

Food for Believers

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THE BELIEVER'S DUTY OF REALIZING THE GLORY OF THE HEAVENLY CALLING IN CHRIST.

Ephesians 1, 2.

The first of these chapters may be considered under two heads. First, we have the Church presented in fulness of blessing, and conscious of her portion; and also we have the revelation of the *power* by which God communicates the blessing to the believer, that of the Holy Ghost. In the closing verses we have the prayer of the apostle for the saints at Ephesus, to whom the epistle was addressed. This prayer will be found to be of a different character from that in the third chapter. In the prayer in our first chapter, the apostle is pouring forth his supplication and his desires for their *establishment* in grace. That in the third chapter is a setting forth of what one *already established* in the truth would have to learn, and ought to know. In this latter he presents the persons in the Godhead. Not Paul himself had attained to the comprehension of the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ; which he, nevertheless, prays might be the portion of the Ephesian saints.

We find that these Ephesians were made known to the apostle by their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and their love to all the saints. "Oh," says Paul, "they are Christ's; that is enough for me;" and accordingly he ceases not to give thanks, and to pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, might give unto them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. He does not pray, you observe, that they might have the spirit of wisdom and revelation, till he knows of their

"faith and love."

The first question which each one of us has to do with is *forgiveness of sins* through the blood of Christ. The *first thing* to be *settled* with every one is his *acceptance*, and not till then will it be of use to present those points which show the greatness and the glory of the inheritance.

God has *revealed* to the Church His purpose and counsel touching her *future glory*, as a means of separating His children more from the *world*, and to *break* the power of *the flesh*. Yet you will find many confining themselves to the first points of knowledge, and very unwilling to listen to any truth not immediately connected with the work of Christ. "It is sufficient," they say; "I have the inheritance; and nothing beyond that, as to any detail, can be material to be enquired into." Now, there is much blessing lost by such a course. God has His reasons for revealing glory to His children. To possess an inheritance is one thing, *to know the value of it* another. God would *have us to know* the value of the inheritance He has given us, and to *prize* it. See how gracious the way He has adopted to heighten our enjoyment of it! His method of *surprising* us by the *discovery* to us of the inheritance He has provided for us in His *own family!* Now what would be the feeling of one of ourselves, who had been brought up in ignorance of his title to some vast possession — of one who might have been brought up in his father's house as a slave — what would be his feeling on discovering that he was the son and heir of all? Would not this new-discovered relation to his father engross all his thoughts? And when the father gradually opened his mind to him, and began to associate him with himself in his plans and purposes, should we not expect to witness in the son and heir much interest and ardour, something like eager listening to all his father's communications? and the father, too, would be seen to take pleasure in feeding the rising hopes and expectations of his son, who had only now been called to share the paternal counsels. Should it be otherwise with the son and heir of the heavenly inheritance? During his *minority*, that is, before faith comes, he is a *servant*; but when he is able to cry "Abba, Father," and when, to meet his need, the God of all grace, his Father! is willing to give him the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, etc., shall we not be surprised to find him making light of it? In Luke 24: 45, we have an instance of the *communication of power* by the Lord to His disciples. Indeed, is it not monstrous to take up the language of many, and to say, "I am satisfied to know my sins are forgiven. I'm safe; all beyond I'll let alone; I don't care for more knowledge than that." What! when God says, *I'm your Father!* when Christ says, *I'm your Saviour!* to say, Oh, that's enough for me! I shan't go to hell! that's all that's worth knowing!

The Holy Ghost is the one who communicates the blessing. But how great the difference between the *being blessed*, and the KNOWING and UNDERSTANDING the DETAILS of the BLESSING. And look at the consequence as to the soul; why, instead of the happy experience of a well-instructed Christian, is not the thought now and then recurring, whether some day or other they may not be *cast off?* and all through ignorance of the love of God, and of the *greater security* on which their title rests.

The first part of this chapter presents *faith in Jesus*, and the *unction of the Holy Ghost*, by which they got understanding. Secondly, we get *the person of Jesus*, as that by which we get the victory over the world. Thirdly, the things which have to do with *establishing* the believer in the love in the Father's heart. "That ye may know what is *the hope* of HIS calling." The believer's hope is, that when we see Him we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. It is that blessed time that the apostle would have them bringing continually before them. So again in Philippians 3: "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Then will come forth such *quickenings power* from the Lord Jesus Christ, as shall transform us to His image.

The next thought in the apostle's prayer is, that the Ephesians might know what is the

congregational glory of the saints, and the riches of the glory of CHRIST'S *inheritance* therein.

Consider again the great delight Jesus must have in His own perfections, in His reflection of His Father's glory! What a contrast to us who have only to mourn over deficiency. Again, there is *Jesus' delight* in being the *source of the perfections* there will be in the Church, so loved by the Father. Consider further the blessedness in seeing the *wide-spread glory of Christ in His inheritance in the saints*; another and a different one from our own individual realization.

It is important that we should *realize* our *resurrection body*. If we don't realize the *resurrection body*, we don't, get our full power over the world and the flesh. God grant you understanding, that you may know what is the hope of *His calling*, what the coming glory.

It is the *display* which God *has made here* that lays *responsibility* upon us. He calls us to enter into the consideration of these things; what is the case amongst ourselves! If I have communicated my mind to my child, and I see every trifle capable of calling him away from what I have been trying to interest him with, don't I give up the attempt? Just so with God. He does *find delight* in *communicating His plans*, and the purposes He has formed *about His Son*. How exceedingly gracious of our God, to present to us the things that He is careful about for us as our Father! Does it not bring His grace very near and very dear home to our hearts? If He tells me He has made a large provision for my happiness in His Son, and that it is His desire I should be conformed to His Son's likeness, shall I not prize this? Is it not a great grace that He should present this to your own soul? Is not the *thought in the heart of the Living God*, in reference to each poor believer, That is one I desire to have *conformed to my own dear Son*, my beloved Son Jesus, in whom is all my delight? And the Spirit of God presses this upon us, knowing our exceeding want of capacity of heart and mind to comprehend and retain a sense of such favours, such promises, such prospects of glory. *We live so little* in the *power* of our privilege, and our thoughts are so much taken up with the circumstances around us.

Remember, when God calls us, and invites us to *know the hope of His calling*, it is a *call to us* to be ABIDING IN IT.

THE LORDSHIP OF JESUS.

Ephesians 2: 14; Ephesians 4: 7.

The subject I propose for this evening out of this portion is "*One Lord.*" There is an unsearchable fulness in each of the seven subjects contained in this 4th chapter, especially in that I have selected for this occasion; and I desire to lift up my heart to God to obtain great guardedness and great sobriety of spirit.

The word "Lord" has two distinct uses. One — *Jehovah* — involving the essential being of the Godhead. If Jehovah be thus found to be applied to Jesus, then He is fully and properly God. The Jews deny to the name of Jehovah anything connected with suffering. (Zech. 13: 7.) We have another use of the word "*Lord,*" as "*Adon;*" as we see Sarah used it, calling Abraham "*Adon*" — Lord. Both are true of Jesus, both are applied to Jesus, both "*Jehovah*" and "*Adon.*" This latter in His *official* character. I proceed to refer to two passages where the title "*Jehovah*" is applied to Jesus. John 12: 39-41, where Esaias is quoted as speaking of the Jewish hardness of heart, "when he saw His glory," — the glory of Jesus. Turn to Isaiah 6: 5. The glory he saw was the glory of the God of Sabaoth — Jehovah of Sabaoth: "Mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Has God the Holy Ghost applied these words to Jesus? Yes; by the pen of John (v. 41), "These things [alluding to the blinding of their eyes,

and the hardening of their hearts] said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him."

The second passage is that in Zechariah 11: 12; and the Holy Ghost, in Matthew 26, quotes this as fulfilled (v. 13); "And Jehovah said unto me, A goodly price that I am prized at."

Another passage (Zech. 13: 6, 7), though not so direct, yet strong by implication: "Against the man that is my *fellow*, saith *Jehovah*;" as ascribing to Him fellowship in glory. But the passage in Isaiah 6 is without qualification; there we have the glory of the fulness of the Godhead bodily, essentially in the person of the Son.

Next as to the title "Adon." In Philippians, Jesus is said to have been *made Lord*: that could only be as master. In Phil. 2 we have the contrast — the *Divine glory* — "in the form of God." Of no angel could this be said, "Who, being in the *form of God*;" also, "He made himself of no reputation;" and, "that at the *name of Jesus*," the infant of the Virgin Mary, "every knee should bow." This title of "Adon" we have again: "One is your *master*." Also in Ephesians 4 — "one Lord." It is the mastership of Jesus. The Church knows one master - even Jesus. It is spoken of what is true in *dispensation* — God is a God of order.

The infidel says there is no proof in the Bible of the existence of God. Why, when one writes to another, does one stop to prove or assert one's existence? It is our blessing to come to Scripture without any previous thoughts, and to fall into the wake of God. People perplex themselves in vain whilst they labour to unravel the mystery of the Christhood. Unless the Son be God, where is the *value of His humiliation*? Let us turn to this doctrine of "Lord." In the Acts, when Peter was speaking, the Holy Ghost was turning his thoughts (chap. 2 and 3) to the earthly blessings which Jesus, "*Lord*," would bring in in the latter day (19, 21). What a heart-searching word for them! He whom you murdered is "Lord" and "master" of all. *We ourselves* have the strongest proof of His being "master," for we have got the Holy Ghost. Again (Acts 2: 36), "Therefore let all the house of Israel know, that God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and *Christ*."

It is a secure thing we have. God has pledged His own word, as Father, that He has made that Son master, and that every knee *shall* bow to Him. Is He your master? Have you *owned* Him? Again (Acts 3), For Moses, yea, all the prophets from Samuel have spoken of these days; "*Unto you first* God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Peter asserted that in this One was the security for the performance of all the promises to their fathers. (Acts 3: 25.)

The same Lordship is presented in Heb. 8 and 9. The 4th chapter presents Jesus as standing in heaven before God. In ch. 8, "We have such an *High Priest*, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens." In ch. 10, "This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." *There* is the Mastership of Jesus in the heavens. In Rev. 4 and 5, what is all the movement there but to bring out the Lamb on the *Throne* — *Jesus of Nazareth*, Lord of all! The way is to take into the Old Testament the bright light of the New — even Jesus, and He is found there. The Church is based on this Sonship: as many of you as know Jesus as Lord and Master are in possession of all *with Him*. The owning of Jesus as *master* is a pledge of our oneness in Him. Rein. 10: 9, and 1 Cor. 12 bring this truth out: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth," etc. First, the confession with the mouth of the Mastership of Jesus; next, belief of the Gospel. The apostle Paul had no other ground of hope. I have none other ground on which I rest for salvation. All the *cable* I have got is God the *Holy Ghost's cable*, uniting me with the Anchor within the veil. Paul saw the Lordship of Jesus in a moment; then the cry, "*Lord*, what wilt thou have me to do?" when he saw Jesus in the glory.

When Ananias hesitated about going to Paul, God says, He is owning my *Mastership* — he is a sound man. Some do not like the simplicity of the Gospel. The light that shined into Paul's heart was much more wonderful than the light that shined in Genesis. Dear friends, Does God see that you are hanging in dependence on Jesus? (1 Cor. 12) "No man can say that Jesus is *Lord* but by the Holy Ghost." It is one thing to have it upon the lip — it must be the turning point of the life. It is ever a practical thing, whenever Jesus is truly known as Lord.

Individual salvation is connected with knowing and owning the Lordship of Jesus.

Such an one says, "I have fled for refuge to the hope set before me in Jesus." There is no danger to be apprehended then. What is my confidence, if any one speaks to me of the judgment before the great white Throne? It is this: The very One that is to sit in judgment is the very One who bore my sins in His own body on the tree! Look at Him as the One who is your "elder brother." Have I found no sorrow today, that I have had to take to Jesus? have I not found Jesus taking it up, and proving He could be touched with the feeling of all my infirmity; Jesus has been exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give faith and repentance. How came I to have the Spirit, not only as the Spirit of adoption, but the continual actings of the Spirit — the Spirit down here bearing witness to the Lordship of Jesus — Jesus the Lord, to throw open the mansions! The Holy Ghost, if He ever lost sight of the *Mastership* of Jesus, and of the connection between the poor weak sheep and Jesus, could never stay down here!

At the table of the Lord we recognize the Lordship of Jesus. Try to get Jesus as *Master*, and see if you cannot get sweetness to your soul. God has made Him Master; I want to own His *Mastership*; then I have real sweetness in doing the most painful things. The Lord enable each to say from the heart, "I will own the *Mastership* of Jesus — own Him as Jehovah of Sabaoth."

Observe, generally, that no truth in God's word is ever made to rest upon a type: — but truth, elsewhere plainly revealed, may be illustrated and opened by the types and shadows of the Old Testament.

GOD'S TRUTH TO BE PRESENTED IN GOD'S ORDER.

1 Peter 1: 18-20.

One of the means adopted by the adversary to prevent souls, quickened by God, from being established in peace, is, by *reversing the order of God's truth*. They do not receive God's truth in the *order* in which *God presents it*. You will find many a soul looking to the work of Christ as the foundation before God, recognizing the necessity of the Spirit's work in renewing the heart, yet not having peace — and that because they are looking to the work of the Holy Ghost within, rather than to the finished work of Christ without. The only thing God presents to the sinner is *Jesus*. God never presents the work of the Holy Ghost before the sinner, as that which he is to *begin* with. Until the sinner is converted, the object God presents is the *finished work of His Son*.

When the sinner has received the testimony, he knows the work of the Spirit in his heart; but he is the subject of the operation of the Holy Ghost before he is conscious of it. This is God's order. To reverse it, is to build upon a sandy foundation. Adam and Eve were unconscious of the work of their creation, but afterwards they recognize the hand of God in it. When I know the cross, then I understand how I got peace — by the Holy Ghost.

God's instrumentality is set before us in this chapter (ver. 21), "You, who by Him do believe in

God," etc.; and again (ver. 23, 25), "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." *There* is the instrument — "the word of God" — not the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, *but of Christ*. So also the same thing is brought out in the preaching of the apostles: the objects brought forward were *Jesus* and the *resurrection*, — he that believed *found* he had got peace. Again: — in the instance of Saul's conversion, his knowledge about the work of the Holy Ghost was matter of after attainment; what Saul learnt first was, that Jesus, the very one he had persecuted, was *up in heaven*.

The alone thing God presents, is *Jesus crucified and risen*. (Acts 2, 3, 4) Here the sum and substance of the gospel is presented. The *sinner's* attention is never called to the Holy Ghost. The soul, though awakened, has no power of entering into the privileges of the Holy Ghost till it gets *peace*. Until the saint can say, "Unto Him that loved us," etc., the doctrine of the Holy Ghost is not to be presented. The 6th and 7th chapters of Romans show that the quickening power of the Holy Ghost cannot give peace. In Rom. 8: 3-6, it is the person of Christ that is presented as the *quicken*ing power, and not the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost uses the Lord Jesus as the *quicken*ing power. In John 3: 14-18, Jesus, after speaking of the necessity of the new birth, goes on to show where the power was which would give the new nature — the power which would open the door into heaven.

This is exceedingly important as connected with peace - "*I am the door*." The Holy Ghost has not *that* place given Him. Is the question, I ask, ever of the Holy Ghost, as to the work, opening the way to God? The Holy Ghost does give the power to receive the testimony sent forth. The Holy Ghost does make it a quickening word; and then the sinner finds that the Holy Ghost has done it.

The soul that is not established on the work of Christ cannot understand the work of the Spirit.

Again: — It is thought by some that the Holy Ghost is simply the substitute for Jesus Christ: that is not strictly so, the case being that both Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost are substitutes; Christ being the substitute for the sinner - "the Just for the unjust," — and the Holy Ghost being substitute for Christ in His guardian care of the Church, and in all His service, taking up, and calling whom He will; acting as representative of Jesus during His absence.

There is no atonement in the work of the Holy Ghost; nothing to open the way; nothing for God to work upon in connection with the Holy Ghost. We find that the apostles never took that ground when the question was *of sin*: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, *Jesus Christ* the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins." So also Paul, — "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that *Christ Jesus* came into the world *to save sinners*."

The apostles had no thought of interfering with this prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is confusion on this point of prerogative that occasions so much disquiet to souls; for consider, if God the Holy Ghost came to the sinner, without the work of the Lord Jesus Christ, it could be only as a consuming fire.

There is nothing, then, in the work of the Holy Ghost to bring peace. He has come to discover sin. All the *holiness, all the requirements*, of God are MET FULLY in the Cross. The soul that comes to this gets instant peace; whereas the Spirit of God is a Spirit of conflict with the flesh — it is a constant warfare; but whilst there is the *work of Christ* before the soul, there is just quiet and simple peace.

The great place of the Holy Ghost is as representative of Jesus, as Guardian of the Church; even as Jesus had been an *elder brother* to the Church, so the Holy Ghost succeeds Jesus in that character, on Jesus' going away and taking His place at the right hand of the Father, and during His absence, until Jesus returns to take His Church to himself. (John 14, 15, 16)

To those who *understand the value of the blood*, the Holy Ghost gives power to enter into the Holiest. He teaches all things, and brings all things to remembrance. "He shall testify of ME: He shall take of mine, and show it unto you." The subject of the Holy Ghost's testimony is not of himself, but *Jesus — the person of Jesus*. The 15th chapter treats simply of bearing fruit.

If the sinner's ground of hope is connected with something wrought in himself — the *experience* of something wrought in himself — he is sure to fail in the hour of trial. Nothing but the *Blood of Christ*, and God's testimony concerning it, can give peace. There need be great simplicity on this point. Let this be our rest; the *death* and the *resurrection* of Jesus Christ. The 16th of John points rather to the believer's victory over the world.

Such portions of Scripture, as the Epistles to the Philippians and Colossians, have been read in vain, if you do not know that *Jesus* has been made to you "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." If you are still looking for evidences *within*, a Balaam might have taught you, but the Holy Ghost does not teach so. He teaches of the *love of Jesus* — of the *death of Jesus*. With Him it is not *sunshine* today, and *gloom* tomorrow. No; He whispers Jesus' farewell — "Peace I leave with you; my *peace* I give unto you." The Holy Ghost presents your security as in connection with the session of Jesus at the right hand of God the Father; a security based on a rock immovable and unchangeable? Lastly, He presents the "Lamb as it had been slain, on the throne."

I would earnestly ask those who do not know this abiding peace, how can God hide His face from one who is in Christ? hide His face from him *who ought to know his own entrance with Jesus into the presence of God? Is such an one to be ever changing and shifting according to the state of his own frame and feeling? He has one abiding answer to every question about sin, - There is Christ at the right hand of God! God is satisfied!* That is the answer of a soul resting on the word of God.

It is matter of astonishment from day to day to witness the prevailing defective apprehension of their standing, in those reported and recognized as Christians. A man has no *proper standing* as a Christian, if he does not know his sins to be forgiven. Without this knowledge, he is scarcely in a state to be accredited as a Christian by the Church. It is a matter of the most solemn consideration: Christ's death being either the *condemnation* or *salvation* of every human creature.

CONSOLATION FOR DISCIPLES.

Matt. 13.

The first parable does not present the kingdom, but the means and mode of forming the kingdom of heaven. In the second parable, Jesus is speaking before the multitude. It is in this we get the hidden thing connected with that kingdom — *the Tares*. It will be seen that Jesus adds, in interpreting, something beyond the outline of the parable itself; for the Lord would give His disciples warning how that men would come in and *mar* His work, *leaving a ruin*. We have a similar warning to Israel in Deuteronomy, chapters 28 to 31. The third parable presents the first great features of departure into Apostacy. The fourth parable points to leaven — connected with unsound doctrine. The first four parables were uttered before the multitude, and privately interpreted to the disciples: significant this of the intimacy and confidence into which the Lord's disciples were to be admitted.

The remaining parables are in quite a different connection — have a different aspect, and are *spoken to the disciples privately*, the multitude being outside. You will at once see, that to interpret these latter would require one with "the mind of Christ." There is more of comfort and *consolation* than

warning. Accordingly, Jesus seems to say, "You are *not to look* simply at *the thing set up* — that would only be to deject you the more, — when you find, as you will find, that evil has come in, and tumbled it all into ruin." The object of our Lord in these parables was to convey *comfort* and *strength* to His disciples.

The common idea is, that these parables refer to the individual case of believers. This is a mistake; a great principle of interpretation being involved in this mistake. Now, I may gather the meaning of any portion of God's word, according to *God's mind*, or according to the *natural bias of my own judgment*. In the latter case, I shall be led to bring everything *home to myself*. The Holy Ghost thinks directly of Jesus, of Him who is the centre of all God's purpose. The 17th of Exodus is an instance of misapplication to ourselves of what more properly belongs to Jesus. The truth there is deeper than is commonly supposed. JESUS *was and is the unceasing Intercessor*. Moreover, the application to the individual case of the believer is not so blessed. Nor is it so blessed in the parable before us, as it is to see that JESUS *counted the Church so precious, as to be willing to give up all for her*.

The parable of the *treasure* hid in the field cannot be truly interpreted of a disciple — he *does not give up all that he has*. Take, for instance, Paul, an eminent example. God gave him all first, and *then* he was willing to give up all beside. He got the portion first *in grace*. Not so Jesus. To get to the treasure, to secure the treasure to himself, we see Him giving up all, selling all, leaving all, as He is described in Heb. 2: 9-18. Yes, HE indeed laid aside all, and became subjected to God's judgment, and afflicted of God. See also Phil. 2: "He *made himself of no reputation*," etc. He laid aside all, that He might get the kingdom. It was because the Son of God left all His glory, "therefore hath God highly exalted Him," etc.

If we have the quick discerning eye of Jesus, we shall discern in *the midst* of this *corrupt* thing, which devils and men have joined in defilings, *something so precious* as to induce Jesus, the anointed Son of the Highest, to *give up* all, that He might possess himself of it. Oh, dear brethren and sisters in the Lord, how the knowledge of this, and the remembrance of this, if borne in mind, is calculated to strengthen our hearts in endurance for His sake. The Lord could so love His little flock, that He could leave His Father's glory that He might call this little flock His own. Yes, spite of the dross, Jesus sees here a bit of pure ore, and there a bit. Oh, Jesus has magnificent thoughts of His Church. Your names, dear brethren and sisters in the Lord, are entwined in His affections. (Ex. 28: 29.) In the midst of deep trial, how full of strength and comfort the thought — I am part of that treasure for which the Son of God thought it worth His while to leave all His glory, and to endure scorn and contumely, and the cross itself. What practical power in this *truth* — "*He gave up all!*"

In the next parable, the *beauty* of the Church is brought out, — described as a "pearl of great price." Now a pearl is an exceedingly beautiful object. In tint and delicacy of colour it is unrivalled. The *beauty* the *Church* has in the eye of Jesus is presented in the pearl of this parable. I ask, What beauty could Jesus see in the *tree* — the abode of wicked spirits; or, again, in the *leaven* — emblem of corruption, — a thing of evil omen? Jesus seems to say, I would have you taught of me, to see through that outward form."

The Church is, in the eye of Jesus, what Eve was to Adam, — the beauty of the garden of Eden. Can it be otherwise, knowing, as Jesus does, that the Church is to be conformed to His own image, and not think her beautiful, very beautiful? Behold, again, the glory of the Lord's beauty: Is He not altogether lovely? "Thou art fairer than the children of men." (Ps. 45) And it is by the mighty power of this One that we shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body." He knew that the Church was

predestinated to be conformed to His own image and likeness.

Here, then, in these parables, was a store of comfort and consolation for His disciples. Jesus was desirous of leading them to *discern*, and fix their thoughts upon the *pearl hidden within*, which would yet shine forth in the day of glory, and be crowned together with Him. Be it ours to realize the crown, and to see it on the Church now by faith.

The last of the parables is that of the net. *When full*, the good were deposited in vessels; — *when the net was full*. Observe, *not all* the fish of the sea: nothing like a gathering into universal blessing intimated by means of the preached Gospel. The 49th verse raises the great question as to the angels, the instruments employed here. Angels are connected with *Providence* in the book of Revelation. That book fills up the gap until Jesus comes. If this separation is accomplished by Providential agency, it would seem to have already begun, and to be going on now. In many countries on the Continent, as well as in England, it is observable that God has raised up men who have come forth preaching a more simple Gospel, and a *separating process* is going on.

In all these three parables, the object *is to comfort disciples* in their distress. In each there is that which would not strike the eye of a casual observer: — the *discerning mind* of Christ is required. Jesus was, as it were, digging a trench between the *true* and the *false*.

It is as being no longer under the power of the devil, that we are enjoined to stand against his wiles. (Eph. 6: 11.) What sweet encouragement is here!

ONE GOD AND FATHER.

"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Eph. 4: 6.

The Son of God is called Son in two senses: one, as Son of the Father, independent of incarnation; another, as Son of the Highest, as born of the Virgin Mary by the Holy Ghost. It was in the latter sense He could say, "*My God*;" He came as a servant — He took our nature upon Him that He might associate us with Himself and with God. What vast blessedness, dear brethren men in the flesh to be associated with God! But the association Jesus has brought us into with the *Father* has a deeper range of blessedness, — my *Father*; something far beyond "my God." God has revealed Himself in preceding ages as Eloim; then as Eloim Shaddai; next as Jehovah (Ex. 2); but the title, "*My Father*," carried with it all that range of blessing and glory that Jesus the Son knew from all eternity. The names, Father, Son, are domestic titles. How sweetly they speak to us of *home*! Contrast with Eloim, Shaddai, and Jehovah, *the Father*, as He is presented in 1 John 3, in all the constraining power of a love known to us; or as our privilege it won in the first chapter of that epistle, "and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ," throwing us into that communion which exists between the *Father* and the *Son* — bringing us into partnership and community! Hence the different kinds of worship. Those of you who are accustomed to watch the workings of your own hearts — I speak to you — have you not marked the different character of your worship? In Hebrews God's place of worship is laid open; we are enabled to go in through the rent veil by the blood of Jesus, and stand in the holiest with a pure conscience. Jesus has higher intercourse than that, - that fellowship He has as a *Son* with the *Father*. The Son has got a communion far beyond that which He has as *High Priest*. I call the one heavenly worship, the other divine worship. Even thanksgiving and service connected with this latter are quite different from the former. Col. 3 brings my soul into the relationship between Jesus and the Father. These are the things my heart is to be prying into — to be connected with.

Again, as to *Mediatorship* - two distinct thoughts are connected with it: one, of God dealing with a creature; and then three persons present — God, the Mediator, and those mediated for. Something far beyond Mediatorship is opened in Galatians: God was in Christ - the Church also in Christ; there Mediatorship, but quite another thought. In connection with the mystery, God speaks to us of having died with Christ, being raised up together, and set together in heavenly places in him. Christ hiding me in the clefts of His side is something far beyond Jesus telling me, "I will undertake for you" — "I will clear you." The blessed *mystery* leads my soul into different and deeper thoughts than even that one of the great Sacrifice for sin — the just for the unjust, to bring us to God. It is the mystery of my oneness with Christ that brings me nearer in worship.

Again. Jesus being made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, is very blessed; but still more blessed is the weird, "accepted in the beloved." Christ as the *mystery* in whom the Church is hidden, presents our case as a very different one from His *Mediatorship* for the Church. In the one, I see myself as a creature; in the other, the former, as a child. You must get into the *mystery*; otherwise you have no full liberty, nor full establishment. (Rom. 16: 25.) Without the saints understand the real vital union between Christ and the Church, they cannot enter into their full privilege of liberty and blessing.

We are entitled to look up into our Father's face as little children, and say, Thou gracious, glorious Father!

Every believer is a child of God by faith in Christ Jesus; directly the light has shined into his heart, God says, "There is one of my beloved ones." The thought of my relationship awakened by the cry of "Abba, Father," is by the Spirit's voice within witnessing to my sonship. Now many of you have known the cry of Abba, Father, and can say Abba, Father, but have you *God's thoughts* about you as His children?

Christ may see many a one of His rejoicing in being able to cry, Abba, Father! but He says, Ah! how little do they know yet of their portion in me!

Abba is a cord stronger than any other.

On the cross we hear first, in the agony of suffering, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani! *My God, my God*, why hast thou forsaken me?

He really was forsaken of God. God has never yet forsaken one of you as He forsook His own Son. (Ps. 22 and 31) Though *God* had forsaken Him, one word, '*Father*,' remained to Him; and then in fullest repose and confidence He rests there — "*Father*, into thy hands I commend my Spirit." There was *this one thing* which failed not when all else was lost, — the *Son of the Father*! The heart of a *Son* was *His stay*. It is ours. The power of "*Abba, Father*," in sustaining strength, was above that of "*My God*."

The thing that God has made the strongest cord to bind His children to Him, men have made scourges to torment themselves. The only proof before God of a man's election, the *knowledge* of the *blood* as his, men have perverted, and turned away from that unto themselves, looking *within* for proof of election. Until they turned to the blood as seen of God on the mercy-seat, believing what God says about the blood, they have never known true peace and liberty. The Spirit witnesseth that we are sons of God — witnesseth with our spirit — *that* gives power. I cannot have faith unless I am resting on the object of faith. Yet, how often do we hear God's children addressing their *Father*, "Am I thy child?" Such a cry could only have been from the Spirit of Adoption, and with some knowledge of the blood, though not a full knowledge.

Dear brethren, do you recognise the truth of God being your Father with all that fulness of affection He has toward Jesus! The Father above, thinking of you, and all His affections entwined around you. The Son, the Eternal Son, knew that love towards the adopted sons. For this cause *He* is not ashamed to call them brethren.

Jesus' motives are drawn out of that eternal counsel and purpose of the Father. The Holy Ghost also knows right well our place. It was the apostle's knowledge of this that constrained him in the patient actings of soul we witness toward the Corinthian Church — those troublesome opposers of the apostle's authority.

The Holy Ghost knows the fellowship we have with the Father and the Son. This fellowship we have not only for our refreshment; it is needed for our counsel and guidance. If this were truly understood, we should see no separation such as we now see. We would not, could not, tolerate anything like those little pens and folds, and those dividings of the flocks, we see now. We should say at once, in such a case, there is no response in our Father's heart. Such dividings! how bitter must they be to our Father's heart, to see His children dividing themselves off, and refusing to sit down at the same table! Oh! how blessed the contrast when we shall see them all gathered at the marriage supper of the Lamb!

HEARKENING.

The Scripture instructs us in one beautiful character of *strength* in obedience, in the 103rd Psalm, "Bless the Lord, ye His angels, that *excel in strength*, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word."

It is this "hearkening and doing," refusing to admit *second* thoughts to our counsels.

EPHESIANS 5: 18-21.

"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ver. 20.)

This is the portion on which I purpose to dwell this evening. A man must be conscious of having a *good portion* who *can rejoice always in all things*, who *can give thanks always for all things*. The natural man cannot receive such a word as this. The joy which marks such a spirit is not joy in the flesh; so far from its being dependent upon prosperity, it is found in highest exercise under *afflictive circumstances*. God seems to say in this passage, My child, you will never be in any circumstances, or in any position, in which you have not cause to give thanks. Giving thanks is the response in us for what we see in God: it is the happy expression of our sense of what we have found in God! This giving of thanks, — it is not one or two links of a chain, as it were, and then broken off; no, it is continuous and unbroken, and enduring.

In the Lord Jesus Christ, and in Job, we shall find much illustration of this passage in the way of *contrast*. In Matthew 11 we witness in Jesus His triumph in *giving thanks* in the midst of the most humbling circumstances. Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, had just rejected His claim; and John, too, sends a message, which tells Jesus that John's faith had failed him; yet here, in this very crisis, we find Jesus saying, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth," etc. Jesus could always drop back into the bosom of God His Father. Just observe the blessed subjection of His soul to God — the hanging in dependence upon God; He says, "Yes, all may fail here, but not thou! Thou canst not fail!" Again, His

meekness and lowliness of heart! The blessed Lord was *walking in heaven, and in God the Father*, whilst on earth. The blessed yieldedness of His soul in that ready dropping back into His Father's counsels, sinking upon His Father's bosom: then He would take the place of the witness for the Father. How blessed the fruit of that subjection was to the soul of Jesus! He became revealer of the Father. How can the Son of David, He who was heir to the throne of David, 'give thanks' under such humiliating rejection? But He does: He exclaims, "I *thank thee, O heavenly Father!*" and instantly after He takes the place of revealer of His Father to *all them that are weary and heavy laden*. We see one here who could give thanks in all things; and the secret was, He walked in heaven and in God. *There* was the secret spring of His power; and will He keep the secret to Himself! No; He says, "That spring I have opened to you. I would have you enter into my secret of giving thanks for all things, at all times. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Job's failure stands as a sort of dark background to the perfections which shine forth in the Son of God. (Job 1: 13-21.) Here we see, though Job bows, he does not thank God for his trials. In chap. 3 the secret comes out; Job, in prosperity, was rejoicing, not in *the Lord*, but in his prosperity; he was living in circumstances; he was constantly saying to himself, Ah! there are those precious things — I shall lose them, perhaps, some day — sons and daughters, my camels, etc. I always used to be trembling at the thought of the privation, and "the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me; I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet, yet trouble came upon me." God had seen Job rejoicing in his circumstances. Job had not attained that elevation of soul of one walking above circumstances: *there* is the uncovering of the real root of Job's failure; he was occupied with circumstances, and not with the God of circumstances; and he was found, when the circumstances were touched, to be cursing.

If circumstances overmaster us, it is because we are not living as children, "in God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" Job's example is instructive, as well as a warning to us. What more common than to hear a child of God say, "I do not see how I could give thanks for *that*" (some unexpected trial, perhaps, which has cast him down): what is that but because you have not been walking with God, and in Him. Some may exclaim, "Oh! we never complain; — we are always willing to take what God sends, and thank Him for it." Is it truly so? can't you remember some scene, even within the last week or so, to which God could point and say, "Was that a giving of thanks?"

There is exceeding preciousness in the words which close this injunction as to giving thanks *"unto God and the Father, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ."* These are the pillars by which the truth in its power is brought down to the soul. Whatever the force of the tempest, let the storm rage as it may, God has spread as it were a canopy over you, and these words are the four pillars which support the canopy. It is the Father bringing in your title of sonship, your standing in connection with the Lord Jesus Christ; so that you are able to say, when some cross comes, "There is some *blessing* intended in this; there is God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ there; don't touch it. Today, perhaps, the voice may have reached you, *Follow thou me*, pointing to some strange place. Those *bars*, those *ravenous lions*, would you think of going there? says the flesh, looking at the circumstances as very terrific: in these, too, the word applies, *"Giving thanks always in all things, unto God and the Father, in the name of the lord Jesus Christ."* The whole of this, be it remembered, is addressed to those walking in service; never did a soul take God's estimate without finding blessing. Perhaps there is some rankling sore or boil — something God sees in a proud heart — some tumour that must have vent by discharge of the humours: if we won't learn the lesson within the veil, we must learn it without. If we don't judge ourselves in the secret of His presence, the evil will work out. David would never have had the severe chastisement that he was visited with, if the evil could have been subdued by gentler means. God will

use the failure in our case, as He did in David's case, to cleanse us, "that we may be partakers of his holiness." He says to us in it all, "You see *what sort of relationship and intercourse* I have established between you and me. I am your God, and ye are my servants; I am your Father, ye are my sons; I am always meaning good in the thing I send, and you will find your blessing in connecting it with me, as your God and Father, and with the Lord Jesus Christ."

Dear brethren and sisters in the Lord, can we think of the Lord Jesus renouncing His own will, and we be bent upon following our will, when God has seen fit to cross us? No; in all these harassings of our will, let the thought be, "God has put me here as one who is to have no will at all. God has sent me this to mow down all the crops I had planted."

THE BURNT OFFERING.

Leviticus 1.

There are three different kinds of offerings: — 1st, that of the Great Day of Atonement (Lev. 16), which was God's provision for making *worshippers*; 2nd, Sin and Trespass Offerings — God's provision for the worshipper *when he failed*; 3rd, Burnt, Meat, and Peace Offerings — God's provision for the worshipper in *service*.

Every one is in one of these states either *a stranger to God*, or *knowing God*, or knowing God, but *hindered in worship*; and there are three different parts of truth in which Jesus meets these three different states.

The way we got peace was not by confession of sin, but *by taking God's testimony of the blood*. (Lev. 10) The blood was carried and sprinkled upon and *before the mercy-seat*; the blood of atonement was put there, — dealing with a sinner as a sinner; the blood is upon the mercy-seat. The blood of atonement is of no value, save *as seen on the mercy-seat*. My body being washed in the blood of Jesus would not satisfy; it is not a question about my conscience being clean, but what would justify God; and it is when I see *where the blood is put*, even *on the mercy-seat*, (which was the cover of the ark, in which was the law,) that the conscience is satisfied; but nothing else could satisfy, - nothing but *the blood on the mercy-seat*. And what connects a sinner with that is, simply *receiving God's testimony*. When we have seen the blood there, and have received God's testimony, how should we be found? — rejoicing! going into the presence as dear children, in confidence; holding communion, because on the throne there is the "*Lamb, as it had been slain*."

Well; after a while we are overtaken with a fault, and we lose all joy, and hang our harps on the willows; and why? *because we have sinned*. What, then, do you say to such an one! You do not call him to the blood on the mercy-seat again. When once I have seen the Lamb, my person is for ever accepted. The moment a saint sins, the Spirit is quenched and grieved, and all joy is gone. *Confess*, then, your sin, and He is faithful and just to forgive, because you *are accepted*. There is a controversy between you, as a child, and God; and you must get your conscience washed; and until you *confess*, you will not get peace. The blood is getting connected with the conscience. Here I get the blood in connection with the Trespass and Sin offerings. This question is not about our *persons* being *accepted*. Until you *confess*, and, as it were, dip your conscience in the blood of Jesus, you cannot get peace. That is the way we must purge our consciences; by *confession*. If I sin, and do not confess, my joy is hindered. As a poor sinner, blood upon my conscience will not do, but I must find that God can be just, and the justifier of the ungodly, — and the proof is, *the blood upon the mercy-seat*. But this will not do

for the Spirit of God dwelling in me; He will not minister joy and peace if I allow a spot to continue on my conscience; and the place where the blood of Jesus then comes in is, not on the mercy-seat, but in connection with my *conscience*.

Well, again, if you found one who knew he was forgiven, ever speaking of *himself*, or of his *prayers*, instead of *Jesus* and of *God*, then comes in this third thing in *Jesus*, presented to us in John 16, "When the Spirit of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth," etc. If He shall receive of *mine*, and shall show it unto you." The Spirit having led us to know the *blood on the mercy-seat*, and that confession will *keep the conscience clean*, does not send us back to feed with swine, but is blessedly engaged in "*taking of the things of Jesus, and showing them unto us.*"

Christians often, when they have failed, find their joy gone, and say, "How did I get my joy first? was it not by thinking of *Jesus*?" Then they try this again, but they do not find their joy. When you have not confessed your sin, the Spirit will not let you have joy, although you may try to force it; He says, "No, you are *a child*; you have done wrong; — go back and confess your sin, or else I will not go on to show you and teach you; you must be brought to *confess*." When we have confessed, we do not labour to believe again, nor continue confessing, but we know His word is true, "If we confess, *He* is faithful and just to forgive."

There are three distinct uses which the Spirit makes of the glories in *Jesus*: 1st, to the poor sinner, *the day of Atonement*; 2nd, to the poor sinner who knows the blood, *He takes of the things of Jesus, and shows them*; 3rd, the failing believer He leads to *confess*. These are three different portions of truth in the person of *Jesus*.

That truth which is presented in *the day of Atonement*, is how *God makes worshippers*. In the *sin and trespass offering* we have *God's* provision for His worshippers in *failure*; and the *burnt, the meat, and the peace offerings* show different, glories IN *Jesus*, the unfolding of which is the blessed, joyful worship of the worshipper before the Lord. In the *sin and trespass offering*, we have *God's* provision for His worshippers in *failure*. Would you not recognize, that one who was fully established in the two, and not knowing the other, did not know *worship*? If you had seen a Jew only bringing the two, would you not say to him, "Will you never take a *burnt offering*? Is it enough that you are accepted, and are not under judgment?" Our worship, as Christians, does not consist in the use of the *blood on the mercy-seat*, nor in the *confession* of sin, but it is in *my happy intercourse with God Himself, in His estimate of what the Lord Jesus Christ is*. Just as we converse with Him about *Jesus*, are we holding our place of worship. This is the sweet *savour to God*. It is sweet to Him, when we come and repeat to Him His own thoughts about *Jesus*; that is *true communion*. Both the *burnt offering* and the *meat offering* have this expression: "It is an offering made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord." One involved death — in the other there was no death.

Jesus' perfection, as offered to *God* consisted in two things — one, complete *self-renunciation*; the other, *active service*. In the *burnt offering* we have the proof of the perfection of *Jesus*; for the way in which *God* manifested the perfections of His Son, was not only by the active energies of service (the Holy One going about doing good), but the one great thing that proved the inseparableness of His will from *God's*, was not that He loved to bless, but that He *was willing to give up all and everything for God*. The question was, was He willing to say, "*Even so, Father!*" It was this which stamped the completeness of the renunciation of the Lord; was He ready to take the place the adopted Son ought to have taken? We make a great deal of running here and there, and but little of *suffering* the will of *God*; *He* was willing to *suffer* it, and in the *burnt offering* we have *Christ* in His *selfrenunciation*.

In the *meat offering* we have *Christ* in *active energy* of life, *doing* the will of *God*.

In the burnt offering we have Him *suffering* the will of God.

A poor Jew might not be able to offer a bullock: was he to be cut off? No; but while this may be, I do not think that this only is meant by the bullock, lamb, and bird; but rather that they show three distinct features in the Lord's humiliation. This self-renunciation of the Son came out in three different ways, it came out as the Son of God from the bosom of the Father, as in Phil. 2, who "made himself of no reputation." He looked round on all the glory, and it was His, and He said, I will leave it, for it is my Father's will, and these poor sons cannot come here unless I do so. It is only said of the burnt offering, "It shall make atonement;" and this shows that if you take any view of Jesus which leaves out His Godhead, your sins are not pardoned. If you don't see the Lord Jesus as the second person in the Godhead dying upon the cross, your sins are not forgiven you, and cannot be; for you have not got *that* in the Blood which meets the holiness of God: nothing will do for my soul but the *blood of the Son of God*, who was in His bosom.

His second act of humiliation was taking the form of a servant; and what was Jehovah's servant to be? was all the treatment He received *that* which He was to receive? *He* who "was to be exalted, and extolled, and to be very high?" When I look at the cross, and see Him there in agony, I get the same *servant of Jehovah* humbling Himself. He was not only the eternal Son of God, but the servant of Jehovah; and as we see in Psalm 22, the Prophet, Priest, and King; in verse 22, we see Him as the Priest; in verses 25 and 28, as King. He who cried in verse 1, "My God," was the Prophet, Priest, and King. The face of God as the Father was hidden from His own Son. So as the master, God was hiding His face from His servant. In Isaiah 52 and 53, we see him as the servant especially, and He renounces all: "My servant shall deal prudently, He shall be extolled," etc. As God's servant He was to be "extolled," but He was to be *obedient unto death*.

Though He was the King of Israel, and was to get the kingdom, He went through the depth of every thing. He was to have the kingdom, but the only way He could take the sceptre was through humiliation, and He cared for nothing saying the will of His Father.

Man did not care to obey; but Jesus did not thus. God had one *perfect servant*. *Come and look at Him* — a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour. He who was to be extolled, etc., *would* go down; He would carry all His glory as a *servant*, and be put to shame!

The same Spirit by which He was led is that by which we understand His service as intrinsically beautiful. No *man* can sympathise with the service of Christ. The seeing Him take the path of humiliation — God's path — to all the glory, is beautiful; and in all my course as a *servant*, I shall be led through suffering. The greatest servant is the greatest sufferer.

There is no power of sustaining our souls, save simply the power of worship; searching into Christ in this character we see Him as Prophet, Priest, and King, only entering into His glory through humiliation, and while we learn this, we earn the power of bearing.

If you want to know the power of self-renunciation, you must learn it in the Burnt Offering. What we have not learnt in power in the presence of God we cannot practise outside. You cannot endure suffering as a mother, or as a nurse, save as you have learnt the preciousness of the *Servant* in stripping Himself. If you do not keep up your *communion with the burnt offering*, you lose your power. The Lord Jesus knew nothing as a Son, save to be a servant; and so must we, for the life given to us is a *life of service*. In the *little* things around you, do you realize that as sons you are to *serve God in them?* and don't you find it is constant self-renunciation all day long? a thorn under every step? we must be giving up; giving up; giving up. Now do we not fail in this point? and is it not because we try to strengthen our hearts for suffering without learning this in the presence of God! If we were abiding all day long,

admiring Jesus, in His self-renunciation, with our hearts lifted up to God, we should not so fail. It is because we *do not use the burnt offering*, that we so fail. (Heb. 12.)

Oh! know more of the value of that Burnt Offering! What I would wish for you, is to know *more* about the *Burnt Offering* — to have your minds filled with God's thoughts about the humiliation of His Son; because *there* is the power to do likewise.

GOING WITHOUT THE CAMP.

Heb. 13: 5-25.

It was the 13th verse of this portion I had more particularly before my mind. The *Camp* was a thing understood by Israel. The Jews were deeply attached to their ancient rites, which they knew to be of God's appointment. The apostle saw the necessity of drawing them away from the shadows to the substance — to lead them from earthly things to Jesus in the heavens, where now their worship was to be. The High Priest being in the heavens, the sacrifice there, their worship was to be there likewise. He would have them see that now it was a *heavenly calling*. Jesus had been rejected from the earth, and received up into heaven; Jesus had suffered *without the gate*, just as the bodies of the beasts offered for a sin offering were burned without the camp; and he calls upon them, in the spirit of Moses in Deut. 33: 7, "to go unto Him without the Camp, bearing his reproach."

When Paul accredited Jesus as the *great sacrifice*, the simple receiving this truth put him outside the camp. The thing Paul saw was *the Spirit of God bringing souls into communion outside the Jewish system, etc.* So with us; whatever the form, the question is, *Where is God?* If God is in this line of conductor in this truth — I must be there too. For this, all that is necessary is to be prayerfully waiting upon God, and the teaching of His Spirit.

MARRIED TO ANOTHER.

"Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." (Rom. 7: 4-6.)

There is one passage in these verses which would be more correctly rendered, "that ye should be for *another*." That the *marriage* of the Church is a thing yet future is clear, from considering 2 Cor. 11 - "I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ." See also Rev. 19: 7.