

Gospel Words — Eighth Series

Table of Contents

1 Unprofitable Bondmen.....	1
2 The Persistent Widow.....	3
3 The Pharisee and the Tax-Gatherer.....	4
4 Christ returning to Reign.....	6
5 The Shepherd of the sheep.....	7
6 The Door.....	9
7 The Good Shepherd.....	11
8 Feet-washing.....	13
9 The vine.....	14
10 Christ the Bread of Life.....	16
11 Eating Christ's flesh, and drinking His blood.....	17
12 Christ the corn of Wheat.....	18

A Series of 4pp. Gospel Tracts by W.K. for distribution after preaching.

1 Unprofitable Bondmen

Luke 17: 7-10.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 133-134. Gospel No. 8-1.)

One needs to be saved by Christ before one can serve Him. Salvation is of grace and by faith. It was Christ Who alone bore the burden. We contributed the sins, and nothing else; but awakened by the word and Spirit of God we repented and believed the gospel. How is it with you, dear reader? Beware of going on in dark uncertainty. The true light already shines since the Son of God came. Turn not your back on Him, lest the true character of yourself and your works should be shown as they are. Be honest Godward. Confess yourself a sinner, and your deeds evil. Receive Jesus as the one divine Saviour, expressly sent by and from God to save the lost. We were indeed bondmen of sin; but set free from sin by the Saviour, we would henceforth yield our members in bondage to righteousness unto holiness, each the Lord's freedman, now Christ's bondman.

We are in a world of snares, pitfalls, and evils. Christ is not only the Saviour but the sole path of safety. Hence an exercised conscience, and a spirit of compassion become those who confess Christ and are saved by grace. Self-judgment is the fruit, a careful walk, and readiness to forgive. As we may not weary of well doing, so neither should we of pardoning. Stumbling-blocks abound and work mischief; woe to him through whom they come! A terrible death were better than to cause one to the least disciple. Our Lord's call is, "Take heed to yourselves." Let fidelity to God rebuke sin; let grace forgive it to the repentant, were it seven times in the day. Do we not know it without limit in Christ? It is the kingdom and patience now. By-and-by it will be power and glory, when He reigns.

No wonder that the apostles said, "Lord, increase our faith." All things are possible to him that believes. Were their faith minute as a grain of mustard, He would have it count on God's power that

answers the call for His glory, which roots up a tree, say this mulberry, and plants it in the sea obediently. Man may be weakness itself; yet is it God's purpose in and through man to glorify Himself. Is not the Lord Jesus the sure pledge and the manifest proof of it?

Bought with a price (and what a price!) we are here to obey in all lowliness and meekness. God loves to work in us, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. While faith is encouraged to the utmost, self-complacency is absolutely condemned and excluded. Brokenness of spirit is the fitting preparation for the energy of faith. The Christian here is simply witnessing Him Who is not here, his Lord and the Lord of all. We are not fellow-workers with God, but *under* Him. We are His fellow-workers, but in entire subjection to Him, in no way on a level with Him. The wording in the A, and R. Versions of 1 Cor. 3: 9 and 2 Cor. 6: 1 is equivocal and dangerous; if interpreted as it often has been to put God and His servants on a common plane, it is evil and presumptuous. This, scripture repudiates and the new nature surely resents. The parable which follows reduces such a claim to dust.

"But which of you, having a bondman ploughing or keeping sheep, will say to him when come in from the field, Come in straightway and recline at meat? But will he not say to him, Make ready what I shall sup on, and gird thyself and serve me that I may eat and drink; and after that thou shalt eat and drink? Is he thankful to the bondman because he did what was ordered? I judge not. Thus ye also, when ye shall have done all the things ordered you, say, Unprofitable bondmen are we; we have done what we were bound to do" (vers. 7-10).

It is a shameful perversion of serving Christ to make it either a ground of acceptance with God, or a measure of ease or rank among men. Bring in the Master, and behold every such plea exposed as evil and vanishing away. Even Christ pleased not Himself, but according as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached Thee fell on Me. And the great apostle of the Gentiles loved to style himself "bondman of Jesus Christ." What an overthrow of human feeling and worldly pride for him, the free-born citizen of Rome, so to introduce himself to all that were in Rome beloved of God, saints by calling! So indeed to the utmost was it with the Lord of all, Who, subsisting in the form of God, did not esteem it robbery to be on equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking a bondman's form, becoming in likeness of men, and being found in figure as man, humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, death of [the] cross.

Here the Lord lays down the servant's place, so readily slipping out of our light hearts. He had shown what faith ever so small can do through God's power. Here He would remind us that we are His bondmen. A great honour it is for us, yet a great reality. It is fellowship with Him in what His love led Him to become.

Time was when we were enemies of God. Death and judgment were then our sure and appointed lot. He interposed and by His sacrifice changed all for those that believe. His love that made Him a bondman constrains us to the same service of love. Whatever our privileges, this is our place: servants not only of Him but for His sake. Has not grace made us debtors to all, to saints and to sinners, to countrymen and to foreigners, to wise and to unintelligent? But pre-eminently and unalienably and always are we Christ's bondmen. In this let us not forget that he who loveth his life shall lose it, and that he who hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal. Let us remember that the rule for anyone who may serve Christ is to follow Him, and the issue will be that where He is, there also shall His servant be, and honoured of His Father.

Assuredly the Lord owes us no thanks. It is our privilege as our duty to serve Him in all things great or small, day and night, sick or well. We are His altogether and evermore. Is a master "thankful to the bondman because he did what was ordered? So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all the things

ordered you, say, Unprofitable bondmen are we; we have done what we were bound to do." Never did man speak like this Man, our Master. Others without an exception have thought, that it was enough to confess ourselves unprofitable when we fail to do our duty; He teaches us to say it, when we shall have done all the things ordered us.

How completely His word destroys the vain and unbelieving dream of works of supererogation! Not a single saint was other than His bondman; not a single right work done by anyone of them but was his duty to do. They were God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God before-prepared that they should walk in them. What short-coming themselves found in what others deemed the best! Whatever they were, they had only done what they owed to Him.

2 The Persistent Widow

Luke 18: 1-8.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 149-150. Gospel No. 8-2.)

The closing verses of Luke 17 are occupied with the appearing of the Lord, when He comes in His kingdom and executes judgment on the quick. Hence the comparison is with the days of Noah and of Lot. It is not the heavenly hope dawning, as in Luke 12: 32-38; but "the day that the Son of man is revealed" (2 Thess. 1), when the birds of prey are gathered together over the corpse.

In moral connection with His coming in personal judgment of the earth the Lord intimates the urgent value of prayer.

"And he spake also a parable to them that they must always pray and not faint, saying, There was in a certain city a certain judge, not fearing God and not regarding man; and there was a widow in that city and she kept coming unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he refused for a while; but afterward he said in himself, If even I fear not God and regard not man, yet because this widow is troublesome to me I will avenge her, that she by forever coming may not worry me. And the Lord said, Hear what the judge of unrighteousness speaketh. And shall God in no wise avenge his own elect that cry to him by day and night, and he is long suffering over them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Howbeit, when the Son of man cometh, shall he indeed find faith on the earth?" (vers. 1-8).

As God's call is the warrant of faith, so faith is exercised in prayer, and rests always on the unseen in the midst of seen experience. And when things are most trying through the prevalence of evil, those that believe are encouraged the more to cry, How long, O Lord? He puts faith to the proof; He can never deny Himself, nor disappoint His people. But endurance is to have a perfect work, that they may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

The figures employed were the best possible to encourage: on the one hand a judge of unrighteousness neither fearing God nor respecting man, on the other a widow wronged by an adversary near enough to inflict so much the greater evil, because he should have been her protector. Yet her persevering cry wore out the judge's indifference. He could not stand her continual appeal, and, to escape the annoyance, he let her have justice. The Lord reveals the thoughts and motives of the judge's heart, and draws the believer's attention to the way in which even now God's providential ways act in the most reckless and unprincipled on behalf of the oppressed.

But how much more will it be when God rises up in judgment of the world, as He surely will in the person of the Lord Jesus at the end of the age Then will He shine forth as the Judge of the earth: and the elect will have their cry by day and night at length heard, and the wicked triumph no more. They

speaking arrogantly now, they boast themselves. They will slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless. But Jehovah will not cut off His people, nor will He forsake His inheritance. For judgment, instead of diverging to the right or the left, shall return to righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it. So it will be in the day of the Lord's appearing. She who had long played Him false and sought many lovers will take by repentance 'the place of the desolate widow, and shall forget the shame of her youth, and the reproach of her widowhood shall He remember no more. For her Maker is her husband in that bright day; and the Holy One of Israel is her Redeemer; the God of the whole earth shall He be called, as indeed He is, and she shall know. He may be long suffering over His own elect in their tribulation; but He will avenge them speedily in that day. For in His hand is a cup, and the wine foameth; it is full of mixture, and He poureth out of the same, Surely the dregs thereof all the wicked of the earth shall wring out, and drink them; and the horns of the righteous shall be lifted up when those of the wicked also shall be cut off. But it will be a dark hour, not only in the land but elsewhere, and faith seems then extinct as regards public profession up to that mighty intervention.

O my reader, forget not that you still hear the gospel. Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. Him Who knew no sin God made sin for us, that we might become God's righteousness in Him. Such is His testimony to you. It is not a promise or a hope; it is the most wondrous of all facts in the grace of God; and you, if you have not already believed God as to it, are now called to believe on Christ Whom He gave and sent that you might be saved. To Him and His work of redemption does the Holy Spirit now bear witness in the gospel, which is God's glad tidings to every one that believes. Trifle not with grace so unparalleled. To put it off is to trifle with the will of the Father, the work of the Son, and the witness of the Holy Spirit. Can there be more glaring or guilty unbelief?

Why do you now delay? The atoning work is done. Be it known to you therefore, that through Christ is *preached* to you forgiveness of sins; and in virtue of Him every one that believes is justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. This was no defect of His law, which indeed was God's law and must condemn, not justify, the sinner. But the gospel is from God the good news of Jesus the Lord His Son, the Son of man come to seek and to save that which was lost. Beware then, lest that come upon you which is spoken in the prophets, Behold, ye despisers, and wonder and perish; for I work a work in your days, a work which ye will in no wise believe if one declare it to you.

3 The Pharisee and the Tax-Gatherer

Luke 18: 9-14.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 164-166. Gospel No. 8-3.)

From the widow's pertinacity prevailing over the injustice of the wicked judge the Lord drew the assurance of God's avenging at length the cry of the elect. Here He turns to God's pitiful estimate of a contrite spirit despised by haughty self-righteousness. What an encouragement to the poor self-judging one! What a warning to such as presume on their own fancied superiority! Both parables illustrate the moral light here cast on man as he is by the Son of man. They are characteristic of Luke who alone gives them.

"And he spoke also this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and set all the rest at nought. Two men went up into the temple to pray, the one a Pharisee, the other a tax-gatherer. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus to himself, O God, I thank thee that I am not as the rest of

men, rapacious, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax-gatherer. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I gain. And the taxgatherer standing afar off would not lift up even his eyes unto heaven, but kept smiting his breast, saying, O God, be merciful to me, the sinner. 1 tell you, this [man] went down unto his house justified rather than that; because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (vers. 9-14).

How deeply "Jesus Christ, the Righteous," resented the spuriousness of a sinner claiming righteousness! how He pitied the soul that really felt its sinfulness before God! He is the Saviour of all that believe the gospel, the Judge of all that disbelieve. Simple yet graphic is the scene, and the sentence sound, sure, and conclusive. But in the haze that overhung the temple the Pharisee had as high a repute as the tax-gatherer had none.

There the Pharisee took a position and poured out his complacency in himself. "O God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men." Not a word about his sins or even his need. Not a suspicion of his guilt and ruin. He is lifted up with the sense that he was not this or that, extortionate, unjust, adulterous, "or even as this tax-gatherer." Nor that only; for he boasts his religion. "I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I gain." It was another Cain. Oh, the many that go in the way of Cain! They come before God as they are; they offer their fasts and their tithes, as they feel assured they are better than the rest of men. What have they done to offend God? Why should they doubt His acceptance of them?

So it is that men still deceive themselves, or even make God a liar, as the apostle expresses it. They cloak their own sins; they denounce other people's sins; but God is not mocked. His word is that all sinned, and do come short of His glory. But Abel bowed and brought his sacrifice. Fruits of the ground man laboured on could not avail for sin. Death must come between God and the sinner. So Cain righteous in his own eyes had no right sense of his ruin; Abel who was righteous duly felt and owned ruin in his offering, whereas Gain's denied it. In a word Gain trusted to self, Abel to Another. Sin or death was nothing to Gain, but great to Abel's faith that looked for the Saviour.

And what of the tax-gatherer? He, standing afar off, would not lift up even his eyes to heaven, but kept smiting his breast, saying, O God, be merciful to me, the sinner. It was his evil that pressed on his spirit, as he cried to God. Not a thought had he of good deeds done, of bad ones avoided. He did not dream of hiding himself in a crowd of sinners or a vague confession. He singled himself as the sinner if ever there was one. What did he know of others? or, even if he had a slight knowledge, he knew himself far better and overwhelmingly. "O God, be merciful to me, the sinner." His light from God might be small, but it was real; and as it disclosed his own sinfulness, he owned himself the sinner. He looked out of himself to God about his condition, without a word of self-commendation, or of comparison with others, or of excuse. No, he was the sinner, and before God he lays himself as he is. On God, a God of grace, he relies in simple real acknowledgement of his ruin.

It was the fear of God, and the beginning of wisdom; and the Lord recognises it accordingly. "I tell you, this man went down unto his house justified rather than that." Hence the general principle follows, "because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

It was not "justified by faith" so as to have peace with God. The Lord does not describe one who had heard and believed the word of truth, the gospel of salvation. There was not, nor could be yet, the presentation of the great work of grace, Christ's work. God's righteousness in Him had yet to be manifested. But the tax-gatherer was brought where all the godly in Israel had been before him, to look away from himself to God's mercy; he was believingly taught as a sinner, where the godly outside

Israel were taught to renounce self-dependence. See a saint like Job thus broken through severe discipline for his greater blessing: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42: 5, 6).

For sinners or saints repentance there is and must be. Even he whom Jehovah commended as a perfect and upright man, that feared God and eschewed evil, needed it, as He alone turned the fiery trial to that good end. For Job thought too well and much of what grace enabled him to do, and exalted himself in consequence. The enemy failed wholly to shake him. Jehovah touched the weak point through his friends (more ignorant of God and of themselves than Job), who at length humbled himself deeply and was exalted in due time. This was when he prayed in a spirit of grace for his proud and harshly judging friends. What a contrast with the Pharisee! There the tax-gatherer was led in his measure, a case of true repentance, if not so deep as that of Job: both precious in the Lord's eyes. "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than that."

In justification through Christ's blood are found no degrees. By Him all that believe are justified from all things (Acts 13: 39). Here it was faith and repentance, and hence a state morally right before God (which the Pharisee's was not), though short of the clearance and liberty which faith in the gospel brings.

4 Christ returning to Reign

Luke 19: 12-27.

(B.T. Vol. N1, p. 180-181. Gospel No. 8-4.)

The disciples, little knowing God's mind, were impatient for His kingdom. They thought it was immediately to be manifested. They forgot that "first must He suffer many things" and enter into His glory. They overlooked reconciliation by blood as the basis of all: how else could God be glorified or man be saved? The Lord said therefore,

"A certain man of high birth went unto a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. And having called his own ten bondmen, he gave them ten pounds (minae), and said to them, Trade till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent an embassy after him, saying, We will not that this [man] reign over us. And it came to pass on his coming back again, having received the kingdom, that he bade these bondmen to whom he gave the money to be called to him, in order that he might know what each gained by trading. And the first came up, saying, Lord, thy pound made ten pounds more. And he said to him, Well [done], good bondman; because in a very little thou wast faithful, be in authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound made five pounds. And he said also to him, And be thou over five cities. And the other came, saying, Lord, behold, thy pound, which I kept laid up in a napkin; for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man; thou takest up what thou didst not lay down, and reapest what thou didst not sow. He saith to him, Out of thy mouth will I judge thee, wicked bondman. Thou knewest that I am an austere man, taking up what I laid not down, and reaping what I did not sow; and why didst thou not give my money into a bank, and I on coming should have got it with interest? And to the bystanders he said, Take from him the pound and give [it] to him that hath the ten pounds. (And they said to him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say to you, that to every one that hath shall be given; but from him that hath not even what he hath shall be taken from him. Howbeit those my enemies, that would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay before me" (vers. 12-27).

Redemption by Christ's death must be first, and heaven be opened for the redeemed where He is

exalted as its answer. He would receive the kingdom as all things not from man but from God. But He will surely return, having received the kingdom. Then will He take account of their service to whom He gave gifts for trading in responsibility to Him during His absence. For we are here in view, not of His receiving His own to Himself for the Father's house, but of His appearing and His kingdom. And they are rewarded according to their fidelity, one more, and another less. It is not gifts differing according to God's sovereignty, but all alike entering their Lord's joy as in Matt. 25; but here each receives alike a pound and is rewarded respectively according to the different result of their work. The two Gospels present the two sides, but are both true. Both show us also the "evil bondman," without a particle of faithfulness. And why? Because he had no faith in his Lord's grace. On the contrary, he insulted Him Who is full of grace and truth as "an austere man," selfish and dishonest as his own heart; and his end is accordingly.

There is reward then for work that pleases the Master, Who will be no man's debtor, but surely requites all in the coming day. Each bondman shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. But there is a foundation requisite for every one who thus builds; and other foundation can none lay than that laid, which is Jesus Christ. There is and must be faith in His grace for any one to serve Him truly. This the faithful bondmen had, and in the faith of Him they were devoted to His service. This faith the wicked bondman had not, and therefore he served not. He cared only for himself, he wronged his Master and gave the lie to His grace. But he could not escape righteous judgment, and out of his own mouth he was condemned: as those who believed in the Lord's grace receive a righteous reward in the kingdom of glory for their good works.

Take notice, my reader, that it is no question here of heathen but of professing Christians, of the service due to the absent Lord before He appears in His kingdom. Faith in Him, faith in His grace, can alone avail you. Alike is the turning-point for every soul that hears His word; it is the spring of acceptable service, no less than of salvation. How could it be otherwise? The Lord is the Son of man Who came to save the lost at all cost for Himself. God will not tolerate slighting His own Son. Not to believe on Him at God's word is to dishonour both the Father and the Son; and as men thus receive not life eternal, they must come into judgment, and hence inevitably into the second death. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." O unbeliever, what bliss do you not lose? what woe do you not gain?

Then the Lord speaks of another guilty class; not the wicked servant, but His citizens sent an embassy after Him when He went on high, saying, We will not have this man reign over us. They are the Jews that hate Him, instead of professing to serve Him. When the true servants shine in the honours of the kingdom, what will be their portion, His open enemies that would not have Him, Messiah their king, reign over them? Those who repent not will fall under His destructive judgment. Bring them hither, says He in the parable, and slay them before Me. For when He shall come to be glorified in His saints and to be marvelled at in all them that believed, there will also be the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven, rendering vengeance to those that know not God, and to those that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus. Jews that hate and Gentiles that despise the Saviour must suffer the due reward of their rebellious unbelief and their evil deeds. How would it be, how is it, with you that read these words? Do not assume that God is indifferent, like you.

5 The Shepherd of the sheep

John 10: 1-6.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 198-199. Gospel No. 8-5.)

The similitudes of the Fourth Gospel differ from the parables of the other three, and have another name. They are sayings by the way or proverbial allegories, and like all the doings and sayings of John's Gospel, they set out the Lord personally, the grace and truth which came by Him. Here is the first of the cluster.

"Verily, verily I say to you, He that entereth not, by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbeth up elsewhere, he is a thief and a robber; but he that entereth by the door is shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice; and he calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out. When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth on before them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice. And a stranger they will in no wise follow, but will flee from him, because they know not the voice of strangers. This proverb (or, allegory) spoke Jesus to them; but they understood not what things they were which he spoke to them" (vers. 1-6).

With the solemn formula that occurs so often in his Gospel, the Lord introduces His description, not of the shepherd of the sheep, but of a thief and a robber. He does not enter by the door into the fold of the sheep, but climbs up elsewhere. God distinguished the door by plain marks that the sheep might discern the Shepherd, Who came from and was sent by Himself. For they were precious to Him no less than to the Son. And the Son was zealous for the Father's house and would enter by the appointed way and none other. He, the mighty God, deigned to be the Messiah, the Shepherd of Israel, and so to become the Seed of Abraham, the son of David, and born of the Virgin. Through Micah (Micah 5: 2) Jehovah named Bethlehem as the place of His birth. Out of it should He come forth unto Him that was to be ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Nor was the time left vague. Through Daniel He fixed it by weeks (of years) to elapse, from the commandment to restore and build Jerusalem (issued by Artaxerxes Longimanus), after which Messiah should be (not born nor manifested nor reigning, but) "cut off and have nothing." So also He does not fail to announce in this chapter as in John 3: 14 too.

Others sought their own things by craft or violence. He came in a love unmistakably of God, in an obedience that left nothing to desire, always doing in an evil world the things that pleased the Father. Prophecy pointed Him out no more plainly than the grace and truth which came by Him, or the signs of beneficent power which studded the path of light that could not be hid. He entered by the door, and "to him the porter openeth." The Spirit of God deigned to work in this as in all others to glorify the Lord. Notably we perceive this by the testimony of Simeon, and of Anna a prophetess in early days, but above all by John the Baptist the divinely appointed herald of the Messiah, when the time drew near for His public ministry.

It was for him who was but "a voice of one crying in the wilderness" to say, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Nor was it in vain for those given to see according to God. For "the sheep hear his voice;" and as He said in John 5: 25, "they that hear shall live." There was faith, without which it is impossible to please God; and with faith life. For life was in Him from everlasting to everlasting. It belonged to His eternal person as the Word and the Son (John 1: 3, 1 John 5: 11); and when He took the place of man, as the Sent One, the Father gave Him to have life in Himself, yet not for Himself simply, but that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have life eternal, and this in hearing His voice (vers. 24, 25). It might not yet be life in resurrection, but it was life eternal; for it was in the Son, and the Son has none other for the believer. Verily, verily I say to you, He that believeth on Me hath life eternal (John 6: 47). There is no exception. A robber just converted, and an apostle behind none, have just the same life. Christ lived in both; and He is the true God and the eternal life.

But what tender care in the Shepherd! "He calleth his own sheep by name." His love is in the fullest way personal. His interest is in each personally, and He would have all to know it. What could evince it more than His calling His own sheep by name? So the apostle wrote, for those who believe as well as himself, He loved me, and gave Himself for me.

A change is next announced of great moment, especially for Jews. He "leadeth them out." God had given His ancient people much advantage every way. But they had received not His Son, the Shepherd of Israel, hating Him to the utmost, and about to cry, Crucify Him, crucify Him. And He, knowing the end from the beginning, leadeth His sheep out of the fold, more and more the den of thieves and robbers, already the seat of His enemies. It might be done through the violence of others, as when the blind now seeing was cast out by the reviling Jews. But in effect He leadeth them out, as would be true for all His own in due time.

But there is more; and it is of transcendent importance. "When he hath put forth all his own, he goeth on before them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice." Later in the chapter He explains how this was to be. He would give Himself for them. It would be by nothing less than His death and resurrection: such was His love, and such their need. Thus only could they be secured, or fitted for the new place of blessing. For even Caiaphas soon after prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation, and not for that nation only, but that He should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad (John 11: 51, 52) — a yet larger view than ver. 4 presents, and needing ver. 16 to supplement it. And what a safeguard for their difficulties and dangers grace provides the sheep! "They know his voice." This enables them to "follow him," as it preserves them from misleaders.

"And a stranger they will in nowise follow, but will flee from him, because they know not the voice of strangers." So the Lord lays down the truth for His own. He does not here state the possible wandering of any sheep, but presents the only way of life. Others might occupy themselves with errors and evils, a pursuit not without danger of defilement, The wisdom of the Christian is to be content with His voice which gave him life from the first, and to delight increasingly in Christ to the last fleeing from a stranger and knowing not the voice of such.

It was a deep allegory, and looked on to that which was not yet accomplished. We need not, then, wonder that as yet the Saviour's words were not understood.

6 The Door

John 10: 7-10.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 212-214. Gospel No. 8-6.)

In the previous verses our Lord speaks of Himself as the Shepherd of the sheep entering the fold of Israel by the door or God-appointed means.

Here, for the best reasons and the fuller display of the grace and truth which came by Him, He presents Himself as the Door of the sheep, rather than of the fold.

"Jesus therefore said to them again, Verily, verily, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep. All as many as came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: through me if any one enter, he shall be saved, and he shall go in and shall go out, and he shall find pasture. The thief cometh not but that he may steal and slay and destroy; I came that they might have life, and have [it] abundantly" (vers. 7-10).

The fold is here left aside. What could Judaism avail for the saints any more than sinners? Christ is

the door of the sheep. They might be cast out like the blind man whom He caused to see. Where were they to turn, and whither go? "I am the door of the sheep." He is the entrance to the new and abiding blessings of God for His own, the entrance to the God that blessed them, yea, to the Father, as they learn in due time. He is the object of faith now more clearly than ever; as He had been truly, if dimly, since sin came into the world. All believers looked to Him that was coming, the Messiah; but now He is revealed as incomparably more.

Had any claimed the sheep? "All as many as came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them." For God protects His own. They might boast and say that they were somebody, like Theudas; they might draw after them a people in revolt like Judas of Galilee. But they were thieves and robbers; and none followed whom the Son made free, only Abraham's seed but not his children.

In ver. 9 He describes Himself in fewer words which convey far more, "I am the door." It is not merely "of the sheep"; it is for any. "I am the door: through me if any one enter, he shall be saved, and he shall go in and shall go out, and he shall find pasture." Can words be more precise or more full? Can blessing for a needy soul be more suited, rich, and secure? He is the door absolutely, away from all evil into all good.

It is Christianity in contrast with Judaism or any other earthly religion. To enter through the door is to believe on Jesus the Son of God. He that does is on His word assured of salvation; "he shall be saved." This, mark it well, is given to him that enters through Christ. No such assurance attends another than the Son of God. He is the Saviour, and none else. The church consists of the saved, but cannot save: only Christ can and does. A false church may set up to save; the true church repudiates such a pretension as a lie and a blasphemy. She is but the body, He is the Head; she is the bride, He the Bridegroom. She, being true, is jealous of His honour; she rejects with horror all thought of setting herself in His place as of Satan. She has the Spirit now, as He had when here; but the Spirit does not glorify her but Him. All her privileges are in virtue of Him, and are rightly turned but to His praise.

Salvation then, as it is of God's grace, is through Christ. "Through me if any one enter, he shall be saved." It is not for the Jew only but for the Gentile also; it is for "any one." But he must enter through Christ. Through Me if any one enter, he shall be saved. He may be baptised and be lost; he may take the Lord's Supper, and be lost. If any one enter through Christ, he shall be saved. This He declares; and His words shall endure when heaven and earth pass away.

O my reader, do you believe His words? Do you believe on Himself? Unless He were what He is, unless He were Who He is, neither you nor any other sinner could be saved. But being the Son and becoming the sacrifice for sin, salvation is now open to the poorest of sinners who believes on Him. "Through me if any one enter, he shall be saved." He is the door; and He tells you so. Have you heard Him and entered? Have you taken Him at His word? This is to believe. Do you then believe on the Son of God?

Nor is salvation all that He is now giving. He gives liberty: or as He says here of "any one" that enters through Him, "he shall go in and shall go out." It is in contrast with the penned-up condition of the sheep under Judaism. The law genders bondage; it could not confer freedom. Only the truth, the Son, makes free; and "if the Son therefore makes you free, ye shall be free indeed." So here "he shall go in and shall go out." This is divine emancipation, to us without money or price, to God at the cost of His Son.

There is yet more. For we need now, not salvation nor freedom only, but food; and this He next guarantees. He that enters through Christ "shall find pasture." As He had before taught, the best food is Himself not incarnate only, but dead for us, so that by faith we eat His flesh and drink His blood. This

is what most nourishes the soul, communion with His death.

O my reader, turn not a deaf ear to God's glad tidings. Fear to treat such a Saviour with indifference. Beware of putting off to a more convenient season. God is not mocked. To slight God's law was bad; to neglect His gospel is a great deal worse. The enemy is busy and near. "The thief cometh not but to steal and slay and destroy." This Satan loves, and his servants are many. "I came," says the Lord, "that they [believers] might have life, and have it abundantly." Here He makes a brief transition to His death and resurrection, that the saved might enjoy life, as they do now, in the power of His resurrection.

7 The Good Shepherd

John 10: 11-18.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 230-231. Gospel No. 8-7.)

Very direct are these words of the Lord. What blessing to receive them in faith! what guilt and ruin to despise Him and them!

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd layeth down his life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not a shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, beholdeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and fleeth; and the wolf seizeth them and scattereth. Now the hireling fleeth because he is a hireling, and he hath no care about the sheep. I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: those also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall be one flock, one shepherd. On this account doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again. No one taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again: this commandment I received of my Father" (vers. 11-18).

In Isa. 40: 11, of the Lord Jehovah it is said, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd, he shall gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom — shall gently lead those that give suck." Here He Himself goes much farther. He proves Himself the Good Shepherd by laying down His life for the sheep: none other would, nor, if any other be conceived, could it avail with God or for man.

Rejected He was, with hatred for His love; but nothing turned Him from His purpose of grace. He was the Good Shepherd; and as such He lays down His life for the sheep. Such love bespoke itself divine; it characterised His person and God's nature, but in man, which alone made it possible. Beyond doubt only thus could they be, only thus were they, reconciled to God; but here His laying down His life is the evidence and acme of devoted love in Him, Who acts freely and never was more consciously God than in His atoning death.

What a contrast with him who is a hireling and not a shepherd; whose own the sheep are not! Beholding the wolf coming, he leaves the sheep and flees, while the wolf seizes and scatters them; And so it is, because a hireling he is and careth not for the sheep.

But Jesus only is the Good Shepherd here. Others there have been who love the sheep in their measure, and so feed and tend them. But here where He is thus introduced, they have no mention but must vanish away. They were not entitled to call theirs the sheep, which in fact are "the flock of God." The sheep were Christ's own. Even if the wolf should catch any, not even the wolf shall catch them (the same word) out of Christ's hand. To kill the wolf would have been incomparably easier than to lay

down life for them; and this He did, Who had no sin but love, no fear any more than selfish object, Who always did the things pleasing to His Father. And as the Good Shepherd He could say, "I know mine own, and mine own know me; even as my Father knoweth me, and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." It is the fullest evidence of His devotedness in love for them. His knowledge of them, and theirs of Him, He compared with the Father's knowing Him and His knowing the Father. What can be conceived so satisfying and perfect?

Gracious and powerful is the love the O.T. reveals in Messiah for His flock, "His beautiful flock" as it will surely be. But what is even that to a loving and mutual knowledge of the Shepherd and the sheep, so intimate that it could only be matched by the Father's and the Son's knowledge of one another! In this case is absolute and intrinsic excellence beyond thought or question; in the other, oh! what and how many faults on our side! But love in Him never fails; and we are entitled to count on it in our knowledge of Him as in His of us. This is grace divine, superior to all that it finds, and everlasting.

Such is the depth of the Good Shepherd's love; but He intimates a width far beyond His disciples' thoughts. "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring [or, lead], and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become [or, be] one flock, one shepherd."

Thus He points to the call of Gentiles by the gospel. If most of the Jews turned a deaf ear, many Gentiles have heard and do hear. For no criterion is truer than this. As He deigns to lead them also, "they shall hear my voice."

O my reader, how is this with you? His voice is not of one crying in the wilderness like His herald. He, when here, frequented not the wilderness only but the hillside, and the riverside, and the villages, and the towns, and the cities. He preached the gospel to the poor emphatically; and when His work here was done, He charged His servants to preach the gospel to all the nations, the whole creation. Had Jerusalem been most guilty? To all, said He, "beginning with Jerusalem."

Is not this glad tidings to you, whoever you are, whatever you may have been? Redemption depends on the Redeemer, not on the redeemed, save that they "hear His voice." Oh! then repent and believe the gospel. Never can you truly worship or serve Him, till you receive Him, believing on His name. In vain is every other resource; nay, to trust any ordinance, in order to reconciliation with God, dishonours both the Father and the Son. When you have Him as your life, they find their place.

Of one great added privilege the Saviour speaks here. "They shall (Jews and Gentiles) be one flock, one Shepherd." It was a quite new thing from God: "one flock" (not "fold" as formerly), "one Shepherd." Oh, how sad the change man has made! and how guilty the excuse to cloak it as one flock consisting of many folds! Why do Christians thus defraud the Lord, disguise or corrupt the word, and forfeit their own fidelity and their own fuller blessing? Not so. To set up a fold now is no better than Judaising. There is, as the Lord's will and truth, but one flock, as there is but one Shepherd in the supreme sense. And every Christian is bound to own this One and no other rival. In Him all the fulness dwells.

But let us hear also His own wondrous words. On this account doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again." Christ here omits "for the sheep" and presents His death as in itself furnishing a motive to the Father's love. None but He could; none but His divine person. As such He declares, "no one taketh it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power [or, title] to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." None but the One Who is both God and man in one person could thus speak; and so while He speaks as divine, He does not fail to remember the place of sent One and servant He had taken. "This commandment I received from my Father."

8 Feet-washing

John 13: 1-15.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 244-246. Gospel No. 8-8.)

The Lord was going on high. Of this He treats henceforth till the closing scenes on earth. It was an immense surprise to the disciples, who looked for His restoring the Kingdom to Israel at that time. His departure to the Father would begin that new order of things which we know as Christianity.

"Now before the feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own that were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being come, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's [son] to betray him, [Jesus] knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came from God and goeth unto God, riseth from supper, and layeth aside his garments, and having taken a towel girded himself; then he poureth water into the bason, and began to wash the feet of the disciples, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. He cometh therefore unto Simon Peter. He saith to him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and saith to him, What I do, thou knowest not now, but shalt come to know hereafter. Peter saith to him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, if I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith to him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is wholly clean: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew him that should betray him; on this account he said, Ye are not all clean. When therefore he washed their feet and took his garments, reclining again he said to them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me the Teacher and the Lord; and ye say well, for I am. If I therefore the Lord and the Teacher washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For gave you an example, that ye should do even as I also did to you" (vers. 1-15).

It was a new and profound testimony to His love-love to the uttermost: not in His work on the cross in suffering once for their sins, but in His provision for His beloved ones against every defilement by the way. In this act of washing the disciples' feet we have mystically His advocacy with the Father if any one should have sinned. Was the devil then goading on the traitor? Our Lord Jesus shows what His love would do in heaven for His failing ones. He would fulfil all the meaning of stooping to wash their feet. The glory conferred on Him, the infinite purity that returned to God as unstained as when He came out from Him, only attested His grace and adequacy to their need and what was due to divine majesty. It was a question of restoring communion interrupted by defilement; and the Lord met it by a way as unailing for the saint, as His atoning death for the sinner. "This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ."

Here it is not blood but water. As His blood alone could cleanse us from all sin before God, so do we need what the water typifies. According to His mercy God: saved us through washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit. Thus are we bathed or washed all over, a new creation in Christ. But this does not dispense with the need of washing for the feet, soiled by walking through this miry world. Only Christ could effect either; and He does effect both through the Holy Spirit and the word. He is the Advocate with the Father.

Saints are apt to misunderstand this, as we see Peter did; and the Lord corrected his hasty thoughts. How much had Peter to learn! how much have you? The Lord's gracious work in heaven is as indispensable as His work once for all on the cross. Not that regeneration is repeated. "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet." Peter, who understood little as yet, soon learnt what it is to defile his

feet, and what it is for the Saviour to wash them. For indeed He prayed that Peter's faith should not fail, though his faithfulness did deeply. But His grace restored him, and made him afterwards such a strengthener of his brethren as he never was before. When Peter reached the lowest point of the mire, "the Lord turned and looked upon Peter; and Peter remembered the word of the Lord." What a witness to this service which the Lord now carries on above for His failing ones on earth! It is the washing of water by the word, which applies for our regeneration at the start, and for our restoration at every occasion of need. If it were not so, one could have no part with Christ; but this He secures by His constant love in washing our feet when defiled.

O my reader, are you then bathed? Are you regenerate and renewed by the Spirit? If not, there is but one door, but one way. Jesus alone can avail you. Believe God's word concerning Him. This is faith, without which it is impossible to please God. All things, says He, are possible to him that believes. Such are washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God. Otherwise you are still in your sins. If you only profess the Lord's name, but believe not in your heart, so much the more awful is your case.

Abide no longer under the wrath of God, as you do if not subject but disobedient to His Son. He is as willing as He is able. Turn not from His grace. He refuses none, but accepts every one who comes to Him, and will raise him up at the last day. From first to last the Lord Jesus undertakes for the believer. His sheep, as He declares, shall not perish, nor shall any one seize them out of His hand.

How wonderful it is that we who believe are called to like grace with one another! Christ would have us wash one another's feet. Is this our way, or our desire, before our God and Father? It is vain, unless we be spiritual. Such alone can restore a fallen brother in a spirit of meekness. Be it ours thus to seek grace from our God.

9 The vine

John 15.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 261-262. Gospel No. 8-9.)

The disciples were used to regard Israel as the vine of Jehovah's planting. He brought it out of Egypt and planted it in the land on which His eyes rested. But the Psalm (80), which tells us so, mourns its actual devastation by the wild beasts of the field, and beseeches Him to visit this vine, as He will by the Son of man. Here the Lord meanwhile sets aside Israel altogether, and substitutes Himself for that empty vine. Christ is the True Vine, and His Father is the Husbandman. This is clearly, not His office in heaven as Advocate (John 13), nor His coming as our Hope to place us with Himself in the Father's house (John 14), but His relation to His own on earth for fruit-bearing. Christ is all.

Hence we see throughout that it is the responsibility of the disciple to depend on Christ, to cleave to Him, to refer all to Him. Thus only is fruit borne to His praise, and the Father glorified. Throughout our abiding has the first place, and it is a question of "if." The very reverse appears invariably where God presents salvation by grace.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away; and every one that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it that it may bring forth more fruit. Already ye are clean on account of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you: even as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither ye unless ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye the branches: he that abideth in me and I in him, he beareth much fruit; for apart from me ye can do nothing. Unless one abide in me, he is cast forth as the branch and is withered; and

they gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask whatever ye will, and it shall come to pass for you. In this is my Father glorified that ye bear much fruit, and ye shall become disciples to me" (vers. 1-8).

Luminous as these words are, bias has misunderstood them, Calvinists and Arminians wresting them, each to his scheme. Both start with the assumption that the figurative language means union with Christ, or membership of His body. But His body is never taught in our Gospel nor indeed by any but the apostle Paul; and though union is elsewhere, it is not here, but communion. Union is a settled fact in the spiritual realm, on the basis of Christ's death (John 11: 52) and by the given Spirit's power (John 17: 11, 21, 22, 23). But communion is conditional, and hence may or may not be, as it depends on abiding in Christ.

For this reason it is not a question here of believing on Christ to life eternal, but of abiding in Him and bearing fruit. Man's will for this wholly fails; the chosen people have no power more than others; the law is in vain; and so is the church. Angels, saints living or departed, the Virgin, are but sinking sand. Christ is the True Vine, Christ only. The branch cannot bear fruit of itself; apart from Him it can do nothing.

It is the responsible position of all that call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. All such have left Gentilism or Judaism for Christ. It may be a heart or a lip confession of Christ; but those that confess Him are all branches in the Vine. He is the True Vine; but they may not be true branches. If they abide in Him, they bear fruit; if they do not, they are sooner or later taken away. They may leave Him, or, if put away, they may never be restored either inwardly or outwardly. So we read (John 6: 66) that many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him. So it was going to be manifest in Judas, one of the Twelve. They were branches in the Vine; they confessed His name. But if they did not abide, they hence bore no fruit for His Father. The truest branch needs pruning, or cleansing, by the Father, that it may bear more fruit; but every branch that is true bears fruit. Those that are untrue prove it by not abiding in Christ, and hence by bearing no fruit, self-confident and active though they may be.

The Lord Jesus is life eternal to those that believe on Him. This however is not the subject which is here treated of. It is rather how to bear fruit; and abiding in Christ is its source and way. He is not only life, but the rule of life; and as He is absolutely what He also speaks, His word expresses it fully. By His word were they begotten afresh; on account of it they were already clean. To abide in Him, and have His words abiding in them, draws out in suited prayer and ensures the answer. There is thus much fruit to the glory of the Father, and Christ is not ashamed of them as His disciples. Not to abide in Him, after knowing and confessing Him, is worse than never to have heard, and leaves those who abandon Him as dried up branches of the Vine, only fit for the burning. Such souls never had life in the Son.

How is it then with you, dear reader? Do you yearn after fruit acceptable to God the Father? Is it in your heart to serve the Lord Jesus? You cannot, unless you abide in Him. If you strive to abide in Him in order to service and fruit-bearing, it will be a failure. And the Lord here solemnly warns of failure, as He explains the secret of realising. Begin with taking the place of a guilty and lost sinner that you may be saved through grace by believing on Christ. Thus only is life eternal given. "Verily, verily I say to you, He that believeth *hath* life eternal." "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of life eternal."

The responsibility of bearing fruit attaches to all who confess Christ. If you believe on Him at God's word, you have life in Him, and will respond to His call of abiding in Him; if it be but confessing Him on evidence satisfactory to your own mind, you will play fast and loose, and turn away on

pressure or to please yourself. This is the reverse of abiding in Him, and it is the prelude to everlasting judgment.

10 Christ the Bread of Life

John 6: 35-51.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 277-278. Gospel No. 8-10.)

From the sign of the miraculously multiplied bread the Lord turns those who sought Him to the true bread which the Father gives out of heaven. They had been of a mind by force to make him King; He would receive the kingdom only in due time from His Father. He therefore goes up on high meanwhile to pray. But now on the other side He explains that during Israel's unbelief it is no question of accomplishing their hope now, but of receiving life eternal for resurrection and the heaven to which He was going. It is Christianity in short, and not yet the kingdom restored to Israel.

"Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life. He that cometh unto me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. But I said to you, that ye have both seen me, and believe not. All that the Father giveth me shall come unto me, and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out; because I am come down from heaven, not to do my will but the will of him that sent me. And this is the will of him that sent me that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father that everyone that beholdeth the Son and believeth on him should have life eternal; and I will raise him up at the last day" (35-40).

The Bread of life is not a rite or a sacrament, but the Incarnate Word. He is the object of faith presented, that needy, famishing, souls may have life eternal. The manna in the wilderness was a witness to Him, little as they knew who ate of it and died there. The Lord Jesus is the Bread of God that comes down out of heaven and gives life not to Israel only but to the world. Him the Father God sealed. But so it was the right time to unfold a higher and larger work as the Son of man, rejected by the Jews. Faith receives in Him this rich gift, life eternal. The unbelief of man, yea of the chosen people, only brings out more grace from God the Father in the Son.

But the blessing is only to faith. "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall not hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." Nothing but coming to Himself by faith can avail. Those who saw Him without believing were no better for it but the worse. Those who resort to images of Him find only a blind. Those who lean for life eternal on any ordinance, even of Him, set up a rival to their shame. He is the object of faith for life eternal. "He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father that sent Him." And the Father's will is that all honour the Son, even as they honour the Father: if they honour Him not by faith unto life eternal, they must in His judgment of them to everlasting perdition.

It is beautiful to see how perfectly the Son of the Highest becomes His Servant, now to save, as by-and-by to administer the glory. He chooses none for saving; He leaves all with Him Who sent Him. "All which the Father giveth me shall come unto me; and him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." On the one hand is the security of the children; on the other is the free grace of the gospel. For this has Christ come down out of heaven, Who alone could give either effect according to the Father's will, that none of that He had given should be lost, and that every one who believeth on the Son should have life eternal, Christ raising all up in the last day. For He brings to view not the present power of the kingdom on earth, but life for the soul now, and for the body resurrection.

When the Jews murmured incredulously, the Lord urges the more the need of the Father's drawing those He Himself should raise in the last day, and cites the prophets accordingly. Then He sums up

with His solemn asseveration. "Verily, verily, I say to you, He that believeth on me hath life eternal. I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, and died. This is the bread that cometh down out of heaven that one may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven: if one eat of this bread, he shall live for ever" (vers. 47-51).

The Incarnate Saviour thus stands before us, the food of faith in the wilderness world. Have you, dear reader, gone to Him? For He is thus revealed in the written word that you might come to Him and believe on Him. Life is in Him for sinful man, in Him only for him that believes on earth, in Him life eternal for the most guilty, untoward, and proud. So He assures us without hesitation or condition, save that we believe on Him. And this is the one thing the sinner does most of all pleasing to the Father, jealous as He is for His glory Whom man despised for His grace. "Whosoever denieth the Son, hath not the Father either; he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also." All that is good follows faith through grace.

May this be your present and everlasting portion!

11 Eating Christ's flesh, and drinking His blood

John 6: 53-58.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 293-294. Gospel No. 8-11.)

There is a marked change in our Lord's discourse. He turns from His incarnation to His death. In both cases He speaks of eating. It is the well-known figure of scripture for appropriation or communion. He was not only the Living Bread that came down out of heaven, that one might eat and live for ever. He would give His flesh for the life not of Jews only but of mankind, or as He says "for the life of the world."

But not a trace of ordinances is in either. It is a question of Himself, first living, then dead. He only was entitled to speak of giving life to the world. He through Whom the world came into being, He could quicken the dead; and such was and is the moral condition of all through sin (John 5: 24, 25). He, the new Man, is the object of faith giving life. And it is for any, for the Gentile as well as the Jew. Baptism and the Lord's supper have their place by the Lord's institution till He come; but scripture attributes quickening to Him, not to them. In Him, not in them, was life. It is a falsehood of Christendom to claim an attribute which is His for a rite in the hands of men who thereby arrogate a dignity not only unreal but profane. All through this discourse, as in all other scripture, notably in John's Gospel at large and in his great Epistle, life is in the Son; so that he who believes has the Son and has life, as he that has not the Son of God has not life.

Only now He insists on faith in Him dead. This was yet more repulsive to unbelief than faith in Him living. But the Lord did not soften the truth to make it more palatable. He presents it in pointedly strong terms, peremptorily demanding its reception. Did the Jews contend with one another, saying, How can a man give us his flesh to eat? "Jesus therefore said to them, Verily, verily, I say to you, Except ye shall have eaten the flesh of the Son of man and drunk his blood, ye have no life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath life eternal, and I will raise him up at the last day; for my flesh is truly food, and my blood is truly drink. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, he also that eateth me, he too shall live because of me. This is the bread that came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died: he that eateth this bread shall live for ever" (vers. 53- 58).

Till His death there was no atonement. Sin was not yet judged in an adequate sacrifice, nor was

God vindicated, still less glorified. In the cross He was; and remission of sins could be proclaimed in the name of Jesus Christ. Whosoever called on the name of the Lord should be saved. Hence faith in the Incarnate Word, wherever real, received the wondrous tidings of His death, as alone reconciling a sinful soul to God. Fallen man had no title to life eternal; and He Who was eternal life died for sin and to bear the sins of all who believed, that they might have that life without the sins blotted out by His blood. Therefore did all, who received Him incarnate from God, welcome the more deeply Him that died for sins and to sin, that every inconsistency with the new and divine life might be cancelled. How thankfully did they eat His flesh and drink His blood! Those who stumbled at Him thus dead, refusing to eat His flesh and drink His blood, proved thereby that they had no due sense of His grace nor of their own ruin by sin. Their professed faith in Him incarnate was unreal; had it been true, they would have hailed with deeper satisfaction His going down into death to do away with every effect of sin. From this they revolted, because they had no such conviction of their own evil, no such assurance of His love, even God's love.

But the Lord intimates more, and lets us know that if one has eaten His flesh and drunk His blood, he will not be content with once partaking of Him; he will continue to find in Him that best food. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath life eternal, and I will raise him up at the last day." For His flesh is true food and His blood is true drink (as some of the best MSS. here say). "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him." To have thus partaken of Him dead is life eternal, but more than this: to make Him dead our habitual spiritual food is to ensure the communion of His love to the uttermost. Thus does one abide in Him and He in him; and one lives, not only through Him but on account of Him, as He lived on account of the Father, the motive and reason of being.

We may observe too how carefully the Lord in verse 58 binds together the incarnation and His death. This is quite inconsistent with a rite; it is His person living and dead, the one source of life eternal to the believer. If a rite be fancied here, it would involve the twofold and fatal error: that none who failed to partake of the Lord's supper could have life; and that he who does partake of His supper has life eternal and must rise in the resurrection of the just.

O my reader, be not deceived. The Lord's supper indeed refers to Christ's death, to which this portion of John 6 refers. But He speaks only of faith in Him Who died for sin and sinners, that they believing on Him may have life. Therefore not to the communicant as such, but to the believer is the Lord's assurance of life eternal. Turn away therefore from every substitute for Himself, Who is the only Saviour, the one substitute for your sins. Sacraments are admirable signs, but ruinous when they displace Christ and faith in Him.

12 Christ the corn of Wheat

John 12: 24.

(B.T. Vol. N2, p. 308-309. Gospel No. 8-12.)

A very characteristic truth in the Gospel of John is the Son of God come, the Word become flesh, Who is life eternal and gives it to the believer. But nowhere have we a fuller witness to the efficacy of His death. His work is for us as necessary and as blessed in itself and in its effect as His person: God's glory is concerned most nearly in both (John 1: 29; John 3: 14, 16; John 6: 51-58; John 8: 28; John 10: 9-11, 15-18; John 11: 51, 52; John 12: 32).

At this point of the Gospel testimony is rendered to Him in three aspects: first, as marked out Son of God in power by resurrection, in John 11; secondly, as Messiah, King of Israel, David's Son and

David's Lord, in John 12: 12-16; and lastly, as Son of man with rights over all flesh, yet (as we see in our text) about to die to have others sharing His blessedness and glory. Let us consider this last particular a little more fully.

The Son of God was in the world which He had made; yet the world, boasting of its knowledge, knew Him not, the highest, best, most momentous of all knowledge. He came to His own things, for He was also Messiah, "the born King of the Jews"; yet His own people, if not so ignorant, were more guilty still than the world, and received Him not. Hence, when certain Greeks, of those coming up to worship at the feast of Passover, made known through disciples their desire to see Jesus, He answered, saying, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say to you, Except the corn of wheat falling into the earth die, itself abideth alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." The entire vista of His humiliation unto death and of its blessed result opens before Him and receives suited expression in these wondrous words.

Have you then heard Him in faith? Are you not nearly and deeply concerned? The rejection of the Son, Who is also Messiah, leads in marvellous grace to the fulfilment and disclosure of God's counsels. The Jews and the world at large were verily evil, openly proved enemies. His speaking to them as He did left them without excuse for their sin; His working among them as none other had done made other sin as nothing in comparison: for, as things were, they had both seen and hated both Him and His Father. Did the Jews by hand of lawless Gentiles crucify and slay the Lord of glory? It was by the grace of God He tasted death for every one. The greatest wrong of man confronted the love of God; which triumphed over sin and Satan in effecting redemption by His blood. Then, in being raised from the dead, He only and now is the Second man and Last Adam, by Whom all that believe are justified. Thereon, when the Jews refused the gospel of Him dead and risen, the word of salvation was sent to the nations or Gentiles. It is here for you now. He came to do God's will in His death as the perfect offering and sacrifice, which sums up yet surpasses all others. And again it is God's will that the glad tidings of remission of sins and life eternal should come to you. "Hear, and your soul shall live." Did not God say, even of old looking onward to Him. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters"? Be reconciled to God.

Where man saw in the cross shame, and the deepest shame, the Saviour saw glory. If this was moral glory, heavenly glory is its answer: "Wherefore also God highly exalted Him." "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified." So we read in Psalm 8. If the rejected Messiah of Psalms 2, 8 go down into death (compare Heb. 1, 2), He is the Son of man also crowned with glory and honour on high, though now we see not yet all things subjected to Him. But we by faith see Him in heaven, the pledge that they shall be. This will be when at His coming He raises those that are His to reign with Him, as 1 Cor. 15 declares. And it agrees with what He Himself here says, "Except the corn of wheat falling into the earth die, itself abideth alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit." That the victims of sin might be delivered, sin itself judged, Satan vanquished for eternity, God Himself glorified in man, and His love free to bless perfectly, He, the true grain of wheat, fell into the earth and died. Without that atoning death the glory had been His alone. But now what abundant "fruit"! They that are His are cleansed whiter than snow by His blood; they live of His life; they are children of God, and shall never perish. They are sealed by the Spirit. Through Christ they have the entry by one Spirit unto the Father; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.

The Greeks, like all Gentiles indeed, were apart from Christ, having no hope, and godless in the world; and it would soon be proved that the Jews, notwithstanding their great privileges, were no better but guiltier and therefore worse: all alike children of wrath. Neither living grace nor almighty power in Jesus could meet the desperate need. Nothing short of atoning death could avail. Without death He

abode alone; but dying He bears much fruit in resurrection. And how scripture teems with testimony to this truth!

Oh, is it not a great thing to be part of His much fruit"? How blind, wretched, and sinful, to despise Him Who alone makes it good? What must it be to wake up to the awful evil of unbelief, when it is irretrievable?