

Simon Peter, 1 Conversion etc.

Section 1 of 5 (chapters 1-8) of:

Simon Peter — His Life and Letters.

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Preface.

There is a charm and intensity about Simon Peter's character which have in all ages made his Life and Letters peculiarly attractive to his brethren in Christ. Doubtless it is because he is in so many ways like ourselves, that we have felt so drawn to him. Although an apostle, he "was a man subject to like passions as we are," and by his mistakes we have learned much, while we may well imitate his fervour.

When Peter's blessed Master became the writer's — just thirty-two years ago this day — a little bit of his history (Luke 18: 28-30), quoted by a servant of God, greatly impressed and helped him spiritually; and the oft-repeated study of his Life, and ministry thereon, has undesignedly led to the unpretending volume now in the reader's hands. It consists largely of notes of addresses, revised, and extended, while some chapters have been written specially.

The Author's object has been to trace out completely God's record of His beloved servant, scattered through the New Testament, and briefly to unfold his Epistles.

The book is designed for the lambs of Christ's flock, to whom, it is trusted, it may, by the Lord's grace, be helpful.

To the care and blessing of a Master unequalled in grace — as both Simon Peter and the writer have tasted — the volume is now commended.

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PART 1 — HIS LIFE.

CHAPTER 1 — CONVERSION.

John 1: 19-42.

This scripture in the fourth Gospel without doubt gives us the moment when Simon Peter, the fisherman of Bethsaida, first met, and got to know the Lord Jesus, whom to know is life eternal. No more important epoch in a man's history could possibly be than this — the moment when he is brought into personal contact with the living Saviour. Hence there is a most important question which each one of our hearts should ask, and answer before God — viz., Have I been brought to have to do with this living Saviour?

If you have not yet been brought to Jesus, my reader, give me the joy that Andrew had in his day, as he led his brother to Jesus — give me the joy of bringing you to meet that Saviour in this day. This is the evangelist's work in the Gospel.

Let us see now what led to this warm-hearted man — Simon the son of Jonas — being brought to the Lord, for the links in the chain that lead to conversion, whether his, or yours, or mine, are ever very interesting.

The Lord had sent to Israel at this moment a servant who roused the people from end to end of the land. No smooth-spoken prophet was John the Baptist. He spoke to people of their sins, and of their need, and multitudes were aroused and gathered round him (*see* Matt. 3: 1-12), until he, as it were, shook them off at the feet of the Saviour. John preached repentance. "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," was the clarion note that reached the conscience of the multitudes that heard him. Thoroughly awakened by his preaching of coming judgment, John plainly told them, in answer to their query, "What shall we do then?" (*see* Luke 3: 1-14), all that they should do, or should not do.

To the publicans the Baptist preached, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you;" to the soldiers he said, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely, and be content with your wages." He said, moreover, "Now also the axe is laid to the root of the tree;" and if an axe be laid to the root of a tree, down it must go. In a way, therefore, John foretold the ruin of the nation. If the axe were laid to the root of the tree, moreover, it would show what was inside the tree, and it might be rotten to the core. If the axe of God's Word lay open — as it does — the heart of man, it shows it to be rotten to the very core (*see* Mark 7: 20, 23).

It was strong language John used as the multitudes came out to him. "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" fell not only on the ears of the common people, but also on "many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism." How they were going to escape the damnation of hell was urgently sought of them, as I would ask it of you, too, my reader. It is a query that must be faced, alike in John's day, and in ours.

John could not give his hearers pardon, nor preach forgiveness, but he told them that if truly repentant they would go down under the waters of Jordan, and be baptized, confessing their sins; and they did so. As he was thus baptizing, there came to him a Man whom John knew to be the sinless One. He had no sins to confess. He was the only sinless man there ever was in this world, but He asked to be baptized of John — took His place, though sinless, with the remnant that was turning round to God, and, as He came up out of the water, the Spirit of God came down upon Him, like a dove, and a voice from heaven proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3: 17).

After this John sees Jesus one day coming unto him, and he gives this lovely testimony of Him, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. . . . And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John 1: 29-34). John got the sense in his soul, Here is the One who can really bless man. You get the atoning work of the Lamb of God first, and then that He is the One who baptizes with the Holy Ghost. We must learn these two things, first, that Jesus is the One that can take away our sins, and then that He is the One who gives the Holy Ghost, and blesses. The Lord puts away sin in two ways — He puts away the sins of His own people by dying for their sins upon the cross, and then for those who, alas! refuse Him, He baptizes them with fire — that is, judgment sweeps the whole scene. Oh, come to Him, my unsaved reader, while you can get the forgiveness of your sins, and the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and escape the certainly coming baptism of fire, the judgment which is rapidly nearing.

John's first testimony to Jesus seems to have had little effect — no one followed the Lord — hence we hear his voice again raised as he says, the day following, "Behold the Lamb of God." I do not think John is exactly preaching here; he loved his Master, and saw His moral beauty, and as he stands and says, "Behold the Lamb of God," he becomes the channel of introducing to the Bridegroom the nucleus of the Bride, as two of his own disciples were detached from himself, and followed Jesus.

I grant you the Bride, the Church, was hot formed till afterwards, but I have no doubt you get here the nucleus of that which becomes the Bride. One of the two who heard John speak was Andrew, and I am inclined to regard the other as the man who wrote the Gospel, the one who does not name himself save as "the disciple whom Jesus loved," John the son of Zebedee.

The Baptist spoke in a lovely, meditative manner, as his eyes rested upon that incomparable Man, the One whom he knew to be Jehovah, the One who came to take up the whole question of sin; and as he says, "Behold the Lamb of God," those two disciples turn, and, leaving John, follow Jesus, And thenceforward John disappears, and Jesus fills the whole scene.

Jesus turning saw these two disciples following, and said to them, "What seek ye?" Searching question! Is it fame you are seeking, my reader, knowledge, power, or riches? The Lord asks you this from the glory today. Can you answer Him as these two did? "Master, where

dweldest thou?" i.e., We only want you, we want to know where we can be always sure of finding you, "They came and saw where he dwelt." Capernaum is the place called "his own city" (Matt. 9: 1), the place in which His most mighty works were done, and concerning which, at length, he is fain to say, "And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained unto this day; but I say unto you, that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee" (Matt. 11: 23, 24). The higher the privilege the more terrible the judgment when it falls on those who have not answered to that privilege.

"They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day, for it was about the tenth hour," that is, there were two hours of the day left. Oh, those two hours with Jesus! I ask you, Have you ever spent two hours with Jesus? I am sure if you have, you have come out and tried to take somebody else back to enjoy what you enjoyed. These disciples did. There comes out at once individual testimony, and let me tell you that quiet personal testimony is often worth far more than public preaching. That quiet man, Andrew, of whom we hear no more, save that he accompanied with the Lord till the end, became the means of the conversion of the most prominent man of the twelve, the record of whose life and ministry has such a large place in the Scriptures, and who at Pentecost was himself the means of the conversion of three thousand souls in one day.

It is beautiful to see how Andrew goes at once to testify of the One he had found, and he begins at home. "He first findeth his own brother Simon." He begins from the centre, and works out to the circumference.

Andrew not only finds Simon, but "he brought him to Jesus." Happy service! Have you, my reader, been brought to Jesus yet? If not, let me lead you to Him now. Come to Him now!

I think I hear that stalwart fisherman speaking that day, and saying to his brother "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ; come to Him, Simon," and he came.

It is not a question of having an immense amount of knowledge here, but it was a Person who was known, and to Him Andrew brings his own brother Simon. "And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone." This was a wonderful moment in Simon's history. He gets into the presence of the Lord, and what does he learn? He learns that the One whom he had never seen before, and, as far as he knew, had never before seen him, knew all about him. Jesus knew what Simon was, and He knows what you are, my reader. He knew that Simon was a sinner, needing a Saviour, and He knows that you are a sinner, needing a Saviour too.

The Lord, addressing the new-comer, says, "Thou art Simon, the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone." What does this changing of his name mean? In Old Testament times the changing of the name was very frequent. God changed Abram's name, and Sarai's; He changed Jacob's too; Pharaoh changed Joseph's name, and Nebuchadnezzar Daniel's, and the King of Egypt changed the name of the last King of Judah.

The changing of the name, then, implied that the one whose name was changed was the vassal, the subject, the property of the one who so changed it. The Lord said, as it were, Simon, you are Mine, spirit, soul, and body, and I shall do what I like with you. "The hour is coming, and now is when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live," was being fulfilled in the Galilean fisherman's history. Simon heard the voice of the Son of God then, and though, perhaps at the time, he did not know the meaning of what He said, yet when he wrote his first epistle afterwards he had found it out, for he says, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone. . . . ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house." What is a stone? A little bit of a rock. And what is a Christian? A little bit of Christ, for he is a member of Christ.

Believers now in the Lord Jesus Christ are linked with, yea, united to Him. Peter was learning this truth, slowly I admit, but the necessity and blessedness of it are apparent as, by-and-by, we hear him saying, "To whom coming — as unto a living stone, . . . ye also, as living stones, are built up" — that is, Christ communicates that life which is His to us, and we become an integral part of that house which God is building; and is not being a living stone a very different thing from being a dead sinner? Do you ask, How am I to get this life? You must get into personal contact with Jesus. Andrew brought Peter to Jesus, and Jesus said to him, "Thou art Cephas, which is by interpretation, a stone "you are a living stone, Peter, and you belong to Me from this moment. And will not you, my reader, belong to Him today, will not you trust Him now?

The whole question of sin is settled by the death of Christ. He went into death, and annulled it. He destroyed him who had the power of death. He took sin upon Him, and put it away; and now at the right hand of God, He says, "Look unto me, come unto me." If you come, He will give you eternal life on the spot, and make you a living stone. Peter then, that day, had life communicated to him from the Son of God. He "passed from death unto life" as he stood before the Son of God that day; his soul was for ever linked with the Lord from that day. I do not say that he followed the Lord then, but here you get the moment of Peter's conversion, he is quickened with the very life of Jesus, and becomes "a living stone." This then is the account of HIS CONVERSION.

CHAPTER 2 — CONSECRATION.

Luke 5: 1-11.

THE events recorded in our first chapter evidently precede by some space of time what we find here. Although a man be converted, he does not, alas! always begin to follow the Lord. It would appear to have been so in Peter's case. Whether he accompanied the Lord in any of His journeyings between John 1 and Luke 5 we know not; at any rate, if he did so, he had resiled, gone back into the old groove, and was settling down to life, just as before the Lord first met him. This is often noticed in the history of young converts, unless the work of conviction of sin in their souls has been deep, and the sense of deliverance correspondingly great; then immediate devotedness to the Lord is usually apparent.

For a time, then, we hear no more of Peter, he had evidently gone back to his earthly calling; but now we turn to the next eventful day in his history. We find it in Luke 5, where you get what I may call his CONSECRATION. In this chapter he sets out to follow Jesus; yes, forsakes all, and follows Him; and it is a happy moment for us when we forsake all and follow Jesus. The Lord goes down to Peter in the very midst of his business. He Himself was, as ever, going on with His mission of grace, and mercy to souls, and in order to more advantageously speak to the multitudes, who were thronging to hear Him, He uses Peter's boat as a pulpit.

It must have been a lovely and impressive scene. One can picture the panorama, and the blessed Lord's appearance, as the Spirit says, "It came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret." A multitude in such a place can easily be accounted for. The scene is laid in one of the most populous parts of Palestine. Looking landward from the lake, far away to the right lay Capernaum, His "own city"; while Chorazin, Bethsaida, Magdala, and Tiberias, in close contiguity, successively dot the western shore of the deep blue lake, whose waters are sparkling beneath the beams of the morning sun. The fishing fleet has made for its port — Bethsaida (which means, *the house of fish*). There Peter, in partnership with James and John, and probably his own brother Andrew, was carrying on a considerable business, as "hired servants" remain to Zebedee, when these four have ill followed the Lord's call (*see* Mark 1: 16-20). All is therefore stir and activity in the things that concern human life when the Lord appears on the scene.

The language here used by Luke makes one incline to think that the occasion may have been the same as that recorded by Matthew, where he says, "And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore" (Matt. 13: 2). Be this as it may, the Lord's action is significant, as "he entered one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship" (Luke 5: 3).

The Lord's object in this step is plain. He desired that those to whom He spoke might easily hear Him. He was a model preacher in every way, whether matter, manner, or method be considered. All who preach should seek only to imitate Him. Did they, I believe all listeners would hear, and more be profited.

We are not informed of the subject of the Lord's discourse by Luke, but if the suggestion be correct that Matt. 13 supplies this information, what wondrous tidings of God's activity in grace fell on the ears of landsmen, and fisherfolk, alike that day! Further, I am inclined to think that the ministry which Peter heard that morning — as, dropping his net-mending, he listened to the Lord — had much to do with what followed. The Son of Man, as the Sower, was bounteously scattering the seed. He tells us "the seed is the word of God." The soil is the heart of man, and into Peter's heart that day fell seed that brought forth eventually fruit a hundredfold. The effect of God's Word is ever far-reaching, though the fruit may be slow of appearing.

His sermon over, the Lord now turns to Peter personally, with intent to richly bless him.

In John 1 He sought to teach Peter one lesson, namely this, "Peter, *you* belong to Me," though evidently Peter did not then fully learn it. Now He teaches him another lesson, namely,

"Peter, you, and *all that you have*, belong to Me." He had stepped into Peter's boat, without asking for it, because it belonged to Him; and now He says, "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." He will not be beholden to any man, so He is going to pay Peter for the use of his boat. Peter says, "Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net." Peter obeys, for he knows now something of who He is who speaks, and, as a result, finds that he never had taken such a haul of fish in all his days.

His answer is at once a confession of failure, and of faith. Failure as regards his own efforts, and faith in the One who now bids him lower his nets. Daylight is not the time when fish enter a net, hence the man who would catch them goes out by night. Reason would have said, If there were none to be got last night, there are sure to be none caught in broad daylight. But reason is of no avail in nearing God. Faith alone understands Him; and "the obedience of faith," as well as its confidence, is manifest in the utterance, "Nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net."

At once it is filled to breakage, and Simon's partners have to be summoned to help to secure the catch, two ships filled to the gunwale, "so that they began to sink," being the result. Thoroughly "astonished" thereat, and awakened thereby to a sense of his sin, Peter "fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." He saw now not two boatloads of fish, but the Godhead glory of the Son of Man, the Messiah, the more than Man, Son of God. He saw the application of Psalm 8: 4-8 to his Master as the fish obey Him. He is convicted about his sin, his guilt. He had never had the truth of his sinful state raised before. He had to learn what he was. He had learned something of what Jesus was in John 1, and something more of what He was in this scene. Now he had to learn his own good-for-nothingness, his guiltiness; but he felt too, I cannot do without Thee, O Lord, and he gets as close as he can to Jesus' knees, while he says, "Depart from me: for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

The experience in the soul which this passage in Peter's history illustrates is most important. In John 1 no question of Peter's guilty state had been raised. There it was simply the absoluteness of sovereign grace blessing him. Here the Lord purposely lets the question of his state as a sinner be raised. His conscience is profoundly aroused. His heart had been attracted in John 1 by the grace of the Lord's person; here a ray of divine glory from that same person illumines the dark chambers of that heart. The effect is electric. All his life is flung into deepest shade. "Sinful". he judged himself to be all along the line, but chiefly, I opine, in that he had not followed the Lord from the time when He first spoke to him.

There is a real and deep work of grace here. He is spiritually convicted — morally broken up, and brought in self-judgment on his face before the Lord. He is joining company with Job, as he says, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now *mine eye seeth thee*. Wherefore *I abhor myself*, and *repent in dust and ashes*" (Job 42: 5, 6). He is side by side, morally, with Isaiah, as he exclaims, "Woe is me! for *I am undone*; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for *mine eyes have seen the King*, the Lord of Hosts" (Isa. 6: 5).

The stalwart fisherman of Galilee joins the patriarch, and the prophet, in the unspeakably blessed pathway of deep self-judgment, and self-repudiation, as out of the depths of a broken heart he cries, "Depart from me; for I am *a sinful man*, O Lord."

The importance of this process in the soul cannot be overestimated. In the lack of it is found the secret of so much of the slipshod profession that abounds around us. The seed gets no deep root in unbroken ground. The deeper the furrow produced by the ploughshare of conviction, the deeper the root, and the more abundant the fruit in later days. One longs to see more of this sort of work where the Gospel is proclaimed. Only where deep, genuine, Holy Ghost-wrought repentance, and self-judgment are produced, will there be the gladsome hundred-fold harvest which the Lord so delights to garner.

May I inquire, my reader, what you know of all this? If you have never passed through something akin to this, I think it is high time you carefully, and prayerfully examined the foundations of your soul's relationship with God. John Bunyan said, "When religion goes in silver slippers, there are plenty found to put them on." This witness is true. Profession of Christ is easy enough nowadays. Possession of Christ is another thing altogether, and I doubt if any heart really possesses Him until, like Peter, it feels that it is utterly unfit for Him.

Peter felt he was utterly unfit to be near Him, yet he could not do without Him. His actions and his words are strangely contradictory. "He fell down at Jesus' knees," — i.e., got as close to Him as he could, — and then said, "Depart from me, O Lord." I do not believe he thought the Lord would depart from him, but nevertheless he was morally right in his utterance. He felt profoundly how unfit he was for Jesus, but could not do without Him, and so it has been with every divinely-awakened soul from that day to this.

Jesus sweetly calms his troubled conscience, as He says unto him, "Fear not, from henceforth thou shalt catch men." His troubled soul is sweetly calmed by the Lord's own blessed ministry, "Fear not"; and to every troubled soul, in this our day, He says now, "Fear not."

"And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him." No doubt most people would have thought Peter a most improvident man, — would have said he had better go to market with his fish first; but Peter, heeding the call Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men (Matt. 4: 19; Mark 1: 17), gave up all that had hitherto entranced him, in the day when it was most bright and prosperous. He had a heart to be for the Lord, and the Lord only. Christ eclipsed everything in his soul, and he leaves all to be near that Saviour, to be His companion, and His servant, as He passes through this scene. Happy choice, blessed submission of faith, and answer of affection!

We are not all called, as Peter was here, to abandon an earthly calling to follow the Lord, but the principle is the same. When grace is known, and peace and joy fill the heart, as the fruit of hearing the divine words, "Fear not" — which always come to the soul after honest confession, — then to follow the Lord fully is the only safe and right path, for the new-born soul. We must make a clean break with the world if we are going to have the enjoyment of the Lord's favour. Out-and-out decision for Christ is of the last possible importance.

Peter turned his back upon his world when it was most attractive, and he most successful in it. This is particularly fine. Many a man has turned to the Lord when all has gone dead against him, and his earthly history has been, so to speak, a huge failure. Peter consecrated himself to the Lord, and His service when everything was most flourishing, and all combined to keep him where his heart had hitherto found all its springs of joy. The fact is, an eclipse had occurred. He has been introduced really to the Lord of glory, and from that moment everything else was hidden from his view, and paled into utter insignificance, compared with the blessedness of being in the company of, and near to the One who had said to him, "Follow me."

Now, my reader, if Jesus says to you today, "Follow thou me," what will you say? Let your answer be, "Lord, from this day forth my heart is Thine!" The Lord grant it.

CHAPTER 3 — COMPANIONSHIP WITH CHRIST.

Mark 1: 28-37, Mark 3: 13-19.

THE next thing we find in the Gospel narrative, as we pursue Peter's history, is that the Lord enters his house at a most opportune juncture. He comes out of the synagogue, where He had just been casting an unclean spirit out of a man, and *forthwith* (a characteristic word of Mark's Gospel) He goes to Peter's house, and "Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever," and they tell Him of her. It was most natural that they should tell the Lord of the sick woman, and He heals her with a word.

Now, it has often been taught that a man must remain unmarried in order to fully follow the Lord; but here we learn that Simon was a married man, and he was a man who had affections large enough to take in his wife's mother, not only into his heart but into his house. We live in a day when mothers-in-law are often at a discount; not so here, and God has not recorded this in the pages of His Word for nothing.

I have no doubt Peter's wife was in a tremor that day. Her mother, possibly (for we do not read of children) the dearest object, save her husband, that she had in the world, lay sick of a fever. Another Gospel (Luke 4: 38) says, she was "taken with a great fever." But Jesus "stood over her, and rebuked the fever, and it left her;" and He "took her by the hand, and lifted her up," and "she ministered unto them," instead of being ministered to. She was a useful mother-in-law that.

Do you think it was by chance that the Lord went there that day? I believe not. If we go back a few days in Peter's history, we remember that he had given up all to follow the Lord; and having abandoned his earthly calling so to do, it is quite possible that his wife might have felt somewhat anxious as to ways and means, and may have thought, if she did not say, "How are we now to be cared for and supported?" The Lord comes into her house — her home; takes her mother by the hand, and heals her with a word; and as the loving daughter sees the mother healed and restored, she must have felt quite assured as to the wisdom of her husband's action in fully following the Lord. And I doubt not, before Peter left again to accompany his Master in His

labours, he got a word of this sort from his wife, "You follow Him fully, Simon; I see well you are on the right track; He has the heart and the power to care for us in all things."

This scene is so like the Lord. He ever loves to put His servants at rest at home, as well as to set them free to follow Him. It is sweet to think that He has His eye on the oft-times solitary wife at home, with her cares and burdens, while the husband, called to labour in public, is frequently and necessarily away. Ye wives of evangelists, and other servants of the Lord, note how the Lord thinks of you!

Passing on now to the third chapter of Mark, we find the special call which Peter received of the Lord. After a night spent in prayer (see Luke 6: 12), the Lord selects those who should be His companions in His pilgrim pathway here. We read, "He ordained twelve, that **THEY SHOULD BE WITH HIM.**" I know nothing more blessed than that!

People think it is a wonderful thing to be saved, to escape the damnation of hell — a wonderful thing to go to heaven; and so it is. But to go to heaven in Scripture, is always to be with a Person. "Absent from the body, present with the Lord," — "to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better," — is the language of Scripture.

To be with Him, to enjoy companionship with the Lord Jesus Christ, is what God calls us to; and here these men, in a very special way, were called to be with Him. Have you been called to be with Him, my reader? You are not called to be an apostle, but the eternity of a Christian is to be with Jesus. But for you, my unconverted friend, what is your eternity? To be with Jesus? Alas! you do not know him! To be in glory? You have no title to it! Your future is very different. I fear there will fall on your ears a sadly solemn word, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Perhaps you say, I do not believe God ever made hell for man. Nor do I. The Lord Jesus says it was "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25: 41). But some men are such fools they prefer the company of the devil and his angels to the company of Christ. See where you stand, my unconverted reader, and think of the contrast between your portion and that of the true follower of Jesus.

"He ordained twelve, *that they should be with him.*" "Ah! but," you say, "one was a traitor." Well, do not you be a traitor! God help you, and me too, not to be traitors! Judas's history has its lessons for all of us. It is like a beacon light put on a dangerous coast, to keep the watchful mariner off the sunken rocks — to teach our souls to be in no wise like him.

In this place, again (Mark 3: 16), you get Simon's new name emphasised, and in all the Gospels it is so. His name always comes first on the list (see Matt. 10: 2; Mark 3: 16; Luke 6: 14; John 21: 2); not that he had any authority over his brethren, or was made a sort of primate, as Rome would fain teach us. It was his natural fervour, and warm-hearted impulsive earnestness, that put him always in the front rank. If there be a query, Peter most usually puts it; if it be a confession of who the Lord is, Peter is the spokesman. I grant you his very impulsiveness drew him oft-times into danger, and ended in his denying his Lord at a later date; but still Peter's is a wonderful history of devotion to the Lord, and where he failed, the Lord, in infinite wisdom and faithfulness, tells us about it, and puts him too before us as another beacon light, lest our small barks should also be stranded on the selfsame rocks that damaged his.

Nothing but devotion of heart to Christ personally will do for us. A mere creed is of no value whatever. Unless there be affection of heart that puts us near Himself, and, if we have got away, leads us back to Him as quickly as possible, our confession of Him is valueless to us, and nauseous to Him. Peter learned a blessed lesson at this point of his history, viz., The Lord wants me to be with Him, — He wants my company. Have you learned yet, dear reader, that the Lord loves your companionship, and desires to have. your affections?

But besides the thought of companionship, there was another purpose in the Lord's mind as He drew the twelve around Him. Luke's record of the event runs thus: — "And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named Apostles; Simon (whom he also named Peter)," etc. (Luke 6: 12-14). Turning to Mark we read, "And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils. And Simon he surnamed Peter" (Mark 3: 14-16).

This is intensely interesting. Notice the prelude to the selection. He, who was Lord of all, and knew all, "continued all night in prayer to God" before He selects His companions, and ordains His apostles. What a lesson to us all of dependence on God. This is only recorded by Luke, who gives us the pathway of the perfectly dependant man. We are not surprised, therefore, though deeply instructed thereby, to find the Lord bowed in prayer seven times in that Gospel (Luke 3: 21, Luke 5: 16, Luke 6: 12, Luke 9: 18-29, Luke 11: 1, Luke 22: 41). Each occasion has its own peculiar lesson for our hearts.

Here then we get Simon's new name (Peter) confirmed, his apostolic call declared, and at the same time we receive instruction as to the meaning of the term "Apostle." Jesus so named the twelve, Luke tells us; and Mark adds the explanation, "that he might *send them forth to preach*, and to have *power to heal* sicknesses, and to *cast out devils*." How comprehensive is apostolic work, — to *preach* God, to *heal* man, and to *defeat* the devil. No wonder Satan did his best to trip up the most prominent of the band, and gladly entered into the meanest, who at best was but a "thief" and a "devil," in order by the one to dishonour, and by the other to get rid of, their blessed lowly Master!

The reader is referred to Matt. 10 and Luke 9 for the actual moment when the Lord conferred on Peter, and the twelve, the power here spoken of, and sent them on their joyful mission; from which we may also see them returning in Mark 6: 30, and reporting to their Master "both what they had done, and what they had taught." How He appreciated, and entered into the toil, connected with their service, is seen in what follows, as He says, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile," Blessed Master! How well does He know how to equip, and send out His servants, and how to care for and refresh them, when they came back, whether returning elated with success, as in this instance, or depressed by difficulties, as has often been the case with His less highly gifted, but not less deeply loved servants of later days.

Now let us go on to the eighth chapter of Luke for a moment. There is a remarkable scene here, and again Peter comes to the front (Luke 8: 41-56). How beautifully the Lord responds to every call and every need! If you have any difficulty about the affection of Christ, about how He

would respond to your call, and your need, these lovely Gospel narratives ought to settle your difficulty. Look at this man Jairus, who had a dying daughter! He comes to Jesus about her. The Lord responds at once. Then the people throng Him, and press Him, and a woman who had spent all her living on physicians, and had only got worse instead of better, comes and touches His garment. Just like today. People spend their lives going about to all sorts of spiritual doctors, instead of simply coming to Christ, and of course get no better, for religion cannot save them. Religion can damn you very easily, if you are content with religiousness, without having ever come to a personal Saviour to be saved. This woman heard of Jesus, and she came to Him; and when she came, she touched; and when she had touched, she felt; and then she came forth and confessed Christ! She got all she wanted. She was healed immediately she touched the Saviour. So would you be, if you were to do as she did. Jesus then said "Who touched me?" And the Lord, looking down from glory, now says, Who is touching Me? And will you not touch Him, dear friend, and get life from Him?

And now, poor dear blundering Peter puts in a word about the multitude, and says, "Master, the multitude throng thee, and press thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me?" In all this throng, Lord, how can You ask who it is that has touched You? But Jesus said, "Somebody hath touched me; for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me." That is always the way; if you only get near enough to touch the hem of His garment, virtue will go out from Him, and you will be healed, you will get all you need. The Lord will never shake you off; He will encourage you to come forth and confess Him. Only try Him, — just come to Him, and touch Him. The virtue that comes out of Him always heals the soul that just simply touches Him in faith.

The woman comes out and confesses what she had done, and why she did it, and what the effect of it was. She had faith in His goodness, faith in His heart, faith in His person; and see what the Lord says, "Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith had made thee whole; go in peace." Peter learned a good lesson that day, that a throng might press his Lord and yet nobody really touch Him, whereas the faintest touch of faith secured the fullest blessing.

Next, in Jairus's house Peter gets another lesson, as he stands by and sees the Lord annul the power of death. He had seen Him heal his mother-in-law, he had seen how faith must be in exercise if blessing is to come, and now he learns that He is the One who quells the power of death, that death cannot be in His presence. Jesus has power over death. He only met it to annul it, for He was the Lord of life. The thieves who were crucified with Him could not die till He had died; and when He died, He annulled the power of death, broke its bands, demolished the bars of the tomb, and came up out of it. Hence it is to a victorious triumphant Christ I call on you to come now, One who is alive for evermore. I have to do with a victorious Saviour, One who went into death that He might annul it, and did so by dying. He took my sins on Him as He went into it, and put them all away.

Peter was learning blessed lessons of the moral power and glory of his Master, as in Jairus' house he first saw how He dealt with infidel scorners, viz., "put them all out," and then heard Him say, "Maid, arise!" and bid her be fed.

This scene is a striking foreshadowing of what will yet be. A day is rapidly nearing when He who overcame death in the house of Jairus, will deal with it finally and for ever. "The last

enemy that shall be destroyed is death." This we see effected in Rev. 21: 1-8. Happy will they be who are then the witnesses of the Saviour's final triumph. No scorner shall see it. All such are judged and "put out" in Rev. 20 by the judgment of the great white throne. Peter will witness the Lord's final victory over death; so too, through infinite grace, shall I. Will you, my reader, be a delighted witness, or a judged scorner in that day?

CHAPTER 4 — WALKING ON WATER.

Matt. 14

TURNING to Matthew 14, we get another very blessed lesson taught. Peter walks on the water in this chapter, and we will inquire what led to it. Herod had beheaded John the Baptist, "and his disciples came and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus." What a right and suited action!

Have you been burying some dear one? And did you too go and tell Jesus, pouring out your sorrow into His sympathising ear? These disciples did. I think I can see two roads that day, and the two companies who were on them. On one road come up the sad disciples of John, who had lost their master; on the other, the disciples of Jesus return, flushed with success, from their first missionary tour (*see* Mark 6: 30, 31). The two companies meet in the Lord's presence. The Lord says to them, "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile." How morally lovely is this call! Alike to successful labourers, and to disheartened disciples, is it made. By each alike it was needed, but a desert with Jesus can be no desert.

Then comes the feeding of the multitudes, and the way in which the Lord sends the multitudes away, — a very different sending away from what it would have been if the disciples had had their way. They would have sent them away to buy bread for themselves, — sent away hungry thousands to be witnesses, as it were, against Christ. He sent those many thousands away happy, satisfied, so many witnesses to the tenderness of His heart, and the divine glory of His person. While the Lord does this, He constrains His disciples to take ship and go to the other side.

I can see the Lord's beautiful wisdom in sending His disciples away, at that moment, out of the way of an element for evil, for John 6: 14,15, tells us that the multitudes would have taken Him by force to make Him a king, and the disciples too were intent on the kingdom. They would have heartily entered into the thought of the multitude to exalt their Master on an earthly throne (*see* Matt. 20: 20-23; Acts 1: 6). But the Lord could take no kingdom, nor could He reign, while sin was here, not put away from God's sight. The disciples' constant thought was the earthly kingdom. Not so the Lord's! He knew He must die, and accomplish atonement, ere the day of the kingdom. So now He sends His disciples away out of temptation. The Lord is always so wise, we may well trust Him — trust His love and His wisdom in all His ways with us.

He Himself went then up into a mountain to pray. That really is where He is now, as it were on the mount, in intercession, for Scripture says, "He ever liveth to make intercession for us" (Heb. 7: 25). The disciples, dismissed at eventide, were by this time on their way to

Capernaum, "tossed with waves" and "toiling in rowing," as Mark 6: 48 informs us. The Lord came to them "in the fourth watch of the night." The distance they had to go was only about ten miles, but they had been nine hours doing "five-and-twenty or thirty furlongs" — a little over three miles. We make little progress if we have not the Lord with us.

The Lake of Tiberias is well known for its sudden and violent storms, and they were caught in one. The gravity of the situation, and the difficulty of the disciples in making headway is easily apparent, when we picture their position, with a knowledge of their surroundings. Sudden and furious hurricanes are common on inland lakes. I remember crossing Lake Como one brilliant summer afternoon, when the surface was like glass. Within an hour a storm burst, which raised so furious a commotion on the waters that no small boat could live therein, and we had to wait till quite late in the evening and get to our destination by steamer.

Travellers in Palestine furnish a similar report; and Dr Thomson, in his well-known work, gives a graphic account of his experiences at the Lake of Tiberias. He thus writes: — "The sun had scarcely set when the wind began to rush down towards the lake, and it continued all night long with constantly increasing violence, so that, when we reached the shore next morning, the face of the lake was like a huge boiling cauldron. To understand the causes of these sudden and violent tempests, we must remember that the lake lies low — six hundred feet lower than the ocean; that the vast and naked plateaux of the Jaulan [Golan] rise to a great height, spreading backward to the wilds of the Matron, and upward to snowy Hermon; that the water courses have cut out profound ravines and wild gorges, converging to the head of this lake, and that these act like gigantic funnels to draw down the cold winds from the mountains. On the occasion referred to, we subsequently pitched our tents at the shore, and remained for three days and nights exposed to this tremendous wind. We had to double pin all the tent ropes, and frequently had to hang with our whole weight upon them to keep the quivering tabernacle from being carried up bodily into the air. No wonder the disciples toiled and rowed hard all that night." (*The Land and the Book.*)

But in all their difficulties and dangers the Lord had His eye upon His own. He was above in intercession, and in the fourth watch He comes to them. He never forgets His own in their difficulties. "Touched with a feeling of our infirmities," He is "able to succour" (Heb. 2: 18), able to sympathise (Heb. 4: 15), and "able also to save to the uttermost" (Heb. 7: 25). He does all three in this scene. That He is able to "succour," is evidenced in divine power as He is seen "walking on the sea" to their rescue — His *sympathy* finds vent in His "Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid;" while His power to *save*, is touchingly seen in His action towards Peter, as he cries in distress, "Lord, save me!" Such is Jesus, our Jesus, as He now sits in glory, and these earthly incidents give us blessed glimpses of what He is.

In the first part of this chapter (Matt. 14) you have the sympathy of His heart, and then, as He feeds the multitude, the power of His hand, displayed. Now, as they are toiling, storm-tossed and miserable, what music is in the voice that comes to them above the raging of the wind and waves, saying, "It is I, be not afraid." And as they heard the tones of His voice, Peter, ever energetic, fearless, and full of affection, says, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." Look at the energy and the love of that man's heart. It is very refreshing. You have the Master going over the stormy deep, and then, in answer to the word "Come," you see the disciple

imitating his Master, and Peter, upheld by divine power, "walked upon the waters to go to Jesus." Only faith and love will act thus. It is an action the Lord admires.

This is a particularly fine scene in Peter's life, but nevertheless his action here has often been questioned. To the spiritual judgment there can be nothing but commendation of his pathway as he leaves the ship. Whatever motives might have been in his heart, they certainly seem all to his credit. Evidently he wanted to be near the Lord, and that was right. Caution and self-consideration would have kept him in the ship with his brethren. Affection and faith led him to leave all that nature leans on. Men with less zeal and less energy would have saved themselves possible failure and discomfiture, and said, "We will just wait where we are till He comes on board." Peter, assured that it was his beloved Master, — for his "If it be thou," I take it, implies no doubt, — and charmed to see Him thus superior to the fickle element on which He trod so firmly, counting also on His love liking to have him near Him, says in his heart, "I'll go and meet Him, if He will let me." Heedless of all his words conveyed, and true to his natural character of unrestrained impulsiveness — for Peter was no hypocrite — he says, "Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water." Getting for his answer the single word "Come," he at once obeys. Not to have done so would have been disobedience. And "when he was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus." He was entirely right. He had a divine warrant for his action in the word "Come," and divine power he knew could not be wanting, since he was now in the presence of Him, who must be God to walk the waters so majestically as He did.

And yet you will argue that he broke down. Quite true; but why? Because he foolishly left the ship? No, for it says, "he *walked* on the water, to go to Jesus." For the moment he was like his Master. Why then did he sink? Because he took his eye off Jesus. As long as he kept his eye on Him, all went well; the moment "he *saw the wind* boisterous," down he went. The wind was as high, and the billows as rough, ere he abandoned the ship. The moment, therefore, he left the deck, it was a question of Christ sustaining him or drowning. Had he kept his eye where he first fixed it, as he stepped overboard, — viz., on the person of the Lord, — all would have gone well; but the moment he let the circumstances of his surroundings intervene between him and the Lord's blessed face, he began to sink. It must always be so. So long as I have God between me and my circumstances, all is well; the moment I let the circumstances come in between my heart and God, all is wrong, and "beginning to sink" may well describe the situation.

Faith can walk on the roughest waters when the eye is on the Lord. "Looking off unto Jesus" must ever be the motto of the soul, and the momentary habit of the heart, if this blessed pathway of superiority to circumstances is to be rightly trodden. Peter's failure carries its lessons for us doubtless, but I believe the Lord greatly estimated the love that led him to do as he did, so that I think the point of the presage to note, is not so much that he broke down at last, but that he was really immensely like his Lord till he broke down. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me," said another servant in a later day.

But to return: "When he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and, beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me!" Why did he sink? Was the water a bit more unstable when boisterous than when calm? Certainly not. You could not walk on the stillest mill-pond a bit better than on the stormiest wave that ever surged, without divine power. The power of Christ can sustain you and me in the most difficult circumstances, and nothing but the power and grace

of Christ can sustain us in the most easy circumstances. Then, as Peter cries out, the Lord "caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" Peter had faith, though it was little. Have you and I, dear reader, as much as he?

The exquisite grace of Christ in this passage is incomparable. Peter quite failed to get to his Lord, but the Lord did not fail to reach him in plenty of time. His very failure had brought him to his Saviour's feet, and in the moment of his deep distress he finds himself in his blessed Saviour's arms. His appeal, "Lord, save me," was heard, and answered at once; and cannot many of us bear witness, in just the same way, to the tender pity and compassionate love of that same precious Jesus, when in our exigencies and distresses we have cast ourselves upon Him? Ten thousand witnesses, repeated myriad-fold, reply, "Yes, yes, indeed! for He is 'Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever.'"

As soon as the Lord got into the ship the wind ceased, and John 6: 21 adds, "Immediately the ship was at the land whither they went." How beautiful! How calm everything is as soon as you get into the presence of the Lord! And now they worship Him, saying, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God." Peter had learnt Him as Messiah in the 1st of John; he had learnt Him as Son of Man, and Lord over the fish of the sea, in Luke 5; and now, as he sees more of the moral glories of His person, he gets another most precious lesson, that this One who is the Messiah, and the Son of Man, is also the Son of God.

Let me ask you, my friend, have you ever been bowed in worship before the person of the Lord Jesus? Have you ever cried out to Him, "Lord, save me!"? And, if He has saved you, have you ever gone down on your knees and worshipped Him, saying, "Lord, of a truth thou art the Son of God!"?

May the Holy Ghost lead out your heart and mine to worship the Lord Jesus, as Son of God, in a fuller, deeper way; and if you, my reader, have never really worshipped Him yet, may He lead you to bow down before Him today, and praise Him, and worship Him for all that He is, and all that He has done, and thus glorify Him, for He says, "Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me" (Ps. 1.23).

CHAPTER 5 — A MODEL PRAYER.

Matt. 15: 1-20.

DECLARE unto us this parable!" This petition falls from Peter's lips, as he hears the Lord discourse in this chapter on that which surpassed his comprehension. It is truly a model prayer, the style of which we might all well imitate. Montgomery has well said —

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,

Uttered, or unexpressed."

Peter sincerely desired to understand the parable, and in the simplest language sought it. For brevity and directness this prayer, for such it is, cannot be surpassed, though it reminds one of the prophet's prayer, "Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see" (2 Kings 6: 17). Both Elisha and Peter remember to whom they are speaking, and waste no words. They know exactly what they want, and they each say just that to the Lord, and stop. This is real prayer. Any more would be mere verbiage, to be deplored and deprecated, no matter from whose lips.

It would be a widespread blessing if this were borne in mind by those whose voices are heard in prayer, whether in the household, the assembly, the prayer-meeting, or the preaching-room. Long prayers are a mistake, and an evidence of weakness, in all these scenes. In the closet, where no eye sees, and no ear hears but God's, there would appear to be no restriction in Scripture. But in public long prayers are only referred to, to be condemned.

There is a remarkable word from the pen of Solomon which bears on this subject, "Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God. . . . Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore *let thy words be few*" (Ecc. 5: 1, 2).

Peter was heeding this counsel as he simply says to the Lord, "Declare unto us this parable." How refreshing is the brevity and directness of his prayer. Observe, too, that he gets his request straightway.

What led to Peter's prayer is instructive. The Pharisees had challenged the Lord's disciples for eating with unwashed hands. Jesus replies that God is looking at the *heart*, not the *hands* — *at the inside*, not the outside. The Jews, full of externals and tradition, — as men are, alas! today, too, were using God's name, and, under pretence of piety, actually sinking lower in its use than the laws of natural conscience.

Hear the Lord's charge. God commanded, saying, "Honour thy father and mother: and, he that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; and honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition" (Matt. 15: 4-6). For a child to neglect his parents under appearance of devoting to God — in temple sacrifice, I presume, the priest bettering thereby what was due to them, was held to be all right. They had only to cry, "Corban," i.e., "It is a gift," and the parent might be forgotten. The Lord calls them "hypocrites," and quotes Isaiah's solemn verdict, "This people draweth nigh to me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me."

Thereon the Lord calls the multitude, saying, "Hear, and understand, Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man." He has done with Judaism, and the truth comes out that man is lost.

With this the Pharisees are highly offended, and on the disciples informing the Lord thereof, He adds, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." There must be a new life from God, not an attempt to improve the old; that day had gone by.

"Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch." Such was the state of Israel's leaders at the moment. Utterly blind, they knew not Jesus, nor their own need, and their state and their end is thus tersely described. Fancy "the blind leading the blind." Can anything more sad be conceived? Yet has it its counterpart today, when Romanism and Ritualism, with their blind leaders, are leading a blindfold host to the ditch, the means by which blind leaders guide their blinded followers being nothing but the exhumed and refurbished paraphernalia of a defunct Judaism, which had its death-knell sounded by the Lord in this chapter, its death-blow dealt by God at the cross, and its funeral executed when the Romans swept temple, altar, Sacrifices, and earthly priesthood all away at the destruction of Jerusalem.

Christianity is a system of another order. Its spring is in the last Adam, not the first. Its centre and circumference is Christ Himself personally. His love, His work, His blood, His sacrifice, yea, Himself — all that He has, and is, are its Alpha and Omega. Now it is no longer the blind leading the blind, nor even the seeing leading the blind, but the seeing leading the seeing.

But this light had not then fully shone, so one can understand Peter saying, "Declare unto us this parable." That he should call plain truth a "parable," i.e., "a dark saying," is strange, but to him, as yet full of hopes in the first man, the doctrine of the Lord doubtless sounded strange, and was evidently unpalatable. The Lord's answer only revealed to him his own moral blindness, as He says, "Are ye also yet without understanding," etc. He shows that all is a question of what man is in himself. The spring - *the heart* - is hopelessly corrupt, hence the streams can only be of the same sort. "*Out of the heart* proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man." Man must be born again of water and the Spirit. Until a new life is brought in, all is useless.

What scandalised the self-righteous Pharisee, and appeared unintelligible to the disciples, was the truth, the simple truth, as to the heart of man, as God knows and reads that heart.

If Christ's witness be true — and it is true — it is all over with you, my respectable, religious, moral, and possibly self-righteous, reader. Your life may be splendidly clean outwardly, but your heart is corrupt in the essence of its being. You may possibly deny the most of the charge that Matt. 15: 19 brings — and one is thankful to hear it — but will you venture to say that from your heart — your *heart*, mind — an evil *thought* never sprung? You tremble to assert that. You well may. God's verdict has rung out, "All have sinned." But, thank God, He also tells us His remedy. The ruin of my heart is met by the love of His heart. For my sin He gave His Son, and Scripture sweetly affirms, "The blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin."

I am very thankful, therefore, for Peter's prayer and its answer. It is an immense thing to know the truth, the worst about oneself. There is nothing so simple or satisfactory as the truth, when it is known. It puts one in right relation with God, and all else. Jesus is the truth, and He brings it out here most solemnly, but does not stop there. He is full of grace, too, so His death comes in later to meet the ruin that He has unfolded here. Still, I repeat, it is a great thing to know the whole truth about one's state, and Peter's prayer is what leads up to it here. The day of

outward forms is past; man is utterly lost, and needs a new life. How he gets it is revealed elsewhere,

CHAPTER 6 — THE TWOFOLD CONFESSION.

John 6: 23-71; Matt. 16: 13-28.

IN these scriptures we have recorded Peter's dual confession of the Lord Jesus. It is a thing of the greatest importance to the soul to confess Christ boldly, for the Holy Ghost has said in our days, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Now when Peter made his confession in John 6, which I believe was previous to the confession in Matthew 16, the Lord Jesus Christ had not died, nor did Peter think that He was going to die. What is so beautiful to see, is that his heart was deeply attached to Christ. His was no mere head knowledge of who Jesus was; that is made quite clear by the glowing, burning confessions he makes.

We saw in a previous view of this affectionate man that when Peter walked on the water to get to Jesus, he did not quite get to Him, but that Jesus got to him, and that was what he wanted. His one desire was to get near Jesus. When the Lord was taken into the ship, immediately they were at the shore whither they would go, and the disciples then discovered that He was the Son of God. This was the day previous to that which we get recorded in the end of the sixth of John. In that chapter we find the Lord giving forth startling, yea marvellous ministry, as He says, "I am the living bread," and "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."

Get hold of this clearly in your soul, my reader, that unless you have eaten the flesh of the Son of Man, and have drunk His blood, you have no life in you; and do not think that this means the communion — the Lord's Supper. Nay, nay, this is the substance; the Lord's Supper is the shadow. This is the reality, the communion is the figure. A man might eat the Lord's Supper a thousand times, and yet spend eternity in hell, but no man could eat the flesh of the Son of Man and not have eternal life. When the Lord said this, He knew that He was going to die, and to rise again and go, as man, to the right hand of God, — that He was going to do a work whereby man might be brought to God, a work which enables the believer in Him in righteousness to go to the spot where He now is; and therefore here the Lord presses the necessity of knowing Himself, of eating Himself, saying, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6: 54). Again, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him" (John 6: 56). In plain words He says to the believer, We are one. In view of the gravity of this matter, let me ask you, my reader, Have you ever yet eaten the flesh, and drunk the blood of the Son of Man? That is a question that you must answer to God, and to Him alone.

It is a very happy thing to eat the Lord's Supper with the saints of God, but that is only the symbol; whereas what the Lord means here is, we must accept Him in His death, and feed on Him in death. Thereby only can we get life to our souls.

The result of this ministry of the Lord's was that the Jews murmur; and He then says, "Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?" (John 6: 61, 62.) He has ascended, and consequently we are immensely better off than if He were on earth. If He were on earth now — say in Jerusalem — He would not be also in Edinburgh; but being in glory, the Holy Ghost has come down to dwell among us, and to abide in each believer, and He gives us the sense of the Lord's presence no matter where we are located.

The result then of the Lord's ministry was that "from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him" (John 6: 66). They had been looking for, and hoping that He was going to set up a kingdom, in Messianic power, and glory; and when He talked to them of His death, that did not suit them at all, and many left Him. Indeed, I suppose the defection was very great, for He turned round, and looking at the twelve, said unto them, "Will ye also go away?" (John 6: 67.) To this query warm-hearted Peter fervently answers, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Splendid testimony, grand confession, made too at the moment of general defection! Peter, as it were, led the forlorn hope, as he said, Go from you, Lord? Never! "We believe and are sure that thou art the Holy One of God" (New Translation). I wonder if you have ever confessed the Lord after this fashion, my reader. There was no "I hope," nor "I think," but "WE BELIEVE and ARE SURE." None of that half-heartedness of the nineteenth century, in which people are uncertain about everything, except that they cannot be certain about anything that relates to the Person of Christ, and to the things of eternity, was seen in Peter. Fatal folly is all such blundering in matters of momentous and eternal import.

Well might Peter say, "To whom shall we go?" Others had gone. Whither, we are not told. They disappear and are seen no more. So much the worse for them. It is a poor thing to turn away from Christ in a day of difficulty. This Peter felt, as he puts his touching and unanswerable query, Where in all the universe of God could One be found like his blessed Master? There was no other. He was unique, and Peter felt and knew it, though perhaps conscious how little he could rise to the height of His heavenly teaching. That was one thing; leaving Him was altogether another. He alone could fill the heart, pacify the conscience, calm the soul, and control the whole man. Leave Him then? Never!

Two things mark Peter's confession here, as he says, "*Thou hast* the words of eternal life," and "*Thou art* the Holy One of God." Peter had got deeply in his soul what He *was*, and what He *had*, as he said, "*Thou art*" and "*Thou hast*." What He *is* forms the stable resting-place of our souls as we pillow them on Him, and on His work. What He *has* forms the everlasting supply to our souls in all their varied need. He gives us all we need, and then becomes the object of our affections for ever. He gives us eternal life and eternal joy. What an immense mistake to let aught here eclipse Christ in the view of our souls!

Do you believe after Peter's fashion, my friend, I ask, or are you a nineteenth century doubter?

There was one standing by that day who was detected by Peter's exclamation, for the Lord turns round as He heard the beautiful, burning confession of Peter's soul, and says, "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" I believe in that moment when so many were slinking off, the thought in Judas's heart was, "It is time for me to go too;" but then he thought he

would follow the Lord a little longer, and make gain ere leaving Him. He would put the Lord in such a position that, though of course. He would easily extricate Himself from it, yet he — Judas — would gain money by his act. Judas loved money, not Christ. His God was gold; his master, Satan; his end, an eternal hell.

Is there one who reads these lines who loves money more than Jesus? Brother of Judas, thou art detected here. Beware, beware, God is giving thee thy warning. Wilt thou spend thine eternity with Judas, or with Jesus? Which?

Turn now, my reader, to Matthew 16. After this noble confession of Peter's which we have been considering, the Lord had gone up to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, and there had blessed the daughter of the Syrophoenician woman. Then he had gone to Galilee and Decapolis, and northward to Caesarea Philippi. This place must not be confounded with the Caesarea on the borders of the Mediterranean, the Roman seaport capital of Palestine, where Peter preached so successfully afterwards (see Acts 10). Caesarea Philippi — now known as Baneas — was a town outside the limits of the land of Israel, situated at the foot of Mount Hermon, close to the most easterly source of the river Jordan.

The Lord had gone out, on to Gentile ground. In this outside place, He asks His disciples, "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" Jesus likes to know what men think of Him; whether the hearts of men had risen to the moment, and the occasion; if they had found out who He was — and so He puts the question. And they answer, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." This was only supremely careless indifference. Men might have known, and should. Eighteen months before, John the Baptist had declared who He was, and crowds had flocked to Him; but now, after these many months, — in which He had visited "every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God" (Luke 8: 1), months of unwearied testimony by lip, life, and miracle, that had proclaimed God, blessed man, and defeated Satan, — the tide had turned, and instead of receiving Him as the Messiah, they did not even know, or care to know, who He was! Alas, for poor, blind man!

Almost invariably in the Gospel narratives the Lord speaks of Himself by the title of the Son of Man. He calls Himself a King but once (Matt. 25: 34). He was a King, but as yet uncrowned, and throneless. Unrecognised by the nation in His proper glory, He now asks His disciples, "Whom say ye that I am?"

Your eternal destiny, my reader, depends upon the answer you can give to this question, "Whom say ye that I am?" Be you what you may, if you do not know and confess Jesus as the Son of the living God, you are still in your sins. You may be the most religious person in the world, and the most intelligent to boot, but what is all your knowledge worth if you do not know Christ? The person who is not right about Christ, is right about nothing. Ah! my friend, if you pass into eternity ignorant of Christ, yours will be an awful eternity. The Lord's query to *you* therefore, just now, is this, "Whom do *ye* say that I am?"

Peter comes magnificently to the front again, at this juncture of national indifference to the Messiah. In the buoyancy and fulness of his heart, as well as in real faith, and true attachment to

the person of His Lord, he answers, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Heaven-born deliverance! and how grateful to the ear and heart of the blessed Lord it must have been. It was a beautiful confession, and carried with it lovely consequences. Equally so does confession of His name now, for "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved," is the word of assurance to us in this day. Blessing rich and full always follows simple and true confession of Christ.

Observe what the Lord says to Peter immediately on his confession, "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." The soul that knows Jesus as the Son of the living God, He, Himself, declares to be blessed of the Father. No doubt Peter had learned much of the Lord, as he had followed that lovely, and blessed life of devotedness, and self-sacrifice, but the Father had taken hold of that uncultured, and unlettered Galilean fisherman, and taught him the truth, that the blessed Man he was following was the Son of the living God. The Father Himself alone can teach you this blessed truth, my friend. No university curriculum, no human teaching, can impart to your soul this knowledge of the Son; but the Father loves to teach the willing, and Christ-seeking soul, the divine and moral glories of that rejected One, who is at once His eternal Son, the lowly Son of Man, and, blessed be His peerless name, the Saviour of the lost.

Do you, my reader, confess that He, the spotless Son of Man, was God's Son, ever God's Son, though born here in time? Good indeed for you is it if you thus confess Him, for it is written, "Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God" (1 John 4: 15). Note, it is the confession of His person, not of His work. There are many who know something of the work of Christ, and tell you they are clinging to the cross, but yet they are full of doubts and fears? Why? I believe the reason is that they have not a deep or adequate conception of the fulness of His person. They have not fully in their souls the sense of the divine glory of His person, as being the Son of the living God, as well as being a true, real, veritable Man, holy and sinless, and hence able to be a sacrifice for sin. To all such I commend the poet's lines: —

"How wondrous the glories that meet
In Jesus, and from His face shine;
His love is eternal and sweet,
'Tis human, 'tis also divine!
His glory — not only God's Son
In manhood He had His full part,
And the union of both joined in one
Forms the fountain of love in His heart."

It is the inscrutability of the glory of His person that is the guarantee to faith of the divinity of Jesus, divinity which His self-renunciation — in emptying Himself and assuming humanity — might have hidden from the eyes of unbelief. But His divinity, and the fact that He is the Son of the living God, is proved by His resurrection from among the dead. The life of God cannot be destroyed, and the Son of the living God cannot be overcome of death; nay, by going into it He overcomes and destroys it. Hence it is as risen from the dead that He begins the work of which He next speaks — the building of His Church.

After saying that the Father had revealed this truth to Peter, the Lord goes on, "And I also say" — not "And I say also," invert those two words, the Father had spoken, and now He Himself has somewhat of grave moment to say to Peter — "I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." What did the Lord mean by this? He confirms Peter in his new name, a stone. But where was this shone to be built? On the rock. "Upon this rock will I build my church." Rome has tried to make out that Peter was the rock. A poor rock would Peter have been! Peter was far too much like you and me. No, no, Peter was a stone, but Christ was the rock, Christ, according to the confession of Peter here, the Son of the *living* God.

Peter is very fond of the word "living." In his epistles we get a "living hope" (1 Peter 1: 3); "a living stone" (1 Peter 2: 4), and "living stones" (1 Peter 2: 5). It is a grand thing, in this world of death, to be introduced into a circle of living realities.

Observe that the Lord says to Peter, "Upon this rock I *will* build my church." It had not been begun to be built then. I think I hear you say, "But I thought the Church began with Abel." Not at all; there had been, without doubt, saints of God from Abel onwards; but when does the Church, the body of Christ, begin? The Church the Lord speaks of here could not be built until the rock — He Himself — had been laid as its foundation, that is, until He Himself had gone into death, annulled it, had come up out of it, and gone into glory, and from the right hand of God had sent down the Holy Ghost to unite believers — now forming His body here — with Himself the living Head there on high.

Remark that it was not Peter who was going to build, it was the Lord who was going to build; and "I *will* build," not "I have been building," are His words. Christ's assembly, His Church, commenced to be formed on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down; and from that day until the moment when the Lord comes into the air to gather up His people (*see* 1 Thess. 4: 15-18), the Church is being formed.

The Church was the peculiar thought of God from all eternity, but the truth about it never was fully unfolded until the apostle Paul's ministry. The first intimation about it that we find in all Scripture, we get, however, here from the lips of the blessed Lord to His beloved servant Peter.

The Lord says further to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven." How did Peter get these keys? By the sovereign grace of Christ undoubtedly, but nevertheless they are committed to a man that is evidently going on. He was a man that was earnestly going forward, and I believe that it is always the man that is earnestly going on, in settled affection to

the person of Christ, who gets light, and gets further truth. Peter, of course, had a very special place given him by the sovereign favour of the Lord, and was in that sense "a chosen vessel," but the character of the man must not be lost sight of.

But do you think, my friend, that Peter had the keys of heaven? God forbid! Peter had no more to do with the keys of heaven than I have; it is "the keys of the *kingdom* of heaven." This kingdom relates to earth, whereas the Church belongs to heaven. The kingdom of heaven is the administration of the Lord's things here on earth, while He, who is the King — as yet unrecognised, and disowned — is in heaven.

In all the great pictures that men have painted you see Peter with the keys hanging at his girdle, and the sheep gathered round about him. But men do not feed sheep with keys, nor do they build with keys. The use of a key is to open a door, and when that is done the key has no more service. The figure has been misconstrued. The Lord Himself was going to heaven, but He was about to have a work carried on here on earth, and through Peter's administration "the kingdom of heaven" — a term only found in Matthew's Gospel, and there never said to be nearer than "at hand" — was to be inaugurated. I believe Peter used one of these keys when he spoke to the Jews in the second of Acts, and he used the other key when he went down to the house of Cornelius in the tenth of Acts. The keynote in Acts 2, when he spoke to the Jews, was "REPENT!" They had to judge themselves, and own their sin in crucifying their Messiah; but when he went to the Gentiles the ward of the key, that fitted the hitherto firmly locked door, that barred them from blessing was "BELIEVE." "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever *believeth* in him shall receive remission of sins."

The Lord further says to Peter: "And whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." This is a question of administration, on earth, and in the assembly, not of how a man gets to heaven. Peter gets a peculiar place of administration down here on earth, to act in the assembly for Christ, as the whole believing company does afterwards (see John 20: 23).

If you want to go to heaven, you must get to Peter's Saviour, and let Him save you, as He did Peter; and if you get into His assembly on earth, you must be careful to walk rightly, or you may fall into that which will dishonour the Lord, and bring you under the solemn exercise of the authority thus committed to the assembly, to bind the sin upon you in putting you away from its midst (*see* 1 Cor. 5: 13).

From this moment the Lord alters the character of the testimony concerning Himself, and "charged his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Messiah." From that moment He forbade them to preach Him as being the Messiah. Why? He knew the nation would not believe, and He never likes to give more light when it is rejected, because the greater the light the greater the judgment. Then we read: "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." So far from taking the kingdom, He announces plainly that He is going to die. This Peter could not understand, so took Him, and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee." He could not understand that the Lord must die. How the one who could heal the sick, cleanse

the leper, open the eyes of the blind, make the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak, still the storm, and raise the dead to life again — how He could die, Peter saw not, hence he says, "This shall not be unto thee, Lord."

What a volume of instruction is in the Lord's answer as "He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me." A moment before it had been: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona;" and now, favoured disciple as he was, the Lord treats him as Satan, because He saw behind this dear disciple's words, the temptation of Satan himself. Yes, it was the enemy using Peter as a vessel. Satan can often make even a servant of God do his dire work. But the Lord saw the author of the suggestion, and He says, "Get thee behind me, Satan." If we are going to follow Christ, we must accept His pathway of shame and sorrow here. If we refuse the cross, we shall not have the crown. If we refuse to follow a rejected Lord, we shall not know much of the joy of His company. "If any one will come after me," He then adds, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." Poignant words for Peter to hear, and equally addressed to us.

Then Jesus says, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul!" Oh, my friend, what will it profit you if you lose your soul? What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Only think of the blackness of despair that must seize the soul that has lost everything. The things for which you have bartered your soul, you must leave them all, and then lose your soul too. Ah! my unsaved reader, you are paying a terrible price for those pleasures of sin which endure for a season. You are going on with the world, and the flesh, and the devil, and you are denying yourself heaven, and glory, and eternal joy, and the company of Christ. And the Christian, what is he doing? He is denying himself certainly the pleasures of sin for a season, but he is denying himself also a thorny pillow on his dying bed, he is denying himself the judgment of God, and denying himself an eternal hell. Surely, my friend, the Christian has the best of it. When are you going to be one?

After these pointed queries, the Lord reveals the future blessedness of those that are His, as He says, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, and then shall he reward every man according to his works," adding "There be some standing here which shall not taste of death till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."

The meaning of these words we shall find in our next chapter.

CHAPTER 7 — THE TRANSFIGURATION, AND THE TRIBUTE.

Matt. 17

IN our last chapter the Lord, in speaking to His disciples, and telling them what the consequences would be of following Him, namely, that necessarily reproach and shame would be their portion, points them on to the future. In Matt. 16: 27 He casts the eye of the one who would follow Him on to the future, in order to give a stimulus for devotion in the pathway now,

saying, "When the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels, then he shall reward every man according to his works." According to what we have been for Christ now, will be the reward in that day. If we have not been true to Christ now, He must withhold reward then, which will not be a joy to His heart, I need scarcely say. How necessary therefore to seek to be for Him now!

In the last verse of chapter 16 the Lord had said, "There be some standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." (Matt. 16: 28) Now this has been a difficulty to many. He has not yet come in His kingdom, and how then could any, who stood there that day, not taste of death till they had seen it? He has not yet come in His glory, and yet all who stood there that day have long since passed off this scene. I have no doubt that the first verse of Matthew 17 gives us the solution of the difficulty.

Three of those who stood there that day saw a picture of the establishment of the kingdom. The Lord did not say "*all* standing here," but "*some*." If you turn to Peter's second epistle you will be assured that the interpretation I have given of this is the truth. "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount" (2 Peter 1: 16-18). Peter here gives the explanation of what he saw on the holy mount. And what was it? They were "eyewitnesses of his majesty;" in other words, the Lord's words were fulfilled, that some of them should not taste of death till they saw the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. It was a little miniature view and foreshadowing of the coming kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord was rejected, but He was coming back to this earth to establish His kingdom, and He chose to show to those favoured three a picture of that kingdom.

It was a perfect miniature picture of the kingdom; Moses was there, a figure of those who have died and gone into the grave, and will be raised by the Lord; Elijah, a figure of those who will never die at all, but will be caught up alive — though changed — to meet the Lord in the air when He comes for His saints; and Peter, James, and John, figures of the living saints, on earth, in the millennial day.

The account of the transfiguration is related in all the synoptic gospels. John does not give it, however. His gospel is full of the moral glory of the Lord, not that manifested external and visible glory which Matthew, Mark, and Luke all describe, but each with a little difference. Luke says, "It came to pass, about an *eight* days after these sayings" (9: 28). Both Matthew and Mark say, "And after six days." Is there any discrepancy? Not a bit! Matthew, who is writing from a Jewish point of view, where the seventh day is the day of glory, says "*After* six days;" Luke, who is looking at things from another, a resurrection aspect, which the eighth day indicates, says, "*about* an eight days." Both are correct. Matthew does not include the two terminal days, while Luke does so. Exactly six days — complete days — intervened between the prophecy and its fulfilment. There is no discrepancy or mistake in this, or in any other scripture. All the fancied mistakes are in those who read God's Word, not in the Word itself.

When the Lord took His disciples up into the mountain it was night, and the disciples evidently had all gone to sleep, "for when they were awake," Luke says, "they saw his glory, and the two men that stood with him." Evidently this display of the Son of Man in glory had been going on some time before they awoke to see it. The Lord had gone up to the mountain "to pray," and while that lowly dependent Man prayed, His prayer continuing far into the night, His three disciples slept. While they slept, all this transcendent glory, "received from God the Father," shone around the blessed Son of Man. It was not the essential and divine glory of His being which was here allowed to break through the veil He had cast over it for so many years. No, it was the glory He had earned as Son of Man, that He then received from the Father. Peter, alas! was so little in communion with the Father about all this deserved glory, brighter far than sunlight, that he got his eyes on the two stars Moses and Elias, and spoke most unwisely, as we shall see.

It must have been a glorious vision! "Jesus . . . was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light" (Matt. 17: 2). "His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them" (Mark 9: 3). "And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening" (Luke 9: 29). And when these three sleeping men are awake, they see their Lord thus transfigured, but not alone, Moses and Elias talked with Him. I think it is delightful to notice the sense that Moses and Elias had of what suited Christ at the moment. Poor Peter, waking out of sleep, spoke most unwisely, putting the Lord on a dead level with Moses and Elias. They were two heads of Jewish history. Moses was the lawgiver, and Elias the reformer. Moses had died, and been buried by the Lord's own hand; Elias had never died, but had been caught up to heaven in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2: 11). He had endeavoured to recall an apostate people to the law, which they had forsaken; but he failed, and fled to Horeb, from whence the law had been given, "and, requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers" (1 Kings 19: 4). But God's answer was, so to speak, I'll take you to heaven without dying. Now, lawgiver and reformer re-appear together with the Messiah on the mount of glory, and speak "of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." They speak not of His glory, nor of His kingdom, but of what they were in the sense of at that moment, namely, that He was going to lay down His life for those who were His. It is sweet to see how, in company with the Lord, the heart learns what suits Him.

You have then in Matt. 17 a miniature picture of the coming kingdom of the Lord Jesus. The heavenly side of it is typified by Moses, — the man who had died and been raised out of death; and by Elijah, — the man who had been taken up to heaven without dying. These two picture the heavenly saints, — some raised from the dead, others changed and caught up at the second coming of the Lord. Then you have the earthly side of the kingdom portrayed in Peter, James, and John, even as there will be earthly saints by-and-by, who, though not in the highest position, nevertheless will bask in the light of the glory of the Son of Man, when His kingdom is established.

Moses and Elias are seen here occupied only with Jesus. Personal identification, one learns from this scene, will remain in the day of the kingdom, whether in its heavenly or earthly side, although much that marks us as men down here will have passed away, thank God. Still I take it we shall know each other, while being *occupied* fully and only with the Lord Himself.

Peter was not exactly in this state here, as the scene of glory bursts on him, for he said unto Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias" (Matt. 17: 4). Luke adds, "Not knowing what he said" (Luke 9: 33); while Mark reads that "he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid" (Luke 9: 6). This only shows how dangerous a thing it is for the saint to speak unless he has the assured sense that he has the Lord's mind in what he says.

Moses and Elias are talking with the Lord about His decease, to be accomplished, when Peter, "not knowing what he said" (*see* Luke 9: 33), but evidently enraptured with the sight of Lawgiver, Reformer, and Messiah, standing together, desires the kingdom to be established then and there, so says to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." But in this he is putting the Son of God, the Saviour, Moses, the lawgiver, and Elijah, the reformer, all on one dead level, and God could not stand that. Immediately, therefore, "a bright cloud overshadowed them," and a voice breaks forth from the cloud, and says, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

Peter no doubt rejoiced greatly when he saw the Messiah, the lawgiver, and the reformer, all together. What he would have liked was to perpetuate this blessed meeting. He desired that it should last. He got back much into the spirit he was in when the Lord had said to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Peter, who had fallen at the Lord's feet and worshipped Him, who had confessed "Thou art the Christ the Son of the living God," now seems as though all these lessons were lost, and he would put the Son of God on a dead level with His servants, beloved men though they might be. But the Father could not brook such an insult to His beloved Son, and all at once "a bright cloud overshadowed *them*: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (ver. 5). What was the bright cloud? I believe it was the Shekinah of glory, that which is the Father's house to us. Moses and Elias were enfolded by, and hidden in that cloud, which to us is the Father's house. And the disciples feared as Moses and Elias entered into that cloud. To be thus near to God was beyond their faith or expectation. But what a lesson is taught by this. Moses's day had gone by; Elijah's day had for ever rolled away; but there now is One, in whom the Father ever has His delight, and His voice says most emphatically, "Hear him." At His baptism the Father only said, "This is my beloved Son." He did not then say, "Hear him." It is supposed that every one would hear Him. But here, where rivals have cropped up, where others are put on a level with Him, the Father's voice is heard saying, "Hear him."

At the present day men are not clamouring for three tabernacles, but, alas! they often cry aloud for two; for the law is frequently put on a level with Christ. But all truth now is focused in the Son of God. The law was the expression of the claim of God upon man, but the day of the law is gone by. It has to give place to the full and perfect revelation of all that God is, and of all the blessed relationships with the Father and the Son which flow from accomplished redemption. Hence Paul says, "Ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Rom. 6: 14). Is it the Lord Himself that we are now to listen to? Are we yielding our hearts to be led by His blessed voice into nearness of intimacy with the Father?

Peter most certainly does not shine here. Moses was the lawgiver, but the law could not save a man. Elijah was the reformer, but reformation cannot save a man. Only Jesus, the Son of God, can save; but, blessed be His name, He saves any and every man that comes to Him. Will you not come to Him, my friend? God emphatically says, "Hear ye him." There is only one voice to be listened to now, and that is the voice of His beloved Son, "hear him."

When Peter and his fellow-disciples heard these words they fell on their face, and were sore afraid, but Jesus touched them, saying, "Arise, and be not afraid." Why should they be? Looking up, "they saw no man save Jesus only." Of Him none need be afraid. Have you heard His voice yet, my friend? "The hour is coming, and now is," the Lord says, "when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live." The Lord grant that you may listen to His voice now, yes, hear, believe, and live. The voice of Moses may arouse you, that of Elijah deepen your sense of sin, but the voice of Jesus will sweetly calm your troubled heart if you hear it.

Peter, ere he writes his Epistles, has learnt his lesson; he is delighting in Him, and therefore he only quotes the words, "This is my beloved Son;" he does not add, "Hear him;" for really his heart was now fully in communion with God. I have an object, says God, down there upon earth, who fills my heart with joy and delight; and Peter's affections are fully responsive.

We think it strange to read that the disciples "feared as they (Moses and Elias) entered into the cloud." They had no need, for the more we know what it is to dwell in the Father's presence the happier for our hearts will it be. But the lesson they had to learn here was that, though they might disappear, Jesus abides. "And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only." Ah! that is very sweet. Moses may go and Elias may go, but if you have Jesus left you have everything your heart can desire.

Have you found out yet what it is to have Jesus only for your heart, or is somebody or something else absolutely essential to your happiness? If so, it will be an awful day for you when that person is taken away. Your heart will be left utterly desolate then, for you have not found out what it is to have Jesus as the incomparable One.

If you have Jesus first in the bright day, you will have Him first, I need not say, in the dark day. The crash may come, you know not how soon, but if you have Jesus your heart cannot be desolate and lonely.

"And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead" (Matt. 17: 9). Mark adds, that they questioned "What the rising from the dead should mean" (Mark 9: 10). It is not the rising of the dead that they questioned, every Jew understood that, but His rising from among the dead, His being taken out *from among* the dead as the mark of the special favour of God, and as the firstfruits and pattern of those who shall also be thus taken out.

The lesson which Peter learned of his Master's glory, and of His personal worth on the mount, is followed by a deep attestation thereof a little later. We will look for a moment at the incident connected with the tribute money in the end of this 17th chapter of Matthew.

Capernaum (Matt. 17: 24) is, I have no doubt, the city that is called the Lord's "own city" (Matt. 9: 1). It is in a man's own city that taxes are levied on him. The tribute spoken of is not the tax the Romans imposed, but was *temple* tribute, a didrachma, a piece of money worth fifteen pence, which every Jew paid towards the support of the temple; and the question put, as they that received the didrachma came to Peter and said, "Doth not your master pay tribute?" (ver. 24) was really this, Is your master a good Jew? *My* Master a good Jew? says the impulsive Peter, of course He is! Peter, anxious for his Master's reputation as a good and devoted Jew, immediately replies "Yes" to the collector's query. This question, and Peter's answer, both took place outside the house, away from the Lord; and when Peter comes in, the Lord demonstrates that He is far more than man, yea, that He is God, by showing what was in Peter's heart, and letting out that He knew what he was thinking about.

The blessed Lord without giving Peter a chance to speak, at once says, "What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free" (Matt. 17: 25, 26). The Lord is going to show Peter now who the children are. Who was the Great King? God. And who was the Son of the Great King? He Himself was. But He is also going to show Peter that He and Peter together were both children of the Great King! He puts Himself and Peter together, as he says, "Lest *we* should offend them." And let me say there is a great principle involved here. Do you say, I must stand up for my rights? Then you must stand alone, the Lord will not stand with you. He was the Son of the Great King, and therefore *free*; but "lest we should offend," he says to Peter, "go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a stater: that take, and give unto them for *me and thee*" (Matt. 17: 27). Go, He says, to the sea again, from which I called you, Peter, and you will find a fish, that will give you up the exact piece of money, that will pay *your* tribute and *mine*.

It is well to note that the stater, which Peter found in the fish's mouth, was exactly two didrachmas. Here Jesus puts himself and Peter once more together! He shows He *knew* everything, as He told what was in Peter's heart, and what had gone on outside the door; and He shows He could do everything, as He commands the fish of the sea to give up the tribute money. "The fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea," according to the eighth Psalm, were all under His control, and His direction. As Son of Man, and at the fitting moment, He can order the fish of the sea to give up what He needed at that moment. I know nothing more lovely than the way in which He puts Himself with Peter here, as he says, "That give for *me and thee*."

It is precious to see the way in which He shows that we are to be united to Him, and linked with Him, and therefore in the whole of our pathway we are to walk with Him, and to be led by Him.

The lessons Peter learns in this chapter are very blessed, and very sweet for our souls too if we are prepared to learn them, and to walk with Him, and to go with Him. The Lord help us to for His Name's sake.

CHAPTER 8 — FEET-WASHING.

John 13

THIS chapter occupies a peculiar place in the Gospel. The Lord's earthly history is over, one might say, and He anticipates in this chapter, and the four that follow, the cross, and what were to be the legitimate results of the cross, on which He glorifies God fully. Here, when about to leave the earth, He introduces the disciples into association with Himself, into the new and heavenly place that, as man, He is about to take. They had thought of Him as the Messiah, about to set up the kingdom on earth: He the King, and they profoundly blessed with Him. That is now all over, and here in the thirteenth chapter, as passing out of the scene, He intimates to the disciples what He would be to them, and what they were to be for Him. On earth He had been their companion; He could be it in this sense on earth no longer. He is going to show them how He can take them where He is going, and fit them to be there.

Jesus here takes on Himself peculiarly the place of a servant. He is perfectly their servant; He who was Lord of all. He is never going to cease to be the servant of His people. "Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end" (John 13: 1). There is no end to the love of the blessed Lord; His circumstances may change, but there is no change in His love.

We have the Lord here as the perfect antitype of the Hebrew servant in Exodus 21. He might have gone out free, but then must have left his wife and children behind. "If the servant shall plainly say, I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free: . . . then his master shall bore his ear through with an awl; and he shall serve him for ever" (Ex. 21: 5, 6). He will not be separated from those He loves, and that really is the meaning of John 13.

Jesus is going to take His loved ones, to be with Himself, in the place to which He is going, on the ground of redemption. There is a noticeable point in connection with this paschal supper, and the feet-washing viz., those who prepared it. Matthew informs us (Matt. 26: 17-19) that the disciples inquired of the Lord where they should prepare for Him to eat, and He told them, but none are named. Mark, in relating the same occurrence (Mark 14: 12-16), says, "He sendeth forth two of his disciples." Luke supplies their names: "And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat" (Luke 22: 8). John, who had been associated with Peter in this sweet service, with his accustomed diffidence and hiding of himself, makes no allusion to the preparation of the supper, in which he had had a hand, but records the touching fact — and he is the only evangelist that does — that ere they partook, the blessed Lord Himself washed their feet, soiled doubtless in this very service, and, thus refreshed, rendered them the better able to enjoy it. Little doubt have I that Peter greatly enjoyed thus serving His Lord, though he shrank, as we shall see, from His lowly grace that sought to wash his defiled, and possibly wearied feet.

This supper scene is replete with the grace and love of Jesus. It is the evening before His death, and "supper being ended" everything was ready: even the base turpitude of Judas was consummated. Jesus knew He was going to depart out of this world, so rising from supper He performs an action most blessed and instructive. "He riseth from supper and laid aside his

garments; and took a towel and girded himself," — i.e., He assumes the place of the servant, — "After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded" (John 13: 4, 5). It was the habit of the country that if a man bade you to his house, the first thing he would do was to provide water for the feet. In Gen. 18: 3, 4, Abraham did; in Luke 7 the Lord reproaches Simon that he did not. The Lord takes here the place of host, and provides the water, and He takes also the slave's post, and washes their feet. The Lord of glory stoops down and washes the feet of these twelve men. It was perfect grace; He who was God stooping down and becoming a man, and then as man stooping to do an action few of us would have grace to do. Then, refreshed and comforted, He desired that His own should partake of the feast to which He had invited them. He ever desires to make His people profoundly restful.

Peter, true to his character, comes forward, and, speaking after the manner of men, says, "Lord, dost thou wash my feet?" It was incomprehensible to him. It was lowering Himself on the Lord's part: that was Peter's thought, the thought of man, for we do not know how to stoop naturally — only grace, only real loftiness can do it. But Peter's speaking out what was in his heart, becomes the means of developing, from the Lord, precious blessed truth. "Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter" (John 13: 7). It was not till the Holy Ghost came down that there was the spiritual intelligence to learn the meaning of this action. All through the Lord's life His words were misunderstood. Until there be the possession of the Holy Ghost there will never be the knowledge of the mind and ways of God. The possession of life does not mean power, and intelligence — it is the possession of the Holy Ghost that marks the difference between saints now, and those of bye-gone times.

The answer of Jesus discloses the spiritual meaning of what He was doing, a meaning Peter could not then understand, hence he says, "Thou shalt never wash my feet;" but "Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." You see man was in a condition of sin and ruin here, with which Christ could have no part. You must be dependent on me, He therefore says, to fit you to be in the place to which I am going.

Unless I am cleansed by the blood of Christ in the first instance, and know the cleansing power of the water, I have no part with Christ. He died to make me clean, and He lives to keep me clean. Unless washed in His blood. first of all, there can be no link with Him, and unless there be the maintenance of this state, by the washing of the water, there can be no part with Him. Peter then says, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head," He is like many Christians now, they have been washed in the Saviour's blood, and know it: are forgiven, and know it; but if the conscience gets defiled, then they think they must go back and be washed again in the blood; but that would reduce the blood of Christ to a level with the blood of bulls and goats in Old Testament history. Now the blessed truth is that, "This man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God" (Heb. 10: 12). The efficacy of that blood always abides before God, and the possibility of the soul being re-washed in that blood is for ever precluded. It was the imperfection of the Old Testament sacrifice that made its repetition necessary. It is the perfection of Jesus' sacrifice that makes its repetition impossible. You say, What about the daily failure? That is what this chapter speaks of: that is the cleansing by *water*, not *blood*, and is by the Word of God. Water gives the sense of purification. Peter says, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit," etc. (1 Peter 1: 22). I

do not doubt that *water* is the Word of God applied by the Spirit; it carries the thought of purification by the Word of God, which comes to, and judges me thoroughly.

This is brought out in the Lord's reply to Peter. "Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean" (vers. 10, 11).

There are two different words used by the Lord here for "wash." The first word carries with it the thought of cleansing by immersion in the great Roman bath, used in the morning for the whole body; but then, through the day, it was a constant and common thing to have the feet refreshed by being washed, and here the word used is that which applied to anything small.

The water itself, employed here or elsewhere as a figure, signifies purification by the Word, applied in the power of the Spirit. When one is "born of water, and of the Spirit" (John 3: 5), then the whole body is washed. There is a purification of thoughts, and of the actions likewise, by means of an object which forms and governs the heart. This is necessarily connected with the work of Christ on the cross, and the blood of atonement. If a believer at all, you are cleansed by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, — and you start "clean every whit," — whiter than the driven snow by the Saviour's precious blood. You have been bathed by that which has removed every trace of defilement, so that Christ can say "clean every whit"; but since we walk through a defiled, and defiling world, "he that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet." What do you understand by the feet? It is the walk. As we pass through this scene we do contract defilement. This does not suit God's house, and must therefore be remedied. The love of the Lord supplies the remedy. He washes our feet. He uses only water to do it too. Once the soul has been converted it cannot be repeated; once the Word has been applied by the Holy Ghost, the work is done, and it cannot be undone, any more than the sprinkling of the blood can be repeated, or renewed. I cannot be born again twice, or be washed from my sins in the blood of Christ twice. "Once" is the word Scripture uses in this respect: but I may sin and defile my feet, and my communion with God may be interrupted. Then it is that the Saviour's tender love is seen in restoration. He uses the basin and the towel now, although He is in glory.

How does He effect this? Always by the Word of God — water. How that Word may reach us is quite another matter. It may have been in private, when no eye was upon us but His own, and no voice heard but His, through the written page of Scripture; or, on the other hand, we may have been refreshed or comforted, or our consciences reached, through the public exercise of a brother's ministry. Where has the word come from that has touched our hearts? From the Lord; it is the present ministry of Christ. We are more inclined to look at the vessel He uses, — so to speak, that which holds the water, — the basin, but it is really the Lord who is ministering to us. He has his eye on each sheep, and He knows just what each sheep wants, and He knows how to speak the word which shall refresh the heart, and remove defilement.

But perhaps some one will ask, "What is this thirteenth of John — this feet-washing — is it priesthood or advocacy?" The difference is important! Both offices have to do with Christ's intercession for us. Priesthood is exercised that we may not sin, advocacy is for sins that have been committed, that communion may be restored. Here it is more the character of advocacy. It is the ministry of His perfect love that cannot rest unless He has His people near Him, and unless

He removes every thing that could keep them at a distance. Those you love you like to have near you, and your love is never more gratified than when those you love count on your love, and more, use it! For love likes to serve, and selfishness likes to be served. Love that serves always gets refreshed, and he that waters others gets refreshed himself.

The difference between the priesthood and advocacy of the Lord Jesus is very important to be clear about. Priesthood maintains the soul before God. It does not contemplate failure. I am maintained in all the strength of His shoulder, and the affections of His heart before God, in all the efficacy of the work that He did before He became a Priest, for he was not a Priest upon earth.

In 1 John 2: you find what an advocate is. It is the same word as is rendered Comforter in John 14, 15, 16. The Christian has two Comforters, one in heaven, and one in earth. In heaven the Comforter, the Lord Jesus, is before the Father. On earth the Comforter, the Holy Ghost, dwells in the body of the believer in the Lord Jesus. The Lord never ceases to love, and the Holy Ghost never leaves the believer. If I think of the Lord on high, or of the Spirit on earth, both are busy with the interests and blessing of those whom they serve.

In John's first epistle we read that we are not to sin: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye *sin not*. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2: 1). In the seventh verse of the first chapter, it says, "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." That is the continuously abiding character of the blood, that has made you clean, and keeps you clean. It is the blood that keeps you clean before God, in divine righteousness; it is the water that keeps you clean as to your conscience, and fits you for communion. "If we say that we have *no sin* we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." If I say I have *no sins*, it is true, because Christ bore them and put them away; but if I say I have *no sin*, the truth is not in me, for that is my *nature* as a child of Adam, and the flesh is still in me. If it acts I at once have sins, of which God and the conscience are cognisant. How then do we as believers get rid of these daily sins? "If we *confess* our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1: 9). That supposes the possibility of a Christian sinning, which necessarily interrupts his communion. What is the way for him to get rid of his sin? How can he get back? If he endeavours to go back to God, saying, as of old, "I am a lost sinner," he will never get restoration that way. Why? Because he is not a lost sinner, he is a defiled child, a naughty child. That soul never gets right till it comes back in the acknowledgement of its true relationship, which, thank God, its sinful ways have not destroyed, and says, Father, I have been a naughty child. The man that is right before God confesses his sin, and then he learns what forgiveness is.

Merely asking for forgiveness, and the confession of sins, are two different things. Confession involves real exercise, and brings with it blessing. The mere asking for forgiveness is often only skin-deep. Confession must be individual. It is the individual who has failed, and he confesses his sin to his Father. The man who says he has "no *sin*," has not the truth in him. This should cause some latter-day perfectionists to call a halt, and see the solemn ground they are really on. The man who says he has "not sinned" makes God "a liar" (1 John 1: 10), for He asserts that "all have sinned" (Rom. 3: 23), and every person would do well to ponder this statement. But there is perfect relief here for the erring or backsliding saint, the one who has

been a naughty child. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." He is faithful and just to Christ, who has died for these sins. The man who really seeks this relief says, "I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord;" and what did he find? "*Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin*" (Ps. 32: 5).

But there is something further than this. We ought not to sin, and there is no reason that we should sin. The flesh in you does not give you a bad conscience, but if you let it act, it gives you a bad conscience. "He that saith he abideth in him, ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (1 John 2: 6). The Christian's life is Christ, and his power is the Holy Ghost, and Paul says, "I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4: 13). If I sin, the blessed Advocate on high does His intercessory work that I may be restored. He takes the initiative in grace, as we see in Peter's own case later on. The result of His advocacy I believe is that the Holy Ghost puts the sin on my conscience, communion is interrupted, and not restored, until I confess it to the Father, and thus get my conscience relieved, and cleansed through the purifying effect of the Word. Communion with God is then restored.

Before Peter sinned Jesus prayed, and when Peter sinned and denied his Master, the Lord turned and looked on Peter. The procuring cause of Peter's restoration was the Lord's prayer, but the producing means of Peter's restoration was the Lord's look on him in Pilate's hall.

The washing of the feet therefore is a service with which Christ is now occupied for us. If negligent — for which there is no cause, or excuse, or need — we defile our feet, are thereby rendered spiritually unfit to enter into God's presence; Christ thereupon cleanses us by the Word, so that our communion with our God and Father may be re-established.

Having resumed His garments, we find the Lord urging on His disciples to "do as I have done to you." "If I then your Lord and Master have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13: 14). That is we ought to be able and willing to help each other. It is not feet-washing to point out the fault of another. If you are going to wash another's feet, you must get down low enough yourself. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13: 17). I think the secret of a good deal of want of happiness lies in this. We are not doing this. If we were more desirous, in the spirit of meekness, to take the spot off some erring child of God, we should know more what this means. We are still called to wash one another's feet, to apply the Word in grace to the conscience of an erring brother or sister who needs it. But to really do this we must be in the humility of Christ, so blessedly shown in this heart-touching scene.

I am much struck with the way in which the history of Peter fills up the gospels, and how much of instruction, deep and blessed instruction, we owe to him. His questions, his mistakes, his assertions, and his varied impulsive actions, are all marked and striking means of drawing out from the Lord much that is blessed and profitable for us.

Some of these questions appear in John 13, but these, with others scattered through the Gospel narratives, we will reserve for our next chapter.