

# Simple Christian Truths.

---

E. Dennett.

*Christian Friend, vol. 13, 1886, p. 61 etc.*

## Contents

Forgiveness Sins.....	1
Cleansing and a Purged Conscience.....	5
Justification by Faith.....	8
Repentance and Faith.....	12
The Person of Christ.....	15
The Work of Christ.....	20
Reconciliation.....	24
Prayer.....	28

I.

## Forgiveness Sins.

The first anxiety of the awakened soul — a soul convicted of guilt before God — is to know the way of forgiveness. Every other consideration is subordinated to the pressing and all-absorbing question of its relationships with God, of the method of obtaining pardon and peace. Coming to the Scriptures, and listening to its teachings, there is really but little, if any, difficulty; but unhappily at such a time the eye is so often directed within, in the vain hope of discovering there some ground of approach to God, that the soul becomes self-occupied, and consequently the prey of every passing emotion; and Satan, who is no uninterested spectator of the conflict, watches for and seizes his opportunity of entangling such a soul in hopeless perplexity. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the clear and simple teaching of Scripture should be presented to any in this state of mind, as nothing else will defeat the subtleties of the evil one, or guide the feet of the anxious to the immutable and immovable rock, and put into their lips the song of salvation. What then — for this is the question proposed for our consideration — has the word of God to say on the subject of forgiveness of sins?\*

\*We purpose in this paper to confine ourselves to the relationships of the soul with God, and to the way in which forgiveness is to be had with Him. The announcement of this

forgiveness by the apostles and others — as, for example, in Acts 2: 38, 39; Acts 22: 16, etc. (see also John 20: 22, 23) — sometimes termed administrative forgiveness (that is, forgiveness authoritatively announced or administered by others), is another and distinct branch of the subject, and would only confuse the reader if introduced here; besides the fact that it is in no wise necessary to be understood by the enquiring soul.

The most simple and concise statement on the subject is found perhaps in one of the addresses of the apostle Paul. Speaking in the synagogue at Antioch, he says, "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." (Acts 13: 38.) There is another quite as simple, though it takes its form from the audience he was addressing, by the apostle Peter: "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins." (Acts 5: 31.) Now, taking the first of these scriptures, and examining the context, it will be readily perceived that "this Man" is Christ. The apostle had been showing that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, and proving that His resurrection had been foretold by David. The death and resurrection of Christ had been his theme; and, as soon as he had proclaimed a risen Christ, he turned to them and said, "Through this Man [the risen Christ] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." Bearing this in mind, the reader will easily apprehend the truth on the subject, if he will but carefully, and looking up for guidance, follow what is written.

First, then, forgiveness of sins is founded upon the death of Christ, upon His finished work. That is, changing the form of the expression, the foundation on which God is able, righteously able — able in consistency with all that He is — freely and fully to forgive the sinner, is the work of atonement, which was accomplished on Calvary. In the Old Testament it was taught in every possible way — by type and figure, by constant sacrifices ever repeated — that without the shedding of blood there could be no remission. (Heb. 9: 22.) The reason was that sin had entered the world, and death by sin; and so death had passed upon all men, for that all had sinned. (Rom. 5: 12.) The life of every sinner was, and is, therefore forfeited to God; and hence it is written, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Heb. 9: 27.) Mark well these two things — death, and afterwards judgment, for the sins committed during life. Such is the awful prospect before every unsaved soul. Both these things were shadowed out in the olden sacrifices. It will amazingly help the reader if he will give his earnest attention to this. Look then for a moment at what was done when a Jew brought a sacrifice for sin. First, he laid his hand upon the head of the animal about to be slain, which signified the transfer of his sin to the animal; so that the animal from that moment stood before God charged with the offerer's sin, in the place and stead of the sinner. Observe what followed. The animal was slain — death, the penalty of sin, was brought in upon it — and the blood was sprinkled (for the life is in the blood) in the appointed place before God, in token of life rendered up in answer to His claims: afterwards, passing over details, the carcass was totally consumed by fire. And what did this signify, dear reader? It told of the judgment after death; of that lake of fire in which all the unsaved, alas! will find their portion throughout eternity.

If my reader has understood so far he may now accompany us to the cross of Christ; for we shall discover there that the sacrifices of which we have spoken were but outlines of the character of the death of Christ as the great sacrifice — the sacrifice for sin of God's own providing, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. (John 1: 29.) It should,

however, be observed, first, that He alone could be this sacrifice, that He alone possessed the necessary qualifications, whether to meet the claims of God or the needs of sinners. He only amongst men was "without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1: 19; Heb. 9: 14); and He only, being what He was, both God and man, could stand for men, stand in the breach which sin had made between God and man, and offer a sacrifice of such infinite value as could avail for the whole world. God alone knew what was requisite for His glory in making atonement for sin, and hence it was, acting from the love and pity of His own heart, that He gave His only begotten Son. Wondrous grace! adorable love!

We may now inquire what it was in the death of Christ that constituted the atonement. Reserving details for another occasion, we call the reader's attention to two points, the two essential points. As in the sacrifices in the old dispensation, so on the cross there was the yielding up of life (and this was testified to by the blood and water that flowed out of the Saviour's side when pierced by the soldier's spear); only it must be carefully remembered that He yielded up His own life, "He gave up" (or delivered up) "His spirit" (John 19: 30; John 10: 17); and there was the bearing the whole weight of the judgment due to our sins, bearing from God what His glory demanded as an atonement. In other words, He suffered death, and He passed through (in His case before death) what answered to the fire that consumed the carcase of the sin-offering; viz., the wrath of God against sin. But passing through the holy fire of judgment was a transaction between God and His own soul. (2 Cor. 5: 21; Isa. 53: 6) — a transaction veiled from all mortal eyes by the darkness which descended on the cross and on the earth, and of which the only outward expression was that agonizing cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27: 46.) For it was then that God in His holiness was dealing with that holy Victim instead of sinners for whom He died, when all God's waves and all His billows rolled in upon and over the holy soul of Jesus.

Thus, dear reader, our blessed Lord met both death and judgment, and wrought out that finished work in which God can rest in satisfaction (for indeed He was abundantly glorified in it), and on which too, blessed be His name, sinners can rest in unshaken confidence and security in the presence of God and the prospect of eternity.

There is another thing to be remarked. The reader may perceive that the apostle Paul took great pains to prove from the Scriptures, and from the testimony of eyewitnesses, that God had raised Christ from the dead. (Acts 13: 30-37.) And with reason; for the resurrection of Christ was the evidence of the completion of His work of atonement to the satisfaction of God; nay, it was God's own demonstration that He had been glorified in the death of His Son, and that the question of sin had been once and for all settled. For it was God Himself that stepped in — stepped in in the abounding joy of His own heart — and lifted out of the grave the One that died upon the cross; and, moreover, He set Him down at His own right hand in heaven, as the expression of His estimation of the value of the work which had been finished on the cross. The resurrection of Christ is therefore of the highest value. It proclaims, on the one hand, what God's thought is of Christ, of the crucified One; and it assures the sinner, on the other, that Christ is the only Saviour, that the burden which He bore on the cross has been left for ever behind in His grave. Hence the apostle says, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain, ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. 15: 17); for the clear proof that the sins of believers are gone is the fact that He who bore them on the cross is now seated in the glory of God.

Let us advance a step further. The reader will now apprehend, we trust, without difficulty (at least if he has understood the foregoing remarks) the meaning of the apostle when he says, "Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins." We may, however, examine it a little more closely. Two things are contained in the statement. First, that God proclaimed, and still proclaims, or announces, in the gospel the forgiveness of sins, and that this forgiveness is declared through Christ. It means, in other words, that through the death and resurrection of Christ, He having satisfied all God's claims concerning sin on the cross, and vindicated His name and glory, God is now able, in consistency with all that He is — His holiness, His righteousness, His majesty, His truth, as well as His tenderness, mercy, and love — to satisfy His own heart, in freely — freely, without money and without price, without any demand whatsoever — offering the forgiveness of sins to any and all who come to Him in the name of His beloved Son. Forgiveness of sins is thus offered through Christ — offered gratuitously to sinners anywhere and everywhere throughout the wide world. This is God's message in the gospel, that forgiveness of sins is His free gift, on the ground of what Christ has done and is, to all who will have it.

The reader, however, may say, Is there no condition whatever annexed to such a gift? The words of Scripture are plain — "Through this Man is *preached unto you* the forgiveness of sins." This much will be noticed by all, that no one will be disposed to accept the gift unless he first believes that he *needs* forgiveness. The announcement is made *to sinners*; that lies on the surface. Does my reader therefore, if he should be one who knows nothing of this blessed gift, place himself before God amongst this class as a sinner? Does he acknowledge that he is verily one that needs forgiveness? If he can answer these questions in the affirmative, there remains but one other, and it is this, Does he believe God's testimony to the death and resurrection of Christ? Does he receive the truth that God preaches forgiveness by the mouth of His servants through the risen and glorified Saviour? If he does there remains nothing more, nothing whatever; for as the apostle Peter also says, "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him *shall receive remission of sins*." This is God's own word, and on it we may rest both for time and eternity. Forgiveness of sins is thus freely presented to every poor sinner who comes to God as a sinner in and through the lord Jesus Christ.

There remains but one point more, which concerns the character of the forgiveness. Does it relate only to the past or the present? What has Scripture to say on this subject? It teaches in plain and unmistakable language that the benefits resulting to the believer from the death of Christ are eternal, that his sins are removed for ever from the sight of God. It says that by His own blood Christ has entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption; that, having offered one sacrifice for sins, He for ever sat down on the right hand of God, in token that His sacrificial work was finished for ever; that by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified; that the Holy Ghost has borne this testimony — "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." (Heb. 9, 10) If the reader ponders these statements, and asks himself what God intends them to convey, he must see that they have but one voice — that they unite to declare that when God forgives He forgives once and for all, on the ground of the eternal value and abiding efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ.

Does any one still object, But what of my sins since conversion? Let such a one consider for a moment that he had not been born when Christ died on the cross. How then could it be our past sins only that were there laid on Him? No, blessed be His name, He bore our sins, all our

sins, made atonement for all, the sins of our whole lives; so that the forgiveness God bestows is an eternal forgiveness. It should be remembered, moreover, that if Christ had not endured the judgment due to all our sins, if one single sin had been excepted, He must have returned to the earth and died a second time before that sin could be forgiven. But the word says, "Where remission of sins is there is no more offering for sin." As enduring, therefore, as is the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ before God, so enduring is the forgiveness which God presents to the sinner who comes to Him through Him who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. Let the reader then rejoice, if he is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, in the assurance that God has forgiven his sins absolutely and for ever, and that never more can a single sin be imputed to him as guilt; for he has been brought, in the mercy of God, under the everlasting value of the one offering of Christ.\* E. D.

\*We do not enter upon the question in this paper of God's provision for the sins of believers after conversion. These are never imputed as guilt, as we have shown above; but when, through the advocacy of Christ (1 John 2) and the action of the Holy Spirit through the Word, they are brought home to the conscience and confessed, they are forgiven. (1 John 1: 9.) The sins of the sinner are cleansed by the blood of Christ; the sins of the believer are put away through the washing of water by the Word.

II.

## **Cleansing and a Purged Conscience.**

Sin may be viewed in two ways, either as an offence against God, or as defilement to the sinner. God has His sovereign rights and claims over all His creatures, and it is this fact that constitutes sin a wrong done to Him, an outrage upon His majesty and glory. Sin in this aspect needs forgiveness, the way of which has been shown in a former paper. But sin also is in its very essence and nature defiling, polluting; and it is to this allusion is made in that striking entreaty in the prophet Isaiah: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." (Isa. 1: 18.) There is also a recognition of this by the psalmist when he cries, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow." (Ps. 51: 7.) The word guilt perhaps combines these two aspects of sin, because it tells of the soul's sin against God and the effect upon the soul itself; and the first question for our consideration is, the method God has provided for cleansing the guilty soul from its deep-dyed iniquity.

There are several scriptures which state this method clearly and explicitly. "The blood of Jesus Christ His [God's] Son cleanseth from all sin." (1 John 1: 7.) Again, "Unto Him that loved [or loves] us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev. 1: 5); and the sprinkling with blood of the priests at their consecration, and of the leper on his restoration, proclaims the same truth, that cleansing from sin could only be effected by the precious blood of Christ. And let the reader mark the word "only" in the last sentence; for it was penned with the object of calling attention to the fact that there are not two modes of cleansing from guilt; that God's way is the only way; and that, therefore, the sinner is shut up to it; so that, if this be refused, there is no other remedy, no other agent in the universe, which can rid the sinner of his sins. No; the blood

of Christ being refused, the sinner must remain in his guilt throughout eternity. Let us then examine the teaching of Scripture as to how it is the blood of Christ cleanses from sin.

If now we turn to Leviticus 17, we read, "The life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar, to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17: 11); and in the previous chapter, which contains a description of the rites of the great day of atonement, we find that the blood of the sin-offering was carried into the holy of holies and sprinkled upon the mercy-seat and before the mercy-seat, the mercy-seat being God's throne (for He dwelt between the cherubim) in the midst of Israel. The blood of the sin-offering was first of all for God, and hence put upon the mercy-seat in acknowledgment and satisfaction of His claims upon His guilty people. But this blood was only a type, a foreshadowing of the infinitely precious blood of Christ, "who by His own blood [and not by the blood of goats and calves, as did Aaron] entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption." (Heb. 9: 12.) This blood — the blood of Christ — presented before God, constituted the propitiation which He made for sins; for it was the all-sufficient answer, being what it was, to all the claims of a holy God upon sinners; yea, it was of such value in the eyes of God that He could, having been glorified by it according to all that He is, righteously offer salvation to the whole world.

Such was God's part in the precious blood of Christ, and thereon follows the question of its application to the sinner, and the effect of the application. The types, whether of the consecration of the priests or of the cleansing of the leper (Ex. 29; Lev. 14), will make this part of our subject very plain. The reader will notice that in both cases washing with water preceded the sprinkling with the blood of the lamb. This simply means that the two things were connected in that order; viz., the new birth (for the washing with water was an emblem of this) and the application of the blood of Christ. To be even more simple, the moment a sinner believes in God's testimony concerning Christ's death he is under all the value of His precious blood. We thus read in the Romans, "Whom [i.e., Christ] God hath set forth a propitiation [or mercy-seat] through faith in His blood" (Rom. 3: 25); so that when the sinner, in confidence in this testimony, approaches God, he finds that the blood of Christ has made a full and an all-sufficient atonement for his sins. This indeed was the meaning of the blood being sprinkled seven times before the mercy-seat (Lev. 16), this action teaching us that as soon as we come into the presence of God, believing in His witness to the death of Christ, we find there a perfect testimony, symbolized by the seven times, to the fact that our sins have for ever been put away. In one word, and even a child cannot fail to understand the statement, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, faith in what God says concerning His death, links the soul with all the value — the value as reckoned by God — of His precious blood.

It will not now be difficult for the reader to apprehend the effect of the application of the blood of Christ to the believing soul. Identified with its value before God through faith, he, as to his guilty state, is seen by God with all that value resting upon him; and where God sees the blood He sees no sin. There is indeed a twofold effect: First, it removes all guilt from the sinner — *i.e.*, from the one who believes in Christ — cleanses from all sin; and secondly, it brings the sinner under all its positive value. This may be illustrated by a reference to the sin and the burnt-offerings. The efficacy of the sin-offerings cleared away the guilt of the one who brought the sacrifice; but though his sins, regarded as transferred to the victim, were gone, the man remained

as he was before — neither better nor worse — excepting that the sins he had committed were now gone. When, however, he had brought a burnt-sacrifice to be offered for his acceptance, he stood before God in all its positive value, a value represented by the words, "an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord." (Lev. 1: 9.) And if the reader will turn to the chapters already spoken of (Ex. 29; Lev. 14), he will see that the invariable order was: first, the sin-offering, by which guilt was taken away; and then, the burnt-offering, by which the offerer was invested before God with all the acceptance of Christ. So is it now. The effect of the application of the blood of Christ (and every believer is under its value) is to cleanse away every trace of guilt even before the all-searching eye of God, and also to bring the soul into His presence in all the sweet savour of Christ Himself. Nothing less than this is meant by the cleansing which is effected for the soul through the blood of Christ; for nothing less would fit us to stand before God. But everyone who is cleansed is brought into the light as God is in the light. That is his place while in this world; and he is therefore fitted, if called upon to die, to depart immediately to be with Christ. The blood thus not only shelters us, as it did Israel in the land of Egypt, from judgment, but it makes us whiter than snow, white as the pure light of the holiness of God; so that we are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, even while passing through the defiled scenes of this world.

We now pass on to the consideration of a purged conscience, concerning which instruction is given in the epistle to the Hebrews. Cleansing is, so to speak, a work without, a judicial work on the part of God by which we receive qualification and title for His own presence. Purging the conscience is that work made good within us; so that our sins are as completely gone from us, in our apprehension, as they are from before the eye of God. Cleansing removes all our guilt, purging the conscience takes away the sense of guilt from our own souls. The former gives us the title to stand before God, the latter gives us liberty and happiness in His presence. This will be readily understood by the reader if he will carefully read Hebrews 10. We may call his attention to two or three important points.

Remark, however, first of all, that the sense of guilt, when under conviction of sin, troubles the *conscience*. It is the conscience that bears the burden of sin when the soul is awakened; and an uneasy, a bad conscience often condemns the soul as distinctly as the word of God. Remembering this, the statements in the above-mentioned chapter will at once be understood. The first point then to be noticed is, that the worshippers under the old dispensation were never made perfect as to the conscience, that they never obtained the priceless blessing of "no more conscience of sins." (vv. 1, 2.) This is shown in a twofold way. The fact that sacrifices were continually offered proved it, because "in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year." (v. 3.) The worshipper might indeed feel, in a certain measure, that the sins he had already committed were removed; but no sooner had his sacrifice been offered, than he began to sin again, and every fresh sin needed another sacrifice. He was therefore never free from guilt before God or in his own conscience. Then we are also told that it was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. God passed over the sins of His people, because these sacrifices shadowed forth that of Christ; but they had no virtue to purge the conscience, though they might have sanctified to the purifying of the flesh. (Heb. 9: 13.) The burden of sin was thus never wholly removed from the conscience of a Jewish saint.

The writer then brings out in contrast the eternal efficacy of the one sacrifice of Christ, and bases it on a threefold foundation — the will of God, accomplished by our blessed Lord and Saviour through the offering of His body (on the cross) once; the work of Christ, seen to be a finished work, from the fact that He has "for ever sat down on the right hand of God" — sat down in perpetuity — in contrast with the priests of old, who stood "daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins;" and finally, the testimony of the Holy Spirit, which runs, "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." (vv. 5-17.) Summing up this divine argument, we have two things — the eternal value of the one offering of Christ, and the consequent abiding efficacy of His sacrifice for every believer; so that, as we read, "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." The result is, that the sins of the believer are gone for ever — gone completely from the mind of God, no more remembered. And when this truth is received — made good in the soul by the Holy Spirit — they are gone also as completely from our conscience. We have no more conscience of sins; for having learned the value of the precious blood of Christ before God, as a full atonement for our sins, we recognize that our guilt is gone; and that because of the abiding efficacy of that one sacrifice, guilt will never more be imputed. We are therefore free; our conscience is no more disturbed as to guilt. This is the Scriptural meaning of a purged conscience.

It may be needful to add, for the help of some readers, that this truth in nowise touches the question of indwelling sin — the evil nature. That remains in us, and will remain, until Christ comes for His people, or until death. But the knowledge that we have sin within us will not, and should not, affect a purged conscience. If that evil nature should, through unwatchfulness, break out into sin, our communion with God will be disturbed; and the sin must be judged and confessed before communion can be restored. If, however, we have known the true character of the one sacrifice of Christ, and the virtue of His precious blood, we shall not — even while we are mourning over our failure, and feel it all the more deeply because it is sin after we have known the Lord — lose the enjoyment of no more conscience of sins. To suppose that sin could be reckoned to us as guilt, after we have once been purged, would be to slight the eternal value of the death of Christ. As indeed we read, the worshippers once purged should have no more conscience of sins. "If," then, "the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9: 13, 14.) E. D.

III.

## **Justification by Faith.**

God being what He is — holy in His nature — must necessarily be righteous in all His ways. While, therefore, a sinner needs mercy and forgiveness because of his sins, the very pardon he receives on believing in the Lord Jesus Christ must be, if it is to be a secure and lasting one, grounded on righteousness. This is only another way of saying that God cannot in any age or dispensation act otherwise than in consistency or harmony with His own nature. And this is the scriptural sense of the term so prominent in the epistle to the Romans — the

righteousness of God (see Rom. 1: 17; Rom. 3: 21, 22, 25, 26) — and which, when once understood, is the simple key to the doctrine of justification.

Let us, however, first of all explain what is meant by justification by faith. The reader will perceive, if he reads Romans 3, that the apostle uses the expression in contrast with justification by works of law. Under the Mosaic dispensation the promise of life was not to faith, but to works — "The man which doeth these things shall live in them." (See Romans 10: 5.) Hence we read in Deuteronomy, "It shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as He hath commanded us." (Deut. 6: 25.) But the Jew was a sinner already, when he accepted obedience to the law as the condition of blessing, and he turned his back upon Jehovah in shameful apostasy before even the tables of the law reached the camp; and the apostle overwhelms his nation with proofs from their own Scriptures, that they had been guilty of continual sin and iniquity, that there was "none that doeth good, no not one," that they, equally with the Gentiles, were nothing but guilty sinners before God; and his conclusion is stated in these words: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." (Rom. 3: 20.) It was thus all over with the law as the way of justification, or as he states it in another chapter, Christ is the end (the termination) of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. (Rom. 10: 4.)

The apostle in the epistle to the Romans announces another way of blessing. God's way of justification since the cross, a principle, indeed, on which He had acted in notable cases in former ages, but one which was never fully propounded until after the death and resurrection of Christ. We may cite two or three verses to explain it: "That He might be just, and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Rom. 3: 26.) "Therefore being justified by faith." (Rom. 5: 1.) "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." (Rom. 4: 5.) These scriptures set forth the principle of justification most clearly, teaching as they do that God now justifies not on the principle of works, but on that of faith, and that instead of works, He reckons faith for righteousness. This is the meaning of the expression which the apostle cites from Habakkuk, "The just shall live by faith" — words which contained a blessed foreshadowing of God's way of grace in redemption; for it does not say, as under the law, "The man that doeth these things shall live by them;" but, "The just shall live by faith." It is therefore a total change of dispensation; for faith, and faith alone, is what God looks for, and that which He counts as righteousness.

If this is so far clear, before entering upon the object of the faith by which we are justified, let us consider the ground on which God acts. We read in chapter 5, "Being justified by His blood." (Rom. 5: 9.) To remove all misconception, it should be said that the word "by" in this sentence is not the same word as "by" in "being justified by faith." This latter may be taken to signify "on the principle of faith," whereas the former means "in virtue of" the blood. The blood of Christ, in fact, is shown to be what is often termed the meritorious cause of our justification; i.e., that which constitutes before God a ground of all-sufficient value for Him to justify us freely by His grace. A few words will set this in a clear light. Man had no righteousness for God, for all had sinned and come short of His glory; and hence, if God had acted in righteousness, in harmony with His holiness, in indignation against sin, He must have destroyed the sinner. But Christ died on the cross, took there the sinner's place, bore all the righteous meed and doom of sin, met all God's claims upon the sinner, exhausted, in making a full and all-sufficient

atonement, God's righteous judgment against sin. He thus glorified God concerning sin, and it was His precious blood that made the propitiation before God, which His holiness demanded; for it was the blood of Him who had passed through all the waves and billows of judgment, of Him who while truly man was also God. We thus read that God set Him forth a propitiation (or mercy-seat) through faith in His blood (Rom. 3: 25), because He could now declare His righteousness — the death of Christ being the ground — both in passing over the sins of the saints of old, through His forbearance, and also that He might now be just and the Justifier of him who believes in Jesus. In other words, God could now, in virtue of the blood of Christ, righteously show mercy to the sinner, and reckon faith instead of works for righteousness.

This truth cannot be too firmly grasped, for not only is faith now the principle on which God justifies, but, as pointed out at the commencement of this paper, God also acts on it in consistency with all that He is — with every attribute of His character, and this is His righteousness. There are some who teach that His righteousness means the obedience of Christ to the law which is put down to the account of the believer. Our object is not controversy, and hence we content ourselves with asking the reader to examine carefully every place in which the words occur, and to see for himself if there is a trace of this in the Scriptures. Surely it would read, if this contention were correct, the righteousness of Christ.\* But it is not so, and the reason is that the mind of the Holy Spirit is on another thing — even upon the glorious demonstration of the righteousness of God: first, in raising from the dead and setting on His right hand the One who had glorified Him in His death (for how could He but exalt Him who had suffered all to vindicate His glory?); and secondly, in justifying every poor sinner who should come to Him in the name of Jesus.

\*Even Luther, who was so abundantly used of God to recover the truth of justification, failed to see this, and translated the words — the righteousness of God — "the righteousness which avails before God." This was really adding to the scripture.

We may now examine a little more closely the object of the faith by which we are justified. At the end of chapter 3 it is the believer in Jesus who is justified. (v. 26.) In chapter 4 it is, "If we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead," etc. (Rom. 4: 24.) The difference is both important and instructive, and may be more easily explained if we refer for a moment to what took place on the great day of atonement. (Lev. 16.) The reader will there see that Aaron was commanded to take two goats in connection with making atonement for the people; the one of which he was to kill as a sin-offering, and then to take its blood and sprinkle it upon and before the mercy-seat, while the other — the scape-goat — was to be presented alive before the Lord; and after Aaron had confessed over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, it was to be sent away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness. The former of these goats answers (as a shadow to its substance) to Romans 3: 26, where God sets forth Christ a propitiation through faith in His blood; the latter corresponds with Romans 4: 24, where we see Jesus our Lord delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification — bearing our sins, and carrying them away, so to speak, into a land where they can never more be found. The first is propitiation; that is, the blood of Christ sprinkled on the mercy-seat, meeting all the claims of God's glory in respect of our sins. The second is substitution; that is, Christ taking our place, and bearing our sins in His own body on the tree. These two aspects show us in a word Christ meeting God's claims and the sinner's needs.

It will much help the reader if he will carefully consider this difference; and it will aid him at the same time to apprehend the character of the object of faith as presented in these two scriptures. Thus in Romans 3 it is faith in the blood of Christ (Rom. 3: 25), or believing in Jesus (Rom. 3: 26); that is, the reception of God's testimony to the efficacy of that blood in making propitiation for sins. In this passage it is a question of the sinner's approach to God, and we find that the way is opened through faith in the blood of Christ; and coming in dependence upon its efficacy, as declared by God Himself, the sinner discovers that God is both just and the Justifier. In Romans 4 it is faith in God Himself — in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, and for this very reason that here is brought in the resurrection of the One who was delivered for our offences. As our Substitute He bore our sins, and the resurrection is God's own demonstration that our sins are for ever put away; for it was God who laid our sins upon Christ (Isa. 53), and if He steps forth and raises our Substitute from among the dead, it is that He might show His abounding satisfaction with the work of atonement, and at the same time present Himself to us as the God of all grace in the gift of His own Son, and in raising Him from the dead. It is not only now that we believe in Christ, but through Him also, as Peter writes, we "believe in God that raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God." (1 Peter 1: 21.) Believing thus in God includes His testimony to Jesus our Lord as being delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification; and it is to those who thus believe in God that righteousness is imputed. The reader will see at a glance that this goes further than chapter 3. There it is the efficacy of the blood in propitiation, here it is sins borne, and He who bore them raised up out from under the awful load which had been placed upon Him into a new place before God — a place which should henceforward belong also through grace to every believer. He was raised again for our justification, and it is therefore in a risen Christ that we are justified in virtue of His finished work on the cross.

Now let the reader mark the sequence to this wondrous unfolding of truth: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 5: 1.) The believer is justified, his faith is reckoned for righteousness; yea, the righteousness of God (not the righteousness of man, which, if it were possible to obtain, would no longer avail, but the righteousness of God), which is by faith of Jesus Christ, is unto all and upon all them that believe. (Rom. 3: 22.) *And peace with God is the portion of the justified.* The reader will observe that nothing is said concerning peace with God until after the resurrection of Christ is introduced; for it is this which proves, as already seen, that God has been satisfied, yea, glorified, by the death of the Lord Jesus, and thereon He presents Himself to us as the object of faith, revealing, as He has done, all His heart of love and grace in the death and resurrection of His beloved Son. Receiving His testimony then as to the complete expiation and clearing away of our sins, we can now also rest in Him, knowing not only that He has nothing against us, but also that He Himself has justified us. We have, therefore, peace with God — with God according to all that He is as revealed in Christ, a peace founded upon the work of atonement, and which consequently is as immutable and everlasting as the value of that work before God. It is an eternal peace. Our feelings may fluctuate and change, our experiences may be of one kind today and another tomorrow, but peace with God ever remains the same. Once possessed, though from indifference, coldness, or inconsistency we may fail to enjoy it, it can never be lost. As the hymn says —

"'Tis everlasting peace!

Sure as Jehovah's name.

'Tis stable as His steadfast throne

For evermore the same."

There are other blessings pointed out as belonging to the justified. "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. 5: 2.) First, we enter also, consequent on justification, through faith upon the full favour of God. Our sins gone, and peace with God made ours, God can now rest in us in perfect complacency; we stand before Him the objects of all His love, blessed with the full outshinings of His perfect favour. As we have peace with Him through our Lord Jesus Christ, so every cloud has been swept from the sky, and we bask in the perfect sunshine of His presence. As to the past, our sins are gone; as to the present, we stand in His full favour; and as to the future, we rejoice in hope of His glory — into which He will infallibly bring us; for if we suffer with Christ we shall also be glorified together. (Rom. 8: 17.) What a heritage! Peace with God, His full favour, and the prospect of the glory! And let the reader carefully remark that this is not a heritage to be won by long years of Christian experience, but one that belongs to us the moment we are justified by faith. Experiences may, as they will, come after, as the fruit of the Spirit through tribulation, etc. (see, Rom. 5: 3-5); but all this wealth of blessing is connected, and immediately connected, with being justified by faith.

NOTE. — In Romans 5: 18 we find the term "justification of life;" but it would be to go farther than our purpose to consider in this paper this branch of the subject. It will suffice to say that this justification is ours as being made alive in Christ, in Christ risen — risen up out of death into a new place where neither death nor judgment can come. It is therefore a positive justification, as we have elsewhere said, inherent in the very life we have in Christ; and it involves our dissociation from Adam, and our connection in life with Christ as the second Man, the Lord from heaven. E. D.

IV.

## **Repentance and Faith.**

When the Lord Jesus commenced His ministry, He cried, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: *repent ye, and believe the gospel.*" (Mark 1: 15.) The apostle Paul also said, when addressing the elders from Ephesus, that he had testified "both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts 20: 21.) The Lord's commission indeed to His disciples, after His resurrection from the dead, was that repentance and remission of sins (which could only be on faith in the message) should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24: 47.) It is therefore according to the divine order that these two things should be conjoined in preaching the gospel to sinners; and it might be added, with perfect truth, that these two things are also connected, of necessity, in the soul that divinely receives the glad tidings of the grace of God. Whether repentance has been sufficiently insisted on, or whether the essential bond between repentance

and faith has been maintained in modern evangelistic preaching, we do not here enquire, as it is our object rather to expound the meaning of these two things, and their mutual relationship in the word of the gospel.

The first thing then that meets the soul is the demand for repentance toward God. This very fact implies the condition of those on whom the demand is made. If, for example, the Lord cried, "Repent ye," there was something in those to whom He spoke that needed repentance. It is evident, in a word, that such a message could only be addressed to sinners. The Lord speaks indeed, in another place, of just persons (if there were such) who need no repentance.

It is then because men are sinners that repentance is necessary, repentance toward God; for it is against Him that they have sinned, and under His just judgment that they have consequently fallen. The preaching of repentance is, on this very account, designed to awaken the sinner to a sense of his condition, by bringing before his soul the claims of a holy God, as well as the provisions of His grace. The presentation of God in the gospel as the One who so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life, is surely calculated to touch the most obdurate heart. A God coming in judgment to deal with sinners even the natural conscience could understand; for the soul, whatever its subterfuges, knows its deserts. But a God appearing in grace, sending His beloved Son into the world, making Him to be sin on the cross, and publishing the glad tidings of grace and salvation far and wide, is so contrary to all human thoughts that the sinner may well be arrested, and compelled to consider. Justice is a well-known principle even in this world; but grace is so beyond its experience that it can hardly fail to beget a desire to trace out its source and origin. If God then proclaims the necessity of repentance, He Himself seeks to produce it by bringing the soul under the appeals of His grace in the gospel.

But let us enquire what repentance is. It is the more important to be careful as to this, owing to the loose and insufficient answers frequently given to this question. Some say that it is sorrow for sin; some that it is a change of mind, dwelling upon the literal meaning of the word; while others affirm that it comprises the determination both to forsake sin and also to do the will of God in time to come. In truth it is none of these, nor all of them combined together, though some of the things mentioned may constitute a part of scriptural repentance. That sorrow for sin does not amount to repentance is seen from the apostle's words: "Godly sorrow [sorrow according to God] worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of." (2 Cor. 7: 10.) Mere sorrow for sin may spring from the sense of shame, or from the bitter consequences which sin often entails, and may often have no reference to God; and even sorrow according to God, as in the above scripture, is not, though it works, repentance. Much less could change of mind, or the vain effort to forsake sins and to do the will of God, be accepted as answering to it. No; scriptural repentance is nothing less than our identification with God in His judgment of our sins, our taking His part against ourselves, and our consequent bowing in the dust before Him in true self-judgment. This involves our hatred of sin, inasmuch as the moment, through grace, we side with God in His judgment upon our deeds, we are so far in communion with Him, as to His thoughts and feelings, about our sins. When we thus repent, we justify God and condemn ourselves. This can never take place but in His presence, when His light, the light of His holiness, reveals sin to us as it appears in His sight; so that we are able to say with Job, "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.) Or again, with the psalmist, "Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest." (Psalm 51: 4.)

The reader, however, must remember that we are explaining what scriptural repentance is, and that we are by no means affirming that even true repentance always answers to this description. There may indeed be but a feeble sense of sin, a very imperfect self-judgment, when the soul is first awakened; but let none on this account be discouraged, for God — who requires nothing, but gives everything in this day of grace — will deepen His own work in His own time, and give a truer estimate of sin to all who seek it. Peter thus proclaimed to his nation concerning Christ, "Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins." (Acts 5: 31.) So also, when Peter had explained to the Jewish believers in Jerusalem the reasons and the effect of his visit to Cornelius, they said, "Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life." (Acts 11: 18.) If, however, repentance is the gift of God, it is a gift He is ever ready to bestow; and we learn from our Lord Himself that "there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth." Indeed, it is the father himself that says, concerning the returned prodigal, "Let us eat, and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." (Luke 15: 23, 24.)

Now, faith, as we have seen, is always conjoined with repentance; and while repentance is toward God, faith is toward the Lord Jesus Christ. The explanation of this is very simple. It is against God we have sinned, and it is He who has passed judgment upon our sins; so that, when we are convicted of our guilt, it is to Him we turn with confession and self-judgment. In this state our one need is to learn the way of salvation, just as when the jailer, conscience-smitten, rushed into the presence of Paul and Silas, and cried, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Their answer was the presentation of Christ. "Believe," they said, "on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts 16: 30, 31.) This, as the reader may perceive, is a summary of what was said; for we read in the next verse that they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. But the fact of the term — the Lord Jesus Christ — being used, shows that it was a full gospel they preached — the gospel concerning His person, His death and resurrection, and His present exaltation as Lord at the right hand of God. The jailer received, through grace, the testimony thus delivered, and there was therefore in his soul faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. He believed God's testimony to the finished work of Christ on the cross, to the value of that work before God as having made full and perfect atonement for sin, and also to the testimony to His resurrection; so that he could then say, "He was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."

And it is with faith, as so exercised, that remission of sins is always connected. This will be at once understood, if the reader will turn to the passage already cited from Luke 24, where repentance and remission of sins are linked together, both to be preached in the name of the risen Christ. For the moment there is the reception of God's testimony concerning the death and resurrection of Christ, forgiveness of sins is enjoyed. Repentance brings into a right state of soul before God; faith identifies the soul with all the value of the work of Christ. Both therefore are absolutely necessary for salvation.

The question, however, is often asked, Whether repentance must always precede faith? The very form of the question, as a few words will show, is misleading. If the true nature of repentance has been apprehended, the reader will see that it cannot be dissociated from faith. For what produces repentance? It is God's testimony, received in power, concerning me as a sinner. Somehow or other light has entered into my soul, and convicted before God, I bow to all He says of me in His word, as a lost sinner. This faith — faith in God's word as to the truth of my condition — must always be connected with repentance. The two things are indissolubly united. But the soul may remain in a state of repentance, if it may be so described, a long time before accepting God's further testimony as to His beloved Son; and it need scarcely be said that, as long as it thus continues, there will be no peace or liberty. Hence repentance in such a case precedes faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ, and this is undoubtedly the general order of the soul's experience.

We say the general order, for it cannot be denied that there would seem to be many exceptions. Repentance is so little preached, and the forgiveness of sins, or, in other cases, eternal life, without even raising the question of sin, is so often pressed upon souls — especially in so-called revival preaching — that many appear to be converted with scarcely any exercise as to the state of their souls before God, almost without ever having had the burden of sin upon their conscience. Fully granting that there are genuine cases of this kind, it yet must be said that all such will have conscience-work as to sin sooner or later. With them, what answers to repentance will undoubtedly follow after their conversion. But the divine order is repentance toward God first, and then faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ; and wherever the truth of the gospel is proclaimed according to God, this order will be maintained in the experience of souls. Take, for example, the epistle to the Romans, which in an especial manner presents the gospel. In the first place, after unfolding his theme, the apostle proves that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, then — but not till then — he expounds the provisions of God's grace for the sinner's guilt, and thereon he proceeds to explain how God has met also the sinner's state as well as the sinner's guilt. We do not here enter into this, beyond calling attention to the fact that the demonstration of our guilt precedes his description of how God has set forth Christ Jesus as a propitiation through faith in His blood. And wherever this divine order of the presentation of truth is followed, it must necessarily produce repentance toward God, though repentance will ever be connected with the reception of the Word, before faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ. E. D.

V.

## **The Person of Christ.**

The truth concerning the person of Christ lies at the foundation of Christianity. Apart from what He was, even His death on the cross would not have made atonement for sin. It is necessary, therefore, to be clear on this subject, being as it is a component part of the Christian faith. On this account the apostle John wrote, "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine" (the doctrine of the Christ; i.e. the true teaching concerning Him), "receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." (2 John 10, 11.) Such an one while claiming to be a teacher must not be regarded even as

a Christian. The truth involved is both fundamental and vital, so that neutrality concerning it would amount to identification with those who rejected it. Another remark is needful. Our Lord Himself said, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father." (Matthew 11: 27.) By this we are to understand that no one can grasp the mystery of His being, of the union in Himself of the divine and human natures. Acquainted with Him we can be, for He has also said, "I know my sheep, and am known of mine, as the Father knows me and I know the Father."\* There is thus no limit to the possible intimate knowledge of Christ Himself; but together with this, it must never be forgotten that none but the Father comprehends the Son, the mystery of His being who, when down here, was God manifest in the flesh. It savours therefore both of presumption and profanity to seek to penetrate into that which is absolutely concealed from all human eyes. The attempt has often been made, as church history abundantly testifies; but those who have made it, left to their own imaginings, have always fallen into dangerous errors, and become the blind instruments of Satan to scatter the people of God, while those who listened to or read their unholy speculations were often drawn into the vortex of doubt and infidelity. What is revealed may be pointed out for reception with adoration, but to proceed one step beyond is to forsake the light of revelation for the darkness of unhallowed reasonings.

\*This is now generally admitted to be the right translation.

There are three scriptures which in a very special way bring before us the glory of the person of our blessed Lord; they are John 1, Col. 1, and Hebrews 1. We may then, first of all, look at these in the order named. The very first verse of John's gospel brings Him in all His divine majesty before our souls — "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And then it is added, "The same was in the beginning with God." Doubtless this precise title — if title it be — is used in relation to errors current in the apostle's day. Into these we need not enter, for the term is simple, and means, as has been said, that He is, and is the expression of the whole mind that subsists in God. Let the reader reverently ponder this statement; for what does it imply? Nothing less than that He is divine, for He who was the expression of the *whole* mind of God could not be other than Himself God. No created intelligence, however exalted, could by any possibility be the complete display of the divine mind. Prophets and apostles were often used, though they did not always understand the messages they had received, to communicate parts of God's mind, but none but the eternal Word could be its perfect expression. The saying of the old writer is strictly true — That only God could comprehend God.

The first verse, as often pointed out, asserts three things of the Word — that He is eternal in His existence — He was in the beginning; distinct as to His person — He was with God; and He is divine as to His nature — He was God. That the words "In the beginning" reach back into eternity is plain from verse 3, for the Creator of all things ("and without Him was not anything made that was made," whether angels, principalities, or powers, as well as men) necessarily was eternally existent. Creation indeed was the first expression of God, and that, as we here learn, was by Him who was the Word. In Him also was life, and the life was the light of men. (Compare Psalm 36: 9.) Of whom could this be said but of one who was Himself absolutely divine?

Passing now to verse 14 we read: "The Word *became*" (not was made) "flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." We may read in connection with this, "No one hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him." (v. 18.) We have thus brought before us the mystery of the incarnation — the Word became flesh. He who was with God, and who was God, became man, and tabernacled amongst men in a human body. But though His essential glory was thus shrouded from the natural eye, there were those who, with their eyes opened by the Holy Spirit, beheld His glory — not simply His moral glory, but His divine glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father. Thus down here as Man He was the perfect expression of God — the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. Creation was *an* unfolding, a display or revelation of God (see Romans 1: 19, 20); but the Word become flesh was *the* revelation of the Father, as He said to the Jews, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also" (John 8: 19), and to Philip, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (John 14: 9.) What then do we learn from these statements, but that He whom we know as the Lord Jesus Christ was the eternal and divine Word, that He was God, that He was the Creator of all things, and that He stepped forth into time and became flesh, a Man amongst men, "very God and very Man"? And this, we repeat, is one of the essential truths of Christianity.

We will now turn to Col. 1. The apostle tells of how the Father "hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light . . . delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son" (literally, the Son of His love); and then, after adding that it is in Him (in Him who is the Son of His love) "we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins," he proceeds to describe His glories. First, He is the image of the invisible God. If the reader will look at Genesis 1, he will see that man was made in the image and *likeness* of God; and this indicates a twofold distinction. Man was made in the image of God; our blessed Lord was that image. Secondly, man was made in God's likeness; but it would be derogatory to the Godhead of the Son to say that He was the *likeness* of God. Being Himself God, He could not be the likeness, but, as manifested in time, He was the *image* of God. Man was made in the image of God, for he represented God in the first creation. When Christ came, He, as the image of God, not only represented Him, but was in Himself the perfect presentation of God. Truly read, therefore, this one brief statement is the assertion of His divine claims. He was also the Firstborn of every creature, or rather the Firstborn of all creation. Let us borrow the words of another as to this: "He is then the image of the invisible God, and, when He takes His place in it, the Firstborn of all creation. The reason of this is worthy of our attention — simple, yet marvellous. He created it. It was in the person of the Son that God acted when by His power He created all things, whether in the heaven or in the earth, visible and invisible. All that is great and exalted is but the work of His hand; all has been created by Him (the Son), and for Him. Thus, when He takes possession of it, He takes it as His inheritance by right. Wonderful truth, that He who has redeemed us, who made Himself man . . . is the Creator! But such is the truth." And then, that there might be no misconception as to the glory of His person, we read, "And He is before all things" — before the existence of a single thing, when the self-existent One, God Himself, dwelt (if we may venture the words) in the solitude of His own blissful being. "And by Him all things consist;" called into existence by His creative word, they are dependent still for continuance upon His power. And be it remembered that these things are revealed, not to be explained, but to be received, and to be received that our hearts may be filled with adoration

as we think of the essential glory and majesty of Him who came into this scene as man, and humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

In the epistle to the Hebrews we shall also find, if in connection with another line of truth, the glories of the person of Christ unveiled. God, says the writer of this epistle, hath in these last days spoken to us by the Son; and he adds immediately, "Whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds." So that we have in these few lines a very trinity of glories — Son of God, Heir of all things, and Creator. "All the vast system of this universe, those unknown worlds that trace their paths in the vast regions of space in divine order to manifest the glory of a Creator-God, are the work of His hand who has spoken to us, of the divine Christ. In Him has shone forth the glory of God. He is the perfect impress of His being. We see God in Him in all that He said, in all that He did, in His person. Moreover, by the word of His power He upholds all that exists. He is then the Creator; God is revealed in His person." But who, we may ask, is this glorious Being? It is no other than He who was crucified through weakness, Jesus of Nazareth, as He was known amongst men, the Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, as depicted by the prophet; for as soon as we are told that He upholdeth all things by the word of His power, it is added, that it is He who made by Himself purification of sins, and has thereon sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. This identifies Him at once with the Christ who died on the cross, and who rose again on the third day, and is now at the right hand of God.

There is, however, still more in the chapter. He is the Son of God as born into this world, spoken of as such in the words, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." As the First-begotten, when introduced into this scene, "all the angels of God" are commanded to worship Him. He is addressed even as God: "Unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." Once more He is pointed out as the Creator; and finally, His position is given at the right hand of God until His enemies are made His footstool. It is glory upon glory which is here unfolded, and all alike centring in and radiating from the Son, in whom, in these last days, God has spoken, and who not only became flesh and tabernacled amongst men, but was also, as we learn from John's gospel, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world.

But it is not only in such scriptures as these that the character of the person of Christ is revealed. Every page of the gospels tells that He was the God-man. If, on the one hand, He was a homeless stranger, a weary Man sitting on Samaria's well; if He hungered in the desert, slept in the boat; if He groaned, wept tears of sorrow and sympathy; on the other hand, He wrought miracles, cleansed lepers, opened blind eyes, raised the dead to life, asserted His power over the winds and the waves, controlled the movements of the fish of the sea; in a word, He declared by His mighty acts that if a man He was also God. Hence He said to Philip, "Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake." (John 14: 11.) And again, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man" (rather, no other one) "did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father." (John 15: 24.) And the testimony which He gave by His words and by His works during His sojourn here was confirmed and sealed by His resurrection from among the dead, for He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." (Romans 1: 4.)

There is even yet another line of truth pointing — unmistakably pointing — to the same conclusion. He received and approved the confession of Peter, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," and traced it to a special revelation from His Father in heaven. His disciples and others fell at His feet, and in their measure, and according to their light, rendered to Him what only belonged to God. Nay, He claimed from His own what could only be properly given to God. They were to follow Him, love and serve Him; and on His part He engaged to give them rest, peace, and eternal life; promised to return to receive them unto Himself, that where He should be, after His departure, they should be also. Take the one instance of the thief on the cross. In his penitence and faith he turned to the One who was crucified by his side, and said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom." The answer was, "Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke 23: 42, 43.) That He was man was proved by the fact of His crucifixion, and these blessed words which He spake to the malefactor demonstrate no less clearly that He was also God.

And such is the professed faith of Christendom, and nothing less can be received as Christian faith. This must be ever insisted upon with uncompromising fidelity, and especially now, when there are not wanting signs of a rising wave of socinianism, which threatens to spread throughout the land, and which; as it is the result of increasing rationalism, is also the sure precursor of wide-spread infidelity, and, it may be, apostasy. The enemy is very subtle. He will even commend Christ as man, if he may but thereby raise doubts as to His Godhead; and for this purpose he chooses rather to use as his instruments professed Christian teachers than open adversaries. We need therefore, as not ignorant of his devices, to be on our guard, and to cling to the precious truth with ever-increasing tenacity, that the Christ, who as concerning the flesh was born of the seed of David, is over all, God blessed for ever. (Rom. 1: 4; Rom. 9: 5.) And it is also written, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." (1 John 4: 15.)

"Thou art the everlasting Word,  
The Father's only Son;  
God manifest, God seen and heard,  
The heaven's beloved One.  
Worthy, O Lamb of God, art Thou,  
That every knee to Thee should bow."

E. D.

VI.

## The Work of Christ.

The person and work of Christ are inseparable, for — as we saw in the last paper — the efficacy of His work is derived from the character of His person; that is, in simple language, no other but He who was both God and Man, who was the image of the invisible God, the Word who was God, and who yet became flesh and dwelt among us, could have made atonement for sin in His death upon the cross. The truth concerning these two things lies at the very foundation of Christianity, and neither therefore could be surrendered without departing from the faith once delivered to the saints.

By the work of Christ, it should be observed, is meant especially what He accomplished on Calvary. The will of God, which He came to do (Heb. 10), would perhaps embrace the whole of His life, as well as His death; but, as that chapter itself shows, it has reference chiefly to His death, as is seen from the words, "By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once." In like manner the apostle Paul alludes to His death, when he speaks of the "one righteousness" which is towards all men for justification of life. (Rom. 5: 18, New Translation.)

We propose therefore, in this paper, to enquire briefly into the nature of the work of Christ through His death — a work which is often expressed by the one word atonement;\* and if we turn to the sacrificial ceremonies of the great day of atonement, we shall find the materials necessary for our investigation. There are three points to which the reader's attention may be directed. The first is, burning the incense inside the veil before the mercy-seat. After the details are given concerning the sacrifices to be offered, and after the sacrifice was killed, it was said of Aaron, that "he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil: and he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy-seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not." (Lev. 16: 12, 13.) This was the first transaction inside the veil on this eventful day. Aaron had washed himself in water, and put on the holy linen garments, that he might be a type (only a type) of the spotless holiness of Christ. The sin-offering had been killed, death had been brought in upon the victim, the blood which was to make propitiation had been shed; but the first and foremost thing enjoined, before the blood could be dealt with or sprinkled, was, that Aaron should burn the fragrant incense before the Lord in the holiest. The incense sets forth the acceptability of Christ Himself to God; the sweet fragrance of His graces, excellencies, and perfections — a truth not ill-embodied in the lines —

"The merits of the Lord appear,

They fill the holy place."

(\*It may be helpful to some readers if it is explained that the word atonement does not occur in the New Testament Scriptures. It is found in the English Translation in Romans 5: 11, but it is wrongly given for the word reconciliation. In Hebrews 2: 17 reconciliation should be propitiation. This double mistake is remarkable, and perhaps significant.)

This will explain to the reader what has already been observed — the indissoluble connection between the person and the work of Christ. Aaron pauses as it were in the midst of his preparation for his sacrificial service, and enters first of all into the holiest with his censer of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord to burn incense; teaching that the graces, the perfections of Christ, tested by the holy fire, by the absolute standard of God's holiness, emitted a cloud of perfume which covered the mercy-seat — the dwelling-place of Jehovah. It is, we repeat, the infinite acceptability of Christ Himself — the acceptability proved by the application of the holy fire. It therefore tells us of God's delight in what Christ was in Himself; not so much God's delight in His beloved Son, as expressed at His baptism and on the mount of transfiguration, but rather His unmeasured complacency in Christ as Man — in Him who had devoted Himself to death, and to death in the place of sin, and for sin, for the glory of His God. Though not the burnt-offering — for that was presented on the brazen altar — yet, in one aspect like it, the incense, when placed upon the burning coals, ascended as a sweet savour unto the Lord.

The next thing was dealing with the blood of the sacrifice. The reader will observe that Aaron was to offer a bullock as the sin-offering to make an atonement for himself and for his house (v. 6); but for the congregation of the children of Israel two goats were appointed — one of which (that on which the Lord's lot fell) was to be killed as a sin-offering, and the other was to be the scapegoat. (vv. 8-10.) It is with the goats that we are concerned in this paper; for while the bullock speaks of Christ equally with the two goats, it is in these latter God has been pleased to show forth the two aspects of the death of Christ. The blood of the bullock was dealt with in the same way as that of the goat of the sin-offering, both alike being sprinkled once on and seven times before the mercy-seat. (vv. 14, 15.) The blood on the mercy-seat was manifestly for God, for the mercy-seat was God's throne in the midst of Israel. (Psalm 80: 1, etc.) That before the mercy-seat was for him that approached — the high priest, in this case — as representing the congregation, and here seven times as a perfect testimony to the efficacy of the sacrifice, while once was enough for the eye of God. What then did this blood represent? It was the blood of the sin-offering, type of the precious blood of Christ, who was made sin in His death on the cross, of Him whose soul — according to the language of the prophet (Isaiah 53: 10) — was made an offering for sin. Hence the apostle Paul writes, "Whom God hath set forth a propitiation [a mercy-seat] through faith in His blood." (Rom. 3: 25.)

In order then to apprehend the true significance of this blood-sprinkling, it must again be carefully remembered that it was inside the veil — in the holiest of all — and on the mercy-seat, where the eye of God alone rested, and that the mercy-seat was His throne. Two things follow. First, that it was for God; and, secondly, that it appeased, answered, according to the nature of Him that sat thereon, the claims of His throne in the midst of Israel. But inasmuch as the holiest was but the pattern (as all the tabernacle), and therefore the antitype of heavenly things (see Heb. 9, 10), we learn from this sprinkling of the blood on the mercy-seat, on the day of atonement, what the blood of Christ was for God. As another has written: "The perfect death of Jesus — His blood put on the throne of God — has established and brought into evidence all that God is, all His glory, as no creation could have done it. His truth (for He had passed sentence of death) is made good in the highest way in Jesus; His majesty, for His Son submits to all for His glory; His justice against sin; His infinite love. God found means therein to accomplish His counsels of grace, in maintaining all the majesty of His justice, and of His divine dignity; for what like the

death of Jesus could have glorified them?" This blood-sprinkling on the mercy-seat constituted the propitiation, because it was for God in reference to the claims of His holiness upon men as sinners. Being thus for God, there is no question of application to sinners, though it is the glorious and righteous basis on which God can act in grace, and save every one who receives His testimony respecting it, on which He can be both just and the Justifier of all who believe in Jesus. (Rom. 3: 24-26.) It is this aspect of the death of Christ — the propitiation made through His blood — that has glorified God completely in relation to all that He is, whether as regards His holiness, His truth, His majesty, His righteousness, or His love. Were no sinner ever saved, God would yet have been infinitely glorified by the death of His Son, in the propitiation He has made by His precious blood; for all His claims as a holy God, all the claims of His holy government, have been publicly vindicated in the face of the universe. But, blessed be His name, not only has peace — the peace of God's throne — been made by the blood of His cross, but streams of blessing also have flowed out therefrom, ever increasing in volume, from the day when the malefactor went from his gibbet to be with Christ in paradise until now; and they will flow onward until the last saint is gathered in, whether in this or the coming dispensation.

"Blest Lamb of God, thy precious blood

Shall never lose its power,

Till every ransomed saint of God

Be saved to sin no more."

If we now consider the scapegoat, we shall have before us another aspect of the work of Christ: "And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities into a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness." (vv. 21, 22.) If the blood on the mercy-seat made propitiation, the putting the sin of Israel upon the live goat sets forth the truth of substitution.\* Thus, as another has well expressed it, "it is evident that, though the scapegoat was sent away alive, he was identified as to the efficacy of the work with the death of the other. The idea of the eternal sending away of sins out of remembrance is only added to the thought of death. The glory of God was established, on one side, in the putting of blood on the mercy-seat; and, on the other, there was the substitution of the scapegoat — of the Lord Jesus — in His precious grace for the guilty persons whose cause He had undertaken; and the sins of these having been borne, their deliverance was full, entire, and final. The first goat was Jehovah's lot, it was a question of His character and majesty; the other was the lot of the people, which definitively represented the people in their sins."

(\*By substitution is meant that the Lord Jesus died in the room and stead of His people — that He took their place, bore their sins, and endured on the cross the just judgment of God — all that was due to them on account of their sins.)

These two aspects are found in the epistle to the Romans. At the end of Romans 3, as already pointed out, we have Christ set forth as a propitiation through faith in His blood (v. 25), and in Romans 4 we read: "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification," where the being delivered for our offences is clearly substitution, answering to the putting of Israel's sins on the head of the scapegoat. *But substitution involves the application of the efficacy of the work, of Christ, and is therefore limited to believers.* This is indeed seen in the ceremony connected with the scapegoat. Aaron laid his hands upon its head, and in that attitude confessed over it all the iniquities of Israel. Laying his hands on its head expressed identification with the goat, and the transference, through confession, of the transgressions and sins of the people to the goat, and the goat consequently bore away their sins into the wilderness. Now none but believers are identified with the sacrifice of Christ. It is only when they first came to Christ, having received God's testimony concerning His beloved Son, and confessed their sins, that they were brought under all the value of His work, and learned that all their sins were put away for ever. And if we refer to a few scriptures where the truth of substitution is found, it will be clear, beyond question, that it is limited to believers.

"He was wounded," says the prophet, "for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53: 5.) Such is the language which the Spirit of God has provided, through the prophet, for converted Israel of a later day; for the reader will observe that without faith it would not be possible to say, "He was wounded for our transgressions," or that "with His stripes we are healed." In like manner, when the apostle Peter writes, "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree" (1 Peter 2: 24), he expresses the faith of himself and of his fellow-believers to whom he was writing, for he adds, "that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness."

There is another class of scriptures, as the point is important, to which we will briefly refer. Whenever the death of the Lord is looked at in its substitutional aspect, it is limited to His people. Speaking Himself He says, "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for [ἀντὶ] many," the many, as shown by the preceding preposition, being a special class; i.e., His people. In the epistle to the Hebrews we also read that Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many (chap. 9: 28), not of all, because the truth of substitution is again in view. On the other hand, when it says that Christ died for all, as in 2 Cor. 5: 14, or that He gave Himself for all, as in 1 Timothy 2: 6, the thought of substitution is excluded, and carefully excluded, by the language employed. Both things are blessedly true of the death of Christ — He died for all, by the grace of God He tasted death for every man — but, according to the teaching of scripture, only believers are entitled to say that He bore their sins in His death upon the cross, for this involves, as before pointed out, faith in His work, and the application to those who have it of the benefits of His death.\*

\*Hence the liturgical expression, "O Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world," is unscriptural and erroneous. It implies no less than that the whole world must necessarily be saved. This shows the importance of jealously guarding the truth of God from human additions. (See John 1: 29.)

If the reader has followed the above statements, he will have apprehended the difference between propitiation and substitution; for, as the writer already cited says, "These two aspects of the death of Jesus must be carefully distinguished in the atoning sacrifice He has accomplished. He has glorified God, and God acts according to the value of that blood towards all. He has borne the sins of His people, and the salvation of His people is complete." It was by the propitiation that He glorified God, and by which, all His holy claims having been met, God was set free in righteousness to proclaim grace to the whole world, to issue the invitation — "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." It is by substitution that all the sins of God's people have been borne away for ever; and it is these two things that make up the one work of Christ — the atonement — which was wrought out and completed on Calvary, when through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God. There are several aspects of this work, as may be seen in the details of the offerings (Lev. 1-4); but the work is one, and perfect, and eternally complete. In this finished work of Christ God has been abundantly glorified (John 13: 31, 32; John 17: 4), and He has shown His estimate of it by the glory in which He has set His beloved Son at His own right hand. It is moreover, as we have seen, the righteous basis on which God can now in His unspeakable grace send out to the whole world the entreating message — "Be ye reconciled to God" — as well as the all-efficacious ground on which He will put away sin out of His sight for ever. (See Hebrews 9: 26.)

Thus God has His part in the death of Christ. Believers have theirs, inasmuch as they know that by it their sins have been eternally put away. Even the world reaps some of its blessed consequences, in that it is written, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Israel will share in its *efficacy*, for He died for that nation (John 11: 49, 50); and thus the time will come when "all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." (Romans 11: 26.) The whole creation will in virtue of it be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Romans 8: 21); yea, the reconciliation of all things will proceed on the foundation of peace having been made through the blood of His cross. In a word, God will, in virtue of the finished work of Christ, accomplish all His counsels of grace, whether in respect of believers of this dispensation, of Israel in the age to come, or of the whole creation; and together with the introduction of the new heaven and the new earth, all sin will have been put away as the full consequence of the finished work of Christ. E. D.

VII.

## Reconciliation.

The very name of this subject points out to some extent its character. It implies, at least, that enmity had somewhere been existing; and when it is remembered that the question is concerning the reconciliation of sinners to God, it may well be asked, Where was the enmity? It is the more important to answer this question, owing to the fact that the statement is continually made, that God is reconciled to man in Christ. This indeed was the general thought at the time of, and subsequent to, the Reformation, and it has found expression in many formal theological treatises. But it only concerns us to ascertain the teaching of the Scriptures. If, then, the reader

will turn to Rom. 5 he may read, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." (v. 10.) This places beyond dispute that the enmity was on our part, that it was we who needed to be reconciled to God, and not God to us. The latter thought, indeed, loses sight altogether — as may be more fully seen farther on — of the fact that God Himself is the fountain of all grace, and that it was acting from His own heart "that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

There are three scriptures which especially speak of reconciliation — Rom. 5: 10, 11, 2 Cor. 5: 18-21, and Col. 1: 20-22,\* and we hope to refer to each of these in tracing out the subject. Let it then be borne distinctly in mind that man, man as such, is an enemy of God. The scripture says, the carnal mind — the mind of the flesh — that is, the mind of every natural man, is enmity against God (Rom. 8: 7), and this was proved when the Lord Jesus came into the world, as He Himself says, "They hated me without a cause" (John 15: 25), and they rested not in their hatred until they had nailed Him to the cross. Perfect goodness did but elicit perfect evil: perfect light was in the world, "and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." (John 3: 19, 20.) Let us now see how God met all this enmity, and what steps He took to break it down, and to reconcile the sinner to Himself.

\*In Hebrews 2: 17 the word is found, but it should be "propitiation," whereas the word "atonement" in Rom. 5: 11 ought to be "reconciliation."

Turning, first of all, to 2 Cor. 5, we shall perceive that the Holy Spirit is careful to remind us, what has already been insisted on, that God Himself is the source of reconciliation. "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ," etc. (v. 18.) Of necessity it was so; for how could man make approaches to God when he was already not only a poor, lost sinner, but also his mind was enmity against God, and when there was no foundation laid on which a righteous reconciliation could be effected? No; man was helpless, and could never, even if he had the desire, have bridged over the chasm that separated him from God. God alone could undertake this mighty work. And this expression — "All things are of God" — tells the blessed tale of grace which flowed out from His heart towards poor guilty man, and made provision for his eternal reconciliation. And the passage in Romans, already cited, teaches us, furthermore, that the motive for the action on God's part was in Himself alone: it was when we were enemies — when our backs were turned to Him in our hatred, that was the moment when God unfolded the depths of His own heart in the gift of His beloved Son. (Rom. 5: 8-10.)

We may trace the stream of grace in its onward course. Its first appearance in this world is indicated by the words: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." (2 Cor. 5: 19.)\* This refers to the attitude of God in Christ in incarnation. He came into a world of sinners, all of whom were under the just judgment of God on account of sin, and who all, had He dealt with them in righteousness, must have been swept away to eternal destruction. But He came in grace, dwelt with sinners, submitted Himself to all their taunts, malice, and hatred, did not for the time impute their trespasses unto them, but bore all their hatred and malice in patience, and even entreated them to come to Him and live. God was thus in Christ reconciling the world to Himself. Instead of exacting what was due to

Himself, He offered mercy, rest, forgiveness, life, and would fain have in this way broken down the enmity of their hearts. But all was in vain, man would not be reconciled. Still the stream of grace flowed on, for the heart of God was unwearied, even in the presence of the ever increasing manifestation of the enmity of man's heart, which rose up to the total rejection and crucifixion of Him who would if possible have reconciled them to Himself. The cross was the answer to man's hatred; that is, the work that was there accomplished. And the aspect of it presented here is very beautiful, "for He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin." It is, as suited to the subject, an action on the part of God. It is God who is reconciling in this chapter, and hence He was acting both in Christ and on the cross (as also in His messengers after the cross), that He might, by the exhibition of His own heart, melt the hard heart of man, break down His enmity. Let the reader ponder this wondrous display of the riches of His grace. For what did God accomplish by the death of Christ? He made Him sin, He exacted from that spotless and willing victim, who offered Himself to endure all that the glory of God demanded on account of sin, all His claims upon us, so that He might lay a foundation, righteous and immovable, on which He could still proceed to satisfy His own heart, in harmony with all His attributes, in His longing desire to reconcile men to Himself.

(\*The reader should carefully mark the exact wording of this scripture. It does not say that God has reconciled the world to Himself, as, for example, the Swedish Bible translates, and as was stated recently by one of the most popular preachers in London; that would mean universal salvation.)

The stream still flowed. Christ died on the cross, was buried, rose again, ascended up to heaven, and sat down on the right hand of God. Thereon the Holy Spirit was given, souls were converted and reconciled, and then sent forth with God's message to the whole world. The apostle says, "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation." And then he proceeds to describe the carrying out of this ministry: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech by us: we pray in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God." (v. 20.) Sent forth as Christ's ambassadors, after He had taken His seat at the right hand of God, it is still, as it were, the voice of God beseeching through those who were pleading with men, in the stead of Christ (for He was no longer here), to be reconciled to God. Such has been the action of God with the view of reconciling men. He Himself was here in the person of Christ, here in grace in the attitude of seeking to reconcile, then, still proceeding with His object, He made Him, who knew no sin, sin on the cross, and thereon He took up men, reconciled them to Himself, and put in them the ministry of reconciliation, that the whole world might know what was in His heart. And though the immediate ambassadors of Christ are no longer upon the earth, yet wherever the gospel message is proclaimed there is still heard the entreating voice of God addressed to His enemies.

We may now look a little more closely at the truth of reconciliation; but first it may be necessary to state distinctly its ground. This is brought forth prominently in all the three scriptures named. We take one of these: "Having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile," etc. (Col. 1: 20.) Here is given, in precise form, the foundation on which God proceeds; it is the peace which has been made by the blood of the cross of Christ. The reader will

at once perceive that this peace is not peace between God and man, not the peace with God which those possess who are justified by faith, because it is set forth as the ground on which God can act in reconciliation. It is rather the peace of God's throne, consequent upon all the claims of that throne, the claims of a Holy God upon sinners, having been completely met by the precious blood of Christ. God, having been thus glorified by the death of the Lord Jesus, is free, in righteousness as well as in grace, to take the first step in the work of reconciliation. The death of Christ is the alone ground on which He acts; so in Romans we read, "We were reconciled to God through the death of His Son" (Rom. 5: 10); in Colossians, "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death." And as it is on the ground of the death of Christ, so it is by the presentation of what God is in Christ, when down here, and through Christ in His death on the cross, that God speaks in power, through the Holy Spirit, to the hearts of sinners, and effects their reconciliation by the revelation of what He is in all His goodness and grace. The work of reconciliation is thus the work of God, even as the apostle says, "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself;" and again, "And you hath He reconciled."

What, then, is meant by reconciliation? Between men who may have been at variance it is the restoration of happy relationships; it is much more than this between God and man. The enmity was in the heart of man alone; and it is not only the removal of this, but it is also bringing man to God according to the eternal efficacy of the perfect work of Christ — a perfect work as estimated by God Himself. It is a reconciliation, therefore, according to all that God is as displayed in the death of Christ, and we brought to be — to quote the words of another — "in absolute harmony with the full display of what God is in His own character and nature." It is not, therefore, merely removing the enmity of our hearts, and God fully and freely forgiving our sins, but it is lifting us up into His own presence, setting us in the light as He is in the light, bringing us to Himself, and causing us to be in harmony with the full manifestation of Himself in Christ. The apostle could therefore say, "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the reconciliation." (Rom. 5: 11.) That is, the result of reconciliation is that we can joy in God, delight ourselves in all that He is, in His holiness, love, grace, majesty, truth, righteousness — in a word, in Himself. What a contrast between joying in and being enemies of God! And this mighty change has been effected by His grace.

If now we turn once more to the epistle to the Colossians, we shall learn the scope of reconciliation. Believers are reconciled. This is the precise statement of the apostle (v. 21), as also in both Romans and 2 Cor. 5; and the character of it may again be marked from the words he employs in Colossians: it is, "To present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in His sight" Such is the wondrous place in which God brings all whom He has reconciled to Himself, and all, it need scarcely be added, whom He may yet reconcile. But the reader should observe that, while it is God's work, it is through faith, for this opens the door of reconciliation to every poor sinner who listens and yields to the beseeching cry, "Be reconciled to God."

There is, however, outside of believers, another field in which God will work for the same end. The apostle says, "Having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven." (v. 20.) It is of the utmost moment to observe, especially in a day when false teachers, presuming upon a wide-spread ignorance of the Scriptures, are seeking on every hand to substitute their own

thoughts for the infallible word of God, that here the apostle speaks of *things* and not persons. Had it been persons, there were no need to proceed to speak of believers as a separate class. The "all things" that are to be reconciled correspond with the headship of Christ over all creation — "He is before all things, and by Him all things consist." (v. 17) — just as believers correspond with His headship of the body. (v. 18.) And these "all things," "whether things in earth, or things in heaven" — i.e., the heavenly things, which were to be purified by better sacrifices than those used for the patterns of things in the heavens (Heb. 9: 23) — are regarded in this scripture, not only as defiled by sin, but also, through being connected with man and Satan, as under the power of evil, and, therefore, of hostility to God. (Compare Rom. 8: 19-22.) God, therefore, will act in power (peace having been made by the blood of the cross), and bring, through Christ, all these things back into harmonious relationship with Himself. This will be seen in measure during the thousand years, when Christ will wield His kingly sceptre over the whole earth; but it will be then only in measure, for evil, if repressed, will still be there, and breaking forth, under the instigation of Satan at the close of the kingdom, will again defile the beautiful scene. It will be, however, its last appearance; for the dark and awful judgments, which will consummate the ways of God with earth and man, will but be preparatory to the introduction of the new heavens and the new earth, wherein righteousness will for ever dwell. All things are now made new, and "the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Rev. 21: 3, 4.) It is only in this perfect scene — perfect according to the thoughts of God — that we behold the far-reaching consequences and efficacy of the precious blood of Christ; for here we are permitted to see all things, whether on earth or in heaven, actually reconciled; and the foundation on which God will work out this glorious result is the peace which has been made by the blood of the cross. E. D.

VIII.

## Prayer.

There is no need to insist upon the importance of prayer; for, while it may often be neglected, there are few who will not admit that it is a necessary expression of the Christian life. Our purpose, however, in this paper is to offer a few considerations upon its nature, as well as upon its conditions and objects.

There are three things contained in prayer — dependence, confidence, and expectation. Necessarily prayer is the language of dependence, springing from the fact, as it does, that we are dependent on Him to whom we pray. When the Lord said to Ananias, concerning Saul, "Behold, he prayeth," He intimated that Saul had now learnt his true place of dependence, along with the conviction of his guilt in persecuting the followers of Jesus of Nazareth. It is the sense of dependence that begets need, and turns our eyes upward to Him who alone can meet it. This is expressed in the language of the psalmist, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from Him." (Psalm 62: 5.) There might, however, be entire dependence without confidence; and in such a case there could be no real prayer. A natural man, for example, might be convinced that he is dependent on a higher power for his existence; but with his carnal mind

enmity against God he could not turn to Him in prayer. The believer not only knows his dependence on, but he has also confidence in God.

He has learnt something of His grace, His heart, and he thus, under the sense of his need, casts himself in childlike confidence on God, in the assurance that He will hear his prayer. Then, allied with this, there is expectation, waiting for the answer in faith. No doubt the heart is relieved by the very utterance of its needs before God; but he who prays in the Spirit will be found watching in his prayer for the expected answer. As the psalmist again speaks, "I waited patiently [in waiting I waited] for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry." And again, "I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning." So in the New Testament we are exhorted to "continue [to persevere] in prayer, and to watch in the same with thanksgiving." As also to "pray without ceasing." (Col. 4: 2; 1 Thess. 5: 17.)

The conditions of prayer according to God are found in various scriptures. Jude speaks in his epistle of praying in the Holy Ghost, and this may perhaps be termed the fundamental condition; for while we read in the Scriptures of prayers offered by natural men, and of such being answered by God in His tender mercy and compassion, it is yet true that no believer could pray except in and by the Spirit of God. It is He who must produce in us the sense of need, and it is He who must lead us into the presence of God, as well as guide us in our petitions. As the apostle says, when speaking of our connection with a groaning creation, "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered." (Rom. 8: 26.) We are thus as dependent on the power of the Spirit for prayer as for walk. It is owing to the forgetfulness of this truth that Christendom seeks refuge in its prayer-books, both in families and in public assemblies, and at the same time conceals thereby its need and poverty.

Our Lord has also laid down an indispensable condition of prayer — a condition which, when fulfilled, always ensures the answer to our cries. He says, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." (John 14: 13, 14.) It becomes therefore a matter of the utmost importance to ascertain the meaning of the words "in my name." It could not mean the utterance simply of the words, or closing our petitions with, "through our Lord Jesus Christ." That would attach the answer of prayer to a mere formula. This is impossible, and we shall see that much more is involved. Even in human transactions the name of another cannot be used without his consent and authority. If we ask anything of a third person in another's name, in the name of one that would give us influence in our request, it can only be with his express permission, and a permission which must be proved if the demand is made. In like manner we cannot use the name of Christ in our prayers without His warrant — a warrant that must be found in His own Word. When we have this, and we have it for every petition which is evoked from us by the Holy Ghost, for every prayer which is the expression of His own mind, we appear before God with all the authority of Christ Himself, in all His value and preciousness to God, and hence the prayers so offered ascend with the same power as if presented by Himself. This is seen from the promise He annexes to the condition, "I will do it." And He will do it, moreover, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. How blessed then when we thus pray! And what an encouragement thus to

pray! And what a foundation, we may also add, for faith to build its hopes and expectations upon!

In John 15 the Lord has given us another condition — "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you." (v. 7.) This is sometimes spoken of as a lower kind of prayer, but the slightest examination of the terms our Lord employs will dispel the misconception. True it is asking what we will, but this is preceded by a double condition. The first is, "If ye *abide* in me." Now abiding in Christ is the constant maintenance in our souls of our dependence upon Him for life, strength, and everything; a dependence as complete as that of the branch on the vine for its power to bear fruit. "Apart from me," He says, "ye can do nothing," anymore than the branch could bear fruit after it was severed from the vine. Whatever of life towards God, service in testimony, fruit-bearing of every kind, that flows out from His people, has its source in Him, and can only flow out through them, as the connection is maintained by abiding in Him, realizing that they are dependent on Him, that in this sense they live, move, and have their being in Him. Then He adds, "And my words abide in you." The two things must go together — abiding in Him and His words abiding in us. The first gives the secret of the power and the second the knowledge of His mind; for when His words abide — dwell in us — they become the source of His thoughts to us; yea, they form His mind, and as a consequence what we will is according to His will. This reveals to us that our prayers — the prayers that have power with God — flow from God's own mind as revealed in the Scriptures. An example of this may be found in the life of David. When the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to tell David that not he, but his son, should build Jehovah's house, and gave him promises concerning his own house, his throne, and kingdom, he went in and sat before the Lord with his heart overflowing with gratitude, and praise, and prayer; and, among others, he used these remarkable words, "Thou, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house: therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee." (2 Samuel 7: 27.) That is, David's prayer concerning his house was founded upon and formed by the gracious communications which Jehovah had been pleased to make. So likewise our truest prayers are those which spring from the word of God, the words of Christ, as in John, dwelling in our hearts, because we then pray in communion with, as well as according to, the divine mind, and hence necessarily also in the Holy Ghost.

In the gospel of Matthew another aspect of prayer is presented — "All things, whatsoever ye ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." (Matt. 21: 22; see also Mark 11: 24.) James too speaks of the necessity of faith in asking, and adds that a waverer must not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Now faith can only spring from confidence in God about the thing sought, and this confidence in God will only follow upon the conviction that what is prayed for is according to God's will; and, it may be added, the assurance that we have the mind of God can only be produced by the Holy Spirit, and by the Holy Spirit, speaking generally, through the written Word. Once having this assurance, we await with the certainty of expectation the answer, according to that word of the apostle John: "This is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him." (1 John 5: 14, 15.) This passage is important as showing that faith finds its sure foundation in the knowledge of God's will — a will that is unfolded to us in the Scriptures.

The apostle John warns us of a common hindrance to prayer. He says, "Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." (1 John 3: 21, 22.) Self-judgment and confession, if there has been failure or sin, are therefore pre-requisites to effectual prayer, even as the psalmist says, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." This will again link itself with the statement of James — "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." The righteous man being, we judge, one who is practically such; one who, in the language of John, "keeps God's commandments." For walking in obedience is not only the path of holiness, but it is also the source through the Holy Spirit of intelligence in God's mind, and thus of confidence in prayer. The very example of Elijah that James adduces is an illustration in point. In the history Elijah announces by a word of the Lord that there should be no rain upon the earth for "these years;" and again, after that period, that there should be rain. And now we learn from James that both the one and the other were answers to his prayers.

We can only touch briefly upon the objects, or, perhaps we should rather say, the subjects, of prayer. From Phil. 4 we learn that we may tell out before God everything which burdens our hearts: "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God," etc. It is not said that God will answer all these requests; still, in His love and grace, He would have us unburden ourselves, and He engages that His peace shall guard our "hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Yes, He would have us, as Peter exhorts, to cast all our care upon Him in the knowledge that He careth for us. These requests are connected with our personal needs, but outside of these (and it is our privilege to rise above ourselves) we may have fellowship with the heart of God in His thoughts, aims, and purposes, in His desires for the saints, and in the activities of His grace which flow out towards the world. Take an example from the prophet Isaiah

"For Zion's sake," says the prophet, speaking in the Lord's name, "will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth;" and then afterwards we read, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night; ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." (Isa. 62: 1, 6, 7.) Thus while He purposes to bless Zion, He would have His remembrancers upon the earth to plead with Him for the accomplishment of that on which He has set His heart. To pray intelligently, therefore, needs acquaintance with His word. It is in the epistles of Paul especially that we find what God's desires are for the saints, in the inspired prayers of the apostle, as well as in the exhortations given for their direction. Besides these the apostle often asks for prayer for his own ministry; and in 1 Tim. 2 he names special subjects for supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks. This will suffice to show the reader that it is from the word of God we must learn what are the suited subjects of prayer; and that if led out, in the energy of the Holy Spirit, into this blessed field of service, he may occupy himself unceasingly with fervent labours in prayer (see Col. 4) in communion with the mind and heart of God.

There are other questions, such as the secret of liberty and power in prayer, the character of private as distinguished from public prayer, or prayer in the assembly, or in unison with others

(Matt. 18: 19), which must be reserved for another opportunity. In the meantime the whole subject, both as connected with the Christian life, and the life of the assembly, may be earnestly commended to the attention of the saints. E. D.