

The Call of the Bride

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Chapter 1.

THE BRIDEGROOM.

"And the man came into the house: and he ungirded his camels, and gave straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that were with him. And there was set meat before him to eat: but he said, I will not eat, until I have told mine errand. And he said, Speak on. And he said, I am Abraham's servant. And the Lord hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses. And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old: and unto him hath he given all that he hath. And my master made me swear, saying, Thou shalt not take a wife to my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell: but thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son." — Gen. 24: 32-38.

The twenty-fourth chapter of Genesis gives a most beautiful illustration of the Gospel of God, now presented by the Holy Ghost to the guilty children of Adam. It is a pictorial representation of the time in which we live. In the bygone ages, Abraham desired for his son Isaac that which would be a joy and comfort to him; and at this present time, God does the same for His Son. He is seeking that which shall be the source of endless joy to His only, His well-beloved, Son, Jesus. And what is that? A BRIDE.

The Son's Bride, with her jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, is what I desire to call your attention to; and, beloved reader, rest assured this has not been left on record merely as a family transaction in the history of Abraham's descendants, but because it is fraught with the deepest interest to us now, and is full of instruction and beautiful simile.

In the beginning of this chapter we see Abraham giving directions to Eliezer, his servant, to go to his country, and to his kindred, and take a wife from thence unto his son Isaac.

In Eliezer we have not only a ready and faithful, but also a prayerful, messenger; and need we wonder then that his mission from Hebron to the distant city of Nahor in Mesopotamia was so prosperous? No; we can but share, as it were, in the faithful messenger's joy, as he recrosses the desert, taking with him to his master's son the one who shall be so dear to his heart. And in these days there is One who has come from heaven's far-off land on a similar errand — the Holy Ghost. He has come down to us. Angels have been passed by, and to man, fallen man, has been delivered the Gospel message of peace; and from the family of Adam the Holy Ghost is gathering out those who shall form the Bride, and He is leading across the pathless desert of the world this Bride for the Son, to whom the Father has given "all *things*." Safely is He leading her onward to that happy moment when she shall be presented, radiant with the jewels that have been given her by her long-expected Bridegroom, the Lord of all.

Have you ever thought that there is a living Man, seated on the throne of heaven, waiting and longing for the time when the Church, His Bride, shall be associated with Himself in glory, and when He shall share all the honour and dignity of that throne with the one for whom He died? So it is. "Christ loved the church and gave himself for it;" and of Him individually the believer can say, "Who loved me, and gave himself for me." How happy and blessed are they who form an integral part of the Church! Reader, can you look forward with joy to the meeting of the Bride and Bridegroom? Can you picture the scene, and share by anticipation in the joy, when all heaven shall be in ecstasy, because "the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready"?

Twice in Scripture do we read of ecstatic joy amongst the heavenly hosts. First, at the birth of the Lord, we are told: "And suddenly there was with the angels a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2: 13, 14). And again at the marriage of the Lamb: "And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife

hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Rev. 19: 5.8).

Do you wish to form part of the Bride here described? I do not now ask, Do you want salvation? or, Do you want to escape from hell? No; I ask now, Do you want what God calls you to? Do you desire to possess the honour He here offers you? Will you have the dignity and glory He puts at your disposal? Will you accept it, or refuse it? *Which?* Can you for a moment hesitate? Oh, better far spend eternity as the happy Bride of the Son of God, in the brightness of heaven's glory, than spend it in the darkness of hell! Better far be bound to Jesus with the cords of love, than be bound in hell with the cords of your own sins! — for in one state or other must eternity be spent.

But let us return and look in detail at what is here written. The scene represented is in the distant country of Mesopotamia, and the servant is there telling a tale that will allure one to leave all that is dear to her in her native land, and go to be the bride of him whom she has never seen, but of whom she hears such wondrous tidings.

Eliezer's mission is very simply and clearly told. He is a true and faithful servant; his sole desire is to serve his master. He says, "O Lord God of my master Abraham, *I pray thee*, send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast showed kindness unto my master" (verses 12-14).

What a beautiful example this is to each servant of God! Would that we all were more prayerful, more dependent on God for the success of all we undertake in His service, then might we look for an equally blessed result. He *prayed*, nor had he long to wait for an answer; for we are told, "And it came to pass, before he had done speaking, that, behold, Rebekah came out, who was born to Bethuel, son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, with her pitcher upon her shoulder. And the damsel was very fair to look upon, a virgin, neither had any man known her; and she went down to the well, and filled her pitcher, and came up." Mark here the eagerness of the servant in his master's work: "And the servant *ran* to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher. And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink. And when she had done giving him drink, she said, I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking" (verses 15-19).

Rebekah, type of the sinner, meets the messenger thus at the well. And does not God delight to meet you, dear soul? Yes. You think you have something to do, that you must get into a certain condition, before you can get into the presence of God; but you are mistaken. Rebekah, going just as she was to draw water, is met by Eliezer; and so, too, the sinner, just as he is, has presented to him, and must receive from God, His testimony to the Person of the Lord Jesus.

What does drawing water signify? It is the action of an unsatisfied soul, an expression of thirst. We have in the New Testament an account of one who came to draw water at Samaria's well, and to whom the Lord said, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again. But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." The truth taught figuratively here is the necessity for you to have Christ now as your own, and to be satisfied with Him, for it is He alone who can satisfy the cravings of the needy soul. As Eliezer met Rebekah, so would the Lord meet you. "Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher" is the first address of the seeker to the sought one.

So, in the 4th of John, when the blessed Lord would win the confidence of Samaria's erring daughter, "Give *me* to drink" is the gracious word that began an interview which did not end till, *convicted* of her sin, and *commanded* by His grace, that *revealed* heaven's best gift (Christ) to earth's worst sinner (herself), she left His side only to bring others back with her to that sacred place of blessing, by the words, "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" Such, my reader, is the lovely way Divine Grace stoops to win man's heart. It has won mine. Shall it not win yours also?

Having secured her attention, got into her company, and gone with her to her mother's house, Eliezer begins to unfold his mission; and see his earnestness: "I will not eat till I have told mine errand." And what doth he tell? "And he said, I am Abraham's servant. And the Lord hath blessed my master greatly, and he is become great; and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maid. servants, and camels, and asses. And Sarah, my master's wife, bare a son to my master when she was old: *and unto him hath he given all that he hath*. And my master made me swear, saying, . . . Thou shalt go unto my father's house, and to my kindred, and *take a wife unto my son*" (verses 34-38).

His first care, you see, is to unfold the tidings about this only-begotten son; *i.e.*, he presents distinctly, a PERSON enriched with all that the father's love could give, and concerning whom he had *purposes* which deeply concerned one of those who, for the first time, heard of this would-be bridegroom, Isaac.

What a type of Christ! We must not forget, too, that in Gen. 22 we have in a wondrous figure the death and resurrection of Jesus, as of that scene it is written, "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises, *offered up his only-begotten son*, . . . accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure" (Heb. 11: 17-19).

Thus it is not till Christ has died, risen again, and ascended into heavenly glory, that the Holy Ghost comes to seek the heart of the Bride for the absent one.

Before Isaac gets *his possessions or his Bride*, he is the risen heir; and thus is he a type of our Lord, who had first to die for His Church before He could have her with Him in glory. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth

forth much fruit" (John 12: 24). How far the antitype exceeds the type I need not say. How wonderful it all is! and how blessedly true! What the restraining arm of God saved Isaac from, His own beloved Son had to endure. He hung on the cross, He died a shameful death, He descended into the grave, as the Church's Representative; and, blessed be God, He rose again entitled to claim "His own" in virtue of His atoning death and blood-shedding.

What does the Holy Ghost reveal of that only. begotten Son of God? All that the Father hath is His: "Unto him hath he given all that he hath." The Man in the glory is the One to whom the Father has given everything. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand" (John 3: 35). He "also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2: 9-11).

Scripture abounds with testimony that all has been given to Jesus; but there was one thing yet in the mind of God, of deeper and greater value than all that had been given, a priceless gift in the sight of Jesus, and that was a "Bride" to be His helpmeet. How wonderful is the thought that the Son of God so loved that Bride as to come down to earth and give up His life in order to possess her! He loves the Church — loves her with so great a love that we are told He "for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame." For her He left His Father's home on high; for her He became a "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;" was mocked and scourged, and at last crucified between two malefactors. But the fruit of all His sufferings is that He shall have a spotless Bride for ever seated by His side in glory. All has been done to win her, and she shall be His. That was what sustained His heart while here on earth; that was what He looked onward to in the midst of all His untold, His unutterable agony. He was doing His Father's will, was paying the costly price demanded by a righteous God to redeem those who are to form His Bride. Costly, indeed, was the ransom! Great, indeed, was His love. But it is joy to know He shall have full recompense for all His labour, all His sufferings; that His heart shall be fully gladdened, when He shall have the Church, His Bride, with Himself in glory.

"He and I in that bright glory

One deep joy shall share;

Mine, to be for ever with Him,

His, that I am there."

Oh, beloved reader, will you be there? God wants you to share this joy and love, and to rank with Him to whom He has given all things. But you say, "Can this be for *me*? Does God mean this for me?" My answer to this question is very simple. How did Rebekah know she was the one Eliezer wanted for Isaac? She could have no doubt on that point, for she stood by as the servant (see ver. 42-52) detailed to Laban how he had prayed to the Lord that he might meet the "appointed" one at the well, and recognise her by this sign, that when he should ask water for himself alone, she should not only yield this request but volunteer water for the camels also.

Now Rebekah knew that she had exactly corresponded to this wanted personage, having said and done thus to the letter, and therefore must be the one the servant was in quest of.

If you have any doubt whether you am the one Jesus wants, just tell me — Are you a sinner? "Yes." Then listen: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to *save sinners*" (1 Tim. 1: 15).

"Yes, but I do not know whether I am 'appointed' to be saved, or, in other words, if I am among the elect." Very likely, and I did not know that the night I came to the Lord, but I knew something far more to the point, viz., that I was "lost." Do you know and acknowledge that? "Yes, indeed I do," you may reply. Very well, hear the Saviour's words, "The Son of man is come to *seek*, and to *save* that which was lost" (Luke 19: 10). Now what do you think? Are you the wanted one? You own you are a "sinner," and further, a "lost" one, and God says it was for such Jesus came. How can you escape the conclusion that He wants you? It is impossible to do so. Whether you want Him and are willing to accept God's wondrous salvation is the only open question. He offers it now to you, and it only remains with you to accept or reject His offered gift.

The exalted Son of God is patiently waiting till the last heart shall he won for Him. Say, shall your heart be won for Jesus? Shall the strong chains that bind you to the world and the slavery of Satan be broken even now by the tender accents of the Bridegroom's loving voice, saying unto you, "Come unto me"? Can you look back on the dark scenes of Golgotha, and see all that He suffered there to win you to Himself, and yet refuse to give Him your heart's affections? Surely not.

I ask you in God's name, and as a herald from heaven's far-off land, Will you come to Jesus? I take up the words of Rebekah's friends, and say to you, "Wilt thou go?" Let yours be the heart that joyfully responds, "I will go." Look at His beauty, He who is "the chief among ten thousand" and "altogether lovely," and rejoice in the truth that you may be His. He lingers over you with deepest patience and strongest love; He is knocking at the door of your heart; oh, soul, open unto Him. He, lures you with all the deep affection of His true heart of love; He would draw you to Himself. Again His accents fall upon your ear, calling you this day, and saying, "Come unto Me."

Let your response be that of Rebekah's when she unhesitatingly said, "I will go." What decision there is expressed in these three words, "I will go!" and will you be less decided than she? Her vista was one of earthly joy, tarnished with earthly sorrows, and ending with death; but that which is now offered to you is perfect, unending, unclouded joy, and glory with Jesus in heaven. God, in grace and mercy, proposes to lift you from your present state of degradation, in which your sins have placed you, and deliver you from the eternal future of misery which awaits every unsaved soul. He invites you to association in all the love and glory of heaven, as the Bride of the Lord of all.

This, then, is the call which now by the Gospel falls on every sinner's ear. That which fits the sinner for the presence of God is provided also through the finished work of Jesus, and doubt.

less typified by the "jewels of silver, jewels of gold, and raiment," which Eliezer gave Rebekah, and of which I shall treat, with the Lord's help, in future chapters.

Chapter 2.

THE BRIDE'S "JEWELS OF SILVER."

"And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah" — Gen. 24: 53.

The effect of the word of God, when it for the first time really reaches the soul of a sinner, is to raise the question of fitness for the presence of God. Am I fit to go to God? is the query which the awakened soul will put to itself, and answer in the negative when the Gospel call has aroused it to the invitation of God. Now the perfection of the Gospel of God is this — that not only does it call the sinner to God, but shows the soul the way to come, and the ground of access to Him. In other words, it provides that which fits the guilty sinner to stand in God's presence, cleansed, forgiven, and happy.

Further, before the soul is called on to decide for Christ, it has brought before it the tale of His work and its effects for all who believe God's message about His beloved Son. This truth is strikingly illustrated in the verse at the head of this chapter. Having found the one whom he wishes to gain as a Bride for Isaac, Eliezer brings out the things which were at once the pledges of the reality of his message, and the answer to any question of poverty or unfitness to respond to his call by reason of the lack of these things. The jewels of silver, jewels of gold, and raiment, were suited to the glory of the sphere whence they came, and to which she was invited; and once accepted and worn by Rebekah, would make her personally suitable to the scene and home to which she was called. These gifts must have for ever silenced her fears (if she had them) that she did not possess the attire and the ornaments that the Bride of such "a mighty man of wealth" should possess. Nay, more: she receives and possesses them ere she has to decide whether or not she will accept the call to be the Bride of Isaac.

Let all this have its application to you, dear reader. God wants you for His Son, and the Holy Ghost tells you, in the Gospel, what Christ has done by His death to fit you for the presence of God.

But you may say, "God may be willing to receive me, but I am quite unfit to go to God. How can I, who am such a sinner, go to be with Jesus in glory?"

Let not the question of unfitness keep you back, for God does not invite you without putting before you the jewels and raiment that will fit you for His presence, and for the place He calls you to. It is *He* that fits you, bear that in mind; you cannot fit yourself. All your attempts to fit yourself will but end in your being clothed in filthy rags.

Rebekah has listened to the messenger, she has received the gifts; he has told her about his master's son, of the wealth and honour of him who is sole heir of all his father's possessions; he tells her also that he has come to seek a Bride for him, and Rebekah at length discovers that *she* is the one whom he seeks. She is asked to be the Bride of Isaac. Does the thought cross her mind of her fitness? or is the question asked, "Does he wish me?" We are not told so; but, trembling, doubting one, the heavenly Bridegroom wants *thee*. Art thou willing to go? Wake up, O sinner, to see that it is *thee* he wants. Rebekah may think of the riches and honour that shall be hers as the Bride of Isaac; but great as they were, they pale before the glory that shall be yours when in association with Christ in heaven.

We read in verse 53, that "the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah," thus fitting her with the bridal raiment suited to the high station about to be hers. Reader, do you want that which will fit you to be the Bride of the Lamb? It is all ready for you, offered to you, as Rebekah's was to her. Will you accept, as she did, "jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment"? How rich and how rare are these jewels! Let us look at them separately.

The jewel of silver is the first in order; and as we gaze on its beauty we see engraven upon it, in sparkling letters, REDEMPTION. Gold is the symbol of DIVINE RIGHTEOUSNESS, while RAIMENT tells of a suited covering. Thus you see the believer has three things: 1st, Redemption; 2nd, Righteousness; 3rd, Raiment; and they are all free gifts; you have not to purchase them; you are not to work for them. Eliezer *gave* to Rebekah, and she *received*.

The meaning of the jewels of SILVER we learn in Ex. 30: 12-16, where we read of silver in connection with making atonement, or giving a ransom for the soul, *i.e.*, Redemption. "When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a *ransom* for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary [a shekel is twenty gerahs]: a half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD. Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the LORD. The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the LORD, *to make an atonement* for your souls. And thou shalt take the *atonement money* of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD *to make an atonement for your souls*."

In Exodus we have the first mention of redemption, and in Revelation we have the last. It is found all through Scripture, till it culminates in that magnificent song of heaven: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and *hast redeemed us* to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Rev. 5: 9). The blood of Jesus is the believer's redemption money — that, dear reader, is the jewel of silver He offers *thee*. Wilt thou accept it? Thou must either be redeemed or be eternally lost; and as it was of old, so is it now: "The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less." The same for the rich, the same for the poor, every one must have the same Saviour, the same salvation

through His sacrificial death, the same redemption price, and that is Christ. Christ from first to last, we owe all to Him. He alone is our Redeemer, our precious jewel of Silver.

On turning to Ex. 38: 25-27, we read: "And the silver of them that were numbered of the congregation was an hundred talents. . . . And of the hundred talents of silver were cast the sockets of the sanctuary, and the sockets of the veil; a hundred sockets of the hundred talents, a talent for a socket." The boards of the tabernacle (type of the believer) rested on the sockets of silver, or, in other words, had a foundation on redemption, and figuratively teach us that every thing rests on atonement. Precious indeed in the sight of God is this fair Jewel of Silver; and shall we fail to value the heavenly gift?

How often is redemption brought before us in Scripture! Let us look at a few passages in the New Testament: and first in that epistle which gives the foundations of man's relationship to God after he has sinned. I allude to Rom. 3: 23-25, where the Holy Ghost says, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through *the redemption* that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation *through faith in his blood.*" Man's sin is met by God's grace, which provides a Redeemer, and a redemption based on the shed blood of that Redeemer. The sinner has only to believe in Jesus in order to enjoy present and eternal redemption from the consequences of sin that God must judge.

After man's sin, and before God's judgment of him and it, at the great white throne, Christ steps in, bears sin, and is made sin on the cross; sustains God's judgment in respect thereof, fully satisfies all the claims of God's righteous throne, makes propitiation, or atonement, and effects redemption for every poor sin-stained soul that trusts in Him. Mark, redemption and purchase are not the same. If I buy a slave, the slave is mine, and is still a slave. If I *redeem* a slave I take him out of the condition in which he was a slave, and the moment I redeem him, he is a slave no longer, but a free man through the redemption which I have effected — perhaps at a great cost to myself — but which he now rejoices in. Mere *purchase* would still leave his fetters on him, but *redemption* means their being for ever knocked off and the man set free.

Now this is exactly what the Gospel does: it delivers the sinner who believes from the righteous judgment of God — Christ having borne it — and from the present power of Satan — Christ having overcome him. What a blessed Redeemer! and what a redemption! Who would not have Him and it when both are to be gotten by faith?

Again: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and *redemption*" (1 Cor. 1: 30). How plainly it is stated here that Christ is made our redemption; but do you believe it? Are you willing to be redeemed?

Again: "Christ *hath redeemed* us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3: 13). What more could He do for us? He has redeemed us "once for all." Once is sufficient, for that *once* has satisfied the righteous claims of God.

We are redeemed by the blood of Christ, but, oh remember, divine judgment will inevitably overtake you if you are not sheltered by that precious blood. To be without the blood

will be as certain judgment to you as it was to the Egyptians on the night of the Passover in Egypt: but yours will be eternal judgment.

Have you ever thought of the extent of the meaning of *Redemption*, and how it affects you? What does it mean? It means that you may be set free from the judgment due to you on account of sins. "The wages of sin is death." Oh, sinner, will you not flee to the refuge from the wrath to come?

Then, in Eph. 1: 7 we read, "In whom we have *redemption* through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." Here we have not only the redemption in the Beloved, but we have the forgiveness of sins, and it is according to the *riches of His grace*.

Again, as it were, does the heavenly Bridegroom open the casket and anew offer to you this precious jewel of silver. Do not undervalue it, it may not again be offered; do not refuse it, lest to the pangs of hell be added the bitter remorse, that redemption from its flames and torment had once been offered you, but you refused to be redeemed.

Again, in Col. 1: 14 we read, "In whom we have *redemption* through his blood;" and in Titus 2: 14, "Who gave himself for us, that he might *redeem* us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works." What did He give? He *gave Himself; to* redeem whom? All who will receive this silver jewel of redemption. Christ Himself is the half shekel of the sanctuary; yea, He is the sanctuary itself where all may find rest and salvation.

In Hebrews 9: 12, we have it spoken of as an *eternal* redemption. "But Christ being come . . . neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood, he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained ETERNAL REDEMPTION for us.

The Spirit of God also speaks of it as a present, known, precious, and *perfect* redemption; Christ was perfect, therefore His work was perfect. "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not *redeemed* with corruptible things as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot,' (1 Peter 1: 18). You see it is no mere hope of redemption that is offered to you, it is a blessed certainty, "*ye know*." Mark it well, beloved fellow-believer: "*Ye know*" it, for the precious blood of the Son of God *has* been given to redeem you.

If you simply believe in Jesus, you are entitled to swell that song of heaven which rises to the ascended Lamb of God. "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and *hast redeemed us* to God by thy blood" (Rev. 5: 9).

What a note! "Redeemed *to* God!" If you believe in Jesus you are not only redeemed from judgment and the lake of fire for ever, but "*redeemed to God*" NOW. I have not reached heaven yet, but I have reached God, every simple believer in Jesus can truly say. It was to effect this He died. "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might *bring us to* God" (1 Peter 3: 18).

Dear reader, do you believe these blessed truths of God? Let me urge you not to despise them. Your own eternal ruin — spirit, soul, and body, will be the sure result if you do. As the servant "gave" the "jewels of silver" to Rebekah, so do I bring to you the tidings of God's gift to the world — His Son, a Redeemer, a Saviour. Oh, be entreated to accept this blessed Saviour now, and enjoy "redemption" as a present portion. The slave cannot redeem himself, nor can you. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him" (Ps. 49: 7). If you cannot do it for your brother, much less can you for yourself. You must let another do it for you. The only One who could do it is Jesus. His work of redemption is finished. "He *gave himself* a ransom for all." See the cost of our redemption. Himself! Can you refuse any longer to trust Him? Nay; trust Him simply; receive Him as your Redeemer — as your redemption — and then go on your way, not ashamed to wear the priceless and sparkling "jewel of silver" sovereign Grace has given you, always singing -

"My Redeemer! Oh, what beauties

In that lovely name appear;

None but Jesus, in His glories,

Shall the honoured title wear.

My Redeemer,

Thou hast my salvation wrought."

Chapter 3.

THE BRIDE'S "JEWELS OF GOLD."

"And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and *jewels of gold*, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah." — Gen. 24: 53.

When the servant comes to call Rebekah, he brings out the things that fit her for the sphere to which she is called. We have seen the value of the "jewels of silver," viz., *redemption*; now let us look at the "jewels of gold."

Gold, in Scripture, is used as a symbol of *Divine righteousness*. As such, it occurs in many of the types of the Old Testament, specially in the articles in the Tabernacle and Temple, which are symbolic of God's righteousness in government and judgment.

Take, for example, the Ark of the Covenant. "And they shall make an ark of shittim wood; two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof, and a cubit and a half the height thereof. And thou shalt overlay it with *pure gold*; within and with. out

shalt thou overlay it, and shalt make upon it a crown of gold round about. . . . And thou shalt put into the ark the testimony which I shall give thee" Ex. 25: 10, 11, 16).

Now the Ark of the Covenant was the throne where God manifested Himself in righteousness, if any could. In righteousness, draw near to Him. God, who was to be approached, is holy — infinitely so; and holiness is a nature which delights in purity and repels evil; hence He sits on a throne, which judges in righteousness and with authority the evil that holiness abhors. Further, the law — the testimony of what God required of man — was in the ark, but thank God it was covered by the mercy-seat. Another has well said, "Suppose an ark with no mercy-seat. The law would then be uncovered; there would be nothing to hush its thunderings, nothing to arrest the execution of its righteous sentence. Could a nation of transgressors stand before it? Could a holy and righteous God meet sinners there? Could mercy reign, or grace shine forth from such an ark? Impossible! An uncovered ark might furnish a throne of judgment, but not a seat of mercy."

But God knew this better than we, and hence we read: "And thou shalt make a mercy-seat of pure *gold*: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy-seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end; even of the mercy-seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof, and the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy-seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; *toward* the mercy-seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark, and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee" Ex. 25: 17-22).

With the cherubim looking down on it, the mercy-seat thus formed the basis of the throne of God. Both were of gold — pure gold. Thus in the ark and its covering we seem to have a marvellous connection of human and Divine righteousness in the Lord Jesus. He was perfect in human obedience and love to His Father, and lived perfectly up to the responsibility of man according to God. But He also glorified God. All that God is was glorified by the Son of Man, and not only does the Son of Man go righteously into the glory of God, but by His going to the Father righteousness is proved; and we can go where He is, in virtue of Him and His work for us.

The shittim wood and the tables of the law are in the ark, but all is clothed with the gold — God's own righteousness.

The cherubim, who always in Scripture are connected with the judicial power of God, or are the executors of the will of that power, are of gold also, and the direction of their faces is important. *Inwards* towards the mercy-seat. Why? Because they could thus see that which the moral nature of God demanded should be on the mercy-seat, if man, a sinner, is to draw near to a holy God who hates and must judge sin. But what do they see on the mercy-seat? Blood. Yes, blood must be put upon the mercy-seat, as the witness of the work of atonement done for those who had failed in responsibility before God. The claims of His throne must and can only be met by blood — the sign of death having been undergone — and when the blood is sprinkled, the cherubim gaze upon it as expressive of the satisfaction of God in that which enables Him to permit the sinner to approach to Himself.

What a comfort to see thus that God's claims in righteousness are met by the blood of atonement, and we draw nigh to a mercy-seat sure of acceptance in righteousness!

We have the same truth taught by the use of gold in the New Testament. For example, turn to the book of judgment, which the Revelation most emphatically is. There the Apostle John says: "I saw . . . in the midst of the seven candle sticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and *girt about the paps with a GOLDEN GIRDLE.*" John had often seen Jesus, had often enjoyed sweet companionship with Him, had heard His life and peace-giving words, had lain his head on His loving bosom, knew Him well; but now when he sees Christ, he sees Him with a garment down to His feet, and he recognises Him not. The garment down to the feet shows priestly discriminating judgment, the golden girdle Divine righteousness as displayed in Christ where He now is.

He threatens with judgment those who have departed from Him. Priestly discrimination and judgment are here brought out. It is no longer grace meeting man's need, but judgment meeting him as he is.

That the "golden girdle" signifies Divine righteousness is clear from Isaiah 11: 5, where the Spirit of God, speaking of the judicial dealings of Christ in righteousness with the earth, which usher in the millennium, says, "And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins."

Again, the Lord says to the Church of Laodicea, "Because thou sayest, I am *rich . . . and knowest not that thou art . . . poor . . .* I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich" (Rev. 3: 17, 18). What a solemn call! And who is it to? To the professing Church, accounting itself rich without having Christ as the righteousness of the soul by faith.

Reader, are you a mere professor? or do you really possess Christ as your righteousness before God? If the former, you had better heed the call of Christ in glory to possess yourself of true and approved righteousness by buying it of Him. You must have to do with Him in order to get it.

Now in order to stand before God, man must have a righteousness suited to God. Do you think man has any righteousness? No; yet he must be righteous to stand before a righteous God. Man may say, "I will work it out, I will fit myself for the presence of God," but when he stands before God he finds he has no righteousness: "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags" (Isa. 64: 6). Ah, why does man not take God's word for truth, and seeing that he can have no righteousness of his own, accept what God has provided and so freely gives?

"There is none righteous, no, not one," is written against man once, yea, thrice, by God (Ps. 14; Ps. 53; Rom. 3). Spite of this, many serious souls drop into the snare laid by Satan, and, "being ignorant of God's righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom. 10: 3). Dear reader, are you one of this class? If so, may God use this paper to show you the utter folly of your course.

Now the essence of the Gospel is this, — that when man is utterly helpless and guilty, and can furnish no righteousness suited to God, so as to be able to stand before Him, then God comes out, and by the work of the Cross — the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus — confers on every one who believes in Jesus divine righteousness, which enables the soul to stand before God in unclouded peace. When man has no righteousness for God, then God has righteousness for man.

This is the burden of Romans 3, to which I would direct my reader. Should you think that in order to stand before God there must be *works* on your part, how does verse 20 dispel such an illusion: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the *knowledge* of sin" — not the blotting of it out. The law can recognise, detect, and measure the sin, and then can only condemn the sinner; so that it is clear the law can afford no help, and confer no righteousness. Whence, then, is it found, if not in man's own efforts to keep the law? The answer is plain. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, *unto all* and *upon all them that believe*: for there is no difference; for *all have sinned*, and come short of the glory of God" (verses 21-23). All have sinned, and come short of yielding what was due to God, and then, all being manifestly without righteousness, God manifests His righteousness *to all*, and confers it *upon all that believe* (not who *work*).

The *aspect* of this manifested righteousness is unto all, *i.e.* it is universal; its *application* is to all that *believe*. Here is a limit: "All them that *believe*." But why this limitation? Because "righteousness" is not by "works" now, but by *faith* on our side, even as it is of *grace* on God's part, as it is written: "Being justified freely by *his grace*, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation (or mercy-seat) through *faith* in his blood, to declare . . . at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Rom. 3: 24-26). The righteousness of God is declared to be this, that He is just in justifying the one who believes in Jesus. This is no new doctrine, for "Abraham *believed* God, and it (his faith) was counted to him for righteousness"; and at a later day, David also (Ps. 32) "describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness with. out works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Rom. 4: 3, 6, 7).

Now the point of all this is, that it is God's grace and not man's good behaviour which secures these blessings to the poor guilty one. Did you ever ponder these words of the Spirit of God, dear self-righteousness worker? "Now to him that *worketh* is the reward not reckoned of *grace* but of *debt*. But to him that *worketh not*, but *believeth* on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his *faith* is counted for *righteousness*" (Rom. 4: 4, 5). If I work for you at £ 1 per week, it is only right and fair you should pay when the work is done; this is *debt*; but if, when the work I should have done I fail to do, and then you come and give me £5, that would be *grace*. Just so does God act. Unable ourselves to do anything but sin, Christ has come in grace, and on the cross borne sins, and been made sin. The judgment due by God to sin has been sustained by Jesus, and He has glorified God about sin.

The proof of this is clear, for God "raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4: 24, 25). Then

what now is this justifying righteousness of God? Simply, WHAT IS DUE TO CHRIST. Our due, and the due of sin, Christ took and sustained on the cross. The judgment that was due to us fell on Him. The moment He bare "the sins of many" (Heb. 9: 28), God in righteousness forsook Him; hence His cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" What is the answer to this cry? God raises Him from the dead, and then in righteousness accepts and connects with Christ every one who has faith in Him.

To make it plain. Christ took *my place* in death and judgment on the cross, and now I get *Christ's place* before God, by faith in His blood. Is this right? Clearly so; it is due to Christ that if He took my portion to extricate me from it, I should share His portion, if, in grace, He be willing to share it with me. God, therefore, against whom I have sinned, is "just" in now justifying me, because Jesus has been delivered and condemned for my sin, and then raised by God in proof of His satisfaction and delight in Him and His work of redemption for me. I might go further, and say He would be unjust to Christ to condemn me for those very sins for which He condemned His Son. Nay, He is righteous, "faithful and just," as John puts it, and shows His righteousness by justifying every soul that clings in faith to His beloved Son. He judges sin, and justifies the sinner who believes in Jesus. Thus is God's righteousness declared.

How beautifully harmonious is every part of this wondrous way of possessing a righteousness suited to God, needed by man, provided by God, and possessed by the believer!

A threefold cord of righteousness now binds the believer to God, and the Scripture says, "A threefold cord is not quickly broken." The various strands of this golden cord of righteousness are: (1) *Grace*; (2) *Blood*; (3) *Faith*.

1. God's GRACE is the SOURCE of justification.

"*Being justified* freely by his *grace*, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3: 24).

2. Christ's BLOOD is the MEANS of justification.

"Much more then, *being now* (not hoping to be by-and-by) *justified* by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Rom. 5: 9).

3. The soul's FAITH is the PRINCIPLE of justification.

"Therefore *being justified by faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5: 1).

Now if these be the true sayings of God, where have you room for "works"? Nowhere, at least in Romans. Some one will say, What about James? Does he not say, "Ye see then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith *only*"? Yes, he says this, and it is most needed. But do not for a moment think that Paul and James clash. The truth is this. In Romans you are justified *before God* BY FAITH, and that only; in James you are justified *before men* BY

WORKS. God can see faith, men cannot, but they can see works. God must see both, and surely will see works when faith exists.

But there is more than this. Not only is the believer justified *from* all offences by faith in the Lord Jesus, but "they which receive abundance of grace and of the *gift of righteousness*, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5: 17). The "*gift of righteousness*" is to be "received," you notice - not earned, as many suppose. When received by faith, the possessor is assured he shall "reign in life." This sweetly accords with the expression, "justification of life," which flings a flood of light upon the present standing of the believer. "So then as it was by one offence toward all men to condemnation, so by one righteousness toward all men for *justification of life*. For as indeed by the disobedience of the one man the many have been constituted sinners; so also by the obedience of the one many will be constituted righteous" (Rom. 5: 18, 19, New Trans.). In verse 18 we have the *aspect* of Adam's path and Christ's, given us in contrast. Adam's involves "condemnation," Christ's "justification of life." In verse 19 you have the *effects*. Adam's disobedience constituted all his family "sinners." Christ's obedience unto death constitutes all who are His (and we are His by faith in His blood) righteous.

Then the moment I am linked with Christ by faith I see (1) that I am through His work justified from all the offences and sins of my old life as a child of Adam, and (2) that I am the possessor of a new life, called in Romans 6: 23, "eternal life," and that I have "justification of life," and hence shall "reign in life," being constituted "righteous" by God Himself, in virtue of my association with Him who died and rose again, and is now at God's right hand in glory.

We also read in 2 Cor. 5, "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

The truth therefore is, that Christ is the believer's righteousness before God: and the believer is also made the witness as well as the subject of God's righteousness, inasmuch as he is brought into the same place of nearness to God, in life and glory, as Christ Himself (viewed of course as the Man who died and rose again). The believer and Christ are viewed as one, and as Christ is the righteous One, all His are viewed as possessors of a righteousness in Him, which is suited to the glory of God where Christ now is. On the cross Christ identified Himself with us in our sin, shame, guilt, and death. By His atoning death all we had done and been was for ever swept away from before God. Rising from the dead, the head of a new family, He associates with Himself in life, standing, and place before God in glory, all who trust Him, and whom therefore He calls His "brethren."

In conclusion, I would only now ask you, beloved reader, have you yet accepted the "jewels of gold" the Gospel messenger brings to you? Have you yet received the "gift of righteousness"? If not, I would urge you to delay taking so important a gift no longer. Come to Jesus as you are. Receive Him, and in receiving Him you will receive all and far more than I have written of, for all that God can give you in blessing is wrapped up in the Person of Christ, and once you receive Him you receive all. May you be able to see what another saw and wrote, viz.:

"The risen Christ had ended

Righteousness of *law*:
God's righteousness was something
Quite distinct, I saw.
That MAN above — whose dying
Closed the things of old —
WAS HEAD OF GOD'S CREATION,
Channel of the *gold*.
"That MAN was in the glory,
I in Him up there.
Before His God and Father,
I was *thus* brought near.
The Place I found was opened,
Where was wealth untold —
The MAN beginning all things,
In Himself the *gold*.
"I once was lost, a sinner
Under Satan sold,
And now I'm lost in glory,
In the source of *gold*.
'Tis when God's Christ in glory
We at last behold,
We learn, as with Rebekah,
He begins with GOLD."

Chapter 4.

THE BRIDE'S "RAIMENT."

"And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah." - Gen. 24: 53.

We have looked at the "jewels of silver" and "jewels of gold"; now, I would desire to direct your attention to the "raiment." But let me first say it is of no use hearing the Gospel unless it produces an effect upon you, unless it shows you what you are, and what God is, and what He has done for you. Unless it turns you to the Lord for salvation, the effect of your hearing the Gospel is but to add the weight of heavy responsibility to your already sin-burdened soul.

God is calling you in this hour of His grace to association with Christ in glory; He is offering you a place with Christ. Christ could not have a place down here because of the sin and wickedness of man, so God gives us a place with Christ in glory. He offers you a part or portion with Christ. Eliezer travelled from Canaan to Padan-Aram for a bride for Isaac; Christ is in glory, and the Holy Ghost came down from heaven at Pentecost, and from that time till now His constant effort has been, and is, to lead souls to yield themselves to Christ. There ever have been, and will be, hindrances and difficulties in the way; for Satan is ever busy in trying to keep you out of the blessings God has for you — the great blessing of being "one with Christ." But what breaks down all opposition of Satan and the human heart is that God wants to bless you. Do you believe that God really wants, and is waiting to bless you?

Reader, do you possess that which fits you and gives you a true title to be in the presence of God? Have you the bright hope before you of this glory with Christ? Before you can stand in His presence you must have on suited raiment; the courtly Robe of Heaven must be yours — and that is Christ. God has provided it for you, and I, as the ambassador of God, now offer you in His Name

CHRIST, THE RAIMENT.

Oh, sinners, and all ye workers *for* salvation, better far barter your own self-made clothing, which is useless before God, and accept what He in His grace and mercy has provided for you; provided for you without money and without price. Your own raiment — in the way, I mean, of good works, almsgiving, or morality — may do well enough to clothe you in the sight of your fellow-sinners; but they are no covering in the sight of a God who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; and, sinner, you must be clad suitably for God or be eternally lost.

There is a great difference between working *for* salvation and working *from* salvation; the first is your own futile attempts to clothe yourself; the latter is working because God has already clothed you and made you fit for His service.

The first covering or raiment we read of in Scripture is the fig-leaf "aprons" of Adam and Eve; and what avail were they when the guilty ones heard the voice of God, saying, "Where art thou?" They knew they were naked, and they tried to hide themselves from God. The miserable knowledge obtained by their sin had but taught them they were now unfit for the presence of God. You, whose life has been one long pathway of sin — sins of so deep a dye that you blush at their remembrance — mark, it was *one sin* only that made Adam unfit to stand before God. One sin drove the guilty ones from the Garden of Eden; one sin brought death into the world: what then about your numberless sins?

Can you brave the presence of a sin-hating God in nothing but your nakedness and burden of guilt? Adam and Eve hid themselves, for they could not stand in His presence in their nakedness. But oh, the love of God's heart! No sooner was clothing needed than He in mercy and love provided it. "Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them" (Gen. 3: 21). How different is their clothing now! Instead of an "apron" in which God has not put one stitch — the whole thing being paltry human effort — each is arrayed in a "coat" in which man has not put one stitch, for the Lord God made and conferred the suited garment. What grace! and what a lesson to workers for salvation now! And, sinner, Adam's need was not greater then, than yours is at this present moment; and God is as willing now to clothe you as He was to clothe Adam and Eve.

But do you *know* your need? Oh, what can cover the nakedness of your guilty sin-stained soul? I do not address you as a *poor* sinner, but as a guilty sinner in need of clothing in order to fit you to stand before a sin-hating God. Doing your best will not do: it but discloses the sense of your guilt and need by arraying yourself in what you think will suit God; but it will not do. Your own clothing is filthy rags in the sight of God: you are but trying to hide behind your works, as Adam tried to hide himself from God behind the trees of the garden. But you, like he, shall be drawn from your hiding-place and obliged to own yourself to be naked and undone before God; obliged to own your own clothing to be valueless.

The Apostle Paul's wonderful comment on this is found in 2 Cor. 5: 1-3: "For we know, that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven (if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked)."

This last clause is very solemn. The Apostle had fears that some in Corinth might be found like Adam — *naked* — when they were clothed, i.e., when in resurrection. Though resurrection should bring soul and body together again, so that he called the person clothed, nevertheless he fears they may be found *naked* — in other words, Christless — not having that covering for the whole man which fits it for the presence of God. How awful to be a mere professor of Christ here — to have on a lovely garb of morality, so-called good works, and religiousness, so as to pass current as one of Christ's people; to die, that is to be unclothed; to rise again, alas, not in the first but the second resurrection, that is, to be clothed, and then find yourself in the holy blaze of the great white throne a *naked sinner*, never having been washed from your sins in the blood of Christ, nor had Him as your clothing before God!

Reader, are you clothed? have you Christ as your raiment? or do you think you will be accepted as you are?

Look at Matt. 22: 11: "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment. And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to his servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." We have here a warning, as well as the truth of the end of this dispensation, for it is the guests here, not the bride; but the warning is for all who have not on raiment. "How camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment?" The King gave him an opportunity of telling the reason why he had no wedding garment on; but what is the result? what the consequence of this meeting between the King and his guest? The man was *speechless*. How earnest thou in thus? Was there no provision made for the guests? Was there no raiment for thee? Yes, there was the robing-chamber, and there were garments provided, as is the custom in the East, but the man neglected the provision made, and the result was the command, "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into outer darkness." Oh, soul, will you be warned ere it be too late? God would fit you for His presence; Christ is the garment, the royal raiment He has provided for you; therefore, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ."

The man here described did not want a robe; he may have been one of the "good" mentioned in verse 10; his life may have been a blameless one; he may have been a dutiful son, or a kind husband and father, a useful member of society, one of whom his country was proud; then what need had he of a robe? The King would surely acknowledge him as he was; his deeds were sufficient to recommend him to his Sovereign, and so he passes in; but what is it to find? Ah, what indeed? His unworthiness; and that there is nothing left to be done but to bind him and cast him forth.

Professor of Christianity, have you been converted? Have you on the garment that fits you to stand before God? If you were to die this night, would you be naked in the presence of God? I beseech you to ask yourself the solemn question, and to rest not till you have truthfully answered it: Have I been born again? have I fled to Jesus? have I found Him? have I Him as my covering, my raiment? Can you say, *Yes*? If not, oh, precious soul, beware; be warned: thou hast detailed before thee in these verses an event in thine own history, the moment when before God thou must stand, and find the clothing of morality to be of no avail. You find you are not in Christ, therefore you are still in your sins; you hear the question asked you, "Friend, how camest thou in hither?" and thou, *thou* shalt be speechless. Oh, what a moment when thou discoverest the true state of thy precious but *eternally lost* soul. No excuse hast thou to offer; thou shalt be speechless. No extenuation can be offered by thee. It is too late; thou standest before the King, then forced to be a judge, and the awful silence is broken by the command, "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Oh, be warned! What is God's command now? It is "*Clothe him*;" clothe him with the raiment I have provided for his need; but if you reject His provision, then it will be "*Bind him*." What a contrast! Clothe him with Christ, put upon him the "best robe;" and "Bind him" with the cords of his sin, and "cast him into outer darkness."

Oh, ye unsaved souls, wake up to the reality of your perilous position! Why does the Spirit so often warn you? Why does He so often bring your own case, as it were, before you? Why? why? Is it not because God always warns before He judges? Is it not that He gives the unsaved soul often the opportunity of escape, though, alas,, he heeds it not? Yes, He is a God of mercy now, though one day He will be a God of judgment to those who scorn and reject His proffered mercy. God warns, but man goes on, and on, and heeds, it not. We have but to look around us in order to see the truth of this.

What are those agonised accents from yonder bed of death? It is an unsaved soul finding out with his latest breath that he has scorned the offer of salvation, that he has left unheeded all the warnings of a gracious God, till it is *too late!*

Oh, what must it be to be swept into eternity without one ray of hope! Care ye to die thus?

Come to Jesus. "Come, for all things are now ready." The silver is for thee, the gold for thee, the raiment for thee. "Put ye on Christ." Eliezer brought raiment to Rebekah and she received the gift — I bring you Christ, will you receive Him?

In Luke 15 we again find mention of raiment: "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him." Had it been left to man to choose the raiment, he might have been content to robe himself with the garments that holy angels wear; but God gives more befitting raiment to the Bride of the spotless Lamb of God. She shall be arrayed in the best — the glorious robe of the "King of kings."

You know the beautiful story of the prodigal son here given; but have you observed, it was not till "he began to be in want," that he thought of his father's home, and the joy and abundance there. Want is the discovery the soul makes when in the far country, away from the Father's house. But the last thing man does is to turn to God for help; he will try all other expedients first, ere he goes to the only Source of help and succour.

The prodigal, like too many in the present day, goes and joins himself to a citizen of that country. And who is that citizen? Satan! And oh how successful he is in providing for the wants, the lusts, of sinners! He does his utmost to keep you away from the Father's house of plenty; and how often he is successful, too! He gilds over the husks to make them fair to the eye; but when the sinner eats of them he finds out they are bitter to the taste, they are unsatisfying, they are but husks; and yet such is the morbidness of his appetite, he fain would fill his belly with them.

The prodigal is brought to a sense of his need before he says, "I will arise and go to my father." Ah, he has found out that he is helpless and in need of food and raiment, and he comes just as he is; in his rags and poverty he comes, and is he refused? *No! He is first welcomed, and then clad.*

Many try to clothe themselves before they go to God; they have found out their need of God, but they think that before going to Him they must better themselves; but man must come just as he is, and be beholden to God for all. Come as you are; it is thus God delights to receive you.

"I have sinned," said the prodigal. Have you known the moment when you found that you have sinned, found that you were undone, and lost, and naked; when you have gone down before God with the words, "Father, I have sinned"? I call this the grandest moment of a sinner's experience on earth, when he gets before God, and finds out — *what?* That the One whom he has offended and sinned against, and whom he thought was against him, is *for* him, is waiting in grace to receive him, is on his side.

"*I have sinned.*" It must be individual confession; it will not do to rest satisfied with, "We have sinned." No; you must get alone with God, and forgetting all else in the deep penitence of your soul, own to Him, "I have sinned." Sooner or later the awakened soul passes through this searching conscience-work, this conviction of sin, ere it is clothed and is at peace. This precedes the clothing in the case of the prodigal before us.

"I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called thy son." Ah, this is the man God clothes. I urge you to consider your own individual case; it is of paramount importance, this humbling yourself before God. The ploughshare of conviction must go deep down in the soil — the deeper the furrow the surer is the seed to be safe, and the brighter the prospect of a harvest of golden grain. What is the result of the prodigal's confession? It is the command to "Bring forth the best robe and put it on him." Oh, what love! "Bring forth the best robe." Prodigal, will you have Christ? He is the Best Robe. "Put it on him." He was not even asked to put it on himself, it was put on him; all was done for him, he did nothing but receive his father's gift of love. And your case is the same: God has done all; He provides the raiment, and, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." The first Adam, who was unfit for the presence of God, has ended his history in the death of Christ, and in the second Adam the believer is gloriously complete.

The claims of God have all been met, and after the darkness of Calvary, the bright rainbow of God's acceptance shines forth to man; the Corn of Wheat fell into the ground so that in resurrection He might be enabled to say, "I go to my Father, and to your Father." What blessedness it is to be "found in Christ!" "accepted in the Beloved!" Again, I say unto you, "Put ye on Christ;" stand in that which God gives you, and have peace; throw away the fig-leaves, and God will clothe you with Christ. Precious raiment! Sinner, come to God as thou art, and hear Him say to thee, "Take away the filthy garments from him . . . Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment" (Zech. 3: 4).

It has been said there are two steps to be taken, "Out of self into Christ, and out of Christ into glory;" but it seems to me there is but one step needed. Will you take it? It is, "Out of self into Christ," to abide there for ever in all the fulness of His perfection.

What a place! To stand before God "accepted in the Beloved," the One who is the joy of God's heart! What have you done to merit this? *Nothing*; but Christ has done all. "That ye have *put off*, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts . . . and that ye have *put on* the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. 4: 22-24), is the truth of the new position in Christ. "Put off" and "Put on." It is the blessed substitution of Christ for self, the result of that work when "He who knew no sin was made sin for us."

If you are wise you will not slight, but gladly receive, the instruction of the Lord Jesus, who says, "I counsel thee to buy of me . . . white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear" (Rev. 3: 18).

See how He wants to clothe you with that which alone can make you suitable to God. "White raiment!" How different from the repulsive "filthy rags" of "our righteousnesses." You would not admit one clothed in "filthy rags" to your house and table, and will God? No. Then away with all that springs from or savours of self, and array yourself in all the perfection of Christ, and His work for sinners.

The Raiment, then, that is offered to you, is Christ, and having Him you have redemption, and righteousness, and peace. Christ is all, and I have that which fits me to be His Bride when I possess the jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and the raiment. It is Christ, Christ, Christ — all Christ; Christ from first to last, Christ for time, and Christ for eternity; "For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

Once again I ask, "Wilt thou go?" — go across the desert to Him? Oh, the joy of knowing that God has forgotten my sins, and given me liberty to forget myself, and let my thoughts be all given to, my glorious Bridegroom! "Wilt thou go?" Would that I could hear you say, "I will go." God can hear you say it wherever you are. Oh give Him the joy of listening to thy whispered "*I will go.*"

Decide for Christ; you have heard all about Him who is the silver, and the gold, and the raiment. He has been offered to you freely, and shown to be the only way you can be acceptable to God, and fitted to be the Bride of Jesus. Will you accept the gifts? Will you have Christ?

"Wilt thou go?" is God's challenge to your heart. Can you refuse? Will you not come to Jesus?

God presents Christ to you now as an object of faith. Rebekah did not see Isaac until the journey across the desert was accomplished, but he came to meet her when the desert sand was left behind; he came to meet her when she had reached the green fields of Canaan.

"I shall see Him in His beauty,

He Himself His Bride will meet;

I shall be with Him for ever,

In companionship complete."

Oh, Christless soul, can you risk spending a joyless, hopeless, loveless eternity, without Jesus? I charge you by the joys of heaven, to which God invites you, and by the horrors of hell, of which He warns you, "Be ye reconciled to God" — "Put on Christ."

You have but to decide, and honestly say from your heart, "I will go," and He will receive you and welcome you and fill your heart with joy and love. Oh, come to Jesus! Accept the gifts offered to you in God's well-beloved Son; accept the silver, the gold, and the raiment, and know that thou art fit to be the Bride of that Son, "to whom the Father hath given all things." Let yours be the joyful words: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God: for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her *jewels*" (Isa. 61: 10).

Chapter 5

THE BRIDE'S DECISION.

"And the servant brought forth jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah: he gave also to her brother and to her mother precious things. And they did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night; and they rose up in the morning, and he said, Send me away unto my master. And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten, after that she shall go. And he said unto them. Hinder me not, seeing the Lord hath prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master. And they said, We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth. And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go. And they sent away Rebekah their sister, and her nurse, and Abraham's servant, and his men. And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them. And Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they rode upon the camels, and followed the man: and the servant took Rebekah, and went his way. And Isaac came from the way of the well Lahai-roi; for he dwelt in the south country. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and, behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant. What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a veil, and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all things that he had done. And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." — Gen. 24: 53-67.

We have, in previous pages, been looking at this chapter, and seeing how simply and sweetly the Gospel is therein foreshadowed and illustrated; and now, in referring to it once more, I avow, most distinctly, my object is not to unfold the Gospel in its doctrinal view, but to get your soul, my reader, if possible, brought to a distinct point before Christ.

The Lord help me to pen, and you to peruse, this paper as if indeed it were the last occasion on which I could appeal to you, or you have the opportunity of receiving Christ.

I find, then, here one question: the person most interested gets one simple question put to her, to which she must make, on her own responsibility, one answer — Yes or No.

The narrative is very simple, the type equally beautiful, the application heart-winning. The Father of the Lord Jesus Christ offers to give you eternal glory in association with His Son. Consequent upon the death, resurrection and ascension of His Son — which are the proofs of God's love on the one hand, in giving that Son to die, and His righteousness on the other, in raising and glorifying Him as man, in token of His delight and satisfaction in the work He has accomplished for sinners — there has come from heaven a divine messenger, the herald of a divine message, and it falls now on your ear. It is this: God wants to have you for His Son, He does not come and press upon you that you want His Son; that possibly may not be the case consciously, for many do not care to have Christ, as they are not aware of their lost and needy condition as sinners. When people really want anything they cast about till they get it, but if they are indifferent they are passive.

It is perfectly true you want a Saviour; but salvation is not the thought here. God here proposes to you to share the glories of His beloved Son. Do you not see to what glories and dignities you are invited? Instead of being left to die in your sins, and then pass unpardoned and unblessed into outer darkness, to be the miserable companion of the devil and his angels (Matt. 25: 41), God wants you to enter into relationship with Christ now, by faith in His name, and then be the sharer of His joys through the endless cycles of eternity's blissful day.

This is the message Eliezer brings. He comes from Canaan, where Isaac abides. The father sends his servant to the far-off land to get one, if *he* could, to cross the desert to be the Bride to the unseen and unknown Bridegroom. Three things are necessary if you are going to be a sharer of the glory of Christ — redemption, righteousness, and raiment; but "jewels of silver," "jewels of gold," and "raiment," the very articles which typify these three things, the servant brings out and offers to Rebekah. Silver is the type of redemption: the only way the soul can draw near to God is on the ground of redemption. I need righteousness, and gold is the symbol of Divine righteousness. "Raiment" speaks for itself, and these three things I must have.

Christ is your raiment, if you will have Him as such, and all else.

I address you as a messenger from God. "Bold ground," you say. Yes, but no more bold than blessed. In the name of my Master I come, and want to win you for Christ. I want to win you for Christ as you read this paper. O unsaved man, unsaved woman! my message is this — I want you I want you for Christ. God wants you for Christ.

"Oh, but I am such a sinner!" True, that is. quite true. "I cannot, is I am, draw near to God." False. The veil is rent, the blood is shed and sprinkled before God, the new and living way exists, and you are bidden to come to God just as you are.

Nevertheless, mark, Eliezer does not say, "Wilt thou go?" before he gives Rebekah the jewels and the raiment. If it be the question of what will fit me for the Father's house, could anything be better than what He sends? The Gospel tells you that Christ came into the world, and it tells you, too, what He has done. The law tells me what I ought to do, and smites me because I have not done it. Law tells me of myself; the Gospel tells me what Christ is, and what He has done.

Are you going to have Christ? You have often heard about. Jesus, but are you on your way to Him? I want this to be the moment of your betrothal.

What I want now is *decision*. Redemption is accomplished, the blood has been shed, and the claims of God have all been met by the cross. That which the sinner needs has been wrought out for him by Jesus; and now it is for you to accept the Gospel message, for you in the truthful integrity of your soul to say, "Come what may, I am going to be Christ's." You may have some time to wait ere you see the Lord Jesus face to face; the desert may be long in crossing, but one sight of Him will more than make up for all the toil or trouble of the way.

Rebekah hears the message one day and starts the next. Many have put off coming to Christ for ten days and have spent them in hell. I beseech you to come now to Jesus.

Notice here how that arch-enemy of present blessing — procrastination — appears.

The servant "rose" and said, "Send me away unto my master." Her relations reply, "Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go." They want the moment of decision deferred, and you want that too, don't you? "Some day," you say, "but not just now." You want to defer it. This is the plausible voice of the devil. If you are not turned to the Lord, your back is towards Him; you are still in your sins, and they will bring you to judgment. Ten days are most insidious. Felix was a man of *ten* days. "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Ah, poor Felix, when will his convenient season come? He never had a more convenient season. Oh, turn now to Jesus! Oh, ye halters, who are not yet decided for Christ, take Felix as a warning!

Perhaps you think you will turn to the Lord when you reach your deathbed. Delusive hope, for you may never have one. I heard lately of a procrastinator whose constant reply to earnest Christian friends, when they spoke to him of his soul's salvation, and urged him to come to Christ, "I am sure that God is so merciful, that if I turn to Him, even on a deathbed, He will hear my prayer and save me, so I shall wait till then." Though repeatedly warned, this was his refuge, and so on he went, till he came, not to his deathbed, but, as was his wont, into the hunting field. While the hounds were in full cry after the quarry, his horse leaped a hedge, on the further side of which were lying some sheep. Disturbed and frightened by the sudden apparition of the horse, the timid creatures fled in all directions. Their scampering off alarmed the usually sure-footed steed, who fell, flinging his rider. Three words burst from the lips of the falling man — not "God have mercy!" but, addressing the sheep, "Devil take ye!" They were his last words, for he broke his neck and died on the spot. Reader, be sure of it, procrastination is the thief of souls, as well as of time, and I quite agree with Rowland Hill, who termed it "The recruiting-officer of hell."

God may never give you the opportunity of repentance on a deathbed. Now is the only time you can be sure of finding Christ.

Sinner, I warn you, these are facts, stern facts, "But what do you want me to do?" you may reply. I want you to yield yourself to Christ just now. I want you to make sure of eternity, and not put off, even until tomorrow (which never comes), the momentous matter of getting really hold of the salvation of God.

Ye young ones, I appeal to you. It is vain to say "Let me die the death of the righteous." If you are going to die the death of the righteous you must live the life of the righteous. It is vain to suppose you can get Christ when you like: you must get Him when you may, and that is just now.

"And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at the least ten; after that she shall go" (ver. 55). Such was the procrastinating speech of that day, and how solemnly is it echoed by many a soul nowadays — Do you say, "I will decide for Christ in a few days at the least: at most, ten? Ten days hence! Oh, no! It must be now if you want to be with Christ in glory; if you want to be with that rapturous throng around the Saviour; if you want to join the chorus, "Worthy is the Lamb."

What does God say? *Now*. Jesus will have you *now*. I earnestly implore you not to delay. I lay no claim to being a prophet when I say you may never have another Gospel message and another day of grace in which to be saved. Really, my dear reader, you can have no idea of the joy of being Christ's or you would not delay a single hour in turning to Him, receiving the pardon of your sins, the salvation of your soul, and the sweet heart-thrilling assurance that He is yours and you are His. Do you know that Jesus loves you and wants you, wants to claim you as His? "Jesus . . . having loved his own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." Oh, to be His own loved one — His *very own!* Nothing changes that love of His. Jesus wants to have you numbered among His own, His *very own*.

Will you yield? Let not Satan deceive you with *a few days hence, ten days*. *Now* is the time.

Well, what is the servant's answer to be — "Send me away, for I have failed?" Oh, say, must I go and tell my Lord I have failed — failed to win your heart for Him? Shall it be so? Oh no, no; give me the joy of saying to my Lord, "This heart is Thine."

What was Rebekah's answer when her relations said to her, "Wilt thou go with this man?" She said, "*I will go*." No one else can decide for you. You have a soul, its eternal welfare depends on your answer. You have a soul to be saved or lost. Oh, will you let any one, anything, come in between the Lord and your soul? Decide, decide now.

Jesus wants you, Jesus is waiting for you. Oh, let nothing hinder you from coming to Him. "We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth," was the word then; it is you that are concerned now. Wilt thou go? dear soul, Wilt thou go? Oh, say, "I will go!" — Yes, have Christ, be Christ's! Shall He be thine? What say you? "Wilt thou go?" The Holy Ghost puts the question to you, it is not my question. God's question is, "Wilt thou go?" Wilt thou go to meet Christ and be His? Give me thine answer; oh, let there be no more delays. How can you tell you will have time to decide tomorrow? Tomorrow is God's, not yours. "Today, if ye will bear his voice, harden not your hearts." Let there be no more procrastination. God lingers over you; again and again He lets you hear these words, "Wilt thou go?" "Wilt thou go?" "I will go," says faith, "I will go," says the decided heart, "I will go," says the earnest one.

"I will go;" this is the calm, quiet resolution of the soul that wakes up to see the glory that is offered, and the grace that offers it.

What is the absolute alternative if Christ is not received? The dreary darkness of an eternal night, in which the only light is that shed by the lurid flame that is never quenched, the only companions sinners and devils as wretched as yourself, and the only occupation vain regrets over the folly and unbelief that have landed you in a spot beyond the reach of the hand of God Himself.

All depends on yielding yourself, or not, to Jesus. If the language of your soul is "I will go," you will thank God for all eternity.

Would you like all to be saved but yourself? Would you like all to be included and you excluded from that blessed number who surround the Lord Jesus in unfading glory? Surely not. Then halt no longer, but give a decided answer to the query which again I put — nay, which God in His sovereign grace once more puts to thee.

Soul, "wilt thou go?" Thou canst hardly say no, when to remain is to be eternally lost. What is thine answer? "Ten days hence." Beware, the clemency of God will not last for ever. Ten days hence and the door of heaven may be closed for ever against thee, and in vain shall thy piteous cry be, "Open unto me." But, thank God, there is yet another answer thou canst give, "I will go." Let it be thine.

Rebekah had never seen Isaac when she decided to go to him, but she believed the report that Eliezer gave. And think you not that as they journeyed across the desert many a question was asked concerning the one to whom she was going? And would not her heart grow warmer and warmer towards him as she heard his praise? And shall it not be so with you? The Holy Ghost, we are told, "Will take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto you." Oh, listen to Him, let no trumpet-sound of earth deaden His voice. He would tell you of God's well-beloved Son. Oh, learn of Him, of all His gentleness, love, and grace, and of His glory, too; and as each beauty bursts upon your admiring gaze, know that He may be thine, and if thine, then shall the jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and the raiment become more precious to thee because they are His gifts.

Did Rebekah stop the camels to pick up the agates of the desert? I trow not; and wilt thou linger by the way to gather the withering pleasures of a death-doomed world?

Oh, no! Haste thee on to the joy, the satisfying and endless joy that is to be possessed only at thine Isaac's side. Be unfettered, be but a sojourner and pilgrim here; heaven is thy home, speed thee on to it. And what shall the meeting be when thou shalt see Him face to face? Wonderful as was the story you listened to by the way, yet your astonished soul in wonder shall exclaim, "The half had not been told."

There are three things the Lord has done for us. He loved us, He gave Himself for us, and He has washed us from our sins. Why has He done these? "That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and

without blemish." What a glorious Bride shall the Church be in that day when "the marriage of the Lamb has come!"

Rebekah, goes, she commits herself to the guardianship of Eliezer, and at eventide she sees Isaac coming; and what is that but a simple type of the meeting with our Lord? Isaac was comforted when he received his Bride; and have we not read of Jesus, "Who for the joy . . . set before him endured the cross, despising the shame"? His joy will be full when He has 'His Bride in glory with Him. And is that blessed hour near? The last step of the journey may be indeed most near; this night it may be that "He that shall come will come." He is coming. Three times in Rev. 22 He says, "I come quickly." Are you ready? "Wilt thou go?" "I will go," is the only answer suited to such a call of grace. And now, in conclusion, I would say, Let all know you are Christ's. Confess Christ. Own Him.

"The Father, from eternity,
Chose us, O Jesus Christ, in Thee,
In Thee, His well-beloved;
And we, as given to Thee — Thy Bride
In Thee, Lord Jesus, do confide:
Thy love remains unmoved.
From Thee daily
Strength receiving — to Thee cleaving,
Blessed Jesus!
May we all show forth Thy praises.
"Before the world we'd make our boast,
That Thou, in whom is all our trust,
Art Lord of life and glory:
And soon Thou'lt bring us to that place
Where we shall see Thee face to face,
And, glorified, adore Thee. Amen! —
Be then

Praise and blessing, never ceasing,
To Thee given,
Here, and when we come to heaven."