

The Purpose of God for His Sons and Heirs

Eph. 1: 3-7.

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The Old Testament makes it clear that God, even in His aspect of Jehovah, the God of Israel, never limited Himself to Israel. He made them His particular people. He made known His name, His will for a people on earth to Israel only. He abounded in every kind of privilege that could be to a people in the flesh. Israel as naturally, were the chosen people who belonged to Him here below. They were objects of favour and goodness and mercy in a way that no other nation received, except the people in the land of Palestine.

But even before that, God had His blessed intention to set up a kingdom that would in no way be confined to Israel. This we find explicitly from the Gospel of Matthew in the last section of the great prophecy on the Mount of Olives; at the end of this age will be the accomplishment of these last words. Not only will the godly remnant be formed out of the Jews as in Matt. 24 down to ver. 44, and the heavenly saints, or the Christian company, which forms the central part from ver. 45 to Matt. 25: 30, but lastly there will be the future sheep, or living believers, of all the nations, brought into marked blessing and favour. The King bids them, not reign with Him like the heavenly saints, but "inherit the kingdom prepared for" them "from the foundation of the world." It is well to have this clearly, as a preliminary principle. Had we only this single prophecy, it is a plain proof that others are to be blessed, in their several places on earth under the reign of the Lord Jesus, whilst the risen saints reign over it with Him. It is a mere delusion that to the church belongs every elect soul from the beginning to the end, and that God has not varied companies, both for heaven and for earth, destined to be objects of His grace for His glory.

Far from me to deny that there is on earth now, the church, Christ's body, gathered out of Jews and Gentiles, wherein all earthly distinctions disappear. But those Gentile sheep at the consummation of the age are not the church. Scripture proves that God is so full of goodness toward man that He means to bless Israel after all their long unbelief and manifold iniquity; and that He will send the gospel of the kingdom among all the nations for a blessing to many before the end comes. The church will be glorified on high. Remnants from both Israel and the nations are about to be blessed on the earth in that day. The sheep of Matt. 25: 32 are by no means all the sheep of God.

The popular divinity, if you believe it, says that there is nothing else but these sheep, and that they compose His church. Why? Because the church is assumed to be the one and only object of divine grace throughout all time. They have got their ideas out of tradition, following not the scriptures, but men no wiser than themselves. Do you ask if we pretend to any wisdom of our own? God forbid. What we confess is that God is true; and what we do is to be subject simply and solely to the word of God. Is it not the only right way?

The fact is, there will be, if we heed scripture, different companies of the blessed in heaven, as well as on the earth. It is mere traditional prejudice to conceive a single multitudinous throng. On the contrary there will be marked varieties both above and below, blessed with or by Christ. Nor can we know the glorious future for heaven and earth, but by the word of God, which is the one authority for all truth, past, present, or future. In the verses with which the Epistle to the Ephesians opens, we have a wondrous unfolding of divine grace at its very highest, and coming down to the lowest possible. The time too made it all the more striking, though eminently suitable as it must be for such a disclosure. Not a word had been divulged about it in the Old Testament as we are distinctly told in a subsequent part of

this Epistle. It was a secret kept hid in God from all previous ages and generations. Indeed it would then have been quite incompatible, whether in the earlier generation, or after the law was given to Israel by Moses.

When was it that God chose to bring out this, the highest, the deepest, and the most wonderful of His purposes? It was when Jew and Gentile, the world, had united in greater sin than it had ever before committed. Need one tell you what that awful sin was? Too well — alas! too little, men know it. To your souls that believe, it has been brought home by the Holy Spirit of God. That tremendous sin is the rejection, even to the cross, of the Lord Jesus. Yet such is His unbounded grace that the otherwise hopeless sin can be forgiven though it be the hating of the Father and of the Son without a cause (John 15: 22-25). The worst of man, and the best of God, never came clearly out till the crucifixion of the Saviour. The cross of the Lord Jesus was morally the end of probation. The whole of the Old Testament had been given long before that; people who alone were familiar with Law, Psalms and Prophets were indifferent learners of the New Testament. They liked the Old better. They said the old wine was good; and they stuck to it, as the Lord told them when their refusal of Himself came out more and more. It was very fate when the Epistle to the Hebrews was written to set those of them who believed on their proper ground intelligently. They had been but partially on Christian ground, pretty much as most professing Christians are now. They had only vague notions about the gospel, Christian walk, worship, and hope. All was indistinct, not to say incorrect; and that is the state not only of Christendom, but of the children of God in it. Believers from among the Jews ought to have been teachers when Paul wrote to them his great Epistle. They had to learn better the very elements, "the word of the beginning of Christ." They had not arrived at "perfection" or full growth, the due and definite truth of Christianity. There was not only a shortcoming, but a veritable muddle in their minds; consequently their conduct as Christians was mixed and vacillating.

Among those who are upright, how much depends upon their real hold of what scripture actually teaches! The Christian Hebrews feebly understood anything distinctive. Without denying that Christ died, rose, and went to heaven, the great truths that came out consequently were not developed as they should be, so characteristically different from what the Old Testament led people to expect. With Christ confessed they looked for everything grand, honoured, prosperous, and delightful here below. But how did the cross of Christ and His going away to heaven consist with the expectation of Israel being now at the head of the nations and in the enjoyment of earthly glory? Even believers had that idea still. You will recollect that when the risen Lord was about to go to heaven from the Mount of Olives, they asked, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" They had little idea of the thorough break with Israel; still less that God was bringing in a wholly distinct purpose, and associations new and heavenly. This is what we find very fully in the Epistle to the Ephesians and elsewhere: an absolutely fresh revelation. The believers in Jerusalem were slow to learn. Nor does the Epistle to the Hebrews rise to the mystery concerning Christ and concerning the church. Even the heavenly calling therein treated was imperfectly known. Yet it was written late, though somewhat before the destruction of Jerusalem. It speaks of Mosaic covenant, ritual, system, tabernacle, altar, priest and offering, superseded by what was far better, earthly shadows by the heavenly realities. This was strange not only to the unbelieving Jews but to the Christian remnant. They thought that the old forms were rather to be filled with new power, and that grace would be given to make them living. They had not realised that the old divine service must pass away, and be succeeded by entirely heavenly things in accordance with Christ seated at the right hand of God on high. He is the truth, and must be brought not only into the heart by faith as He is now exalted, but wrought into the worship of God and into the practice of men that believe as a living reality here and now.

To this and nothing less is the Christian called. He is, and ought to know from God through Christ, that he is a heavenly man, while here on earth. He has to act out this association with Christ above whilst he lives here below. The consequence is that the Christian seems, if faithful, the greatest fool going. That is what the world thinks of out and out fidelity to Christ. They can understand a Papist or a Protestant, an Anglican, a Presbyterian, a Methodist, a Baptist or the like. If you are ever so inconsistent with Christ, it may be excellent in men's eyes. Accordingly they scourged, imprisoned, stoned and slew the faithful witnesses of Christ; and Rome at length tortured them in every cruel way to kill, or cure them of the truth, which seemed to them nothing but the most chimerical ideas. Do the children of God feel how far they have slipped away? It is to recall them to a better grasp of Christianity that I am speaking to you to-night. It were not much to talk about what you know well enough yourselves. My duty is to show in my measure some things you are but little acquainted with. Think me not proud or pretentious if I thus speak and earnestly urge. God forbid! He that would be true to Christ's name and word, and true to the church of God of which he is a member, ought assuredly and with all his heart to speak of the fruit of Christ in heaven brought by the Spirit to men on earth; for, if we believe it, we are called to speak it and by grace to live it. What indeed is the good of truth if you do not humbly seek to carry it out? Better not to hear and know it, than to have on your lips what condemns all your life and your worship.

The truth now made known in the N.T. would not have been understood by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, nor by Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel. None of them could have so much as guessed what is now revealed. It all hangs upon Christ come down in reconciling love, yet utterly rejected not merely by the Gentile world but by the Jew most of all. Him God has received up into heavenly glory, and by the Spirit associates us with Himself there and now. Of Him and this, we are called to bear witness, in our walk, service, and worship. We care not to confess it boldly, if we shirk it practically; it is only our greater condemnation. Assuredly this is as true as it is solemn.

I cannot but believe God raised up brethren to recall themselves and their fellows to these truths in all their necessary consequences practically; it is also my sad conviction that some lifted up with pride have brought these very truths into all kinds of confusion. Does any such reaction disprove the truth? Not for a moment. It proves how easily grace may be divorced from truth which then degenerates into knowledge that puffs up. The truth never got really into their heart, for one does not suppose they depart from what they know to be true. When grace does not direct and strengthen, it becomes a great danger for every one of us of losing whatever truth we have. All really turns upon Christ, and Christ now in heaven, who also brings out the now revealed character of God. For He does now assume a new character according to the position of Christ who died and rose. When Christ receives the earth, He takes up the Jewish people, and all the nations; and Jehovah shall be king over all the earth, one Jehovah and His name one. God will act in accordance with it in power and majesty. For the world-kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ shall then have come, and He shall reign for ever and ever (Rev. 11: 15). The Spirit of God will make effectual what is then in hand, as He always does. "Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

In past history who can recall a single thing in which the Gentiles and the Jews agreed except to crucify the Lord Jesus? Otherwise they hated each other with mortal enmity. Yet they joined for once to cast the Lord out of the earth as unfit to live. Nevertheless the Lord is gone up into supreme glory on high, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come. And all things being made subject, He is given as Head over all things to the church, which is His body — He that stooped to all ignominy in the cross. We cannot be Christians in faith without both. To Him in all depths we go as lost sinners to be saved;

and when we have redemption through His blood, we that were far off are brought nigh, in the closest association with Christ at the right hand of God.

Is it not a strange and humbling and prevalent fact that so few Christians should understand their own Christianity? Yet it is true that there are many brethren in the Lord who know more about the Jews than they do about their own Christianity. Pay close heed to this, lest it be your own case. It is always the truth most important for us which the devil tries to hide away from us, and turn us bitterly from. Nor is it only the bad things that he perverts, to hinder our blessing. For many true believers are kept back because they refuse to look for more than the forgiveness of their sins through the gospel. Now therein is God's righteousness revealed by and to faith; therein the sinner owns the riches of God's grace to his soul: but to stop there is altogether unworthy. And so many saints of God fall into this snare at the present moment, that it is well to see to it that we ourselves escape it. What is the good of occupying ourselves with what does not promote God's glory? Let us seek in all integrity to judge ourselves. Let us zealously seek to be taught of God. Let our eyes be fixed on the Lord that we may be filled with fervour of spirit, and purpose of heart, simple and thorough going. The question for our faith and practice is the attitude that God assumes toward us, and our relation to Him while Christ is above on His own right hand. How is the answer to this great truth to be carried out on the earth in the heart and ways of those who believe? Must it not be through faith working by love?

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us." It was His God and Father that raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, and gave Him glory, that our faith and hope should be in God — His Father and our Father, His God and our God. As in the rest of the N.T. it is not the God of Abraham, etc.; but here "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is no longer the revelation of the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; you naturally become more or less of a Jew in this case; and your heart cannot then rise higher than the promises made to the fathers. Hence so many believers now, like the Puritans in former days, talk of grasping the promises. This is to ignore and lower the privileges of the gospel and of the church. It loses sight of Christ in heavenly glory after redemption. Every Christian ought to appreciate the difference. At any rate, the foundation of Christianity is that the most wondrous of all promises is already accomplished. It is no longer the righteousness of God as near to come, or His salvation to be revealed (Isa. 56: 1), but His righteousness is come, and His salvation is revealed. This supposes the Lord Himself come, and His work done for our sins, with an entirely new state of things. And this is the new creation in Christ which each believer gets by grace in the gospel. Therein is revealed the righteousness of God, and thereby salvation is no longer a hope, save for the body, but a reality now also brought into the soul. This reminds me of a text much misunderstood in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 11: 14). Cornelius in Caesarea was to send for Peter at Joppa, who should tell him words whereby he and all his house should be "saved." It was not merely, nor at all, words by which he should be "converted." Cornelius already was as much converted as you. He was as truly born again as anyone in Jerusalem. The chapter before describes him as devout and God-fearing, as a man that gave much alms, and praying to God always. Well for you and me to be in these respects, his match, if not his superiors. It is a total error to regard Cornelius then as a self-righteous person. This is the effect of ordinary Evangelicalism, Calvinistic no less than Arminian; because they alike confound conversion with the soul's salvation. It is theology, not the gospel. The N.T. makes the difference known.

The words of Peter were to tell how they were to be "saved," which goes far beyond conversion, and is the actual privilege of the gospel through redemption. Ignorance of this leads preachers to pervert the force of this scripture, and of the truth in question. It destroys for converted souls in our day what grace was giving Cornelius to learn through the apostle then. Cornelius, like the O.T. saints, was

already born of God. He was, as we are told in Acts 10: 37, not at all ignorant of the word published throughout all Judea, and sent to the children of Israel. What he wanted to learn authoritatively was that God intended the same word of His grace to himself a Gentile and others like him, in all the freeness and the fulness of the gospel. He did not dare to take it without divine sanction. He saw it clearly enough for Israel whom he honoured as the old and chosen people of God. He believed that Messiah had come for their blessing; but *he* was not one of God's people Israel. He needed to have the assurance for a poor Gentile. For soul-salvation means the knowledge of being saved now. When people do not know this as their present portion, they are in substance like Cornelius. They too need to hear words whereby they shall be saved. It is really to be brought personally into "the word of truth, the gospel of" their "salvation." Many converted persons do not know on the word of God, that all is clear between themselves and God, now and for ever. This is soul-salvation. It is not only that a good many of our Methodist friends need to be saved in that way. Their system allows them but a scanty salvation, because they think it depends so much on themselves from day to day. Consequently if ever so happy today, they dread losing it tomorrow. This is not the salvation of God, but rather of man, or more particularly of John Wesley; who nevertheless did believe on Christ, and had the blessing far beyond his own scheme. For who can doubt that John Wesley is with the Lord, a blessed man as he really was, with short and imperfect views of salvation. I hope no Methodists here will be offended. Why should they be, because they are told plainly the truth? It is not mine, save that I believe it, but what God reveals in His word. It may soften matters, but is a sorry comfort, that we are all liable to mistake. Brethren, so called, are just as liable as others, especially if high-minded. Nothing keeps them or any others but God's word and Spirit. Thank God, in His rich grace, we Christians have both; and therefore should we be glad to prove more and more how perfect the blessedness is for our souls and to His glory.

The relation He gives us is not only beyond all that had ever been known, but the highest and nearest that could be given. For what could equal Himself as the Lord knew Him, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? The Lord said the same. So on this resurrection day the Lord gave the message to Mary of Magdala, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and my God and your God." There is the revelation of the divine Name according to this knowledge, and the relation that His own beloved Son enjoyed. There is necessarily the difference, that God was the Father of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, in a way ineffable and inscrutable, because of Godhead where He could not but be the eternal Father of His eternal Son. If people do not like the word eternal in this connection, so much the worse for them; for doubt here is peculiarly dangerous. If the Word was not the eternal Son, He is not God. You cannot bring time into the Godhead, because its nature being essentially eternal, what is not so can have no subsistence in Godhead. The Word became flesh, the man Christ Jesus, inasmuch as He was born of the Virgin Mary; He was truly man in virtue of His mother, yet in no way to the loss of His divine nature. Yet the Son, the Word, was God; and when born of woman, the Holy thing born was still the Son of God. He took nature into His person, but was still eternal as God. Before Abraham came into being (if we render it in its full force), "I AM." There never was a beginning to that "I AM." Going back before the world's foundation, He could then say as He said to the Jews, "I AM." The eternity of His divine being could not be more distinctly expressed than in "I AM." It is granted that you cannot prove it by reason; because man argues according to his reason from his own experience. It is legitimate enough to reason from yourself in what is subject to man's sense or mind; but to reason from yourself about God is presumptuous folly. How then are we to learn divine things? We learn by receiving what He says in His word. How else could we learn the truth about Himself or His Son? But also as to what grace gives the believer, the new place was taken by God the Father when Christ accomplished redemption for the soul though not

yet for the body. Both Jew and Gentile had done their worst work when God did His best work.

The meeting place of man was at the cross of Christ; which was the immutable basis for God. There was this foundation for His judgment of our sins and for uniting the otherwise irreconcilable. Thence was the new and everlasting building to rise, God's habitation in the Spirit even now, to grow into a holy temple in the Lord; the church of God, to be the bride of Christ through all eternity. But it is remarkable that the apostle in unfolding this great mystery in the two Epistles devoted to this end carefully begins with the individual soul. When any learn of the church before they learn themselves they invariably make a very bad use of it. Does the Romanist say, "I believe what the Church believes?" Alas, my friend, you believe nothing as you ought. This is no genuine, no acceptable belief. It is merely believing what other men say. The true ground of faith is believing what God says. To be right before Him I must individually come out of my own thoughts or yours to what God says. You and I must begin with this; and what does God say to us at the start? He says that I am dead in sins, an utterly lost sinner. In Christendom they furnish the babe with an ordinance for giving life. Not in Christ by the hearing of faith is one quickened, but in the christening of one as duly ordained! The Eucharist sustains or renews it! Both are portentous and pernicious lies of Babylon. Baptism is to Christ's death and never gave life since the church began. The Lord's Supper is the memorial of Christ's love unto death, and the symbol of His one body to the many members. Baptism is individual confession of His death, as the Lord's Supper expresses the communion of His body and blood. This makes all the difference possible. Christ died because all were dead; and this the believer owns to his life and salvation. He came down as the sacrifice to God for me by His death, and brings me not only life eternal, but propitiation for my sins. Christ is the only life and salvation for the sinner who believes. Baptism and the Eucharist are His institutions, the one individual, the other corporate, but simply signs, however precious for His sake, and holy, which it would be sinful and even rebellious to refuse.

I once knew a Jewish Rabbi who could not understand English any more than a Greek monk, but both able to understand French. So we had a little meeting for them and others to read the Epistle to the Hebrews. The monk was already converted; and the Rabbi confessed at length that Jesus was the Son of God. He was told of course to get baptised. But from this he shrank, saying, "If I were baptised, I should be counted a dead man." He was told that this was exactly what the Lord meant by it, namely, passing out of the scene of death into the blessedness of the Christian salvation. If I meet God without Christ, it can only be ripening for hell fire; but if I receive Christ from God, He is life and quickens me. That is why He says nothing at first about union; it is God's purpose about us individually. Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who not only honoured Him, but blessed us with every spiritual blessing. The Jews had every sort of carnal blessings. Our blessing is distinctively of a spiritual nature, not on earth, but in heavenly places where Christ is. The meaning of this should not be dubious.

Of course as to the body we are all on the earth; but now that I am in Christ, I belong to the heavenly land. The Christian is no longer of this or that country. Heaven is meant to supersede his old boast in England, or Ireland, or Scotland, or anywhere else here below. To be "in Christ" is meant to take him out of earthly places. I know some friends who are still so enamoured of Devonshire (Where this address was given, in Exeter.) that it spells danger to talk of anything that reflects ever so little on the things or the men of Devonshire. What is Devonshire compared with the heavenly places? What is any other country here below? The Lord takes all the vanity or pride out of us for our native land by giving us an incomparably better. To the child playing with poisonous fruit the mother says wisely, "Here is an orange, dear, much better than those berries." The child gladly drops the danger and grasps the orange. O that we may be won in heart to heavenly things! He blessed us "with every spiritual

blessing"; and not only the best blessings, but in the highest or "heavenly places"; and also "in Christ," the best possible security. We have then, the highest blessing; His purpose follows in vers. 4-6; and then in ver. 7 the redemption in Christ "through His blood, the forgiveness of trespasses," — for the soul, not yet for the body. God confounded the worst wickedness of man by bringing out His secret and best blessing to the glory of His grace, when Satan succeeded in drawing all mankind in principle to their united and worst daring rebellion against Himself and His Son. Is not this grace God's grace beyond mistake? Who need despair, if he bow in faith to such a God — the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? Be not dull of hearing, nor hard of heart, like the Jews. You have not the danger or excuse which they had. They as a people had promises beyond all others. They sprang from Abraham the friend of God. They had a religion and city laid down by Him who was their God. The Messiah came of their stock supernaturally, long after the manifestation of divine glory was forced to depart. Was it not very hard for a nation thus favoured to forget such favours and own their need of grace, like sinners of the Gentiles? Compared with such antecedents as Israel possessed, what are we? Our ancestors ran about in the wilds and woods with stains of blue on their bodies instead of clothes, and burnt their children in order to appease their demon gods. It is easy enough to understand how the Jews in unbelief, proud and stiff-necked, resisted the truth which pronounced them children of wrath like others.

But at a time of utter evil it suited God to divulge the secret of His purpose. From before the foundation of the world He chose us Christians, in Christ, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love. He would surround Himself above with beings like Himself: holy in nature, blameless in ways; and love, their animating principle as it is His own. Such we shall be when His purpose takes full effect. We are sadly short now, yet is it verified in principle as to His elect. But God's purpose cannot fail; and Christ will make every word good when He comes to receive us to Himself and like Himself for the Father's house. Not as though we had already attained, or were already perfect; but we follow after; and God's purpose shall surely be fulfilled then. He that knows what the Christian is destined to, judges any present measure in the Christian race and knows that he will have a more humbling yet blessed account to give the Lord in glory than any one's experience in a Methodist class meeting. Those who have entered more deeply into God's mind in His word are better aware what our manifestation to Him will prove. The faith of it has already brought down their high thoughts and imaginations, and shown us how weak and unworthy we are as saints, that no flesh should glory in His presence; and "that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

But God will surround Himself, not merely in heaven, but in its nearest circle of His own, with those capable of holding communion with Him about everything that concerns His nature, counsels, and ways. Can anything be more wonderful than the place He designs for Christians? We ought to be therefore in course of spiritual education for it now; but till we are like Christ at His coming, none can have yet arrived as a matter of fact at the fulfilled purpose of God. But then we shall be absolutely holy before God, and not a single thing to blame in us, according to the working whereby Christ is able to subdue all things to Himself. Instead of vanity or pride, there will be love that delights in God and His goodness without alloy. Even now are our hearts won to all this by divine grace, in partaking of a divine nature; but we justly feel how poor is our manifestation of it now, and how comforting is the purpose, that every son of God will be absolutely thus according to God's nature. So it is to be according to the fourth verse.

The fifth verse takes up another side of the truth. Predestination is not quite the same thing as election, and here we have the Scripture account of it. We do well to stand clear of human exaggeration here. Election is to fitness for His presence in a nature like His own. Predestination is to a relationship,

as like as possible to His Son's. But scripture carefully excludes any such human inference as God's predestination to hell fire. It is clearly revealed that such must be the unending end of the wicked. When the everlasting judgment comes, and they are judged, each according to their works, the book of life has none of their names written there, and they are cast into the lake of fire. But there is no predestinating decree of God in the case. Their own sins fitted those vessels of wrath to destruction.

Notice that pious and learned men have made the mistake of confounding "son" and "child" in the Scriptures. But they, however closely connected, are not the same thing. To identify them is really to take no small liberty with the word of truth. Not that one means to deny that the child of God may be also called a son of God; but the N.T. shows plainly that the two words express different things. It is the apostle John that particularly dwells on our being "children" of God. Why? Because we are born into the family of God. Born of the Spirit, we are thereby children of God, children of His family. "Sons" is wrong in the A.V. of John 1: 12 and of 1 John 3: 1, 2. Beyond question it should be "children" as in 1 John 3: 10, and 1 John 5: 2. But when it is a question of being "sons", it is predestination that puts us into this place of relation. This was overlooked in the A.V. of Gal. 3: 26, which should be, not "children," but, "sons," as in Gal. 4: 5-7. And so it should be in Eph. 1: 5, where the word requires the adoption of "sons," not "children." There is never the adoption of children, but of sons. One must be by new birth a "child" of God. But God also predestined to adopt the Christian into the position of a "son" by Christ Jesus to Himself. All the Old Testament saints were "children," as we who now believe are also. But they were not the adopted "sons," as we may read in the argument that opens Gal. 4. On the other hand, we are all His sons now, whether Jew or Greek, and receive the Spirit of His Son. Every Christian is brought into that place of sonship. It is one of the new privileges of the gospel. The King and Queen do not consider the highest nobles in the land to be in any such dignity. They may by courtesy be their trusty cousins; but they are not their sons. We Christians are adopted into the place of sons, and have the Spirit of God's Son sent into our hearts, crying Abba, Father. How wondrous, yet true! We are sons of an infinitely greater personage than the king, or any other that ever was on the earth. Such is the Christian by faith in Christ Jesus. It is not spiritual necessity as in ver. 4, but "according to the good pleasure of His will." God might have predestined to a much lower place; He was pleased to give us, for His own delight, the highest possible for a creature, "to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He made us objects of favour (far beyond the one act of "acceptance") in the Beloved." This explains all. Thus only could we be thus blessed (ver. 6), whether in new nature or new relationship.

Yet the apostle comes down in ver. 7 to our need even in communicating this roll of privilege: — "In whom (Christ) we have (a present thing) redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of trespasses." This is indispensable for the soul now. Otherwise we should be burdened and wretched, and unfit for the gracious working of the Spirit, or the enjoyment of Christ, or communion with God.

THE PURPOSE OF GOD IN THE INHERITANCE

vers. 8-12

The earlier verses presented to us God's purpose about His sons, His heirs. This, I need scarce say, is the highest of all; for therein we are viewed as perfectly brought into communion with His mind. This goes far beyond the inheritance, and we are before Himself. The inheritance is what we are set above in His grace. But the purpose of God about His sons directly concerns us in the nearest way, because it concerns Himself too. As men He has given us a soul and spirit by which we are distinguished, yet thoroughly responsible to Him. But as His sons we have now a new blessedness and

a new responsibility. The old responsibility, we know too well, ended in total ruin. Man fell, and this practically led to, and means, every evil in nature and ways, because all is involved in sin, and flows from it. But now in grace He has taken us entirely out of ourselves (so to speak) as sons of Adam, and set us in Christ. God found none in heaven, still less in any other part of the universe, comparable with His Son the Lord Jesus. On the contrary, Satan led the world to the rejection and slaying of Christ; as the setting up of the antichrist will be his worst work at the end of the age. Impossible to conceive anything so evil, hateful, and rebellious as the antichrist. Even now are there many antichrists that prepare the way, who are all the worse because they once confessed His name. Of course, as the apostle says "they were not of us": had they been, "they would have continued with us." Their departure proved that none had part or lot with Christ. They abandoned their natural place in professing His name, and they became His greatest enemies, in direct antagonism to the One that God delights to honour, and loves supremely.

Already are believers given to know that they are set in Christ, associated in this ineffable way with Him to whom we belong. We may, however, be in the presence of God in spirit now. By and by we are to be there, in the very likeness of Christ, according to whose glory we are now called in every way by God. First, the heirs are brought out very distinctly; next, comes the inheritance. God, as to the heirs, had that purpose before the foundation of the world. But He purposed the inheritance also. It was not an afterthought. It was not after the ruin, but before the creation. It was immeasurably in eternity. Quite different was the call of Abraham. His was merely in time, but the call of the Christian was before time began. The very first purpose that God formed in His own eternal mind was to surround himself with beings of a totally different destiny from those that were to follow; beings that could know Himself, and appreciate grace and truth; beings that needed it all, but at the same time whom He needed in order to gratify His own love and share with them His thoughts and affections. And a wondrous fact too is, that He would have them to enter into that purpose of His now by faith. They were His secrets before redemption, but are here revealed in due time. It is what the apostle is now occupying us with in this Epistle.

It is observable in ver. 8 that His grace abounded toward us in all wisdom and intelligence, that such a communion should not be in vain. We do not hear about His rich supply in the earlier verses. There it is rather to tell us that we should be holy and blameless in love. But He would have us understand the inheritance, immense as it will be. Before, it was the imparting of a divine nature, as 2 Peter 1 calls it, an answer to His own in holiness and blamelessness and love; for what else was suited to His presence? Not only so; but the new relationship must be just as fully in accordance with Christ. Nothing would satisfy His love but that which was after His pattern. The Son, the Only Begotten, was God, and of course therefore eternal. These were necessarily creatures, taken out of all ordinary conditions, but put into the immediately nearest relationship that God could vouchsafe. It was an adoption, a sonship through Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will. Assuredly, it concerns every true Christian to know what his new nature and relationship are. God forbid we should ever neglect or forget these things. Can anything make one feel more deeply that all is ruin at the present time and how deeply we are fallen from our true estate? It is not meant that the purpose of God can be frustrated in the end; but where, among those that bear the Lord's name, can be found any adequate approach to what is here revealed to the saints? The rarest thing to find in Christendom is any answer to the description God gives of the Christian. Is it not so? What can we say to such a fact? At best we are only learning what it is.

So again this future and immense inheritance is so illimitable as to embrace all heavenly and earthly creation, all that is to be put under Christ and consequently under those who are united to

Christ. Do Christians realise that they are to share it all with Him? Hence the form His grace takes in view of the glory of Christ. He would have us capacitated to apprehend it in all wisdom and intelligence. This last word is in the A. and the R. Versions called "prudence," an excellent thing in practical things. But in the present case it is a very insufficient word. What has prudence to do for understanding Christ's future glory. Clearly it stands here for "intelligence." God would have us even now acquaint ourselves with this purpose also. We need to know our personal blessing first; but next, what we shall share with Christ when He takes the inheritance of all things. Spiritual understanding is requisite but is also abundantly given for this express purpose.

We may be helped in this if we look at the first Adam. When God made the first man and put him into the brightest part of the earth, or paradise as it is called, everything was "very good" (Gen. 1); but the very best were collected by Jehovah Elohim in His power for the head of mankind. So He planted the garden for Adam with special provision, not for every use only, but for delight and enjoyment also. And as Adam was constituted the lord of the lower creation here on earth, he was enabled in God's goodness, through the wisdom and intelligence conferred upon him, to give the proper names to all cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field; for all these were subjected to him. This is the more important, because it is the appropriate sign of the dominion given him. In Adam there was no question of sin. Adam herein assumed nothing in pride: it was the Lord God that brought to him the animals to see what he would call them; and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, it had His sanction. As master by divine appointment, the right or title was recognised, as he had the wisdom and intelligence for that function. Divine goodness had pleasure in it.

It is of the more interest to remark this, because, as we generally know, men of speculative mind have dared to question that man was thus endowed from the first. But philosophers deny everything of divine grace and power. They assume that Adam, if he ever existed, was a kind of barbarian. They lack faith and its discernment to enter into the real difference of Gen. 1 and 2, being carried away by the nonsense of the Astruc guess growing into the pretentious theories of German sceptics. In Gen. 2 is the relationship of the creature, and, in particular, man's responsibility founded on the place in which God was pleased to put him. So Adam gave these names, and God recognised them. Very far greater are the things God has done in Christ for us.

A fair and beautiful scene it was with every creature in it that God subjected to Adam. But what is that compared with the whole universe of God, and every creature above and below, after all the ruin, gathered into united blessedness under Christ's headship, and ourselves associated with Christ in that place of honour over all things? God therefore caused grace to abound toward us "in all wisdom and intelligence" that we might be capable even now of entering with spiritual understanding into a scene so boundless.

Even real Christians count it wisdom and prudence to disclaim all definite thought about the future glory. And no wonder. For the mixture of law and gospel destroys the right use of both, and reduces revealed truth to uncertainty. To souls in this state these purposes of God are, and must be, unknown. They need to receive previously the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation. Were they at home in God's grace and truth, even in that respect, they would yearn after more, and the Spirit would lead them into all the truth, and show them things to come for Christ's glory. Surely God looks for this, that we should understand the grace He has lavished on us. Here He has made known "the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself for the administration of the fulness of the times" or, seasons (vers. 9-10). The importance of the word "mystery" is that it means, not something unintelligible as in vulgar usage, but, a secret that was never revealed in the Old Testament. Mysteries are entirely peculiar to what is called the New Testament, wherein they are made

known from the Gospel of Matthew to the Revelation of John.

Hence the purpose of God about us, or about the inheritance, was nowhere revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is well to recall the last verse of Deut. 29, "The secret things belong to Jehovah our God, but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." Now, God is pleased to reveal what He then reserved to Himself. The time was fully come; and these purposes of His are some of His great secrets. You will find for that reason that the Lord speaks about the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. In the Old Testament that kingdom was revealed, but not the mysteries of which the Lord spoke in Matt. 13, which turned on His rejection by the Jews, which forms the theme of Matt. 11 and Matt. 12 especially. Thereon follows the peculiar aspect of the kingdom of the heavens when the Rejected of men would go on high; and there it is that we know Him now by faith. The kingdom of the heavens assumed this new form when Christ took His seat on the Father's throne. And we may note that when He rose from the dead and was glorified, then more and more the disciples were brought into the understanding of the mysteries of God; and of those mysteries the apostle Paul was an eminent steward, as John also was.

All these were entirely outside the Old Testament; but they could be understood like other truths when revealed. For this we need, and we have, the Holy Spirit given to us. None of them could have been anticipated; but now that God has revealed them, they are for us to search into by the Spirit.

Here it is first the truth as to the Christian; then we begin to hear it as to the church, each in due time. All is revealed in view of the new creation that God was bringing in. It is far beyond the kingdom of the heavens in ever so new a way. The church of God is explained which had never been revealed, but kept hid in God. The mystery hid from ages and generations was now revealed to the holy apostles, and by Paul. The new building, the church of God, rests upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. It is not said, nor is it true, upon the prophets and the apostles. Great care is taken to put the apostles before the prophets as both of the N.T., and a common class for this work of God, when Israel was finally set aside for the present. Their writings are an entirely new volume; and in order to make it plain and certain, they were written in a different language, in Greek, as those who compose the church were to be chiefly from among the Gentiles.

God made known this mystery of His will according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself; and, to render it effectual, conferred the needed wisdom of understanding. It is therefore now no longer a secret. His purpose is for administration of the fulness of the seasons, to gather together (or head up) the universe in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth (ver. 10).

This is a wholly different thing from gathering together into one the scattered children of God for which He died (John 11: 52). The latter is the unity which He asked of His Father in John 17: 20-23. The former is not yet begun till He appears in glory and delivers the whole creation. The heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ must be revealed before the inheritance can be set free; and its earnest expectation awaits the revelation of the sons of God. For we know that though grace has already freed the heirs, their mortal bodies are not yet changed into the likeness of His glorious body, and that till they appear with Him in glory, all the creation groans together till now.

Hardly a phrase in scripture seems less understood than Eph. 1: 10. Though this is not the fit occasion to lay bare the strange variety of opinions — learned and unlearned — the fact is as certain as inexcusable. The language of the apostle is plain, save that the word for summing, or heading up, rises necessarily to a sense never thought of among heathens, but given its fullest and highest force in this apostolic revelation: an immense elevation shared with other Greek words in N.T. usage. The question here is not what men conceive who do not adequately weigh both the word and the context; but what

these both fairly compel us to accept as the mind of God here conveyed.

Most have been misled by the supposed analogy of Gal. 4: 4. But the phraseology is as different as the time and circumstance and aim. "The fulness of time" now past, simply means the time fulfilled for God's sending His Son to redeem or buy out from under the law to the adoption of sons, and to impart the Holy Spirit. "The fulness of the seasons," still future, means the completion of those seasons when God instituted dealings of varied character: human government from Noah's day; call to separation and promise given to Abraham; law from Sinai with other supplements, in Israel; world-power, on Israel's failure, in the four great empires; to say nothing of the fall of man and creation long before, and the gospel, last of all, consequent on redemption.

God has left all these to run their course, as testing human responsibility in so many ways. And it is unquestionable that none of them is ended, as all must be when the Lord of all comes in judgment of the quick: a judgment practically forgotten in Christendom, though the creeds, so little heeded or even understood, testify to it. There will be seen in all solemnity the total failure of man, in all these respects; but most flagrantly in that the world, Jew and Gentile, rulers and people, crucified the Lord of glory. God will then call to account how men treated each of these institutions which He established and man violated. Take government on the earth. It never was till after the deluge; and it continues still. Hence in the N.T. we read, "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and those that be are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment" — not "damnation" which is an execrable exaggeration, and blunder of translation as in Rom. 14: 23, 1 Cor. 11: 29, and in too many other passages that refer to temporal judgment only. The Christian is to be subject to the law, or, if God's truth be at stake, bear the consequences quietly. Yet not one word warrants the Christian to exercise civil authority: many scriptures call for his subjection to such authority, but never to exercise it. We are not of the world, as Christ is not. He declined even to arbitrate, and has set us an example that we should follow His steps. It is ours to obey God always, if not always man and then to suffer, not to rebel. We are sanctified by the Spirit to the obedience of Christ, to obey as He obeyed. What a help it is to a Christian to be content to walk as nothing at all in this world but in the spirit of obedience as the Lord ever did. Further, he can afford to respect others, and can do so freely, learning of Him who was meek and humble in heart. Especially does he need grace when it is a duty to find fault with another. Then have we most reason to be lowly, and vigilant. We have to watch against ourselves lest, by a hasty word or way, we should only make bad worse. But to return, God has not yet called the world to account for misgovernment. He surely will, as we may read in Ps. 82; and the One who will be invested with the administration is the Lord Jesus. But quite another dealing of His began with the first of "the fathers" (Rom. 9: 5, Rom. 11: 28) Abraham. It was the separating to God from idolatry which came in after the deluge and overspread even the line of Shem, as we read in Joshua 24.

Israel as a people then followed and undertook to keep His covenant. But what did Israel become at Sinai itself? and where are they now? Scattered to the winds of heaven. Where is a nation in the world so dispersed as Israel? Yet had they walked rightly, God would have made them stand unmoved as a mountain. In every way they totally failed. Take any detail of theirs, as, for instance, the priesthood. It was set up, as nowhere else. Aaron made the golden calf to please the people, and before consecration was complete, two were cut off, and the other two only spared by intercession.

Then, take the judges that God raised up in their distress. What failure even in the judges! What can one say of Samson? Even Samuel who shone among them, through his sons' fault lost the confidence of Israel, who would have a king like others. And how did Saul turn out? or even David, the man after God's heart? or Solomon, with his father, typifying the Lord, each in a different way? The

nation consequently broke up in Solomon's son, the proof of general sin, till each of the kingdoms in turn had to be swept out of the land by the just judgment of God.

Then came the Gentile world-powers. They were entrusted with universal empire. The head of gold, Babylon, soon set up an idol forced on all the nations at the penalty of death. Such was the first: what was to be the conduct of the last? It crucified the Lord Jesus; and on its rise again, will oppose the same Lord when He returns in power and glory. Man broke down in every one of the empires; but the last was to be the guiltiest of all.

Thus all these seasons will close when Christ comes in the clouds of heaven. The Lord will bring in an entirely new administration; in which, besides judging each of these broken trusts, He will establish them in His own person and power to the praise and glory of God. Everything in which man failed will be taken up by Him who never failed in His humiliation; nor will He in that day of manifested blessing and glory. He will not only stand Himself, but He will maintain a glorious kingdom over Israel, and empire over all nations and tongues. Then, on earth righteous men will live throughout a period of a thousand years. Of course one does not ask the doctors what they think about that. They, judging by present appearance, must regard such an expectation as mad. They are no worse than the divines, who deny miracle and prophecy, and are giving up genuine inspiration from Genesis to Revelation. These men of knowledge falsely so called know not the scriptures nor the power of God. Methuselah fell short of a millennium; whereas in the future, everyone on earth who is not rebellious against God, is to live the thousand years throughout. Believers will be transferred from the old earth to the new without passing through death. So it will be on earth when the seasons spoken of are fully out, and the time come for the Lord to take His world-kingdom (Rev. 11: 15). The future administration will be in His hands when the seasons of man's responsibility have come to nothing but utter sin and ruin. Then will all the universe, inclusive of the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth, be summed up under the headship of the Lord. It is not the eternal state, but the kingdom in its largest possible sense, when the Heir of all things takes and holds the inheritance to God's glory.

The heavens, as we too well know, are now severed from the earth; and the things on earth are in opposition, each to each; and confusion reigns through sin. Spiritual wickedness is still in the heavenly places; Satan is still the accuser before God, as he is the arch-deceiver of the whole inhabited earth. And what a field of self-will, vanity, pride, covetousness, lust, violence, falsehood, corruption, lying, unrighteousness, and ungodliness, is that of man here below.

Even in what is called Christendom, where is Christ all? Where is scripture only, and all, obeyed? Where has the Holy Spirit His due place individually and corporately? But the time hastens when the Lord will come in His kingdom, and the heavens and the earth be in perfect harmony; when everything in the heavens above and on the earth shall be subjected by divine power to Christ, gathered or headed up in Him as a universal and united system. All know too well that there is not the smallest approach to such a call as this now, nor has it ever been so. But in this day of the Lord that is to dawn, there will be unfailing righteousness, peace, and joy. In an exceptional case of rebellion, death will demand its victim. But it will not be the rule as now. It will be normal to live through the millennial day. But Christ will then have complete and universal sway manifestly. He will bear up the pillars, and chase away want and suffering. If the tiniest insect that flits in the sun's light, if a single blade of grass on which we tread, were not brought under the power of Christ's reconciliation and blessing, it would be a victory for the enemy over Him. But God's purpose will stand, not only for His heirs, but for the inheritance in all its vast extent and to the minutest detail. The reason is plain. As He created, He will restore, all things, though assuredly not all persons, for the mass live and die His implacable enemies. He died to reconcile all things to Himself. He is declared to be the Heir of all

things. Everything above, and everything below, the universe will be put under Christ. This is God's purpose, but not the fact as yet now. It is only God's counsel still, while the heirs are being called; it is not accomplished yet, but surely will be. The Lord is waiting for it. He is not reigning in any such sense as prophecy requires. Rejected by Jew and Gentile He is accepted on high, and He sits on the Father's throne above. There beyond doubt He is crowned with glory and honour, but He has not taken His great power to reign openly and put down every foe.

The Jews rejected Him as their King, and the Gentiles crucified Him. But God the Father raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory; and we are meanwhile being called, His friends, His brethren, and His joint-heirs. When the last one is called, the Father will give the word, and the Lord, after receiving them to Himself, will descend in flaming fire on all His foes and tread them down. After that He will inaugurate the reign of peace; and the spared, who submit, will be the willing subjects of the King of kings and Lord of lords. Every creature on the earth will share the blessing in peace; for the nations will learn war no more. Such will be the administration of the fulness of the seasons. What an absurdity to fancy that the time or state is yet come! "The whole creation groaneth together." Why does it groan? Because it is not under Christ, revealed in power and glory. It is travailing in pain together until now. Weakness, failure, and death are stamped upon every creature that has any kind of life. And things that have not life are habitually turned to a selfish purpose. Take gold and silver, precious stones, pearls, etc., what crimes do they not cause? Think of the pride and vanity and misery to which the lust after these things leads! There is a time coming when everything will join in a chorus of praise to the glory of the Lord Jesus. O what a righteous; holy and beneficent change. He will bring it about: nothing but His coming in power, who once came to suffer for sins, will avail. He who has preyed upon man ever since the fall in the garden of Eden, Satan, will be for a thousand years shut up. He will not be consigned to the lake of fire till after the millennium: but during the Lord's reign he is not allowed to deceive the nations. Now he is also the accuser of God's saints above. Now he does all possible mischief there and here. All that will cease during the millennium. Idolatry and evil in general will cease, righteousness will flourish during the reign of our Lord over the earth; and the new Jerusalem, metropolis of the universe, will be intimately connected with but above, the rejoicing earth. The Jews will be the head, not only of Israel saved by God's mercy, but, of all the nations. It does not matter what the anti-Semites say, Israel is kept of God for this blessed time — "the restitution of all things whereof God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets since time began." They will be the lowly and faithful servants of the Messiah in that day of gladness. But the Gentiles will also abandon their self-sufficiency and joyfully acknowledge their folly and God's goodness, and this glory of Jehovah will fill the earth as now the waters the bed of the sea. That is the unforced and explicit revelation of God. More than that, the very beasts of the earth will lay aside their fury that followed man's departure from God. Whatever may have existed before man, I speak only of the time since man was created. In contrast with the first man's fall, God means to honour the Second man. He is worthy to bring all creation, and the brutes as part of it, to the true centre in the power which subdues all things to Christ. How universal and profound the evil when man fell! Reconciliation of all things prepares for the transfer to the risen Man who is also True God as truly as is the Father, to Christ the one Head of all things in the heavens no less than of all things on the earth. Then will Christ have come forth publicly, with all His glorified saints following Him; then will He take up the dispensation of the fulness of the seasons, establishing all the divinely given institutions which had broken down in man's feeble and faulty hand. But the saints are carefully distinguished from the inheritance. If the inheritance be given to us, we are the heirs, not the inheritance; and so it is distinctly stated in ver. 11, "in whom [Christ] we were also allotted, foredetermined according to purpose of him that works all things according to the counsel of his own will." The heavenly Bridegroom shares His inheritance unreservedly with those

who are constituted His bride; just as Eve the earthly bride shared all that Adam her bridegroom possessed as the gift of the Lord God to him.

In Christ's case, it was not only in virtue of creating all (John 1: 3); another ground far more precious and unfailing was laid in His death. "Because all the fulness was pleased in him to dwell, and through him to reconcile all things unto him, having made peace through the blood of his cross — through him, whether the things on the earth, or the things in the heavens " (Col. 1: 19, 20). Here too the saints, the heirs, are beyond doubt discriminated, as in the counterpart Epistle, from the "all things," the inheritance, "You" He reconciled now, vers. 21, 22. Creation has to be reconciled by power as well as blood, and that will be when He is manifested in glory. But the saints already are reconciled, not by incarnation as is falsely held, but, in the body of His flesh through death.

The church is neither all things in the heavens, nor all things on the earth, still less both, which is a most egregious error, but believers out of both Jews and Gentiles, baptised by one Spirit into one body, Christ's body, from which all earthly distinction is blotted out. Impossible to fairly maintain the current traditional view, or to deny the truth, that the gathering of all the universe is the future stewardship for Christ's manifestation.

Christ's death is the ground for the saints now reconciled; but the reconciliation of the universe as a matter of fact awaits His appearing in power and glory. It is already applied to those who believe the gospel; and they are the heirs. But the deliverance of creation from the bondage of corruption will be into the liberty of the glory of the children of God (Rom. 8: 21), and cannot be before those already delivered by grace through faith are revealed to every eye as His sons in glory. What is here said, is but a simple reflection of God's word. It declares with all plainness of speech that the heirs are reconciled; as the inheritance will be, at Christ's manifestation. The heirs are those reconciled through the blood of Christ, as all creation will be. But they believe the gospel of grace; with which the rest of creation, animate or inanimate has nothing to do. But they will answer fully to the revelation of Christ's power and glory. We must never confound the Christian's portion with Israel's. The chosen people were Jehovah's especial inheritance. We are united to Christ by the Spirit, not in any sense His inheritance, but heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. If Christ is to have all things above and below we too by grace shall share all things.

Let us consider seriously a purpose so immense. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus was pleased so to purpose, and also to reveal it clearly to the faithful in Christ Jesus. Was it not to exercise a direct and intimate bearing on our souls? to lift our hearts to Christ in the heavenly places, as united to Him who is there, for entirely like glory with Him? It is not only the bad things of the flesh and the world that present danger, the best things are perverted and falsified by spiritual wickedness in heavenly places to rob us of our highest privileges. We belong to Christ, for and in heaven; He is the way, the truth and the life. If we give not, as a constant principle and practice, to Christ the first place, we grievously wrong Him and to our own irreparable loss as Christians. It is our privilege and our duty to make Christ the prime object of our souls in every question that comes before us. Satan ensnares by our own interests. We are only kept and guided aright by Christ's dwelling in our hearts through faith. What quiet comfort and confidence, if you are content to tell the Lord about it and are subject to His will and word! He gives entire deliverance from every wile of the enemy. His love entitles one to consult Him about little matters: — nothing, it has been well said, is too great for us, nothing too small for Him, in His grace. Who that believes need wonder, if when dead in our offences and sins, God quickened us together with the Christ, and raised us together, and seated us together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. We are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God before prepared that we should walk in them.

The efficacious work is offered and accepted on high for all things in the heavens and on the earth. Yet spiritual wickedness is not even yet dislodged from the heavenlies. Still less is the field of the world cleared of all scandals and those that practice lawlessness. Yes, the serpent's trail is still above; and those associated with Christ in the heavenlies have brought deep dishonour on Him by their unbelief and worldliness, tampering on this side with superstition, on that with rationalism; bad enough in mere professors, far worse in members of His body. The heavenly things therefore needed to be purged by better sacrifices than Israel or any man ever offered. The inheritance, heavenly and earthly, remains yet to be delivered according to the energy of His power even to subdue the universe to Himself; and we shall share His most worthy exaltation, in that day for which we wait, suffering with Him, and it may be for Him, by grace meanwhile.