

"Stand Therefore."

Eph. 6: 10.

"Selections from the Writings and Ministry of G. V. Wigram."

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The contrast between the opening and the close of this epistle is striking. It is to my mind like one of those brilliant suns, which, on a dark, lowering day, suddenly pours forth its brightness, and the eye follows the broad beam of glory it casts, until it lights at last on some field, of which it brings out all the colouring in bright relief. Thus to me does the glory of the beginning of Ephesians shine down upon the place of conflict in which the church militant is seen in the last chapter. In grace, not in nature, we see that there is a necessary connection between the light above and the church below.

How very little any of us apprehend what the church is. The generality of Christians merge in their thoughts of the church, all God's dealings with men; but God has given us, now present, to see that there are different classes of blessing amongst the saved. God displays His attributes in dealing with an earthly people, and His character as preparing a heavenly people for Christ; but many, who have even fresh and happy knowledge of what the church is, look upon her *only* as the Bride of Christ. Would indeed that we had far deeper entrance into this; never will our souls be right unless there be entrance into it — that the church is the one espoused to Christ; still there is only one chapter in the epistle in which it is spoken of as the Bride; it is one of the happiest thoughts to our hearts that this should be, but we should greatly rob ourselves were we to limit our thoughts to it.

Eve, it is true, was one of Adam's ribs; she was built into a woman, and brought by God to Adam, who found in her that which made her a helpmeet, one in whom he could delight. But we must not see Eve only as under Adam; we must also see her under God — the Elohim of Genesis 2. Here we get her in a three-fold light. She is not only the one fitted to meet Adam's heart, but she is set *with* him as the centre of a threefold circle. First there is the bright blaze of creatorial beauty; then there is the garden in which the Lord God had gathered all that was: — fitted for him who was to be the centre; and, lastly, there Adam takes his bride — this is the innermost circle.

So will it be with the church. The redemption glory will be over all the universe; but there will be one place more glad than the rest; God will have His Paradise, as Adam had his. The new Jerusalem is the Paradise of God; here are the Bride and the Lamb.

This was the secret hidden in the bosom of God. God displayed His attributes, His glorious power, and wisdom, and goodness in Adam's creation; but these attributes were known before; not so all that is to be known of God in redemption.

There are two systems. In the first creation, link joins link in unbroken succession till we rise to man; but here we stop. An infinite gap comes in between man and his Creator. The first Adam was the centre of this system. In the second — redemption — this gap is filled up. And God sets as the centre of *this* system — of which the first was a mere type — His own Son, the second Adam, who will take all the perfect glory of it as *man* — Son of man. But here in redemption He goes back into Deity — into the eternity of God; we are "chosen in him before the foundation of the world." And not only this, but God as the Son: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself." There is much more in this than may at first meet the mind; He might call angels sons, or Israel; but the church has sonship as chosen *in the Son*. And then He gives the sweep of the circle which should belong to the Son. He will "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and

which are on earth." All — all — is to be headed on Christ — *all* centering round Him — all stable as He is stable.

Here, then, is the church in a new position; not only is she one suited to meet the heart of Christ as His Bride, but her glory will be displayed where He is displayed as the centre on which all hangs before God. The love wherewith the church is loved is one thing; the glory she is to have is another.

The first chapter of Ephesians brings out the name of God; the third that of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This name never came out until Israel rejected Christ. In the last three chapters of Revelation there is a display of glory; in John 13 there is — "the Father's house." Though enjoyed by the same persons, these are not identically the same. The church is the beloved object of Him who has the key of the Father's house; she has a certain play of His affections as Son of man, to which she responds; this is the light which shines down now. Adam failed, but God will not give up these "children." He *must* have them, and He brings them in through redemption, and says: If they belong to my Son, I must have them with me.

Well, this broad beam of celestial glory — this light from heaven — narrows down to the field where is seen the church militant in combat here below. And it is this which is not enough noticed — that this epistle begins with God shining forth on His church, in His glory, placing the children in His house, and bringing them there now into vital union with His Son. There is a bright background for me, which began to glimmer "before the foundation of the world!"

But we are down here in conflict. There are two things: pilgrimage, and conflict. Israel was a captive in Egypt; God pledged Himself to bring him out of it. Little by little this goes on, bringing out our nothingness before Him; He ends by subduing the hostile powers of Egypt; and then, by the passage of the Red Sea, they are for ever *shut up to God*. They needed but eleven days to get into the land, but they wandered forty years in the wilderness; and, when they did get into the land, they had conflict there, in order to take possession of it.

I believe that many saints do not distinguish between being in the wilderness and having crossed the Jordan. We have been brought out of Egypt, and we know the wilderness, but the wilderness ought not to be, as it is with some saints, the dominant thought. We are in it, say they, and we must go on thinking about it.

Israel certainly were not in Canaan and the wilderness at the same time; but the wilderness and the land do come together with *us*. Israel again had to fight their way *in*; but, as to ourselves, God is now teaching us *what Christ is*, and not what *we* are; *where Christ is*, and not where *we* are. *We are* "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Truly, as to my feet, they are sinking step after step in the thick parched sand of the wilderness; and, when I look above my head, I find I have to wrestle "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places." As to all around me, I have done with it. I shall know well my steps are in the wilderness; I shall feel the fiery dart; the sharp flint will not lose its edge, nor the sand its burning. But, am I shut out from communion? No. Heaven is opened to me; and Christ has taken possession for me. He sits above the principalities and powers. Not only is there the land over there, where we shall rest; but God is saying: Lift up your heads *now*, and rejoice, and see if there be not more power in Christ for you to lift you up above all, than there is in the wilderness and Satan to weigh you down.

In all these things we may be more than conquerors through Christ. Satan is allowed to hold his place in the heavenlies, but Christ knows all down here; He saw all; He passed through all, up to the right hand of God. Satan is now allowed to hold this place against us, because he is allowed to hold it

against Christ; but directly *He* rises up, Satan will be chased out, like the dried leaves before the whirlwind. Satan holds now the very place where the new Jerusalem will be.

Up above there, is the One with whom I have vital communion, and who is my strength. "One spirit with the Lord." And this is not having to fight my way in; neither is it the wilderness. No, it is what we have in this tenth verse; being strong *in the Lord*; standing fast. It is holding fast a defensive position; but it is *up there*.

Before entering into detail there are two things I would notice: the difference that there is between the wilderness, and *trying* to get into the land.

First. What is the best preparation for treading the wilderness? The cross on the shoulder — the denying self at every step, so as to bring in Christ, and thus having Christ's thought about everything here.

Second. What is taking possession of the land? — It is not cheering myself with the thoughts of coming glory. No; it is pushing forward now, into what *is in Christ*.

Now there may be the standing fast as here, in what God has given us; or there may be the striving to get possession ourselves. In this latter case there will be an immense stirring of soul — a putting forth of energies — but it is really a false position and effort. I have not got to take possession; Christ has done it for me. It is the very worst thing I can do to put forth my energies in this. If it were a question of actual possession, why Satan will hold the heavenly places till Christ rises up from the throne of God.

Oh! if there be one thing in which I should wish to give a death-blow to the minds of saints — if there be one thing as to which it would be happy if we were all knocked down before God — it is this, as to our non-understanding of what the church has in Christ. Speak Lord, and show us the power of the things in which we are planted! — there, where the springs are in God.

Down here suffering is emphatically the position of the church. Even in our blessed Lord, what He did was not like what He suffered. Thus with Paul too; the mind of his Lord was upon the great things he should "suffer" for his name's sake. Many have little to do; the many have much to suffer. Sufferings we shall, and ought to, have; thick as hailstones they will come down upon us. We are set in the position of suffering now for Christ's name, and we are called to stand fast in it, not in the sense of being unbending, but in the sense of that glory being ours which is displayed in Ephesians 1.

I laboured lately, long and in vain, to get the idea into a Christian's mind that he had *died*, and was buried in Christ. But it was still with him only "I, I, my feelings," and so on. Ah, if Christ were disparaged — if His honour were touched we might well be troubled, but we *must* come to an end of this self.

Never can we take this position, much less keep in it, unless we see where Christ has set us. This sixth of Ephesians is not a call to fight our way in, but a call to the church militant to "stand" in the fixed position Christ has set her in.

In order vividly to give the thought on my mind I refer to another Scripture — the sixth of Revelation. John was caught up into heaven, above all, where the Lamb was. What would be his experience there? Why, whatever turn up from powers of darkness in heavenly places, or whatever there be in judgment on earth, still the Lamb has the full place and title; "He is worthy" come what may; and I am, and will act as, a member of that Lamb. What could be against John if that were his position? There might be the accusations of Satan; the failure of the best thing — the church; there

might be the sealed book; but still all was safe to him: he had *Christ*.

If you seek to act here consistently with this your real position before God, you will find it a desperate conflict. Do you, I ask, act consistently with it? It is true that, if you do not, yet you will not — you cannot — lose this position; but still ask yourself, has nothing this day, for instance, in you been unworthy of a member of that body of Christ in which the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is to be displayed? If you have forgotten your failures, there are two parties who will secure not the least one of them being forgotten. Satan numbers them all, because he hates you; God numbers them all, because He loves you. Blessed that it is so, for sorrily should we often come into His presence, with soiled garments, were we left to our own recollection; but God marks them, and cleanses us from all things, because He loves His Christ. Looking down on us He says to His Son: Behold — here — there — is a member of thyself! — If we say our Amen to this — if we resolve to walk in the power of it — we shall find conflict. But, if so, our God will be still saying to us: I am weaning thee for myself. Be not cast down. If the springs be not bubbling? still I am weaning thee for myself. If the wilderness be under your feet? well? I am weaning thee for myself. If Satan be still above? I am weaning thee for myself. — No, God will never rest till he has so weaned us, that our hearts are as much filled with Christ as His is.

What are the things that are against you? I ask each present: Is it solitariness? God says: I can rest in my love for you. God sees me as hidden in Christ, even as Eve was hidden in Adam, and He takes all delight in us; God is rejoicing over you. He is thinking how brightly you will shine in the glory.

Whether as to position, armour, or personal detail, in all cases the exhortation to us is to "stand" in the position in which Christ has set us.