never brought him to God; it carried him further away even than his *will*; and he barter for the husks his all! It is in a certain sense a mercy to find a soul at this extremity, for in the extremity of *misery* there is no hindrance to the grace of God, which an "elder son" refused.

"And God heard their groaning" (Ex. 2: 14); and God came down to deliver them. He is not merely love, but He is active in His love. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." "The Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost." But "God is a consuming

fire." How then can He act in love, and have to do with sinners without consuming them? This is beautifully hinted at in Ex. 3, where the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses "in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush." The bush burned, but was not consumed. Strange anomaly! "And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, *why the bush is not burnt!*" This was the wonder. If God had revealed Himself in the character of One whose burning holiness must consume all contrary to itself, who might abide? But He came down and revealed Himself in lowly grace in Jesus. He veiled His glory in that lowly Man. Still "he could not be hid." As the sun in piercing through the cloud proves the intensity of his beams by the light and heat which they convey, so Jesus in His lowly path of service and toil, sent forth His beams of love and light to enter the hearts of those whose need had penetrated His. He came down in grace to seek in a poor lost world for those who would trust His love, before the day of judgment. Thus God, who is a consuming fire, was not consuming, because He was revealing Himself in grace, but in a grace which reigns through righteousness.

He now announces His purpose to Moses: "I am come down to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land into a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." Not a word is said of the wilderness, and its forty years of endurance and toil. His *plan* was to test them there, which He did; but His *purpose* was to bring them to the place where He could dwell, to a land that "drinketh water of the rain of heaven. A land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year" (Deut. 11). He would bring us into a place where His own heart can be satisfied, and where He may dwell with and enjoy His people. How different from the land of slavery where nothing is to be had for nothing, where no man gives! "For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs" (Deut. 11).

God has redeemed us for heaven and for His own glory to Christ. He has not redeemed us for this world at all, though He tries and tests our hearts here, and teaches us to test and trust His. So He announces His purpose to Moses, and says not a word of the wilderness.

Now when Moses came to announce God's purpose to redeem His people, Satan began at once to bestir himself. As long as the strong man armed kept his palace, his goods were in peace, but when a stronger than he appears, all is changed. Burdens are increased, and the tasks more severe. Bricks are to be made without straw. The quiet service of Satan, where all are asleep under his power, gliding down the stream, is easy indeed, compared with the moment when God begins to work. The

deathfulness of a previous state is even preferred to the pressure of the enemy. The chains which had been noiseless and unfelt are now heavy, and their clank is heard. How many and how varied are the fetters with which Satan binds his victims! And these chains are the saddest of all which are noiseless, and therefore unfelt and unheard.

Cain's chain was envy. He could not bear to see one who had not toiled like himself accepted without an effort, as Abel was. Balaam's was the "wages of unrighteousness" which bound his soul in its fetters. He would gladly have died the "death of the righteous," but to break the fetters he so well loved, and to live the life of the righteous, he could not bear, and he was a lost man.

With Herod, it was his lust which bound his soul. In him we see the signs of deep workings of the natural conscience, so much so that "he feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly" (Mark 6). He seemed for a time to be an altered man. But the chain that bound his soul with noiseless power was too powerful for him to break, and to please a courtesan he beheaded John. How deeply solemn!

We might mention other cases in Scripture of this kind. Judas loved money; avarice was the noiseless chain, and it ate away his heart; no eye but the Lord's could see it. He grasped it more tightly, till the "son of perdition" "went to his own place." With the amiable young ruler, it was his possessions which bound his heart unconsciously to the scene, till Jesus put His finger on the chain, and "he went away grieved, for he had great possessions." With Gallio it was the careless indifference which we see in so many; "He cared for none of those things." With Felix it was procrastination. He trembled at Paul "reasoning of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," but put off repentance to a convenient season, which, alas! never came. With Saul of Tarsus, it was his robe of self-righteousness. Cleaving so closely to the heart, these chains are unfelt till the Lord interferes in mercy; then all is changed. Satan's bondage begins to be felt as it never was before, and all his energies are then put forth to frustrate the purpose of the Lord in delivering grace. Alas! we find that the people whom He has come to deliver now murmur. But we cannot wonder at this, as all was comparatively well with them in that service with which Satan had made them satisfied. But when the chains are touched they complain.

I desire to address the conscience of my reader as I pass on. Is there some noiseless chain, silently but surely woven round your heart, and, alas! it may be, unknown to you! Perhaps it has been touched now and then by the Lord, and the clank heard for a moment in your conscience; still yet you are unbound. It may be a chain which you know yourself —

the Lord and conscience have made you aware of it — and still it is there. Some secret sin — something cherished and allowed in your heart and ways — unseen by the eye of others, there it rusts, and cleaves to you. Be warned, and look to Him who has pointed it out; be assured that as surely as His unerring eye has seen it, so surely can He snap the fetters that bind your heart; they will be like "the cords that were upon (Samson's) arms" — they will become "as flax that was burnt with fire."

Do not allow the terrible chain of procrastination to bind your soul till that "convenient season" which never comes; but be warned, and flee to Him (be you saint or sinner), and in His presence He will prove the truth of His words — "If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8.)

Chapter 2.

Judgment Announced and the Way of Escape: the Bunch of Hyssop.

I pass over all the signs and wonders wrought in the land of Ham; and also over the compromises proposed by the enemy under the pressure of God's hand, until the moment when the final message was sent by Moses to Pharaoh. This we find in the eleventh chapter of Exodus.

And here I note the marked and striking analogy between this, and the Lord's present dealings of grace. With the message of the fullest and richest grace of the Gospel, comes the most solemn and final revelation of a judgment to come — as final as it is solemn and searching to the soul. No threat — no language of denunciation or declamation; but the terribly calm, clear statement of the utter ruin, after every trial and test, of man's estate; of the sure and certain perdition and eternal ruin of every soul with whom God will enter into judgment, according to his works. The truth has come and disclosed all: it has shown what God is, what man is, what Satan is, what the world is, what judgment is — all things are laid bare. He does not *threaten*; but has *revealed* judgment to come as the solemn result of grace despised.

"And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt." When all were asleep and apparently secure, the judgment would fall: "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." A cry when the blow had fallen. Signs and wonders had produced no contrition of heart: Pharaoh had hardened himself still more. Threatenings of judgment were of no avail. The plan of deliverance was unfolded by Him who knew His own requirements, and who was about to enter upon the scene as a relentless, righteous Judge. The *supper-time* was the time to hear and to act; when the *midnight* came the blow had

fallen, and then it was too late. The procrastinator might plead how well he understood the plan of deliverance; but he had folded his arms and judgment had overtaken him. He might cry, "Lord, Lord, open!" but the door of mercy had closed for ever!

If we examine the parable of the Great Supper in Luke 14, we find that it was not those who were living in open sin who refused this final call of grace. I say final, because you will note that the Gospel Feast is set forth as the final meal of the *day* of God's dealings with men. The Lord was at dinner in the house of this Pharisee at the time. The *supper* is the last meal of the day before *midnight* comes. This is very significant and striking. The gospel comes after all God's previous ways of testing and trial have passed.

The *morning* of innocence, with its lovely moments of freshness, when God came down to visit His creatures, when His creation was unsoiled with sin, soon passed away and man fell, never to return to this state of creature blessedness.

Then came His *noon-day* dealings with man, now with a conscience obtained when he fell. During their continuance came the frightful wickedness of men and angels, the earth was filled with corruption and violence; and God had to wash the polluted earth with the mighty baptism of the flood. Then men set up the devil for God in the renewed earth, and the whole world was worshipping him, in the passions and corruptions of their evil hearts.

The *afternoon* testing of the Law followed. It told man what his duty was, both positively and negatively — its "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not," taught him what he ought to be. But it never disclosed what *he was*, utterly and hopelessly ruined. Nor did it tell him what *God was*, with a heart full of tender pity and perfect love. Then the prophets were sent to recall him to its observance lest judgment should overtake him, and these they stoned.

It was in the averting that at last God revealed Himself in Christ. Would man now be won? Alas, no! Not one single heart was attracted to Christ of itself. They saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him. It was a lovely evening, after a day of storm and evil, which was ushered in so brightly; but how soon to close in around the darkness of the cross, where men quenched (as far as they could) the light of heaven.

God had another moment of mercy. The *supper-time* of the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, with the message that "All things are now ready;" "Come," for the *midnight* of judgment was about to fall. But "*all* with *one* consent began to make excuse." Men who were not living in sin,

but who were doing lawful and right things — attending to the farm, the merchandise, or their family affairs — even they also refused the gift of God.

I know nothing more solemn than the fact that when the Lord lifts the veil and points to the awful judgment of a future scene, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16), we learn there the *compelled remembrance* (the deathless sting of remorse) of times gone by and advantages lost for ever, in this present day of grace. How dreadful then for the professor, the procrastinator, the careless man. " *Son, remember!*" tells its own tale more truly than the many words which might be used to paint the scene. But it is not my present task to dwell on this side of the picture; I desire rather to unfold in some measure the certain way of escape from this judgment to come. The one is as certain as the other.

God had a serious question with Israel on the night of the passover. They were sinners, and sin had constituted Him a Judge. He had come down to deliver them and to bring them to the land. He appoints a way in which he can righteously pass over them as sinners when judging the world. The blood of a spotless lamb was to be taken, and placed upon the two side posts and lintel of the doors of their houses, which were to be closed, and none of the people were to leave their houses until the morning.

I did not purpose dwelling lengthily on this well-known scene, which has been such a fruitful theme to others. But I would press a few points which may not have been fully noticed. In the evening the lamb was to be slain, and its blood sprinkled by the believing Israelite in the "obedience of faith." This was done by means of a "bunch of hyssop." Now this points to a most significant and important thought in connection with the gospel. Many know the plan of salvation, as it is termed; they are as clear as possible as to the truth that salvation is by faith alone, and that the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it only, is that by which security from coming judgment depends. They know well those words, that "without shedding of blood is no remission"; yet they never have had, so to speak, the Bunch of Hyssop in their hands, though this illustrates the real link between their souls and their acceptance of the gospel. This is the point concerning which so many are ignorant. A Bunch of Hyssop is used in Scripture on two occasions. (I do not now refer to its typical import in the offerings: see Lev. 14, On one occasion it is used *by* an Israelite with blood (Ex. 12). On the other it is used in the hand of a clean person, *for* an Israelite, with water (Num. 19). In both cases it signifies *humiliation*. The Psalmist refers to it in this way in Psalm 51: 7, where he cries, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." This was the moral cleansing of his soul by complete humiliation.

An Israelite who believed Moses concerning the plan of deliverance on that "night to be remembered," did not fold his arms quietly, as many, and do nothing. No; he was up and doing, in "the obedience of faith" (Rom. 1: 5; Rom. 16: 26). "Believing in his heart" the glad tidings by Moses, he was seen outside the door of his house, before the world "confessing with his mouth" the acceptance of this message, and thus appropriating his personal share in the efficacy of the blood of the lamb. It was truly humiliating for him to go outside before a world of idolaters, into whose sins he had sunk (Ezek. 20: 6-8), and confess that, although he was one of God's chosen people, he could claim no immunity from judgment but by the shelter of the blood of the lamb. He thus justified God and condemned himself. It was humiliating, but right to do so. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." Here is the link between the soul and Christ, which so many need. The Bunch of Hyssop has never been grasped; the soul has never bowed in the obedience of faith, and in the conscious reality of its state, not only believing the gospel in the heart, but confessing it with the mouth to salvation.

How many are the dealings of God with souls to awaken them to the sense of their need, that His heart may thus be free to pour its love into theirs! How varied are His ways to bring them down to the point of blessing — even the sense of their own ruin in His sight. Once there, there is no hindrance; how simple then becomes the story of His grace "The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. 10: 8, 9).

The poor thief was there in conscience, when he rebuked his fellow, and said, "We indeed justly." He had the Bunch of Hyssop in his hand at that moment. Not claiming superiority over the railing robber; not excusing himself; but justifying God, and condemning himself; *then* there was no hindrance to the love of Christ making itself known to him. He believed in his heart, and he confessed with his mouth, and went to paradise with Jesus that day.

So with the woman of Syrophenicia; "Truth, Lord," confessed the fact that she could claim nothing from Him who was there before her, with His heart full of mercy. "Yet the dogs eat of the crumbs" — told that her heart had penetrated God's, and knew and believed that there was a blessing there even for one who had neither promise, nor right to claim His grace. It was the bowing of the conscience before the Lord in the obedience of faith; and the moment she is there the spring is touched — His heart is free to give the blessing which He had come down to reveal and bestow. "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt." You cannot think too well of God! Like Jehovah of old wrestling with

Jacob until he brought Him to the point where He might bless him, Jesus, as it were, wrestles with her till she has a sense of her true state, and then the blessing comes.

An Israelite on the evening of the Passover, with the bunch of hyssop in his hand, conveys this truth to our souls. The blood he sprinkled was to meet and satisfy the eye of God. It was to present a righteous ground to Him in judgment, for passing over a man whose sins deserved that the blow should descend on him, even more righteously than on his Egyptian neighbour next door.

The midnight of judgment came, but all was settled beforehand, as it must be for us. Our sins cannot be worse in the day of judgment than now. God's way of escape from judgment then will not *have changed*. It is as certain now as then. His love has anticipated that day in giving His Son. His Son has come, and has presented His blood before God. God has pronounced on our state as sinners already; and the day of judgment cannot speak more plainly than "There is none righteous; no, not one!" Christ has borne our sins and put them away before that day comes, and God has sent the news of His having done so. "He that believeth not is judged already (*ede kekritai*) because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3: 18).

But you may say, I know it all. I ask then, Are you forgiven? Are you safe under the shelter of the blood of Christ? I do not ask, Do you *hope* to be so? I ask, Are you safe? If you believe God, you are. If you believe your own heart, you are deceived: "He that trusteth in his own heart, is a fool" (Prov. 28: 26). May you know what it is to have had the Bunch of Hyssop in your hand; your heart confessing that your only security is that God, against whom you have sinned, has looked upon that precious blood of Jesus, that He has accepted it already, and the day of judgment will not change its value, or make it less precious in His sight. In virtue of it He has declared, "I will pass over you." Do you dare to doubt that He has accepted it? You could not, for you know He has. I do not ask, Have *you* accepted it, but do you believe *He* has done so? The proof that He has is that Jesus is at God's right hand. "When he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high" (Heb. 1: 3). He has by Himself purged the sins, and he who believes has his conscience purged of them. Suppose some one has *paid* a debt which I owed and could not discharge; well, I cannot be sued for it, but I shall be afraid to meet my creditor. To be happy in his presence, I must *know* that some one has been kind enough to do it: so God declares that it is done. Then my conscience is free, and I can afford to look now into my heart, which I dare not do before.

The question of all our sins has thus been settled before the day of judgment, and according to God's mind. If not, we never can put them away. Christ cannot die again "death hath no more dominion over him." He "was once offered to bear the sins of many." I say "all our sins;" for all were future when that precious blood was shed — when Jesus bore them in His own body on the tree. If all were not there, if all were not borne and put away, they will most surely come up again at the day of judgment, and that would be eternal ruin. Thank God He has borne ours who believe. Others may reject it and perish, but there the love is, and there is the work of Christ to save all who believe in Him.

Chapter 3.

The Seal of the Holy Spirit on the Forgiveness of Sins.

On receiving the forgiveness of our sins, there results a most important matter for our souls. I allude to the sealing of the Spirit of God. The sealing of the Spirit takes place *at once* when we receive this forgiveness — when we believe in Christ. This is quite different from the work of quickening, which makes us see our need of forgiveness. It is the personal indwelling of the Holy Ghost in our bodies. This truth comes out very blessedly in the type of "the things which happened" to Israel. The moment the blood had met God's claims, the pillar of cloud and of fire descended. "And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people" (Exodus 13: 21, 22).

It was blessed to be *safe* from a God of judgment on the night of the passover. But God was outside, and the Israelite was within: there was no communion between them. They could have no thoughts in common with One who was judging. To keep Him outside the house was the thought of that solemn night. But now He comes down at once to take His place amongst the people whom blood has sheltered. *Forgiveness* was known, but *deliverance* was not; still the conscience was clear with God, and in virtue of this the cloud descended *before* they were out of Egypt.

A soul may know no other truth than the simple but blessed fact of the forgiveness of his sins. Never mind; the rest will come! God seals him. While Peter yet spake these words — "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10: 43) — here were quickened people, needing forgiveness, listening; there was Peter declaring forgiveness in the name of the Lord Jesus, and in virtue of His work — needy hearts accepted the message; it was this they wanted, and at once, as the words entered their hearts, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." No doubt

He had been at work in quickening them *before* Peter's visit. He had created desires and the need of forgiveness which Christ alone could satisfy, but now He comes with the message of forgiveness, and they believe; consequently He takes up His abode in the bodies of those who believed in this message of pardon. This was the *gift* of the Holy Ghost; quite distinct from the *gifts* which, to mark His presence in the sight of others, were also seen at that day.

This makes the sealing of the Holy Ghost very plain. So it was understood by Peter, and taught by Paul. Peter tells them in Acts 2: 38 that, on the *remission of sins*, they would receive the Holy Ghost. Paul so teaches in the Epistle to the Romans. The blood of Christ having been shed (Acts 3: 25); and the ungodly sinner having believed on Him that justifieth the ungodly (Acts 4: 5), and who raised up Jesus from the dead, who had been delivered for our offences (Acts 4: 24); "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts (at once) by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us" (Acts 5: 5). All this is before deliverance is known (Acts 6, 7) from their *state* as sinners before God.

Thus, the reception of the Holy Ghost is a positive result on our believing in Christ, for the forgiveness of sins. Much has to be learned doubtless, but the result is plain — the Holy Ghost dwells in us as a consequence, and as a seal; "Having believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1: 13).

The tenth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews also shows us this truth. The moment the work of Christ is accomplished, the Holy Ghost is sent that we may know the forgiveness of our sins. "Whereof the Holy Ghost is a witness to us and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 10: 14-17). Here it is not the witness of the Holy Ghost *in us*, which is spoken of, but that *to us*. He comes to dwell in the Church, and to tell us not only that Christ had purged our sins before He went on high, but to bring to us the testimony, that we may have our consciences purged, and that God will remember our sins no more! He will not be untrue to His own Word; nor to Him whose precious blood has been shed; nor to His Spirit's testimony to us. Thus we have the (unasked) presence of the Holy Ghost, consequent on the putting away of our sins through the blood-shedding of Christ; as Israel had the cloud and the glory (unsought), consequent on the blood-shedding of the paschal lamb. It was as if God desired to be with His people at once; so the moment He could righteously come down to dwell amongst them, He did so.

Chapter 4.

Redemption.

To possess the forgiveness of his sins is the portion of every child of God. An unforgiven child of God is unknown in Scripture. False theology may, and has darkened the souls of His people; or they may never have known the light. Still forgiveness is their portion, and they *are* forgiven whether they know it or not; but God would have them *know* it as well, and when they receive forgiveness, He gives them the Holy Ghost. It is no matter of attainment, but of simple faith; taking God's thoughts and giving up our own. "Abraham believed God;" that was faith. Experience will often contradict what God says, but faith is not experience, and we are saved by faith and not by experience. "The full assurance of faith" is the only normal Christian state. It rests upon what Christ has accomplished, and upon what the Holy Ghost declares in the Word of God. Unbelief may reject it and be lost; but faith — child-like, Christian faith — believes God; it "sets to its seal that God is true," and God sets His seal (the Holy Ghost) on him who believes.

But to know forgiveness is not to know redemption. A man may know his sins are forgiven for which he would have been judged, and in conscience still be in Egypt. He may think himself "a sinner" merely, still. He may suppose he is still a child of fallen Adam, and thus he may have no sense of deliverance from that state at all. Now it is one thing to know that I had sins, and that I had earned judgment for those sins, and that grace stepped in and sheltered me by the blood of Christ, both blotting out the sins for ever, and delivering me from a judgment to come; but it is quite another thing to know that I have been wholly delivered from a present *state* before God — that of a responsible and sinful child of Adam, and that I am now a forgiven child of God, and never can be a child of Adam again!

Here the truth of redemption comes in, and we have both. "We have (both) redemption through his blood, (and) the forgiveness of our sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1: 7).

It was one thing for Israel to know that they had been *safe* from judgment on the night of the Passover, and quite another to have been *saved* out of Egypt. They *had been* slaves there, making bricks without straw. They *are* God's freed men, as they sing the song of Moses on the wilderness side of the Red Sea! Here is where so many err. They are trusting in Christ as their only hope; they may know too that their sins are pardoned, but they go on all their lives through, perhaps, crying out "miserable sinners" or "sinners." Plainly they do not know redemption, or this they could not do.

Suppose that an Israelite, instead of singing Moses' song of redemption, was crying out, because he found himself the same person still, "I am a poor slave in Egypt," what would you have thought of his

folly? Yet there are plenty of the people of God in no better state. How thoroughly dishonouring to the work of Christ! But it satisfies systematic religion, and ministers to it. Redemption is ignored in its true force; I do not say in words, for, alas! that is one of the most successful plans of the enemy, to use orthodox words without their true import, and thus blind the souls of the people of God as to their real meaning, keeping them in darkness and uncertainty all their lives.

An Israelite who was redeemed was dealt with from that moment on an entirely new footing — never as a slave in Egypt again; but according to the new place and relationship in which he now stood with God, and so it is with the Christian.*

{*Here I may remark that we must not confuse two thoughts that are quite distinct in Scripture. I refer to Redemption and Purchase. Christ is the "Head of every man" — even the heathen. Every man must be presented to Him in grace now, or in judgment by-and-by, because of the rights He has over all men by purchase. This is alluded to in 2 Peter 2: 1, and in Jude, where it speaks of those who profess His name, denying the Master who had *bought* them; but it is not said that He *redeemed* them. In the parable of the Treasure, in Matt. 13, you have the man buying (*agorazo* from *agora* — *the market-place*) the *field* (the world), in order to obtain the treasure which he had found in it. He purchases the whole inheritance, the world and all that is therein; but He redeems His people (*apoluo*, from *luo*, to loose). Buying them makes them your slaves; redeeming them is setting them free! It is never said that He redeemed all men; it is said that He bought them; and therefore He has, on this ground, although not on this only, indefeasible rights over all men. A Christian is both purchased and redeemed. Made free by redemption from Satan and the consequences of his sins, he is Christ's by purchase — he is "bought with a price," and therefore is "not his own," but the possession of Him who has purchased him.}

And now comes another thing altogether: not merely have we to learn what we have *done*, and the *forgiveness* we need for this; but we have to learn a far more trying lesson — what we *are*, and the *deliverance* we have in Christ. We never obtain the sense of thorough deliverance from what we are, until we are forced to cry out, "O wretched man that am, who shall *deliver me*?" Forgiveness may be known in measure, at the same time, as we have seen.

This is unfolded in Exodus 14. They started to leave Egypt, but the bitter lesson was then learned that they could not deliver themselves. Forgiveness does not give strength, nor does the possession of life. And here comes in *experience*; but experience before deliverance, and therefore not experience on proper Christian ground yet.* Experience will

never give deliverance; it will "bring me into captivity," but it will never set me free (see Rom. 7: 14-24); that is the work of another.

{*I would here notice the significant typical import of the fact stated in Ex. 13: 18. The people went up as far as Etham by five in a rank. (margin) Now five, in the typical use of the number, means weakness — it is "relatively small." "Five thousand of you shall flee at the rebuke of five," etc. Here it was God's ordering that they should go out by five in a rank from Egypt; while on their side man's weakness must feel that it cannot deliver itself. Satan's power is typified by six, or its multiples: and "six hundred chosen chariots" of Pharaoh (Ex. 14: 7) pursued them to hinder their escape from his hand. This is the more striking if we compare it with the fact that they crossed the Jordan afterwards by five in a rank (see Joshua 1: 14; 4: 12). The beginning of the picture shows man's effort in his own strength which is only weakness to leave the territory, and deliver himself from the thralldom, of Satan; this he finds by bitter experience that he is unable to do, and that he must be delivered by another. The other end of the picture shows us that it is only man in weakness who is permitted to pass through, and man's weakness which God will use on the new ground of practice in the heavenly warfare, so that when he is weak then he is strong. They must by God's ordering leave Egypt by five in a rank, as afterwards they must also by His ordering, in the same way pass over Jordan, to meet the Canaanite on the other side.}

On the night of the Passover it was a question between God and Israel: on the day of the Red Sea, between God and the enemy. Was God or the enemy to have those whom blood had purchased? In the salvation of the Red Sea we learn in type the efficacy of Christ's *death* and *resurrection* in delivering from the world, and Satan's power who had formed it as a sphere in which to please the flesh in man. The *blood* of Jesus answered for our sins before God as a Judge. His death and resurrection takes us clean out by redemption into a new place; delivering us for ever from the attacks and accusations of the enemy. God counts to us in grace, and we possess by faith, the efficacy of what Christ has passed through for us.

The children of Israel had encamped at Pi-hahiroth, between Migdol and the Sea. Pi-hahiroth bears the significant meaning of "*The opening of liberty.*" Here Satan's power is put forth in a final effort to frustrate "The salvation of the Lord." All his hosts are marshalled against the people, who are "sore afraid." But the Lord permits this pressure which eventuates in their learning Him in a far more blessed way than as a Judge. They experience what souls do who find that a day of quiet slavery to Satan was more easy to be endured than the pressure of his power against them, in their first efforts to escape. They may have dreamed of escape in days gone by; but now the trial comes. Will Satan permit it? The

bondage of the Egyptians was preferable to this trying moment: "For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness" (v. 12). Death was before them, and up to death Satan wields his power. Once death is past, Satan's power is over.

Now God's resources are seen; the blood which had answered for our sins has come from the side of a dead Christ; but He has risen, and left the whole domain of Satan's power — nullifying death for him who believes. "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord . . . The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (vv. 13, 14). And Moses lifted up the rod of judgment, and divided the waters of death; and the people passed over to the other side through death, which stood before them a moment before. The Lord has gone into the last stronghold of Satan's power, and wrought complete salvation *for* His people. A very real work may have to be done *in* them, that they may know themselves, and that when put into the pressure of such a moment they may be forced to find that all must be of God. But the Lord has wrought the work of salvation *for* us; and what He has passed through is counted to us in grace. It is not merely that His blood has cleansed us from every sin and saved us from judgment to come; but He has died and risen, and left the whole sphere into which He entered; we have died also to the sin and sinful state for and to which He died in ending it before God; and now He liveth unto God. "Christ being raised froth the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also (i.e., count it true in faith, what God has counted to you in grace) yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6: 9-11).

How then can Satan touch or accuse? If we have died with Christ out of the scene into which He entered in divine love, we have died to it for ever. Satan may try to follow (as Pharaoh and his hosts), and find that there is his ruin. He put forth his worst, in leading on the whole world against Christ to drive Him out of it; but therein Christ destroyed his power. His accusations are over; his attacks frustrated. He might accuse and attack one who is alive; but we have died with Christ, and this he can do no more.

If we were simple, this truth of deliverance would be simple too. But alas, we are not simple, and hence the bitter experiences we have to pass through, till we cry out, "Who shall deliver?" Then all is clear. We have been translated completely out of the place and condition in which we committed the sins, and as cleansed from them, put into a new place "in Christ" risen from the dead. By no efforts of our own could we ever reach this place. It is by complete surrender, and by giving up every effort that

we obtain this deliverance in Christ, who has accomplished it all, and who now stands in this new place Himself.

You find this experimentally described at length in Rom. 7: 14-24. Not that these verses give you the experience of any person at the time they were spoken. They are the *past* experiences of a *delivered* man, who had struggled for freedom until he found he was rather getting further from *deliverance* than nearer the goal. He is now standing on dry ground, so to speak, and describing what he experienced before he was free.

You see a remarkable illustration of this in Jonah 2. He is put into the place where none could deliver him but God alone in the "belly of hell" — as he describes it. Three times over he promised what he would do, if he only could get out; but no! "I will look again toward thy holy temple." No; vows and resolutions will not do. "But," he cries, "I will sacrifice to thee with the voice of thanksgiving." Will this set him free? No. Again he cries, "I will pay that I have vowed." All in vain! Promises and vows, efforts and resolves which are made in such a state will not do; they all come from "I," and as long as "I" is recognised you have not given up "I" as one in whose flesh "dwelleth no good thing," and turned the eye away to Christ alone.

"Well," said Jonah, "*Salvation is of the Lord!*" Ah, Jonah, you have found out the secret; you have touched the spring of the lock, and you are standing on dry ground the next moment! How simple, and yet how blessed to have the eye removed from self — hopeless self — and turned in the sense of utter, helpless weakness upon Christ! Then all is done, and we are free!

In passing I may remark that there are three steps learned in the bitter experience of this chapter (Rom. 7: 14-24). First, the hopeless evil of the nature of the flesh, in which is *no* good: not merely that the tree has produced evil *fruit*, but that the *tree* itself is corrupt. Then, secondly, it begins to dawn upon the soul that, after all, there are good desires, and earnest longings to do the right thing for God. The very aspirations of a new nature, which is sanctified to the obedience of Jesus Christ, are there. The first cry of the quickened soul is "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" But oh, what distress of soul, to find that even with good desires and earnest aspirations after God, the evil nature is stronger than the good, and leads me captive, so that I do the thing I hate; and I detest and abhor the thing I do! Bitter lesson; but useful to learn. Lastly, then, I learn that I have no power over it, and some one else must step in and set me free. Sad enough to find its total evil; sadder still to find that it is not myself, and yet I am captive to its desires. But the moment I give "I" up, and cry "Who will deliver?" my eye has turned away from all the efforts of "I," and at once I am free. The Lord has been there in the depths, and the

evil nature has been completely condemned in Him, so that I can reckon myself dead by *faith* and for deliverance; though in *fact* and *experience*, I find the nature alive, and its tendencies unchanged, but am entitled to treat it as "not I," but an enemy to overcome and subdue.

Thus we are "in Christ" — not "in Adam" at all, and *now*, for *the first* time, God will have fruit from us. All this work of redemption (Ex. 12 — 14) is what God has done *for* us. The experience we pass through is a work *in* us, that we may enter upon what He has accomplished. Now, for the first time, the mouths of those who in solemn silence ate the paschal lamb on the night of judgment; whose cries of fear had been silenced at the Red Sea by a God of salvation, are opened in a rich song of praise for what the Lord has accomplished in His delivering grace.

Thus *sins*, and *death*, and *judgment*, are all behind the delivered soul. The sins are gone — for Christ has borne them. Death is past for us in Him. Through it we pass (if we have to die physically) into the presence of the Lord, and "death is ours" — not now the wages of sin; but Christ having taken its wages, we are free, and instead of sinful man's portion, "after this (death) the judgment" (Heb. 9: 27); it leads us to the glory where Jesus is. Judgment is past, for He has borne the wrath, and he that believeth "hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment; but is passed from death unto life" (John 5: 24).

And "the waters returned, and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh that came into the sea after them: there remained not so much as one of them." "Thus the Lord saved Israel" (vv. 28-30). The same waters that silenced the foe, flowed back into their mighty channel; there was no retrogression — no return. Redemption once accomplished is accomplished for ever! The waters, flowing back in the channel, precluded the possibility of returning by that path into the land of slavery and sin

Chapter 5.

Praise: the Song of Grace and Glory.

"Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me," saith the Lord. God is pleased to receive our praises for what He has done for us, as also for what He is. Who would refuse to sing to His praise! Who would be silent in rendering to Him "the fruit of our lips; giving thanks to his name"? But mark the moment when the note is heard. The enemy was silent, he had "sunk to the bottom as a stone," "like lead in the mighty waters." God had wrought, and Israel was free; *now* He will have His meed of worship. How can He be worshipped when the heart is not free, when the conscience is not at rest? Impossible.

The ordinary thought of worship is the going through of certain religious formularies, and a routine of praying and singing, and perhaps hearing a sermon. All well in their place, but such things will not be in heaven. Worship characterises heaven: "They shall be still praising thee; "They rest not day nor night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty." The Father seeketh those that worship Him in Spirit and in truth (John 4). Worship is the expression of our *fulness*, as of His blessedness. Prayer is the expression of our *need* and our dependence on Him.

God first cleanses us from our sins, that we may be happy in His presence. He bestows on us a nature which is capable of enjoying Him in the light of His presence. Then He sets us before Him, "holy and without blame" in Christ, seals us with the Spirit of God; then having redeemed us, Christ takes His place in the midst of His people to lead their praises up to God. He was alone in death, sin-bearing, and judgment; the moment He has accomplished this and has risen, He says, "In the midst of the assembly will I sing praise unto thee." (Compare Ps. 22: 22, with John 20: 17, and Heb. 2: 12.)

Now I believe we should sing as Christians — believers, if you please — or not sing at all. The idea of setting sinners, as such, to sing, has no warrant from Scripture. We should sing in the consciousness of our blessing, and to Him, or of Him who has blessed us.

We will examine some features of interest in Moses' song, the chorus of which was taken up by Miriam and her maidens, with timbre's and dances. "Music and dancing" were thus heard outside the house and bore their testimony towards others. Even if it provokes the elder son's enmity, it tells out the father's and the household's joy! (Luke 15)

There are two distinct parts in this song; that of Moses, and that of Miriam. Moses' song took in both the present *grace* that delivered, and also the future *glory* to which they were called. Miriam only sang of present grace, but did not take in the glory beyond. This is marked and striking, and the more so when we find that she died by the way, in the wilderness, before they entered the land (Num. 20). Doubtless Moses too died on Mount Nebo; for the Law, of which he was representative, could never lead into the possession of the land; but that does not affect the lesson which we learn here; besides it must have been so, as he "spake unadvisedly with his lips," and it "went ill with him for their sakes."

His faith saw the delivering grace of the Lord, and so he sung. It also saw the sure glory that would come, and it took in the Jordan (v. 16) and the entrance into the mountain of the inheritance of Jehovah, which He had made to dwell in; the sanctuary which His hands had established.

Miriam only sang of present grace. A lovely note to be sure! But the heart must enter into something more than the look behind into those mighty waters of judgment, out of which Jesus rose, having left our sins, and death, and judgment for ever! Such a joy would never carry us through the desert where faith and patience are tried and tested every day. It needs that the heart be carried into the glory beyond, where He is, and to rejoice in the hope of it in the time to come; in the present sense of peace with God, and the consciousness of standing in the present favour of God — that favour which is better than life. (Compare Rom. 5, verses 1 and 2).

She pre-figures here the first bright joy, so full and real, which we have perhaps experienced ourselves, or have seen in others. It is bright and blessed, but it is a joy that never lasts very long on the journey. You see it at times in those freshly converted. In such a state the soul frequently becomes occupied with the joy, and this frequently takes it off true dependence on the Lord, and a fall is the result.

There is another kind of joy which is full and deep, and which never dies. It survives all the vicissitudes of the way. No desert sorrows or privations can ever touch its spring. "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice" (Phil. 4: 5). The Lord is the spring of it here, and He never fails. Paul was at the end of the desert journey there, and yet he never was so full of this joy. There was everything to try and wrench his heart. Like the caged eagle, he was pent up in the walls of a prison — shut out from the fellowship of the saints — all they that were in Asia, the scene of his most successful labours, had turned away from him; the saints were going on badly — the Church failing — need had pressed on his soul — and he was cut off too from that service which was his life: yet he finds marrow and fatness filling his heart, and his mouth is praising with joyful lips, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is (Ps. 63).

There is, as has been noted, another exceedingly lovely desire which springs up at once, seen in this song. It is to have God dwelling with them; the soul desires to prepare Him an habitation. It is going to dwell, by and by, with God in the land; but meanwhile it would have God dwelling with it in the desert: this is the alternative of John 14: 2 and 23. Satan is now in the Land; that is the strange anomaly in the present state of things. We are with God in the wilderness, and He with us: but with Satan, or rather against him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus.

The *holiness* of the Lord, too, is now spoken of for the first time. It was hinted at to Moses, in Ex. 3, in the words, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." If God had come down to redeem His people out of bondage and corruption, He must

have holiness; and now that they are free, they sing He is "glorious in holiness."

I believe we never understand what holiness is until we know redemption. You will find a sincere soul distressing himself dreadfully because he does not find holiness in his heart. He thinks rightly, Must I not be holy? You ask, Where do you look for it? And you find he is looking for it in his own heart. The fact is, he is not established in righteousness yet, and he is looking for holiness where "there is no good thing." But when he finds himself with God in righteousness, and redeemed, then it is all right to look for it as becoming the new sphere into which he has been introduced, to be with God. "Be ye holy, for I am holy" is all right then.

They are thus saved — but "saved in hope," as Romans 8: 24, says. It never takes you further than the wilderness, with a hope of the land and the glory, and meanwhile the groaning in unison with the Spirit here; but singing the praises and blessings of the Lord.

Chapter 6.

Heavenly Places.

Redemption is the starting-point of the Christian in his course and his relationships with God. Many and bitter are the experiences which lead the soul up to this; but they do not find the soul consciously on proper Christian ground at all. This redemption is in Christ. We come into all the blessings and benefits of it on believing — but the work was done long before — our sins were borne, and all was finished before we came on the scene. Then came the work in our consciences which made us feel our need of cleansing; then of deliverance; but it only led us into the value of what Christ had already accomplished. This is not learned by experience — though experience may lead up to it — but by simple faith in Christ. Faith is the empty hand which stretches itself forth to be filled from Him; and true faith may always be tested, in that it has Him for its object!

Some are troubled, too, about measures of faith, as to the assured sense of deliverance or otherwise. There are no measures of faith in this respect. Faith is faith; and there is no such thing as faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that does not save. You may ask, When? I reply, When you have got it! Just as a drop of water is water as much as is the Atlantic Ocean; so faith is faith — be it great or small. Faith casts the soul wholly upon God and what He has said, apart from feelings or experiences altogether. No doubt when faith is simple right feelings and experiences will follow; but it rests upon the word of God as its true and only basis.

It may now be demanded, why I have brought together the heavenly place of a Christian, immediately following the salvation of God, and complete deliverance of the soul out of all its former relationships and responsibilities. Has not, it may be asked, the great and terrible wilderness to be traversed before we reach that place on high? Did not Israel wander for forty years in the desert before they arrived in Canaan?

This was all true with them. They traversed the one to reach the other. We have, on the contrary, reached our Canaan already, as being in Christ; it is then, and only then, that we have found the world a wilderness to us. I do not think we ever really find it so, until we are conscious of our place and possessions on high "in Christ" — united to Him by the Spirit of God. I do not say that with all it is so known; many think the wilderness of life has to be traversed before the soul is conscious of its place on high — but this is not God's way. "Not as the world gives" gives He unto us. He brings us into all that Christ possesses as a Man before Him — and this is a present thing. There is no experience at all in learning this. Much experience had brought the soul to the consciousness of powerless fear, and such exercises of the heart and conscience that it might learn God as a Saviour — delighting to save!

But God has brought a *Man* into glory, and seated Him on the throne of God. Faith tells us that there is a Man in heaven — faith which is based upon the testimony of the Scriptures. *They* tell us that this is the new place for man by redemption. If I look upon Him as the forerunner, He has entered in for me, If I look upon my union with Him in that new place, then I am united to Him who is there. If I was alive in sins, He shed his blood and put them away. If I was dead in sins, He died for my sins. If He was raised, God has raised us together with Him. If He is gone up on high, we are raised up together and seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. There never was such a thing as a man being united to Christ in heaven before the Holy Ghost came down from heaven to dwell in our bodies. There never was such a thing as the Holy Ghost dwelling in a man whose conscience was not purged, and this could never have been until after the work which purges the conscience was done. Hence no saint before the cross ever knew all his sins put away, and his conscience purged. He knew of certain sins being forgiven. Nathan is sent to tell David of his horrible sin in the case of Uriah being put away. But no one ever knew God in the light of His presence within a rent vail, and that the very blow which rent the vail had put him in God's presence without one single sin! As a consequence, the Holy Ghost never was given till Jesus was glorified. (See John 7: 36-39).

The Holy Ghost inspired the prophets; came on them for a time, and then left them. He did this even on men who were not converted to God at all, as Saul and Balaam. He guided and taught the saints, and quickened

the souls of sinners; but He must have the conscience purged of every sin before He could dwell in our bodies.

The Spirit of God wrought in souls, and they were born again of the Word and Spirit of God. They had a new nature, which longed for complete deliverance before the cross made it possible that God could make known to any that all their sins were there put away. The children of God were then in bondage, hoping for a Saviour, and a salvation which they needed. Still none of them had the Spirit of adoption — the Spirit of His Son, whereby they could cry "Abba, Father," given them. Now, it is true (since the cross) that "Because ye are sons (already, by faith in Jesus Christ; Gal. 3: 26), God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father" (Gal. 4: 6). We stand thus consciously in relationship to God as our Father, which no saint of God ever did; although they were born of God, this relationship as sons never was known. *Confidence* in God characterizes the Old Testament and before the cross; *relationship* characterizes the New.

The people of God before the cross were under the "*forbearance*" of God. When the cross came and discharged all God's claims, and purged their sins, they are on another footing altogether. They now stand as those who have been righteously forgiven and justified. Romans 3: 25, 26, brings this truth out very plainly; "Whom God hath set forth a propitiation (or mercy seat) through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the *passing over* (margin), of sins that are *past*, through the *forbearance* of God; to declare *at this time*, his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Suppose a man owed a debt which he could not discharge. Well, some kind person says he will be security for that debt. Then his creditor *forbears* with him; he does not press his claim. Still the creditor's claim has not been settled, nor is the debtor relieved; the debt hangs over him still.

But suppose the rich man has kindly discharged the debt himself, unknown to the other. How very kind! you exclaim. But still the debtor's mind is not relieved; he thinks he is still under the forbearance of his creditor. Then some one comes with the news that all has been discharged, and that the creditor wishes to assure the person that he wishes him to know it, and not be afraid to meet him any more.

Now this forbearance was the state of the saints before the cross — they confided in God — trusted His promises. They knew that some day or other these promises would be fulfilled. They thus lived and died in confidence in God. God was looking on towards the cross, and the Son was in the heavens; the One who had presented Himself to come some

day and do all God's will (Ps. 40: 6 — 8). Thus God *waited*, and His people were under "the *forbearance* of God;" and the Son was security, so to speak, for their sins; one day or other He would take up the claim and discharge it. At last came the Son of God; in holy love He took up the work — "bore our sins" on the tree, discharging every claim. He died and rose, and went on high. From the heavens which He entered by His own blood (Heb. 9: 12), He sent down the Holy Ghost with the message that the sins were borne and put away, and thus our consciences are purged in receiving His testimony *to us* (Heb. 10: 15-17); then having believed this testimony *to us*, He then comes to dwell *in us*, uniting us to Him who has purged our sins, and then making us members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones!

But more. Then comes out all God's delight, and the purposes of His love. He gives us the same place, and joys, and blessings, and inheritance with His own Son! He had become a Man, and as a Man — the firstborn amongst many brethren He took His place in glory, and God set us in Him there on high. He has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1: 3). He has quickened us together with Christ; raised us up together, and seated us together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2: 6).

Thus His people have, by sovereign grace, this new and wondrous place, and they should be the exponents of a heavenly Christ, on earth, by the Spirit of God. The Church of God, looked upon in the truth of it, is the reflex on earth, produced by the power of the Spirit of God, to the glory of Christ in heaven.

We will now examine this a little more in detail. Forty years' endurance brought Israel up to the plains of Moab, and Jordan lay before them. The wilderness is a subject of deep interest to our hearts. In no place do we so learn the sympathies and tenderness of Christ as there, where faith and patience are tried and tested — where God leads and feeds, and trains His people in obedience and brokenness of will, for the heavenly warfare of the land. This is not properly the subject of these papers, though we may enter a little upon it in the next chapter. They had been safe from judgment forty years before in Egypt, on the night of terror. They had *come out* of it by redemption, never to return by that way again. Still they were not *come in* to the Canaan to which God had purposed to bring them; and there rolled the barrier to the land. The Jordan is commonly taken as a type of death, and very justly. But it is not death physically — or in other words the death of the body. It is the fact of Christ's death and resurrection being counted to us in grace, and so used that it is death and resurrection morally to us, leading us "in Christ," into a new scene altogether; a place where we know no man after the flesh,

yea, if we had known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him thus no more (2 Cor. 5: 16).

We read in Joshua 3, that the Ark of God — borne by the Levites — was first to pass down into the waters of death, the last token of the enemy's power. There was to be a space between it and the Host which followed after. Then as the feet of the priests touched the brim of the waters, they stood upright on an heap, and all the Host of the Lord passed over into the land in which the Lord delighted, at the other side of Jordan. *God* had passed over them when He was judging Egypt. *They* passed over here, when it was a question of sovereign grace bringing them into the land in which He chose to dwell.

None could pass that way till Christ first was there. He must dry up that mighty stream of death in which God's judgment was expressed. He must thus end human life, which the enemy could touch, before He introduced us into the life beyond it all. The waters compassed Him about, and flowed over His head. Deep called to deep as they reached His soul. But all was borne, and the bed of the river of death proved, as His people traversed it with dry-shod feet, that all had borne down upon Him; "All thy waves and billows passed over me."

The priests "stood firm," bearing the Ark; and "the people passed over right against Jericho." There was the organized strength of the Enemy in unbroken power — the seven nations of Canaan were also there. Thus has the Lord died and risen; ascended on high He has entered, as Man, into a new sphere for man, and has introduced us into life on the other side of death, and given us all that He possesses as Man.

In Ephesians 1 this new place is unfolded according to the counsels of God. It is remarkable that there you have an allusion, not only to the Passover and Red Sea; that is the judgment of sin, and redemption of the people of God; but we have also in it the Ark in and out of the Jordan, and in our Canaan — the heavenlies. Thus, the whole wilderness is dropped; fulfilling most fully in the antitype the statement of God's purposes to Moses in Ex. 3: 8, and the full result of those counsels in introducing man into His presence on high.

Thus we read (v. 7), "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." The blood of Christ, on the ground of which we have this forgiveness and the redemption which is in Christ, is the way into those counsels of His grace and purposes in Christ before the world began. Then we read (v. 19) of "The exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in heavenly

places." Thus the true Ark of the Covenant has been in the waters, and in the next chapter (Eph. 2: 3-6), the people of God have passed through. "Even when we were dead in sins, he hath quickened us together in Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

We have thus been introduced into this new land. We might say in the language of Psalm 119: 3, "The sea saw it and fled: Jordan was driven back." As the Psalmist links together the deliverance out of Egypt of the Red Sea, and the entrance into the land through the Jordan; so does the breadth of the purposes of that God, "who is rich in mercy," take in, in Eph. 1, 2, our present introduction into "heavenly places in Christ Jesus," as the people whom He has cleansed and redeemed!

Chapter 7.

Canaan First; then the Lessons of the Wilderness.

The people of God are a heavenly people — they are already "in the heavenlies in Christ," as we have seen. We require no experience in learning this blessed truth — nothing but simple faith. We pass through many experiences before accepting the truth of being dead with Christ to our whole sinful state as children of Adam; the more so when experience contradicts God's Word, and we find we are, if we look at ourselves, still alive. The evil nature is still ready to lend itself to everything contrary to God. But for faith, and for God, it is dead. The only thing which lives in us, in His sight, is that new nature which He has given us. The feeblest throb of it is fragrant before Him, because it is the exhibition of the life of Jesus, in whom was all His delight, in our mortal bodies.

We have thus been introduced into a *life* on the other side of death and judgment. The very life we have in Christ is a witness that our sins are all put away. Before He bestowed it upon us, He first bore the sins which He found in the way, as He passed down, in holy love, into the depths in which we lay — "dead in sins." He then rose, leaving them all behind. He introduced us into a *peace* on high with God — a fitting sphere for that life to grow and flourish. He gives us the glory He has as a man: the *possessions* of all He will inherit. Then He looks for the works and fruits suited to that new condition which God had foreordained for us to walk in (Eph. 2: 10).

Thus, in this new place, having this new life, and being already set in possession of all things in Christ, we are not in Egypt; we did walk according to the course of this world; we are not in the wilderness; but we are in the heavenly places, which are our Canaan: "We are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit." And here comes in the paradox of the Christian state. He

looks on high and sees Christ in the glory, and is conscious that he is in Him. He looks below and he finds himself traversing a world under Satan's power, in which there is not a breath that is not noxious to the new and heavenly life within. But having first begun in the glory, with the consciousness of His place there, he is in the race which leads to the attainment of the goal — the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus. He looks at himself, and he can say, "as having nothing." He looks at Christ, and says, "yet possessing all things."

Now, there is no place for learning the tender sympathy of Christ — the blessings of a Father's love and patience and care as in the journey through. True, he must first have reached by faith the Canaan to which he has already come in Christ. Then he finds that this world is not the sphere in which God can bless him fully; but that there is no place where his own heart is more thoroughly learned, and the heart of Christ, as in the wilderness way.

In Deuteronomy 8: 2-5 we read — "And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thy heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no. And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna (which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know), that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live. Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell these forty years. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee."

The wilderness is the place of education for our warfare in the land — the place where faith and patience are tried, and where the ultimate thought of God in the training is that obedience may be perfect, and our wills broken, by learning to live by every word of God.

The first stage in the wilderness journey gives a character to the whole. We find it in Exodus 15, just after the song went up to the Lord. The *first* thing we have to do is to give thanks unto the Father, "Which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1: 12-14). This takes in the whole range of what God wrought from the night of the passover, until the morning when the note of praise ascended to Him from the hearts of His redeemed people, on the shores of the Red Sea, in which the hosts of Pharaoh had sunk to the bottom as a stone. Then we need to be

strengthened according to the power of His glory unto patience by the way.

The salt or bitter waters of death have delivered us, because they have been borne by Jesus. But now we must taste them because we have been delivered. We must find that death is in the scene. Tribulation is our portion in this world — but in Christ, peace. What, then, must we learn? That we are crucified with Him; that the cross, in which we can glory, when put into the trial, makes it sweet indeed. Take reproach — how bitter to endure! but let it be the reproach of Christ, and how different is the taste! Take the needed discipline of His hand in correcting that which is evil in us, or likely to spring up in our hearts — how hard to be borne, how hard to be continually humbled! Now if we were thoroughly humble we should not need to be humbled, but because we are not, we must be broken down. See the thorn given to Paul. He goes to the third heaven, where no one had ever been before and returned again but Paul, and now he must have his thorn. What trying work thus to be humbled before others, just because he had been in the heights! He did not need it there, but he did when he returned, and lest he should boast of having been there, he must have a thorn in his flesh. He prays thrice that it may depart from him. It was the bitter water to Paul. But no! The Lord knew better than Paul what was needed, and he must have the thorn. Very well, says Paul, "most gladly;" "I glory in it." Ah, Paul, now you are at Elim! You have made an Elim of the trial, and you can sit under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit be sweet to your taste.

There are three sorts of tribulation or dealings of God in the way of discipline in the wilderness with us. First — *Tribulation in which we may glory*; for instance, suffering *for* Christ in this evil world. This is different from suffering *with* Christ. All Christians suffer with Him, because they possess life in Him, and that life must necessarily suffer in a scene which was all suffering to Him. If we suffer with Him we shall also reign with Him. But to some the suffering comes for faithfulness to Christ; it is also looked upon as a *gift*. "Unto you it is *given* in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer *for* his sake" (Phil. 1: 29). In this we can indeed make our boast. How far this goes beyond suffering for conscience' sake! A man to suffer for it may be a loser, because he does his business conscientiously: perhaps his profits may not be as large as those who have no conscience in the matter. But the same man may have found the pathway of a rejected Christ in this evil world, have had grace to turn his feet into the track, and the result may be that he loses his business altogether. The mistake is in judging things merely as right and wrong by conscience. Conscience is never a guide. Paul followed his conscience, and persecuted Christ and wasted the Church of God. Following Christ is the only sure pathway, and it is a Christ whom the world has cast Out, and whom God has set in glory. Can I have better

treatment from the world than He had? "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but *because* ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, *therefore* the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him who sent me;" that is the Father (John 15: 19, 21).

There is a second kind of *suffering under which I must humble myself*, and in which I cannot boast. I allude to the suffering of various kinds which comes under God's righteous government, and from Him as a Father, for evil allowed and unjudged in our ways. The Father, without respect of persons, judgeth according to each one's work, therefore we have to pass the time of our *sojourning here* (to which this judgment applies) in fear; there is no fear in heaven (1 Peter 1: 17). How much these retributive dealings of a Holy Father with us are forgotten!

Then there is another tender and merciful order of chastening or discipline, which is more what Paul also had to endure. It is a *preventive discipline, because of a tendency to be puffed up*. The Lord knows our hearts well; who knows them better? and His dealings are suited to the temperament of each, and to the tendency of each to get away from Christ, to which each is most liable. "He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous;" His eyes are on them for their good, and the righteous should not withdraw their eyes from Him!

A striking fact comes out now. I mean when the Marah bitterness is approved of, as God's true and loving yet firm dealing with us, the sorrow and bitterness become but the occasion for the next step; the cross sweetens the cup. It brings to mind that murmuring self has been dealt with on the cross, and when self is gone, then the bitterness that self tasted is gone with the self that tasted it. Then the soul is at Elim with its wells and palm trees, its refreshment and shelter. But I allude to something else which is not told us in Exodus — their return to the Red Sea again. How strange to go back to that through which they had just passed!

If we turn to Numbers 33 we find the interesting itinerary of the journey, step by step, and stage by stage, marked and registered under God's eye. From Pi-hahiroth to Marah, from Marah to Elim, and from Elim, with its fountains and palm trees, back again to the Red Sea! (vv. 8-10.) What do we learn from this? I believe a blessed lesson. We should be able to turn now, without a quiver in our hearts, and calmly survey that death by which we have been delivered — the death of Him who passed through its dark raging flood for us. We can contemplate it as that which silenced

every foe; "The waters covered their enemies; there was not one of them left" (Psalm 106: 11).

Chapter 8.

"Gilgal": the Stones of Memorial in the Jordan and at Gilgal.

God has thus given us eternal life in His Son — a *life* on the other side of death and judgment, which were borne by Jesus before it was bestowed. This life is a witness that the sins we had committed are all for ever put away. When He was passing down in holy love into those depths where we lay "dead in sins," He found our sins: He took them up and made them His own — died and rose, leaving them all behind Him at His cross.

We have also been introduced, "in Christ," into a new *sphere* on high with God; a fitting place for the life He has bestowed. He has given us in title the glory He possesses as Man, and the possession too of all He will inherit by and by. Thus, in this new place, we have wholly left the Egypt to which we once belonged, and the wilderness which we traversed, as we look at ourselves "in heavenly places" "in Christ."

And here comes in the double character of the Christian state, as we have before said. If he looks up he is in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus, united to Him by the Holy Ghost sent down. But he is traversing the desert as a pilgrim and stranger, if he looks below; a place in which every breath is noxious to the heavenly life he possesses in Christ. He has begun in the glory, and he is in the race which leads to the attainment of the goal; the mark for the prize of the calling on high of God in Christ Jesus. He looks at himself and can truly say, "As having nothing;" he looks at Christ, and says, "Yet possessing all things."

The first spot where Israel's feet stood after crossing over was at Gilgal. There is no student of Scripture who will not have noticed the deep importance of this spot subsequently, in all the wars of the Lord, as also in the history of the people. (See Joshua 4: 3, 8, 19; Joshua 5: 9; Joshua 6: 11, 14, 23; Joshua 9: 6; Joshua 10: 6, 15, 43; Joshua 14: 6.)

Here I may remark that Canaan is not the type of the Father's house where we hope to be when the Lord comes and receives us to Himself, and conducts us to that scene of bliss. There will be no conflict, no enemies found in that place of rest. Canaan is a figure of the heavenlies which we are in, as a *present* thing by faith; and as united to Him who is there. All is yet in possession of the foe. The heavenlies are the abode, for the time, of wicked spirits — the rulers of the darkness of this world (Eph. 6: 12). We have therefore, to maintain our place as heavenly men, under the Lord, against all the hosts of Satan's power.

Gilgal has five characteristics, of which we shall now hope to speak in detail. They are — *First*, The stones of memorial set up at Gilgal, and those in the Jordan. *Secondly*, The characteristic of the place — Circumcision. *Thirdly*. The eating of the Passover there, on the plains of Jericho. *Fourthly*, Feeding upon the old corn of the land of Canaan; and — *Lastly*, The presence of the Captain of the Host of the Lord, who now presents Himself to lead a circumcised people to victory.

If all things then are ours, there is that which we never may and never would lose sight of; nor would our God allow it to be so. I mean the way into this new sphere, and what it cost the Lord of glory that He might have us there. It would seem as if He only waited until His people were safely over, to speak of that which was nearest to His heart (Joshua 4: 2).

There were two heaps of stones of memorial set up. One, *at the command of Joshua, by twelve men*, in the place where they lodged at Gilgal. This was composed of twelve stones taken out of the spot where the Ark stood firm till all had passed across dry shod. The other by *Joshua himself*, in that spot where the feet of the priests bearing the Ark stood, in the bed of the river of death. No doubt both are attributed to Joshua (v. 20), but there is a striking significance in the difference.

There are two ways of looking at these stones. They point to the Lord Jesus Himself at the moment when the waves were flowing over His holy soul in death. And they point to Him as the risen One, who was dead, and is now "alive for evermore." They also point (for such is the perfect identification between Him and His — He the Redeemer, they the redeemed; He the Sanctifier, they the sanctified) to our being *now* one with Him in life who was dead, and who lives for ever; also that as thus risen with Him, we are dead with Christ.

The moment we are introduced into this life in resurrection, the remembrance of the path into it for us — the path of death for the Lord, is the constant food of the soul. Instead of death having fed upon us, its lawful prey — we feed upon death; but this death is the death of the Lord. It was thus we received this life at the first; eating the flesh, and drinking the blood of the Son of Man; thus appropriating Him in faith, and in the consciousness that except thus we have no life in us (John 6: 53). Having fed upon Him by faith in death, and having received eternal life in Him, we live by that which produced it. We feed upon Him as risen, and who was dead, and thus we live by Him. "He that eateth me, even he shall live by me" (John 6: 57). This is practical life: all else is death. It is but the Adam life (if you can call it such), and God owns it not.

The Lord instituted the supper when here below on the same night on which He was betrayed; but this was not enough. We do not (as the Church of God) eat the Lord's supper merely as thus appointed. He has gone on high in glory, and again — as the true Joshua, type of a heavenly Christ, by power of the Spirit, Leader, and Guide of His people — has He re-instituted the feast. It is from the heavens He speaks through Paul, by the Spirit of God sent down; and thus does the Church of God partake of it in the unity of one body. It had not this character as at first given, and the Church of God partakes of it, as the symbol of its unity as one body — breaking one loaf, which expresses this unity. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The loaf which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? (i.e., His own body.) For we, being many, are one loaf, one body (i.e., the Church, His body); *for we are all partakers of that one loaf*" (1 Cor. 10: 16, 17). With Israel, it was twelve stones, as the symbol of the unity of the twelve tribes. With the Church it is "one loaf" — because it is "one body" in union with its Head in glory. There is no room in this for the independency of the present day. There is no room for the self-will of man in having as many tables as he pleases, or each one for himself; as many have done through the "commandments and doctrines of men."

Thus the Church of God, if obediently acting under a glorified Christ, by the power and direction of the Spirit of God, has the precious memorial in that feast (in its verity), the touching and heart-searching remembrance of the death of the Lord, antitype of these stones taken from the bed of death. We carry with us death, which once was our enemy, but now our ally, to this place of strength. She is conscious of her union with Him who died. There was no union with Him till He rose. Till then He abode alone. But also (now that we are in union with a risen Christ), we know that we have died with Him, and are now risen with Him, and thus introduced into this sphere of glory.

Oh what a crowd of thoughts would freely flow through our hearts, by the Spirit of God, were we to meditate further on those that present themselves as we contemplate this feast! But we must be satisfied in presenting the meaning as far as we can in this meditation; bearing in mind the basis of our thoughts as noted in our introductory chapter.

The other heap of stones was set up by Joshua, in the bed of the river Jordan. The first heap, set up at Gilgal, was placed there by the twelve men, at his command. These he is said to have placed himself, in the place where the priests' feet stood firm with the Ark. To me this difference conveys a most touching truth. We are told in v. 18, that the waves flowed on, over this second heap of memorial stones, as soon as the Ark of the covenant, borne on the priests' shoulders, came up out of Jordan: "and there they are unto this day."

Both these heaps of stones refer to Him in *His* death, and in *His* resurrection. They also speak to us (because twelve were thus used in the type) of *our* being risen with Him who was dead; and as risen, we know too that *we* have died with Him.

One heap — that at Gilgal — was ever to be seen; while the other was hidden, deep in the waves of the river. There are two sides, so to speak, amongst the host of thoughts which encircle the Lord's Supper, one of which the church has always — but I do not think that practically she invariably enjoys the other. The stones which the twelve men took under Joshua's command (or with us, the *Church* acting under the power and directions of a heavenly Christ), are ever to be seen and enjoyed. She always has the remembrance of Him in His death, carried to the place of communion — the ever freshly-speaking memorial of her blessing, and of the death of Him who gave Himself for her. "Till he come" marks its continuance. But, let me ask my reader, do we always have that of which the second heap of stones speaks? Is *Christ* always free (it was *Joshua's* action in the type) to lead us to the brink of that river? — are our hearts always in order that we may be led there? Yea, more; are our souls spiritual enough to be so led? Can He, I say, ever freely lead us back to the river — while we have only stepped to that spot from the Gilgal where self is gone, and put back the stream — draw aside the vail of waters, and allow us to gaze down into their depths, and behold the spot where His precious feet stood fast; and let us read His heart, and His sorrows — His cry!

How blessedly have we enjoyed Him speaking to *our* hearts, of our blessing in feeding together in peace at the Supper of the Lord; but have we always been let into what flowed through *His* heart at that memorable hour? I can answer for myself — perhaps for others — No!

Oh, for the children of God to come together in such condition of heart and conscience, that He might be ever free to manifest Himself and allow us *thus* to discern His body! That we might not only have (what, thank God! we ever have) the truth conveyed to us in the heap of stones at Gilgal; but that He *might* be free to carry us in company with His spirit to the place His holy soul *was*, when deep called to deep at the noise of God's waterspouts (Ps. 42: 7); when the waters compassed Him about (Jonah 2: 5); when they flowed over His head (Lam. 3: 54); or when they came in to His soul (Ps. 69: 1); letting us into the secrets of those moments when nature veiled her head; when the sun put on his mourning, and the rocks rent, because the Son of God was pouring out His soul unto death; when His heart was like wax, melted in the midst of His bowels! (Ps. 22: 14.) There in His solitary path through death's river, He stood fast, there was God most fully glorified; there to the Father was presented a fresh motive to love His Son. And He values our remembrance of His love

— now that we are free to think of Him who gives us His company at Gilgal.

Thus we have death, our foe, converted into our ally in this new scene; and Joshua, in his *explanation* of these stones of memorial, takes in the Red Sea in looking back (Joshua 4: 23); as Moses' *faith*, in the song of deliverance, took in the Jordan when looking forward to the completeness of God's salvation (Ex. 15: 16).

Part 2.

Chapter 9.

"Gilgal": Circumcision, Positional and Practical.

Satan has lost his prey! "He who had the power of death, that is the devil" (Heb. 2: 14), can go no further than death; there his power ends. He put forth his worst at the close of the Lord's pathway here; but he was not subject to Satan's power. It was sin occasioned his having this power, and there was no sin in Jesus. "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me" (John 14: 30). The Lord entered his domain and destroyed his power for ever, for faith, and for God. He could not then bar the victorious *exit* of the people out of the house of bondage; nor, therefore, can he now hinder the *entrance* of the people into the land. If Christ died and rose for us and delivered us out of the one; we have died and risen with Him by faith, and entered in Him upon the other.

But if so, we must practically hold ourselves dead. Satan can work in this new sphere upon all that is in our hearts, if we do not reckon ourselves thus dead; this were ruin indeed, for there is no retrogression from the place of this heavenly warfare. Satan bestirred himself and the burdens were heavier to bear of old. Now he bestirs himself again on other ground. But he is cowed in the presence of the redeemed host of the Lord. He might be a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, in the wilderness journey, and frighten the people very much indeed; but here his heart melts "because of the children of Israel." "And it came to pass, when all the kings of the Amorites, which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites, which were by the sea, heard that the Lord had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until we were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was their spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel" (Joshua 5: 1).

Now his whole tactics are changed; a more subtle warfare than ever must now be carried on. "The wiles of the devil" are now the resource; a cowardly, hidden, plausible, but deadly strife. There never was a time

when the children of God needed to believe it more than at present. You can hardly take up a book, even if endorsed by the highest names in religion and learning, without finding an adder in the path; a serpent in the grass. Some devilish heresy, or some infernal infidel thought, glossed over and covered up apparently with the garb and language of Christ! Religion, science, antiquity, Scripture, are all enrolled under his banners in this conflict against the Lord and His people. It is not a little open power (at least around us here); but the quiet deadly crusade against the truth, on all hands. Crowds have deserted the Lord's standard, betrayed by his plausibility. Crowds have never found their place beneath its folds. The smoke from the pit clouds their perception, and stifles the consciences of His people. The very persons who profess to love Christ, and who take the place of conservators of the truth, are enlisted to stamp it out, or hinder those whom He loves from taking up the cross in this heavenly warfare.

The "world" is enlisted; and religion adopted as the fashion of the day. The "flesh" is in the saints of God; the "world" is the sphere where flesh can find itself at home when the heart is not with God. The old grossness of the "world" is abandoned: it is now "the thing" to be a religious man. The world has patronized Christianity, and is on its good behaviour. But I must stay my pen. The Lord grant that His people may be able to say "We are not ignorant of his (Satan's) devices" (2 Cor. 2).

What then must be the course of the Lord's people in their divine warfare? *Self* must be the *first* thing dealt with (and that thoroughly), as that which the enemy can use. Give him nothing to work upon and he is foiled. "He that is begotten of God (i.e. who has this eternal life in Christ), keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not" (1 John 5: 18). This is accomplished by the putting practically to death all that which *is dead* judicially, for God and for faith, through and by the death of Christ; everything that savours of the "old man."

We never can accomplish this until we *first* consciously possess this heavenly life and place beyond death and judgment. This being true, we do not deal with ourselves *in order to reach* this new platform, but *because we are there*. Therefore, the wilderness was not the place for this kind of thing. They never were circumcised until they reached the land (see Joshua 5: 5, 6).

Here I would note what seems generally to have been overlooked; that there are, with us, two aspects of the truth of circumcision, as spiritually interpreted. Its *practical* side has frequently been examined; but the *positional* side seems generally to have been overlooked. Now both are true. "We are the circumcision" — that is not practical, but *characteristic*. "In whom ye have been circumcised, with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh by the

circumcision of Christ" (Col. 2: 11); this, too, is *positional* circumcision in Christ. No doubt we find further on, the practical side of it in the mortification of our members, and practically putting off the fruits of the old man (Col. 3). So also in Phil. 3. If he says "We are the circumcision," see all that must go practically; his righteousness by the law, zeal, religiousness; everything must be cast aside because we are the circumcision. First we have the positional side or character; then follow the results which flow from it practically.

Circumcision first came in, in the case of Abraham (Gen. 17). He had sought to possess the promises of God as to the heir, by the energy of nature. Then, by circumcision, which he learns *practically*, that he cannot get the promise by the power of the flesh; and Ishmael, the fruit of it, must go. In him — type of the Jew after the flesh — we find what we may term *ritual* circumcision; *i.e.*, merely the outward observance without the inward reality. But when Isaac was born he was circumcised after eight days, and in him we have one in whom both sides of the truth are illustrated. He was born of a circumcised man — this was, so to speak, *positional*. Thus we are begotten from on high, from the sphere into which Christ has entered as man, dead and risen, and thus circumcised, or completely separated to God. But Isaac was also circumcised the eighth day.

So in Abraham you have *practical* circumcision. The putting down and refusing the workings of nature, which sought to act in divine things and only frustrated the divine ends.

In Ishmael you find *ritual* circumcision "not of the Spirit," "but of the letter;" and,

In Isaac, a type of both *positional* and *practical* — *born* of a circumcised man, but circumcised the eighth day.

But to pass on. We are wholly separated to God by the circumcision of Christ. We have begun in the new order of things, in Him "who is the beginning of the creation of God." Then we must enter upon that order of dealing with self, by the application of this truth spiritually to our souls, so that Satan may have nothing to work upon, no material on which to act; and thus that we may present an impenetrable front to the foe.

Here the Lord directs Joshua "Make ye sharp knives, and circumcise again the children of Israel." They still bore the traces of the slavery of the land of Egypt. "The reproach of Egypt" was still clinging to the Lord's Host all must now disappear. This, beloved reader, is very quiet, unseen work with God. It has no outward show whatsoever; nothing to attract attention in this heavenly warfare. But in it we find the first requisite — the

sine qua non of all real spiritual power. To remain at Gilgal and do nothing, in order that all fleshly energy may be broken in us, seems a strange process. But so it must be that we may learn the lesson of that utter weakness, which is really the condition in which divine strength works; then the power is really of God and not of us. If this lesson were truly learned by many who go on in fleshly energy, what different results would be seen. Then we should find that if we were always at Gilgal, it would only be a step from that place of strength to victory.

See Paul: one who possessed an energy which puts us to shame. He went into the synagogue in Damascus to preach as soon as he was converted (Acts 9); but Paul's fleshly energy was not yet broken. The Lord loved him too well to allow him to go on in the energy of his nature, and he must be a broken vessel, that the excellence of the power might be of God, and not of Paul. So he has to fly from Damascus. What a sorry spectacle he presented, as he was let down the wall in a basket! And Paul has to go again and stay there three years and do nothing. What a lesson for his ardent nature! But Paul wanted God, and God did not want Paul yet, and so he must stay at his Gilgal. What lost time! exclaims one or another; but it was time well spent, for he came forth a broken vessel, but a vessel filled with the power of Christ, and the fleshly energy of his nature subdued and broken.

Moses too must learn that, in his divine warfare, the flesh and its energies only lead into trouble; he too must have his Gilgal at the "backside of the desert" for forty years, ere he is a vessel meet for his Master's use.

The fine warm-hearted, impulsive Peter, alas! must have a sad and grievous fall, to teach him what his flesh was capable of, and what Satan's power was, before he was prepared to go forth in the boldness of grace, and in the power of the Spirit of God. And Peter gained strength, by learning that he had no strength but that of the flesh, which is only sin.

The knife of circumcision must cut deeply and unsparingly all that is of the flesh in us; but it is a true mercy, for that with which it deals would only lead to ruin and defeat if allowed to work. If we were always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, self would never be seen, and Christ would always be seen. This would be true victory in the heavenly warfare. The Lord's Host, thus, as circumcised people, bear the marks of their heavenly citizenship, and the traces of Egyptian bondage are rolled away.

Suppose you see one who is a child of God running after fashions, the world, and the like. Well, you say, you may be dead and risen with Christ, but you need to visit Gilgal that you may practically learn the meaning of circumcision. But it is as we have noticed before, quiet, secret

work with God, which brings no *eclat* with it, and has nothing to show to others; but by and by the strength of God is seen working in and by him who is truly and spiritually circumcised.

Chapter 10.

"Gilgal": the Passover on the Plains of Jericho.

In the Passover on the plains of Jericho we find the third feature which Gilgal presents to us. Circumcision gave it its character, and the stones out of the river of death had been set up there. Encamped at this wonderful spot, the circumcised Host of the Lord celebrate redemption once more. They can look back to the first moment of their history as a people of God, when God as a Righteous Judge was not smiting those whom blood had sheltered from His holy eye. What different feelings fill their hearts as in the plains of Jericho they now can gaze around them, and look back on the cross in peace! It speaks to our souls of the occupation of heaven by and by, when praising the Lamb who has redeemed us to God by His blood, and thus we shall be looking back to the cross even from the glory. But then it will be from the Father's house, not the Canaan in which we now are in Christ, from which Satan is not yet expelled.

In looking around from Gilgal, we find how the horizon of our souls has enlarged since the day God at first took us up as sinners. The walls of the houses of Israel were their horizon on that solemn night of judgment. There they stood, with girded loins and sandalled feet, ready to depart from the land of slavery: but outside the houses, destruction and death were doing their solemn work. God was judging; and woe betide the sinner who was not within a bloodstained lintel on that night.

Then came the day when they stood at Pi-hahiroth, before they crossed over to the other side of the sea. There the horizon enlarged itself, and instead of knowing Him only as a Judge passing over them, a Deliverer God unfolded His great salvation before their eyes, and they passed across the sea, with death as a wall on either side, and the glory of God sheltering them and leading them into the wilderness. Still the horizon is enlarging each step of the way until the desert solitudes are around them. There God teaches them another lesson. He teaches them what His resources are in the desert, where the eye has not one vestige of anything to rest upon to cheer and support the heart, or to supply the daily need of His people as they traverse its wastes. They are forced to look up to God. There He teaches them the boundlessness of His resources, and proves that He is superior to the desert and its momentary need. If the manna failed but for one day, what would become of that mighty Host? But it did not fail; nor did His hand fail who rose up early to

spread the daily supply upon each drop of dew which surrounded the objects of His care!

How the heart is taught to wonder and adore Him for the unexpected ways in which He comes in with His resources for those who trust Him, where they never dreamed they were. But He "suffers them to hunger" that He may feed them. He suffered Paul to be cast down, but why? that He might comfort him and teach his heart those deep, rich consolations of Christ which he never otherwise could have known, so that he can rejoice in the Lord always. He can rejoice when the wells are full of water, and he can rejoice in Him when the wells are dry. "Because thou hast been my help (not that the help came, but because God was his help), therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." Because God's loving kindness is better than life, his lips shall praise Him. There is no blessing to be compared with it to the heart that has tasted His loving kindness. It is better than all the favours He can bestow, great and wonderful as they are. Thus the soul is filled with marrow and fatness, and the mouth can praise Him with joyful lips, even in a dry and thirsty land.

But the soul's horizon has widened each step of the way, until at Gilgal we can survey the scene where there is neither length, nor breadth, nor depth, nor height. God Himself is the horizon, and that is infinite; a boundless field of glory. There the soul can rest and look back in peace and remember the way; it can survey the past, from the night of the blood-stained lintel, through the walls of the Dead Sea, and the wastes of the desert; until now, on the other side of Jordan, from the place of strength, it can survey the basis of it all — God's glory, and its own blessing, in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. "And the children of Israel encamped at Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month, at even, in the plains of Jericho" (Joshua 5: 10). God spreads a table for them in the presence of their enemies; setting them down to celebrate redemption, and think of the cross, in the heavenlies in Christ.

Chapter 11.

"Gilgal" "the Old Corn of the Land."

"And they did eat of the old corn of the land on the morrow after the passover, unleavened cakes and parched corn in the self-same day" (Joshua 5: 11). Here another characteristic of Gilgal is seen. A circumcised people are feeding upon this heavenly food. This points to a glorified Christ, as the manna does to a humbled, lowly one. In the desert the heart is cheered and sustained by feeding on Him as the lowly Jesus; the "bread of God," who came down from heaven to give life to the world. We have received life out of His death. He has given us His flesh to eat and His blood to drink. We lay in death and ruin, and He entered the scene

in holy love. He died and ended our whole moral being as sinners in the sight of God. "He that eateth me," He says, "shall live by me." But in feeding upon Him, we feed on One who has ended our history as children of Adam — so that we do not live by Adam at all, but by Christ, who has borne the judgment which stood registered against us.

As poor sinners we came first and ate His flesh and drank His blood. That is, we appropriated by faith that death as meeting our state and accomplishing the redemption by which we have left for ever our whole condition, and thus, out of His death we have received life. Then we live because of, and on account of Him. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me (the One who had died and risen), even he shall live by me" (John 6: 57). Is there diligence of heart, beloved, in feeding upon this humbled, dead and risen Son of God? It is the characteristic of eternal life in us, which we possess in Him, that it lives by Him as its object. "I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me (not merely died for me, or put away my sins, but, "who loved me"), and gave himself for me" — yes, gave Himself for me, and loved me when I was a sinner and nothing else. Blessed Son of God — Son of the Father, who has told out His Father's love, and bade me read it in Himself; to whom I cling and in whom I trust, to whom I can unburthen my poor wretched heart when it has turned aside and fed upon things for which He had to suffer and die. Pardon and cleanse the wandering hearts of those whom Thou lovest, Blessed Lord; draw them to Thyself, and unfold Thyself to our souls, and occupy our hearts with Thine own sufficiency!

In the desert we learn the need of feeding upon this Humbled One. Reproach is bitter, but He bore it Himself — "The reproaches of them that reproached thee, are fallen upon me." And when we are privileged to bear the reproach, what sweetens it, but that it is "the reproach of Christ" How faultily too are we able to interpret these trials and sufferings for His name, in their true value. What may seem deserved by us, and what thus may lead us to judge ourselves, may, after all, when weighed and appraised according to the balances of the sanctuary, be "the reproach of Christ."

How could Moses tell when he forsook the court of Pharaoh, and fled when he had slain the Egyptian, that God would characterise his act as He does in Hebrews 11: 26? Oh, what marvels of divine grace, and what weighings of actions that none can read but God Himself, will be manifested in that day when "every man shall have praise of God!" Actions which we blushed to recall; poor, faltering blunders, fears and turnings of our eyes to the right hand and to the left; but God, who has treasured them as the productions of His grace in us, will then read all that His grace wrought in us, in the daylight of heaven, and they will receive a name that will make us only wonder and adore. Many a fine

action too, which has won the applause of men, will then be found to have had its meed in that applause; only worthy too, it may be, of a place in the forgotten past, and unworthy of a name in the then recounted annals of the wilderness way!

But it is the manna which feeds the soul in that journey, and it is appreciable only by those who tread in the path where such food is found. It is not found amongst the great things, or the great ones of this earth. His was a lowly, unknown track, but one which left a path of heavenly light behind it in the eyes of God!

When consciously in wilderness circumstances, we need another food. We need that which grows and ripens and fructifies in the land of glory. So we read that they ate the old corn of the land, on the self-same day on which they kept the Passover on the plains of Jericho. A heavenly Christ now unfolds Himself, and feeds our souls, "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more" (2 Cor. 5: 16). How bold does Paul grow in his glowing words in this Scripture! His life seemed to be made up of two alternatives; "Beside himself," when his heart entered upon those things that eye of man had not seen, but which are revealed unto us by the Spirit; but "sober" when he thought on others (v. 13). The love of Christ constrained his heart — impelled him onward in its mighty swellings, because of man's condition — "dead" — proved by His "dying for all," to beseech men. But that once-dead One, now lived; He had died, and had risen, and entered on that scene of glory. In Him God would make all things new. That vista of the new creation opens before his heart — he sees the One whom some may have known as the Messiah walking here in lowly love. He would know no man after the flesh; but his heart glows, and grows bolder as he proceeds, "Yea, though we have known *Christ* after the flesh," as He was on earth, "yet now henceforth know we him," he says, "no more." He had entered the glory as a Man. As Man He occupied the throne of God — object of the adoration of the Hosts in glory; *there* he knew Him now — as the "old corn" of that land. If he needed Him (as he ever did) in the wilderness way, it was as One whom now we understand in measure, whom He was as He traversed the world — "the bread of God" which came down from heaven — who died, and rose, and went on high.

We never feed at the *same moment* on Christ, in these two conditions. As we are in the double place of being on high, and traversing this world's deserts, so we need Him to feed and sustain our souls in both conditions. In one we need to see and know Him in His downward path from the glory to the cross, as the Humbled One — the true manna — whose "mind" is to be in us, enabling us to bring God down in the circumstances, so as to act divinely in them every moment. This we learn in Phil. 2. In the other the eye, once blinded by His glory, grows stronger

by His Spirit as it gazes on Him who had displaced the whole moral being of His servant, and his body thus filled with light from that glory, seeks only to "know him," and to "win Christ" as it runs onward to the goal of complete assimilation to the One on whom it feeds in heavenly glory on high. This is the "old corn" which fed Paul in Phil. 3.

Oh, what preparations of heart for the people of God! What lessons for those who would fight "not in uncertainty" for the possessions which they seek to realize. But they must learn too that only as "unleavened cakes" can this heavenly Christ be used and enjoyed. How could the joys of earth — of human relationships — be allowable in such food? Impossible. The fruit of the land must be eaten by those who are circumcised in the unleavened perfection of that nature which is capable of feeding on such food. What can those who are feeding upon the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life," know of this old corn of the land? They are running after the vanities of this life, the follies of this world. They need to go to Gilgal! Egypt's chains are still there. Egypt's "reproach" still clings to them. And though they may be truly trusting in Him whom they profess to love; though they may be dead and risen with Christ, they need to visit Gilgal that they may be circumcised, ere they can either need or appreciate this heavenly food.

Let us test our hearts, beloved. Are they feeding with diligence on a heavenly Christ, or upon those things which shut Him out? Is Christ precious to us as hidden treasure? Is the "beauty of the Lord" sufficient to fill our hearts so that our souls are tilled with marrow and fatness, and we are able, in a dry and thirsty land, to praise Him with joyful lips

Chapter 12.

"Gilgal": the Captain of the Host.

The last feature which Gilgal presents is now before us. Circumcision gave it its special character. The Passover eaten in the plains of Jericho followed; and then the feeding on the old corn of the land. In this spot too, stood the "memorial stones," taken from the bed of the River Jordan; and there the Captain of the Host now presents Himself to lead His people into the possession of their "own things."

He comes too, as suited to their present condition of conflict. Adapting Himself to it, He presents Himself with a "sword drawn in his hand." Thus you will ever find that Christ adapts Himself to the condition, and to the need of His people. If they need redemption, then He is their Redeemer. If they need to be fed and guided in the wilderness, He is their Food and Guide. In every thing He adapts Himself to them. So when they

are about to do battle with the foe, He comes with a drawn sword in His hand to lead them to victory.

When Joshua was standing by Jericho, he lifted up his eyes and "Behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries?" Why this question? Because in our heavenly warfare there can be no neutrality! Every one we meet all day long is either *for* or *against* Christ. Every moment of each is an opportunity for victory or defeat; for obedience or disobedience. Hence the question. There can be no neutral ground — no middle place for those who would fight God's battles.

We are either for the Christ whom the world has rejected; and in consequence, against the world; or, we are for the world that has cast Him out, and consequently against Him. There is either *with* or *against*. But it is but the one thing or the other. Lukewarm, we may seek to be; or, we may advocate so-called "Christian charity" — than which there is no one thing more nauseous to Christ. What an outcry raised if a heart seeks to be true to Him, and refuses the right hand of fellowship to those who are false, or indifferent to the holiness and truth of His name, whose one mission to the earth was this — that He "might bear witness to the truth" (John 19).

Many a practical infidel heart turns away now-a-days without seeking a reply to Pilate's question, "What is truth?" Men do not care. Alas, Christians do not care! If, they say, our salvation is secure, why trouble us with more? You only seek to press what we believe to be non-essentials!

O the solemn state of souls, when good is put for evil and evil good — bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter; and His people love to have it so. Not only so, but, under the plea of Christian charity, as it is termed, evil is tolerated, and Christ's honour and God's truth esteemed valueless things, unless, indeed, so far as the selfish ends of souls are served. Shall not God visit for these things? Do you suppose that He is as indifferent as you would be, and as you desire He should be? He would not be God if it were so! Do not the burning words of Isaiah most deeply and fully apply in this lukewarm day? "Judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off; for truth is fallen in the street, equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey (or 'is accounted mad', margin); and Jehovah saw it and it was evil in his eyes (margin) that there was no judgment," etc. (Isaiah 59). Indifference is a more hateful thing to God, than pen of man may tell. The gushing, indignant words of Scripture pour out His thoughts about these things, in their deep and solemn tone. "Curse ye Meroz! said the angel of Jehovah:

curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of Jehovah, to the help of Jehovah against the mighty" (Judges 5).

This was God's thought about neutrality which His people in this latitudinarian day would term "toleration" and "forbearance," and which covers up under the cloak of Christianity that which is more deeply hostile to His name than the horrors and darkness of the heathen world.

"And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I *now* come." Mark what he says; "now come." They had rolled away the reproach of Egypt, and now bore distinctly the marks of heavenly citizenship — having exchanged them for the marks of Egyptian bondage. They had surveyed the fulness of redeeming grace in that paschal feast on the plains of Jericho: they had fed upon the old corn of Canaan — while standing around the memorials of death, taken from the spot where the Ark stood fast in the waters of death. Now the Captain of the Host appears to lead His people to victory.

"And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant?" Beautiful attitude of worshipful obedience! He does not enter Canaan as a suppliant merely, but as a worshipper; one whose ear is open to hear the needed charges of the Captain of the Host of the Lord. We find another thing too in this touching scene. The unshod holiness, which is the strength of conflict, coupled with the worshipful heart of one whose ear is thus waiting to receive the commands of the Lord.

Remark, also, that at the far distant moment when God in grace came down to deliver His people — revealing Himself to Moses in the burning bush (Ex. 3), these very words had been spoken to him. Now, at their entrance upon the conflicts of this heavenly warfare, they are sounded again in the ears of Joshua — "for the place whereon thou standest is holy." If holiness was needed at the deliverance of His people out of Egypt, how much more, now that they are entering into Canaan!

Here I must pause, before entering on the next words of the Lord to Joshua (Joshua 6: 2); for we have yet only noticed the first of the second feature which we named in the opening pages of this book (p. 2); i.e., the dealing with *self and flesh*, by practical circumcision, needed that the heart may be in condition for these divine wars. We must now examine another feature, that is, the arming of the Host in order to meet the foe. This we will enter upon in the next chapter.

Chapter 13.

Condition of Soul to Face the Foe: the Loins Girded with the Truth.

The few verses in the close of the Epistle to the Ephesians will give us the basis of the thoughts I now desire to present to my readers. It is to be remarked that they are found at the end of the Epistle which sets us already in the "heavenlies, in Christ Jesus" (vv. 14-18).

We read in Ephesians 1: 7, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace," following the blessed calling of God, in which He has set us before Him as sons, holy and without blame before Him in love, and accepted in the Beloved (vv. 3-6). "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."

We enter this wonderful sphere of blessing by redemption through blood; as Israel was delivered by the Passover and Red Sea. Then Christ has been raised up as Man (v. 19, etc.), and seated on high; the people have been quickened, raised up together, and seated in Him in the heavenlies (Eph. 2: 1-6).

In Ephesians 3: 10 we read, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by means of (*dia*) the church, the manifold wisdom of God." Thus her testimony reaches the hosts on high, even at this present time. The angels see the Church in Christ Jesus; the world is to see His Epistle in her here below!

When we come to Ephesians 6: 12 we find our warfare is carried on in the same sphere. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood," as Joshua and Israel in an earthly Canaan; "but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in heavenly places" (margin).

Thus, whether for our blessings, our position, the Church's testimony, or our warfare, the scene is all in that sphere into which we have entered already "in Christ." And this is really what our Canaan is. We are passing on to be in the Father's house on high, where no conflict will ever be; but we are already in an order of blessing, where we have to fight the Lord's battles against His enemies, and this is the true normal conflict of the Lord's Host.

It will readily be seen that this armour of God is more that which enables us to stand *against* the foe, as we read; "That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand." It is not so much

an aggressive warfare as a defensive. It relates too, to the condition of the heart and conscience which, when good, leaves the foe without resource, and our souls are thus maintained consciously in the joy of our heavenly position, as witnesses and soldiers of a glorified Christ. Do we suppose if our souls are bent on maintaining such a position, that Satan will allow us to pass? We shall never be so conscious of the depth of his wiles as then. Alas; what mournful instances crowd upon our memory, of those who once ran well, who fought valiantly in the Lord's battles, and fell before the foe! Some part of His armour wanting; some joint let loose; some moment of an ungirded loin, and the ever watchful foe sent home his wile, and the bravest have fallen. Alas! what dishonour has been heaped upon His name; what shame — and confusion of face have followed, when some active servant, some bright and blessed witness — prostrate before the foe, proves that none are secure in this solemn, yet blessed battlefield, when lacking the condition of soul unfolded in this "whole armour of God."

O beloved friends, let us be warned, deeply, truly warned — yea, forewarned, and therefore forearmed. If Peter had believed the words of Jesus, he would have deeply mistrusted himself, and failure perhaps would never have ensued. How He watches our hearts all the way; warning us, reminding us of the dangers and snares. At times permitting us to go to the brink of some fearful chasm, where some allowed and unjudged sin was leading us. He allows us, as it were, to see the abyss for a moment, and makes our hearts shudder, and then turn to cling more closely to Him; to adore that unwearying, unwavering love which thus deals with these treacherous hearts, that we may not fall and dishonour Him. Blessed, adorable Lord and Saviour! Who but Thyself would so bear with us? Who would — who could keep us as Thou?

And oh! was there ever a day in which Thy keeping was so needed as this? Hardly a book we take up; hardly a thought which is current, but carries some devil's wile concealed. Lord, keep the young in this infidel day. Preserve the tender impressible heart from the corruption of man, from the lie of Satan which circulates around. Give grace to parents to make their home a place where the young heart turns instinctively to find it truly "home;" that they may not seek in the outer world what they should find there — the genial warmth of a parent's watchful heart, the confidence of his trusting child. Walk before your children, ye parents, and present Christ to them thus. Win their hearts to Jesus by preaching Him in your words and ways.

The first thing which is presented to us in this armour of God, is the inward condition of our souls. There can be no divine activity until the heart is right with God. We may be heavenly men, and know the things which are freely given to us of God, without this *sine qua non* of a

Christian soldier — a heart to which the truth of God has been applied in such a way that all is broken which would hinder the vessel being used. Hence nearly all the thoughts we have in this armour are what we would term *subjective* truth. He casts us back upon our own condition; but He never does this until we have been fully established by His grace in Christ. When this is so, we can bear anything — we can bear to be broken to pieces in conscience and heart by His word, just because this experimental work never gives us a thought of uncertainty as to our soul's acceptance with Him. It is just because *we are* fully accepted in Christ that this dealing comes; we would not have *such* dealing with our hearts if it were not so. Many bitter experiences come before peace with God and redemption are known. Then comes another order of dealings, because of this new and blessed relationship and place before Him.

We read "Stand therefore, with your loins girt about with truth." Now, there is no truth in the world but the word of God; you find doubts, and darkness, and ignorance, and pride; plenty of speculations of man's mind, which, because he is a creature, never can rise superior to the level of a creature's mind. The word of God, being the revelation of the truth, sets everything in its right place and relationship with Him. It tells me what God is as revealed in Christ: it tells me what He is to a poor, lost, ruined world. It tells me what man is, what Satan, what sin is; what His righteousness is regarding sin; what His love to the sinner. All is unfolded in the word of God. But man cannot bear to be thus judged morally, and set where it sets him; hence every effort is made to weaken its force, to destroy the poor man's faith in the living word of God. Nevertheless, one who has tasted it in any little measure, finds in it (as the deep cooling draught of water to the soul of a thirsty wanderer) that which satisfies his heart and sets his burthened conscience at rest. In it he finds and learns his Saviour by the power and teaching of the Spirit of God.

When this living word is applied to the heart and conscience, and the whole inner man curbed and broken, his loins are thus girded with the truth. The loins are that portion of the body that need to be braced up and supported in conflict and toil. Wherever we find Scripture speak of girded loins, we are supposed to be in the place of conflict and weariness, or of exercises of heart. As the Lord said to Job, "Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me" (Job 38: 3).

When the loins are braced up with the truth, the affections are curbed, and the will broken, so that there is a firmness of tone imparted to the whole man. He finds his way strewn with those things after which his natural heart would go out; but "the truth" has judged their value in God's sight, as well as in his, and they are refused.

In this battle field, where defeat is ruinous, and where retreat is impossible, how deeply important that not even for one instant the girdle should be relaxed. A moment of carnal ease or fancied security, and the heart is entrapped into some action which years of bitter tears cannot recall. How we find too, that even if the will was not active in going after the desires of the flesh and of the mind, the loins were ungirded and failure ensued. See David when he should have been with girded loin as a man of war in that day, in the battle field, at the time when kings go forth to battle; the heart was thus an easy prey to a watchful foe. Oh, what a bitter fall ensued in the matter of the wife of Uriah! Years of sorrow followed, and consequences which no repentance could ever efface from his house, marked the sure and certain righteous government of God.

Look at Peter in the garden of Gethsemane. No sense of his own total want of strength in the face of Satan. No thought of Satan's power. He was sleeping with ungirded loin, when he should have watched and prayed; he was in conflict when his Lord and Master was submitting Himself as a lamb for the slaughter. How had He (blessed Lord!) spent His time? In an agony of prayer. He was praying when Peter was sleeping; He was submitting, when Peter was fighting. But what a sad conflict it was — flesh fighting with flesh, and with the carnal weapons of man! Then following Christ "afar off" — then denying with oaths — then the bitter tears!

How we see too, that in this heavenly warfare a moment of victory is a solemn and dangerous one for the soul. We are never so near defeat as when we have conquered. The very success of the spiritual man takes him away from the sense of full and complete dependence. It is an intoxicating moment, so to speak, when the heart feels and knows that God has been using one in the battle field. We are inclined to look upon it as *our* success; self is once more aroused, and the enemy has that on which he can work. David had conquered, and David was just crowned in Hebron. His first thought was of the ark — but his success did not serve to keep him a dependent man. He consults his "captains," and places the ark of God on a "new cart," instead of on the "shoulders of the Levites." How the failure of a spiritual man involves others in its sorrow; the "breach upon Uzzah" told this sad tale. Tells too, how the moment of success is the moment to distrust one's self more deeply than ever, a moment to brace up the loins more firmly with the truth.

The time will come when we may let the heart go free; when conscience will not be needed, and there shall be girded loins no more for ever. In heaven we shall be able to let the heart go free. *Here never!* If you tire for a moment in watchfulness, and relax the loins, the heart wanders into something that is not Christ! Then comes the reaction, and we tire of *self* more than ever. *It* has sprung up again and defiled the heart.

It will not do to have the truth merely *known*; but it must be the truth *applied*, and then, with girded loin and broken will, the heart goes on with God, and Satan's wiles avail not. God's truth has revealed all that is in heaven, and has revealed God's heart on earth. It has judged all in this evil world: every motive and spring of action laid bare by Him who was and is the living Word of God.

He came into this world — the Truth Himself — that He might bear witness to the truth. Not one single motive ever governed His heart that governs man's — not one single motive ever governed ours that governed His. The eternal Son of God became a man; He walked with God for three and thirty years, never doing His own will — perfect as it ever was. "Not my will but thine be done." He met Satan at the beginning of His path of service. The enemy came up to seduce Him from the path of obedience. He showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. Own me, says the enemy, and all shall be thine. As God, He could have put aside his power in a moment. But this would not do for us. As man in obedience, and by obedience He bound the strong man. As man in obedience He was an hungered. To work a miracle would be an easy task for Him who created the world. But no! He came to obey; and while it was no harm to be hungry, it was harm to satisfy that hunger without a word from God. "Man," He says, "shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." I have come to obey. The living Word, in obedience on earth; perfect Man before God; perfect God to man. He was the truth, and the truth is now embodied in the *words* (not merely word) of God. Scripture is the *words* of God — the intelligible words disclosing all His mind. "Which things also we speak," says the apostle, "not in the *words* which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth."

Chapter 14.

Condition of Soul: the Breastplate of Righteousness.

Having showed us the preparation of our hearts to meet the foe by this subjective truth — a girded loin, he passes on to the state of the conscience, marked by the next part of the armour, the "breastplate of righteousness." As it is a question here, not of our standing before God but of our facing the foe, I need but state that this breastplate of righteousness is a conscience void of offence before God and man.

There is no part of the armour which, if wanting, will make the heart so weak as this breast-plate. Let none but one's own conscience know in secret the stain that is there — be it of the faintest hue — the heart cannot stand boldly before Satan's accusing power. The (consciously) righteous is as bold as a lion. Nothing is more to be sought than this most precious of all precious conditions of soul, a good conscience before God and the

enemy. "Herein," says Paul, "do I exercise myself, to have *always* a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men" (Acts 24: 16).

In the ordinary Christian, who is but seldom, if ever active in this heavenly warfare, a good conscience or the reverse plays a part more in a grieved or hindered Spirit, than in open failure and feebleness. His own heart can tell whether his joy is full in deep, precious communion with the Father and the Son. This only can be enjoyed with a good conscience; an uncondemning heart. Confidence in God is perfect when the heart condemns us not.

If one labours actively in the fore-front of the battle, how truly terrible is the case, when in the midst of outward activity, the accusations of the enemy fall on the ear of the heart. To keep up the outward activity, in such a state of soul, is to leave the soul open to the wiles, and indeed the open power, of the enemy in a most solemn manner. How often those who have boldly stood for Christ, and, in His hand have been most blessed instruments of His power, have fallen — irrecoverably fallen from their post, because thus open to the snares of the devil.

There never has been, I think, a break-down of this kind, but it has been preceded by warnings and previous dealings of grace; but which fell unheeded on the ear and heart. The Lord give us to be warned and to shun the danger — the wrong turning in our path; the wrong hour. To *look* not on the wine when it is red!

Having on the breastplate of righteousness, then, keeps the heart as bold and free as air; but free to go on with God. There rests no frown on His face, so to speak, and the soul is conscious of the freedom which grace has given, in His presence. The conscience purged by the precious blood of Jesus, maintained in practice good before Him, knows the joy of going on with Him freely and naturally. In such a walk the flesh is better known, than in one who learns it by a bad conscience through failure and weakness. It learns the tendencies of the flesh in the light of His presence; it knows it has His strength to count upon; he makes indwelling sin, though not a ground of communion, an occasion of it, and his heart judges the tendencies it finds there, without the failure, learning them by the standard of God Himself as known, rather than the lower standard of the conscience which feels the stain.

The first part of the armour, then, expresses the normal condition of the soul to which the truth has been applied; thus judging all the motives within, and bracing up the whole man. It may act defectively, as the word of God in Heb. 4: 12, "Discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart." Appraising every thought which springs up, as to its source — as of God, or of the flesh. Or discerning whether the intent which the heart cherishes

has Christ for its object or self. It may come too in the shape of a formative and, sanctifying truth, as we read in John 17, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth." That in Hebrews is more the detective power of the word; while John refers more to the formation of the soul, separating it by the word of the Father from the world. All that is of the world is not of Him. And then, by the revelation of a Man in glory before the Father, who is our life, and who is the pattern for the new man before Him.

The second part of the armour is more directly as regards the conscience; giving condition of soul to face the foe, no armour being provided for the back. The breast-plate bright — the conscience good; the soul thus walking with God, and the enemy having nothing to point at, nothing to enfeeble that boldness which it needs, and which otherwise would make the soldier of Christ as weak as water in His presence. No self-accusations to render him irritable with others, and, in this way his heart is kept in peace. It is surprising to see how happy things seem, what a different hue they present when the soul is walking peacefully with God. The reverse, too, when there is an accusing conscience. Where it is so, we are ready to find fault with others, and see what we would not see if we were happy in the love of Christ, flowing from a peaceful walk and a conscience void of offence towards God and man.

Chapter 15.

Condition of Soul: Feet Shod with the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace.

When the conscience is good, and the heart free to go on happily with the Lord, it is wonderful what a peaceful character it imparts to the pathway of the soldier of Christ. He is not what the world would call a hero. God's heroes present a sorry figure to the world's eye. A humble broken spirit characterizes them. They have found the secret of strength, and the ability to govern their own spirit in a world where "a man of spirit" is esteemed. "He that ruleth his spirit (is better) than he that taketh a city" (Prov. 16: 32).

What a tone this peacefulness of spirit gives to the whole man in the trials and troubles of the way. "The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." (1 Peter 3.) In man's sight but little esteemed, but not so in the sight of God. We never find that peaceful spirit when the soul is not happily with God. It may be put on outwardly and a canker in the heart, but it is one of these precious graces of Christian life, which there is no such thing as imitating.

Alas! one sees the want of this, and cannot but see it, in many who are occupied with very high truths. Objective things are presented to the soul and esteemed, as surely they ought to be. But there is the other side too; the broken, humble spirit, which esteems others better than itself. The tone of soul which is ever on the watch for some line of Christ in the ways of another. This is the "mind of Christ." No doubt that the divine energy which lifts one out of things here below is much to be sought for and desired; but when this side alone is looked for, the tendency is to make the person hard, and inclined to judge others. To me, it is far more wonderful to see Him walking on earth as a lowly man, acting divinely in every circumstance; never indifferent to any sorrow or trial, while feeling it more keenly than others; yet always accepting the trial in the meekness and gentleness which bows its head, and accepts of all the sorrow as of God. I do not say we can enjoy this beauty of Christ, or indeed perceive it at all, if we only seek to know Him thus. We must know our place first "in Christ" before God; we must "know him" in measure, in that scene as the glorified One. Then we will be morally fit to enjoy Him, and trace His wondrous path of lowly love — the more to be wondered at, as we know the person of Him who was there.

This lovely peacefulness of soul carries one into all the details of each and every day, with soft and gentle tread; sheds by its presence a calm and placid influence on others; it gives firmness to the pathway in which it treads the battlefield of God. The feet thus sandalled with firm footing, as it may be said (*hetoimasia*), of the glad tidings of peace, carries peace into the enemy's land; and in face of the restless anxiety and uneasy fears which govern the hearts of so many, and as much as lieth in it, lives peaceably with all.

Jesus Himself was the Prince of Peace. He passed through a world of unrest, in the calm of heaven. He was ever in the bosom of His Father. No circumstances ever ruffled Him. Sorrow and rejection pressed upon Him; unbelief and hardness of heart met His Spirit, to chill if it were possible, the love of His heart; still He went on. He sighs at man's unbelieving spirit, but lifted up His eyes to heaven. The Samaritans will not have Him in His mission of love, because His face was as it were to go to Jerusalem; i.e., His heart was bent upon a path which ended in the cross and shame. He bows in submission and passes onward to another village; rebuking James and John who knew not what spirit they were of. His yieldingness is known unto all (Luke 9).

At His end, when all His sorrow stood before His soul; even when He had surveyed its mighty depths and accepted the cup from His Father's hand, He passes through shame and scorn and spitting, in calmness and peace. No moving of His heart to haste; no reviling when reviled; no threatening when He suffered — His case was with His Father. In the

midst of all — with girded loin, as Servant of servants, He thinks of Peter's fleshly blow which cut off Malchus ear; He touched and healed it; repairing His poor impulsive Peter's rashness. He still has His eye on Peter. He thinks of him as one who specially needs His care. His eye is turned on him at the moment the cock crew, to disclose to him the distance his heart had wandered from His Lord. Silent before His foe, He commits Himself to Him that judges righteously, when His judges were condemning (and they knew it) an innocent man. He was as "A man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs."

Oh, how His blessedness judges our ways! What trifles move our hearts to haste? But still our calling is to be the heralds of peace, and of the Prince of Peace; to carry into a world of unrest a spirit of peace and restfulness, which is to be found only where self is broken and God is trusted.

This condition of soul results as the outflow of Christian character, consequent on the previous pieces of this armour of God. The inward condition formed and braced by the word of God; the conscience perfect to face the foe. No thought for self is needed, and the heart is thus free to go on with God and think of others, and, with restfulness of spirit, shedding blessing upon those around. Thus we find that this relative state towards others, only ensues when the personal, inward condition is right with God. "Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," follows the girded loin and breastplate of righteousness.

Chapter 16.

Condition of Soul: the Shield of Faith.

We have examined the subjective or inward state of soul, personally and relatively, in the previous parts of this armour of God. Now we come to that inward state which rests in unfeigned faith upon God Himself in His known character — what He is — which sustains in us perfect confidence in Him, so that come what will, we know that nothing can separate us from His love. Things may seem adverse; we may have reached our wit's end, so to speak; still the heart that knows Him who cannot be but what He is, waits patiently for His time to show Himself strong in behalf of them that trust Him.

"Above all (this previous condition of soul), taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked (one)." What is here spoken of is not the faith of the sinner which first lays hold on Christ. We find that in the Epistle to the Romans, and we may term it the *no-working faith of a sinner*; "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for

righteousness" (Rom. 4: 5). Here in Ephesians, we find the faith of the saint: the perfection of confidence in God, known experimentally as One who is what He says He is. That confidence which as the heart grows in the deeper knowledge of Him, discovers more deeply the springs of evil within, yet finds its confidence in Him growing in proportion; so that the heart trusts and counts upon Him against itself. It can say, I cannot trust myself, and God cannot trust me, but I can count on Him and trust Him. It can say, Go with me, *for* I am stiff-necked, and cannot but fail if left alone.

You find this "shield of faith" practically illustrated in Moses. God had said that the people were a stiff-necked people, and if He were to come into their midst He must consume them in a moment. Then Moses took the tent and pitched it outside the camp, and the Lord came down and spake with Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. Moses had found grace in the sight of the Lord, and his heart seeks to find grace; he seeks to learn the fulness of this grace. All the goodness of the Lord then passed before him, and his heart, bowed in the presence of the mercy of the Lord, makes the very fact of their being a stiff-necked people, the plea that His presence might go with them by the way. The very reason which the Lord gave in Ex. 33: 5, for not coming into their midst, lest He should consume them in a moment, Moses pleads in Ex. 34: 9, as the reason why He should go with them. "And he said, If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us; *for it is a stiff-necked people*; and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance." But he had found out meanwhile what God is in Himself, and in this consciousness he pleads for His presence, on the ground of what *He is*, and seeks His company by the way, because they were a stiff-necked people! Oh, what confidence — what a plea to present to Him, in the consciousness of the depths of such evil hearts! And it must be so, the more He is known; and the more we know ourselves.

See this confidence even before forgiveness is known, in the woman of the city who was a sinner. The very light which rendered her speechless, as a convicted sinner in His presence, drew her heart to the One who, while He searched the conscience — piercing and following in its turnings all the depths of sin and a nature at enmity with God — drew the heart to Him in love, so that she can count on Him, because of what He is, against all that His holiness had disclosed of her heart. In her case it was a sinner's confidence who had not yet been assured of His grace. How much greater must our confidence be in One whose grace is known, and who has set us without a spot in the presence of His holiness, where the very light and holiness only increase the confidence of our hearts the more!

Satan may come in with his dark suggestions, but their power is gone, because God is known. Thank God, we do know Him better than we

know ourselves! Not better than He knows us, but better than we know our own hearts. What a comfort to the heart, that He knew all — that He knows all! I can go to Him and tell Him all. The depths of evil, and the springs and motives which I find there; and find that I have Him *for me*, against it all. Satan's fiery darts (I do not now wish to enter upon their full meaning, as used of God for discipline of the soul under His hand) are quenched with the joyous and exulting note, God is for me! Silenced by this blessed condition of soul conveyed to us figuratively in this "shield of faith."

How much better is it to possess this blessed state of soul, by having on the armour at all times, than to find its importance when wounded by some shaft of Satan! It is not the day of conflict which is the time to put it on; but when the heart is with God, in the consciousness of His favour resting upon it. At the same time the deep consciousness that a watchful enemy is ever ready to take advantage of an unguarded moment, should such be allowed, and work defeat or wound the soldier of Christ.

Its deep importance is learned at times by failures and woundings of the soul. How much better, I repeat, it is to learn it in confiding peace with God. To use it in companionship with Him, rather than by exposing one's self, with some portion of it wanting, to the assaults of Satan's power. Negatively we may learn its importance by slothfulness of soul with God; the heart thus becomes indifferent and cold. Positively we may learn it when the conscience is concerned and not at rest. Then the Spirit of God acts as the stern, unbending convicter of the conscience; making us feel the loss of that joy, and happy communion with our God and Father, as known and enjoyed against the evil; by His pointing out the evil which has thus separated practically the soul from God. How frequently we find the former, or negative side. The latter, or positive side, is more terrible to bear, because the soul has enjoyed the favour of God which is better than life; and has lost it through allowed evil. I speak, of course, of one whose acceptance as a sinner is complete, and who has known it in the soul's consciousness.

Thus this complete, perfect confidence in God, expressed in the shield of faith, follows all the previous inward condition of the soul conveyed to us in the loins girded with the truth — the breast-plate of righteousness, and the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.

Chapter 17.

Condition of Soul: the Helmet of Salvation: and the Sword of the Spirit.

If the Shield of Faith conveys to us the soul's perfect confidence in what God *is*, in His own unchangeable nature: the Helmet of Salvation teaches us what God *has done* for us, known and enjoyed in the soul; and with that unquestioning certainty that never leaves in the heart a shadow of doubt as to the result by and by. When the soul feels and knows this, it is free in the day of battle, and goes on without fear. It can think of others when the enemy seeks their ruin. It feels that that lovely word, "Thou hast covered my head for the day of battle," imparts a firmness and joyfulness that no present circumstances can ever mar. The enemy may rage, and evil may be there; but through that impregnable helmet no sword can ever pass. God's salvation as a helmet on the head, set there by the hands of God Himself, renders the heart fearless in the face of the foe. One is free, in the forgetfulness of all personal questions as to one's own things, to desire others' good.

It will be seen that while we receive this precious piece of the armour of God, and that so far it may be looked at as producing a subjective state of soul, still God is the confidence of the heart both in the Helmet of Salvation (what He has done for us) as well as in the Shield of Faith. In a certain sense then, God is objectively before us, though the state produced is noticed too.

What a lovely illustration we have of this helmet of salvation in Paul in Acts 26. For a considerable time in prison; cut off from the work he loved and lived in; and the sad thought perhaps that his own conduct was the immediate cause of his imprisonment; the first moment of his conversion fills his soul. There stood that blessed man, bound with chains, before Festus, with King Agrippa and Bernice. He unfolds to them the story of his former life, his conversion, his mission of service. This Pharisee of the Pharisees; this righteous man according to the law, who had lived in all good conscience before God, while doing many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth; this dread persecutor of the saints — of the Church of God: there he stood, the attention of the Roman governor riveted by the glowing words addressed to the king, until Festus cried out, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad."

Mark the calm and collected reply: "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. For the king (Agrippa) knoweth of these things, before whom I also speak freely; for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And Paul said, *I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds!*"

There stood this blessed witness of the power of that salvation with which God had covered his head for the day of battle. An evident consciousness too of the truth they conveyed, in the king's soul, before whom he spake the glowing words, eloquent from the calm and holy joy which filled the speaker's heart. How near was King Agrippa to this salvation, and yet how far off, when, to cover and conceal his emotion, he rose up and went aside to confer with the rest.

Chains and imprisonments had not damped this heavenly joy. Free in heart, and with the helmet of salvation on his brow, he can think of others' blessing. No desire was expressed as to removal of the bonds of Christ which he wore. His desires were for others. He does not merely wish they were Christians, which King Agrippa seemed almost persuaded to become, but that they might be "both almost, and altogether *such as I am*;" that they might have the same deep joy which filled his heart — the same salvation consciously which rested on his brow; "*Except these bonds*" — he could bear them alone for the Master whom he loved, and he would only wish them to be as happy a man as he, without the bonds.

Oh, what a softened feeling grace imparts to the heart which brings us in contact with a living person, who has placed the Helmet of Salvation on our brow! It is not the salvation itself which then engrosses, but the One who has so acted for us, setting our heart as free as air, that it may run in the same channel with His heart towards an evil world.

The soul is now free and in order to wield "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Remark that first of all, the Word of God has formed us, and braced up the whole inner man; the conscience is good; the path peaceful; confidence in God perfect, and the conscious joy of a salvation which no adverse power can mar, and which links the heart with Him who has accomplished it and bestowed it upon us, making the heart so joyously free. *Then* comes the aggressive warfare, by the sword of the Spirit, against the enemy of souls.

Remark too, that as in all this armour it is a question of meeting the wiles of the devil, so here it is not the word used in edification for souls, but for detecting and unmasking these very wiles. How prostrate and feeble the soldiers of Christ seem to be in these infidel days. They fear often to stand alone by that word which God has set above all His name (Ps. 138: 2). They are not formed by its precepts themselves, and therefore they are not fit to use this mighty sword; it would cut themselves, for it has two edges. It must do its own keen circumcising work with ourselves, before it can be used effectively against the foe. Israel must be circumcised themselves, before they can draw their sword, and follow the leadings of the Captain of the Host of the Lord.

But when the soul is thus fitted to wield this sword, no enemy can withstand it. See the Lord Jesus Himself, in conflict with the devil (Matt 4). No power was put forth by Him to destroy the destroyer. No word spoken to correct the misquotation of the enemy (v 6). "It is written" was His weapon; and By the words of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer" (Ps. 17: 4). It is very striking as one has noticed, that when it became a direct conflict between Jesus and the devil, the Word of God was the instrument used on both sides. The Lord uses it to explain and govern His own conduct, and the devil uses it against Him. How solemn! For in the present day, when the saints are thrown upon it as their resource, the devil uses it for his own ends as well. But the Saints must be formed in obedience by it, else they will find they must fall with the sword of the Spirit in their hands; because it will wound themselves.

When those wiles of the devil are presented to the soul, there is no fear felt for the result of the conflict by the well-trained soldier of Christ. He is not amazed at what the enemy presents, nor distracted by an effort to have some text ready to meet the foe: the word of God comes readily to the heart and lips, and the wile is answered: the enemy may not be worsted, but the soul is steadied; its conduct and obedience are accounted for by the word. No wile of the enemy can stand for a moment before that mighty weapon which is "mighty through God to the pulling down of strong-holds; casting down reasonings, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10: 4). Every infidel suggestion is met; every perversion of the truth laid bare; every superstition with which the devil deceives his votaries — exulting in their shame — is exposed. All is met by the mighty instrument which alone can guide the soul in a world of boasting progress; but which, having lost the knowledge of God, and refused the revelation of Himself in tender grace in Jesus, ripens under the culture of the wicked one, for that judgment, which will consign himself and his followers to the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, to be tormented day and night for ever! (See Rev. 20: 10-15.)

Chapter 18.

Condition of Soul: Prayer.

We now come to the last mighty weapon in this "whole armour of God." The breathing of His people's hearts to God by prayer, when they have been formed by His word — His breath to us! It is the characteristic feature of Christian life; obedience and dependence mark its activities this fallen world. It is very striking how frequently we find the word of God and prayer in close connection in Scripture. When God was dealing with and testing man in the flesh in the nation of Israel, He did not *name* prayer as

part of their relationships with Him. They accepted, in their own strength, the Law as the terms of their relationship. Now, prayer expresses the weakness of man. There were two forms of address to God given them, one expressing blood guiltlessness (Deut. 21), and the other the expression of worship in the perfection of obedience (Deut. 26). But man was put on his own strength to do these things and so to live in them. What ruin ensued! Yet, in the midst of such a wreck, no doubt many a faithful heart cried to God, outside all ordered and formal relationships with Him.

In the opening of the first book of Samuel, we find a Hannah — desolate, and pining after her heart's desires — moving her lips as her heart expressed its cry to the Lord. Even Eli the High Priest rebuked her, supposing that she was drunken with wine. But her answer seems to have touched a chord in the old priest's soul, as she replied, "No, my lord; I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord." Eli answers her, "Go in peace: and the God of Israel (He who had wrestled of old with Jacob in another way) grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him." (1 Sam. 1: 9, etc.) The child Samuel, whose name signifies "Asked of God," was the answer to this cry.

We find too, in the early chapters of this book how complete was the wreck of things in Israel. The priesthood was defiled and corrupted, and at last the Ark of God passes into the hands of the Philistines, and "Ichabod" is written on the ruined people, whose aged high priest brake his neck, in falling backwards from his seat by the side of the gate, when he heard that the Ark had been taken by the uncircumcised.

All ordered relationships were now gone. The people have no priest to draw nigh to Jehovah; the priest (if he desired it) has no Ark, where to consult by "Urim and Thummim;" no mercy-seat on which to sprinkle the blood before the Lord. What will now be His resource, who is never frustrated by the evil and failure of man? Samuel — the man who was "asked of God" — will now be the "prophet of the Lord," by whom God will reveal Himself again by the "word of the Lord" to the consciences of those who had an ear to hear. If God thus maintained His relationship through the consciences of His people by Samuel, the cry of need — the prayer of His people, also went up to Him by Samuel (1 Sam. 7: 8, 9; 1 Sam. 12: 18, 19, 23), In this we find the two great principles, or characteristics of spiritual life, so frequently found together in Scripture, viz., the Word of God, and Prayer. Mary at the feet of Jesus hearing His word; and the disciples saying to Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 10, 11), illustrate this thought. See also Peter in Acts 6, "We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word." "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly;" then "Continuing instant in prayer"

(Col. 3: 16; Col. 4: 2). Even the very food we eat is sanctified unto us by the word of God and prayer. God's word sanctions certain things for the use of the body, as meat and drink for His people; they receive it from Him with prayer, refusing nothing that has thus been set apart by His word: "For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. 4: 4, 5).

Prayer is the first expression of the newly born soul to God. They lead Saul of Tarsus, blinded by the light of the glory in the face of Jesus Christ, to Damascus, and in the "house of Judas," in the street called "Straight," behold this persecutor on his knees. A little time before he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord Jesus; now the earnest cry ascends to and enters His ear; and "Behold he prayeth," shows how the Lord's ear and heart were attentive to these strong cryings of this chief of sinners.

Prayer takes very varied characteristics in the word of God. If we turn to the eleventh chapter of Luke we find the Lord instructing the hearts of his disciples in the earnest prayer of *"importunity."* He says, "Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves: for a friend of mine in his journey is come unto me, and I have nothing to set before him. And he from within shall answer, and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed: I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth." How practical is the scene He here portrays! The deep sense of need, and dependence on One who has discovered Himself to our souls as One who alone can supply the want we feel. The sense of confidence is displayed too in the earnestness which turns not aside from Him to any other source. He knows the heart, and knows well whether there is there unmingled confidingness in Him. Yet it is not His goodness and readiness to hear and answer which are here unfolded, but the importunity, the pertinacity of the heart that clings to and cries to God until the need is supplied. That which abates not in earnestness in asking of Him who has said, "Ask, and it shall be given you."

But this is not the highest character of prayer by any means; still it is needed for His people while they are here. A still more blessed provision — for *making known our requests* — is found in Phil. 4: 6. In this place we do not find that He promises to supply the need we express to Him; but He answers in another and much more blessed way. Ten thousand cares may press upon the heart; what is to be our resource? *"Be careful for nothing!"* is the reply. "Nothing!" you answer; how can this be? Then He proceeds, "But in everything, by prayer and supplication, with

thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." And how blessed is the answer. Perhaps not one request has been granted, but the answer comes in another manner; "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"! God puts His peace into the heart which has put its cares on God! How frequently we are disposed to allow our cares to eat away at the heart and bow down the soul. Care for the Church — the saints of God; the deep anxieties of service for the Lord; for the conversion of those we love; for the recovery of those who have wandered from the way. Circumstances too may try the heart: the love of those whose love we valued has grown cold; the bitterness of being misunderstood and misjudged, all press upon the soul. How blessed those strong, bright words, "Be careful for nothing"! How blessed to go to God in the strong cryings and secret bitter tears which His eye has marked and noted, and hand over the cares to Him! Mark, it is not to our Father, but to *God*. It is not here the confidingness of *relationship*, but to a holy Being whose *nature* is known; whose throne is never touched by cares. The heart learns there to pour out its earnest cry, deepening in intensity from "prayer" to "supplication," until the heart has risen, as it were, above the cloud — above the cares which pressed upon the soul, until it bursts out in the pure light of heaven, in "thanksgiving" into the ever opened ear of One who gives His peace to the relieved heart, with the sweet sense that His hand is under the care — that He has charged himself with the matter — has taken it into His own merciful hands, and we have in exchange God's own peace.

But in Ephesians we are outside the things which distress the heart, in another way. The range of vision takes in the things which occupy the mind of Christ. The great interests of the Lord on earth are before us, more than our own cares. Not that He does not interest Himself with our little cares and trials — that He does; but here the prayer and supplication in the Spirit, with its watching and perseverance, is for "all saints." In the true dependence of one who is fully armed with this armour of God, prayer keeps the heart in confidingness in Him. Self is broken, and He is trusted, and "the more knowledge the more prayer." Satan cannot seduce the heart which is ever in this attitude before God. "He that is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not."

The Host of the Lord has thus been prepared to meet the foe, and to "withstand in the evil day" — that is, the whole period through which we now pass. The soul is formed by the truth; the conscience good, maintained in the light; the heart peaceful, in the confidingness and piety which walks with God and trusts Him amidst the storms and waves which beat around us. Thus Satan's fiery darts are of no avail, and with the helmet of a known salvation covering the head, and the word of God as the Spirit's sword, we are ready to meet the wiles of the devil, and the heart is kept in a right condition before God in this evil world. He has His

true place of authority which orders all; the saint too is found in his true attitude of dependence and confidence before Him, as expressed in prayer — but prayer which embraces His great interests here on earth; "all saints," in their labours and conflicts, toils and joys.

We have seen, then, the condition of soul which flows from the unsparing dealings with self and flesh, because of our place on high in Christ. Then the arming of the Host against the foe, to resist and face the enemy with the courage of God. We will now look at the condition of soul we need to go on naturally and happily in communion with the Lord, in the aggressive warfare, realizing our own blessed portion on high. We must plant the foot on each spot of ground which is ours in our heavenly Canaan, but in doing so we find we must first dislodge the foe. Deeply important it is then to know the conditions by which the path and service of faith may be successfully trodden, so as to insure the presence of the Lord with us, and "good success."

This we will hope to examine in the next chapter.

Chapter 19.

"Good Success" in our Spiritual Warfare.

"Every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you, as I said unto Moses. From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even unto the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and unto the great sea toward the going down of the sun, shall be your coast.

"There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee; I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I sware unto their fathers to give them."

"Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses my servant commanded thee; turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest."

"This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success. Have I not commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest." (Joshua 1: 3-9.)

We will now examine the blessed principles, by the observance of which we may enjoy the sure presence of the Lord in almighty power, and good success in our spiritual warfare.

Mark the first thing that is presented — the land is ours: God has given us, in the grace of His heart, the best of blessings, in the best place, and in the best way; "All spiritual blessings; in heavenly places, in Christ." "All is yours," He says, but then we must drive out the enemy and place the sole of our foot upon every inch of ground, and take possession. He has marked out the bounds, and none can dispute our title to what He has bestowed. No hostile power can stand against His people — God is for them; "If God be for us who can be against us?" The possessions are His, but in His people, under Christ, He takes them into His hand.

Such is the boldness with which we have to face the foe; no fear of the result, He "hath not given unto us the spirit of fear." But all is ruin where these conditions are not observed. In place of "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life," we find, further on, that they "could not stand before their enemies," and the Lord said, "Neither will I be with you any more" (Joshua 7: 12). How solemn! The walls of Jericho, around which the victorious Host had walked but a little before, had fallen down flat; and now the people are smitten before the men of Ai, "and the hearts of the people melted, and became as water." The "accursed thing" was permitted; disobedience brought its defeat and bitterness. "Covetousness," which desired the wedge of gold, and "idolatry" of heart, which saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, had been allowed; until defeat proved that the Lord's presence and power was forfeited while they remained, and a discomfited Host finds what a reality His presence had been, though unseen, and how the sin of one of their number was felt by all: "One member suffered and all the members suffered with it."

It is interesting to see, in passing and alluding to this chapter, that as obedience was the condition of their strength and of the Lord's presence with them, so again by obedience restoration is effected in the judgment of the sin. Even the judgment of the offender, and the recovery of the presence and manifested power of the Lord for them. This obedience, too, by which such is effected, is seen in those who *suffered*, rather than in the *offender*. One would almost have thought that it should have fallen upon him, but it is upon Joshua and the people that the activities of obedience now devolve; thus the offender is discovered, the evil cast out, and the people restored.

So it is also in Matt. 18: 15-22. Upon the aggrieved devolve the activities of grace towards the offending one — not upon the erring one.

When all had failed in the effort made for his recovery, the very obedience of the aggrieved one was the means by which all came to light, and was judged and cleared away. Such is God's way.

"As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee." As if the Lord were to say, If I was with you through the desert solitudes, where your needs and your necessities were all *my* care; how much the more will I be with you now, when you are occupied with my battles in the land, and my warfare is *your* care. Moses recalls this persevering, unchanging, perfect love which had been displayed in the desert, in those touching words, "He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee, thou hast lacked nothing" (Deut. 2: 7). And here the Lord recalls His ever watchful presence and care, as if to remind them of its solicitude and perfection, that their hearts might trust Him whose battles were now to be fought, and whose land was to be taken from the enemy's hand. "I will not fail thee" in the exigencies of every hour of need and toil; "nor forsake thee" in the wisdom and power needed in possessing the land.

How bright and real are those words spoken at times to the heart of His servants as the difficulties increase, and the power of the enemy displays itself: "Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land which I sware unto their fathers to give them." Adversaries there are, but the word is, "In nothing terrified by your adversaries" (Phil. 1: 27). You may appear as grasshoppers in your own sight, and they as giants; the cities may be walled up to heaven; no matter: the higher they are the more complete will be the proof of what My power can accomplish by an obedient people.

Paul at Corinth (Acts 18) meets the opposition and blasphemy of the enemy; but the Lord speaks to His servant, "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace; for I am with thee, and no one (*oudeis* — man or devil) shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." Many were there to whom the word of life was to be ministered, and who needed to be put in possession of the land — their "own things." Paul was to divide to them their lot — their heavenly possessions, and the word was, Be of good courage, "be not afraid." Timothy might have been discouraged at the defection and the general state of things — another day of deep ruin; but again the word to him was, Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." And Paul can write those wondrous words, "I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Tim. 2).

"Only be thou strong and very courageous" — why is this again repeated? Why this solicitude that courage and strength may be there? "That thou mayest observe to do according to all the law which Moses my

servant commanded thee." Courage and strength were needed to *obey*. God's strength is with us *in* the path of His will, and not *out* of this path most surely; and we need courage to do His will in this evil world. Take up God's word as the standard by which to walk, and men will tell you that the times are changed — (so they have!) — that things are not what they were, and the like. Besides this, we need courage with self to obey the word of God. Who is not conscious of the unsubdued will of the flesh, which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be? We need special courage with self that we may do His bidding; we need courage one with another; with the world; with relations, with all. We may have to walk alone in the pathway, but if so, we walk with Him whose word it is. It needs then this courage to obey, and God knows the end from the beginning: He foresaw all that would come, and He gave His word in view of all. Thus we can trust that He has not spoken one word too much, and there is not one word which is not needed, even if it may seem of little moment in our eyes. He looks at the *enemy* and exhorts us to "Be strong and of good courage;" He looks at *ourselves*, and again He speaks, "Be thou strong and very courageous;" "Turn not from it (the word) to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest."

But if there is courage needed to obey, that we may prosper in our spiritual warfare, it needs too, that we should meditate on the Word that we may know the mind of God as revealed therein. "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate thereon day and night." The word of God carries with it the great fact, which we find growingly each day, that God has revealed the truth — nay Himself, in the midst of a scene formed and systematized through man's departure from Him. Divine light is needed for our path through it, with its snares and pitfalls, and we have a watchful enemy to meet and overcome; therefore, we should live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. The day may be bright, or the night may be dark, the great thing is to have the word of God stored up in the heart, and treasured there in the love of it, that we may be kept from the paths of the destroyer. "By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer," speaks the Spirit of Christ in Psalm 17, and "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee," in Psalm 119: 11. "Meditate upon these things," says the apostle to the young servant Timothy, "give thyself wholly unto them, that thy profiting may appear unto all." (1 Tim. 4.) And so we find, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful: but his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night." Now mark the result, "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper." (Ps. 1.) The heart is carried along in the channel of God's mind, and thus the

constancy of communion with Him enables the heart to live in another sphere and order of things than the motives of the scene we are passing through. But it is in the heart — the affections, in which the word must be hid. Intellect will not do, or clearness of thought — but the heart in treasuring up His words is kept near to Him in whom dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and thus we know that we are in Him. "For then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success" (Joshua 1: 8).

We now come to a word of deep blessedness, and nothing can compensate for the absence of such an assurance from the Lord. "Have I not commanded thee?" sustains the heart in the midst of the scene through which we have to tread our way, with the presence of Christ, in almighty power. To have God's command steadies the heart in the midst of it all. To find a difficulty by the way, and not have such an assurance is bitterness indeed. The more tender the conscience the more deep the pain, when we are not assured of having His command if difficulties arise. We have to be exercised and sifted in heart, that we may seek His face in the exigencies of the journey, but He gives the consciousness of "Have I not commanded thee?" in unwavering certainty to us. The heart may cry out, in the sense of the peril that a false step might entail, without having His word — "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee." But He never fails the heart which cries, but assures it with His calm and quiet "Come"! Then all difficulties vanish like the morning cloud; or they only serve to unfold His resources and ways to us, when we know we are in His pathway here below.

In a dream Paul is directed to Macedonia; and they gathered that the Lord had called them to preach there, and they go across. For days they seem to have no work to do; then a few women are found at a river side, and are blessed through the Word; and then Satan comes to hinder and deceive. What a lesson we learn in these men walking for days apparently at leisure (that which tests the soul's condition often but too well), with girded loins. The enemy does not meet them unprepared, but finds these soldiers of Christ armed with the whole armour of God, and Satan is frustrated, and the damsel delivered from his power. But the deliverers are soon cast into the inner prison, with bleeding backs undressed, and their feet are set fast in the stocks. What a moment of anguish, had not Paul had the clear sense in his soul of "Have I not commanded thee?" and thus, without a single care, he and his fellow-soldier prayed and sang praises to God at midnight, in that unquestioning confidence, and that trustfulness which an uncondemning heart bestows.

Again take Moses: Forty years before he had assayed in fleshly zeal to deliver his brethren, and had failed. Forty years of discipline finds him a broken man; distrustful of his own powers and unwilling to go when sent

by the Lord. His mission begins — he shows his signs, and demands God's first-born from the hands of Pharaoh. He is driven from his presence, and the people, whose minds he had wrought upon by the visions of freedom from the lash of Egypt, are driven back to their toil with heavier tasks than before. Now comes the solemn moment for this man Moses, who would be a deliverer to his brethren. *They* turn upon him, and charge him with the increase of their burdens and that their savour was abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh. (Ex. 5: 21.) Moses returns to the Lord in this bitter moment of his history, and the Lord gives him a charge — a defined mission to His people and to Pharaoh; then all is clear. "Have I not commanded thee?" really makes all simple, and no matter what difficulties may arise hesitation is gone, and this blessed soul-sustaining word is the solace of the heart of him — nay of all — who have wrestled with Him, as it were, that He might speak it to our souls. Then the rejection of our brethren, if we have to bear it; the sorrows of service, whatever they may be, are overborne by the words, "Have I not commanded thee?" "Be strong, and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest"! If He be with us, no matter how rough the water. Yea the waters may seek to engulf the ship, but if He be in it all is well.

In the remaining portion of this chapter we learn a solemn lesson in one way, and a blessed lesson on the other,

On one side we find the type of those who seek to take their place on *this* side of the Jordan — death and resurrection applied to us by the Spirit of God. Reuben, Gad, and half Manasseh, do not go back to Egypt — still their hearts linger on this side of the land of promise, seeking rest — not where the calling of God had contemplated. Joshua had not given them this portion; but the well-watered fields on this side of Jordan seemed to be a proper place for their flocks and herds, and their wives and little ones. They "came short" of the purpose and calling of God, yet they are not apostate, by turning back again to the land of Egypt. So far, they are "enemies to the cross of Christ . . . who mind earthly things." The things of heaven, as risen . . . with Christ, have no sweetness to the taste of those whose wills led them to settle where Israel wandered. Solemn truth, too, that henceforth they are looked upon as distinct from Israel. They have a history of their own, outside the land; like Lot's history in Sodom, so distinct from that of Abraham on the mountain-top with God.

The day came too, when it could be said of them, "In the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart. Why abodest thou among the sheep-folds, to hear the bleatings of the flocks? In the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart." (Judges 5.) The ear was opened to hearken to that which took possession of the heart, and it was deaf to the call of the Lord. Yet there had been a day too, when Moses

refused to come out of Egypt without those "wives and little ones" whose prosperity now was their hindrance in entering the land.

How we see this every day around us. Parents urgent and earnest in seeking to have their children converted, and thus severed from the land of Egypt; yet when the prospects in this world of those children are at stake, a midway course is chosen; the land of promise, where the Lord carries on His warfare is refused, and ease accepted. Still this did not bring with it the rest which was sought; for those who sought rest without going into heavenly places had still to go to war.

On the other side, it is very sweet to find how that the Lord cares for the wives and the little ones of those who fight His battles for their brethren. We may leave them to His care as a tender Father and a more than Husband, conscious that He can care for them when we are not with them, while engaged for Him. We could not care for them ourselves even if with them were He not to do so, and He can do so without us when occupied in His affairs. This may be done in various ways. Epaphroditus may "labour fervently" for his brethren in prayer. Perhaps to some bed-ridden saint was Paul indebted for those great gifts whereby the hearts of many were gladdened in the fields of his labour for Christ, and so a note of praise ascended to Him who had put it into the heart of some such lowly saint thus to pray. See 2 Cor. 1: 11, etc.

Part 3.

Chapter 20.

Realization: the Seven Trumpets of Rams' Horns.

We have now reached the closing part of our meditations. We turned aside at the end of Joshua 5 to examine the condition of soul unfolded in the "Whole armour of God," and needed by the Lord's people in order successfully to face the foe and stand fast in the evil day; we also sought to learn something of those practical conditions, by the observance of which we may expect unbroken success and the Lord's blessed presence with us, in these spiritual wars (Joshua 1).

The Captain of the Lord's Host had said to Joshua, "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy." The place of conflict was holy ground, and "As captain of the host of the Lord" had He "now come."

We will seek now to learn something of the lessons taught us in Israel's history, in order to the practical realization of our own things, and that we may be used for the deliverance of others: these two activities

characterise the life and warfare of the redeemed. "Now Jericho was straitly shut up;" or, "Did shut up, and was shut up" (marg); not only was this unbroken display of the enemy's power "shut up" from the Host of the Lord; but in heart and will it was against Him — it "did shut up because of the children of Israel: none went out, and none came in." But Jericho must fall before the armies of the Lord. Satan must find that no power can defeat the people of God, while walking in obedience and dependence, and God working in them. Rahab was within, and could not get out to those with whom her heart was bound up. Israel was without, and no power of man could break down those walls which reached to heaven. But a power had come into this world which no malice of the enemy, no evil of man could frustrate or defeat: the power of simple obedience. It was by this mighty weapon Jesus bound the strong man; and by the same power reaching "unto death," He had gone into his last stronghold to set his captives free! Now those delivered ones are about to be used to deliver others from his power by the same mighty energies, and to take possession of and realize their own things.

We may remember that when the Lord would give His people a heavenly place, in type, in their crossing of Jordan into Canaan, or in the fact unfolded in the end of Eph. 1 and commencement of Eph. 2, that He — the true Ark of the covenant, must go *first* into the waters of death, and thus make a pathway for His people into the land of promise. But another blessed and precious truth is taught us in the fact that when they are in the land, and about to take possession of all, the ark will *follow after* the faithful soldiers of the Host of the Lord.

And this is just as it should be. None could enter the waters of death and pass across that flood unscathed, until Jesus entered and dried up these waters. There He must be alone. None but He could bear the wrath — none but He could stand fast in those "swellings of Jordan." But this being accomplished, the order is reversed, and in the forefront went the "seven priests, bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns," and "him that (was) armed passed on *before* the Ark of the Lord" (vv. 4-9). And then the falling walls would prove two things. First, the faithful condition of heart of those who led the way, and next, that the Lord was with those faithful hearts in sure and almighty power.

We find two other occasions where the presence or otherwise of the Ark told its solemn tale. In Numbers 14 when the Lord had pronounced the sentence of forty years' wanderings for the unbelief of those who would not go up and possess the land, and then had turned back Himself to be a wanderer with them; the people, instead of accepting this discipline as of God, which faith would have done, seek to go up to battle without the "Ark of the Lord" (vv. 40-45). "And they rose up early in the morning, and got them up into the top of the mountain, saying, Lo, we be

here, and will go up unto the place which the Lord hath promised: for we have sinned. And Moses said, Wherefore now do ye transgress the commandment of the Lord? but it shall not prosper. Go not up, for the Lord is not among you; that ye be not smitten before your enemies. For the Amalekites and the Canaanites are there before you, and ye shall fall by the sword: because ye are turned away from the Lord, therefore the Lord will not be with you."

Twelve men had safely traversed the length and breadth of the land for forty days some little time before; yet the children of Amalek, and the Canaanites were then there; but God was with these men, and faith counted not its own resources, but counted on the Lord. Then, six hundred thousand men with unbelieving fears, in heart turned back to Egypt, and God gave them up to their unbelieving desire — "Would God we had died in the wilderness" (Num. 14: 2) — and said, "I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do unto you: your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me, doubtless ye shall not come into the land" (vv. 27-30).

But they did not bow to this chastisement from His hand. Faith should have counted on God and gone up against the foe at the first; and now faith should have accepted and bowed to this sentence and remained; but instead of this, they rose up early to go to battle without the Lord. He, before whom the children of Anak were nothing, tells them that they must be smitten in their own strength, before those very Amalekites and Canaanites who were there.

But even this word of warning was not "mixed with faith in them that heard it," any more than the word of glad tidings of Canaan's rest by the spies. So we read, "But they presumed to go up unto the hill-top; *nevertheless the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and Moses, departed not out of the camp.*" The result was fatal; they were completely routed before their enemies, even to Hormah (Destruction).

Thus we find the solemn result of an effort to go against the foe without the presence of the Lord.

In 1 Samuel 4 another lesson is "written for our learning." It was the day of Israel's failure, and their ruin was now about to be complete. The Philistines — the instruments of Satan's power which had been allowed — were gathered in battle against Israel. And Israel was smitten. In an unfaithful condition they had ventured to go out against the enemy; the result was what must ever be. But instead of this defeat bringing them, in

the sense of their own state, to the dust before God; they seek to identify the Ark with their own unfaithfulness. Do you suppose that God could acknowledge or succour them? Impossible! We read, "Let us fetch the Ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh amongst us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies."

They did so; they shouted too, "with a great shout so that the earth rang again." But God would not answer. He knew how to take care of His own honour, even if His Ark were to be found in Dagon's house (ch. 5); but own them He will not.

But at Jericho we find the normal state of the warfare of the Lord's Host. The complete number of the priests were to go in the forefront blowing seven trumpets of rams' horns. Here I find an exceedingly beautiful thought; one which will commend itself to the Christian reader's heart and conscience; giving him to feel consciously and increasingly the conviction that there is not one word of God but which has its divine lesson for us. This, thank God, is the growing conviction of the writer. That he and all the Lord's people may have grace increasingly to appreciate His word, is his prayer!

Seven is the well-known symbol of completeness or perfection in spiritual things; and the Trumpet is that which carries simply with it to the heart and understanding the thought of testimony rendered actively (Num. 10, etc.). The Ram is always the victim of consecration (Lev. 8: 22, etc.). The Horn is used as the symbol of power. To put all that this lovely type conveys together, it would mean, *the testimony of the power of complete consecration to God!* How lovely! A delivered — redeemed people, in full consciousness of all their privileges; armed at all points with the whole armour of God, obedient in heart and practice; the Lord's presence amongst them in living and victorious power, and in the forefront of this Host of the Lord, the testimony of the power of complete consecration to God! O, if the church of God — if the Host of the Lord, had maintained this wondrously blessed place of consecration and power, would it not have led indeed to the fulfilment of the prayer of the Son to the Father, "That they all may be one, that the world may believe"? (John 17).

But another striking thought comes in here also. When the sound of these trumpets was heard, the people were to shout with a great shout. In Psalm 89: 15, we find exactly the same word, in the original language, translated joyful sound." "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound; they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance." And here we find this shout of victory — the fitting accompaniment of all the surroundings in this scene. They walked in "the light of the countenance" of Him who was pre-figured in the ark, and knew the "joyful sound" — the

joyful shout of conquerors through obedience to Him, and through His victorious power.

Forth sallied this little cavalcade day after day; contemptible, doubtless, in the eyes of the proud city of Jericho; but the Lord was there, and obedience in patience gave character to the little host, as they waited the time that the shout would be answered by the falling walls, and the deliverance of those on the Lord's side who were within.

But one day, or two, or three, was not sufficient to accomplish this victory. Seven days must be completely fulfilled; perfect patience must be tried and proved; but it was the patience of God! And while exercising this perfect patience, each day the little army returned to the true place of strength and self-judgment — to Gilgal. It seemed a foolish thing to those who may have seen it from the proud walls of Jericho; but those in the secret of the Lord could afford to bear this reproach of Christ and contempt of the enemy: they had faith in Him whose Ark they bore on their shoulders, and whose unseen presence ordered all!

And the seventh day came. On that day they were to encompass the city seven times. "And it came to pass at the seventh time, when the priests blew with the trumpets, Joshua said unto the people, Shout; for the Lord hath given you the city." His victorious power was working through their obedience; and "So the people shouted when (the priests) blew with the trumpets: and it came to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet; and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat, so that the people went up into the city, every man straight before him, and they took the city." The Lord had given it to them in right and title, but they had thus to realize the possession and dislodge the enemy.

But more; those who were captives to the enemy's power were to be delivered. Rahab (with her "house") had been a "prisoner of hope" since the day she had "received the spies in peace, and sent them out another way." She had identified herself in faith with the Lord's people when they had not an inch of their possessions; a host of wandering pilgrims. But her faith saw beyond all this and could say, "I know that the Lord hath given you the land" (Joshua 2: 9). She looked for a "true token," by the faith which wrought by love, in that it sought the safety of her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and sisters, and "all that they had." In the obedience of faith she bound the scarlet line to the window — the "true token" — which these witnesses of the Lord had given her. Not only did she "believe with the heart" their testimony; but "confessed (it) with the mouth," in binding the line to the window of her house on the wall.

The day came when Joshua redeemed the pledge these men had given, as the Lord Jesus will own every true pledge which the soldiers of Christ now make in His name. When the walls of Jericho fell down flat, the only thing which remained was Rahab's house on the wall! She might say with us, "We receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved;" all will move by judgment some day, unless that which stands on the propitiation wrought by Jesus, and is reconciled. "By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace," testifies one divine witness (Heb. 11). And another adds, "Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she received the messengers, and had sent them out another way" (James 2). Her faith, like that of the woman of Samaria in another day, had wrought by love, and "many had believed because of the word of the woman." Her father, mother, brethren, and all that she had; all her kindred were saved and delivered on that day; and this through the obedience of the victorious hosts of Israel. More still: she was not merely delivered, and then left to her own resources; but she was brought out to the camp of the Host of the Lord, and eventually had a place of deepest honour in the ancestry of the Lord of glory (Ruth 4: 21; Matt. 1: 5).

Where now should the victorious Host have gone? To carry on this brilliant warfare, says some one, still into the enemy's power. Nay; they should have returned to Gilgal — the place of the secret of power, and renewal of the strength of the Lord! But a day of victory is a trying day, and, instead of this, even Joshua fails. (Blessed that the true Joshua never fails!) He "sent men from Jericho to Ai" (Joshua 7: 2). Alas! they had not returned to Gilgal; for the victory had led to negligence and confidence in their own resources. But I pass on.

Now the end of Ephesians 1 pointed out Christ — the true Ark — in the waters of death, and the people passing over dry-shod, as quickened together with Christ, raised up together, and seated together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This was before us in type in the third chapter of Joshua, when the Ark was borne on the priests' shoulders in the river of death. But there, we remarked, when it was a question of sovereign grace, the Ark went first into the waters, as the Lord Jesus into the death where we lay (Eph. 1: 19). But in Joshua 6 we saw, as it was a question of faithfulness and spiritual conflict, the Ark came on behind.

Just the same analogy as Joshua 3 bears to Joshua 6, in this way, such analogy, may we not say, lies between the prayer of Paul in Eph. 1: 15-22, and his prayer in Eph. 3: 14-21. The Lord is first in death and resurrection, and then the people pass over — quickened together with Him, and so are seen in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. May we not safely give to the prayer of Eph. 1: 15-22 the characteristic name of the prayer of *Possession*? The apostle desires that they may know what they

possess — the *calling* of God into the Father's house (vv. 3-6): the *inheritance* of God — that is, the universal possession of all created things set under Christ and the church as joint heirs with Him (vv. 9-11); and the *power* to usward who believe, which was wrought in Christ when God raised Him as Man from the dead and set Him on high; this same power had wrought in quickening and raising them.

But when we come to the prayer of Ephesians 3, which may we not characterise as the apostle's desire (that we should not only know what we possess and are brought into as in Eph. 1, but) that we might *realize* and take possession of by faith, all that is ours in Christ? Is it not then the prayer of *Realization*? This being so, he prays that we may be strengthened with might by the Spirit of the Father, in the inner man; thus we are put *first*, and *then* it is to the end that *Christ* may dwell in our hearts by faith. He has been set on high — the Son of the Father — the centre of all the wondrous counsels and purposes of glory and He desires that we may realize what we are before Him, in the consciousness of our souls, in order that Christ, who is this centre, may dwell in the heart's affections. Not merely that the "*eyes of our heart**" may be enlightened to see (*objectively*) this prospect of our possessions into which Christ as man had entered, and which were ours in Him, as in Ephesians 1; but that *in our hearts* Christ might dwell; He who is the centre of all the glory. Then looking out from this centre, and being rooted and grounded in love, He desires that we may be able to comprehend (*subjectively*) with all saints, this boundless scene of glory — "What is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;" an ocean without a shore. To be with the heart of Him who is the centre of it all — to have Him who is its centre dwelling in our hearts by faith; thus we must take in what His heart does, and all those whom His heart embraces, even "all saints." They are the closest and nearest circle in the affections of Christ. We may not be able to go with all of them in their ways here below, if they are walking in disobedience to the truth; but we shall, if near the heart of Jesus, bear them upon ours, and have communion with the thoughts that Jesus thinks of them on high.

{*"Eyes of your *heart*" is the correct reading of Eph. 1: 17.}

But boundless and wondrous as are these fields of glory, they do not fix the affections; they do not engross the heart. And so he goes on, "And to know the love of Christ" — this makes the heart feel at home. If, as one has remarked, I were unused to the courts of kings, and I found myself there, they might dazzle me with their splendour, and the like; but splendour presents nothing on which the affections may rest. But suppose I found the dearest friend I had there, and the chief person there? At once I am at home. Thus from the glory (which, though unnamed, is implied), he passes on to recall the heart to Jesus, and to give it to feel at home in the scene, "the love of Christ" — the very love which now I know,

and which I have learned here below in the sorrows and joys and needs of the way. But even if it sets the heart restful and at home, he adds that it too "passeth knowledge." Thus we are "filled into all the fulness of God."

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (so He is, most surely) but, "*according to the power that worketh in us.*" Not merely a power working *for us*, blessed as that is, and has been; but "*in us,*" enabling us to realise and possess consciously this glory, in Him who is its centre — to overcome what hinders — to take these things of Christ out of the enemy's hand (as Israel, by the power that wrought in them in taking Jericho), and thus bring Him that glory even now, which He will have "in the Church throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

Chapter 21.

Unity of Action; Diversity of Operation: Joshua's Spear.

Before we close, perhaps some practical thoughts on the living activities of the Lord's Host may be helpful to some. May the Lord direct us in our thoughts. There is a sentence in the sixth Chapter of Joshua which has much power and significance — "The people went up into the city, *every man straight before him.*" There was no clashing with each other's work or pathway, while the fullest unanimity, the most perfect fellowship and harmony prevailed amongst the conquering Host of the Lord. This is the divine order, and there is none like it. There was no one person had the same path, or the same work to do as another. God never repeats Himself | He never makes two leaves of a tree — two blades of grass — two faces alike. He never sets two members of Christ to do the same service in the Church of God. Each, however closely his work may lie with that of another, has his own work to do; and no person can do another's work as well as he can do his own. Nay, he can, of all men, do his work *best* himself.

To be successful as the Host of the Lord, there must be the divine unity of action, while diversity of operation necessarily follows. The Lord guides all spiritually, and each one shows his confidence in his Lord and Master, and his obedience to His commands, by going "straight before him" in the pathway he has been ordained. Like the soldiers of a mighty army, we are moving right and left in the smoke and confusion and din of the battle-field; we do not, and cannot know the bearing of each act of ours on each other in carrying out the plan of the battle, or the purposes of the Captain, in the presence of the enemy. The mistake we frequently make is, instead of seeing to it that we are keeping line ourselves, we are watching the pathway and service of another; perhaps encroaching on it and hindering him, and in consequence not doing our own special work.

Now this should not be. Wisdom is marked in each step of obedience; and each step of obedience finds each in his place with God. The confidence of each too, in his Commander is thus proved, and his work is done in quiet confidingness of heart in Him. The action of some unseen soldier of Christ, whose pathway lies in some secluded corner, who is perhaps only known to Him, has its bearing on the whole Church of God. He may think his actions are of no consequence, he is so humble and insignificant a member of Christ: he has yet to learn that "those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary . . . for God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to those parts which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12: 22-26).

Now this is strikingly illustrated in type in the eighth chapter of the Book of Joshua, in the history of the taking of Ai. We have the doctrine unfolded for us especially in Ephesians 4: 1-16, Rom. 12, etc.

When Israel had failed after the destruction of Jericho, and the solemn discipline in the case of Achan had been accomplished, Israel thus "proving themselves clear in this matter," the Lord had directed that *all* the people of war should now go up. Ambushments are laid; some at the west and some at the north of the city, all under the direction of Joshua by the command of the Lord.

There are even now in the army of Christ (these, so to speak), outposts, pickets, and ambushments, as in another way there were then. Some are standing alone for Christ, far away from the fellowship of the saints. Like the lonely but watchful sentry, upon whose fidelity the safety of the army in measure depends — some have this lonely post. But whether his path be isolated, or amongst the congregated saints, upon the faithfulness, watchfulness, devotedness of each depends (as far as man's responsibility reaches) the work of God in the whole.

The men of Ai are drawn into the snare; the army of the Lord in the forefront seem to them to give way, yea, to flee. There are times to do this even in this day in our spiritual wars. A time to let our yieldingness be so known to all men, as to make it appear to them that we have nothing to say. Such a moment may seem a triumph to the foe. But how short-lived! He is led to commit himself the more completely; but faith counts on the resources of God, and abides His time. Thus did the Lord in His day, and all seemed a complete triumph of the enemy. But O what wondrous resources lay behind! What a work was He accomplishing, when in His apparent defeat and desertion by all! The enemy seemed to have gained such a complete victory, when Jesus, despised and rejected of men, died

a malefactor's death; and wretched men could say, "Ah, so would we have it!" But what a downfall was his, when the bars of death — the "gates of hades" — were borne on the shoulders of this Mighty Conqueror, and the enemy's last strong citadel — death — succumbs, abolished by the power of His resurrection.

We too may seem at times to be defeated — to yield, and flee before the enemy's power, confiding in our Captain and the unseen resources — the armies of reserve which He can employ to accomplish His victory. But all this requires faith in Him, faith that thinks not of self, but of Christ. The watchful eye of Jesus marks all from the heights above; He withdraws not His eyes from His people. "And the Lord said unto Joshua, stretch out the spear that is in thy hand towards Ai: for I will give it into thine hand. And Joshua stretched out the spear that he had in his hand toward the city. And the ambush arose quickly out of their place, and they ran as soon as he had stretched out his hand: and they entered into the city, and took it, and hasted and set the city on fire" (Joshua 8: 18).

Thus we find that the Holy Ghost produces under Christ, unity of action in the hearts of those who are thus under His mighty and constraining power. Wondrous Unity! past man's comprehension; past his ordering. But no difficulty is felt when the Lord is thus at work, and an obedient people act in the current of His mighty operations. Joshua's spear — and that by no preconcert — was stretched out by a hand which grew not weary till all was accomplished. This marks this lovely concert of action in the unity which is indeed of God. Each soldier on that day had his own special pathway; yet there was but one Joshua, with one spear, who ordered all. True unity; yet true diversity brought forth to fruition this victory.

If we turn to Eph. 4: 1-16, we find these activities unfolded in the church of God. Complete, sevenfold unity begins the chapter (vv. 1-6), yet diversity marks the place of each and all. The "prisoner of Jesus Christ" exhorts that we should walk worthy of this vocation which he has just unfolded. It embraces with its collateral truths three prominent features. The calling of God into Christ's place as Son and Man before Him (ch. 1). Then our corporate relation to Christ, the Head, as His body (ch. 1). And in the close of ch. 2 the fact that here on earth we are builded together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. All these wondrous things form the basis of his exhortation in ch. 4.

"Lowliness and meekness" become us most surely then, in God's presence. To be lowly in truth we must be consciously there. "Long-suffering" too; for the greater the evil, the more must this divine quality be found in us. It is more than patience; long-suffering supposes outrage and injury, and our bearing it as God. Then too, "Forbearing one another in

love;" it needs this much, for flesh is in each, and we have flesh in ourselves. It can never combat with flesh in another; thus there must be forbearance. It is wonderful when this forbearance is exercised towards the actions of flesh in another how he is ashamed, and how the soul is brought to self-judgment sooner or later before the Lord. All this then is prefatory to the great end in view, the glory of Christ, and in walking worthy of our vocation. We shall be characterised by the blessed qualities of lowliness and meekness, long-suffering and forbearance in love; this divine character crowning all, and qualifying (what otherwise would be but human amiability) with the nature of God.

The Apostle now names the sevenfold unity. First the essential real unity to which our corporate responsibility is attached. He begins by saying, "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace." All diligence is needed for this in such an evil day as that through which we now pass. This is its scope. Then, when we come to its *practice* all should be "using diligence to keep" it, in the uniting bond of peace, in "one body."

The first two unities are connected with the Holy Ghost, "There is one body and one Spirit." This is the real thing formed by the presence of the Holy Ghost, "one hope" — it can have none other. There can be but one for that which is held in living unity by the "one Spirit" of God, in "one body."

The next three are connected with Jesus as "one Lord." Here we find His place of dignity as owned in profession by all who call on the name of the Lord, "both theirs and ours." Such have but one common confession of His name — "one faith." It is this is in his thought. Elsewhere there is also "the faith," as the truth held between the soul and God; or "faith" in itself, as a divine gift and power in the soul. But here it is the common confession and profession of "one faith" in "one Lord," and this expressed by "one baptism" — of water.

The last unity brings us in connection with "God," as such; He who is "Father of all" (cf. ch. 3: 15), or supreme Author of them; who is "above all;" here we find His supreme place; He also permeates all, and lastly, He is "in you all" — thus He dwells in the saints.

This then is the administrative place of the Spirit, of the Lord, and of God. The revelation of the Trinity we find elsewhere. We have these unities connected with the *Holy Ghost*, real, essential, and vital. Unities connected with the *Lord* — those of profession and confession. And with *God* as Father and supreme.

He then turns to the great source of divine diversity in the Church, to Jesus — the true Joshua. "But unto every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ;" here are contemplated the Hosts of the redeemed on earth — the whole church of God. Every one in the mighty army has his place. What business would he have to be in and of that Host if he had not some office to perform? "According to the measure of the gift of Christ" determines all. He sees fit to give, and He is Lord of all. He is seen here in His glorious exaltation, as "ascended up on high." How then did He reach that wondrous place? First He went down into the stronghold of Satan's power — death; but He did so as one who overcame this power of the enemy by apparent defeat, as we sing, "He death by dying slew." Then He burst the bars of the grave asunder, and "ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." At another day a little rehearsal of this wondrous victory, in an earthly way was celebrated in the song of Deborah. "Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam" (Judges 5: 12). But its effects only lasted for a little moment, and then passed away. Now this eternal victory of Jesus is so complete that He can turn those who were captives to the power of the enemy and as thus set free, and make them His Host against all his power in the energy of that day of glory, in which He will bind Satan and cast him into the bottomless pit, and fill the earth with the full results of His victory and glory.

Shall not His Hosts then gladly publish His victory? Israel's first great salvation is ever a type and sample of their last and greatest deliverance. In the day of their redemption from Egypt they had to "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord;" in their final deliverance it will be the same story. Their extremity is God's opportunity, as is ever the case. The Church can say "Thou hast ascended up on high, thou hast led captivity captive; thou hast received gifts in the man" (Ps. 68: 18). The day will come when it will be said, "Yea, for the rebellious also (Israel), that Jehovah God might dwell among them." Meanwhile, "He gave gifts to men," He has not only "received gifts in man" according to the Psalm, but given "gifts to men" — members of His body. The same power that will free the world from Satan's power, He now dispenses in His members, in order to free others from that power, and build them up by the word of His grace.

What a wondrous Christ is He with whom we have to do! One who first descended "into the lower parts of the earth," i.e. the grave. The creature fell with the first Adam, and became subject to Satan's power and to death; Jesus — the second Adam — went under death, and then ascended far above all heavens." I look down to the deepest depths of ruin where the creature lay; I look again up to the highest heavens, even "the heaven of heavens which is the Lord's," and I behold a Man filling it

all! From the extremest depths of ruin, to the highest heights of glory He has traversed, "that he might fill all"! and this as Man. It is such a Christ with whom we have to do; such a Christ we have to serve, in the consciousness of the breadth of these wondrous fields of glory as realized by faith; in the depth of the creature's misery as fallen, and under Satan's power.

Then we learn the diversity of the special permanent gifts which He has given: "And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (vv. 11, 12). Apostles did their own special foundation work, and then passed away. Their special power and foundation ministry is continued to none: none could now say, "Have I not seen the Lord?" a necessary qualification for this work; nor could any now say, "And so ordain I in all the churches." Without these special qualities there are none. Their work then was done and ended when the last apostle passed from this scene. He gave "some apostles," and there it ended.

And He "gave some prophets" — Mark was one; Luke was another, may I not say? They were not apostles, but they wrote by revelation their Gospels and the Acts. Such like service, with the oral teaching as revealed then by the prophets, was their work; it has been accomplished, and they too have passed away; their work was done.*

{*The gift of prophecy is continued now in another way. For those, who in ministering speak to the conscience of the hearer from God — whether to saint or sinner — are prophesying in the ordinary sense. (Cf. John 4: 19; 1 Cor. 14, *passim*)}

"And he gave . . . some evangelists," whose work is to carry the "glad tidings" to the lost, in this evil world, and bring souls when delivered from the bondage of Satan, to the consciousness of their place in Christ, and thus as of the Host of the Lord to do battle against the enemy.

"And some pastors and teachers" to shepherd and feed the flock of God, and train them in the ways of the Lord. All these are special and permanent gifts attached to individuals; an evangelist is always an evangelist, even when he is not evangelizing. A pastor and teacher is always this, though not always at his work. They are the definite abiding gifts of Christ to the Church, "Till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." This is the end and aim of ministry in the Church of God. Even when the Lord shows (v. 12) for what purpose He has thus bestowed these gifts, He puts the individual saint first, even

before He speaks of the whole body. Just as the place and relationship to the Father, of the individual saint, is shown most fully in chapter 1 of this epistle, before his corporate place and relation to Christ as a member of His body is touched upon in its end; so here He adds, "For the perfecting of the saints (first; then) for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." And the end to be attained, "Till we all come" — that is, every individual saint of the whole body of Christ — "in the unity of the faith," one uniform basis of faith in the understanding of the things of Christ, and consciousness of our place before Him; the standard of all being "the knowledge of the Son of God" — He for whom the Church waits; upon whose person as risen, she is built; "The Son of the living God;" "in the faith of whom she overcomes the world, and who will take her to Himself for His Father's house and the glory. The measure of growth in each being "a perfect (or full-grown) man," in contrast with being "babes" (v. 14); the "perfect man" having still but one just measure and stature to which to attain, that of the "fulness of Christ."

Then after those permanent gifts are treated of, we find the "whole body," in the effectual working of the measure of each one part." Here we find the place and function of all the members of Christ without exception. The expression "effectual working" is very beautiful; for not only on the individual growth to "full age" of each Christian, depends the prosperity of the whole body; but also upon the "effectual working of the measure of each one part," hangs the healthy growth and edification in love of the whole.

The heart pauses for a moment to contemplate what the Church of God — the Host of the Lord — would have been, had these wondrously blessed thoughts of Christ been practically carried on to fruition. Still, blessed be His name, the thought is unchanged, and faith thinks His thoughts and faithfulness acts upon them, even were there but one or two acting in their truth on earth. What a wreck — what a ruin, has the Church become in the hands of Satan and men! Yet still the work of grace and truth proceeds, and it will be found, in spite of all the failure, that He who knew the eternal thoughts and counsels of God, and descended to carry them out in the power of divine love, will effectually do so, and present the Church to Himself "Holy and without blame before him in love."

In Romans 12 we also find this "unity of action," and "diversity of operation" — in living and practical power.

The chapter begins with the weightiest of all truths in the practice of a soldier of the Lord's Host: personal consecration to the Lord (vv. 1-3). "I beseech you," says the apostle, "by the mercies of God." Wondrous basis of divine exhortation, of which the mighty mercies unfolded from Rom. 3 to 8* are the foundation in this chapter. "That ye present your bodies,"

heretofore the slaves of sin and every folly, "a living sacrifice." How touchingly does this point to Jesus as the perfect meat-offering — the sinless Man ever before the eye of heaven, and before His Father His perfection in this lovely character was only proved in its completeness by His death in obedience to His Father, and for His Father's glory. Were we to enter upon the full beauty of its presentation of the Lord, in Lev. 2, we should notice an ingredient which, while it formed no part of the offering, was never to be forgotten, that is, the "salt."

{*The direct connection is between the end of Rom. 8 and 12. Romans 9, 10, 11, are parenthetical, and refer to Israel in the past, in the present, and in the future.}

Salt represents the separative power of holiness, which in Him was always perfect. There was a holiness in Jesus which He used to bring God's love to man, because He could not be defiled. But it was that inward power of it which distinguished Him from all other men. It is this He presses at the close of one of His most deeply solemn discourses (Mark 9), "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another." He exhorts to this inward power of holiness and holy grace which connects the soul practically with God, enabling it to refuse the evil and choose the good in this evil world. This renders this "living sacrifice" "acceptable unto God." So far as in us lies, it is thus that the frankincense of His graces are seen in us. No one being ever was offered *in itself* to God but Jesus. But His was that intrinsic perfection ever presented to Him, and tried by the judgment of fire, yet only and always yielding its own sweet savour: all the frankincense went up to God. So far then as Christ liveth in us, this "acceptableness" is found. This is our intelligent service.

He then passes on to our relative place of separation from the world and its ways, and in obedience thus we find as Enoch, God's good and acceptable and perfect will; or as Moses, having found grace in God's sight, we seek His way, that we may find grace in His sight. Then He looks (v. 3) for lowliness, yet sobriety of thought as to ourselves, in the place of responsibility God has set each one. No false humility; but humbly yet firmly accepting the place and measure of gift which God has bestowed, and this in dependence on Him.

After this personal consecration or devotedness, he turns to the mutual relationship of all, as "one body in Christ" (vv. 4, 5); "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office, so we being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." Then he passes on to the individual responsibility of each and all. If it be ministry, it is to be waited on; or prophecy; or teaching; or exhortation. He who gives is to do it with simplicity; he that rules (takes the lead) with diligence. He that showeth mercy, with

cheerfulness. Love is to be without dissimulation, and from the bottom of the heart. Evil to be abhorred; good, to be desired and loved. Kindly affections flowing to others; each taking the lead in paying honour one to the other. Diligence in business, and without slothfulness, thus serving the Lord. Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer. Distributing to the necessities of saints; given to hospitality, Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but associate with what is lowly. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as far as it lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves; but give place unto wrath: for it is written, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Blessed list of graces and virtues which God looks to find in the practical life and warfare of the soldiers of Christ! May they be engraven on the heart, and seen in the lives of all who are His, that His name may be glorified!

Thus, while we see how unity of action in "one body," is imperative on the soldiers of Christ, when moving practically under His eye and command as Captain of the Host of the Lord; diversity of operation is maintained throughout: each having his own place and work assigned to him in the whole. As the members of our human bodies, though many, do not interfere one with the other in the discharge of their several functions; but each working in unity, form one harmonious whole, so is it in the Church of God!

May He give singleness of eye and purpose of heart to His people — to each and all; that we may know His mind and will, and, knowing it, be found effectually working in the measure assigned to us, where we can best glorify Him and carry out His designs and victories here. The day will come when the armour may be put off, and the girdle of service be laid aside for ever! Then He will put it on in His eternally blessed love; and, girding Himself afresh, will come forth to serve us with the best things from the table of the Father, feeding us with His own hand, to make us enjoy the more that House on high in which we shall dwell with Him and He with us, in its peaceful joys for eternity.

Chapter 22.

"The Last Trump:" Conclusion.

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God" (1 Thess. 4: 16).

There is but one command more for which the Host of the Lord now waits — a precious, glorious word! He whose voice once spake on earth in lowly grace, and now speaks from heaven with grace unchanged by man's sin, will utter that "*shout*" of relationship to His own. Known only to them, and heard only by those who have already known the Shepherd's voice; in the twinkling of an eye all shall be changed, and "for ever with the Lord."

What a thrilling note it will be to many a toiling one, who has trodden faithfully his lowly path in the armies of the Lord! Perhaps he had laid down his head on his Master's bosom and "slept," till that day should come — his spirit with the Lord. It may be that he may be found amongst those who are "alive and remain," and when the voice of Jesus sounds it finds him at his post, like a man who waits for his Lord. In the thousand times ten thousand circumstances of life, the voice will reach those whom He loves, and He will carry him to His Father's house on high. The mighty Host of the Lord will rise, in silence and secrecy, like His own resurrection. He will glean up the dust of His people, hitherto carefully preserved by His living power. The four winds of heaven may have scattered it abroad; the four quarters of the earth may have apparently swallowed it up; but it must surrender His prize. The sea must give up those who are Christ's, and who perhaps found there an unmarked tomb. The sealed tomb, the silent places of the dead, must be gleaned of their precious dust. The unmoved sod; the yet-sealed tomb, will tell the tale, that He who left the grave with unbroken seal in presence of the sleeping watch; He who left the grave-clothes "wrapped together" unmoved, has ordered that with the same silence, the same quiet yet mighty power, the "dead in Christ" will rise. They will quit their places as He, the "first-fruits" did, when He comes. The living army still here then hear His voice, and then this corruptible puts on its incorruption; then this mortal puts on its immortality, and the exulting song of the Church is heard in response to His mighty "shout" — "O death, where is thy sting; O grave, where is thy victory"! (1 Cor. 15) Then "they will gaze upon their Master, with His name upon their brow."

Like Enoch of old they will not be "found" — for God will have translated them.

What an incentive is this hope to earnestness of purpose in serving Him for whom we wait, meanwhile. The "terror of the Lord" for those who are not Christ's must press itself heavily upon the heart of His soldiers

here. They know that the sleeping Church has had the midnight cry. They know how His coming had been forgotten — nay denied. They know how that many who love Him had fallen into the "evil servant's" snare, who said, "My lord delayeth his coming." Again they have heard His voice, and have trimmed their lamps, and "gone forth to meet" Him. They know the solemnity of the hour in which they now stand. They feel that the dawning of the day is near; they watch through the gloom for the Church's Bridegroom — the "Bright and the Morning Star." They feel that all the confusion of the present moment marks the state of the poor foolish virgins. They know too, alas, the solemn wail that will pass over these lands where Christ is professed, but alas, Himself unknown — "Lord, Lord, open unto us," and this when the door is shut for ever! Solemn moment of terror indeed will it be! But, O! how bright and living a moment it will be to those who belong to the "first resurrection;" who are raised or changed by His mighty power as the witness and proof of their complete acceptance in the Beloved. *His* resurrection was a proof of the perfection and glory of the person of Him who was there. *Ours* will be the proof of the perfection of His work in which we stand. Surely then we may well "comfort one another with these words."

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." Amen.