

That which Remains

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Everything has gone to pieces! The position is hopeless! These were the thoughts that pressed themselves upon one's spirit some years ago at a time of crisis. Graciously God spoke — tenderly calling attention to that which was unaltered, unchanged and unchangeable. Something of the majesty of God's command in Genesis 1 flooded the soul — "Let there be light. And there was light." "For *He* spoke, and it was done; *He* commanded, and it stood fast" (Psalm 33: 9). *Instantaneously*, at the word of God, light dispelled the darkness which lay on the face of the deep, chaos was dismissed and order established, resulting in a scene in which God could carry out His own thoughts and designs. The subsequent intrusion of man's sin, with its devastating consequences, could not thwart those designs, for the blessed God who is mighty in power excels also in wisdom and in love. Sovereign mercy, abounding grace, infinite love, surpassing kindness will triumph — yea, have *already* triumphed — every feature of sin and disorder with their resultant chaos shall be banished for ever from God's creation, He will "head up all things in the Christ" (Ephesians 1: 10, New Trans.); His unclouded glory will fill the scene and myriads of the redeemed will find their eternal portion in the enjoyment of, and response to, eternal love.

"Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! . . . For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen." (Romans 11: 33-36).

Tenderly and graciously would the blessed God speak peace to the troubled heart, calling attention to the *abiding* character of that into which grace has brought us. In the Old Testament the Name of God is given some seventeen or eighteen times by a word which, in the original language, signifies "THE SAME," the unchanging, self-existent One. How encouraging it is to find this Name appearing some nine times in the prophecy of Isaiah — the "Salvation of Jah"! What absolute security is envisaged — the God of our salvation is the Unchanging One — "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1: 17). Well may the Psalmist, as he thinks on this Name, speak of exultation and joy, exclaiming "Sing unto God, sing forth His Name . . . His name is Jah; and rejoice before Him" (Psalm 68). In that magnificent passage (Hebrews, chapter 1) where the deity of the Son is so wonderfully expressed, this very Name — the Same — is given to our beloved Lord; and again in Hebrews 13 His glorious Manhood is seen to be unchanged and unchangeable, for He is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." The Holy Spirit is spoken of in Hebrews 9: 14 as the "eternal Spirit;" thus Scripture presents the Godhead — Father, Son and Holy Spirit each in His unchanging and abiding character. Divine movements may have been specially related to differing dispensations, but the blessed God has remained "THE SAME," His love and His power and His wisdom constant and unalterable. His word, too, is in nature as Himself — "For ever, O LORD, Thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119: 89); see also Isaiah 40: 8; 1 Peter 1: 23-25. Every attribute and every expression of the blessed God are consistent with the eternal character of His love.

What a galaxy of eternal realities are unfolded in the Scriptures! — eternal life; eternal weight of glory; eternal salvation; eternal redemption; eternal inheritance; all according to eternal purpose — precious truths setting forth the glory of God and His abounding grace in blessing for man; blessings which cannot be negated by man's failure or Satan's opposition, proceeding as they do from the heart of God Himself and established immutably in absolute righteousness through the work of our precious Lord, the power and joy of them available to us in the power of an ungrieved Holy Spirit.

It is ever in the heart of God that man should enjoy the blessings and security available to him, and it is delightful to see, in times of general failure, those whom God reserved for His own joy and satisfaction. Amidst the corruption and violence of antediluvian days Noah shines as a man appreciative of God's desires and will, and when all else was swept away by divine judgment we read — "Noah alone remained, and what was with him in the ark" (Genesis 7: 23, New Trans.). Who can measure the delight with which the blessed God viewed the contents of that ark with their vast potentialities for His praise — the spiritual progeny of the Eunuch, of Cornelius and of Saul of Tarsus; the thousands of burnt offerings valued as pointing on to the unswerving devotion of Christ to the will of His God. Blessed indeed that which "remained" in spite of the breakdown.

In Leviticus it is clear that God wished His people to know the blessedness of approach to Himself. In Exodus we read of the way in which He had delivered them from bondage with a mighty salvation, desiring that they should be responsive to Him in praise and thanksgiving. As holiness becometh God's House for ever, it is essential that the way of approach should be according to His holy command, and hence we have the oft repeated word "as the LORD commanded Moses." Nearness to God, in accord with the thoughts of His love, must ever involve supreme joy and contentment; and although there was in that day but a partial revelation of the mind of God, yet we see from His many precious promises to His people what safety and blessing He had in store for them. Sad indeed to read in chapter 10 that those of the priestly family did that which God "had *not* commanded them." Judgment of necessity followed, and it would appear that even Aaron thought the position almost irrecoverable (v. 19). But God had His reserves! Priests and sons still *remained*; the oblation *remained*; unleavened bread, the wave offering and the heave offering were available, and there still remained those upon whom was "the anointing." Let us thank God that in a day when the will of man has introduced much that is "strange fire" into the profession of Christianity, there still remains that which speaks of the preciousness and greatness of Christ, and in infinite mercy God has seen to it that there are those *left* who appreciate and value Christ and His interests and who, in the power of the Anointing, are found responsive to God in praise and worship. The precious sense of our acceptance as we lay our hands on the burnt offering; the ability to appreciate the beauty and excellence of the Person of Christ as set forth in the Oblation; the privilege of sharing our thoughts of Him with our brethren as the Peace offering would suggest, and the blessedness of knowing the solid basis for our full and complete forgiveness as seen in the sin and trespass offerings. The glory of our beloved Lord remains unchanged and undiminished. *All* is secure in Him!

In the days of Elijah the rights of Jehovah as Lord were disowned, the king and his wife Jezebel foremost in their allegiance to Baal. To the prophet the position appeared beyond repair — no one remaining but he himself. Again God has His reserves. "Yet I *have left* (Myself) seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that hath not kissed him" (1 Kings 19: 18, New Trans.). Not only did they refuse to acknowledge the authority of Baal, they did not allow their affections to move towards him. Triumphantly the apostle exclaims — "To us . . . there is *one Lord*" — we own His rights alone; preciously he adds "Jesus Christ," and as we contemplate the glories and charm hidden in that blessed Man, our hearts rise up to Him in responsive affection and praise.

How much more the Scriptures have to say on this holy theme! When the words of truth which Jesus spoke in John chapter 6 proved too testing and many of His disciples left Him, Peter and those with Him *remained*, held by the greatness of His person as the "Holy One of God" and by His "words of life eternal." The "rest in Thyatira," the "few names in Sardis," and the potential overcomers in the Churches all speak of those who in a day of public breakdown treasure the things of God and the preciousness of the One in whom those things have been revealed.

On the divine side, all is unchanging and eternally secure; all is established in resurrection, the man who brought in failure and chaos has been removed, Satan is defeated and death annulled; God is eternally glorified and Christ enthroned.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15: 58).