

## Extracts from Letters

of G. V. W.

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"My thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor my ways as your ways," is a grand truth, and how heartily can faith add its "Amen" to the declaration; for how far better are His thoughts than ours! It is good to be in His hand; and surely every way of the Lord as to each of us is the best possible, being the perfect expression of infinite wisdom, love, and power in our favour of one who sees the end from the beginning, without whom not one sparrow falls to the ground. God is God in all His thoughts and doings, and from before the foundation of the world He planned as well as counselled all, when man was not, and therefore could not think or will. With what perfection the seed of the woman was announced after the fall! With what perfection did He wait in patience on wicked man, till in the fulness of time His Son came to try whether man would be reconciled to God! (2 Cor. 5.)

With what depth of wisdom did God find atonement in the blood which wicked man shed, because Christ brought God too near to man when He was down here! With what perfection has He waited for you, for me, for many whom we loved, not closing up these last 1800 years the stream of blessing until we were reached! And had He proposed any one part of His plan to me, I should as certainly have refused it, as I have most surely been slow and stupid to learn that all my salvation is in Christ alone, and that He is mine, as I am His, because God's ways are not as mine, nor His thoughts as mine. The ways of the Lord are perfect, and we have to bow to Himself to learn how perfect they are. God works in us by sorrows and trials, that which He sees we need; and the living Christ washes feet still, and girds up loins, and realizes to us what earth is in its best condition now, and that gives me confidence afresh.

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The inbreaks of Job's sorrows on him were proofs of God's love to him, and of the jealousy of that love too; for Job had enjoyed the gifts more than the Giver, and said, when in the enjoyment of the gifts, "Surely calamity will come." (Job 3: 25, 26.) I think it was a bad state making gifts loved more than the Giver. Job did look up; but his own mind was at work within, and instead of waiting for God to come in and explain all, Job showed Job's self, prolonged the furnace and the trial; but God did come in, and Job learned. (Job 40: 4, 5; Job 13: 2, 6.) I judge that *the great thing* is to own God, and be still: "I was dumb; thou didst it," said David. Perhaps it was well to be dumb. Had he spoken David might have shown out David; but "I was dumb." There is rest in this — giving to God His own place.

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The Lord's will is bright about us, each one; and I am sure it is better for us too, for divine wisdom and love to sit at the helm and decide for us, than for us to have to decide. The Lord Himself wept by the grave of Lazarus; and all affliction is from Him, so that we should feel it as affliction. This I do in your present exercise and sorrow; but I look up still to God as a Father. As to heaven, all is right, ready for us, and happier they that are there, than we that are here. The good Lord settle for us the times of our going thither, and keep us while here ready and willing to slip in at any moment.

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Faith makes a bright and shining way up to Christ. But many have to climb up by a broken

ladder, which tears feet and hands; but broken ladder and the narrow stairs — steep and too narrow for some to be carried up without getting bruised — lead up to the same place as the bright and shining way. God be praised for this!

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The heart is to be like the gold in which a peerless jewel is set, Christ dwelling in my heart; the setting should hold the jewel firmly.

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To walk as only having God and Christ and the Spirit is not solitude necessarily, was not so even to Christ in John 15: 32. I find it a hard thing sometimes to put and keep in exercise the double lesson (Heb. 12: 5), "Despise not" (or make little of), "and not faint or droop." I think the Lord would have us tell Him of all trials — bereavements, as well as others. If the Lord takes away, it ought not to be little in our eyes that He has done so. Nor in such a case as His taking away, in a heavenly way and service, one of His own, see I, the least reason for drooping. Scripture, however, goes further, and claims "giving thanks always, and for all things." (Eph. 5: 20.) To do that, and to do it truthfully and heartily, one must be out of the death side of the scene, and abiding in the light of heaven.

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The first of January, 1872, reminds me of the rapid lapse of time. Oft, short in the retrospect, though it may have seemed to move on heavily and slowly in the course of its progress. But time shall be merged in eternity one day to us, and then not lessons learnt in detail, or sorrows or joys connected with our own little centres, but grace, mercy, and peace, shining forth from God and the Lamb, and filling the new heavens and the new earth, wherein shall dwell righteousness.

To my own soul, however, the thoughts of God and the Lamb, as then to be displayed in all their fulness, and enjoyed in the power of the Holy Spirit, surpass the mere *scene* of glory. It will be for Their sakes: and Persons are better than places. And I do not doubt but that we, who will be there, will then see all the wilderness circumstances in their full and correct light; in their connection with the fall, and with Satan, and man, and the world, and flesh, and redemption, and salvation, and with God and the Lamb, and eternal glory. The thought of God's and Christ's connection with the daily journey, and the portion of each day and its experience, is the divine and heavenly side; its present bearing upon us and our want of accommodating ourselves to it, is man's and earth's sorrowful side. But all will be seen then and there, when we come to the end of the journey.

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In God there is no distance, either as to time or space.

Every feeling man may have of "How long the wilderness is!" or, "How long till He comes!" only shows us how little we walk in the power of the Spirit, how little we see things as Christ sees them. It is not stoicism which would seek to pound out all the higher feelings of nature (in the stoic), and of the divine nature in the badly-taught Christian. If my affections were as sensitive as were Paul's, I should have more feeling than I have. But my feelings in this sense are not merely of nature, fallen nature, but a new. I have Christ and His mind as their power and regulation. Christ wept; but He wept as in the sight of God, and He would not have been perfect as a man if He had not wept once and again.

The man who was perfect Godward and manward must need have wept in His day and work. So Paul, as one in whom (though a man of like passions with ourselves) we see how far life divine can be displayed in a man, had sorrows, and we too must have them. But where is Abba? where is His God to

us in our sorrows? And let us see to it that the sorrows we have flow from Himself, and flow toward Him in God — they will be all the deeper, I am sure; but what is from God and to God is sustained by God, and so we can give thanks always for all things.

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How far is Christ practically formed in our hearts and minds? I mean not as in Galatians, Christ formed in their souls, but formed in us, so that His thoughts are our thoughts, His cares our cares, His subjects of interest our subjects of interest, and none other. So it was in Paul, and so might it be wherever His life reigns in us, although our portions and calling be not so Nazarite as were Paul's. I ask for more of this for myself in my remaining sojourn down here one thing, and but one; that standing and abiding in Christ where I am — my range of affections and thoughts may be in unison with His until He comes. I can think of nothing as more blessed than this reproduction in oneself of His life, already ours through faith, but needing the unhindered action of the Holy Ghost — fulness of the Holy Ghost — in order to be practically seen and known of all around as enjoyed by the soul - In the secret of God's presence. The dust of the wilderness, one thousand and one little cares, would then drop off, or if remaining, be but as the last year's fruits, that have still survived the autumn blasts and hard frosts, and will drop off as spring returns, and the fresh flow and sap comes, and shows what is and what is not vitally connected with us.

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More and more does it become clear to me that "I will instruct thee and teach *thee* in the way thou shouldest go: I will guide *thee* with mine eye," is the only proper and safe guide for us. Better err so while endeavouring, as individuals, to walk with God than go upon a level highway without individual faith in exercise. I am to walk with God, and spend and be spent for others down here. This is not pride; pride will soon wither and die down if I walk in the spirit of dependence and obedience to God. And further, we have to profit from every help God gives us; but to try all things and prove what is of God, and to take forth the precious from among the vile that we may be as His mouth.

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Christ as the end of one's being, whether living or dying, makes all sweet, and all intelligent too; for we know both what we are about, and the way to get it; whereas if self reigns within, waywardness fills our path with uncertainties, for self-will never knows its own mind.

"What pleases thee, Lord, pleases me," is a grand motto for rest, and peace, and quiet, and for the stopping of all repining about what we have not got, however it may be.

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He that has poured light and life into myself is above in heaven — the fountain filled with all blessing for me, and He never hides Himself from us. Poor things that we are, to have such an object and such a stay for our souls.

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Strange the world we live in, strange its ways, and strange ourselves that we are not more Christ-like, more living above where He sits at, the right hand of God, and where too is the constant memorial that He is coming quickly to take us to His Abba's house, where all is in harmony with His own self, and thorough consistency with Himself will be ours, and ours for ever. For ever with the Lord. I trust you are walking as alive from the dead and living unto Christ — 'tis simple; that they that live, that have Him for their life, hidden with God though He be, should do everything as unto Him, eat to Him,

drink to Him; wake as for Him, and go to rest as in Him. So the bright inshining of His glory will be both upon us, and round about us.

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I find that there is nothing to do but — as Christ is our representative and head, spring and fountain of life up there — to seek down here to be His representative and the manifest member of His body — a channel and a sluice through which His life flows out before men. My own conscience gets exercised about the little extent to which I am like a glass lamp, having Christ as a light burning within me, and the light shining out upon all around. A crack in the glass, or a spot of mud on, might have its shade cast on the ground; but then it would become evidence indirect of the power of the light too.

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The Lord doeth all things well, and is debtor to none of us to employ us in His work. Individual dependence, and waiting on Him, and communion with Him, He does always expect. And of the two it is the higher; for there will be no work, so to speak, in the glory - where all enemies are put under His feet — but communion and dependent subjection will never cease.

It is life *versus* gift, and the eternal life is higher than the gift, however high that might be. Paul's enjoyment of eternal life went beyond as well as below his apostolic service. And not so only; for, as to the blessed Lord Himself, His having life in Himself preceded all His mission and service too. A little check in work often discovers how feeble life is in *us*. This is selfishness in another form. For service is distinctively individual; life the portion enjoyed by all.

John 13, 14. The One who on earth knew everything, about everyone, everywhere; and when about to leave earth and go on high for us, in love made known to His own whom He loved what He would do for them.

John 13 as guarding against the evil which would still be in them and around them in the world. For His having become known to them, as God's salvation for them, set them truly apart for eternity; but while it secured the end, left them with the law of sin and death still in them, that He might still use them for His glory in daily saving them from Satan's power, sin, and from the evil of their own hearts and the world around. Until the time of glory came He would use us for the daily manifestation of His saving, guardian power; and in so doing give to us opportunity of separating ourselves unto Him too, and avowing that He is our choice, now that we know Him, and have been drawn to Him, as we were His choice when all in and about us was of the enemy.

He is our salvation — eternal life in Him if we have believed in Him. But the old root in us is still ready to throw out its evil, and then renewal of power for communion and practical life is needed. Bathed in passing through the Red Sea we are God's; but need mercy and grace then for restorations (not to Him whose we are, and with whom we are, but) for communion and walking with Him. This comes out (vv. 1-11), and the duty on our part of putting our spotted, soiled feet into the basin in His hands, stooping down to serve us now.

That it is condescension in Him that leads Him to do it, and that that same lowliness which He shows is to be ours one with another, is clear (vv. 12-20); and in our trying to be one another's keepers before God, we find out how unselfishness and true lowliness are wanted. Verses 21-30, He gets upon the more sorrowful part of the picture, not only that God's way of salvation supposes a passage of us through a sin-defiling world, where none can keep us clean but Himself; and that His ensample of unselfish downstooping will cost us much to follow; but that the power of darkness rules in the world, and will work inside the house of passover-blessing on which no judgment from God can fall; and there

too Peter's curiosity, and John's lending himself to help it, will be found.

Verses 31-38 give the Lord's caution to us not to go save where He has been before us. Go into things till He has passed through them we cannot. We must know Him to have gone through all that Satan brings in, ere we can go through it. This Peter denied.

In contrast with this, in John 14, His eye and mouth take up all the things in God, and goodness and privilege, which are ours, until He comes — Himself as God an object of faith. (v. 1.)

The Father's house with its ample room (v. 2), Himself there now, its readiness for us, yet coming again to lead us into it, there to be with Him. (v. 3.) His own self to be known by us now in life (He the revealer of the Father), and the light shining out from Him, telling us which is the path, and whither it leads, even to where all will be but as the expression of what Himself, God manifest in flesh, was and is, and the halo of His own moral glory. (vv. 4-12.) Himself the way to the Father, the truth and the *life*, a life communicable, and one of communion. (v. 19.)

His power with the Father ours, and ready to meet our prayers. (v. 13.)

Himself the giver of a new Paraclete, the Spirit of truth, and the giver of *life*. (vv. 14-20.)

Obedience and dependence (vv. 21-24) in us, on Him, will fill the pathway of our feet with light down here.

The Spirit guiding into truth. (vv. 25, 26.)

Peace, Himself our peace. (v. 27.)

Himself asking us to enter into this blessedness (v. 28) as gone to the Father.

We in the world having to face Satan, the god of the world, have to arise and go hence.

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"He that overcometh" should rather be "the overcoming one;" *i.e.* it is a participial form, marking that the action of overcoming does already attach itself to, is already part. of some person or persons; whereas "he that overcomes," as a tense, might postpone the connection of the action with the person until the whole action of overcoming was perfected. This is very important to remember in the addresses to the seven Churches, and everywhere in John's writings.

Paul's words give the same idea in a different way: "*In all things more than conqueror, through Him that loved us;*" for I am persuaded that neither life," etc.

Anyone that believes and understands Scripture will see that the babe, the young man and. the father in 1 John 2, has each been already an overcomer. The babe has broken away, been broken away, from Satan and from atheism. The young man from self: and the fathers into the full rest of faith.

The overcomer knows he has been an overcomer by what he has passed out of, by what he is now passing through, and by what he has to pass into; not indeed by power or might of his own, but by God's and Christ's Spirit — the seal and earnest of the inheritance. Be strong, be strong, be strong, is God's word to His saved people. (See Joshua 1 and Haggai 1.)

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How the power of the Holy Spirit is practically lacking in our assemblies! and if He is not keeping the house, how other energies bestir themselves! and then how does Christ become, and God too, out of the minds of those that form the house.

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The days are portentous in which our lot is cast. Happy they that make little of themselves, and all of Christ; for the littleness of what we are is sure to come out, and it is better learned in learning what the fulness of Christ is than in any other way.

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It is a good thing to be shut up to the Lord Himself alone, as to all those matters in which one's heart is interested for His name's sake, whether as to His saints, or the dealing of His hand with wandering souls; and it tries one's soul as to its real estimate of the value of praying for them to Him.

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He will have a people to remain and wait for His Son, and if any fail in holding that position they must either seek, and then find restoration, or be set aside for others that will wait for Him. But I see many in England who did take that position, and are, I trust, under the power of it as to the texture of their outward lives, who yet want stirring up so as to be *thorough overcomers*. The world creeps in so imperceptibly, and then whether it bear the more bitter form (to nature), or the sweeter and more attractive one, the heart is not practically responsive to the Lord's love and coming.

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How little everything looks when seen in the light of eternity, and of the counsels which contain a new heaven and a new earth fulfilled, by Christ, to the glory of God's grace, with poor redeemed ones! And how quietly and unselfishly should we seek to walk, who are already not only brought into the knowledge of these most gracious counsels, but called to take a present part in them.

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I see more and more as I go on that the only principle that is safe to walk upon is that of Enoch. Enoch walked with God. God's word testifies of no blessing apart from so doing. 'Tis the path which the feet of the Lord marked through the wilderness, in a way unwaveringly perfect, and walked in by Him perfectly. True the work which He undertook to do is finished, and cannot be done again. But the spirit in which He brought eternal salvation and everlasting acceptance for sinners to shine out from the throne of God on high, so making it, through His own perfect obedience and subjection to God and His Father, to be a mercy-seat; that spirit is ours to walk in now. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God," was the spirit and mind of the Master's walk, when He had to show out man to be a sinner, and God to be a Saviour, through His own life and death and resurrection and ascension. That is done. And it is ours to be obedient and subject to that great salvation, and to live to Him who came off the throne eternal to become a man and to die for us - for me, that I, having received life, might *live to Him alone*.

And this we, amid the failure of the Churches, must never forget. If we do, we drop out of obedience and subjection to Himself into walking with men, or following an earthly leader. Paul seems to have been quite alive to the certainty that his revelations were direct from God, on the one hand; but needed, on the other, revelation from the Lord to the soul of the individual's own self. There is no sanction in what I say to self-willed independence. But if I have received Christ into my soul, I have received Him *from God* alone. And if God has revealed anything in His word, a Paul would have shown it to me as bearing on my walk before God, and leaving me still to walk with God.

Reckoning myself to be dead to sin but alive unto God through Christ, are inseparable from life eternal indwelling the soul.

We are too apt to look and see how others walk, which is not faith, and to allow our own steps to be more or less affected by the walk of others around us. But in so doing, my soul is not carrying out the spirit of life in my walk.

Everything will turn now on our not making churches, but walking with the living God.

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It is a great thing for each to be well girded up, ready to act on and from his own responsibility, but never going beyond that which he sees to be his own duty, never acting under the light which others have, and often quietly assume to be the measure of light common to all. I would rather act under God's measure of light vouchsafed to me, or not act, because I had none such, than be the one to carry out the mind of any man, without my being assured his mind was God's mind for me. An inspired apostle might direct me as in the Lord's name, but none other, and hardly he but where the Spirit bore witness to the word of God, as to what God would have me to do.

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I have no doubt the state of things in England is trying at this present time (1876); but (query) has not that state which tries grown up out of the fact that men have acted beyond the known measure of their faith, and light, and spiritual power. I think it has been so. And the correction of this state is in a private and general humiliation before God. It is no use trying to hide oneself, or get out of the trouble. Faithfulness to God requires you to go through it, but go through it with God.