

Lecture 10 — The Calf and the Camp.

Ex. 32, 33; Heb. 13: 8-16.

from 'The Church: What is it?'

Ten lectures on the church of the New Testament seen to be established, endowed, united and free.

W. T. P. Wolston, M.D., 1905.

Our inquiry as to What is the Church? has led us to see what it was as God set it up, what it has become in man's hand, and what it will yet be according to God's purpose. The question now arises, in view of all the ruin and confusion around us, Is there a path for the faithful heart that seeks to walk with God and maintain the truth today? Depend upon it there is. There is a striking verse in the tenth chapter of First Corinthians which I will ask you to look at, where the apostle Paul, reviewing, in a figurative way, the history of Israel, says, "Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (ver. 11). If the Spirit of God wrote Israel's history "for our admonition," we all need to heed what He tells us, and should seek to learn the lesson thereby inculcated.

Now the Old Testament is the picture book of Christ in some way or other. You get either some presentation of Christ — what He is personally, or what His work was in type or shadow — or there is presented to us the history of God's professing people as they pass through this scene. Israel in the wilderness. is, typically speaking, the description of where you and I find ourselves today. It is the place where they were tested, where they learned themselves, and where they learned God. So we, you, I, all of us, are certainly learning ourselves. Whether we are learning God and His mind is another question.

Now I think, beloved friends, it is a great thing to heed the principles which Scripture unfolds. And, in what I now speak of, you will see the importance of what I may call a spiritual mind. That is to say, there will be action on the part of a spiritual person for which there was no direct command, as we shall see presently in Moses' case. But first of all you get this great and oft-repeated thought in the Old Testament, that if there be among His people that which does not suit God, He must withdraw Himself. And if He withdraw, His people who are faithful to Him must withdraw also from that which does not suit Him, if they wish for His company.

Moses describes this most strikingly in the chapter I have just read: "For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth" (Ex. 33: 16). God separates His people from the world. That is the great point. It is found all through Scripture. Take the history of Abraham. What happened in his history happens in Israel's. When did God call out Abraham? When idolatry came in (see Joshua 24: 2, 3). God said

to him, "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house" (Gen. 12: 1). He went out in the obedience of faith, and became the father of them that believe. When God spoke, he responded in the obedience of faith.

Moses has a very remarkable place in Israel's history as a man and as a leader, and there is something very beautiful in the way in which God speaks about Moses in connection with Jesus, of Whom it is written, "For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses" (Heb. 3: 3). Had Moses glory? Indeed he had. Moral glory frequently covered Moses, and I think there is no place in which it shines out more than in the chapters before us. Moses in the course of his history refuses many things. You all know the start of the man. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, *refused* to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter" (Heb. 11: 24). The first thing is this, he refused the world. Well, I do not think that is so very difficult. If you have really reached Christ, if you have seen the beauty and glory of Christ, it is not very difficult to refuse the world. It is eclipsed. I found, when I was converted, that the thing I was in before was a hindrance to the new sphere of joy and delight in the Lord, into which the grace of God had brought me. To refuse the world is of deep importance to every one who would be God's servant. Well, that is the first thing. With Moses it was the first step in the right direction.

Now in the chapter that is before us tonight — Exodus 32 — you will see another thing, which really showed where his heart was. He had been upon the mount for forty days, and what was he then learning with God? I daresay many of us have thought he went up to receive the law. No doubt he did. But that was not all that was in God's mind. He did receive it, but it never reached Israel as pure law. The thing that God really had in His mind reached Israel, but not the bare tables of stone. What Moses got as the expression of God's mind was that lovely picture — the tabernacle. Moses was hearing about Christ for forty days and forty nights, and when it was all over God gave him the tables of stone. He called him up to see patterns of Christ. The tabernacle and all its furniture; the ark, the mercy-seat, the altar of incense, the veil, the candlestick, the table of showbread, and all connected with it, the laver and the altar of burnt offering outside were these. It was the most blessed presentation of Christ in shadow. And then Moses comes down with that in his heart and the tables of stone in his hand.

But what had taken place while he was up on the mount? Now here is a most humbling picture. Whatever is put into man's hand is always spoiled and lost. Because, unless divine things are held in faith, they will very soon give way. "And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him" (Ex. 32: 1). Instead of quietly waiting for Moses, as you and I have to wait for the Lord's return, they became restless. We have to wait in faith. We have the Holy Ghost, and the enjoyment of Christ, but outwardly we have nothing to show, and therefore the path of the Christian is a path of faith.

Well, they could not wait, flesh works, and you get this dreadful statement, "Up, make us gods, which shall go before us." What was that? Nothing in the world but unbelief, leading to idolatry and apostasy. Do I hear you say, "I cannot understand that"? Can you not? It is a very striking thing that the Spirit of God should tell you and me it is written for our admonition, so we ought to make sure that we do understand it. Do you know that you and I could do the same?

"Oh," you say, "impossible." No, it is just the very thing we are apt to do in principle. You and I like what we can see. You like something you can lean upon. Flesh, nature likes what it can lean upon. And the invisible God is given up. It was seeing the invisible God that always sustained Moses. But Israel wanted something they could see. And you will find that is what is all around in Christendom today. In the things of God let us have something we can see. Israel desired the same, and behold a golden calf was made by Aaron's hands.

When you ponder it though, what a terrible revelation of the heart of man is in that scene at Mount Sinai. Then they said, "Make us gods;" and further on they say, "Let us make a captain" (Num. 14: 4). In all our hearts is the tendency to seek someone we can rest upon, and to find a person who can lead us and guide us; i.e., a person who will take us off the ground of simple faith in God. Moses even says presently to Hobab, "Thou mayest be to us instead of eyes" (Num. 10: 31). He was not free of the danger.

When Moses came down from the mount he said to Aaron, "What did this people unto thee, that thou hast brought so great a sin upon them?" (ver. 21). What does Aaron say? "And I said unto them, Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me: then I cast it into the fire, and there came out this calf" (ver. 24). As though the calf had made itself and come out! The Spirit of God is careful to tell us he made it with "a graving tool" (ver. 4). It is very easy to use a graving tool today, unless we are watchful and dependent. What is the graving tool? I shall not tell you what yours is. It is that with which man's hand can work, in divine things, the outcome of which is something on which the eye can rest, which will relieve the exercise of walking in faith in the living God.

God's eye saw what had happened in the camp that day, just as He sees the corruption of Christendom today, and said to Moses: "Go, get thee down; for thy people which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (vers. 7, 8). In plain language they had dropped into idolatry, and God had been completely set aside. The Lord then says to Moses: "I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiff-necked people. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation" (vers. 9, 10). That "let me alone" spoke volumes. It was God saying to His dear servant, I know you have a true heart for Me and My people. Was not that a splendid chance for Moses, if he had not been what he was? If there had been self-importance in that dear man of God, what a fine opportunity for him. He could easily have stood up and said, "Well, the people have brought this judgment on themselves, and I could not help it, and now God is going to make something of me, I will take it." I think it is so lovely of Moses, he refuses. He refuses himself He refused the world when in Egypt, that was the first thing, and now he refuses himself. What a lesson for all God's servants! It is like Christ. He is a picture of Christ in that.

What Moses then does is very striking. He turns to God and beseeches Him in the most lovely way, and suggests to Him what would happen if He did not carry Israel into the land of promise. What would the Egyptians say? (ver. 12). Again, God would lose His character, break His word, and fail in His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (ver. 13). And he, as it were,

says to the Lord, "It will never do, Lord." The fact was this, he was tenderly careful for God's glory on the one hand, and most solicitous in love and affection for God's people on the other. The effect was, "And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people" (ver. 14).

Thereafter Moses comes down with the tables of stone, and if he had been earnest and zealous for the people God-ward, at the top of the mount, see how zealous he is for God when he comes down from the mount. That is the perfection of a servant of God, and the perfection of a saint. We have to see how things suit God on the one hand, and how they affect the people of God on the other hand. The maintenance of that beautiful and holy principle in this man's soul is easily apparent,

"And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses' anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount" (ver. 19). Law, pure and simple, was never found among the people, else they could not have been carried on. But it is very striking to observe that, before the law was brought to them, or the tabernacle set up, the calf had got into the midst of God's people. Their hearts had been turned aside. Then Moses "took the calf which they had made, and burnt it in the fire, and ground it to powder, and strawed it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink it" (ver. 20). He sought to make them feel their sin. If I have gone wrong in the things of God, what a happy thing it is if any brother can so bring it home to me, that I see it, feel it, and, in that sense, have to drink it. Israel thereby were compelled to own before God what sinners they had been.

"Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him" (ver. 26). That was the reason why Levi, later, got the priesthood. You will find this if you turn to the thirty-third chapter of Deuteronomy, which illustrates a very fine principle, viz., that faithfulness to God is always rewarded; whether then or now is equally true. "And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummin and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children; for they have *observed thy word*, and kept thy covenant. They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar. Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again" (Deut. 33: 8-11). There you see the blessing of Moses, and he blesses Levi not merely on the ground of the purpose and intention of God, but because they had earned it by faithfulness in a day of general departure from God.

"Who is on the Lord's side?" was then the query and challenge to the faithful. Levi steps out, girds his sword by his side, and goes in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp slaying every man, his brother, his companion, and his neighbour. There was a sense of what was due to God, and what suited God. There sprang up the sense in Levi's mind that God was being insulted, and that God's glory had been traduced, when the people had got so low as to not only disobey His word (see (Ex. 20: 4), but had actually "changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass" (Ps. 106: 20). The sons of Levi were in the mind of God, Who must judge

evil. It was terrible work, still they did it. And the result? They got into that peculiar place of blessing of which the chapter in Deuteronomy has spoken.

And now Moses turns again to the Lord in intercession. He says first to the people, "Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord., *peradventure* I shall make an atonement for your sin" (ver 30). And then, "Moses returned unto the Lord, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold; yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin — ; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written" (vers. 31, 32). How striking the contrast here between Moses and Jesus. What does Moses do? He comes down in hot anger, breaks the tables of stone, and brings in judgment, and then goes up saying, "Perhaps I shall make an atonement for your sin." What does Jesus do? He comes down with the law in His heart, saying, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." And after He had done it Himself, He went to death for those who had failed, and for all under the curse of a broken law. Having perfectly settled the whole question of sin, He went up, but not with a "peradventure" on His lips. He has gone up to the right hand of God, and carried with Him the witness of the atonement He has effected. Hence instead of God saying, as then, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out" (ver. 33), He says, because Christ has gone up, having blotted out the sins of sinners, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 10: 17).

But Moses' intercession God hears; and says to him, "Therefore now go, lead the people unto the place of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee: nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them" (ver. 34). Hitherto He had been in their midst, and His presence had been with them by night and by day. Now, He says, "I will send mine Angel." He retires. "And the Lord said unto Moses, Depart, and go up hence, thou and the people which thou hast brought up out of the land of Egypt, unto the land which I swore unto Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, Unto thy seed will I give it: and I will send an angel before thee . . . for *I will not go up in the midst of thee*; for thou art a stiff-necked people: lest I consume thee in the way" (Ex. 33: 1-3). Grace is one thing, and government quite another, and you have both principles illustrated in God's ways with Israel. He brought them out of Egypt in pure sovereign grace. They put themselves under law, and under that God's government must come in. If you and I do wrong, the wheels of government will roll on although God forgive us. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption: but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6: 7, 8). The principle is found here — "I will not go up in the midst of thee," says God.

"And when the people heard these evil tidings, they mourned: and no man did put on him his ornaments. For the Lord had said unto Moses, Say unto the children of Israel, Ye are a stiff-necked people: I will come up into the midst of thee in a moment, and consume thee: therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee, *that I may know what to do unto thee*" (vers. 4 and 5). That is to say, He makes them stand convicted of their sin, with all their ornaments stripped off. God as it were says, "I will think what I will do." And while God is thinking what He will do, Moses, so to speak, says, "I know what I shall do." Read on. "And Moses took the tabernacle, and pitched it *without the camp*, afar off from the camp, and called it the Tabernacle of the congregation. And it came to pass, that *every one which sought the Lord* went out unto the tabernacle of the congregation, which was *without the camp*" (ver. 7).

You might say to me, There was no tabernacle then built. True, Moses had just had the instructions about it in the previous chapters, and you get the erection of it in the thirty-fifth chapter and onwards. Well, what was it? I could not dogmatize. It was certainly a spot, a place where God was to be found, where His presence was secured. And anybody who wanted to have to do with Him then had to go outside the camp. There was a good big bit of distance between the camp and the spot where God was really known. I cannot help thinking it was Moses' own tent. Who bade him do this? Nobody. Do you know why he did it? He had a sense, This will suit the Lord. God's name had been deeply dishonoured in the camp. Was there not to be a spot where He could be found? Surely; so he pitches this tent outside, far off, and calls it the Tabernacle of the congregation. I do not doubt the people in the camp thought it a disorderly action, and I do not doubt that people will do the same today, if you and I really heed what the Spirit of God says to us, and act upon it. The word to us is, "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Heb. 13: 13). I do not doubt the mass thought Moses' action very disorderly. But did he meet God's mind in it? Certainly, or we, in the day of the Church's confusion and sin, should not have been bidden by the Spirit to imitate him, as we are, in the passage last quoted.

There is an immense principle in this. I cannot go on with the camp and all its defilement and have God's presence too, that is clear. It is as true in this day as that. And what is the camp? It will not take a great deal of spiritual discernment to be able to say what the camp is. It has been truly said to be an earthly religious relationship with God, outside the sanctuary, and established on earth, with a separate caste of priests between men and God. This Judaism was, and Christ came into it, but hate cast Him out of it, and it is now utterly rejected. But, as set up by men, it is the place where God is dishonoured, His Word set aside, and where flesh is allowed a place to do what it likes. It is a religious system that really shuts God out, and introduces what the eye can rest on, and the Lord is thus displaced. The camp is earthly or fleshly religion, but the blood of Christ takes us into heaven now in title, and having an inside place with God, I must have an outside place from the world and must have done with human religiousness. We have got heavenly things and must go outside the camp. Christ suffered without the gate, and if the professing Church has become the camp, the place of the faithful believer is always outside.

Now observe what follows. "And it came to pass, when Moses went out unto the tabernacle, that all the people rose up, and stood every man at his tent door, and looked after Moses, until he was gone into the tabernacle" (ver. 8). I do not doubt they were greatly surprised by the action of this man. He was the leader, he was the mediator, and everything turned now upon the action of him who was the mediator.

But see. "And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and *the Lord talked with Moses*" (ver. 9). God sanctioned in the most remarkable way at that moment the action of His servant, as being a divinely instructed action, and divinely suited to Himself, because He at once puts Himself by Moses' side. And observe — "And all the people saw the cloudy pillar stand at the tabernacle door: and all the people rose up and worshipped, every man in his tent door" (ver. 10). If any one wanted to be near the Lord in that day he had to go outside the camp to get near to Him.

Another very important principle now follows. "And the Lord spake unto Moses *face to face*, as a man speaketh unto his friend" (ver. 11). Never in Moses' history had this taken place before. And I suppose it is this that God calls attention to in Numbers 12. There, if you recollect, Miriam and Aaron speak against Moses, and God defends him, saying, that to a prophet He would make Himself known in a vision or a dream, but "my servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and *the similitude of the Lord shall he behold*: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" (ver. 8). That is the way God challenges them, and commends him. What He refers to doubtless is what we have seen in this remarkable thirty-third chapter of Exodus, where the Lord spake face to face with him, as the result of his being a really separate man to Himself in a day of universal departure from the truth. This action on God's part is full of encouragement for us. If today we see the outward Assembly in ruins, and every kind of evil permitted in what bears the name of the Lord, what is the resource of faith? The Lord Himself. If we obey the Spirit's call, "Let us go therefore unto *him* without the camp, bearing his reproach" (Heb. 13: 13), we shall find what Moses found, viz., that the Lord will make Himself known to us, and give us His mind as never before. What cheer is this, and to the heart that really loves Him what an incentive to act decidedly for God.

Of Moses we now read, "And he turned again into the camp: but his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, departed not out of the tabernacle" (ver. 11). Now a person might say, Which was right, Moses or Joshua? I will only say to every young man, if you keep close by Joshua, you will do. And why did Joshua not go back? Joshua had gone out, and he did not go back. Why? He had this sense, I take it, Moses is in particular relationship with God, he might do what I cannot do. You cannot limit God in what He shall do. But I think Joshua was a very wise man. He went out, and stayed out, and God took particular notice of him. He was a promising young man of faith and energy, which his after history confirms. Depend upon it his history afterwards in relation to Israel, in spying out the land, and bringing the people into the land of promise, is very largely connected with Joshua's action here. It is a great thing, if God has given us light, to be true to it. So having gone out, Joshua found himself in God's company, and remained out. He was a very sensible young man. The place of blessing for you and me is in the holy presence of God, outside what does not suit God. If we have found that spot, let us abide there, and not go back. If unfound, let us seek it.

It is a great thing to live before the Lord in the sense of what really suits Him in our life, ways and associations, ecclesiastical and otherwise. We can plainly see where most of God's people are, and how can we help them is the question. Moses helped the children of Israel by very rigid separation. You will find this, if a person is not separate, he is not preserved; and on the other hand you will find all through Scripture that the separate person is the preserved person, whom God will enlighten and use for His glory. Let me illustrate. Samson was a man who lost his outward separation. Then he lost his hair — his power — the secret of his Nazariteship. What is the next thing? He lost his liberty. What next? He lost his eyes, and then he lost his life. When, through mixing with the world socially or religiously, I have lost my separation, my power, my spiritual liberty, and my eyesight, i.e., divine perception of what suits God, it is high time I was gone. I am of no real use to God's people or anybody else. Samson to me is a most solemn beacon. On the other hand, Joshua illustrates the value of being separate and firm in what you know to be the truth.

Let us now look at the passage I have already quoted from in the thirteenth chapter of Hebrews: "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. 13: 12- 16). People will then say, "What is the camp?" The camp today is practically speaking what the camp was in Moses' day — a spot where God's name is known and owned, but where it is dishonoured, and where He Himself is really set aside. Those to whom Paul wrote knew the meaning of the camp very well, if you and I do not. You must bear this in mind, that when Christianity came on the scene God had long patience with the Jewish believers, i.e., the Christians who had been Jews. I do not doubt that for a long time they met with Christians one day, and went back to Judaism and the synagogue the next day. And you say, "Is that wrong?" Well, God was leading many of His people out of Judaism and with such He was very patient. The Spirit of God saw the unsettled state of these Hebrews, and showed them, in the epistle addressed to them, that they must have everything, which has to do with their religious associations, not with an earthly system, which God had rejected, but with an unseen Christ at God's right hand. God had been patient with them, but the time had come when the vacillation I have spoken of must cease. The Lord's word then sounded, "Let us *go forth* therefore *unto him without the camp*, bearing *his reproach*" (ver. 13). They were to go forth to a despised, rejected Saviour — One who had neither His rights in the world nor in what professed to be God's witness on earth.

What, then, is the camp today? Christendom, as you see it now. Christendom is only a bit of Jewish patchwork. Judaism acknowledgedly was religion in the flesh. Christianity subsists in the Holy Ghost. Christendom is the outcome of the mingling of the former as to many of its forms — not its sacrifices — with a little of the truth of the latter. That will not do. There has been the effort to provide for saint and sinner at one moment, under the title of "public worship." That which has resulted is what we have been considering as we have traced the history of God's Assembly in Scripture. For all intents and purposes "the camp" of Paul's day is "the camp" of the day you and I live in. Do I hear you ask again, What is the camp? If you are exercised before God, you will soon find out what it is. It is the place where Christ, as Head of His Body, is not obeyed, where the Holy Ghost as the One who is here in the name of Christ has not been accorded His place, and where the truth of the Assembly of God is not known.

To us today, therefore, the apostle's call to "go forth unto him (Jesus) without the camp" is as urgent and applicable as to those who first got the exhortation. The loving and obedient disciple will follow the Shepherd's voice. We must be careful, however, that it is only to Himself that we go out. Anything short of, or more than Jesus Himself, would put us with those of whom it is written, "And they came not *for Jesus' sake only*, but that they might see Lazarus also, whom he had raised from the dead" (John 12: 9). Anything beside Jesus is a Lazarus — even clearer ministry of the Word. Souls so affected are unstable. After they have seen Lazarus, they go back. They have not gone out to Jesus only. We shall find it a very narrow path, but we should maintain a broad inclusive heart, and thus in our prayers and affection take in every saint and servant of God. But as to the path of our feet it must be narrow, or else we shall practically give up the truth.

In days of evil God always expects to find true and faithful hearts, prepared to do His will at all costs. Hence the apostle Paul says to Timothy, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to *faithful men*, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2: 2). If I am not in the truth myself I cannot teach you, but if we have known the sweetness and joy of going forth to Jesus outside the camp, bearing His reproach, there is something that will keep us there, and help us to stimulate others to tread the path which has brought such deep blessing to our own souls. Joshua abode there. May you and I seek grace from God to go forth to Jesus and abide with Him outside the camp. It can only be for a little while that we shall have the privilege of suffering with and for Him. Outside the camp in rejection with Christ below is what answers to our heavenly portion with Him on high. We are passing on from scenes of grace to realms of glory. "For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (ver. 14). We do not expect to stay here. What are you looking for? The coming of the Lord to take us all to be with Himself is the proximate and happy hope of His Assembly.

Now let us see what goes on outside that camp — according to God: "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God *continually*, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (ver. 15). There you really touch worship. The *holy* priesthood of which Peter speaks (1 Peter 2: 5) comes into exercise, and God gets His portion first. Do you remember what He said to His priests of old? "Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, My offering and my bread for my sacrifices made by fire, for a sweet savour unto me, shall ye observe to offer unto me in their due season" (Num. 28: 2). You will never really know what worship is until you are in spirit, soul and body, outside the camp. What Numbers 28 describes typically — God's food offered to Him by the priests of that day — you will have your part in spiritually, as you find yourself in the spot the Lord would have you in. In Hebrews 10: 19, 20, we are exhorted to go inside the veil through the blood of Jesus. That too is for worship, but very few saints of God seem to rise to it. Why? They shrink from "going outside the camp," and fail to enter "inside the veil." The two must go together. They are like a pair of scissors. There are two blades, but they are of no use whatever unless riveted together. Then they form a cutting and most useful instrument. Hebrews 10 and 13 are the two blades. Keep them separate, and they are really useless. The saint, who, for fear of reproach, will not go "outside the camp," never really goes "inside the veil" as a true worshipper. On the other hand, let me get "inside the veil," and taste the joys that are there, and I am keen to stay "outside the camp," lest I should by worldly associations lose the light and joy God has given me.

But this is not all, for the Spirit says, "But to do good and to communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. 13: 16). There the royal priesthood comes in view. Their business is "to show forth the virtues of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2: 9). On the one hand, God looks for the "sacrifice of praise" which the holy priests present to Him; and on the other hand, He is "well pleased" with the royal priest's sacrifices of active benevolence. No *dummies* are expected to sit in His Assembly, and no *drones* be found in His hive. The holy and royal priests have each two hands; with one he ministers to God, with the other to the need all around him, and that takes in the preaching of the gospel, the ministry to the saints, and the care of the poor, etc.

"Let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them," was a very remarkable word that Jeremiah heard in his day. His was a very similar case to ours. It was a day of idolatry, a day

when things were all in decline, and where the difficulty was for anybody to stand for the truth. He had stood for it and suffered accordingly. His resource was, however, in the Lord, and to Him — not without some feeling regarding his foes — he says, "O Lord, thou knowest: remember me, and visit me, and revenge me of my persecutors; take me not away in thy long-suffering; know that for thy sake I have suffered rebuke" (Jer. 17: 15). He was bearing the reproach of Christ, as, before him, Moses bore it. I do not doubt that Caleb and Joshua also bore it for maintaining the truth. They were very nearly stoned, those two men (see Num. 14: 10). Here Jeremiah was in similar circumstances. What sustained him? "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts" (ver. 16). He got light and food from God's Word. He was sanctified to God, called by His name, and it was as partaking of the Word of God that he suffered, just as Christ did. As a result he had deep joy in his heart.

So will it be with us also if we too seek, by grace, to stand for and maintain God's truth, no matter what it cost us. Do you know what it cost Jeremiah? The loss of all company but God's. Jeremiah was no loser. He says, "I sat not in the assembly of the mockers, nor rejoiced; I sat alone." Why? "Because of thy hand: for thou hast filled me with indignation" (ver. 17). He had the godly sense in his soul, I cannot go on with what I see among God's people; I cannot sanction with my presence that which does not suit the Lord. Do you think he enjoyed that? I trow not. He felt it acutely, it touched his heart deeply. Hear his words, "Why is my pain perpetual, and my wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail" (ver. 18). His faith began to fail for a moment, and evidently he thought of going back to what he had left. It was a temptation of Satan. Note how the Lord succours and cheers him. "Therefore thus saith the Lord, If thou return, then will I bring thee again [the Lord says, If you go back, Jeremiah, I shall pull you out again]; and *thou shalt stand before me*: and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth." It is worth anything to be able to help God's saints into the truth, and what a privilege to be God's mouthpiece to His own, and to communicate His mind.

Now I do not believe that you and I can be God's mouthpiece unless we really are today where Jeremiah was that day. It is absolutely impossible for us to take forth the precious from the vile, unless we are really and practically outside that which God's Word condemns, and in the clean spot with the Lord Himself. If you know where that blessed spot is, and think I am not there, you might show it to me, and I will make for it. Oh, beloved brethren, I trust indeed that I know what it is by His grace. Is it not just holding Himself, His Name, His Word? His Spirit and His presence are ever graciously granted to the two or three who will be true to the light He has given. But if I go back to the camp, I shall not be the man that can help anybody out of it. Do not deceive yourself, you must be a separate saint if you are to take forth the precious from the vile. God then says He will speak through you. He will make you His minister to others. Wondrous grace and honour.

"Let them return unto thee; but return not thou unto them. And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall: and they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee to save thee and to deliver thee, saith the Lord. And I will deliver thee out of the hand of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the terrible" (Jer. 15: 19-21). These words were Jeremiah's instructions as well as his support. *Do not you go back*, was

the purport of these words to him, and I believe that the word to us today is exactly the same. Jeremiah might say, "But I had to be all alone, Lord." "Never mind," says God, "you have Me for your Companion." He was well off.

The question for each of us then is simply this, Have I got God's light and truth as to His Assembly? It is one thing to *admire* the truth, quite another to *adopt* it. Many today will listen to and *admire* the truth without really adopting it; *i.e.*, the question for each after all is this, Is God's truth worth standing for? That test will come more than once or twice in our pathway. What shall our answer be?

Whatever is God's testimony for the moment is the thing that the devil turns all his batteries on. Satan has always done his very best to upset the people of God and spoil their enjoyment of what was theirs peculiarly for the then moment. It is the very same in the day in which we live. To apprehend what the Church is, and to act in accordance with the truth of it, is a privilege God accords us. If we are wise, we shall live for the Lord. And we shall be wise and happy too if we can say with the apostle, "We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (2 Cor. 13: 8). Of everything we may inquire, Will it help the truth? No. Then it will not do for me, says the heart that is true to Christ.

The Lord help us all to heed His Word and do His will. The opportunity of pleasing Him down here will soon be over. If we have heeded His command, "LET ALL THINGS BE DONE DECENTLY AND IN ORDER," we shall surely hear another word shortly, "WELL DONE, THOU GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT . . . ENTER THOU INTO THE JOY OF THY LORD."