

Short Papers — Section 7 of 10.

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“FIVE WORDS”

1 Corinthians 14: 19.

It is often wonderful to mark the way in which the words of Scripture seize upon the heart. They are “as goads and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies.” At times some brief sentence or clause of a sentence will lay hold upon the heart, penetrate the conscience or occupy the mind in such a way as to prove beyond all question the divinity of the book in which it is found. What force of reasoning, what fullness of meaning, what power of application, what an unfolding of the springs of nature, what an unveiling of the heart, what point and pungency, what condensing energy we meet with throughout the sacred pages! One delights to dwell upon these things at all times, but more especially at a moment like the present when the enemy of God and man is seeking in such varied ways to cast a slur upon the inspired volume.

The foregoing train of thought has been suggested to the mind by the expression which forms the title of this article. “I had rather,” says the self-emptied and devoted apostle, “speak five words with my understanding, that I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.” How important for all speakers to remember this! We know that tongues had their value. They were for a sign to the unbelieving. But in the assembly they were useless unless there was an interpreter.

The grand end of speaking in the assembly is edification, and this end can only be reached by persons understanding what is said. It is impossible for a man to edify me if I cannot understand what he says. He must speak in an intelligible language and in an audible voice, else I cannot receive any edification. This surely is plain and worthy of the serious attention of all who speak in public.

Further, we would do well to bear in mind that our only warrant for standing up to speak in the assembly is that the Lord Himself has given us something to say. If it be but “five words,” let us say the five and sit down. Nothing can be more unintelligent than for a man to attempt to speak “ten thousand words” when God has only given him “five.” It is regretful that something like this should so often occur! What a mercy it would be if we could only keep within our measure! That measure may be small. It matters not; let us be simple, earnest and real. An earnest heart is better than a clever head. A fervent spirit is better than an eloquent tongue. Where there is a genuine, hearty desire to promote the real good of souls, it will prove more effective with me and more acceptable to God than the most brilliant gifts without it. We should covet earnestly the best gifts, but we should also remember the “more excellent way,” even the way of love that ever hides itself and seeks only the profit of others. It is not that we value gifts less, but we value love more.

Finally, it would greatly tend to raise the tone of public teaching and preaching to remember the following very simple rule, “Do not set about looking for something to say because you have *got* to speak, but speak because you have got something that ought to be said.” This is very simple. It is a poor thing for a man to be merely collecting as much matter as will fill up a certain space of time. This should never be. Let the teacher or preacher attend diligently upon his ministry. Let him cultivate his gift; let him wait on God for guidance, power and blessing; let him live in the spirit of prayer and breathe the atmosphere of Scripture; then will he be always ready for the Master's use. Then his words, whether “five” or “ten thousand,” will assuredly glorify Christ and do good to men. But in no case

should a man rise to address his fellows without the conviction that God has given him something to say and the desire to say it to edification.

THE BOOK AND THE SOUL

In the formation of the character of a successful minister of the Word of God, two ingredients are essential — an accurate acquaintance with the Bible and a due sense of the value of the soul and of its necessities. The combination of these two qualities is of the utmost importance in the case of every person who is called to minister in the Word and doctrine. To possess only one of them will leave a man a thoroughly one-sided minister. I may be deeply read in Scripture; I may have a profound acquaintance with the contents of the Book and a most exquisite sense of its moral glories, but if I forget the soul and its deep and manifold necessities, my ministry will be lamentably defective. It will lack point, pungency and power. It will not meet the cravings of the heart or tell upon the conscience. It will be ministry from the Book, but not to the soul. True and beautiful, no doubt, but deficient in usefulness and practical power.

On the other hand I may have the soul and its need distinctly before me. I may long to be useful. It may be my heart's desire to minister to the heart and the conscience of my hearer or my reader, but if I am not acquainted with my Bible, if I am not a well-taught scribe, I shall have no material wherewith to be useful. I shall have nothing to give the soul, nothing to reach the heart, nothing to act on the conscience. My ministry will prove barren and tiresome. Instead of teaching souls, I shall tease them. Instead of edifying I shall irritate them. My exhortation, instead of urging souls on along the upward path of discipleship, will, from a lack of basis, have the effect of discouraging them.

These things are worthy of consideration. You may sometimes listen to a person ministering the Word who possesses a great deal of the first of the above-named qualities and very little of the second. It is evident he has the Book and its moral glories before his spiritual vision. He is occupied, yea, engrossed with them — *so engrossed as almost to forget that he has souls before him*. There is not pointed and powerful appeal to the heart, no fervent grappling with the conscience, no practical application of the contents of the Book to the souls of the hearers. It is very beautiful, but not as useful as it might be. The minister is deficient in the second quality. He is more a minister of the Book than a minister to the soul.

Then again you will find some who, in their ministry, seem to be wholly occupied with the soul. They appeal, they exhort, they urge. But from lack of acquaintance and regular occupation with Scripture, souls are absolutely exhausted and worn out under their ministry. True, they ostensibly make the Book the basis of their ministry, but their use of it so unskillful, their handling of it so awkward, their application of it so unintelligent, that their ministry proves as uninteresting as it is unprofitable.

Now, if we were asked which of the two characters of ministry should we prefer, without hesitation we should say the first. If the moral glories of the Book are unfolded, there is *something* to interest and affect the heart, and if one is at all earnest and conscientious, he may get on. Whereas, in the second case, there is nothing but tiresome appeal and scolding exhortation.

But we long to see an accurate acquaintance with the Bible and a due sense of the value of the soul, combined and healthfully adjusted in each one who stands up to minister to souls. The instruction will not do without the persuasion, or the persuasion without the instruction. Hence, let every minister study the Book and its glories and think of the soul and its needs. Let each one remember the link between the Book and the soul.

A LETTER TO A FRIEND ON THE

STUDY OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS

Dear Friend.

You desire a little light on the Book of Psalms and especially to know how they are divided. We can do little more in our brief space than give you a mere hint or two.

In the first place it is important in approaching the study of this most precious book, to remember that in its primary aspect, it is for God's earthly people Israel. This is very clear from Romans 3: 18 where the apostle, after quoting from the Psalms, goes on to say, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law." This marks the application of the Psalms with great distinctness. It is to those who are under the law. Hence, when you come to study them, you do not find in them the knowledge of full redemption. You do not hear the cry of "Abba." You do not trace the breathings of the spirit of adoption, the spirit of liberty. Sonship and an indwelling Spirit are unknown to souls under the law.

True, you get most precious piety in the Psalms — real confidence in and looking to God, an earnest thirsting after Him. All this we may well cultivate and long after. But you find the soul oftentimes in a state of bondage and fear, dreading the wrath of God and sighing for deliverance. Further, you continually listen to the cry for vengeance upon enemies, the calling upon God to judge them — things in agreement with a legal state and an earthly standing, but wholly unsuited to a people in the enjoyment of grace, knowing redemption and consciously standing in the relationship of children.

Hence, dear friend, it would be a great mistake for a Christian — a child of God, a heavenly man — to go back to the position of soul presented in the Psalms or make the language of those Psalms the measure of his godliness or his experience. No doubt such an one can richly enjoy the Psalms and adopt many of the expressions therein. Indeed, it is only when one knows his true standing in a risen and glorified Christ, as well as the true dispensational place of the Book of Psalms, that he can truly enjoy them. It is not to be supposed that a child of God in a low and legal state, who goes to the Psalms to find in their language the true vehicle in which to convey his own feelings and experience, can have proper enjoyment of them. Far from it. If you really want to understand and enjoy the Psalms, you must approach them in the full light of the New Testament — in the clear understanding that they belong to a state out of which you have been taken by the death and resurrection of Christ. Where do you get anything of life in a risen Christ in the Psalms? Nowhere!

But to aid you a little in seizing the true idea of the dispensational place of this profound and wondrous Book, let us call your attention to the mode in which the Holy Spirit quotes from it in the New Testament. Take the following: "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth" (Ps. 34: 16). Now, part of this verse contains a dispensational truth and part of it contains an eternal truth, above and beyond all dispensations. It is always true that "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil," but it is not always true that He is cutting off the remembrance of them from the earth. Accordingly, when the Spirit in the apostle Peter quotes this verse, He leaves out the last clause (see 1 Peter 3: 12). Why is this? Because God is now dealing in grace. He is reconciling sinners instead of cutting them off. Take another instance, though we do not refer to it as a quotation. "Trust in the Lord and do good." Here is an eternal principle. But mark what follows. "So shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." Here you have a dispensational promise, applicable to an earthly people. The Christian is not promised any earthly blessings. Paul trusted in the Lord and did good, but in stead of dwelling in the land, he was beheaded at Rome. And even during his lifetime, he often suffered hunger and nakedness.

But enough. We must leave you to think and study for yourself. We merely add a word as to the

division of this most delightful Book. It is divided into five distinct books as follows:

Book 1 contains Psalms 1-41

Book 2 contains Psalms 42-72

Book 3 contains Psalms 73-89

Book 4 contains Psalms 90-106

Book 5 contains Psalms 107-150

Into the distinct principle running through these divisions, we cannot now enter. We merely add that while we have, scattered throughout the whole volume of Psalms, some of the most blessed, beautiful and fervent utterances of praise and thanksgiving to God — expressions of delight in Him and longing after Him which may be adopted by the saint of every age — still we must remember that the Psalms are not the expression of the Church's worship, though they may well be the subject of the Church's prayerful study and adoring contemplation. God forbid we should pen a single line that might even seem to anyone to be a depreciation of a book which has proved an ever gushing fountain of refreshment to the saints of God in all ages. All we desire is to set before you, dear friend, what we consider to be the true dispensational place of the Psalms.

Many consider the Psalms to be the only vehicle of the Church's worship. The reason they so state is the Psalms are divinely inspired, whereas hymns are merely human compositions and even paraphrases more or less. But this argument will not stand. If we can produce a single expression throughout the entire 150 Psalms which a Christian could not intelligently and truthfully use, it entirely breaks down. Now we know that many of the Psalms contain utterances of the spirit of Christ — utterances given forth when He was making atonement for our sins, when He was enduring the wrath due to us, when He was forsaken of God, when He stood where we, thanks be to God, can never stand. Clearly, such utterances are not suited to us. Therefore the whole argument founded upon divine inspiration falls to the ground.

We believe in the divine inspiration of every line of the Psalms, but that no more proves them to be the suited utterance of the Church of God now, than the divine inspiration of Exodus 20 proves that we are under the law. It is not that the Church cannot adopt some of the expressions in the Psalms. Assuredly she can, but what we maintain is that, as a whole, they are not for the Church's worship, and it would be doing positive violence to dispensational integrity to confine the Church thereto. Only ask yourself this question, What must be the condition of a soul who, in the utterance of its worship, never once says the name of Jesus, never gives forth the cry of “Abba”? Yet neither of these precious words is to be found throughout the entire Book of Psalms.

Many other reasons might be brought out in connection with this deeply interesting subject, but we forbear and rest satisfied with commending what has been said to your prayerful consideration, and you, dear friend, to God's own teaching and blessing.

Affectionately yours, C.H.M.

SUPERSTITION AND INFIDELITY

It is a common saying that “extremes meet,” and certainly its truth is forcibly illustrated in the two things named at the head of this article, Superstition and Infidelity — things which, though so unlike, meet in one point, namely, positive opposition to the plain Word of God. They both alike rob the soul of the authority, preciousness and power of divine revelation. True, they do this by different routes,

but they reach the same end. Hence it is that we link them together and lift a warning voice against both. The two elements are working around us in very subtle and dangerous forms, and the human mind is tossed like a ball from one to the other.

Now, it is not our purpose in this brief paper to analyze these two evil influences. We merely call the attention of our readers to the startling fact that wherever they operate, they are found in direct hostility to the truth of God. Superstition admits that there is a divine revelation, but it denies that anyone can understand it except by the interpretation of the clergy or the church. In other words, the Word of God is not sufficient without man's aid. God has spoken, but I cannot hear His voice or understand His Word without human intervention.

This is superstition. Infidelity, on the other hand, boldly denies a divine revelation. It does not believe in such a thing. It maintains that God could not give us a book-revelation of His mind and will. Infidels can write books and can tell us *their* mind and will, but God cannot.

So says infidelity, and in so saying it finds a point of contact in common with superstition. For wherein lies the difference between denying that God has spoken and maintaining that He cannot make us understand what He says? Would there be any appreciable difference between the man who denies that the sun shines and the man who maintains that, though it shines, you need a flashlight to enable you to enjoy its beams? We confess they both seem to us to stand on precisely the same moral ground. The infidelity that boldly and impiously denies that God can speak His mind to man is no worse than the superstition which denies that He can make man understand what He says. Both alike are dishonoring to God and by both alike is man deprived of the priceless treasure of the volume of divine inspiration.

We are extremely anxious that the reader should seize this fact. Indeed our one object in penning these lines is to put him in full possession of it. We consider that we shall have done him good service if he rises from reading this paper with the clear and firm conviction worked in his soul that infidelity and superstition are the two great agencies by which the devil is seeking to remove from beneath our feet the solid rock of Holy Scripture. It is simply infidelity and superstition versus divine revelation.

And let the reader further note that both infidelity and superstition are alike impious and absurd. It is as impious and absurd to affirm that God could not write a book as to say that He could not make us understand the book that He has written. In either case it is reducing God below the level of the creature, which is simply blasphemy. It is not strange that a man who undertakes to give us a written revelation of his mind should deny that God could do the same? And is it not equally strange that a man should undertake to expound and interpret the Scriptures to his fellow and yet deny that God could do the same? Well, the former is infidelity; the latter, superstition; and both alike exalt the creature and blaspheme the Creator. Both alike shut out God and rob the soul of the unspeakable privilege of direct communion with God by means of His Word.

Thus it has been from the beginning and thus it is now. "There is nothing new under the sun." It has ever been the grand object of the enemy to quench the lamp of inspiration and plunge the soul into the thick darkness of infidelity and atheism. We believe there is an amount of rationalism in the professing Church appalling to contemplate. Divine revelation is being gradually lowered from its lofty position, and human reason exalted, and this is the very germ of infidelity. True, it clothes itself in very attractive robes. It adopts very high-sounding and imposing language. It talks of "freedom of thought" and "liberty of opinion," of "breadth of mind," "progress," "cultivated taste" and "dispassionate investigation." It adopts a most withering style and assumes an attitude of sovereign contempt when speaking of "old prejudices," "old school notions," "narrow-mindedness," "men of one idea," and such

like.

But, we may depend upon it, the one aim of the enemy is to set aside the authority of the Word of God and he cares not by what agency he gains his end. This is very serious and we greatly fear that Christians are not fully alive to its seriousness. Whether we look at the religion or the education of the country, we observe a fixed purpose to set aside the Bible — a settled determination, not only to cast it down from its excellency, but to fling it completely into the shade.

Nor is it merely a question of the hostility of open and avowed infidels, which we can understand and account for. But we must confess our inability to understand the half-heartedness and indifference of many who occupy a high position in evangelical circles. The discussion of the great question of “education” has made manifest a most deplorable amount of weakness in quarters where we should least have looked for it. It is being made sadly apparent that the Word of God has a very slender hold of the minds of professing Christians. Only think of a suggestion recently offered, that the Bible might at least get in our schools the place of a Hebrew classic!

Reader, what say you to this? Are you prepared to see the divine Volume — God's inspired Book — degraded into a mere classic and placed alongside of Homer, Horace and Virgil? We fondly trust not. We would trust that every reader would shrink with horror from such a proposal. Nevertheless, we feel called upon to sound a note of alarm in the ears of our dear fellow Christians everywhere, and we entreat them not to disregard it. We want to see them thoroughly roused to a sense of the true state of the case — so aroused that they may be led to cry earnestly to the great Head of the Church that He would be graciously pleased to raise up and send forth men full of the Holy Spirit and of power, full of faith and holy zeal, men permeated by solid belief in the plenary inspiration of Holy Scripture. These, we are persuaded, are the men for the present crisis. May God supply them!

THE GRACE OF GOD

(Read Titus 2: 11-14)

This lovely and familiar passage of Holy Scripture occurs in the midst of a number of exhortations adapted to various classes of people in reference to their conduct and character. Aged men, aged women, young men, young women and servants are to be exhorted as to their proper conduct in their respective conditions.

But lest we should be tempted to place these exhortations upon a legal basis, the inspired apostle breaks forth in one of the most magnificent and comprehensive statements of the gospel which is anywhere to be found in the Sacred Volume. “The grace of God” and that alone, must be the foundation of all Christian conduct and character. Legality in all its forms and workings is most hateful to the Spirit of God. The robe of self-righteousness with which man attempts to cover his sins, is more unsightly in God's view than the very blackest sin that could be committed. Nothing can be accepted of God but that which flows from His own grace in our hearts.

Now in the Scripture before us, the reader will find three distinct points — the salvation which grace brings, the lessons which grace teaches, and the hope which grace presents. First, as to:

The Salvation Which Grace Brings

This is a grand cardinal point. To be uncertain or obscure as to this, must involve uncertainty and obscurity in everything. “The grace of God that bringeth salvation unto all men hath appeared.” (See the marginal reading.) This is clear and conclusive enough. The very first thing that grace does for the lost sinner is to save him unconditionally, perfectly and eternally. It does not ask him to be anything but

what he is. It does not ask him to give anything. It brings him salvation on the ground of his being lost. It is only as a lost one that I need salvation, and the more I feel myself to be lost, the more clearly I see my title to that full and free salvation which the grace of God brings. Salvation is intended for the lost. If, therefore, I am lost, salvation applies itself to me, just as distinctly as though I were the only lost sinner in the whole world.

Observe the immense breadth of this word “lost.” It takes in all. High and low, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, savage and civilized, moral and immoral, religious and irreligious — all are comprehended under this one title, “lost.” It is well to see this clearly. Men make distinctions and necessarily so. Social life has its distinctions. Law and equity maintain their distinctions which must be duly recognized by every well regulated mind. Society awards to the chaste, the sober and the moral a respect which it justly withholds from the wicked, the drunkard and the unprincipled. But once we get into the presence of the grace of God, all these distinctions are swept away and all are looked at on one common ground as *lost*. The most respectable member of society and the vilest outcast are both in the same condition as regards themselves: they are both lost; they both need salvation; and the grace of God brings salvation to the one as well as the other.

Be it well remembered that the poor broken-hearted outcast is nearer to the salvation which grace brings, than is the cold hearted self-sufficient moralist. See Matthew 21: 31. If the law of God could bring salvation, then the case would be quite the reverse. But the law never brought salvation to anyone because no one could keep it. But grace brings salvation to all because all need it. It is no longer confined to the Jews. The Sun has risen far above the Jewish horizon and poured His blessed beams over “all the world” so “every creature under heaven” may bask in the light thereof. Such is the wide aspect of “the grace of God” which leaves wholly untouched the grand question of God's eternal counsels and God's moral government. God has His counsels and God displays His mysterious wisdom in government. This must never be forgotten, nor does it interfere with the precious truth that “the grace of God bringeth salvation *unto* all” and “the righteousness of God is *unto* all.” The inspired apostle is speaking of the *wide aspect* of these things, not of their final result — a great and important distinction.

It must be obvious to my reader that the term “*all*” necessarily includes him. It could not possibly be otherwise. If he be not included, then it follows that there is someone for whom the grace of God has not brought salvation, but the Holy Spirit expressly declares that it brings salvation unto all. This must satisfy the most anxious soul as to the question so often raised, “How am I to know that salvation is intended for me?” Is anyone excluded? Is not salvation brought to all? Does not this term comprehend every anxious inquirer? Unquestionably! The declaration of the inspired writer is that “The grace of God, which bringeth salvation unto all men hath appeared.” This is as plain as a sunbeam.

Men may reject this salvation. Regretfully, they do reject it, but that can never touch the question of the wide aspect of that grace which shines with undimmed luster in the gospel and brings a full and free salvation *unto* all. Their guilt in rejecting it flows from the fact that it is freely offered. If they could not get it, where would be their guilt in not having it? Where the righteous judgment in punishing men for not receiving what was never intended for them? (2 Thess. 1: 6-10). True it is that God is sovereign, but it is equally true that man is responsible. Are we called to reconcile these things? *No, they are reconciled already inasmuch as both are taught in the Word.* All we have to do is believe them.

But let us inquire what is included in the salvation which the grace of God brings? The answer is, Everything. Salvation is a precious box containing all I want for time and eternity. It includes salvation from the future consequence of sin and from its present power. To be a divinely-saved person — a person saved by the grace of God, saved by the blood of Christ as every believer is — involves entire

deliverance from wrath, from hell, from Satan, from everything that could possibly be against me. A man whom God has saved is surely safe from all. There is nothing doubtful about God's salvation; it is all settled. There is no delay; it is all finished. We have neither to wait for it nor to add to it, but to receive it now and enjoy it forever. The mighty tide of grace rolls down from the very throne of God and bears upon its bosom a full salvation for me. I receive it as a free gift; I bow my head and worship, and go on my way rejoicing.

We shall now proceed to consider

The Lessons Which Grace Teaches

Grace is a teacher as well as a savior, but it never begins to teach me until it has saved me. It is well to see this. Before ever it asks me to hearken to its pure and holy lessons, it brings me a salvation as free as the air we breathe. It is as a divinely-saved person I enter the precincts of the school of grace. Grace teaches only the saved. All its pupils are saved. Grace as a savior seeks only the lost. Grace as a teacher instructs only the saved. This makes all plain and puts everything in its right place. We must never place unsaved persons in the school of grace. Such have no capacity to learn its holy lessons. There must be a proper material, a proper capacity. This capacity is included in the salvation which grace brings me. I am a debtor to grace both for the lesson which I learn and the capacity to learn it. I owe all to grace. Grace seeks me and finds me in my lost estate; it saves me with an everlasting salvation and introduces me as a saved person to the sphere in which its hallowed instructions are imparted. Grace does not teach those who are dead; it quickens them. It does not teach those who are guilty; it cleanses them. It does not teach those who are condemned; it justifies them. It is as quickened, cleansed and justified that I become the pupil of grace. The very first thing that grace does for the lost sinner is to bring him salvation, and when he receives this salvation it teaches him to “deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.”

I desire that my reader be clear as to this. If he be as yet in an unsaved state, let him understand that the grace of God brings him salvation as a present thing. Moreover, until he has accepted this free gift, he is wholly unable to understand or take in the lessons which grace teaches. If grace is to be his teacher, he must be saved to be a pupil. This simple fact gives the death-blow to all legality, to all human righteousness, to all man's pretensions. If none can comprehend the lessons which grace teaches except those who have accepted the salvation which grace brings, then, assuredly, our language must ever be, “Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory.”

Let us look particularly at the lessons which grace teaches. It teaches us to deny everything unlike God and all desire after this present world. It teaches us how we are to live. The law could never do this. Law tells us how we *ought* to live, but it does not teach us. It neither gives us the lesson to learn nor the capacity to learn it. It does not bring us salvation. The law could never have any saved pupils because it does not save the lost, but condemns them for being lost. No doubt men ought to keep the law, and if they were right they would, but they are not right. Quite the opposite, they are wrong, totally, irremediably wrong, hopelessly lost, and in this condition grace brings them salvation. Christ the Savior is our Teacher, not Moses the lawgiver. May we learn His lessons! May we sit at His feet in all quietness and drink in His hallowed instructions!

These instructions arrange themselves under three distinct heads as suggested by the words “soberly, righteously and godly.”

Soberly refers to the inner circle of one's own heart. It simply means *with inward self-government* — a most comprehensive expression. The grace that saves me teaches me to exercise a holy government over self. I am to govern my thoughts, govern my tongue, govern my temper — govern

them, not in order to be saved, but because I am saved. The One who teaches me to exercise this government has saved me before ever He commenced His course of instruction. It is as a saved person that I submit my whole moral being to the wholesome control of my heavenly Teacher. The law could not teach me to govern my nature. It condemns me, root and branch, throws me overboard and leaves me there. Grace follows me, saves me and endows me with a new nature, and seals me with the Holy Spirit so I can exercise myself in self-government.

And be it observed that this self-government is totally different from anything that human philosophy or the energy of an untamed will could ever produce. These things might enable me to subdue some of the accessories of “self” while the parent stem was left wholly untouched. But “the grace of God that bringeth salvation” gives me victory over self in all the length and breadth of that comprehensive term. Full victory over all the evil that dwells in me is as much a part of “salvation” as deliverance from hell. Regretfully, we fail to make use of this victory. Through spiritual indifference and unbelief we fail to possess ourselves practically of that full salvation which grace has brought us, but that in no wise alters the truth of the matter. If I am a saved man I should live as a saved man in every respect. And how is this to be done? By faith. “The just shall live by faith” (Hab. 2: 4; Gal. 3: 11; Heb. 10: 38). I can only exercise inward self-government by faith.

The second grand lesson which grace teaches me as to my practical life is to live “*righteously.*” This contemplates me not merely in the inner circle of my own moral being, but in the midst of the circumstances and relationships of the scene around me — that outward world in which I am called to live and move from day to day. My divine Teacher not only instructs me as to the government of myself, but also as to the government of all my transactions with my fellow man. Here, too, I am to remember that my teacher is the grace that saved me. I must never forget this. If the resources of philosophy or the energy of a strong will might enable me to exercise a kind of inward self-government, so also the principles of a lofty morality or that pride which rejects a wrong action, might lead me to seek the maintenance of an unblemished reputation in all my transactions with my fellow men. But all this leaves me unsaved. Philosophy cannot save me and therefore it cannot teach me. Morality cannot save me and therefore it cannot teach me.

It is “the grace of God” that alone can save me, and it is that same grace which alone can teach me. Hence, if I see a person who professes to be saved, giving way to bad temper, indulging in passion or enslaved by a habit, I infer that that person has not learned practically the first great lesson of his divine Teacher. And if I see a person who professes to be saved, yet not guiding his affairs with discretion, but getting into debt and indulging in extravagance, I infer that he has not learned the second great lesson of his divine Teacher. Let us not be deceived with vain words. If the legalist is silenced by the *freeness* of the salvation which grace brings, the antinomian* is silenced by the *purity* of the lessons which grace teaches. “These things are good and profitable unto men.” The gospel meets everything. It meets the lost sinner with a full salvation and it meets the saved sinner with the purest and most perfect lessons — lessons of holy self-government and practical righteousness.

{*One who holds that under the gospel dispensation, the moral law is no obligation because faith alone is necessary for salvation; one who rejects an established morality (Webster).}

But there is a third lesson which grace teaches its saved pupils. It teaches them to live “*godly.*” This opens up our relations with the world above. There is great force, beauty and completeness in these words used by the inspired apostle. They present to us three great circles in which we are called to act: the world within, the world without and the world above. They must be all taken together to see their divine beauty. There is really nothing left out. All we can possibly want to learn is taught in the

school of grace if we will only accept the lessons. Let us bear in mind that the surest proof of our having received the salvation which grace brings, is our learning the lessons which grace teaches — those hallowed lessons of inward self-government, practical righteousness and true godliness. May God the Holy Spirit make us to understand the fullness and freeness of the salvation, and the purity and elevation of the lessons so we may more distinctly apprehend, in the third and last place,

The Hope Which Grace Presents

The apostle speaks of it as “a blessed hope,” and surely nothing can be more blessed than “The appearing of the glory of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” This is the proper hope of the believer. And he is taught to look for it by the selfsame grace that has brought him salvation and that teaches him how to carry himself in reference to the world within, the world without and the world above. “The Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Ps. 84).

Now there are three things in reference to this “blessed hope” which I desire that my reader clearly understand — title, capacity and moral condition. Our *title* is furnished by the blood of the cross; the *capacity* is furnished by the Holy Spirit; and the *moral condition* is founded upon our learning and exhibiting the holy lessons taught in the school of grace.

Reader, permit me to ask you if, when the subject of Christ's *appearing* is introduced, you ever feel a sort of difficulty or reserve in your mind? Would you be afraid to see Jesus? Would you rather put off the moment of His coming? Do you feel yourself not quite ready? If so, it may be you are not yet able to “read your title clear” or you are not cultivating a spiritual capacity, or your moral condition is not such as would naturally introduce you to that scene of glory for which we are privileged daily to look. These are points of immense importance — points to which my reader should give deep and prayerful attention. If there be cloudiness as to my title; if I am doubtful as to the salvation which grace brings, or if I am backward in learning the lessons which grace teaches; if there is defectiveness in spiritual capacity or if my general moral tone and character is not formed by the holy lessons of grace, I shall not be in an attitude of waiting for the glory before us. It is well to see this in all its clearness, point and power. If we are the recipients of grace and the expectants of glory, should not our lives exhibit the moral power of these things? Should they not have their proper effect in the formation of our character? Unquestionably. “He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself even as he is pure.” If I expect to be with Jesus and like Jesus by and by, I shall seek to be as much with Him and as much like Him as possible.

May the Lord work in us that which is well pleasing in His sight and bring out in all our ways a more faithful exhibition of the divine life! The language with which our Scripture closes is eminently calculated to awaken in our souls the most intense desire after these things. Indeed, I cannot conclude this paper without quoting this noble passage at full length, praying the Holy Spirit to apply it in much power to the heart and conscience of both the writer and the reader.

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation unto all men hath appeared, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us [what a price! what objects!] that He might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto Himself a people of possession, zealous of good works.”

“The day of glory bearing

Its brightness far and near,

*The day of Christ's appearing
We now no longer fear.
He once a spotless victim
For us on Calv'ry bled;
Jehovah did afflict Him,
And bruised Him in our stead.
To Him by grace united,
We joy in Him alone;
And now by faith delighted,
Behold Him on the throne.
Then let Him come in glory,
Who comes His saints to raise,
To perfect all the story
Of wonder, love and praise."*

CHRISTIAN LIFE: WHAT IS IT?

The question which we propose to consider in the following pages is one of the most interesting and important that could possibly engage our attention. It is this: What is the life which, as Christians, we possess? What is its source? What are its characteristics? What is its issue? These great questions have only to be named to secure the attention of every thoughtful reader.

The divine Word speaks of two distinct heads of sources. It speaks of a first man and it speaks of a second. In the opening of the book of Genesis we read these words, "And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness ... So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them" (Gen. 1: 26-27). This statement is repeated in Genesis 5: "In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made He him." After this, we read, "And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years and begat a son in his own likeness, after *his* image."

But between Adam's creation in the image of God and the birth of a son in his own image, a great change took place. Sin entered. Innocence fled. Adam had become a fallen, ruined, outcast man. This fact must be seized and pondered by the reader. It is a weighty, influential fact. It lets us into the secret of the source of that life which, as sons of Adam, we possess. That source was a guilty, ruined, outcast head. It was not in innocence that Adam became the head of a race. It was not within the bounds of Paradise that Cain was brought forth, but outside in a ruined and cursed world. It was not in the image of God that Cain was begotten, but in the image of a fallen father.

We fully believe that, personally, Adam was the subject of divine grace and that he was saved by faith in the promised Seed of the woman. But looking at him *federally*, that is, as the head of a race, he was a fallen, ruined, outcast man, and everyone of his posterity is born into the same condition. As is the head, so are the members — all the members together, each member in particular. The son bears the image of his fallen father and inherits his nature. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and do what you will with "flesh" — educate, cultivate, sublimate it as you will, it will never yield "spirit." You may improve flesh according to human thinking, but improved "flesh" is not "spirit." The two things

are totally opposite. The former expresses all we are as born into this world, as sprung from the first Adam. The latter expresses what we are as born again, as united to the Second Adam.

We frequently hear the expression, “Raising the masses.” What does it mean? There are three questions which we should like to ask those who propose to elevate the masses. First, What is it you are going to elevate? Secondly, How are you going to elevate them? Thirdly, Where are you going to elevate them to? It is impossible for water to ever rise above its level. So it is impossible that you can ever raise the sons of fallen Adam above the level of their fallen father. Do what you will with them, you cannot possibly elevate them higher than their ruined outcast head. Man cannot grow out of the nature in which he was born. He can grow *in* it, but not out of it. Trace the river of fallen humanity up to its source and you find that source to be a fallen, ruined, outcast man.

This simple truth strikes at the root of all human pride — all pride of birth, all pride of ancestry. We are all, as men, sprung from one common stock, one head, one source. We are all begotten in one image and that is a ruined man. The head of the race and the race of which he is head, are all involved in one common ruin. Looked at from a legal or social standpoint, there may be differences, but looked at from a *divine* standpoint, there is none. If you want a true idea of the condition of each member of the human race, you must look at the condition of the head. You must go back to Genesis 3 and read these words, “He drove out the man.” Here is the root of the whole matter. Here is the source of the river the streams whereof have made sad the millions of Adam's posterity for nearly 6000 thousand years. Sin has entered and snapped the link, defaced the image of God, corrupted the sources of life, brought in death and given Satan the power of death.

Thus it stands in reference to Adam's race — to the race as a whole and to each member of that race in particular. All are involved in guilt and ruin. All are exposed to death and judgment. There is no exception. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned (Rom. 3: 12). “In Adam all die” (1 Cor. 15: 22). Here are the two sad and solemn realities linked together — “Sin and death.”

But, thanks to God, a Second Man has entered the scene. This great fact, while it sets forth the marvelous grace of God towards the first man and his posterity, proves in the clearest and most unanswerable manner that the first man has been completely set aside. If the first had been found faultless, then should no place have been sought for the Second. If there had been a single ray of hope as to the first Adam, there would have been no need for the Second.

But God sent His Son into this world. He was “the Seed of the woman.” Let this fact be seized and pondered. Jesus Christ did not come under the federal headship of Adam. He was *legally* descended from David and Abraham, as we read in Matthew. “He was of the seed of David according to the flesh” (2 Tim. 2: 8). Moreover, His genealogy is traced to Adam by the inspired penman in Luke's gospel. But here is the angelic announcement as the mystery of His conception: “And the angel answered and said unto Mary, The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1: 35).

Here we have a real Man, but One without a single taint of sin or a single seed of mortality. He was made of the woman, of the substance of the virgin, a Man in every particular, just as we are, but wholly without sin and entirely free from any association which could have given sin or death a claim upon Him. Had our blessed Lord come as to His human nature, under the headship of Adam, He could not have been called the Second Man since He would have been a member of the first, like any other man. Further, He would have been subject to death in His own person, which is blasphemy to assert or

suppose.

But, adored forever be His peerless name, He was the pure, holy, spotless One of God. He was unique. He stood alone — the only pure untainted grain of human seed that earth had ever seen. He came into this world of sin and death, Himself sinless and lifegiving. In Him was life and nowhere else. All beside was death and darkness. There was not a single pulse of spiritual life, not one ray of divine light apart from Him. The entire race of the first man was involved in sin, under the power of death, and exposed to eternal judgment. He could say, “I am the light of the world.” Apart from Him, all was moral darkness and spiritual death. “In Adam all die; in Christ shall all be made alive.” Let us see how.

No sooner did the Second Man appear upon the scene than Satan appeared to dispute every inch of ground with Him. It was a grand reality. The Man Christ Jesus had undertaken the mighty work of glorifying God on this earth, of destroying the works of the devil and of redeeming His people. Stupendous work — work which none but the God-man could accomplish. But it was a real thing. *Jesus had to meet all the craft and power of Satan.* He had to meet him as the serpent and meet him as the lion. Hence, at the very opening of His blessed career, as the baptized and anointed Man, He stood in the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. See Matthew 4 and Luke 4. And note the contrast between the first man and the Second. The first man stood in the midst of a garden of delights, with everything that could possibly plead for God against the tempter. The Second Man, on the contrary, stood in the midst of a wilderness of privations with everything, apparently, to plead against God and for the tempter. Satan tried with the Second Man precisely the same weapons which he had found so effective with the first — “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life.” Compare Genesis 3: 6; Matthew 4: 1-19; Luke 4: 1-12; and 1 John 2: 16.

But the Second Man vanquished the tempter with one simple weapon, the written Word. “*It is written*” was the one unvarying reply of the dependent and obedient Man. No reasoning, no questioning, no looking this way or that way. The Word of the living God was the commanding authority for the perfect Man. Blessed forever be His name! The homage of the universe be His throughout everlasting ages! Amen and amen.

Now we hasten on to unfold our special theme. We want the reader to see in the light of Holy Scripture how the Second Adam imparts life to His members.

By the victory in the wilderness, the strong man was “bound,” not “destroyed.” Hence, we find that, at the close, he is allowed once more to try his hand. Having “departed for a season,” he returned again in another character, as the one who had the power of death by which to terrify the soul of man. Tremendous thought! This power was brought to bear in all its terrible intensity on the spirit of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane. We cannot possibly contemplate the scene in that garden and not feel that the spirit of our blessed Lord was passing through something which He had never experienced before. It is evident that Satan was permitted to come before Him in a very special manner and to put forth special power in order, if possible, to deter Him. Thus He says in John 16: 30, “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me.” So also in Luke 22: 53, we find Him saying to the chief priests and captains of the temple, “Be ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against Me, but this is your hour *and the power of darkness.*”

Evidently the period from the last supper to the cross was marked by features quite distinct from every previous stage of the marvelous history of our Lord. “This is your hour.” And further, “The power of darkness.” The prince of this world came against the Second Man, armed with all the power with which the first man's sin had invested him. He brought to bear upon the Lord's spirit all the power

and all the terrors of death as the just judgment of God. Jesus met all this in its utmost force and in all its awful intensity. Hence, we hear such words as these, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." And again we read that, "Being in an agony He prayed more earnestly; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

In a word, then, the One who undertook to redeem His people, to give eternal life to His members, to accomplish the will and counsels of God, had to meet all the consequences of man's condition. There was no escaping them. He passed through them all, but He passed through them alone, for who but Himself could have done it? He, the true Ark, had to go over alone into the dark and dreadful river of death to make a way for His people to pass over on dry land. He was alone in the horrible pit and the miry clay, that we might be with Him on the rock. He earned the new song alone, that He might sing it in the midst of the Church.

But not only did our Lord meet all the power of Satan as the prince of this world, all the power of death as the just judgment of God, all the violence and bitter enmity of fallen man, there was something far beyond all this. When man and Satan, earth and hell, had done their very utmost, there remained a region of darkness and impenetrable gloom to be traversed by the spirit of the Blessed One, into which it is impossible for human thought to enter. We can only stand upon the confines and with our heads bowed in the deep hush of unutterable worship, hearken to the loud and bitter cry which issues from there, accompanied by those words, "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*" — words which eternity itself will be insufficient to unfold.

Here we must pause and ascribe once more, eternal and universal praise, homage and adoration to the One who went through all this to procure life for us. May our hearts adore Him! May our lips praise Him! May our lives glorify Him! He alone is worthy. May His love constrain us to live not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again, and gave us life in resurrection.

It is not possible to over-estimate the interest and value of the great truth that the source of the life which we Christians possess is a risen and victorious Christ. It is as risen from the dead that the Second Man becomes the head of a race — Head of His body the Church. The life which the believer now possesses is a life which has been tested and tried in every possible way. Consequently, it can never come into judgment. It is a life which has passed through death and judgment. Therefore it can never die, never come into judgment. Christ our living Head has abolished death and brought life and incorruptibility to light through the gospel. He met death in all its reality that we might never meet it. He died that we might never die. He has so worked for us in His marvelous love and grace as to render death part of our property. See 1 Corinthians 3: 22.

In the old creation, man belongs to death. Hence it has been truly said that the very moment man begins to live he begins to die. Solemn fact! Man cannot escape death. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment." There is not so much as a single thing which man possesses in the old creation that will not be wrenched from his grasp by the ruthless hand of death. Death takes everything from him, reduces his body to dust and sends his soul to judgment. Houses, lands, wealth and distinction, fame and influence, all go when the last grim foe approaches. The wealth of the universe, were it in a man's possession, could not purchase one moment's respite. Death strips man of all and bears him away to judgment. The king and the beggar, the peer and the peasant, the learned philosopher and the ignorant clown, the civilized and the savage, are all alike. Death seizes upon all within the limits of the old creation. The grave is the end of man's earthly history, and beyond that the throne of judgment and the Lake of Fire.

But in the new creation, death belongs to man. There is not so much as a single thing that the

Christian possesses which he does not owe to death. He has life, pardon, righteousness, peace, acceptance, glory, all through death — the death of Christ. The entire aspect of death is changed. Satan can no longer bring it to bear upon the soul of the believer as the judgment of God against sin, although God can and does use it in His governmental dealings with His people in the way of discipline and chastening. See Acts 4; 1 Corinthians 11: 30; and 1 John 5: 16.

But as the one who had the power of death, Satan has been destroyed. Our Lord Christ has wrested his power from him and He now holds in His omnipotent hand the keys of death and the grave. Death has lost its sting, the grave its victory. Therefore, if death does come to the believer, it comes not as a master but as a servant. It comes, not like a policeman to drag the soul to its eternal prison house, but as a friendly hand to open the door of the cage and let the spirit fly to its native home in the skies.

All this makes a great difference. It tends, among other things, to take away the fear of death, which was perfectly consistent with the state of believers under the law, but is wholly incompatible with the standing and privileges of those who are united to Him who is alive from the dead. Nor is this all. The entire life and character of the Christian must take its tone from the source from where that life emanates. “If ye then be *risen with Christ*, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” (Col. 3: 1-4). Water always finds its own level. Likewise the life of the Christian, strengthened and guided by the Holy Spirit, always springs up toward its source.

Let no one imagine that all this for which we are contending is a mere question of human opinion or an unimportant point, an unimportant notion. Far from it. It is a great practical truth constantly set forth and insisted upon by the apostle Paul — a truth which he preached as an evangelist, taught and unfolded as a teacher, and watched its effects as a faithful vigilant pastor. So prominent was the place which the great truth of resurrection held in the apostle's preaching, that it was said of him by some of the Athenian philosophers, “He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods because he preached unto them *Jesus and the resurrection*” (Acts 17: 18).

Let the reader note this. “*Jesus and the resurrection.*” Why was it not Jesus and the incarnation or Jesus and the crucifixion? Was it because these profound and priceless mysteries held no place in apostolic preaching and teaching? Read 1 Timothy 3: 16 for the answer. “And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” Read also Galatians 4: 4-5: “But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law.”

These passages settle the question as to the foundation doctrines of incarnation and crucifixion. But Paul preached and taught and jealously insisted upon *resurrection*. He himself was converted to a risen and glorified Christ. The very first glimpse he caught of Jesus of Nazareth was as a risen Man in glory. It was only thus he knew Him, as he tells us in 2 Corinthians 5. “Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we Him no more.” Paul preached a resurrection gospel. He labored to present every man perfect in a risen, glorified Christ. He did not confine himself to the mere question of forgiveness of sin and salvation from hell, precious beyond all price as are these fruits of the atoning death of Christ. He aimed at the glorious end of planting the soul *in* Christ and of keeping it there. “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him, rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.” “Ye are complete in Him.” “Buried with Him in

baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him.” “Quickened together with Him” (Col. 2).

Such was Paul's preaching and teaching. This was his gospel. This is true Christianity in contrast with all the forms of human religiousness and fleshy pietism under the sun. Life in a risen Christ was Paul's grand theme. It was not merely forgiveness and salvation by Christ, but *union with Him*. Paul's gospel planted the soul at once in a risen and glorified Christ, redemption and forgiveness of sins being the obvious and necessary consequence. This was the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to Paul's trust (1 Tim. 1: 2).

Most gladly would we dwell at greater length on the blessed theme of the source of Christian life, but we must hasten on to the remaining points of our subject. We shall therefore very briefly call the reader's attention to the characteristics or moral features of the life which as Christians we possess. To do anything like justice to this point we should seek to unfold the precious mystery of the life of Christ as a Man on this earth, to trace His ways, to mark the style and spirit with which He passed through all the scenes and circumstances of His course here below.

We should view Him as a Child subject to His parents, growing up beneath the eye of God, increasing from day to day in wisdom and stature, exhibiting all that was lovely in the sight of God and man. We should trace His path as a Servant, faithful in all things — a path marked by incessant labor and toil. We should ponder Him as the lowly, humble and obedient Man, subject and dependent in all things, emptying Himself and making Himself of no reputation, surrendering Himself perfectly for the glory of God and the good of man, never seeking His own interest in anything. We should mark Him as the gracious, loving, sympathizing friend and companion, ever ready with the cup of consolation for every child of sorrow, ever at hand to dry the widow's tear, to hear the cry of the distressed, to feed the hungry, to cleanse the leper, to heal all manner of disease. In a word, we should point out the countless rays of moral glory that shine forth in the precious and perfect life of Him who went about doing good.

But who is sufficient for these things? We can merely say to the Christian reader, Go study your great Exemplar. Gaze upon your Model. If a risen Christ is the source of your life, the Christ who lived down here in this world is your pattern. The features of your life are those selfsame features that shone in Him as a Man here below. Through death, He has made His life to be your life, the Christ who lived down here in this world is your pattern. He has linked you with Himself by a bond that can never be severed. And now you are privileged to go back and study the gospel narratives to see how He walked, that you may, through the grace of the Holy Spirit, walk even as He walked.

It is a very blessed though a very solemn truth that there is nothing of any value in God's thoughts except the outflow of the life of Christ from His members here. All that is not the direct fruit of that life is utterly valueless in God's thoughts. The activities of the old nature are not merely worthless but sinful. There are certain natural relationships in which we stand, which are sanctioned by God and in which Christ is our model. For example, “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the Church.” We are recognized as parents and children, masters and servants, and instructed as to our deportment in these holy relationships, but all this is on the new ground of risen life in Christ. See Colossians 3 and Ephesians 5: 6.

The old man is not recognized at all. It is viewed as crucified, dead and buried, and we are called upon to reckon it as dead and to count as dead our members which are on the earth, and to walk even as Christ walked. We are to live a life of self-surrender, to manifest the life of Christ, to reproduce Him. This is practical Christianity. May we understand it better! May we remember that nothing is of the smallest value in God's account except the life of Christ shown out in the believer from day to day by the power of the Holy Spirit. The feeblest expression of this life is a sweet odor to God. The mightiest

efforts of mere religious flesh — the costliest sacrifices, the most imposing ordinances and ceremonies — are but “dead works” in the sight of God. Religiousness is one thing; Christianity is quite another.

And now one word as to the issue of the life which as Christians we possess. We may truly say “one word” and what is that? “*Glory.*” This is the only issue of Christian life. “When Christ our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him *in glory.*” Jesus is waiting for the moment of His manifestation in glory, and we wait in and with Him. He is seated and expecting likewise. “As He is so are we in this world” (1 John 4: 17). Death and judgment are behind us, nothing but glory before. If we may so express it, our yesterday is the cross; our today is a risen Christ; our tomorrow, glory. Thus it stands with all true believers. It is with them as with their living and exalted Head. As is the Head so are the members. They cannot be separated for a single moment for any object whatsoever. They are inseparably joined together in the power of a union that no influence of earth or hell can ever dissolve. The Head and the members are eternally one. The Head has passed through death and judgment; so have the members. The Head is seated in the presence of God, so are the members — co-quickenened, co-raised and co-seated with the Head in glory.

Reader, this is Christian life. Think of it. Think deeply. Look at it in the light of the New Testament. Its source, a risen Christ. Its characteristics, the very features of the life of Christ as seen in this world. Its issue, cloudless and eternal glory. Contrast with this the life which we possess as sons and daughters of Adam. Its source, a ruined, fallen, outcast man. Its characteristics, the ten thousand forms of selfishness in which fallen humanity clothes itself. Its issue, the Lake of Fire. This is the simple truth of the matter if we are to be guided by Scripture.

Let us just say in conclusion, in reference to the life which Christians possess, that there is no such thing as “a higher Christian life.” It may be that persons who use this form of speech mean a right thing, but the form is incorrect. There is but the one life and that is Christ. No doubt there are varied measures in the *enjoyment and exhibition* of this life, but however the measure may vary, the life is one. There may be higher or lower stages in this life, but the life is one. The most advanced saint on earth and the feeblest babe possess the same life, for Christ is the life of each, the life of both, the life of all.

All this is most blessedly simple and we desire that the reader should carefully ponder it. We are fully persuaded that there is an urgent need for the clear unfolding and faithful proclamation of this resurrection gospel. Many stop at incarnation; others go on to the crucifixion. We want a gospel that gives all — incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection. This is the gospel which possesses the true moral power, the mighty leverage to lift the soul out of all earthly association and set it free to walk with God in the power of risen life in Christ. May this gospel be sent forth far and wide in living energy throughout the length and breadth of the professing Church. There are thousands of God's people who need to know it. They are afflicted with doubts and questions which would all be removed by the simple reception of the blessed truth of life in a risen Christ. There are no doubts or fears in Christianity. Christians sometimes have them, but such doubts and fears do not belong to Christianity at all. May the bright light of Paul's gospel stream in upon all the saints of God and disperse the fogs and mists which surround them, so they may really enter into that holy liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free!

DEVOTEDNESS: WHAT IS IT?

(Read Genesis 22: 1-12)

It has often been said, “There are two sides to every question.” This saying is true and very important. It demands special attention in approaching the subject which stands at the head of this

paper. The history of the professing Church affords many proofs of the fact that serious mischief has been done by devoted men who were not guided by sound principle. Indeed it will ever be found that, in proportion to the degree of the devotedness, will be the gravity of the mischief where the judgment is not wisely directed. We must confess we long for more true devotedness in ourselves and others. It does seem to us the special need today. There is abundance of profession, even of a very high character. Knowledge is greatly increased among us and we are thankful for knowledge, but knowledge is not energy and profession is not devotedness. It is not that we desire to set the one against the other; we want to combine the two. "God hath not given us the spirit of fear, but of power and of love, and of a sound mind."

Mark this lovely union, this exquisite entwining of a threefold cord — "Power, love and a sound mind." Were it *power* alone, it might lead one to carry himself with a high hand and to push aside or crush any who could not come up to one's own mark — to cherish and manifest a spirit of haughty independence, to be intolerant of any difference of thought or feeling. On the other hand, were it a spirit of *love* only, it might induce an easygoing temper, a total indifference to the claims of truth and holiness — a readiness to tolerate error for the sake of peace. But there is both love and power, the one to balance the other. Moreover, there is the *sound mind* to adjust the two and give to each its proper range and its just application. Such is the adjusting power of Holy Scripture for which we cannot be too thankful.

We are so apt to be one-sided — to run to wild extremes, to run one principle to seed while another, though equally important, is not even allowed to take root. One will be all for what he calls power, another for what he calls love. Again, one will extol energy; another will only speak of the value of principle. We want both, and our God most graciously supplies both. A man who is all for principle may do nothing through fear of doing wrong. A man who is all for power may do mischief through fear of doing nothing. But the man who is enabled by grace to combine the two, will do the right thing at the right time and in the right way. This is what we want. And to meet in some feeble way this want is one special object of this paper to which may God most graciously attach the seal of His blessing.

In handling our theme it may help us in the way of clearness and precision to first consider the ground; secondly, the spirit; and thirdly, the object.

The Ground Of True Devotedness

If we answer this question from the ample materials furnished by the history of Abraham, we must say it is simple faith in the living God. This must be the solid ground of true, earnest, steady devotedness. If there is not the link of personal faith in God, we shall be driven here and there by every breath of human opinion and tossed about by every ripple of the tide of circumstances. If we are not conscious of this living link between our souls and God, we shall never be able to stand at all, much less to make any headway in the path of real devotedness. "Without faith it is impossible to please God: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him" (Heb. 11: 6).

Here lies the secret. We must believe *that* He is and *what* He is. We must have to do with God in the secret of our own souls, apart from and independent of all beside. Our individual connection with God must be a grand reality, a living fact, a real and unmistakable experience, lying at the very root of our existence and forming the stay and prop of our souls at all times and under all circumstances. Mere opinions will not do; dogmas and creeds will not avail. It will not be sufficient to say, "I believe in God the Father Almighty." Neither this nor any other form of mere words will do. It must be a heart question, a matter between the soul and God Himself. Nothing short of this can sustain the soul at any

time, but more particularly in a day like the present in which we find ourselves surrounded by so much that is hollow and superficial.

Few things tend more to sap the foundations of the soul's confidence than a large amount of unreal profession. One may gather this in some measure from the fact that the finger of the infidel is continually pointed at the gross inconsistencies exhibited in the lives of the teachers and professors of religion. And although it be true that such inconsistencies, even were they multiplied ten thousand fold, will never shelter the infidel from the just consequences of his unbelief inasmuch as each one must give account of himself and for himself before the judgment seat of Christ, yet it is a fact that unreal profession tends to shake confidence. Hence the urgent need of simple, earnest, personal faith in God — of unquestioning childlike confidence in His Word, of constant dependence upon His wisdom, goodness, power and faithfulness.

This is the anchor of the soul without which it will be impossible to ride securely in the midst of Christendom's troubled waters. If we are in any way propped up by our circumstances, if we are leaning upon an arm of flesh, if we are deriving support from the thoughts of a mortal, if our faith stands in the wisdom of man or the best of men, if our fear toward God is taught by the precept of men, we may rest assured that all this will be tested and fully manifested. Nothing will stand except the faith that endures as seeing Him who is invisible — that looks not at the things that are seen and temporal, but at the things that are unseen and eternal.

How vividly all this was illustrated in the life of the father of the faithful, we may easily learn from the marvelous history of his life given by the pen of inspiration. "Abraham believed God." Observe, it was not something *about* God that he believed — some doctrine or opinion respecting God, received by tradition from man. No; this would never have availed for Abraham. It was with God Himself he had to do in the profoundest depths of his own individual being. "The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Charran, and said unto him, Get thee out of thy country and from thy kindred, and come into the land which I shall show thee" (Acts 7: 2-3).

These opening sentences of Stephen's powerful address to the Council set forth the true secret of Abraham's entire career from Ur of the Chaldees to Mount Moriah. It is not our purpose to dwell upon the solemn and instructive interval at Charran. Our desire is rather to set before the reader, as plainly and pointedly as we can, the unspeakable value, the absolute necessity of faith in God, not only for life and salvation, but for anything like true devotedness of heart to Christ and His cause. True, that honored servant of God tarried at Charran, traveled down into Egypt, turned to Hagar, trembled at Gerar and denied his wife. All this appears upon the surface of his history, for he was but a man — even a man of like passions with ourselves. But "he believed God."

Yes, from first to last, this remarkable man exercised in the main an unshaken confidence in the living God. He believed in that great truth that lies at the bottom of all truth, namely, that God is; and he believed also that God is a rewarder of all those who diligently seek Him. It was this that drew Abraham forth from Ur of the Chaldees — from the midst of all those ties and associations in the which he had lived and moved and had his being. It was this that sustained him through all the changes of his pilgrim-course. Finally, it was this that enabled him to stand on Mount Moriah and there show himself ready to lay upon the altar that one who was not only the son of his bosom, but also the channel through which all the families of the earth were yet to be blessed.

Nothing but faith could have enabled Abraham to turn his back upon the land of his birth, to go forth not knowing where he went. To the men of his day he must have seemed to be a fool or a

madman. But oh! he knew whom he believed. Here lay the source of his strength. He was not following cunningly devised fables. He was not propped up by the circumstances or the influences which surrounded him. He was not supported by the thoughts of man. Flesh and blood afforded him no aid in his wonderful career. God was his shield, his portion and his reward, and in leaning on Him he found the true secret of all his victory over the world and of that calm and holy elevation which characterized him from first to last.

Reader, have you faith in God? Do you know Him? Is there a link between your soul and Him? Can you trust Him for everything? Are you at this moment consciously leaning upon Him, upon His Word, upon His arm? Remember, if there is any darkness or hesitation as to this, devotedness is and must be out of the question. All steady devotedness rests upon the solid ground of personal faith in the living God. We cannot too strongly insist upon this in a day of profession as widespread as it is shallow. It will not do to *say* “we believe.” There is far too much of this, far too much head knowledge and lip profession, far too much of mere surface work.

It is easy to *say* we believe, but as James puts it, “What doth it profit though a man *say* he have faith?” Faith is a divine reality and not a mere human effort. It is based upon divine revelation and not upon the working of human reason. It connects the soul with God with a living, mighty link which nothing can ever snap. It bears the soul above and carries it on in triumph, come what may. There may be failure and confusion, error and evil, coldness and deadness, strife and division, breaking down and turning aside, stumblings and inconsistencies — all manner of things to shake the confidence and stagger the soul — but faith holds on its peaceful, steady way, undaunted and undismayed. Faith leans on God alone and finds all its springs in Him. Nothing can touch the faithfulness of God and nothing can shake the confidence of the heart that simply takes God at His word.

And be it remembered that faith is simply taking God at His word. It is believing what God says because He says it. It is taking God's thoughts in place of our own. “He that believeth hath set to his seal that God is true.” How simple! God has revealed Himself, faith walks in the light of that revelation. God has spoken, faith believes the Word. But, if it be asked, “How has God revealed Himself? Where is His voice to be heard?” He has revealed Himself in the face of Jesus Christ, and His voice may be heard in His Word. He has not, blessed be His name, left us in the darkness of night, nor even in the dimness of twilight. He has poured upon us the full flood-tide of His own eternal truth so we may possess all the certainty, all the clearness, all the authority which a divine revelation can give.

Is it asked, “How can we know that God has spoken?” We reply, “How can we know the sun is shining?” Surely by the gentle influence of its beams. How can we know the dew has fallen? Surely by its refreshing influence upon the earth and by the luster of its pearly drops. So of the precious Word of God. It speaks for itself. Do I want a philosopher to tell me the sun is shining or the dewdrops are falling? Assuredly not. I feel their influence. I recognize their power. No doubt a philosopher might explain to me the properties of light and a chemist might instruct me as to the component parts of the dew. They might do all this for me, even though I had been born and reared in a coal-mine and had never seen either the one or the other. But they could not make me feel their influence. So it is in a divine way as to the Word of God. It makes itself felt — felt in the heart, felt in the conscience, felt in the deep chambers of the soul. True, it is by the power of the Holy Spirit, but all the while, there is power in the Word.

Let us remember this. Let no one imagine that God cannot speak to the heart or that the heart cannot understand what He says and feel the power of His Word. Cannot a father speak to his child and cannot the child understand his father? Yes, surely, and our heavenly Father can speak to our very

hearts and we can hear His voice and know His mind and lean upon His eternal Word. And this is faith — simple, living, saving faith. Such a definition of faith might not satisfy a profound theologian, but that makes no difference. The heart does not need learned theological definitions. It wants God and it has Him in His Word. God has spoken. He has revealed Himself. He has come forth from the thick darkness, chased away the shades of twilight, and shone upon us in the face of Jesus Christ and on the eternal pages of Holy Scripture.

Reader, have you found Him? Do you really know Him by the revelation which He has given and by the Word which He has spoken? Is His Word a reality to you? Is it your stay and support? Is it the real ground on which you are resting for time and eternity? Do, we beseech you, make sure work of it at this moment. See to it that you have a living faith in God and such a sense of the value, the importance and the authority of His Word, that you would rather part with all else than surrender it. It is the only ground of devotedness. It is utterly impossible that a heart distracted and tossed about with unbelieving reasonings can ever be truly devoted to Christ or His service. “He that cometh to God must believe that He is.” How simple! How plain! How could Abraham have left his country; how could he have run the race; how could he have given up everything and come forth as a stranger and a pilgrim, not having so much ground as to set his foot upon? How could he have stood upon Mount Moriah and stretched forth his hand for the knife to slay his son? How could he have done all or any of these things if he did not have simple faith in the one living and true God? Impossible.

And so in your case, beloved reader, unless you can trust God, unless you are sustained by the real power of simple faith in the Word of the living God, you will never be able to get on. In fact, you have no life in you. Truly we may say, “No faith, no life.” There may be high profession. There may be the semblance of devotedness, but if there is not a living faith, there can be no spiritual life. And if there is no life there cannot be any true devotedness. “The just shall live by faith.” They not only get life by faith, but live day by day and hour by hour *by faith*. It is the spring of life and power to the soul all the journey through. It connects the soul with God, and by so doing imparts steadiness, consistency, energy and holy decision to the servant of Christ. If there be not the constant exercise of faith in God, there will be fluctuation and uncertainty. Work will be taken up by fits and starts, instead of being the necessary result of calm abiding in Christ by faith. There will be an occasional rush at some line of service which is merely taken up for the time and then coldly abandoned. The course, instead of being a steady, upward and onward one, will be zigzag and most unsatisfactory. At times there will be a feverish excitement, and then again, deadness and indifference.

All this is the very reverse of true devotedness. It does serious damage to the cause of Christ. Better to never start on the course at all, than having started, to turn aside and give it up. “No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” True devotedness is based upon a profound and earnest faith in God. It has its root deep down in the heart. It is not fitful or whimsical, but calm, consistent, decided and steadily progressive. It may at times, when tried by the rule of a romantic and visionary enthusiasm, seem slow-paced, but if it is slow it is only because it will be sure. The end will prove the difference between the energy of nature and the acting of faith.

May God by His Spirit lead all His people into a truer and deeper sense of what devotedness really is. There is an energy abroad. The minds of men are active. Principles as well as passions are in action. Contending elements are at work underneath the surface of human life. Society is becoming more and more an unsettled thing. Men seem to be on the lookout for something. There is evidently a crisis at hand. Men are taking sides. The stage is being reared for some grand act of the drama. What is needed in view of all this? Unquestionably, a calm, deep, earnest faith in the Word of God. This is the only thing to keep the heart steady, come what may. Nothing will keep the soul in peace; nothing can

give fixedness to the course; nothing can maintain us in the path of devotedness but the realization of that living link between the soul and God Himself, which, as being divine and eternal, must of necessity outlive all that is merely human and temporal.

Having sought to lay down what we consider to be the essential *ground* of all true devotedness — an earnest, personal faith in the living God — we shall now, in dependence upon divine guidance and teaching, proceed to consider:

The Spirit of Devotedness

The two things are intimately connected inasmuch as it is impossible for anyone to have to do with God in the realities of a life of faith, without having his heart drawn out in true worship. And the spirit of worship is, in very deed, the spirit that must ever characterize true devotedness. It is faith alone that gives God His proper place and leaves the scene clear for Him to display Himself in His own proper glory. Hence it is that faith enjoys ten thousand occasions of realizing what God is to all who trust Him and diligently seek Him, and each fresh realization draws forth fresh strains of praise. Thus a living faith ministers to a spirit of worship, and a spirit of worship is the vehicle through which to convey the experiences of a living faith. The more we trust God the more we shall know Him, and the more we know Him the more we must praise Him.

We have little idea of how much we lose by our lack of simple confidence in God. Unbelief ever hinders the display of divine power and goodness. “He could there do not many mighty works because of their unbelief.” This holds good in our individual history every day. God will not show Himself if our unbelief fills the field of vision with other objects. It is impossible that God and the creature can occupy the same platform or jointly form the ground of the soul's confidence. It must be God alone from first to last. “My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him. He only is my rock and my salvation Trust in Him at all times.” Such is the language of faith “only and at all times.” This is the ground — the solid and unassailable ground of true devotedness — and the soul that really occupies this ground will ever be clothed with a spirit of worship. Faith counts on God; God reveals Himself to faith; and faith responds in words of praise and adoration. Nothing can be simpler and nothing on earth more blessed. Faith can ever address God in the following words, “Lord, You know me; we are on the same old terms.” Blessed term! May we understand them better!

There is nothing in all this world like having to do with God in the secret of our own souls and in all the details of our personal history, day by day. It imparts a calmness not easily ruffled, a stability not easily moved, a holy independence of human thinkings and speakings, a moral elevation that lifts the soul above the reach of surrounding influences. There is an atmosphere enwrapping this world — an atmosphere so dense, so murky, so depressing, that nothing but the eye of faith can pierce it. Our own hearts also are full of unbelief, ever ready to depart from the living God, constantly sending up infidel reasonings from within or hearkening to infidel suggestions from without. Therefore we so greatly need to have the foundations of our personal confidence strengthened so our devotedness may be of a more decided type.

But in contemplating the spirit of devotedness as illustrated in the life of Abraham, we must look somewhat closely at the facts of his instructive history, especially at those facts which immediately precede his call to Mount Moriah. For example in Genesis 20 we find him called to apply the sharp knife of self-judgment to an old root of evil which had found lodging in his heart for many days. This self-same root may teach the writer and the reader a deeply solemn and an eminently practical lesson.

When Abraham started on his career, we may notice that he was clogged and hindered by a natural tie and that he was secretly influenced by a root of moral evil. The natural tie was snapped at

Charran by the hand of death and Abraham was set free and enabled to get up to the place to which God had called him. (Compare carefully Genesis 11: 31-32 and Genesis 12 with Acts 7: 2-4). He was told to get up out of his country and from his kindred and come into the land of Canaan, but he brought some of his kindred with him and stopped short at Charran. There his father died. Thereupon Abraham made his way to the true point of divine revelation.

The ties of nature, right enough and really of God in their proper place, are sure, if not kept in their place, to hinder true devotedness. It was all right and very beautiful in Elisha to love with the tenderness of a son, his father and mother, but when Elijah had flung around him the prophetic mantle, it was entirely below the mark of a deep-toned and genuine devotedness to say, "Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother and then I will follow thee." Natural ties are like honey: we must beware of how much we eat and when. Was ever a son's love so tender as that which glowed in the bosom of the Man Christ Jesus? Was ever subjection to parental authority so divinely perfect as His? And yet when the claims of service were to be responded to, when the integrity of true Nazariteship was to be maintained, He could say, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" And again, "Who is My mother?" It was only the true and perfect Servant who knew how to adjust conflicting claims and keep each in its place. Hence from the same lips flowed forth the words of faithful Nazariteship at one time, and words of melting tenderness at another.

Abraham was hindered in his course by the tie of nature until that tie was dissolved by death, but the root of moral evil seems to have clung to him for a much longer period of time. What was that root? Regretfully, it was one which we can only too well understand — a little bit of unbelief, clothing itself in the form of humanly-prudent reserve in reference to his relationship to Sarah.

"What!" it may be said, "Unbelief in the heart of the father of the faithful?" Just so. It is a remarkable fact, illustrated in the history of the most eminent saints of God, that their most remarkable failure appears in the very thing for which they were most noted. Moses, the meekest man in all the earth, spoke unadvisedly. Job, the model of patience, cursed his day. Abraham, the father of the faithful, carried in his heart for many a long day and through many a changing scene, a root of unbelief. This root first sprouted in the land of Egypt where Abraham had gone to escape the famine that raged in the land of Canaan. And as might be expected, the sprouting brought trouble on himself and others. "And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister, that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee."

Reader, remember the Holy Spirit has penned this faithful record for our learning and admonition, and truly it is most solemn to think that such a man as Abraham could be so governed by the fear of personal danger as to expose the object of his heart's fond affections to loss of virtue and to deny his relationship to her. True, this conduct was the result of his being in a wrong position, for had he remained in the place to which God had called him, there would have been no need to deny his wife. But as it generally happens, one wrong step led to another, and having gone into Egypt through fear of the famine, he there denies his wife through fear of death.

"And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife." What marvelous grace to Abraham! God, who ever delights to rebuke his people's fears as well as to answer their faith, covered His erring servant with the shield of His powerful protection. Abraham's life and Sarah's virtue were both preserved in safety behind that impenetrable shield, and the

house of Egypt's monarch was made to feel the heavy stroke of Jehovah's righteous rod. "And Pharaoh called Abram and said, What is this that thou hast done unto me? Why didst thou not tell me that she was thy wife? Why saidst thou, she is my sister? so I might have taken her to me to wife." Abraham had evidently exposed himself in all this matter. Hence, although God protects him, He yet allows Pharaoh to rebuke him.

It is well to see this. When the man of God steps off the path of faith and christian integrity, he at once exposes himself to the men of this world, and he need not marvel if they chastise him with an unsparing hand. Had Abraham remained in Canaan, he would not have been reproved by Pharaoh in Egypt. It is better far to starve, if it must be so, in the path of obedience than gain abundance by the sacrifice of faith and moral uprightness. May we have grace to remember this at all times! It is easy enough to put these things down on paper, but when the moment of temptation arises, it is another thing. Still we must remember that the Spirit of God has penned the history of Abraham for our profit, and it is well for us to ponder its holy lessons.

Now let us enquire as to the effect produced in Abraham by Pharaoh's sharp reproof. Did it prove effective in delivering him from the root of evil which had called it forth? Regretfully no. So far as the inspired history informs us, Abraham received the rebuke in silence and went on his way, but he carried the root along with him to sprout again. He received a fresh revelation from God; he obtained a splendid victory over Chedorlaomer and his confederates and refused the tempting offer of the king of Sodom; he was comforted by fresh assurances and promises from God and manifested a child-like faith which was counted unto him for righteousness. In short, he passed through a variety of scenes and circumstances with varied exercises of soul no doubt, but all the while, the moral root to which we are directing the reader's attention, remained unjudged and unconfessed.

That root had sprouted and produced its bitter fruit, but as yet the sharp knife of self-judgment remained to be applied to it. It is not until we reach Genesis 20 that this root again appears above the surface in the matter of Abimelech, King of Gerar. Here we have the same scene enacted over again after years of rich experience of divine goodness and loving-kindness. The King of Egypt and his house had been brought into trouble before, and the King of Gerar and his house are brought into trouble now, for Jehovah reproveth kings for Abraham's sake though the kings had reason to reprove Abraham because of his ways.

"Then Abimelech called Abraham and said unto him, What hast thou done unto us? and what have I offended thee, that thou hast brought on me and on my kingdom a great sin? Thou hast done deeds unto me that ought not to be done. And Abimelech said unto Abraham "What sawest thou that thou hast done this thing?" This was bringing the father to a point. There was no escaping such plain dealing. Therefore Abraham frankly opens his heart and unlocks that secret chamber which had been kept shut for so many years. He tells out all and exposes every fiber of the root which had proved the source of so much trouble to himself and others. Let us hearken to the unreserved confession of this dear and honored man of God. "And Abraham said, because I thought, surely, the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife's sake. And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife. And it came to pass when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt show unto me at every place whither we shall come, say of me, he is my brother."

Here was the root of the whole matter. Why do we dwell upon it? Why seek to unfold it in such detail? Simply for the spiritual profit and moral health of the Christian reader. Have we not all our roots? Yes, verily, deep, strong and bitter roots — roots which have been the source of a world of

sorrow and shame to ourselves and of trouble to those with whom we had to do. Well then, these roots must be reached and judged, for as long as they remain unreached and unjudged, it is utterly impossible that we can reach the higher stages of the path of devotedness. Need we remind the reader that it is not a question of life or salvation? Need we recall him to the thesis of our paper which is simply "What is devotedness?" Our one grand object is to raise the tone of devotedness in the soul of every Christian who may scan these lines. But we know that devotedness, to be true, steady and effective, must rest on the proper ground and breathe the proper spirit. That ground is faith; that spirit is worship; and though it be quite true that a soul may occupy, in the main, the ground of faith and breathe a spirit of worship while there are many roots in the heart unreached and unjudged, we are nevertheless fully persuaded that so long as there is any hidden root of evil in the heart, any chamber which we keep locked and refuse to have properly lighted and ventilated, the higher stages of practical devotedness are yet beyond and above us.

God knows we do not want to depress the heart of the reader. Indeed, if our lines have anything of a depressing tendency, their effect should be realized first and most of all by the writer himself. But we desire to encourage and exhort, and it is with a simple view to these desirable ends that we now turn directly to the reader and put this plain and pointed question home to him, Have you any secret reserve in your soul? Do you have any hidden root of evil deep down in your heart and mind? Is there anything you are keeping back from the action of the light and from the edge of the knife? Search and see! Search diligently! Do not deceive yourself nor let Satan deceive you. Deal honestly and truly with your own soul in this matter. Let no false application of the doctrines or principles of grace prevent you from exercising a most rigid censorship over your ways, your character and your heart with all its motive springs and hidden chambers.

Be assured of it, there is an urgent demand for real heart work on the part of all who long to tread the highest stages of the divine life. We live in a day which is earning for itself the title of "A day of shams." Yes, reader, *sham* seems stamped upon all around, whether in politics, commerce or manufacturing, and most assuredly, much of the Christianity of the day forms no sort of exception to the rule. Hence the demand for *reality* on the part of the true Christian. And, unquestionably, all reality must find its source in the heart. If the heart is not right and real with God, we cannot be real in anything.

There is another point to which we must refer in the life of Abraham before we close this part of our subject. It is presented in Genesis 21. The bondwoman and her son are cast out of the house. We do not dwell upon this point, but merely name it for the purpose of pointing out the deep moral conveyed to us in this portion of Abraham's history. The heart and the house had both to come under judgment before the call to Moriah fell on the patriarch's ears. God was about to call His beloved servant into the very highest position that man can occupy, to demand of him an expression of devotedness of the very highest order, to pass him through a crucible of the very highest degree of intensity. And, be it observed, before He did so, the root of moral evil had been reached in the heart and the legal element had been expelled from the house. All this is deeply practical.

God deals with moral realities. If we are to walk with Him along the high and holy pathway of pure devotedness, the heart and the house must be duly regulated. If the real desire of our hearts be after a closer walk with God, we must see to it that we are not retaining anything within or about us that would not agree with that nearness. Our God is infinitely gracious, merciful and patient. He can bear with us and wait upon us in marvelous tenderness, but at the same time, we have to remember that we forfeit present blessing and future reward through our lack of earnest devotedness. There is nothing of legality in this: it is but the just application of the principle of grace in which we stand.

“And it came to pass that God did tempt Abraham.” Why is it we never read such words as “It came to pass that God did tempt Lot?” Alas! Lot was never in a moral condition to warrant his being so highly honored. *Sodom* tempted Lot, but it was no temptation at all to Abraham. What a contrast between Lot in the cave and Abraham on Mount Moriah! Yet they were both saved. But what a poor thing to be *content* to be saved! Ought we not to sigh after those spiritual heights which lie beyond? Should we not long to give expression to a more ardent devotedness? Oh! that our houses and our hearts were in a moral condition acceptable in the sight of God so we might enjoy habitual nearness to Himself and unbroken communion with Him. This is our privilege and we should never be satisfied with anything else.

It was a high honor conferred upon Abraham when God called him into the place of trial — when He asked him for “his son, his only son Isaac.” It was an elevated point in the patriarch's career, and that he felt it to be such we may judge from the spirit in which he responded to the divine call and in the manner in which he traveled to the scene of sacrifice. “I and the lad will go yonder and *worship*.” Here the true spirit of devotedness most blessedly unfolds itself. To give up his only son, the object of his affections, the channel of all God's promises, to lay this one as a victim on the altar and see him consumed to ashes, what was it all? Just an act of worship! This was real work indeed. It was no empty lip profession, no saying “I go, sir” and yet not going at all. “Abraham believed God.” Here lay the secret of it all. He had learned to yield an unquestioning, implicit obedience to the Word of the Lord. Therefore when called to lay his Isaac upon the altar as a sacrifice — that Isaac for whom he had longed and waited and trusted — he bows his head and says, “I and the lad will go yonder and worship.”

Thank God there lived such a man as Abraham, that there was enacted such a scene as that upon Mount Moriah, and that we have so vividly and forcibly presented to our hearts the ground and the spirit of true devotedness!

The more we ponder the question which has been occupying our attention, namely, What is devotedness? the more we are convinced of its immense practical importance. It puts the soul in immediate contact with the Lord Himself and opens a path for each one, along which he can move in calm and steady confidence, let his surroundings be what they may.

But just in proportion to the importance of the subject of devotedness is the need of clearness as to the true ground, spirit and object thereof. We have already sought to present to the reader the truth as to the first two points. Now it remains to dwell on

The Object of Devotedness

How much hangs on the answer which the heart gives to this question, “What is my object in life?” It is, undoubtedly, one of the very gravest questions which anyone can put to himself. It is the object which stamps the character. Let us remember this. What was it that gave character to Abraham's journey to Moriah and to his conduct when he arrived there? What was it that drew the attention of heaven to the scene? Was it the mere fact that a father was going to offer up his son as a sacrifice? No; thousands of fathers have done that. Thousands of sons have been sacrificed on the altars of false gods, and that too, in so-called devotedness. But what was it that distinguished the act of the father of the faithful? It was this: let us hear it and mark it with the heart's deepest attention. “Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me” (Gen. 22: 12). Here we have Abraham's object, and on this point let us meditate for a few moments.

The heart may propose to itself a thousand objects. These objects may be good enough in themselves, yet not one of them be the object which characterizes Christian devotedness. We once

knew a man who prayed for seven hours a day. We have seen him on his knees at four o'clock in the morning. And after the toils of the day we have seen him on his knees again till the midnight hour. We have seen him in agonies of devotion. His flesh was worn from his bones by constant kneeling. He was a blameless, friendly man. Those who marked the course of his daily life could not put their finger on a single moral blemish in his conduct as a man. And yet when we approached that man to speak some word about Christ, he shrunk from us and refused to listen. He was devoted to his religion *but he hated Christ*.

Again, a man may devote himself to philanthropy. He may devote his life and his fortune to the objects of benevolence and make the most splendid sacrifices to carry out his schemes. He may fix the wondering gaze of millions upon his career, yet be a total stranger to Christ.

Further, a man may devote himself to what may seem to be the work of the Lord. He may seem to be a laboring student of Scripture, an active, earnest, self-denying evangelist. He may go forth to the fields of foreign mission, leaving his country, his kindred and his home in devotion to his work. He may do all this and much more, and yet not exhibit one atom of true Christian devotedness simply because *Christ* was not his object in all that in which he was engaged.

All this is deeply solemn. We may be religious, devotional, benevolent, active in the Lord's work in all its departments, whether as evangelists, pastors or teachers, and yet not have Christ before our souls at all. A man may start in a work which, to all outward appearance, seems a real work of God. He may seem to be most simple in his devotion to that work and yet, it may turn out in the end that his heart was engrossed with the work to the total exclusion of Christ as an object. True Christian devotedness is embodied in this brief sentence, "*To me, to live is Christ.*" Paul does not say, "To me to live is work," though where was there ever such a workman except the perfect Workman? He does not say, "To me to live is religion or benevolence or morality," though who more religious, benevolent or moral than Paul? It is not that he loved these things less, but he loved Christ more. This makes all the difference. I may wear myself out with religious exercises such as prayers, fastings and vigils; I may bestow all my goods to feed the poor; I may give my body to be burned, yet there may not be in all these things one particle of genuine devotedness to Christ.

Is not this a very weighty consideration in this day of religious activity, forms of piety and schemes of benevolence? Should we not, dear Christian reader, look well to the question as to what is our real object? Is it not too true that one may spend a whole life in the exercise of religion and philanthropy, and yet live and die a stranger to that One who is God's only object, heaven's only center — Christ Jesus? Sadly, the truth of this is illustrated in the history of millions. The god of this world is blinding the minds of countless multitudes. And with what does he most effectively blind them? With schemes of benevolence and forms of piety. Oh! Christendom, Christendom, hear it: thy rituals, thy forms and thy schemes are blinding the minds, hardening the hearts and searing the consciences of untold millions.

It is not merely amid the haunts of vice in all its abominable forms, that God's faithful messengers are called to raise a warning voice, but on the broad and well-trodden highway of religious profession, along which multitudes are rushing to eternal doom. *The devil's grand object is to keep Christ out of the heart and he cares not by what means he attains this object.* He will use a man's lusts or he will use his superstitious fears. Forms of vice and forms of piety are all alike to him. *He hates Christ* and will seek by all means to keep souls away from Him. He will let a man be religious, benevolent, friendly, moral, but he will not, if he can help it, let him be a Christian. And when anyone has through grace become a Christian in reality, Satan's one aim is to draw his heart and turn his eye

away from Christ. He will seek to engage him with objects professedly Christian to divert him from the only Object that really forms the Christian — Christ Himself. He will give him lots of work to do: he will *overwhelm* him with work and get him a name as a most wonderful workman. And yet, by means of this very work, he will sap the foundation of a man's Christianity and so deceive and pervert his heart that, in process of time, he will become occupied with *himself* and his doings instead of with Christ and His service!

Hence the importance of having the one object ever before the heart and that object is Christ. “To me to live is Christ.” “Thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me.” Christ is the great standard for everyone and everything. All must be measured by Him. Everything is to be regulated and valued with reference to Him. The question is not, how much work am I doing? but to whom is it done? Searching question! “Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me in; naked, and ye clothed Me; I was sick and ye visited Me; I was in prison, and ye came unto Me... inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me” (Matt. 25: 34-40).

Here lies the secret of all acceptable service and all true devotedness. We may feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick, but if the King cannot say, “Ye did it unto Me,” it will be valueless.

Oh! what a privilege to be allowed to do any little thing for Christ! To be enabled to have Him ever before the heart! It is this which gives real value and true elevation to all we may be called to do in this world, whether it be sweeping a sidewalk or evangelizing a nation. Christian service is that which is done to Christ. Nothing else deserves the name; nothing else will be so esteemed in God's account; nothing else will pass as genuine gold through the fire of that great testing day which is rapidly approaching. All the thoughts of God center around Jesus. It is His eternal purpose to exalt and glorify that Name. The whole universe will yet be called upon to find in Jesus its central sun. The beams of His glory shall, before long, shine forth over the whole creation.

Thus it will be very soon. Now, the Christian is called to *anticipate* that day and to make Jesus his one absorbing, commanding object in all things. If he gives alms it is to be in the name of Jesus; if he preaches the gospel for the conversion and gathering of souls, it is to be with his eye fixed directly upon Jesus and for the glory of His Name. Will this restrict the sphere or measure of his benevolence? Will it lessen his interest in the work of evangelization? Quite the reverse; it will greatly enlarge the former and intensify the latter, and while it does all this it will elevate the tone of his spirit in the work and impart stability to all his service because it will ever keep his heart and mind occupied with the very highest object, even Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.

I may enter upon a certain line of work under the influence of excitement or in imitation of others, or to get a name for myself- from all manner of motives. I may work with an energy and zeal which puts others to shame. I may be greatly looked up to get a great name among my fellows. I may be puffed, flattered and applauded. My name may appear as a celebrity in all the religious journals of the day. Yet, after all this, the Lord may not be able to say as to a single act of all my service, “You did it unto Me.”

On the other hand a man may pursue a path of quiet, unobtrusive, unostentatious service, unknown and unnoticed, and not wishing to be noticed. The stream of his benevolence may flow abundantly, unknown to all except to those who are refreshed by its influence, and for the most part, not even by them. The lanes, the alleys, the courtyards, the prisons, the hospitals are visited; the widow's tear is dried, her sorrow soothed, her wants supplied; the orphan is thought of; the sons and

daughters of toil and misery are looked after; the precious tidings of salvation are sounded in many a room; the gospel tract is slipped into many a hand; and all the while, little is heard or known down here of the doer of these precious, these most fragrant acts of service and self-sacrifice. But the odor goes up to the throne. The record is above: it is all engraved on the Father's heart. He remembers it all and will bring it all out in due time and after such a fashion that the doer would not recognize his own work.

Who knew what was in Abraham's heart when he started on that marvelous journey to Moriah — a journey which has only been exceeded in marvelous mystery by that from Gethsemane to Calvary? Who knew what he was going to do? Who would ever have known it if the Holy Spirit had not recorded it on the eternal page of inspiration? "I and the lad will go yonder and worship." "They went both of them together." "Thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from Me." Abraham was engrossed with God from first to last. From the moment he rose from his couch on that memorable morning, until he stretched forth his hand to take the knife, his soul was absorbed with the living God. It was this that gave holy elevation to the entire scene. It was done for God.

Thus it is always. Whatever is done for Christ will be remembered and rewarded; whatever is not will sink into eternal oblivion or be burned up in judgment. It is not the *quantity* but the *quality* of the work that will be tried and made manifest before the judgment seat of Christ. Look at the parable of the laborers in Matthew 20. What a seasonable lesson does that parable read out to our hearts! The laborers who were first hired were the only ones with whom an agreement was made; all the rest worked in the confidence that their Master would give them what was right. If any of the first set of laborers had been asked during the day, "What are you to get as a reward for your work?" they would have said "A penny." They were working for a penny. But if any of the others had been asked the same question, they would have said, "I don't know, but I am sure the Master will do what is right."

This makes all the difference. The moment I work for reward, it ceases to be Christian service. It is not that Christian service will not be rewarded: it most assuredly will, but just so far as it is Christian service, it will be rendered apart from all thought of reward. "The love of Christ," not the hope of reward, "constraineth us." Why did the wicked and slothful servant hide his talent in the earth? Because he did not know his Lord. Had he known Him, he would have loved Him and served Him for love's sake, which is the only service that Christ values.

It was, we may rest assured, joy to Abraham's soul to have a son to lay on the altar of God. And so with the true Christian now; it is his joy to be permitted to render any little service to that Lord whom he loves supremely. Nor will it be a question with him as to the kind of service or the sphere in which it is to be rendered, or the amount of the work; it is enough for him if his Lord can say, "You did it unto Me." "Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon Me." It does not matter in the least what we are doing, provided only it be done directly for Christ, with the eye fixed on Him and the heart filled with Him. It is this that imparts value to every little act of service, and if there be one thing more than another which the heart longs for, it is the ability to do all one's work, of whatsoever kind it is, with a single eye to Christ.

But ah! the heart is so treacherous and so prone to have mixed motives. We are apt to attach importance and interest to things because of *our* connection with them, to engage in service for service' sake, to be more occupied with our work than with the Master. May we have grace ever to remember that all that is not done directly to the Lord Himself is absolutely worthless, however showy it may be in the eyes of man; and on the other hand, that the smallest thing done in love to Jesus and in singleness of heart to Him, will never be forgotten.

It would be truly pleasant to the heart to dwell a little longer on this blessed theme, but we must

close. Before we do, we desire to leave with the reader this one solemn question, “What is your real object?” We feel the weight of this question and we look to the Spirit of God to give it weight in the heart and conscience of the reader.

To everyone who can say in calm confidence and spiritual intelligence, “I am saved,” the next grand point is to be able to say, “Christ is my object: to me to live is Christ.” Alas, how few of us can say it. We stop short. We are occupied with our salvation, our peace and blessing, our comfort and liberty, or it may be we are taken up with our service. In a word, it is not Christ — it is not abiding in Him, feeding on Him and acting for Him. It is really self, and this is downright misery. We should never rest satisfied with anything short of having Jesus as a covering for our eyes and an Object for our hearts. This would be to understand experimentally the ground, the spirit and the object of true devotedness.