

C. H. Mackintosh

**Comments on  
the book of Deuteronomy**

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# Comments on the book of Deuteronomy

By C.H. Mackintosh

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## **Preface.**

The value and importance of the word of God cannot be over-estimated at the present moment. Its integrity and authority are being assailed from almost every quarter and in every form of attack. "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps. 11:3.)

Infidel thoughts and principles are not limited to a few literary and speculative minds, as they were fifty years ago, but are now asserted by many who ought to be the true guardians of Christianity and the defenders of the Bible as a revelation from God.

In this way the multitude of the simple and unsuspecting are deceived. If the style of address be pleasing, few care to compare what they have been hearing with the holy scriptures. The conscience not being aroused, they take no further trouble.

But what of the state of immortal souls, under such a ministry, in view of eternity? On whom does the weight of responsibility rest? Fine spun theories will never awaken a soul asleep in sin. The lost sinner must be brought face to face with the plain

word of God, and the solemn realities of eternity. His voice must be heard. All is absolute, positive and definite here, whatever infidelity may say. "The word of the Lord endures for ever."

The burden of the following pages, I am thankful to find, is well calculated to meet and counteract the looseness and indefiniteness of the prevailing teaching of the present day.

And this, I may also say, is the burden of the Book of Deuteronomy. The Jewish lawgiver presses with great earnestness the word of Jehovah on the heart of Israel. It is not a book of ceremonies, but the reminding of the people of their obligation to keep the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments of the Lord.

This is the first moral duty of man in every age — implicit obedience and submission to the revealed will of God. Moses speaks to the children of Israel as a father, and appeals to them in the most tender and loving way. "Hearken, O Israel," he says, "to the statutes; and to the judgments which I teach you ... ye shall not add to the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the com-

mandments of the Lord your God which I command you." And again he says, "Thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."

The welfare of the people individually and nationally depended on their faithfully observing these oft-repeated laws. To neglect them, was to bring upon themselves the displeasure and chastening of the God of Israel.

But more need not be said here on these subjects. The reader will find in the following pages, the most ample unfolding and practical application of these divine exhortations and warnings. But the writer has not confined himself to what Deuteronomy teaches, but has enlarged on what it suggests. In this way we have brought before us the grand cardinal truths of Christianity: a wide circle of truth is embraced, and much that applies to the individual Christian, the family, the household, and the church of God will be found in the accompanying book.

It now goes forth with the earnest desire that the Lord may be graciously pleased to use it for the glory of His own name, the

help of His people, and the eternal blessing of many precious souls.

A. M. London, November, 1880.

## **Introduction.**

The character of the book on which we now enter is quite as distinct as that of any of the four preceding sections of the Pentateuch. Were we to judge from the title of the book, we might suppose that it is a mere repetition of what we find in previous books. This would be a very grave mistake. There is no such thing as mere repetition in the word of God. Indeed God never repeats Himself, either in His word or in His works. Wherever we trace our God, whether on the page of holy scripture, or in the vast fields of creation, we see divine fullness, infinite variety, marked design; and, just in proportion to our spirituality of mind, will be our ability to discern and appreciate these things. Here, as in all beside, we need the eye anointed with heavenly eye-salve. What a poor idea must the man entertain of inspiration who could imagine, for a moment, that the fifth book of Moses is a barren repetition of what is to be found in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers! Why, even in a hu-

man composition, we should not expect to find such a flagrant imperfection, much less in the perfect revelation which God has so graciously given us in His holy word. The fact is, there is not, from cover to cover of the inspired volume, a single superfluous sentence, not one redundant clause, not one statement without its own distinct meaning, its own direct application. If we do not see this, we have yet to learn the depth, force and meaning of the words, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God."

Precious words! Would they were more thoroughly understood in this our day! It is of the utmost possible importance that the Lord's people should be rooted, grounded and settled in the grand truth of the plenary inspiration of holy scripture. It is to be feared that laxity as to this most weighty subject is spreading in the professing church to an appalling extent. In many quarters it has become fashionable to pour contempt upon the idea of plenary inspiration. It is looked upon as the veriest childishness and ignorance. It is regarded by many as a great proof of profound scholarship, breadth of mind, and original thinking to be able, by free criticism, to find out flaws in the precious volume of God. Men presume to sit in judgment upon

the Bible as though it were a mere human composition. They undertake to pronounce upon what is, and what is not, worthy of God. In fact they do, virtually, sit in judgement upon God Himself. The present result is, as might be expected, utter darkness and confusion, both for those learned doctors themselves, and for all who are so foolish as to listen to them. And as for the future, who can conceive the eternal destiny of all those who shall have to answer before the judgement seat of Christ for the sin of blaspheming the word of God, and leading hundreds astray by their infidel teaching?

We shall not, however, occupy time in commenting upon the sinful folly of infidels and sceptics — even though called Christians — or their puny efforts to cast dishonour upon that peerless volume which our gracious God has caused to be written for our learning. They will, some day or other, find out their fatal mistake. God grant it may not be too late! And as for us, let it be our deep joy and consolation to meditate upon the word of God, that so we may ever be discovering some fresh treasure in that exhaustless mine, some new moral glories in that heavenly revelation!

The Book of Deuteronomy holds a very distinct place in the inspired canon. Its opening lines are sufficient to prove this. "These be the words which Moses spake to all Israel on this side Jordan, in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red Sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahab."

Thus much as to the place in which the lawgiver delivered the contents of this marvellous book. The people had come up to the eastern bank of the Jordan, and were about to enter upon the land of promise. Their desert wanderings were nearly ended, as we learn from the third verse in which the point of time is as distinctly marked, as is the geographical position in verse 1. "It came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake to the children of Israel according to all that the Lord had given him in commandment to them."

Thus, not only have we both time and place set forth with divine precision and minuteness, but we also learn, from the words just quoted, that the communications made to the people, in the plains of Moab, were very far indeed from being a repetition of what has come before us in our studies on the

books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. Of this we have further and very distinct proof in a passage in Deuteronomy 29. "These are the Words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them at Horeb."

Let the reader note, particularly, these words. They speak of two covenants, one at Horeb, and one in Moab; and the latter, so far from being a mere repetition of the former, is as distinct from it as any two things can be. Of this we shall have the fullest and clearest evidence in our study of the profound book which now lies open before us.

True, the Greek title of the book, signifying the law a second time, might seem to give rise to the idea of its being a mere recapitulation of what has gone before; but we may rest assured it is not so. Indeed it would be a very grave error to think so. The book has its own specific place. Its scope and object are as distinct as possible. The grand lesson which it inculcates from first to last, is obedience, and that, too, not in the mere letter, but in the spirit of love, and fear — an obedience grounded upon a known and enjoyed relationship — an obedience

quicken by the sense of moral obligations of the weightiest and most influential character.

The aged lawgiver, the faithful, beloved and honoured servant of the Lord was about to take leave of the congregation. He was going to heaven and they were about to cross the Jordan; and hence his closing discourses are solemn and affecting in the very highest degree. He reviews the whole of their wilderness history, and that, too, in a manner most touching and impressive. He recounts the scenes and circumstances of their forty eventful years of desert life, in a style eminently calculated to touch the deepest moral springs of the heart. We hang over these most precious discourses with wonder and delight. They possess an incomparable charm arising from the circumstances under which they were delivered, as well as from their own divinely powerful contents. They speak to us no less effectively than to those for whom they were specially intended. Many of the appeals and exhortations come home to us with a power of application as if they had been uttered but yesterday.

And is it not thus with all scripture? Are we not continually struck with its marvellous power of adaptation to our own very state, and to the day in which our lot is cast? It speaks to us

with a point and freshness as if it were written expressly for us — written this very day. There is nothing like scripture. Take any human writing of the same date as the Book of Deuteronomy; if you could lay your hand on some volume written three thousand years ago, what would you find? A curious relic of antiquity, something to be placed in the British Museum, side by side with an Egyptian mummy, having no application whatever to us or to our time, a musty document, a piece of obsolete writing, practically useless to us, referring only to a state of society and to a condition of things long since passed away and buried in oblivion.

The Bible, on the contrary, is the Book for today. It is God's own Book, His perfect revelation. It is His Own very voice speaking to each one of us. It is a Book for every age, for every clime, for every class, for every condition, high and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, old and young. It speaks in a language so simple that a child can understand it; and yet so profound that the most gigantic intellect cannot exhaust it. Moreover, it speaks right home to the heart; it touches the deepest springs of our moral being; it goes down to the hidden roots of thought and feeling in the soul; it judges as thoroughly.

In a word, it is, as the inspired apostle tells us, "Quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. 4:12.)

And then mark the marvellous comprehensiveness of its range. It deals as accurately and as forcibly with the habits and customs, the manners and maxims of the nineteenth century of the Christian era as with those of the very earliest ages of human existence. It displays a perfect acquaintance with man, in every stage of his history. The London of today, and the Tyre of three thousand years ago are mirrored, with like precision and faithfulness, on the sacred page. Human life, in every stage of its development, is portrayed by a master hand, in that wonderful volume which our God has graciously penned for our learning.

What a privilege to possess such a book! — to have in our hands a divine Revelation! — to have access to a Book, every line of which is given by inspiration of God! — to have a divinely given history of the past, the present, and the future! Who can estimate aright such a privilege as this?

But then, this Book judges man — judges his ways — judges his heart. It tells him the truth about himself. Hence man does not like God's Book. An unconverted man would vastly prefer a newspaper or a sensational novel to the Bible. He would rather read the report of a trial in one of our criminal courts, than a chapter in the New Testament.

Hence, too, the constant effort to pick holes in God's blessed Book. Infidels, in every age and of every class, have laboured hard to find out flaws and contradictions in holy scripture. The determined enemies of the word of God are to be found, not only in the ranks of the vulgar, the coarse and the demoralised, but amongst the educated, the refined and the cultivated. Just as it was in the days of the apostles, "Certain lewd fellows of the baser sort," and "Devout and honourable women" — two classes so far removed from each other, socially and morally — found one point in which they could heartily agree, namely, the utter rejection of the word of God and of those who faithfully preached it (compare Acts 13:50, with 17:5.) So we ever find that men who differ in almost everything else agree in their determined opposition to the Bible. Other books are let alone. Men care not to point out defects in Virgil, in Horace, in Homer

or Herodotus; but the Bible they cannot endure because it exposes them and tells them the truth about themselves and the world to which they belong.

And was it not exactly the same with the living word — the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ when He was here among men? Men hated Him because He told them the truth. His ministry, His words, His ways, His whole life was a standing testimony against the world; hence their bitter and persistent opposition: other men were allowed to pass on; but He was watched and waylaid at every turn of His path. The great leaders and guides of the people "sought to entangle him in His talk;" to find occasion against Him in order that they might deliver Him to the power and authority of the governor. Thus it was, during His marvellous life; and, at the close, when the blessed One was nailed to the cross between two malefactors, these latter were let alone; there were no insults hurled upon them; the chief priests and elders did not wag their heads at them. No; all the insults, all the mockery, all the coarse and heartless vulgarity — all was heaped upon the divine occupant of the centre cross.

Now, it is well we should thoroughly understand the real source of all the opposition to the word of God — whether it be the living Word or the written word. It will enable us to estimate it at its real worth. The devil hates the word of God — hates it with a perfect hatred; and hence he employs learned infidels to write books to prove that the Bible is not the word of God, that it cannot be, inasmuch as there are mistakes and discrepancies in it; and not only so, but, in the Old Testament, we find laws and institutions, habits and practices unworthy of a gracious and benevolent Being!

To all this style of argument we have one brief and pointed reply; of all these learned infidels we simply say, They know nothing whatever about the matter. They may be very learned, very clever, very deep and original thinkers, well made up in general literature, very competent to give an opinion on any subject within the domain of natural and moral philosophy, very able to discuss any scientific question. Moreover, they may be very amiable in private life, truly estimable characters, kind, benevolent, philanthropic, beloved in private and respected in public. All this they may be, but, being unconverted, and not having the Spirit of God, they are wholly unfit to form,

much less to give, a judgement on the subject of holy scripture. If any one wholly ignorant of astronomy were to presume to sit in judgement on the principles of the Copernican system, these very men of whom we speak would, at once, pronounce him utterly incompetent to speak, and unworthy to be heard on such a subject. In short, no one has any right whatever to offer an opinion on a matter with which he is unacquainted. This is an admitted principle on all hands; and therefore its application in the case now before as cannot justly be called in question.

Now, the inspired apostle tells us, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, that, "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." This is conclusive. He speaks of man in his natural state, be he ever so learned, ever so cultivated. He is not speaking of any special class of men; but simply of man in his unconverted state, man destitute of the Spirit of God. Some may imagine that the apostle refers to man in a state of barbarism, or savage ignorance. By no means; it is simply man in nature, be he a learned philosopher or an ignorant clown. "He cannot know the things of the Spirit of God." How then can he form or give a judge-

ment as to the word of God? How can he take it upon him to say what is, or what is not worthy of God to write? And if he is audacious enough to do so — as alas! he is — who will be foolish enough to listen to him? His arguments are baseless; his theories worthless; his books only fit for the waste paper basket. And all this, be it observed, on the universally admitted principle above stated, that no one has any title to be heard on a subject of which he is wholly ignorant.

In this way we dispose of the whole tribe of infidel writers. Who would think of listening to a blind man on the subject of light and shades? And yet such a man has much more claim to be heard than an unconverted man on the subject of inspiration. Human learning, however extensive and varied; human wisdom, however profound, cannot qualify a man to form a judgement upon the word of God. No doubt, a scholar may examine and collate MSS. simply as a matter of criticism; he may be able to form a judgement as to the question of authority for any particular reading of a passage; but this is a different matter altogether from an infidel writer undertaking to pronounce judgement upon the Revelation which God has, in His infinite goodness, given to us. We maintain that no man can do this. It is

only by the Spirit who Himself inspired the holy scriptures that those scriptures can be understood and appreciated. The word of God must be received upon its own authority. If man can judge it or reason upon it, it is not the word of God at all. Has God given us a Revelation or has He not? If He has, it must be absolutely perfect, in every respect; and being such, it must be entirely beyond the range of human judgement. Man is no more competent to judge scripture than he is to judge God. The scriptures judge man, not man the Scriptures.

This makes all the difference. Nothing can be more miserably contemptible than the books which infidels write against the Bible. Every page, every paragraph, every sentence only goes to illustrate the truth of the apostle's statement that, "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Their gross ignorance of the subject with which they undertake to deal is only equalled by their self-confidence. Of their irreverence we say nothing; for who would think of looking for reverence in the writings of infidels? We might perhaps look for a little modesty, were it not that we are fully aware of the bitter animus which lies at the root of all such writings, and renders

them utterly unworthy of a moment's consideration. Other books may have a dispassionate examination; but the precious Book of God is approached with the foregone conclusion that it is not a divine Revelation because, forsooth, infidels tell us that God could not give us a written revelation of His mind.

How strange! Men can give us a revelation of their thoughts; and infidels have done so pretty plainly; but God cannot. What folly! What presumption! Why, we may lawfully inquire, could not God reveal His mind to His creatures? Why should it be thought a thing incredible? For no reason whatever, but because infidels would have it so. The wish is, in this case assuredly, father to the thought. The question raised by the old serpent, in the garden of Eden, nearly six thousand years ago, has been passed on, from age to age, by all sorts of sceptics, rationalists and infidels, namely, "Has God said?" We reply, with intense delight, Yes; blessed be His Holy name, He has spoken — spoken to us. He has revealed His mind; He has given us the holy scriptures. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect [artios], thoroughly furnished to all good works." And again,

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Rom. 15:4.)

The Lord be praised for such words! They assure us that all scripture is given of God; and that all scripture is given to us. Precious link between the soul and God! What tongue can tell the value of such a link? God has spoken — spoken to us. His word is a rock against which all the waves of infidel thought dash themselves in contemptible impotency, leaving it in its own divine strength and eternal stability. Nothing can touch the word of God. Not all the powers of earth and hell, men and devils combined can ever move the word of God. There it stands, in its own moral glory, spite of all the assaults of the enemy, from age to age. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." "Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." What remains for us? Just this, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee." Here lies the deep secret of peace. The heart is linked to the throne, yea, to the very heart of God by means of His most precious word, and is thus put in possession of a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. What can all the theories, the reasonings

and the arguments of infidels effect? Just nothing. They are esteemed as the dust of the summer threshing floor. To one who has really learnt, through grace, to confide in the word of God — to rest on the authority of holy scripture, all the infidel books that ever were written are utterly worthless, pointless, powerless; they display the ignorance and terrible presumption of the writers; but as to scripture, they leave it just where it ever has been and ever will be, "settled in heaven," as immovable as the throne of God.\* The assaults of infidels cannot touch the throne of God; neither can they touch His word; and, blessed be His Name, neither can they touch the peace that flows through the heart that rests on that imperishable foundation. "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." "The word of our God shall stand for ever." "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away; but the word of the Lord endures for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached to you" (1 Peter 1:24-25.)

\* In referring to infidel writers, we should bear in mind that by far the most dangerous of such are those calling themselves Christian. In our young days, whenever we heard the word "infidel" we at once thought of a Tom Paine or a Voltaire; now, alas! we

have to think of so-called bishops and doctors of the professing church. Tremendous fact!

Here we have the same precious golden link again. The word which has reached us, in the form of glad tidings, is the word of the Lord which endures for ever; and hence our salvation and our peace are as stable as the word on which they are founded. If all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass, then what are the arguments of infidels worth? They are as worthless as withered grass or a faded flower; and the men who put them forth and those who are moved by them will find them to be so, sooner or later. Oh! the sinful folly of arguing against the word of God — arguing against the only thing in all this world that can give rest and consolation to the poor weary human heart — arguing against that which brings the glad tidings of salvation to poor lost sinners — brings them fresh from the heart of God!

But we may perhaps, here, be met by the question so often raised, and which has troubled many and led them to fly for refuge to what is called "The authority of the church." The question is this, "How are we to know that the Book which we call the Bible is the word of God?" Our answer to this question

is a very simple one, it is this, The One who has graciously given us the blessed Book can give us also the certainty that the Book is from Him. The same Spirit who inspired the various writers of the holy scriptures can make us know that those scriptures are the very voice of God speaking to us. It is only by the Spirit that any one can discern this. As we have already seen, "The natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." If the Holy Spirit does not make us know, and give us the certainty that the Bible is the word of God, no man, or body of men can possibly do it; and, on the other hand, if He does give us the blessed certainty, we do not need the testimony of man.

We freely admit that, on this great question, a shadow of uncertainty would be positive torture and misery. But who can give us certainty? God alone. If all the men upon earth were to agree in their testimony to the authority of holy scripture; if all the councils that ever sat, all the doctors that ever taught, all the fathers that ever wrote were in favour of the dogma of plenary inspiration; if the universal church, if every denomination in Christendom were to assert to the truth that, the Bible is, in

very deed, the word of God; in a word, if we had all the human authority that could possibly be had, in reference to the integrity of the word of God, it would be utterly insufficient, as a ground of certainty; and if our faith were founded on that authority, it would be perfectly worthless. God alone can give us the certainty that He has spoken, in His word; and blessed be His Name, when He gives it, all the arguments, all the cavillings, all the quibblings, all the questionings of infidels ancient and modern, are as the foam on the water, the smoke from the chimney top, or the dust on the floor. The true believer rejects them as so much worthless rubbish, and rests in holy tranquillity in that peerless Revelation which our God has graciously given us.

It is of the very last possible importance for the reader to be thoroughly clear and settled as to this grave question, if he would be raised above the influence of infidelity on the one hand, and superstition on the other. Infidelity undertakes to tell us that God has not given us a book-revelation of His mind — could not give it. Superstition undertakes to tell us that even though God has given us a Revelation, yet we cannot be assured of it without man's authority, nor understand it without

man's interpretation. Now it is well to see that, by both alike, we are deprived of the precious boon of holy scripture. And this is precisely what the devil aims at. He wants to rob us of the word of God; and he can do this quite as effectually by the apparent self-distrust that humbly and reverently looks to wise and learned men for authority, as by an audacious infidelity that boldly rejects all authority, human or divine.

Take a case. A father writes a letter to his son at Canton, a letter full of the affection and tenderness of a father's heart. He tells him of his plans and arrangements; tells him of everything that he thinks would interest the heart of a son — everything that the love of a father's heart could suggest. The son calls at the post office in Canton to inquire if there is a letter from his father. He is told by one official that there is no letter, that his father has not written and could not write, could not communicate his mind by such a medium at all; that it is only folly to think of such a thing. Another official comes forward, and says, "Yes; there is a letter here for you, but you cannot possibly understand it; it is quite useless to you, indeed it can only do you positive mischief inasmuch as you are quite unable to read it aright. You must leave the letter in our hands, and we will ex-

plain to you such portions of it as we consider suitable for you." The former of these two officials represents infidelity; the latter superstition. By both alike would the son be deprived of the longed for letter — the precious communication from his father's heart. But what, we may inquire, would be his answer to these unworthy officials? A very brief and pointed one we may rest assured. He would say to the first, "I know my father can communicate his mind to me, by letter; and that he has done so." He would say to the second, "I know my father can make me understand his mind far better than you can." He would say to both, and that, too, with bold and firm decision, "Give me up, at once, my father's letter; it is addressed to me, and no man has any right to withhold it from me."

Thus, too, should the simple-hearted Christian meet the insolence of infidelity, and the ignorance of superstition — the two special agencies of the devil, in this our day, in setting aside the precious word of God. "My Father has communicated His mind, and He can make me understand the communication." "All scripture is given by inspiration of God," And "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our

learning." Magnificent answer to every enemy of God's precious and peerless Revelation, be he rationalist or ritualist!

We do not attempt to offer any apology to the reader for this lengthened introduction to the Book of Deuteronomy. Indeed we are only too thankful for an opportunity of bearing our feeble testimony to the grand truth of the divine inspiration of the holy scriptures. We feel it to be our sacred duty, as most surely it is our high privilege, to press upon all to whom we have access, the immense importance, yea, the absolute necessity of the most uncompromising decision on this point. We must faithfully maintain, at all cost, the divine authority, and therefore the absolute supremacy and all-sufficiency of the word of God, at all times, in all places, for all purposes. We must hold to it that the scriptures, having been given of God, are complete, in the very highest and fullest sense of the word; that they do not need any human authority to accredit them, or any human voice to make them available; they speak for themselves, and carry their own credentials with them. All we have to do is to believe and obey, not to reason or discuss. God has spoken it: it is ours to hearken and yield an unreserved and reverent obedience.

This is one grand leading point throughout the Book of Deuteronomy, as we shall see in the progress of our meditations; and never was there a moment, in the history of the church of God, in which it was more needful to urge home on the human conscience the necessity of implicit obedience to the word of God. It is, alas! but little felt. Professing Christians, for the most part, seem to consider that they have a right to think for themselves, to follow their own reason, their own judgement, or their own conscience. They do not believe that the Bible is a divine and universal guide book. They think there are very many things in which we are left to choose for ourselves. Hence the almost numberless sects, parties, creeds and schools of thought. If human opinion be allowed at all, then, as a matter of course, one man has as good a right to think as another; and thus it has come to pass that the professing church has become a proverb and a byword for division.

And what is the sovereign remedy for this wide spread disease? Here it is, absolute and complete subjection to the authority of holy scripture. It is not men going to scripture to get their opinions and their views confirmed; but going to scripture to get the mind of God as to everything, and bowing down their whole

moral being to divine authority: this is the one pressing need of the day in which our lot is cast — reverent subjection, in all things, to the supreme authority of the word of God. No doubt, there will be variety in our measure of intelligence, in our apprehension and appreciation of scripture; but what we specially urge upon all Christians is that condition of soul, that attitude of heart expressed in those precious words of the psalmist, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against thee." This, we may rest assured, is grateful to the heart of God. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word."

Here lies the true secret of moral security. Our knowledge of scripture may be very limited; but if our reverence for it be profound, we shall be preserved from a thousand errors, a thousand snares. And then there will be steady growth. We shall grow in the knowledge of God, of Christ, and of the written word. We shall delight to draw from those living and exhaustless depths of holy scripture, and to range through those green pastures which infinite grace has so freely thrown open to the flock of Christ. Thus shall the divine life be nourished and strengthened; the word of God will become more and more

precious to our souls, and we shall be led by the powerful ministry of the Holy Ghost into the depth, fullness, majesty and moral glory of holy scripture. We shall be delivered completely from the withering influences of all mere systems of theology, high, low or moderate — a most blessed deliverance! We shall be able to tell the advocates of all the schools of divinity under the sun that, whatever elements of truth they may have in their systems, we have in divine perfectness in the word of God; not twisted and tortured to make them fit into a system, but in their right place in the wide circle of divine revelation which has its eternal centre in the blessed Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

## **Chapter 1**

"These be the words which Moses spake to all Israel on this side Jordan, in the wilderness, in the plain over against the Red Sea, between Paran, and Tophel, and Laban, and Hazeroth, and Dizahah. There are eleven days' journey from Horeb, by the way of mount Seir, to Kadesh-barnea."

The inspired writer is careful to give us, in the most precise manner, all the bearings of the place in which the words of this

book were spoken in the ears of the people. Israel had not yet crossed the Jordan. They were just beside it; and over against the Red Sea where the mighty power of God had been so gloriously displayed, nearly forty years before. The whole position is described with a minuteness which shows how thoroughly God entered into everything that concerned His People. He was interested in all their movements and in all their ways. He kept a faithful record of all their encampments. There was not a single circumstance connected with them, however trifling, beneath His gracious notice. He attended to everything. His eye rested continually on that assembly as a whole, and on each member in particular. By day and by night, He watched over them. Every stage of their journey was under His immediate and most gracious superintendence. There was nothing, however small, beneath His notice; nothing, however great, beyond His power.

Thus it was with Israel, in the wilderness, of old; and thus it is with the church, now — the church, as a whole, and each member, in particular. A Father's eye rests upon us continually, His everlasting arms are around and underneath us, day and night. "He withdraws not his eyes from the righteous." He counts the

hairs of our heads, and enters, with infinite goodness, into everything that concerns us. He has charged Himself with all our wants and all our cares. He would have us to cast our every care on Him, in the sweet assurance that He cares for us. He, most graciously, invites us to roll our every burden over on Him, be it great or small.

All this is truly wonderful. It is full of deepest consolation. It is eminently calculated to tranquilize the heart, come what may. The question is, do we believe it? Are our hearts governed by the faith of it? Do we really believe that the Almighty Creator and Upholder of all things, who bears up the pillars of the universe, has graciously undertaken to do for us, all the journey through? Do we thoroughly believe that "The possessor of heaven and earth" is our Father, and that He has charged Himself with all our wants, from first to last? Is our whole moral being under the commanding power of those words of the inspired apostle: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely, give us all things?" Alas! it is to be feared that we know but little of the power of these grand yet simple truths. We talk about them; we discuss them; we profess them; we give a nominal assent to

them; but, with all this, we prove, in our daily life, in the actual details of our personal history, how feebly we enter into them. If we truly believed that our God has charged Himself with all our necessities — if we were finding all our springs in Him — if He were a perfect covering for our eyes, and a resting place for our hearts, could we possibly be looking to poor creature streams which so speedily dry up and disappoint our hearts? We do not, and cannot believe it. It is one thing to hold the theory of the life of faith, and another thing altogether to live that life. We constantly deceive ourselves with the notion that we are living by faith, when in reality we are leaning on some human prop which, sooner or later, is sure to give way.

Reader, is it not so? Are we not constantly prone to forsake the Fountain of living waters, and hew out for ourselves broken cisterns which can hold no water? And yet we speak of living by faith! We profess to be looking only to the living God for the supply of our need, whatever that need may be, when, in point of fact, we are sitting beside some creature stream, and looking for something there. Need we wonder if we are disappointed? How could it possibly be otherwise? Our God will not have us dependent upon ought or anyone but Himself. He has,

in manifold places in His word, given us His judgement as to the true character and sure result of all creature confidence. Take the following most solemn assurance from the prophet Jeremiah, "Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited."

And then, mark the contrast. "Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is: for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out her roots by the river and shall not see when drought comes, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit." (Jer. 17:5-8.)

Here we have, in language divinely forcible, clear and beautiful, both sides of this most weighty subject put before us. Creature confidence brings a certain curse; it can only issue in barrenness and desolation. God, in very fruitfulness, will cause every human stream to dry up, every human prop to give way, in order that we may learn the utter folly of turning away from Him. What figure could be more striking or impressive than

those used in the above passage? "A heath in the desert" — "Parched places in the wilderness" — "A salt land not inhabited." Such are the figures used by The Holy Ghost to illustrate all mere human dependence, all confidence in man.

But, on the other hand, what can be more lovely or more refreshing than the figures used to set forth the deep blessedness of simple trust in the Lord? "A tree planted by the waters" — "Spreading out her roots by the rivers" — the leaf ever green — The fruit never ceasing. Perfectly beautiful! Thus it is with the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. He is nourished by those eternal springs that flow from the heart of God. He drinks at the Fountain, life-giving and free. He finds all His resources in the living God. There may be "heat," but he does not see it. "The year of drought" may come, but he is not careful. Ten thousand creature streams may dry up, but he does not perceive it, because he is not dependent upon them. He abides hard by the ever gushing Fountain. He can never want any good thing. He lives by faith.

And here, while speaking of the life of faith — that most blessed life, let us deeply understand what it is, and carefully see that we are living it. We sometimes hear this life spoken of

in a way by no means intelligent. It is, not infrequently, applied to the mere matter of trusting God for food and raiment. Certain persons who happen to have no visible source of temporal supplies, no settled income, no property of any kind, are singled out and spoken of as "living by faith," as if that marvellous and glorious life had no higher sphere or wider range than temporal things; the mere supply of our bodily wants.

Now, we cannot too strongly protest against this most unworthy view of the life of faith. It limits its sphere, and lowers its range, in a manner perfectly intolerable to any one who understands ought of its most holy and precious mysteries. Can we, for a moment, admit that a Christian who happens to have a settled income of any kind is to be deprived of the privilege of living by faith? Or, further, can we permit that life to be limited and lowered to the mere matter of trusting God for the supply of our bodily wants? Does it soar no higher than food and raiment? Does it give no more elevated thought of God than that He will not let us starve or go naked?

Far away, and away for ever be the unworthy thought! The life of faith must not be so treated. We cannot allow such a gross dishonour to be offered to it, or such a grievous wrong done to

those who are called to live it. What, we would ask, is the meaning of those few but weighty words, "The just shall live by faith? They occur, first of all, in Habakkuk 2. They are quoted by the apostle, in Romans 1, where he is, with a master hand, laying the solid foundation of Christianity. He quotes them again, in Galatians 3 where he is, with intense anxiety, recalling those bewitched assemblies to those solid foundations which they, in their folly, were abandoning. Finally, he quotes them again in Hebrews 10, where he is warning his brethren against the danger of casting away their confidence and giving up the race.

From all this, we may assuredly gather the immense importance and practical value of the brief but far-reaching sentence, "The just shall live by faith." And to whom does it apply? Is it only for a few of the Lord's servants, here and there, who happen to have no settled income? We utterly reject the thought. It applies to every one of the Lord's people. It is the high and happy privilege of all who come under the title — that blessed title, "the just." We consider it a very grave error to limit it in any way. The moral effect of such limitation is most injurious. It gives undue prominence to one department of the life of faith

which — if any distinction be allowable — we should judge to be the very lowest. But, in reality, there should be no distinction. The life of faith is one. Faith is the grand principle of the divine life from first to last. By faith we are justified, and by faith we live; by faith we stand, and by faith we walk. From the starting-post to the goal of the Christian course, it is all by faith.

Hence, therefore, it is a serious mistake to single out certain persons who trust the Lord for temporal supplies, and speak of them as living by faith, as if they alone did so. And not only so, but such persons are held up to the gaze of the church of God as some thing wonderful; and the great mass of Christians are led to think that the privilege of living by faith lies entirely beyond their range. In short, they are led into a complete mistake as to the real character and sphere of the life of faith, and thus they suffer materially in the inner life.

Let the Christian reader, then, distinctly understand that it is his happy privilege, whoever he be, or whatever be his position, to live a life of faith, in all the depth and fullness of that word. He may, according to his measure, take up the language of the blessed apostle and say, "The life that I live in the flesh, I live

by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." Let nothing rob him of this high and holy privilege which belongs to every member of the household of faith. Alas! we fail. Our faith is weak, when it ought to be strong, bold and vigorous. Our God delights in a bold faith. If we study the gospels, we shall see that nothing so refreshed and delighted the heart of Christ as a fine bold faith — a faith that understood Him and drew largely upon Him. Look, for example, at the Syrophenician, in Mark 7; and the centurion, in Luke 7.

True, He could meet a weak faith — the very weakest. He could meet an "If thou wilt" with a gracious "I will" — an "If thou canst," with "If thou canst believe, all things are possible." The very faintest look, the feeblest touch was sure to meet with a gracious response; but the Saviour's heart was gratified and His spirit refreshed when He could say, "O woman, great is thy faith; be it to thee even as thou wilt;" and again, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."

Let us remember this. We may rest assured it is the very same today, as when our blessed Lord was here amongst men. He loves to be trusted, to be used, to be drawn upon. We can never go too far in counting on the love of His heart or the strength of

His hand. There is nothing too small, nothing too great for Him. He has all power in heaven and on earth. He is Head over all things to His church. He holds the universe together. He upholds all things by the word of His power. Philosophers talk of the forces and laws of nature. The Christian thinks with delight of Christ, His hand, His word, His mighty power. By Him all things were created, and by Him all things consist.

And then His love! What rest, what comfort, what joy to know and remember that the Almighty Creator and Upholder of the universe is the everlasting Lover of our souls; that He loves us perfectly; that His eye is ever upon us, His heart ever toward us; that He has charged Himself with all our wants, whatever these wants may be, whether physical, mental, or spiritual. There is not a single thing within the entire range of our necessities that is not treasured up for us in Christ. He is heaven's treasury, God's storehouse; and all this for us.

Why then should we ever turn to another? Why should we ever, directly or indirectly, make known our wants to a poor fellow mortal? Why not go straight to Jesus? Do we want sympathy? Who can sympathise with us like our most merciful High Priest who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities? Do we want

help of any kind? Who can help us like our Almighty Friend, the Possessor of unsearchable riches? Do we want counsel or guidance? Who can give it like the blessed One who is the very wisdom of God, and who is made of God to us wisdom? Oh! let us not wound His loving heart, and dishonour His glorious Name by turning away from Him. Let us jealously watch against the tendency so natural to us to cherish human hopes, creature confidences, and earthly expectations. Let us abide hard by the fountain, and we shall never have to complain of the streams. In a word, let us seek to live by faith, and thus glorify God in our day and generation.

We shall now proceed with our chapter and, in so doing we would call the reader's attention to verse 2. It is certainly a very remarkable parenthesis. "There are eleven days' journey from Horeb, by the way of mount Seir, to Kadesh-barnea." Eleven days! And yet it took them forty years! How was this? Alas! we need not travel far for the answer. It is only too like ourselves. How slowly we get over the ground! What windings and turnings! How often we have to go back and travel over the same ground again and again. We are slow travellers, because we are slow learners. It may be we feel disposed to marvel how Israel

could have taken forty years to accomplish a journey of eleven days; but we may, with much greater reason, marvel at ourselves. We, like them, are kept back by our unbelief and slowness of heart; but there is far less excuse for us than for them, inasmuch as our privileges are so very much higher.

Some of us have much reason to be ashamed of the time we spend over our lessons. The words of the blessed apostle do but too forcibly apply to us, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." Our God is a faithful and wise, as well as a gracious and patient Teacher. He will not permit us to pass cursorily over our lessons. Sometimes, perhaps, we think we have mastered a lesson, and we attempt to move on to another; but our wise Teacher knows better and He sees the need of deeper ploughing. He will not have us mere theorists or smatterers. He will keep us, if need be, year after year at our scales until we learn to sing.

Now while it is very humbling to us to be so slow in learning, it is very gracious of Him to take such pains with us, in order to make us sure. We have to bless Him for His mode of teaching,

as for all beside; for the wonderful patience with which He sits down with us, over the same lesson, again and again, in order that we may learn it thoroughly.\*

\* The journey of Israel, from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea. illustrates but too forcibly the history of many souls in the matter of finding peace. Many of the Lord's beloved people go on for years, doubting and fearing, never knowing the blessedness of the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free. It is most distressing to any one who really cares for souls to see the sad condition in which some are kept all their days, through legality, bad teaching false manuals of devotion, and such like. It is a rare thing now-a-days, to find in Christendom a soul fully established in the peace of the gospel. It is considered a good thing, a sign of humility, to be always doubting. Confidence is looked upon as presumption. In short, things are turned completely upside down. The gospel is not known; souls are under law, instead of under grace; they are kept at a distance, instead of being taught to draw nigh. Much of the religion of the day is a deplorable mixture of Christ and self, law and grace, faith and works. Souls are kept in a perfect muddle, all their days.

Surely these things demand the grave consideration of all who occupy the responsible place of teachers and preachers in the professing church. There is a solemn day approaching when all such will be called to render an account of their ministry.

"And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake to the children of Israel, according to all that the Lord had given him in commandment to them." (Ver. 3.) These few words contain a volume of weighty instruction for every servant of God, for all who are called to minister in the word and doctrine. Moses gave the people just what he himself had received from God, nothing more, nothing less. He brought them into direct contact with the living word of Jehovah. This is the grand principle of ministry at all times. Nothing else is of any real value. The word of God is the only thing that will stand. There is divine power and authority in it. All mere human teaching however interesting, however attractive, at the time, will pass away and leave the soul without any foundation to rest upon.

Hence it should be the earnest, jealous care of all who minister in the assembly of God, to preach the word in all its purity, in all its simplicity; to give it to the people as they get it from God; to bring them face to face with the veritable language of holy scripture. Thus will their ministry tell, with living power, on the hearts and consciences of their hearers. It will link the

soul with God Himself, by means of the word, and impart a depth and solidity which no human teaching can ever produce.

Look at the blessed apostle Paul. Hear him express himself on this weighty subject. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." What was the object of all this fear and trembling "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." (1 Cor 2:1-5)

This true-hearted faithful servant of Christ sought only to bring the souls of his hearers into direct personal contact with God Himself. He sought not to link them with Paul. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed." All false ministry has for its object the attaching of souls to itself. Thus the minister is exalted; God is shut out; and the soul is left without any divine foundation to rest upon. True ministry, on the contrary, as seen in Paul and Moses, has for its

blessed object the attaching of the soul to God. Thus the minister gets his true place — simply an instrument; God is exalted; and the soul established on a sure foundation which can never be moved.

But let us hear a little more from our apostle on this most weighty subject. "Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached to you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all, that which I also received" — nothing more, nothing less, nothing different — "how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."

This is uncommonly fine. It demands the serious consideration of all who would be true and effective ministers of Christ. The apostle was careful to allow the pure stream to flow down from its living source, the heart of God, into the souls of the Corinthians. He felt that nothing else was of any value. If he had sought to link them on to himself, he would have sadly dishon-

oured his Master; done them a grievous wrong; and he himself would, most assuredly, suffer loss in the day of Christ.

But no; Paul knew better. He would not, for worlds, lead any to build upon himself. Hear what he says to his much loved Thesalonians. "For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe." (1 Thess. 2:13.)

We feel solemnly responsible to commend this grave and important point to the serious consideration of the church of God. If all the professed ministers of Christ were to follow the example of Moses and Paul, in reference to the matter now before us, we should witness a very different condition of things in the Professing church; but the plain and serious fact is that the church of God, like Israel of old, has wholly departed from the authority of His word. Go where you will, and you find things done and taught which have no foundation in scripture. Things are not only tolerated but sanctioned and stoutly defended which are in direct opposition to the mind of Christ. If you ask for the divine authority for this, that and the other institution or

practice, you will be told that Christ has not given us directions as to matters of church government; that in all questions of ecclesiastical polity, clerical orders, and liturgical services, He has left us free to act according to our consciences, judgement, or religious feelings; that it is simply absurd to demand a "Thus says the Lord" for all the details connected with our religious institutions; there is a broad margin left to be filled up according to our national customs, and our peculiar habits of thought. It is considered that professing Christians are left perfectly free to form themselves into so-called churches, to choose their own form of government, to make their own arrangements, and to appoint their own office-bearers.

Now the question which the Christian reader has to consider is, "Are these things so?" Can it be that our Lord Christ has left His church without guidance as to matters so interesting and momentous? Can it be possible that the church of God is worse off, in the matter of instruction and authority, than Israel? In our studies on the books of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, we have seen — for who could help seeing? — the marvellous pains which Jehovah took to instruct His people as to the most minute particulars connected with their public worship and

private life. As to the tabernacle, the temple, the priesthood, the ritual, the various feasts and sacrifices, the periodical solemnities, the months, the days, the very hours, all was ordered and settled with divine precision. Nothing was left to mere human arrangement. Man's wisdom, his judgement, his reason, his conscience had nothing whatever to do in the matter. Had it been left to man, how should we ever have had that admirable, profound and far-reaching typical system which the inspired pen of Moses has set before us? If Israel had been allowed to do what — as some would fain persuade us — the church is allowed, what confusion, what strife, what division, what endless sects and parties would have been the inevitable result.

But it was not so. The word of God settled everything "As the Lord commanded Moses." This grand and influential sentence was appended to everything that Israel had to do, and to everything they were not to do. Their national institutions and their domestic habits, their public and their private life — all came under the commanding authority of "Thus says the Lord." There was no occasion for any member of the congregation to say, "I cannot see this," or "I cannot go with that," or "I cannot agree with the other." Such language could only be regarded as

the fruit of self-will. He might just as well say, "I cannot agree with Jehovah." And why? simply because the word of God had spoken as to everything, and that too with a clearness and simplicity which left no room whatever for human discussion. Throughout the whole of the Mosaic economy there was not the breadth of a hair of margin left in which to insert the opinion or the judgement of man. It pertained not to man to add the weight of a feather to that vast system of types and shadows which had been planned by the divine mind, and set forth in language so plain and pointed, that all Israel had to do was to obey — not to argue, not to reason, not to discuss, but to obey.

Alas! alas! they failed, as we know. They did their own will; they took their own way; they did "every man that which was right in his own eyes." They departed from the word of God, and followed the imaginations and devices of their own evil heart, and brought upon themselves the wrath and indignation of offended Deity, under which they suffer till this day, and shall yet suffer unexampled tribulation.

But all this leaves untouched the point on which we are just now dwelling. Israel had the oracles of God; and these oracles were divinely sufficient for their guidance in everything. There

was no room left for the commandments and doctrines of men. The word of the Lord provided for every possible exigency, and that word was so plain as to render human comment needless.

Is the church of God worse off, as regards guidance and authority, than Israel of old. Are Christians left to think and arrange for themselves in the worship and service of God? Are there any questions left open for human discussion? Is the word of God sufficient, or is it not? Has it left anything unprovided for? Let us hearken diligently to the following powerful testimony: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect (artios) thoroughly furnished to all good works" (2 Tim. 3.)

This is perfectly conclusive. Holy scripture contains all that the man of God can possibly require to make him perfect, to equip him thoroughly for everything that can be called a "good work." And if this be true as to the man of God individually, it is equally true as to the church of God collectively. Scripture is all-sufficient — for each, for all. Thank God that it is so. What a signal mercy to have a divine Guidebook! Were it not so,

what should we do? Whither should we turn? What would become of us? If we were left to human tradition and human arrangement, in the things of God, what hopeless confusion! What clashing of opinions! What conflicting judgements! And all this of necessity, inasmuch as one man would have quite as good a right as another to put forth his opinion and to suggest his plan.

We shall perhaps be told that, notwithstanding our possession of the holy scripture, we have, nevertheless, sects, parties, creeds, and schools of thought almost innumerable. But why is this? Simply because we refuse to submit our whole moral being to the authority of holy scripture. This is the real secret of the matter — the true source of all those sects and parties which are the shame and sorrow of the church of God.

It is vain for men to tell us that these things are good in themselves; that they are the legitimate fruit of that free exercise of thought and private judgement which form the very boast and glory of Protestant Christianity. We do not and cannot believe, for a moment, that such a plea will stand, before the judgement-seat of Christ. We believe, on the contrary that this very boasted freedom of thought and independence of judgement are

in direct opposition to that spirit of profound and reverent obedience which is due to our adorable Lord and Master. What right has a servant to exercise his private judgement in the face of his master's plainly expressed will? None whatever. The duty of a servant is simply to obey, not to reason or to question; but to do what he is told. He fails as a servant, just in so far as he exercises his own private judgement. The most lovely moral trait in a servant's character is implicit, unquestioning, and unqualified obedience. The one grand business of a servant is to do his master's will.

All this will be fully admitted in human affairs; but, in the things of God, men think themselves entitled to exercise their private judgement. It is a fatal mistake. God has given us His word; and that word is so plain that wayfaring men, though fools, need not err therein. Hence, therefore, if we were all guided by that word; if we were all to bow down, in a spirit of unquestioning obedience, to its divine authority, there could not be conflicting opinions and opposing sects. It is quite impossible that the voice of holy scripture can teach opposing doctrines. It cannot possibly teach one man Episcopacy; another, Presbyterianism; and another, Independency. It cannot

possibly furnish a foundation for opposing schools of thought. It would be a positive insult offered to the divine volume to attempt to attribute to it all the sad confusion of the professing church. Every pious mind must recoil, with just horror, from such an impious thought. Scripture cannot contradict itself, and therefore if two men or ten thousand men are exclusively taught by scripture, they will think alike.

Hear what the blessed apostle says to the church at Corinth — says to us. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" — mark the mighty moral force of this appeal — "that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgement.

Now, the question is, how was this most blessed result to be reached? Was it by each one exercising the right of private judgement? Alas! it was this very thing that gave birth to all the division and contention in the assembly at Corinth, and drew forth the sharp rebuke of the Holy Ghost. Those poor Corinthians thought they had a right to think, and judge and choose for themselves, and what was the result? "It has been declared to me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of

Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you says, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided?"

Here we have private judgement and its sad fruit, its necessary fruit. One man has quite as good a right to think for himself as another and no man has any right whatsoever to force his opinion upon his fellow. Where then lies the remedy? In flinging to the winds our private judgments, and reverently submitting ourselves to the supreme and absolute authority of holy scripture. If it be not thus, how could the apostle beseech the Corinthians to "speak the same thing, and to be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgement"? Who was to prescribe the "thing" that all were to "speak"? In whose "mind" or whose "judgment" were all to be "perfectly joined together"? Had any one member of the assembly, however gifted or intelligent, the slightest shadow of a right to set forth what his brethren were to speak, to think or to judge? Most certainly not. There was one absolute, because divine authority to which all were bound, or rather privileged to submit themselves. Human opinions, man's private judgement, his conscience, his reason, all these things must just go for what they

are worth; and, most assuredly, they are perfectly worthless as authority. The word of God is the only authority; and if we are all governed by that we shall "all speak the same thing," and "there will be no divisions among us;" but we shall "be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgement."

Lovely condition! But alas! it is not the present condition of the church of God; and therefore it is perfectly evident that we are not all governed by the one supreme, absolute and all-sufficient authority — the voice of holy scripture — that most blessed voice that can never utter one discordant note — a voice ever divinely harmonious to the circumcised ear.

Here lies the root of the whole matter. The church has departed from the authority of Christ, as set forth in His word. Until this is seen, it is only lost time to discuss the claims of conflicting systems ecclesiastical or theological. If a man does not see that it is his sacred duty to test every ecclesiastical system, every liturgical service, and every theological creed, by the word of God, discussion is perfectly useless. If it be allowable to settle things according to expediency, according to man's judgement, his conscience, or his reason, then verily we may as well, at

once, give up, the case as hopeless. If we have no divinely settled authority, no perfect standard, no infallible guide, we cannot see how it is possible for any one to possess the certainty that he is treading in the true path. If indeed it be true that we are left to choose for ourselves, amid the almost countless paths which lie around us, then farewell to all certainty; farewell to peace of mind and rest of heart; farewell to all holy stability of purpose and fixedness of aim. If we cannot say of the ground we occupy, of the path we pursue, and of the work in which we are engaged, "This is the thing which the Lord has commanded" we may rest assured we are in a wrong position, and the sooner we abandon it the better.

Thank God, there is no necessity whatever for His child or His servant to continue, for one hour, in connection with what is wrong. "Let every one that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. But how are we to know what is iniquity? By the word of God, whatever is contrary to scripture, whether in morals or in doctrines, is iniquity, and I must depart from it, cost what it may. It is an individual matter. "Let every one." "He that has ears." "He that overcomes." "If any man hear my voice."

Here is the point. Let us mark it well. It is Christ's voice. It is not the voice of this good man or that good man; it is not the voice of the church, the voice of the fathers, the voice of general councils, but the voice of our own beloved Lord and Master. It is the individual conscience in direct, living contact with the voice of Christ, the living, eternal word of God, the holy scriptures. Were it merely a question of human conscience, or judgement, or authority, we are, at once, plunged in hopeless uncertainty, inasmuch as what one man might judge to be iniquity, another might consider to be perfectly right. There must be some fixed standard to go by, some supreme authority from which there can be no appeal; and, blessed be God, there is. God has spoken; He has given us His word; and it is at once our bounden duty, our high privilege, our moral security, our true enjoyment, to obey that word.

Not man's interpretation of the word, but the word itself. This is all-important. We must have nothing — absolutely nothing between the human conscience and divine revelation. Men talk to us about the authority of the church. Where are we to find it? Suppose a really anxious, earnest, honest soul, longing to know the true way. He is told to listen to the voice of the church. He

asks, which church? Is it the Greek, Latin, Anglican or Scotch church? Not two of them agree. Nay more, there are conflicting parties, contending sects, opposing schools of thought in one and the self-same body. Councils have differed; fathers have disagreed; popes have anathematised one another. In the Anglican Establishment, we have high church, low church, and broad church, each differing from the rest. In the Scotch or Presbyterian church, we have the Established church, the United Presbyterian, and the Free church. And then if the anxious inquirer turns away, in hopeless perplexity, from those great bodies, in order to seek guidance amid the ranks of Protestant dissenters, is he likely to fare any better?

Ah! reader, it is perfectly hopeless. The whole professing church has revolted from the authority of Christ, and cannot possibly be a guide or an authority for any one. In the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation, the church is seen under judgement, and the appeal, seven times repeated, is, "He that has an ear, let him hear" — what? The voice of the church? Impossible! The Lord could never direct us to hear the voice of that which is itself under judgement. Hear what, then? "Let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

And where is this voice to be heard? Only in the holy scriptures, given of God, in His infinite goodness, to guide our souls in the way of peace and truth, notwithstanding the hopeless ruin of the church, and the thick darkness and wild confusion of baptised Christendom. It lies not within the compass of human language to set forth the value and importance of having a divine and therefore an infallible and all sufficient guide and authority for our individual path.

But, be it remembered, we are solemnly responsible to bow to that authority, and follow that guide. It is utterly vain, indeed morally dangerous, to profess to have a divine guide and authority unless we are thoroughly subject thereto. This it was that characterised the Jews, in the days of our Lord. They had the scriptures, but they did not obey them. And one of the saddest features in the present condition of Christendom is its boasted possession of the Bible, while the authority of that Bible is boldly set aside.

We deeply feel the solemnity of this, and would earnestly press it upon the conscience of the Christian reader. The word of God is virtually ignored amongst us. Things are practised and sanctioned, on all hands, which not only have no foundation in

scripture, but are diametrically opposed to it. We are not exclusively taught and absolutely governed by scripture.

All this is most serious, and demands the attention of all the Lord's people, in every place. We feel compelled to raise a warning note, in the ears of all Christians, in reference to this most weighty subject. Indeed, it is the sense of its gravity and vast moral importance that has led us to enter upon the service of writing these "Notes on the Book of Deuteronomy". It is our earnest prayer that the Holy Ghost may use these pages to recall the hearts of the Lord's dear people to their true and proper place, even the place of reverent allegiance to His blessed word. We feel persuaded that what will characterise all those who will walk devotedly, in the closing hours of the church's earthly history, will be profound reverence for the word of God, and genuine attachment to the Person of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The two things are inseparably bound together by a sacred and imperishable link.

"The Lord our God spake to us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount; turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites, and to all the places nigh thereunto, in the plain, in the hills, and in the vale, and in the

south, and by the sea-side, to the land of the Canaanites, and to Lebanon, to the great river, the river Euphrates." (Vers. 6, 7.)

We shall find, throughout the whole of the book of Deuteronomy, the Lord dealing much more directly and simply with the people, than in any of the three preceding books; so far is it from being true that Deuteronomy is a mere repetition of what has passed before us, in previous sections. For instance, in the passage just quoted, there is no mention of the movement of the cloud; no reference to the sound of the trumpet. "The Lord our God spake to us." We know, from the Book of Numbers, that the movements of the camp were governed by the movements of the cloud, as communicated by the sound of the trumpet. But neither the trumpet nor the cloud is alluded to in this book. It is much more simple and familiar. "The Lord our God spake to us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount."

This is very beautiful. It reminds us somewhat of the lovely simplicity of patriarchal times, when the Lord spake to the fathers as a man speaks to his friend. It was not by the sound of a trumpet, or by the movement of a cloud that the Lord communicated His mind to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He was so

very near to them that there was no need, no room for an agency characterised by ceremony and distance. He visited them, sat with them, partook of their hospitality, in all the intimacy of personal friendship.

Such is the lovely simplicity of the order of things in patriarchal times; and this it is which imparts a peculiar charm to the narratives of the Book of Genesis.

But, in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, we have something quite different. There we have set before us a vast system of types and shadows, rites, ordinances, and ceremonies, imposed on the people for the time being, the import of which is unfolded to us in the Epistle to the Hebrews. "The Holy Ghost thus signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing; which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation." (Heb. 9:8-10.)

Under this system, the people were at a distance from God. It was not with them as it had been with their fathers, in the Book of Genesis. God was shut in from them; and they were shut out from Him. The leading features of the Levitical ceremonial, so far as the people were concerned, were, bondage, darkness, distance. But, on the other hand, its types and shadows pointed forward to that one great sacrifice which is the foundation of all God's marvellous counsels and purposes, and by which He can, in perfect righteousness, and according to all the love of His heart, have a people near to Himself, to the praise of the glory of His grace, throughout the golden ages of eternity.

Now, it has been already remarked, we shall find, in Deuteronomy, comparatively little of rites and ceremonies. The Lord is seen more in direct communication with the people; and even the priests, in their official capacity, come rarely before us; and, if they are referred to, it is very much more in a moral than in a ceremonial way. Of this we shall have ample proof as we pass along; it is a marked feature of this beautiful book.

"The Lord our God spake to us in Horeb, saying, Ye have dwelt long enough in this mount: turn you, and take your journey, and go to the mount of the Amorites." What a rare privilege, for any

people, to have the Lord so near to them, and so interested in all their movements, and in all their concerns great and small: He knew how long they ought to remain in any one place, and whither they should next bend their steps. They had no need to harass themselves about their journeyings, or about anything else. They were under the eye, and in the hands of One whose wisdom was unerring, whose power was omnipotent, whose resources were inexhaustible, whose love was infinite, who had charged Himself with the care of them, who knew all their need, and was prepared to meet it, according to all the love of His heart, and the strength of His holy arm.

What, then, we may ask, remained for them to do? What was their plain and simple duty? Just to obey. It was their high and holy privilege to rest in the love and obey the commandments of Jehovah their covenant God. Here lay the blessed secret of their peace, their happiness, and their moral security. They had no need whatever to trouble themselves about their movements, no need of planning or arranging. Their journeyings were all ordered for them by One who knew every step of the way from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea; and they had just to live by the day, in happy dependence upon Him.

Happy position! Privileged path! Blessed portion! But it demanded a broken will — an obedient mind — a subject heart. If, when Jehovah had said, "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough," they, on the contrary, were to form the plan of compassing it a little longer, they would have had to compass it without Him. His companionship, His counsel and His aid, could only be counted upon in the path of obedience.

Thus it was with Israel, in their desert wanderings, and thus it is with us. It is our most precious privilege to leave all our matters in the hands, not merely of a covenant God, but of a loving Father. He arranges our movements for us; He fixes the bounds of our habitation; He tells us how long to stay in a place, and where to go next. He has charged Himself with all our concerns, all our movements, all our wants. His gracious word to us is, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." And what then? "The peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

But it may be the reader feels disposed to ask, "How does God guide His people now? We cannot expect to hear His voice

telling us when to move or where to go." To this we reply, at once, it cannot surely be that the members of the church of God, the body of Christ, are worse off, in the matter of divine guidance, than Israel in the wilderness. Cannot God guide His children — cannot Christ guide His servants, in all their movements, and in all their service? Who could think, for a moment, of calling in question a truth so plain and so precious? True, we do not expect to hear a voice, or see the movement of a cloud; but we have what is very much better, very much higher, very much more intimate. We may rest assured our God has made ample provision for us in this, as in all beside, according to all the love of His heart.

Now, there are three ways in which we are guided; we are guided by the word; we are guided by the Holy Ghost; and we are guided by the instincts of the divine nature. And we have to bear in mind that the instincts of the divine nature, the leadings of the Holy Ghost, and the teaching of holy scripture will always harmonise. This is of the utmost importance to keep before us. A person might fancy himself to be led by the instincts of the divine nature, or by the Holy Spirit, to pursue a certain line of action involving consequences at issue with the word of

God. Thus his mistake would be made apparent. It is a very serious thing for any one to act on mere impulse or impression. By so doing, he may fall into a snare of the devil, and do very serious damage to the cause of Christ. We must calmly weigh our impressions in the balances of the sanctuary, and faithfully test them by the standard of the divine word. In this way, we shall be preserved from error and delusion. It is a most dangerous thing to trust impressions or act on impulse. We have seen the most disastrous consequences produced by so doing. Facts may be reliable. Divine authority is absolutely infallible. Our own impressions may prove as delusive as a will-o'-the-wisp, or a mirage of the desert. Human feelings are most untrustworthy. We must ever submit them to the most severe scrutiny, lest they betray us into some fatally false line of action. We can trust scripture, without a shadow of misgiving; and we shall find, without exception, that the man who is led by the Holy Ghost, or guided by the instincts of the divine nature, will never act in opposition to the word of God. This is what we may call an axiom in the divine life — an established rule in practical Christianity. Would that it had been more attended to in all ages of the church's history! Would that it were more pondered in our own day!

But there is another point, in this question of divine guidance, which demands our serious attention. We, not infrequently, hear people speak of "The finger of divine Providence" as something to be relied upon for guidance. This may be only another mode of expressing the idea of being guided by circumstances, which, we do not hesitate to say, is very far indeed from being the proper kind of guidance for a Christian.

No doubt, our Lord may and does, at times, intimate His mind, and indicate our path by His providence; but we must be sufficiently near to Him to be able to interpret the providence aright, else we may find that what is called "an opening of providence" may actually prove an opening by which we slip off the holy path of obedience. Surrounding circumstances, just like our inward impressions, must be weighed in the presence of God, and judged by the light of His word, else they may lead us into the most terrible mistakes. Jonah might have considered it a remarkable providence to find a ship going to Tarshish; but had he been in communion with God, he would not have needed a ship. In short, the word of God is the one grand test and perfect touchstone for everything — for outward circumstances and inward impressions — for feelings, imaginations

and tendencies — all must be placed under the searching light of holy scripture and there calmly and seriously judged. This is the true path of safety, peace and blessedness for every child of God.

It may, however, be said, in reply to all this, that we cannot expect to find a text of scripture to guide us in the matter of our movements, or in the thousand little details of daily life. Perhaps not; but there are certain great principles laid down in scripture which, if properly applied, will afford divine guidance even where we might not be able to find a particular text. And not only so, but we have the fullest assurance that our God can and does guide His children, in all things. "The steps of a good man are ordered of the Lord." "The meek will he guide in judgement; and the meek will he teach his way." "I will guide thee with mine eye." He can signify His mind to us as to this or that particular act or movement. If not, where are we? How are we to get on? How are we to regulate our movements? Are we to be drifted hither and thither by the tide of circumstances? Are we left to blind chance, or to the mere impulse of our own will?

Thank God, it is not so. He can, in His own perfect way, give us the certainty of His mind, in any given case; and, without that certainty, we should never move. Our Lord Christ — all homage to His peerless Name! — can intimate His mind to His servant as to where He would have him to go and what He would have him to do; and no true servant will ever think of moving or acting without such intimation. We should never move or act in uncertainty. If we are not sure, let us be quiet and wait. Very often it happens that we harass and fret ourselves about movements that God would not have us to make at all. A person once said to a friend, "I am quite at a loss to know which way to turn." Then, "Don't turn at all" was the friend's wise reply.

But here an all-important moral point comes in, and that is, our whole condition of soul. This, we may rest assured, has very much to do with the matter of guidance. It is "the meek he will guide in judgement and teach his way." We must never forget this. If only we are humble and self-distrusting, if we wait on our God, in simplicity of heart, uprightness of mind, and honesty of purpose, He will, most assuredly, guide us. But it will

never do to go and ask counsel of God in a matter about which our mind is made up, or our will is at work.

This is a fatal delusion. Look at the case of Jehoshaphat, in 1 Kings 22. "It came to pass, in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel" — a sad mistake, to begin with — "And the king of Israel said to his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria? And he said to Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramoth Gilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses, and," as we have it in 2 Chronicles 18:3, "we will be with thee in the war."

Here we see that his mind was made up before ever he thought of asking counsel of God in the matter. He was in a false position and a wrong atmosphere altogether. He had fallen into the snare of the enemy, through lack of singleness of eye, and hence he was not in a fit state to receive or profit by divine guidance. He was bent on his own will, and the Lord left him to reap the fruits of it; and, but for infinite and sovereign

mercy, he would have fallen by the sword of the Syrians, and been borne a corpse from the battle field.

True, he did say to the king of Israel, "Inquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord today." But where was the use of this, when he had already pledged himself to a certain line of action? What folly for any one to make up his mind, and then go and ask for counsel! Had he been in a right state of soul, he never would have sought counsel, in such a case at all. But his state of soul was bad, his position false, and his purpose in direct opposition to the mind and will of God. Hence, although he heard, from the lips of Jehovah's messenger, His solemn judgement on the entire expedition, yet he took his own way, and well-nigh lost his life in consequence.

We see the same thing in the forty-second chapter of Jeremiah. The people applied to the prophet to ask counsel as to their going down into Egypt. But they had already made up their minds, as to their course. They were bent on their own will. Miserable condition! Had they been meek and humble, they would not have needed to ask counsel, in the matter. But they said to Jeremiah the prophet, "Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us to the Lord

thy God" — Why not say, The Lord our God? — "even for all this remnant: (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us;) that the Lord thy God may show us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do. Then Jeremiah the prophet said to them, I have heard you; behold, I will pray to the Lord your God, according to your words; and it shall come to pass, that whatsoever thing the Lord shall answer you, I will declare it to you: I will keep nothing back from you. Then they said to Jeremiah, The Lord be a true and faithful witness between us; if we do not even according to all things for the which the Lord thy God shall send thee to us. Whether it be good, or whether it be evil," — How could the will of God be anything but good? — "we will obey the voice of the Lord our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the Lord our God."

Now, all this seemed very pious and very promising. But mark the sequel. When they found that the judgement and counsel of God did not tally with their will, "Then spake ... all the proud men, saying to Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely; the Lord our God has not sent thee to say, go not into Egypt to sojourn there."

Here, the real state of the case comes clearly out. Pride and self-will were at work. Their vows and promises were false. "Ye dissembled in your hearts," says Jeremiah, "when ye sent me to the Lord your God, saying, Pray for us to the Lord our God; and according to all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare to us, and we will do it." It would have been all very well, had the divine response fallen in with their will in the matter; but, inasmuch as it ran counter, they rejected it altogether.

How often is this the case! The word of God does not suit man's thoughts; it judges them; it stands in direct opposition to his will; it interferes with his plans, and hence he rejects it. The human will and human reason are ever in direct antagonism to the word of God; and the Christian must refuse both the one and the other, if he really desires to be divinely guided. An unbroken will and blind reason, if we listen to them, can only lead us into darkness, misery and desolation. Jonah would go to Tarshish, when he ought to have gone to Nineveh; and the consequence was that he found himself "in the belly of hell," with "the weeds wrapped about his head." Jehoshaphat would go to

Ramoth Gilead, when he ought to have been at Jerusalem; and the consequence was that he found himself surrounded by the swords of the Syrians. The remnant, in the days of Jeremiah, would go into Egypt, when they ought to have remained at Jerusalem; and the consequence was that they died by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence in the land of Egypt "whither they desired to go and to sojourn."

Thus it must ever be. The path of self-will is sure to be a path of darkness and misery. It cannot be otherwise. The path of obedience, on the contrary, is a path of peace, a path of light, a path of blessing, a path on which the beams of divine favour are ever poured in living lustre. It may, to the human eye, seem narrow, rough and lonely; but the obedient soul finds it to be the path of life, peace, and moral security. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more to the perfect day." Blessed path! May the writer and the reader ever be found treading it, with a steady step and earnest purpose!

Before turning from this great practical subject of divine guidance and human obedience, we must ask the reader to refer, for a few moments, to a very beautiful passage in the eleventh

chapter of Luke. He will find it full of the most valuable instruction.

"The light of the body is the eye; therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light." (Vers. 34-36.)

Nothing can exceed the moral force and beauty of this passage. First of all, we have the "single eye." This is essential to the enjoyment of divine guidance. It indicates a broken will — a heart honestly fixed upon doing the will of God. There is no under current, no mixed motive, no personal end in view. There is the one simple desire and earnest purpose to do the will of God, whatever that will may be.

Now, when the soul is in this attitude, divine light comes streaming in and fills the whole body. Hence it follows that if the body is not full of light, the eye is not single; there is some mixed motive; self-will or self-interest is at work; we are not

right before God. In this case, any light which we profess to have is darkness; and there is no darkness so gross or so terrible as that judicial darkness which settles down upon the heart governed by self-will while professing to have light from God. This will be seen in all its horrors, by-and-by, in Christendom, when "that Wicked shall be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming; even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness," (2 Thess. 2:8-12.)

How awful is this! How solemnly it speaks to the whole professing church! How solemnly it addresses the conscience of both the writer and the reader of these lines! Light not acted upon becomes darkness. "If the light which is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" But on the other hand, a little light honestly acted upon, is sure to increase; for "to him that

has shall more be given and "the path of the just is as the shining light that shines more and more to the perfect day.

This moral progress is beautifully and forcibly set forth in Luke 11:36. "If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark" — no chamber kept closed against the heavenly rays — no dishonest reserve — the whole moral being laid open, in genuine simplicity, to the action of divine light; then — "the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light." In a word, the obedient soul has not only light for his own path, but the light shines out, so that others see it, like the bright shining of a candle. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"

We have a very vivid contrast to all this in the thirteenth chapter of Jeremiah. "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness." The way to give glory to the Lord our God is to obey His word. The path of duty is a bright and blessed path; and the one who through grace, treads that path will never stumble on the dark moun-

tains. The truly humble, the lowly, the self-distrusting will keep far away from those dark mountains, and walk in that blessed path which is ever illuminated by the bright and cheering beams of God's approving countenance.

This is the path of the just, the path of heavenly wisdom, the path of perfect peace. May we ever be found treading it, beloved reader; and let us never, for one moment, forget that it is our high privilege to be divinely guided in the most minute details of our daily life. Alas! for the one who is not so guided. He will have many a stumble, many a fall, many a sorrowful experience. If we are not guided by our Father's eye, we shall be like the horse or the mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle — like the horse, impetuously rushing where he ought not, or the mule obstinately refusing to go where he ought. How sad for a Christian to be like these! How blessed to move, from day to day, in the path marked out for us by our Father's eye; a path which the vulture's eye has not seen, or the lion's whelp trodden; the path of holy obedience, the path in which the meek and lowly will ever be found, to their deep joy, and the praise and glory of

Him who has opened it for them and given them grace to tread it.

In the remainder of our chapter, Moses rehearses in the ears of the people, in language of touching simplicity, the facts connected with the appointment of the judges, and the mission of the spies. The appointment of the judges, Moses, here, attributes to his own suggestion. The mission of the spies was the suggestion of the people. That dear and most honoured servant of God felt the burden of the congregation too heavy for him; and assuredly, it was very heavy; though we know well that the grace of God was amply sufficient for the demand; and, moreover, that that grace could act as well by one man as by seventy.

Still, we can well understand the difficulty felt by "the meekest man in all the earth" in reference to the responsibility of so grave and important a charge; and truly the language in which he states his difficulty is affecting in the highest degree. We feel as though we must quote it for the reader.

"And I spake to you at that time, saying, I am not able to bear you myself alone" — surely not; what mere mortal could? But

God was there to be counted upon for exigency of every hour — "The Lord your God has multiplied you, and, behold, ye are this day as the stars of heaven for multitude. (The Lord God of your fathers make you a thousand times so many more as ye are, and bless you as he has promised you!") Lovely parenthesis! Exquisite breathing of a large and lowly heart! — "How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden, and your strife?"

Alas! here lay the secret of much of the "cumbrance" and the "burden." They could not agree among themselves; there were controversies, contentions and questions; and who was sufficient for these things? What human shoulder could sustain such a burden? How different it might have been with them! Had they walked lovingly together, there would have been no cases to decide, and therefore no need of judges to decide them. If each member of the congregation had sought the prosperity, the interest and the happiness of his brethren, there would have been no "strife," no "cumbrance," no "burden." If each had done all that in him lay to promote the common good, how lovely would have been the result!

But, ah! it was not so with Israel, in the desert; and, what is still more humbling, it is not so in the church of God, although our privileges are so much higher. Hardly had the assembly been formed by the presence of the Holy Ghost, ere the accents of murmuring and discontent were heard. And about what? About "neglect," whether fancied or real. Whatever way it was, self was at work. If the neglect was merely imaginary, the Grecians were to blame; and if it was real, the Hebrews were to blame. It generally happens, in such cases, that there are faults on both sides; but the true way to avoid all strife, contention and murmuring is to put self in the dust and earnestly seek the good of others. Had this excellent way been understood and adopted, from the outset, what a different task the ecclesiastical historian would have had to perform! But alas! it has not been adopted, and hence the history of the professing church, from the very beginning, has been a deplorable and humiliating record of controversy, division and strife. In the very presence of the Lord Himself, whose whole life was one of complete self-surrender, the apostles disputed about who should be greatest. Such a dispute could never have arisen, had each known the exquisite secret of putting self in the dust, and seeking the good of others. No one who knows ought of the true moral elevation

of self-emptiness could possibly seek a good or a great place for himself. Nearness to Christ so satisfies the lowly heart, that honour, distinctions and rewards are little accounted of. But where self is at work, there you will have envy and jealousy, strife and contention, confusion and every evil work.

Witness the scene between the two sons of Zebedee and their ten brethren, in the tenth chapter of Mark. What was at the bottom of it? Self. The two were thinking of a good place for themselves in the kingdom; and the ten were angry with the two for thinking of any such thing. Had each set self aside, and sought the good of others, such a scene would never have been enacted. The two would not have been thinking about themselves, and hence there would have been no ground for the "indignation" of the ten.

But it is needless to multiply examples. Every age of the church's history illustrates and proves the truth of our statement that self and its odious workings are the producing cause of strife, contention and division, always. Turn where you will, from the days of the apostles down to the days in which our lot is cast, and you will find unmortified self to be the fruitful source of strife and schism. And, on the other hand, you will

find that to sink self and its interests is the true secret of peace, harmony and brotherly love. If only we learn to set self aside, and seek earnestly the glory of Christ, and the prosperity of His beloved people, we shall not have many "cases" to settle.

We must now return to our chapter.

"How can I myself alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden and your strife? Take you wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, and I will make them rulers over you. And ye answered me, and said, The thing which thou hast spoken is good for us to do. So I took the chief of your tribes, wise men, and known" — men fitted of God, and possessing, because entitled to, the confidence of the congregation — "and made them heads over you, captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, and captains over fifties, and captains over tens, and officers among your tribes."

Admirable arrangement! If indeed it had to be made, nothing could be better adapted to the maintenance of order, than the graduated scale of authority, varying from the captain of ten to the captain of a thousand; the lawgiver himself at the head of

all, and he in immediate communication with the Lord God of Israel.

We have no allusion, here, to the fact recorded in Exodus 18, namely, that the appointment of those rulers was at the suggestion of Jethro, Moses' father-in-law. Neither have we any reference to the scene in Numbers 11. We call the reader's attention to this as one of the many proofs which lie scattered along the pages of Deuteronomy, that it is very far indeed from being a mere repetition of the preceding sections of the Pentateuch. In short, this delightful book has a marked character of its own, and the mode in which facts are presented is in perfect keeping with that character. It is very evident that the object of the venerable lawgiver, or rather of the Holy Ghost in him, was to bring everything to bear, in a moral way, upon the hearts of the people, in order to produce that one grand result which is the special object of the book, from beginning to end, namely, a loving obedience to all the statutes and judgments of the Lord their God.

We must bear this in mind, if we would study aright the book which lies open before us. Infidels, sceptics and rationalists may impiously suggest to us the thought of discrepancies in the

various records given in the different books; but the pious reader will reject, with a holy indignation, every such suggestion, knowing that it emanates directly from the father of lies, the determined and persistent enemy of the precious Revelation of God. This, we feel persuaded, is the true way in which to deal with all infidel assaults upon the Bible. Argument is useless, inasmuch as infidels are not in a position to understand or appreciate its force. They are profoundly ignorant of the matter; nor is it merely a question of profound ignorance, but of determined hostility, so that, in every way, the judgement of all infidel writers on the subject of divine inspiration, is utterly worthless, and perfectly contemptible. We would pity and pray for the men, while we thoroughly despise and indignantly reject their opinions. The word of God is entirely above and beyond them. It is as perfect as its Author, and as imperishable as His throne; but its moral glories, its living depths, and its infinite perfections are only unfolded to faith and need. "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes."

If we are only content to be as simple as a babe, we shall enjoy the precious revelation of a Father's love as given by His Spirit, in the holy scriptures. But on the other hand, those who fancy themselves wise and prudent, who build upon their learning, their philosophy and their reason, who think themselves competent to sit in judgement on the word of God, and hence, on God Himself, are given over to judicial darkness, blindness and hardness of heart. Thus it comes to pass that the most egregious folly, and the most contemptible ignorance, that man can display, will be found in the pages of those learned writers who have dared to write against the Bible. "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1 Cor. 1:20-21.)

"If any man will be wise, let him become a fool." Here lies the grand moral secret of the matter. Man must get to the end of his own wisdom, as well as of his own righteousness. He must be brought to confess himself a fool, ere he can taste the sweetness of divine wisdom. It is not within the range of the most gi-

gantic human intellect, aided by all the appliances of human learning and philosophy, to grasp the very simplest elements of divine revelation. And, therefore, when unconverted men, whatever may be the force of their genius or the extent of their learning, undertake to handle spiritual subjects, and more especially the subject of the divine inspiration of holy scripture, they are sure to exhibit their profound ignorance, and utter incompetence to deal with the question before them. Indeed, whenever we look into an infidel book, we are struck with the feebleness of their most forcible arguments; and not only so, but, in every instance in which they attempt to find a discrepancy in the Bible, we see only divine wisdom, beauty and perfectness.

We have been led into the foregoing line of thought in connection with the subject of the appointment of the elders which is given to us in each book, according to the wisdom of the Holy Ghost, and in perfect keeping with the scope and object of the book. We shall now proceed with our quotation.

"And I charged your judges at that time, saying, Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. Ye

shall not respect persons in judgement; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgement is God's; and the cause that is too hard for you, bring it to me, and I will hear it."

What heavenly wisdom is here! What even handed justice! What holy impartiality! In every case of difference, all the facts, on both sides, were to be fully heard and patiently weighed. The mind was not to be warped by prejudice, predilection or personal feeling of any kind. The judgement was to be formed not by impressions, but by facts — clearly established, undeniable facts. Personal influence was to have no weight whatever. The position and circumstances of either party in the cause were not to be considered. The case must be decided entirely on its own merits. "Ye shall hear the small as well as the great." The poor man was to have the same even-handed justice meted out to him as the rich; the stranger as one born in the land. No difference was to be allowed.

How important is all this! How worthy of our attentive consideration! How full of deep and valuable instruction for us all! True, we are not all called to be judges, or elders or leaders; but the great moral principles laid down in the above quotation are

of the very utmost value to every one of us, inasmuch as cases are continually occurring which call for their direct application. Wherever our lot may be cast, whatever our line of life or sphere of action, we are liable alas! to meet with cases of difficulty and misunderstanding between our brethren; cases of wrong whether real or imaginary; and hence it is most needful to be divinely instructed as to how we ought to carry ourselves in respect to such.

Now, in all such cases, we cannot be too strongly impressed with the necessity of having our judgement based on facts — all the facts, on both sides. We must not allow ourselves to be guided by our own impressions, for we all know that mere impressions are most untrustworthy. They may be correct; and they may be utterly false. Nothing is more easily received and conveyed than a false impression, and therefore any judgement based on mere impressions is worthless. We must have solid, clearly established facts — facts established by two or three witnesses, as scripture so distinctly enforces. (Deut. 17:6; Matt. 18:16; 2 Cor. 13:1; 1 Tim. 5:19.)

But further, we must never be guided in judgement by an ex parte statement. Every one is liable, even with the best inten-

tions, to give a colour to his statement of a case. It is not that he would intentionally make a false statement, or tell a deliberate lie; but, through inaccuracy of memory, or one cause or another, he may not present the case as it really is. Some fact may be omitted, and that one fact may so affect all the other facts as to alter their bearing completely. "Audi alteram partem" (hear the other side), is a wholesome motto. And not only hear the other side, but hear all the facts on both sides, and thus you will be able to form a sound and righteous judgment. We may set it down as a standing rule that any judgment formed without an accurate knowledge of all the facts, is perfectly worthless. "Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him." Seasonable, needed words, most surely, at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances. May we apply our hearts to them!

And how important the admonition in verse 17! "Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man." How these words discover the poor human heart! How prone we are to respect persons; to be swayed by personal influence; to at-

tach importance to position and wealth; to be afraid of the face of man!

What is the divine antidote against all these evils? Just this — the fear of God. If we set the Lord before us, at all times, it will effectually deliver us from the pernicious influence of partiality, prejudice and the fear of men. It will lead us to wait, humbly on the Lord, for guidance and counsel in all that may come before us; and thus we shall be preserved from forming hasty and one-sided judgments of men and things — that fruitful source of mischief amongst the Lord's people, in all ages.

We shall now dwell, for a few moments, on the very affecting manner in which Moses brings before the congregation all the circumstances connected with the mission of the spies which, like the appointment of the judges, is in perfect keeping with the scope and object of the book. This is only what we might expect. There is not, there could not be, a single sentence of useless repetition in the divine volume. Still less could there be a single flaw, a single discrepancy, a single contradictory statement. The word of God is absolutely perfect — perfect as a whole, perfect in all its parts. We must firmly hold and faithfully confess this in the face of this infidel age.

We speak not of human translations of the word of God, in which there must be more or less of imperfection; though even here, we cannot but be "filled with wonder, love and praise," when we mark the way in which our God so manifestly presided over our excellent English Translation, so that the poor man at the back of a mountain may be assured of possessing, in his common English Bible, the Revelation of God to his soul. And most surely we are warranted in saying that this is just what we might look for at the hands of our God. It is but reasonable to infer that the One who inspired the writers of the Bible would also watch over the translation of it; for, inasmuch as He gave it originally, in His grace, to those who could read Hebrew and Greek, so would He not, in the same grace, give it in every language under heaven? Blessed for ever be His holy Name, it is His gracious desire to speak to every man in the very tongue in which he was born; to tell us the sweet tale of His grace, the glad tidings of salvation, in the very accents in which our mothers whispered into our infant ears those words of love that went right home to our very hearts. (See Acts 2:5-8.)

Oh, that men were more impressed and affected with the truth and power of all this; and then we should not be troubled with so many foolish and unlearned questions about the Bible.

Let us now hearken to the account given by Moses of the mission of the spies — its origin and its result. We shall find it full of most weighty instruction, if only the ear be open to hear and the heart duly prepared to ponder.

"And I commanded you at that time all the things which ye should do." The path of simple obedience was plainly set before them. They had but to tread it with an obedient heart and firm step. They had not to reason about consequences, or weigh the results. All these they had just to leave in the hands of God, and move on, with steady purpose, in the blessed path of obedience.

"And when we departed from Horeb, we went through all that great and terrible wilderness, which ye saw by the way of the mountain of the Amorites, as the Lord our God commanded us; and we came to Kadesh-barnea. And I said to you, Ye are come to the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord our God doth give to us. Behold, the Lord thy God has set the land before

thee: go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers has said to thee; fear not, neither be discouraged."

Here was their warrant for entering upon immediate possession. The Lord their God had given them the land, and set it before them. It was theirs by His free gift, the gift of His sovereign grace, in pursuance of the covenant made with their fathers. It was His eternal purpose to possess the land of Canaan through the seed of Abraham His friend. This ought to have been enough to set their hearts perfectly at rest, not only as to the character of the land, but also as to their entrance upon it. There was no need of spies. Faith never wants to spy what God has given. It argues that what He has given must be worth having; and that He is able to put us in full possession of all that His grace has bestowed. Israel might have concluded that the same hand that had conducted them "through all that great and terrible wilderness" could bring them in and plant them in their destined inheritance.

So faith would have reasoned; for it always reasons from God down to circumstances; never from circumstances up to God. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" This is faith's argument, grand in its simplicity, and simple in its moral grandeur.

When God fills the whole range of the soul's vision, difficulties are little accounted of. They are either not seen, or, if seen, they are viewed as occasions for the display of divine power. Faith exults in seeing God triumphing over difficulties.

But alas! the people were not governed by faith on the occasion now before us; and, therefore they had recourse to spies. Of this Moses reminds them, and that, too, in language at once most tender and faithful. "And ye came near to me, every one of you, and said, We will send men before us, and they shall search us out the land, and bring us word again by what way we must go up, and into what cities we shall come."

Surely, they might well have trusted God for all this. The One who had brought them up out of Egypt; made a way for them through the sea; guided them through the trackless desert, was fully able to bring them into the land. But no; they would send spies, simply because their hearts had not simple confidence in the true, the living, the Almighty God.

Here lay the moral root of the matter; and it is well that the reader should thoroughly seize this point. True it is that, in the history given in Numbers, the Lord told Moses to send the

spies. But why? Because of the moral condition of the people. And here we see the characteristic difference and yet the lovely harmony of the two books. Numbers gives us the public history, Deuteronomy the secret source of the mission of the spies; and as it is in perfect keeping with Numbers to give us the former, so it is in perfect keeping with Deuteronomy to give us the latter. The one is the complement of the other. We could not fully understand the subject, had we only the history given in Numbers. It is the touching commentary; given in Deuteronomy, which completes the picture. How Perfect is scripture! All we need is the eye anointed to see, and the heart prepared to appreciate its moral glories.

It may be, however, that the reader still feels some difficulty in reference to the question of the spies. He may feel disposed to ask, how it could be wrong to send them, when the Lord told them to do so? The answer is, the wrong was not in the act of sending them when they were told, but in the wish to send them at all. The wish was the fruit of unbelief; and the command to send them was because of that unbelief.

We may see something of the same in the matter of divorce, in Matthew 19. "The Pharisees also came to him, tempting him,

and saying to him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And he answered and said to them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder. They say to him, why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He says to them, Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so."

It was not in keeping with God's original institution, or according to His heart, that a man should put away his wife; but, in consequence of the hardness of the human heart, divorce was permitted by the lawgiver. Is there any difficulty in this? Surely not, unless the heart is bent on making one. Neither is there any difficulty in the matter of the spies. Israel ought not to have needed them. Simple faith would never have thought of them. But the Lord saw the real condition of things, and issued a command accordingly; just as, in after ages, He saw the heart

of the people bent on having a king, and he commanded Samuel to give them one. "And the Lord said to Samuel, Harken to the voice of the people in all that they say to thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of Egypt, even to this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also to thee. Now, therefore, hearken to their voice; howbeit yet protest solemnly to them, and show them the manner of the king that shall reign over them." (1 Sam. 8:7-9.)

Thus we see that the mere granting of a desire is no proof whatever that such desire is according to the mind of God. Israel ought not to have asked for a king. Was not Jehovah sufficient? Was not He their King? Could not He, as He had ever done, lead them forth to battle, and fight for them? Why seek an arm of flesh? Why turn away from the living, the true, the Almighty God, to lean on a poor fellow worm? What power was there in a king but that which God might see fit to bestow upon him? None whatever. All the power, all the wisdom, all real good was in the Lord their God; and it was there for them

— there at all times, to meet their every need. They had but to lean upon His almighty arm, to draw upon His exhaustless resources, to find all their springs in Him.

When they did get a king, according to their hearts' desire, what did he do for them? "All the people followed him trembling." The more closely we study the melancholy history of Saul's reign, the more we see that he was, almost from the very outset, a positive hindrance rather than a help. We have but to read his history, from first to last, in order to see the truth of this. His whole reign was a lamentable failure, aptly and forcibly set forth in two glowing sentences of the prophet Hosea, "I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in my wrath." In a word, he was the answer to the unbelief and self-will of the people, and therefore, all their brilliant hopes and expectations respecting him were, most lamentably, disappointed. He failed to answer the mind of God; and, as a necessary consequence, he failed to meet the people's need. He proved himself wholly unworthy of the crown and sceptre; and his ignominious fall on mount Gilboa was in melancholy keeping with his whole career.

Now, when we come to consider the mission of the spies, we find it too, like the appointment of a king, ending in complete failure and disappointment. It could not be otherwise, inasmuch as it was the fruit of unbelief. True, God gave them spies; and Moses, with touching grace, says, "The saying pleased me well; and I took twelve men of you, one of a tribe." It was grace coming down to the condition of the people, and consenting to a plan which was suited to that condition. But this, by no means, proves that either the plan or the condition was according to the mind of God. Blessed be His Name, He can meet us in our unbelief, though He is grieved and dishonoured by it. He delights in bold, artless faith. It is the only thing, in all this world, that gives Him His proper place. Hence, when Moses said to the people, "Behold, the Lord thy God has set the land before thee; go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers has said to thee; fear not, neither be discouraged;" what would have been the proper response from them? "Here we are; lead on, Almighty Lord; lead on to victory. Thou art enough. With Thee as our leader, we move on with joyful confidence. Difficulties are nothing to Thee, and therefore they are nothing to us. Thy word and thy presence are all we want. In these we find, at once, our authority and power. It matters not in the least

to us who or what may be before us: mighty giants, towering walls, frowning bulwarks; what are they all in the presence of the Lord God of Israel, but as withered leaves before the whirlwind? Lead on, O Lord."

This would have been the language of faith; but alas! it was not the language of Israel, on the occasion before us. God was not sufficient for them. They were not prepared to go up, leaning on His arm alone. They were not satisfied with His report of the land. They would send spies, anything for the poor human heart but simple dependence upon the one living and true God. The natural man cannot trust God, simply because he does not know Him. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee."

God must be known, in order to be trusted; and the more fully He is trusted, the better He becomes known. There is nothing, in all this world, so truly blessed as a life of simple faith. But it must be a reality and not a mere profession. It is utterly vain to talk of living by faith, while the heart is secretly resting on some creature prop. The true believer has to do, exclusively, with God. He finds in Him all his resources. It is not that he undervalues the instruments or the channels which God is pleased

to use; quite the reverse. He values them exceedingly; and cannot but value them as the means which God uses for his help and blessing. But he does not allow them to displace God. The language of his heart is, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock."

There is peculiar force in the word "only." It searches the heart thoroughly. To look to the creature, directly or indirectly, for the supply of any need, is in principle to depart from the life of faith. And oh! it is miserable work, this looking, in any way, to creature streams. It is just as morally degrading as the life of faith is morally elevating. And not only is it degrading, but disappointing. Creature props give way, and creature streams run dry; but they that trust in the Lord shall never be confounded, and never want any good thing. Had Israel trusted the Lord instead of sending spies, they would have had a very different tale to tell. But spies they would send, and the whole affair proved a most humiliating failure.

"And they turned, and went up into the mountain, and came to the valley of Eshcol, and searched it out. And they took of the fruit of the land in their hands, and brought it down to us, and brought us word again, and said, It is a good land which the

Lord our God doth give us." How could it possibly be otherwise, when God was giving it? Did they want spies to tell them that the gift of God was good? Assuredly, they ought not. An artless faith would have argued thus, "Whatever God gives, must be worthy of Himself; we want no spies to assure us of this." But ah! this artless faith is an uncommonly rare gem in this world; and even those who possess it know but little of its value or how to use it. It is one thing to talk of the life of faith, and another thing altogether to live it. The theory is one thing; the living reality, quite another. But let us never forget that it is the privilege of every child of God to live by faith; and, further, that the life of faith takes in everything that the believer can possibly need, from the starting-post to the goal of his earthly career. We have already touched upon this important point; it cannot be too earnestly or constantly insisted upon.

With regard to the mission of the spies, the reader will note, with interest, the way in which Moses refers to it. He confines himself to that portion of their testimony which was according to truth. He says nothing about the ten infidel spies. This is in perfect keeping with the scope and object of the book. Everything is brought to bear, in a moral way, on the con-

science of the congregation. He reminds them that they themselves had proposed to send the spies; and yet, although the spies had placed before them the fruit of the land, and borne testimony to its goodness, they would not go up. "Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God." There was no excuse whatever. It was evident that their hearts were in a state of positive unbelief and rebellion, and the mission of the spies, from first to last, only made this fully manifest.

"And ye murmured in your tents, and said, Because the Lord hated us" — a terrible lie, on the very face of it! — "he has brought us forth out of the land of Egypt, to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us." What a strange proof of hatred! How utterly absurd are the arguments of unbelief! Surely, had He hated them, nothing was easier than to leave them to die amid the brick kilns of Egypt, beneath the cruel lash of Pharaoh's taskmasters. Why take so much trouble about them? Why those ten plagues sent upon the land of their oppressors? Why, if He hated them, did He not allow the waters of the Red Sea to overwhelm them as they had overwhelmed their enemies? Why had He delivered them from the sword of

Amalek? In a word, why all these marvellous triumphs of grace on their behalf, if He hated them? Ah! if they had not been governed by a spirit of dark and senseless unbelief, such a brilliant array of evidence would have led them to a conclusion the direct opposite of that to which they gave utterance. There is nothing beneath the canopy of heaven so stupidly irrational as unbelief. And, on the other hand, there is nothing so sound, clear and logical as the simple argument of a child-like faith. May the reader ever be enabled to prove the truth of this!

"And ye murmured in your tents." Unbelief is not only a blind and senseless reasoner, but a dark and gloomy murmurer. It neither gets to the right side of things, nor the bright side of things. It is always in the dark, always in the wrong, simply because it shuts out God, and looks only at circumstances. They said, "Whither shall we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our heart, saying, The people is greater and taller than we." But they were not greater than Jehovah. "And the cities are great and walled up to heaven" — the gross exaggeration of unbelief! — "and moreover, we have seen the sons of the Anakims there."

Now, faith would say, Well, what though the cities be walled up to heaven, our God is above them, for He is in heaven. What are great cities or lofty walls to Him who formed the universe, and sustains it by the word of His power? What are Anakims in the presence of the Almighty God? If the land were covered with walled cities from Dan to Beersheba, and if the giants were as numerous as the leaves of the forest, they would be as the chaff of the threshing-floor before the One who has promised to give the land of Canaan to the seed of Abraham, His friend, for an everlasting possession."

But Israel had not faith, as the inspired apostle tells us in the third chapter of Hebrews, "They could not enter in because of unbelief." Here lay the great difficulty. The walled cities and the terrible Anakims would soon have been disposed of had Israel only trusted God. He would have made very short work of all these. But ah! that deplorable unbelief! it ever stands in the way of our blessing. It hinders the outshining of the glory of God; it casts a dark shadow over our souls, and robs us of the privilege of proving the all-sufficiency of our God to meet our every need and remove our every difficulty.

Blessed be His Name, He never fails a trusting heart. It is His delight to honour the very largest drafts that faith hands in at His exhaustless treasury. His assuring word to us ever is, "Be not afraid; only believe." And again, "According to your faith be it to you." Precious soul-stirring words! May we all realise, more fully, their living power and sweetness! We may rest assured of this, we can never go too far in counting on God; it would be a simple impossibility. Our grand mistake is that we do not draw more largely upon His infinite resources. "Said I not to thee, that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"

Thus we can see why it was that Israel failed to see the glory of God, on the occasion before us. They did not believe. The mission of the spies proved a complete failure. As it began so it ended, in the most deplorable unbelief. God was shut out. Difficulties filled their vision.

"They could not enter in." They could not see the glory of God. Harken to the deeply affecting words of Moses. It does the heart good to read them. They touch the very deepest springs of our renewed being. "Then I said to you, Dread not, neither be afraid of them. The Lord your God, which goes before you, he

shall fight for you" — only think of God fighting for people! Think of Jehovah as a Man of war? — "He shall fight for you according to all that he did for you in Egypt before your eyes; and in the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bare thee, as a man doth bear his son, in all the way that ye went, until ye came into this place. Yet in this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God, who went in the way before you, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in, in fire by night, to show you by what way ye should go, and by a cloud by day.

What moral force, what touching sweetness in this appeal! How clearly we can see here, as indeed on every page of the book, that Deuteronomy is not a barren repetition of facts, but a most powerful commentary on those facts. It is well that the reader should be thoroughly clear as to this. If, in the book of Exodus or Numbers, the inspired lawgiver records the actual facts of Israel's wilderness life, in the book of Deuteronomy he comments on those facts with a pathos that quite melts the heart. And here it is that the exquisite style of Jehovah's acts is pointed out and dwelt upon, with such inimitable skill and delicacy. Who could consent to give up the lovely figure set forth

in the words, "As a man doth bear his son"? Here we have the style of the action. Could we do without this? Assuredly not. It is the style of an action that touches the heart, because it is the style that so peculiarly expresses the heart. If the power of the hand, or the wisdom of the mind is seen in the substance of an action, the love of the heart comes out in the style. Even a little child can understand this, though he might not be able to explain it.

But alas! Israel could not trust God to bring them into the land. Notwithstanding the marvellous display of His power, His faithfulness, His goodness and loving kindness, from the brick kilns of Egypt to the very borders of the land of Canaan, yet they did not believe. With an array of evidence which ought to have satisfied any heart, they still doubted. "And the Lord heard the voice of your words, and was wroth, and sware, saying, Surely, there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see that good land, which I sware to give to your fathers, save Caleb the son of Jephunneh; he shall see it; and to him will I give the land that he has trodden upon, and to his children, because he has wholly followed the Lord."

"Said I not to thee that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Such is the divine order. Men will tell you that seeing is believing; but, in the kingdom of God, believing is seeing. Why was it that not a man of that evil generation was allowed to see the good land? Simply because they did not believe on the Lord their God. On the other hand, why was Caleb allowed to see and take possession? Simply because he believed. Unbelief is ever the great hindrance in the way of our seeing the glory of God. "He did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief." If Israel had only believed, only trusted the Lord their God, only confided in the love of His heart and in the power of His arm, He would have brought them in and planted them in the mountain of His inheritance.

And just so is it with the Lord's people, now. There is no limit to the blessing which we might enjoy, could we only count more fully upon God. "All things are possible to him that believes." Our God will never say, "You have drawn too largely; you expect too much." Impossible. It is the joy of His loving heart to answer the very largest expectations of faith.

Let us then draw largely. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." The exhaustless treasury of heaven is thrown open to faith.

"All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." Faith is the divine secret of the whole matter, the main spring of Christian life, from first to last. Faith wavers not, staggers not. Unbelief is ever a waverer and a staggerer, and hence it never sees the glory of God, never sees His power. It is deaf to His voice and blind to His actings; it depresses the heart and weakens the hands; it darkens the path and hinders all progress. It kept Israel out of the land of Canaan, for forty years; and we have no conception of the amount of blessing, privilege, power and usefulness which we are constantly missing through its terrible influence. If faith were in more lively exercise in our hearts, what a different condition of things we should witness in our midst. What is the secret of the deplorable deadness and barrenness throughout the wide field of Christian profession? How are we to account for our impoverished condition, our low tone, our stunted growth? Why is it that we see such poor results in every department of Christian work? Why are there so few genuine conversions? Why are our evangelists so frequently cast down by reason of the paucity of their sheaves? How are

we to answer all these questions? What is the cause? Will any one attempt to say it is not our unbelief?

No doubt, our divisions have much to do with it; our worldliness, our carnality, our self-indulgence, our love of ease. But what is the remedy for all these evils? How are our hearts to be drawn out in genuine love to all our brethren by faith — that precious principle "that works by love." Thus the blessed apostle says to the dear young converts at Thessalonica, "Your faith grows exceedingly." And what then? "The love of every one of you all toward each other abounds." Thus it must ever be. Faith puts us into direct contact with the eternal spring of love in God Himself; and the necessary consequence is that our hearts are drawn out in love to all who belong to Him — all in whom we can, in the very feeblest way, trace His blessed image. We cannot possibly be near the Lord and not love all who, in every place, call upon His Name out of a pure heart. The nearer we are to Christ, the more intensely we must be knit, in true brotherly love, to every member of His body.

Then, as to worldliness, in all its varied forms; how is it to be overcome? Hear the reply of another inspired apostle. "For, whatsoever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the

victory that overcomes the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcomes the world, but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God?" The new man, walking in the power of faith, lives above the world, above its motives, above its objects, its principles, its habits, its fashions. He has nothing in common with it. Though in it, he is not of it. He moves right athwart its current. He draws all his springs from heaven. His life, his hope, his all is there; and he ardently longs to be there himself, when his work on earth is done.

Thus we see what a mighty principle faith is. It purifies the heart, it works by love, and it overcomes the world. In short it links the heart, in living power, with God Himself; and this is the secret of true elevation, holy benevolence, and divine purity. No marvel, therefore, that Peter calls it "precious faith," for truly it is precious beyond all human thought.

See how this mighty principle acted in Caleb, and the blessed fruit it produced. He was permitted to realise the truth of those words, uttered hundreds of years afterwards, "according to your faith be it to you." He believed that God was able to bring them into the land; and that all the difficulties and hindrances were simply bread for faith. And God, as He ever does, answered his

faith. "Then the children of Judah came to Joshua in Gilgal; and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said to him, Thou knowest the thing that the Lord said to Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadesh-barnea. Forty years old was I when Moses the servant of the Lord sent me from Kadesh-barnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as it was in my heart" — the simple testimony of a bright and lovely faith! — "nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt; but I wholly followed the Lord my God. And Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the Lord my God. And now, behold, the Lord has kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the Lord spake this word to Moses, while the children of Israel wandered in the wilderness; and now, lo, I am this day fourscore and five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me; as my strength was then, even so is my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in. Now therefore give me this mountain, whereof the Lord spake in that day; for thou heardest in that day how the Anakims were there, and that the cities were great and fenced; if so be the

Lord will be with me, then I shall be able to drive them out, as the Lord said."

How refreshing are the utterances of an artless faith! How edifying! How truly encouraging! How vividly they contrast with the gloomy, depressing, withering accents of dark, God-dishonouring unbelief! "And Joshua blessed him, and gave to Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, Hebron for an inheritance. Hebron therefore became the inheritance of Caleb, the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite, to this day, because that he wholly followed the Lord God of Israel." (Joshua 14.) Caleb, like his father Abraham, was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and we may say, with all possible confidence, that, inasmuch as faith ever honours God, He ever delights to honour faith; and we feel persuaded that if only the Lord's people could more fully confide in God, if they would but draw more largely upon His infinite resources, we should witness a totally different condition of things from what we see around us. "Said I not to thee that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?" Oh! for a more lively faith in God — a bolder grasp, of His faithfulness, His goodness and His power! Then we might look for more glorious results in the gospel field; more zeal, more

energy, more intense devotedness in the church of God; and more of the fragrant fruits of righteousness in the life of believers individually.

We shall now, for a moment, look at the closing verses of our chapter, in which we shall find some very weighty instruction. And, first of all, we see the actings of divine government displayed in a most solemn and impressive manner. Moses refers, in a very touching way, to the fact of his exclusion from the promised land. "Also the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not go in thither."

Mark the words, "for your sakes." It was very needful to remind the congregation that it was on their account that Moses, that beloved and honoured servant of the Lord, was prevented from crossing the Jordan, and setting his foot upon the land of Canaan. True, "he spake unadvisedly with his lips;" but "they provoked his spirit" to do so. This ought to have touched them to the quick. They not only failed, through unbelief, to enter in themselves, but they were the cause of his exclusion, much as he longed to see "that goodly mountain and Lebanon." (see Ps. 106:32.)

But the government of God is a grand and awful reality. Let us never, for one moment, forget this. The human mind may marvel why a few ill-advised words, a few hasty sentences should be the cause of keeping such a beloved and honoured servant of God from that which he so ardently desired. But it is our place to bow the head, in humble adoration and holy reverence, not to reason or judge. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Most surely. He can make no mistake. "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou king of nations." "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints; and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." "Our God is a consuming fire;" and "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

Does it, in any wise, interfere with the action and range of the divine government, that we, as Christians, are under the reign of grace? By no means. It is as true, today, as ever it was that "whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap." Hence, therefore, it would be a serious mistake for any one to draw a plea from the freedom of divine grace to trifle with the enactments of divine government. The two things are perfectly distinct, and should never be confounded. Grace can pardon — freely, fully,

eternally — but the wheels of Jehovah's governmental chariot roll on, in crushing power, and appalling solemnity. Grace pardoned Adam's sin; but government drove him out of Eden, to earn a living, by the sweat of his brow, amid the thorns and thistles of a cursed earth. Grace pardoned David's sin; but the sword of government hung over his house to the end. Bathsheba was the mother of Solomon; but Absalom rose in rebellion.

So with Moses, grace brought him to the top of Pisgah and showed him the land; but government sternly and absolutely forbade his entrance thither. Nor does it, in the least, touch this mighty principle to be told that Moses, in his official capacity, as the representative of the legal system, could not bring the people into the land. This is quite true; but it leaves wholly untouched the solemn truth now before us. Neither in Numbers 20, nor in Deuteronomy 1, have we anything about Moses in his official capacity. It is himself personally, we have before us; and he is forbidden to enter the land because of having spoken unadvisedly with his lips.

It will be well for us all to ponder deeply, as in the immediate presence of God, this great practical truth. We may rest assured

that the more truly we enter into the knowledge of grace, the more we shall feel the solemnity of government, and entirely justify its enactments. Of this we are most fully persuaded. But there is imminent danger of taking up, in a light and careless manner, the doctrines of grace while the heart and the life are not brought under the sanctifying influence of those doctrines. This has to be watched against with holy jealousy. There is nothing in all this world more awful than mere fleshly familiarity with the theory of salvation by grace. It opens the door for every form of licentiousness. Hence it is that we feel the necessity of pressing upon the conscience of the reader the practical truth of the government of God. It is most salutary at all times, but particularly so in this our day when there is such a fearful tendency to turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness. We shall invariably find that those who most fully enter into the deep blessedness of being under the reign of grace do also, most thoroughly, justify the actings of divine government.

But we learn, from the closing lines of our chapter, that the people were by no means prepared to submit themselves under the governmental hand of God. In short, they would neither have grace nor government. When invited to go up, at once,

and take possession of the land, with the fullest assurances of the divine presence and power with them, they hesitated and refused to go. They gave themselves up, completely, to a spirit of dark unbelief. In vain did Joshua and Caleb sound in their ears the most encouraging words; in vain did they see before their eyes the rich fruit of the goodly land; in vain did Moses seek to move them by the most soul-stirring words; they would not go up, when they were told to go. And What then? They were taken at their word. According to their unbelief, so was it to them. "Moreover, your little ones, which ye said should be a prey, and your children, which in that day had no knowledge between good and evil, they shall go in thither, and to them will I give it, and they shall possess it. But as for you, turn you, and take your journey into the wilderness, by the way of the Red Sea."

How sad! And yet, how else could it be? If they would not, in simple faith, go up into the land, there remained nothing for them but turning back into the wilderness. But to this they would not submit. They would neither avail themselves of the provisions of grace nor bow to the sentence of judgement. "Then ye answered and said to me, We have sinned against the

Lord; we will go up and fight, according to all that the Lord our God commanded us. And when ye had girded on every man his weapon of war, ye were ready to go up into the hill."

This looked like contrition and self judgement; but it was hollow and false. It is a very easy thing to say, "We have sinned." Saul said it in his day; but he said it without heart, without any genuine sense of what he was saying. We may easily gather the force and value of the words "I have sinned" from the fact that they were immediately followed by — "Honour me now, I pray thee, before the elders of my people." What a strange contradiction! "I have sinned," yet "Honour me." If he had really felt his sin, how different his language would have been! How different his spirit, style and deportment! But it was all a solemn mockery. Only conceive a man full of himself, making use of a form of words, without one atom of true heart feeling; and then, in order to get honour for himself, going through the empty formality of worshipping God. What a picture! Can anything be more sorrowful? How terribly offensive to Him who desires truth in the inward parts, and who seeks those to worship Him who worship Him in spirit and in truth! The feeblest breathings of a broken and contrite heart are precious to God;

but oh, how offensive to Him are the hollow formalities of a mere religiousness, the object of which is to exalt man in his own eyes and in the eyes of his fellow! How perfectly worthless is the mere lip confession of sin where the heart does not feel it! As a recent writer has well remarked, "It is an easy thing to say, We have sinned; but how often we have to learn that it is not the quick abrupt confession of sin which affords evidence that sin is felt! It is rather a proof of hardness of heart. The conscience feels that a certain act of confessing the sin is necessary, but perhaps there is hardly anything which more hardens the heart than the habit of confessing sin without feeling it. This I believe, is one of the great snares of Christendom from of old and now — that is the stereotyped acknowledgment of sin, the mere habit of hurrying through a formula of confession to God. I dare say we have almost all done so, without referring to any particular mode; for alas! there is formality enough; and without having written forms, the heart may frame forms of its own, as we may have observed, if not known it, in our own experience, without finding fault with other people."\*

\* *Introductory to the Pentateuch*," by W. Kelly. Broom, Paternoster Square.

Thus it was with Israel, at Kadesh. Their confession of sin was utterly worthless. There was no truth in it. Had they felt what they were saying, they would have bowed to the judgement of God, and meekly accepted the consequence of their sin. There is no finer proof of true contrition than quiet submission to the governmental dealings of God. Look at the case of Moses. See how he bowed his head to the divine discipline. "The Lord," he says, "was angry with me for your sakes, saying, Thou also shalt not go in thither. But Joshua the son of Nun, which stands before thee, he shall go in thither: encourage him; for he shall cause Israel to inherit it."

Here, Moses shows them that they were the cause of his exclusion from the land; and yet he utters not a single murmuring word, but meekly bows to the divine judgement, not only content to be superseded by another, but ready to appoint and encourage his successor. There is no trace of jealousy or envy here. It was enough for that beloved and honoured servant if God was glorified and the need of the congregation met. He was not occupied with himself or his own interests, but with the glory of God and the blessing of His people.

But the people manifested a very different spirit. "We will go up and fight." How vain! How foolish! When commanded by God and encouraged by His true-hearted servants to go up and possess the land, they replied, "Whither shall we go up?" And when commanded to turn back into the wilderness, they replied, "We will go up and fight."

"And the Lord said to me, Say to them, Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you; lest ye be smitten before your enemies. So I spake to you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord, and went presumptuously up into the hill. And the Amorites which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even to Hormah."

It was quite impossible for Jehovah to accompany them along the path of self-will and rebellion; and, most assuredly, Israel, without the divine presence, could be no match for the Amorites. If God be for us and with us, all must be victory. But we cannot count on God if we are not treading the path of obedience. It is simply the height of folly to imagine that we can have God with us if our ways are not right. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous runs into it and is safe."

But if we are not walking in practical righteousness, it is wicked presumption to talk of having the Lord as our strong tower.

Blessed be His Name, He can meet us in the very depths of our weakness and failure, provided there be the genuine and hearty confession of our true condition. But to assume that we have the Lord with us, while we are doing our own will, and walking in palpable unrighteousness, is nothing but wickedness and hardness of heart. "Trust in the Lord, and do good." This is the divine order; but to talk of trusting in the Lord, while doing evil, is to turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and place ourselves completely in the hands of the devil who only seeks our moral ruin. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him." When we have a good conscience, we can lift up the head and move on through all sorts of difficulties; but to attempt to tread the path of faith with a bad conscience, is the most dangerous thing in this world. We can only hold up the shield of faith when our loins are girt with truth, and the breast covered with the breast-plate of righteousness.

It is of the utmost importance that Christians should seek to maintain practical righteousness, in all its branches. There is immense moral weight and value in these words of the blessed apostle Paul, "Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and men." He ever sought to wear the breastplate, and to be clothed in that white linen which is the righteousness of saints. And so should we. It is our holy privilege to tread, day by day, with firm step, the path of duty, the path of obedience, the path on which the light of God's approving countenance ever shines. Then, assuredly, we can count on God, lean upon Him, draw from Him, find all our springs in Him, wrap ourselves up in His faithfulness, and thus move on, in peaceful communion and holy worship, toward our heavenly home.

It is not, we repeat, that we cannot look to God, in our weakness, our failure, and even when we have erred and sinned. Blessed be His Name, we can; and His ear is ever open to our cry. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," (1 John 1.) "Out of the depths have I cried to thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice; let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplic-

ations. If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." (Ps. 130) There is absolutely no limit to divine forgiveness, inasmuch as there is no limit to the extent of the atonement, no limit to the virtue and efficacy of the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, which cleanses from all sin; no limit to the prevalence of the intercession of our adorable Advocate, our great High Priest, who is able to save to the uttermost — right through and through to the end, them that come to God by Him.

All this is most blessedly true; it is largely taught and variously illustrated throughout the volume of inspiration. But the confession of sin, and the pardon thereof must not be confounded with practical righteousness. There are two distinct conditions in which we may call upon God; we may call upon Him in deep contrition, and be heard; or we may call upon Him with a good conscience and an uncondemning heart, and be heard. But the two things are very distinct; and not only are they distinct in themselves, but they both stand in marked contrast with that indifference and hardness of heart which would presume to count on God in the face of positive disobedience and practical

unrighteousness. It is this which is so dreadful in the sight of the Lord, and which must bring down His heavy judgement. Practical righteousness He owns and approves; confessed sin He can freely and fully pardon; but to imagine that we can put our trust in God, while our feet are treading the path of iniquity, is nothing short of the most shocking impiety. "Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these. For if ye thoroughly amend your ways and your doings; if ye thoroughly execute judgement between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt; then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever. Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder and commit adultery and swear falsely, and burn incense to Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?" (Jeremiah 7.)

God deals in moral realities. He desires truth in the inward parts; and if men will presume to hold the truth in unrighteous-

ness, they must look out for His righteous judgement. It is the thought of all this that makes us feel the awful condition of the professing church. The solemn passage which we have just culled from the prophet Jeremiah, though bearing, primarily, upon the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, has a very pointed application to Christendom. We find in 2 Timothy 3, that all the abominations of heathenism, as detailed in the close of Romans 1, are reproduced in the last days, under the garb of the Christian profession, and in immediate connection with "a form of godliness." What must be the end of such a condition of things? Unmitigated wrath. The very heaviest judgments of God are reserved for that vast mass of baptised profession which we call Christendom. The moment is rapidly approaching when all the beloved and blood-bought people of God shall be called away out of this dark and sinful, though so-called "christian world," to be for ever with the Lord, in that sweet home of love prepared in the Father's house. Then the "strong delusion" shall be sent upon Christendom — upon those very countries where the light of a full-orbed Christianity has shone; where a full and free gospel has been preached; where the Bible has been circulated by millions, and where all,

in some way or another, profess the name of Christ, and call themselves Christians.

And what then? What is to follow this "strong delusion"? Any fresh testimony? Any further overtures of mercy? Any further effort of long suffering grace? Not for Christendom! Not for the rejecters of the gospel of God! Not for Christless, Godless professors of the hollow and worthless forms of Christianity! The heathen shall hear "The everlasting gospel," "The gospel of the kingdom;" but as for that terrible thing, that most frightful anomaly called Christendom, "the vine of the earth," nothing remains but the wine press of the wrath of Almighty God, the blackness of darkness for ever, the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

Reader, these are the true sayings of God. Nothing would be easier than to place before your eyes an array of scripture proof perfectly unanswerable; this would be foreign to our present object. The New Testament, from cover to cover, sets forth the solemn truth above enunciated; and every system of theology under the sun that teaches differently will be found, on this point at least, to be totally false.

## Chapter 2.

The closing lines of chapter 1 show us the people weeping before the Lord. "And ye returned and wept before the Lord; but the Lord would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear to you. So ye abode in Kadesh many days, according to the days that ye abode there."

There was no more reality in their tears than in their words. Their weeping was no more to be trusted than their confession. It is possible for people to confess and shed tears without any true sense of sin, in the presence of God. This is very solemn. It is really mocking God. We know, blessed for ever be His Name, that a truly contrite heart is His delight. He makes His abode with such. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." The tears that flow from a penitent heart are more precious, by far, to God, than the cattle upon a thousand hills, because they prove that there is room in that heart for Him; and this is what He seeks, in His infinite grace. He wants to dwell in our hearts, and fill us with the deep, unspeakable joy of His own most blessed presence.

But Israel's confession and tears at Kadesh were not real; and, hence, the Lord could not accept them. The feeblest cry of a broken heart ascends directly to the throne of God, and is immediately answered by the soothing healing balm of His pardoning love; but when tears and confession stand connected with self-will and rebellion, they are not only utterly worthless, but a positive insult to the Divine Majesty.

Thus, then, the people had to turn back into the wilderness, and wander there for forty years. There was nothing else for it. They would not go up into the land, in simple faith, with God; and He would not go up with them in their self-will and self-confidence; they had therefore simply to accept the consequence of their disobedience. If they would not enter the land, they must fall in the wilderness.

How solemn is all this! And how solemn is the Spirit's commentary upon it, in the third chapter of Hebrews! And how pointed and forcible the application to us! We must quote the passage for the benefit of the reader "Wherefore — as the Holy Ghost says, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw

My works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in heart, and they have not known my ways. So I sware in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest. — Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end. While it is said, Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke; howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For to us was the gospel preached as well as to them; but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard."

Here, as in every page of the inspired volume, we learn that unbelief is the thing that grieves the heart and dishonours the Name of God. And not only so, but it robs us of the blessings, the dignities and the privileges which infinite grace bestows. We have very little idea of how much we lose, in every way, through the unbelief of our hearts. Just as in Israel's case, the land was before them, in all its fruitfulness and beauty; and they were commanded to go and take possession, but, "They could not enter in because of unbelief;" so with us, we fail to possess ourselves of the fullness of blessing which sovereign grace has put within our reach. The very treasure of heaven is thrown open to us, but we fail to appropriate. We are poor, feeble, empty and barren, when we might be rich, rigorous, full and fruitful. We are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ; but how shallow is our apprehension! how feeble our grasp! how poor our thoughts!

Then again, who can calculate how much we lose, through our unbelief, in the matter of the Lord's work in our midst? We read, in the gospel, of a certain place in which our blessed Lord could not do many mighty works because of their unbelief. Has this no voice for us? Do we too hinder Him by unbelief? We

shall perhaps be told by some, that the Lord will carry on His work irrespective of us or our faith; He will gather out His own, and accomplish the number of His elect, spite of our unbelief; not all the power of earth and hell, men and devils combined, can hinder the carrying out of His counsels and purposes; and as to His work, It is not by might nor by power, but by His Spirit. Human efforts are in vain; and the Lord's cause can never be furthered by nature's excitement.

Now, all this is perfectly true; but it leaves wholly untouched the inspired statement noted above. "He could there do not many mighty works because of their unbelief." Did not those people lose blessing through their unbelief? Did they not hinder much good being done? We must beware how we surrender our minds to the withering influence of a pernicious fatalism which, with a certain semblance of truth, is utterly false, inasmuch as it denies all human responsibility and paralyses all godly energy in the cause of Christ. We have to bear in mind that the same One who, in His eternal counsels, has decreed the end, has also designed the means; and if we, in the sinful unbelief of our hearts, and under the influence of one-sided truth, fold our arms and neglect the means, He will set us aside, and

carry on His work by other hands. He will work, blessed be His Holy Name, but we shall lose the dignity, the privilege, and the blessing of being His instruments.

Look at that striking scene in the second of Mark. It most forcibly illustrates the great principle which we desire to press upon all who may read these lines. It proves the power of faith, in connection with the carrying on of the Lord's work. If the four men, whose conduct is here set forth, had suffered themselves to be influenced by a mischievous fatalism, they would have argued that it was no use doing anything — if the palsied man was to be cured he would be cured, without human effort. Why should they busy themselves in climbing up on the house, uncovering the roof, and letting down the sick man into the midst before Jesus? Ah! it was well for the palsied man, and well for themselves that they did not act on such miserable reasoning as this. See how their lovely faith wrought! It refreshed the heart of the Lord Jesus; it brought the sick man into the place of healing, pardon and blessing; and it gave occasion for the display of divine power which arrested the attention of all present, and gave testimony to the great truth that God was

on earth, in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, healing diseases and forgiving sins.

Many other examples might be adduced, but there is no need. All scripture establishes the fact that unbelief hinders our blessing, hinders our usefulness, robs us of the rare privilege of being God's honoured instruments in the carrying on of His glorious work, and of seeing the operations of His hand and His Spirit, in our midst. And, on the other hand, that faith draws down power and blessing, not only for ourselves but for others; that it both glorifies and gratifies God, by clearing the platform of the creature and making room for the display of divine power. In short, there is no limit to the blessing which we might enjoy at the hand of our God, if our hearts were more governed by that simple faith which ever counts on Him, and which He ever delights to honour. "According to your faith, be it to you." Precious soul-stirring words! May they encourage us to draw more largely upon those exhaustless resources which we have in God. He delights to be used, blessed for ever be His holy Name! His word to us is, "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." We can never expect too much from the God of all

grace who has given us His only begotten Son, and will, with Him, freely give us all things.

But Israel could not trust God to bring them into the land; they presumed to go in their own strength, and, as a consequence, were put to flight before their enemies. Thus it must ever be. Presumption and faith are two totally different things: the former can only issue in defeat and disaster; the latter in sure and certain victory.

"Then we turned and took our journey into the wilderness, by the way of the Red Sea, as the Lord spake to me; and we compassed Mount Seir, many days." There is great moral beauty in the little word "we." Moses links himself thoroughly with the people. He and Joshua and Caleb had all to turn back into the wilderness, in company with the unbelieving congregation. This might, in the judgement of nature, seem hard; but we may rest assured, it was good and profitable. There is always deep blessing in bowing to the will of God, even though we may not always be able to see the why and the wherefore of things. We do not read of a single murmuring word from these honoured servants of God, at having to turn back into the wilderness for forty years, although they were quite ready to go up into the

land. No; they simply turned back. And well they might, when Jehovah turned back also. How could they think of complaining, when they beheld the travelling chariot of the God of Israel facing round to the wilderness? Surely the patient grace and long-suffering mercy of God might well teach them to accept, with a willing mind, a protracted sojourn in the wilderness, and to wait for the blessed moment of entrance upon the promised land.

It is a great thing always to submit ourselves meekly under the hand of God. We are sure to reap a rich harvest of blessing from the exercise. It is really taking the yoke of Christ upon us, which, as He Himself assures us, is the true secret of rest. "Come to me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest to your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

What was this yoke? It was absolute and complete subjection to the Father's will. This we see, in perfection, in our adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He could say, "Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight." Here was the point with Him. "Good in thy sight." This settled everything. Was His

testimony rejected? Did He seem to labour in vain, and spend His strength for nought and in vain? What then? "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth." It was all right. Whatever pleased the Father, pleased Him. He never had a thought or wish that was not in perfect consonance with the will of God. Hence He, as a man, ever enjoyed perfect rest. He rested in the divine counsels and purposes. The current of His peace was unruffled, from first to last.

This was the yoke of Christ; and this is what He, in His infinite grace, invites us to take upon us, in order that we, too, may find rest to our souls. Let us mark, and seek to understand the words. "Ye shall find rest." We must not confound the "rest" which He gives with the "rest" which we find. When the weary, burdened, heavy laden soul comes to Jesus in simple faith, He gives rest, settled rest, the rest which flows from the full assurance that all is done; sins for ever put away; perfect righteousness accomplished, revealed and possessed, every question divinely and eternally settled; God glorified; Satan silenced; conscience tranquilized.

Such is the rest which Jesus gives, when we come to Him. But then we have to move through the scenes and circumstances of

our daily life. There are trials, difficulties, exercises, buffetings, disappointments, and reverses of all sorts. None of these can, in the smallest degree, touch the rest which Jesus gives; but they may very seriously interfere with the rest which we are to find. They do not trouble the conscience; but they may greatly trouble the heart; they may make us very restless, very fretful, very impatient. For instance, I want to preach at Glasgow; I am announced to do so; but lo! I am shut up in a sickroom in London. This does not trouble my conscience; but it may greatly trouble my heart; I may be in a perfect fever of restlessness, ready to exclaim, "How tiresome! How terribly disappointing! Whatever am I to do? It is most untoward!"

And, how is this state of things to be met? How is the troubled heart to be tranquilized, and the restless mind to be calmed down? What do I want? I want to find rest. How am I to find it? By stooping down and taking Christ's precious yoke upon me; the very yoke which He Himself ever wore, in the days of His flesh; the yoke of complete subjection to the will of God. I want to be able to say, without one atom of reserve, to say from the very depths of my heart, "Thy will, O Lord, be done." I want such a profound sense of His perfect love to me, and of

His infinite wisdom in all His dealings with me, that I would not have it otherwise, if I could; yea, that I would not move a finger to alter my position or circumstances, feeling assured that it is very much better for me to be suffering on a sickbed in London, than speaking on a platform in Glasgow.

Here lies the deep and precious secret of rest of heart, as opposed to restlessness. It is the simple ability to thank God for everything, be it ever so contrary to our own will and utterly subversive of our own plans. It is not a mere assent to the truth that "All things work together for good to them that love God; to them that are the called according to his purpose." It is the positive sense, the actual realisation of the divine fact that the thing which God appoints is the very best thing for us. It is perfect repose in the love, wisdom, power and faithfulness of the One who has graciously undertaken for us, in everything, and charged Himself with all that concerns us for time and eternity. We know that love will always do its very best for its object. What must it be to have God doing His very best for us? Where is the heart that would not be satisfied with God's best, if only it knows ought of Him?

But He must be known ere the heart can be satisfied with His will. Eve, in the garden of Eden, beguiled by the serpent, became dissatisfied with the will of God. She wished for something which He had forbidden; and this something the devil undertook to supply. She thought the devil could do better for her than God. She thought to better her circumstances by taking herself out of the hands of God and placing herself in the hands of Satan. Hence it is, that no unrenewed heart can ever, by any possibility, rest in the will of God. If we search the human heart to the bottom, if we submit it to a faithful analysis, we shall not find so much as a single thought in unison with the will of God — no, not one. And even in the case of the true Christian, the child of God, it is only as he is enabled, by the grace of God, to mortify his own will, to reckon himself dead, and to walk in the Spirit, that he can delight in the will of God, and give thanks in everything. It is one of the very finest evidences of the new birth to be able, without a single shade of reserve, to say, in respect to every dealing of the hand of God, "Thy will be done." "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." When the heart is in this attitude, Satan can make nothing of it. It is a grand point to be able to tell the devil, and to tell the world — tell them, not in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth;

not merely with the lips, but in the heart and the life — "I am perfectly satisfied with the will of God."

This is the way to find rest. Let us see that we understand it. It is the divine remedy for that unrest, that spirit of discontent, that dissatisfaction with our appointed lot and sphere, so sadly prevalent on all hands. It is a perfect cure for that restless ambition so utterly opposed to the mind and Spirit of Christ, but so entirely characteristic of the men of this world.

May we, beloved reader, cultivate, with holy diligence, that meek and lowly spirit which is, in the sight of God, of great price, which bows to His blessed will in all things, and vindicates His dealings, come what may. Thus shall our peace flow as a river, and the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ shall be magnified, in our course, character and conduct.

Ere turning from the deeply interesting and practical subject which has been engaging our attention, we would observe that there are three distinct attitudes in which the soul may be found in reference to the dealings of God, namely, subjection, acquiescence, and rejoicing. When the will is broken, there is subjection; when the understanding is enlightened as to the divine ob-

ject, there is acquiescence; and when the affections are engaged with God Himself, there is positive rejoicing. Hence we read, in the tenth chapter of Luke, "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to babes: even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." That blessed One found His perfect delight in all the will of God. It was His meat and drink to carry out that will, at all cost. In service or in suffering, in life or in death, He never had any motive but the Father's will. He could say, "I do always the things that please him." Eternal and universal homage to His peerless Name!

We shall now proceed with our chapter.

"And the Lord spake to me, saying, Ye have compassed this mountain long enough; turn you northward."

The word of the Lord determined everything. It fixed how long the people were to remain in any given place, and it indicated, with equal distinctness, whither they were next to bend their steps. There was no need whatever for them to plan or arrange their movements. It was the province and prerogative of Je-

hovah to settle all for them; it was theirs to obey. There is no mention here of the cloud and the trumpet. It is simply God's word and Israel's obedience.

Nothing can be more precious to a child of God, if only the heart be in a right condition, than to be guided, in all his movements by the divine command. It saves a world of anxiety and perplexity. In Israel's case, called as they were to journey through a great and terrible wilderness, where there was no way, it was an unspeakable mercy to have their every movement, their every step, their every halting-place ordered by an infallible guide. There was no need whatever for them to trouble themselves about their movements, no need to inquire how long they were to stay in any given place, or where they were to go next. Jehovah settled all for them. It was for them simply to wait on Him for guidance, and to do what they were told.

Yes, reader, here was the grand point — a waiting and an obedient spirit. If this were lacking, they were liable to all sorts of questionings, reasonings and rebellious activities. When God said, "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough," had Israel replied, "No; we want to compass it a little longer; we are

very comfortable here, and we do not wish to make any change;" or, again, if, when God said, "Turn you northward, they had replied, "No; we vastly prefer going eastward;" what would have been the result? Why, they would have forfeited the divine presence with them; and who could guide, or help, or feed them then? They could only count on the divine Presence with them while they trod the path indicated by the divine command. If they chose to take their own way, there was nothing for them but famine, desolation and darkness. The stream from the smitten rock, and the heavenly manna, were only to be found in the path of obedience.

Now, we Christians have to learn our lesson in all this — a wholesome, needed, valuable lesson. It is our sweet privilege to have our path marked out for us, day by day, by divine authority. Of this we are to be most deeply and thoroughly persuaded. We are not to allow ourselves to be robbed of this rich blessing by the plausible reasonings of unbelief. God has promised to guide us, and His promise is yea and Amen. It is for us to make our own of the promise, in the artless simplicity of faith. It is as real and as solid and as true as God can make it. We cannot admit, for a moment, that Israel in the desert were better off, in

the matter of guidance, than God's heavenly people, in their passage through this world. How did Israel know the length of the haltings or the line of their march? By the word of God. Are we worse off? Far be the thought. Yea, we are better off by far than they. We have the word and Spirit of God to guide us. To us pertains the high and holy privilege of walking in the footsteps of the Son of God.

Is not this perfect guidance? Yes, thank God, it is. Hear what our adorable Lord Jesus Christ says to us: "I am the light of the world; he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Let us mark these words, "He that follows Me." He has left us "an example that we should follow his steps." This is living guidance. How did Jesus walk? Always and only by the commandment of His Father. By that He acted; by that He moved; without it He never acted, moved or spoke.

Now, we are called to follow Him; and in so doing we have the assurance of His own word that we shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life! Precious words! "The light of life." Who can sound their living depths? Who can duly estimate their worth? "The darkness is past, and the true light now shines," and it is for us to walk in the full blaze of the light that

shines along the pathway of the Son of God. Is there any uncertainty, any perplexity, any ground for hesitation here? Clearly not. How could there be, if we are following Him? It is utterly impossible to combine the two ideas.

And be it remarked here, that it is not, by any means, a question of having a literal text of scripture for every movement or every act. For example, I cannot expect to get a text of scripture, or a voice from heaven, to tell me to go to London or to Edinburgh; or how long I am to stay when I go. How, then, it may be asked, am I to know where I ought to go, or how long I am to stay? The answer is, wait on God, in singleness of eye, and sincerity of heart, and He will make your path as plain as a sunbeam. This was what Jesus did; and if we follow Him, we shall not walk in darkness. "I will guide thee with mine eye," is a most precious promise; but, in order to profit by it, we must be near enough to Him to catch the movement of His eye, and intimate enough with Him to understand its meaning.

Thus it is, in all the details of our daily life. It would answer a thousand questions, and solve a thousand difficulties, if we did but wait for divine guidance, and never attempt to move without it. If I have not gotten light to move, it is my plain duty

to be still. We should never move in uncertainty. It often happens that we harass ourselves about moving or acting, when God would have us to be still and do nothing. We go and ask God about it, but get no answer; We betake ourselves to friends for advice and counsel, but they cannot help us; for it is entirely a question between our own souls and the Lord. Thus we are plunged in doubt and anxiety. And why? Simply because the eye is not single; we are not following Jesus, "The light of the world." We may set it down as a fixed principle, a precious axiom in the divine life, that if we are following Jesus, we shall have the light of life. He has said it, and that is enough for faith.

Hence, then, we deem ourselves perfectly warranted in concluding that the One who guided His earthly people, in all their desert wanderings, can and will guide His heavenly people, now, in all their movements and in all their ways. But, on the other hand, let us see to it that we are not bent on doing our own will, having our own way and carrying out our own plans. "Be ye not as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near to thee." Be it our one grand aim to walk in the

footsteps of that blessed One who pleased not Himself, but ever moved in the current of the divine will, never acted without divine authority; who, though Himself God over all, blessed for ever, yet, having taken His place as a man, on the earth, surrendered completely His own will, and found His meat and His drink in doing the will of His Father. Thus shall our hearts and minds be kept in perfect peace; and we shall be enabled to move on, from day to day, with firm and decided step, along the path indicated for us by our divine and ever-present Guide who not only knows, as God, every step of the way, but who, as man, has trodden it before us, and left us an example that we should follow His steps. May we follow Him, more faithfully, in all things, through the gracious ministry of the Holy Ghost who dwells in us!

We have, now, to invite the reader's attention to a subject of very deep interest, and one which occupies a large place in Old Testament scripture, and is forcibly illustrated in the chapter which lies open before us, namely, God's government of the world, and His wonderful ordering of the nations of the earth. It is a grand and all-important fact to keep ever before the mind, that the One whom we know as "The God and Father of

our Lord Jesus Christ," and our God and Father, takes a real, lively, personal interest in the affairs of nations; that he takes cognisance of their movements, and of their dealings one with another.

True, all this is in immediate connection with Israel and the land of Palestine, as we read in the thirty-second chapter of our book, and eighth verse — a passage of singular interest, and of great suggestive power. "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel." Israel was, and shall yet be God's earthly centre, and it is a fact of the deepest interest that, from the very outset, as we see in Genesis 10, the Creator and Governor of the world formed the nations and fixed their bounds, according to His own sovereign will, and with direct reference to the seed of Abraham, and that narrow strip of land which they are to possess, in virtue of the everlasting covenant made with their fathers.

But, in Deuteronomy 2, we find Jehovah, in His faithfulness and righteousness, interfering to protect three distinct nations in the enjoyment of their national rights, and that, too, against

the encroachments of His own chosen people. He says to Moses, "Command thou the people, saying, Ye are to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir; and they shall be afraid of you: take ye good heed to yourselves therefore meddle not with them: for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot-breadth, because I have given mount Seir to Esau for a possession. Ye shall buy meat of them for money, that ye may eat; and ye shall also buy water of them for money, that ye may drink."

Israel might imagine that they had nothing to do but seize upon the lands of the Edomite; but they had to learn something very different; they had to be taught that the Most High is the governor amongst the nations; that the whole earth belongs to Him, and He portions it out to one or another according to His good pleasure.

This is a very magnificent fact to keep before the mind. The great majority of men think but little of it. Emperors, kings, princes, governors, statesmen, take little account of it. They forget that God interests Himself in the affairs of nations; that He bestows kingdoms, provinces and lands as He sees fit. They act, at times, as if it were only a question of military conquest,

and as if God had nothing to do with the question of national boundaries and territorial possessions. This is their great mistake. They do not understand the meaning and force of this simple sentence, "I have given mount Seir to Esau for a possession." God will never surrender His rights, in this respect. He would not allow Israel to touch a single atom of Esau's property. They were, to use a modern phrase, to pay ready cash for whatever they needed, and go quietly on their way. Indiscriminate slaughter and plunder were not to be thought of by the people of God.

And mark the lovely reason for all this. "For the Lord thy God has blessed thee in all the works of thy hand; he knows thy walking through this great wilderness; these forty years the Lord thy God has been with thee, thou hast lacked nothing." They could well afford, therefore, to let Esau alone, and leave his possessions untouched. They were the favoured objects of Jehovah's tender care. He took knowledge of every step of their weary journey through the desert. He had, in His infinite goodness, charged Himself with all their necessities. He was going to give them the land of Canaan, according to His promise to

Abraham; but the self-same hand which was giving them Canaan, had given mount Seir to Esau.

We see the same thing exactly, in reference to Moab and Ammon. "The Lord said to me, distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle; for I will not give thee of their land for a possession, because I have given Ar to the children of Lot for a possession." And, again, "And when thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them; for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon any possession; because I have given it to the children of Lot for a possession"

The possessions here alluded to had been, of old time, in the hands of giants; but it was God's purpose to give up their territories to the children of Esau and Lot, and therefore He destroyed these giants; for who or what can stand in the way of the divine counsels? "That also was accounted a land of giants; Giants dwelt therein in old times ... a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims; but the Lord destroyed them before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead; as he did to the children of Esau which dwelt in Seir, when he destroyed the

Horims from before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead even to this day." (Vv. 20-23.)

Hence, then, Israel were not permitted to meddle with the possessions of any of these three nations, the Edomites, Ammonites and Moabites. But, in the very next sentence, we see another thing altogether in the case of the Amorites. "Rise ye up, take your journey, and pass over the river Arnon: behold, I have given into thine hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land; begin to possess it, and contend with him in battle."

The great principle, in all these varied instructions to Israel, is that God's word must settle everything for His people. It was not for Israel to inquire why they were to leave the possessions of Esau and Lot untouched, and to seize upon those of Sihon. They were simply to do what they were told. God can do as He pleases. He has His eye upon the whole scene. He sees it all. Men may think He has forsaken the earth; but He has not, blessed be His Name. He is, as the apostle tells us in his discourse at Athens, "Lord of heaven and earth;" and "He has made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth; and has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation." And, further, "He has

appointed a day, in the which he will judge the habitable earth [oikoumenen] in righteousness, by that man whom he has ordained; whereof he has given assurance [given proof] to all, in that he has raised him from the dead."

Here we have a most solemn and weighty truth to which men of all ranks and conditions would do well to take heed. God is the Sovereign Ruler of the world. He gives no account of any of His matters. He puts down one and sets up another. Kingdoms, thrones, governments are all at His disposal. He acts according to His own will, in the ordering and arrangement of human affairs. But, at the same time, He holds men responsible for their actings, in the various positions in which His providence has placed them. The ruler and the ruled, the king, the governor, the magistrate, the judge, all classes and grades of men will have, sooner or later, to give account to God. Each one, as if he were the only one, will have to stand before the judgement-seat of Christ, and there review his whole course, from first to last. Every act, every word, every secret thought will there come out with awful distinctness. There will be no escaping in a crowd. The word declares that they shall be judged "every man according to his works." It will be intensely

individual, and unmistakably discriminating. In a word, it will be a divine judgement, and therefore, absolutely perfect. Nothing will be passed over. "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof at the day of judgement." Kings, governors and magistrates will have to account for the way in which they have used the power with which they were entrusted, and the wealth which passed through their hands. The noble and the wealthy who have spent their fortune and their time in folly, vanity, luxury and self-indulgence will have to answer for it all, before the throne of the Son of man, whose eyes are as a flame of fire, to read men through and through; and His feet as fine brass, to crush, in unsparing judgement, all that is contrary to God.

Infidelity may sneeringly inquire, "How can these things be? How could the untold millions of the human race find room before the judgement-seat of Christ? And how could there be time to enter so minutely into the details of each personal history?" Faith replies, "God says it shall be so; and this is conclusive; and as to the 'Hows?' the answer is, God! Infinity! Eternity!" Bring God in, and all questions are hushed, and all difficulties disposed of in a moment. In fact, the one grand, triumphant an-

swer to all the objections of the infidel, the sceptic, the rationalist, and the materialist, is just that one majestic word — "GOD!"

We press this upon the reader; not indeed to enable him to reply to infidels, but for the rest and comfort of his own heart. As to infidels, we are increasingly persuaded that our highest wisdom is to act on our Lord's words, in Matthew 15. "Let them alone." It is perfectly useless to argue with men who despise the word of God, and have no other foundation to build upon than their own carnal reasonings. But, on the other hand, we deem it to be of the very last possible importance that the heart should ever repose, in all the artless simplicity of a child, in the truth of God's word. "Has he said, and shall he not do it? or has he spoken, and shall he not make it good?"

Here is the sweet and hallowed resting-place of faith, the calm haven where the soul can find refuge from all the conflicting currents of human thought and feeling. "The word of the Lord endures for ever; and this is the word which by the gospel is preached to you. Nothing can touch the word of our God. It is settled for ever in heaven; and all we want is to have it hidden in our hearts as our own very possession; the treasure which we

have received from God; the living fountain where we may ever drink for the refreshment and comfort of our souls. Then shall our peace flow as a river; and our path shall be as the shining light which shines more and more to the perfect day.

Thus may it be, O Lord, with all Thy beloved people, in these days of growing infidelity! May Thy holy word be increasingly precious to our hearts! May our consciences feel its power! May its heavenly doctrines form our character, and govern our conduct, in all the relationships of life, that Thy name may be glorified in all things!

### **Chapter 3.**

"Then we turned, and went up the way to Bashan; and Og the king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei. And the Lord said to me, Fear Him not: for I will deliver him, and all his people, and his land, into thy hand; and thou shalt do to Him as thou didst to Sihon king of the Amorites, which dwelt at Heshbon. So the Lord our God delivered into our hands Og also, the king of Bashan and all his people; and we smote him until none was left to him remaining. And we took all his cities at that time, there was not a city

which we took not from them, threescore cities, all the region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bashan. All these cities were fenced with high walls, gates, and bars; beside unwalled towns a great many. And we utterly destroyed them, as we did to Sihon, king of Heshbon, utterly destroying the men, women, and children of every city. But all the cattle, and the spoil of the cities, we took for a prey to ourselves." (Vers. 1-7.)

The divine instructions as to Og king of Bashan were precisely similar to those given, in the preceding chapter with respect to Sihon the Amorite; and in order to understand both, we must look at them purely in the light of the government of God — a subject but little understood, though one of very deep interest and practical importance. We must accurately distinguish between grace and government. When we contemplate God in government, we see Him displaying His power in the way of righteousness, punishing evil doers; pouring out vengeance upon His enemies; overthrowing empires; upturning thrones; destroying cities, sweeping away nations, tribes and peoples. We find Him commanding His people to slay men, women and little children, with the edge of the sword; to set fire to their houses, and turn their cities into desolate heaps.

Again, we hear Him addressing the prophet Ezekiel in the following remarkable words, "Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus; every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled; yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it. Therefore, thus says the Lord God, Behold, I will give the land of Egypt to Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army. I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, says the Lord God." (Ezek. 29:18-20.)

This is a very wonderful passage of scripture; setting before us a subject which runs through the entire volume of Old Testament scripture — a subject demanding our profound and reverent attention. Whether we turn to the five books of Moses, to the historical books, to the Psalms or to the prophets, we find the inspiring Spirit giving us the most minute details of God's actings in government. We have the deluge in the days of Noah, when the whole earth, with all its inhabitants, with the exception of eight persons, was destroyed by an act of divine

government. men, women, children, cattle, fowl and creeping things were all swept away and buried beneath the billows and waves of God's righteous judgement.

Then we have in the days of Lot, the cities of the plain, with all their inhabitants, men, women and children, in a few short hours, consigned to utter destruction, overthrown by the hand of Almighty God, and buried beneath the deep dark waters of the Dead Sea — those guilty cities, "Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire."

Then, again, as we pass down along the page of inspired history, we see the seven nations of Canaan, men, women, and children, given over into the hands of Israel, for unsparing judgement; nothing that breathed was to be left alive.

But we may truly say, time would fail us, even to refer to all the passages of holy scripture which set before our eyes the solemn actings of the divine government. Suffice it to say that the line of evidence runs from Genesis to Revelation, begin-

ning with the deluge and ending with the burning up of the present system of things.

Now, the question is, Are we competent to understand these ways of God in government? Is it any part of our business to sit in judgement upon them? Are we capable of unravelling the profound and awful mysteries of divine Providence? Can we — are we called upon to — account for the tremendous fact of helpless babes involved in the judgement of their guilty parents? Impious infidelity may sneer at these things; morbid sentimentality may stumble over them; but the true believer, the pious Christian, the reverent student of holy scripture will meet them all with this one simple but safe and solid question, "Shall not the judge of all the earth do right?"

This, we may rest assured, reader, is the only true way in which to meet such questions. If man is to sit in judgement upon the actings of God in government; if he can take upon himself to decide as to what is, and what is not worthy of God to do, then, verily, we have lost the true sense of God altogether. And this is just what the devil is aiming at. He wants to lead the heart away from God; and to this end, he leads men to reason and question and speculate in a region which lies as far beyond

their ken as heaven is above the earth. Can we comprehend God? If we could, we should, ourselves, be God.

*"We comprehend Him not,  
Yet earth and heaven tell,  
God sits as Sovereign on the throne  
And ruleth all things well."*

It is, at once, absurd and impious, in the very highest degree, for puny mortals to dare to question the counsels, enactments and ways of the Almighty Creator, and All-wise Governor of the universe. Assuredly, all who do so must, sooner or later find out their terrible mistake. Well would it be for all questioners and cavillers to give heed to the pungent question of the inspired apostle in Romans 9. "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Has not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel to honour, and another to dishonour?"

How simple! How forcible! How unanswerable! This is the divine method of meeting all the hows, and whys, of infidel reason. If the potter has power over the lump of clay which he

holds in his hand — a fact which none would think of disputing — how much more has the Creator of all things power over the creatures which His hand has formed! Men may reason and argue interminably as to why God permitted sin to enter; why He did not, at once, annihilate Satan and his angels; why He allowed the serpent to tempt Eve; why He did not keep her back from eating the forbidden fruit. In short, the hows, and whys, are endless; but the answer is one, "Who art thou, O man, that repliest against God?" How monstrous for a poor worm of the earth to attempt to sit in judgement upon the unsearchable judgements and ways of the Eternal God! What blind and presumptuous folly for a creature, whose understanding is darkened by sin, and who is thus wholly incapable of forming a right judgement about anything divine, heavenly or eternal, to attempt to decide how God should act, in any given case! Alas! alas! it is to be feared that thousands who now argue with great apparent cleverness, against the truth of God, will find out their fatal mistake when it will be too late to correct it.

And as to all those who, though very far from taking common ground with the infidel, are nevertheless troubled with doubts and misgivings as to some of God's ways in government, and

as to the awful question of eternal punishment, we would earnestly recommend them to study and drink in the spirit of that lovely little Psalm, 131. "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me. Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child."\*

\* With regard to the solemn subject of eternal punishment, we here offer a few remarks, seeing that so very many, both in England and America, are troubled with difficulties respecting it. There are three considerations which, if duly weighed, will, we think, settle every Christian on the doctrine.

1. The first is this. There are seventy passages, in the New Testament, where the word "everlasting" or "eternal" (aionios) occur. It is applied to the "life" which believers possess; to the "mansions" into which they are to be received; to the "glory" which they are to enjoy; it is applied to God, Romans 16:26; to the "salvation" of which our Lord Jesus Christ is the Author; to the "redemption" which He has obtained for us; and to the "Spirit." Then, out of the seventy passages referred to above, which the reader can verify in a few moments, by a glance at a Greek Concordance, there are seven in which the selfsame word is applied to the "punish-

ment" of the wicked; to the "judgement" which is to overtake them; to the "fire" which is to consume them. Now, the question is, upon what principle, or by what authority can any one mark off these seven passages and say that, in them, the word [aionios] does not mean "everlasting," while in the other sixty-three it does? We consider the statement utterly baseless and unworthy the attention of any sober mind. We fully admit that, had the Holy Spirit thought proper, when speaking of the judgement of the wicked, to make use of a different word from that used in the other passages, reason would that we should weigh the fact. But no; He uses the same word invariably, so that if we deny eternal punishment, we must deny eternal life, eternal glory, an eternal Spirit, an eternal God, an eternal anything. In short, if punishment be not eternal, nothing is eternal so far as this argument is concerned. To meddle with this stone, in the archway of divine revelation, is to reduce the whole to a mass of ruin around us. And this is just what the devil is aiming at. We are fully persuaded that to deny the truth of eternal punishment is to take the first step on that inclined plane which leads down to the dark abyss of universal scepticism.

2. Our second consideration is drawn from the great truth of the immortality of the soul. We read in Genesis 2, that, "The Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and

breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Upon this one passage, as upon an immovable rock, even if we had not another, we build the great truth of the immortality of the human soul. The fall of man made no difference as to this. Fallen or unfallen, innocent or guilty, converted or unconverted, the soul must live for ever.

The tremendous question is, "Where is it to live?" God cannot allow sin into His presence. "He is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look upon iniquity." Hence, if a man dies in his sins, dies unrepentant, unwashed, unpardoned, then, most assuredly, where God is he never can come; indeed it is the very last place to which he would like to come. There is nothing for him but an endless eternity in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

3. And, lastly, we believe that the truth of eternal punishment stands intimately connected with the infinite nature of the atonement of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If nothing short of an infinite sacrifice could deliver us from the consequences of sin, those consequences must be eternal. This consideration may not, perhaps, in the judgement of some, carry much weight with it; but to us its force is absolutely irresistible. We must measure sin and its consequences, as we measure divine love and its results, not by the standard of

human sentiment or reason, but only by the standard of the cross of Christ.

Then, when the heart has, in some measure, taken in this exquisite breathing, it may turn, with real profit, to the words of the inspired apostle, 2 Corinthians 10. "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Doubtless, the philosopher, the scholar, the profound thinker would smile contemptuously at such a childish mode of dealing with such great questions. But this is a very small matter in the judgement of the devout disciple of Christ. The same inspired apostle makes very short work of all this world's wisdom and learning. He says, "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God; for it is written, He takes the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain." (1 Cor. 3.) And again, "It is written, I

will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." (1 Cor 1:19-21.)

Here lies the grand moral secret of the whole matter. Man has to find out that he is simply a fool; and that all the wisdom of the world is foolishness. Humbling, but wholesome truth! Humbling, because it puts man in his right place. Wholesome, yea, most precious, because it brings in the wisdom of God. We hear a great deal, now-a-days, about science, philosophy and learning. "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"

Do we fully take in the meaning of these words? Alas! it is to be feared they are but little understood. There are not wanting men who would fain persuade us that science has gone far beyond the Bible!\* Alas! for the science, and for all those who give heed to it. If it has gone beyond the Bible, whither has it gone? In the direction of God, of Christ, of heaven, of holiness,

of peace? Nay; but quite in the opposite direction. And where must it all end? We tremble to think, and feel reluctant to pen the reply. Still we must be faithful, and declare solemnly that the sure and certain end of that path along which human science is conducting its votaries is the blackness of darkness for ever.

- \* We must distinguish between all true science and "science falsely so-called." And further, we must distinguish between the facts of science, and the conclusions of scientific men. The facts are what God has done and is doing; but when men set about drawing their conclusions from these facts, they make the most serious mistakes. However, it is a real relief to the heart to think that there are philosophers and men of science who give God His right place, and who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

"The world by wisdom knew not God." What did the philosophy of Greece do for its disciples? It made them the ignorant worshippers of "AN UNKNOWN GOD." The very inscription on their altar published to the universe their ignorance and their shame. And may we not lawfully inquire if philosophy has done better for Christendom than it did for Greece? Has it communicated the knowledge of the true God? Who could dare to say Yes? There are millions of baptised professors throughout

the length and breadth of Christendom who know no more of the true God than those philosophers who encountered Paul in the city of Athens.

The fact is this, every one who really knows God is the privileged possessor of eternal life. So our Lord Jesus Christ declares, in the most distinct manner, in John 17. "This is life eternal that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." This is most precious to every soul that, through grace, has gotten this knowledge. To know God is to have life — life eternal.

But how can I know God? Where can I find Him? Can science and philosophy tell me? Have they ever told any one? Have they ever guided any poor wanderer into this way of life and peace? No; never, "The world by wisdom knew not God." The conflicting schools of ancient philosophy could only plunge the human mind into profound darkness and hopeless bewilderment; and the conflicting schools of modern philosophy are not a whit better. They can give no certainty, no safe anchorage, no solid ground of confidence to the poor benighted soul. Barren speculation, torturing doubt, wild and baseless theory is all that

human philosophy, in any age or of any nation, has to offer to the earnest inquirer after truth.

How then are we to know God? If such a stupendous result hangs on this knowledge; if to know God is life eternal — and Jesus says it is — then how is He to be known? "No man has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him." (John 1:18.)

Here we have an answer divinely simple, divinely sure. Jesus reveals God to the soul — reveals the Father to the heart. Precious fact! We are not sent to creation, to learn who God is — though we see His power, wisdom and goodness there. We are not sent to the Law — though we see His justice there. We are not sent to providence — though we see the profound mysteries of His government there. No; if we want to know who and what God is, we are to look in the face of Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, who dwelt in His bosom before the worlds, who was His eternal delight, the object of His affections, the centre of His counsels. He it is who reveals God to the soul. We cannot have the slightest idea of what God is apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. "In him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead [Theotes] bodily." "God who commanded the

light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ."

Nothing can exceed the power and blessedness of all this. There is no darkness here; no uncertainty. "The darkness is past, and the true light now shines." Yes; it shines in the face of Jesus Christ. We can gaze, by faith, on that blessed One; we can trace His marvellous path, on the earth; see Him going about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; mark His very looks, His words, His works, His ways; see Him healing the sick, cleansing the leper, opening the eyes of the blind, unstopping the ears of the deaf, causing the lame to walk, the maimed to be whole, raising the dead, drying the widows tears, feeding the hungry, binding up broken hearts, meeting every form of human need, soothing human sorrow, hushing human fears; and doing all these things in such a style, with such touching grace and sweetness, as to make each one feel, in his very inmost soul, that it was the deep delight of that loving heart thus to minister to his need.

Now, in all this, He was revealing God to man; so that if we want to know what God is, we have simply to look at Jesus.

When Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father, and it suffices us," the prompt reply was, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that has seen me has seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak to you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwells in me, he does the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake."

Here is the rest for the heart. We know the true God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent; and this is life eternal. We know Him as our own very God and Father, and Christ as our own personal, loving Lord and Saviour; we can delight in Him, walk with Him, lean on Him, trust in Him, cling to Him, draw from Him, find all our living springs in Him; rejoice in Him, all the day long; find our meat and our drink in doing His blessed will, furthering His cause and promoting His glory.

Reader, do you know all this for yourself? Say, is it a living, divinely real thing in your own soul, this moment? This is true Christianity; and you should not be satisfied with anything less. You will, perhaps, tell us we have wandered far from Deutero-

nomly 3. But whither have we wandered? To the Son of God and to the soul of the reader. If this be wandering, be it so; it, most assuredly, is not wandering from the object for which we are penning these "Notes" which is to bring Christ and the soul together, or to bind them together, as the case may be. We would never, for one moment, lose sight of the fact that, both in writing and speaking, we have not merely to expound scripture, but to seek the salvation and blessing of souls. Hence it is that we feel constrained, from time to time, to appeal to the heart and conscience of the reader as to his practical state, and as to how far he has made his very own of these imperishable realities which pass in review before us. And we earnestly beseech the reader, whoever he may be, to seek a deeper acquaintance with God in Christ; and, as a sure consequence of this, a closer walk with Him and more thorough consecration of heart to Him.

This, we are thoroughly persuaded, is what is needed, in this day of unrest and unreality, in the world, and of lukewarmness and indifference, in the professing church. We want a very much higher standard of personal devotedness, more real purpose of heart to cleave to the Lord, and follow Him. There is

much — very much to discourage and hinder in the condition of things around us. The language of the men of Judah, in the days of Nehemiah, may with some measure of appropriateness and force, be applied to our times, "The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish." But, thank God, the remedy now, as then, is to be found in this soul-stirring sentence, "Remember the Lord."

We now return to our chapter, in the remainder of which the lawgiver rehearses in the ears of the congregation the story of their dealings with the two kings of the Amorites, together with the facts connected with the inheritance of the two tribes and a half, on the wilderness side of Jordan. And, with regard to the latter subject, it is interesting to notice that he raises no question as to the right or the wrong of their choosing their possession short of the land of promise. Indeed, from the narrative given here, it could not be known that the two tribes and a half had expressed any wish in the matter. So far is our book from being a mere repetition of its predecessors.

Here are the words. "And this land, which we possessed at that time, from Aroer which is by the river Arnon, and half mount Gilead, and the cities thereof, gave I to the Reubenites and to

the Gadites. And the rest of Gilead and all Bashan, being the kingdom of Og, gave I to the half tribe of Manasseh, all the region of Argob, with all Bashan, which was called the land of giants ... And I gave Gilead to Machir. And to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, I gave from Gilead even to the river Arnon, half the valley, and the border, even to the river Jabbok, which is the border of the children of Ammon ... And I commanded you at that time, saying, the Lord your God has given you this land to possess it" — not a word about their having asked it — "Ye shall pass over armed before your brethren the children of Israel, all that are meet for the war. But your wives and your little ones, and your cattle (for I know that ye have much cattle), shall abide in your cities which I have given you; until the Lord have given rest to your brethren, as well as to you, and until they also possess the land which the Lord your God has given them beyond Jordan; and then shall ye return every man to his possession which I have given you."

In our studies on the Book of Numbers, we have dwelt upon certain facts connected with the settlement of the two tribes and a half, proving that they were below the mark of the Israel of God, in choosing their inheritance anywhere short of the other

side of Jordan. But in the passage which we have just quoted, there is no allusion at all to this side of the question; because the object of Moses is to set before the whole congregation the exceeding goodness, loving-kindness, and faithfulness of God, not only in bringing them through all the difficulties and dangers of the wilderness, but also in giving them, even already, such signal victories over the Amorites, and putting them in possession of regions so attractive and so suited to them. In all this he is laying down the solid basis of Jehovah's claim upon their hearty obedience to His commandments; and we can at once see and appreciate the moral beauty of overlooking entirely, in such a rehearsal, the question as to whether Reuben, Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh were wrong in stopping short of the land of promise. It is, to every devout Christian, a striking proof not only of the touching and exquisite grace of God, but also of the divine perfectness of scripture.

No doubt, every true believer enters upon the study of scripture with the full and deeply wrought conviction of its absolute perfectness in every part. He reverently believes that there is not, from the opening of Genesis to the close of Revelation, a single

flaw, a single hitch, a single discrepancy — not one; all is as perfect as its divine Author.

But then the cordial belief of the divine perfectness of scripture, as a whole, can never lessen our appreciation of the evidences which come out in detail; nay, it enhances it exceedingly. Thus, for example, in the passage now before us, is it not perfectly beautiful to mark the absence of all reference to the failure of the two tribes and a half in the matter of choosing their inheritance, seeing that any such reference would be entirely foreign to the object of the lawgiver, and to the scope of the book? Is it not the joy of our hearts to trace such infinite perfections, such exquisite and inimitable touches? Assuredly it is; and not only so, but we are persuaded that the more the moral glories of the volume dawn upon our souls, and its living and exhaustless depths are unfolded to our hearts, the more we shall be convinced of the utter folly of infidel assaults upon it; and of the feebleness and gratuitousness of many well-meant efforts to prove that it does not contradict itself. Thank God, His word stands in no need of human apologists. It speaks for itself, and carries with it its own powerful evidences; so that we can say of it what the apostle says of his gospel, that, "If it be

hid, it is hid to them that are lost; in whom the god of this world has blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine to them." We are more and more convinced, each day that the most effective method of answering all infidel attacks upon the Bible is to cherish a more profound faith in its divine power and authority; and to use it as those who are most thoroughly persuaded of its truth and preciousness. The Spirit of God alone can enable any one to believe in the plenary inspiration of the holy scriptures. Human arguments may go for what they are worth; they may, doubtless, silence gainsayers; but they cannot read the heart; they cannot bring the genial rays of divine revelation to bear down in living saving power upon the soul; this is a work divine; and until it is done, all the evidences and arguments in the world must leave the soul in the moral darkness of unbelief; but when it is done, there is no need of human testimony in defence of the Bible. External evidences, however interesting and valuable — and they are both — cannot add a single jot or tittle to the glory of that peerless Revelation which bears on every page, every paragraph, every sentence, the clear impress of its divine Author. As with the sun in the heavens, its every ray tells of the Hand that made

it, so of the Bible, its every sentence tells of the Heart that inspired it. But, inasmuch as a blind man cannot see the sunlight, so neither can the unconverted soul see the force and beauty of holy scripture. The eye must be anointed with heavenly eye-salve, ere the infinite perfections of the divine Volume can be discerned or appreciated.

Now, we must own to the reader, that it is the deep, and ever deepening sense of all this that has led us to the determination not to occupy his time or our own, by reference to the attacks which have been made by rationalistic writers on that portion of the word of God with which we are now engaged. We leave this to other and abler hands. What we desire for ourselves and our readers is that we may feed at peace upon the green pastures which the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls has graciously thrown open to us; that we may help each other, as we pass along, to see more and more of the moral glory of that which lies before us; and thus to build each other up on our most holy faith. This will be far more grateful work to us, and we trust also to our readers, than replying to men who, in all their puny efforts to find out flaws in the holy volume, only prove to those capable of judging that they understand neither

what they say, nor whereof they affirm. If men will abide in the dark vaults and tunnels of a dreary infidelity, and there find fault with the sun, or deny that it shines at all, let it be ours to bask in the light, and help others to do the same.

We shall now dwell for a little on the remaining verses of our chapter, in which we shall find much to interest, instruct and profit us.

And, first, Moses rehearses in the ears of the people, his charge to Joshua. And I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, Thine eyes have seen all that the Lord our God has done to these two kings: so shall the Lord do to all the kingdoms whither thou passest. Ye shall not fear them: for the Lord your God he shall fight for you." (Vers. 21, 22.)

The remembrance of the Lord's dealings with us, in the past, should strengthen our confidence in going on. The One who had given His people such a victory over the Amorites, who had destroyed such a formidable foe as Og king of Bashan, and given into their hands all the land of the giants, what could He not do for them? They could hardly expect to encounter in all the land of Canaan any enemy more powerful than Og whose

bedstead was of such enormous dimensions as to call for the special notice of Moses. But what was he in the presence of his Almighty Creator? Dwarfs and giants are all alike to Him. The grand point is to keep God Himself ever before our eyes. Then difficulties vanish. If He covers the eyes, we can see nothing else; and this is the true secret of peace, and the real power of progress. "Thine eyes have seen all that the Lord your God has done." And, as He has done, so He will do. He has delivered; and He doth deliver; and He will deliver. Past, present, and future are all marked by divine deliverance.

Reader, art thou in any difficulty? Is there any pressure upon thee? Art thou anticipating, with nervous apprehension, some formidable evil? Is thine heart trembling at the very thought of it? It may be thou art like one who has come to the far end, like the apostle Paul in Asia, "Pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life." If so, beloved friend, accept a word of encouragement. It is our deep desire to strengthen your hands in God, and to encourage your heart to trust Him for all that is before you. "Fear not;" only believe. He never fails a trusting heart — no, never. Make use of the resources which are treasured up for you in Him. Just put

yourself, your surroundings, your fears, your anxieties, all into His hands, and leave them there.

Yes; leave them there. It is of little use your putting your difficulties, your necessities into His hands, and then, almost immediately, taking them into your own. We often do this. When in pressure, in need, in deep trial of some kind or other, we go to God, in prayer; we cast our burden upon Him, and seem to get relief. But alas; no sooner have we risen from our knees, than we begin again to look at the difficulty, ponder the trial, dwell upon all the sorrowful circumstances, until we are again at our very wits' end.

Now, this will never do. It sadly dishonours God, and of course, leaves us unrelieved and unhappy. He would have our minds as free from care, as the conscience is free from guilt. His word to us is, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." And what then? "The peace of God which passes all understanding, shall keep [or garrison, phrouresei] your hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus."

Thus it was that Moses, that beloved man of God and honoured servant of Christ, sought to encourage his fellow labourer and successor, Joshua, in reference to all that was before him. "Ye shall not fear them; for the Lord your God he shall fight for you." Thus, too, did the blessed apostle Paul encourage his beloved son and fellow servant Timothy to trust in the living God; to be strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus; to lean, with unshaken confidence, on God's sure foundation; to commit himself, with unquestioning assurance, to the authority, teaching and guidance of the holy scriptures; and thus armed and furnished, to give himself, with holy diligence and true spiritual courage, to that work to which he was called. And thus, too, the writer and the reader can encourage one another, in these days of increasing difficulty, to cling, in simple faith, to that word which is settled for ever in heaven; to have it hidden in the heart as a living power and authority in the soul, something which will sustain us, though heart and flesh should fail, and though we had not the countenance or support of a human being. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower thereof falls away; but the word of the Lord endures for ever. And this is the

word which by the gospel is preached to you" (1 Peter 1:24-25.)

How precious is this! What comfort and consolation! What stability and rest! What real strength, victory and moral elevation! It is not within the compass of human language to set forth the preciousness of the word of God, or to define, in adequate terms, the comfort of knowing that the selfsame word which is settled for ever in heaven, and which shall endure throughout the countless ages of eternity, is that which has reached our hearts in the glad tidings of the gospel, imparting to us eternal life, and giving us peace and rest in the finished work of Christ, and a perfectly satisfying object in His adorable Person. Truly, as we think of all this, we cannot but own that every breath should be a hallelujah. Thus it shall be, by-and-by, and that for ever, all homage to His peerless Name!

The closing verses of our chapter present a peculiarly touching passage between Moses and his Lord, the record of which as given here is in lovely keeping, as we might expect, with the character of the entire book of Deuteronomy. "And I besought the Lord at that time, saying, O Lord God, thou hast begun to show thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand; for what

God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works and according to thy might? I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the Lord said to me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more to me of this matter. Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan. But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him; for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see." (Vv. 23-28)

It is very affecting to find this eminent servant of God urging a request which could not be granted. He longed to see that good land beyond Jordan. The portion chosen by the two tribes and a half could not satisfy his heart. He desired to plant his foot upon the proper inheritance of the Israel of God. But it was not to be. He had spoken unadvisedly with his lips at the waters of Meribah; and, by the solemn and irreversible enactment of the divine government, he was prohibited from crossing the Jordan.

All this, the beloved servant of Christ most meekly rehearses in the ears of the people. He does not hide from them the fact that the Lord had refused to grant his request. True, he had to remind them that it was on their account. That was morally needful for them to hear. Still he tells them, in the most unreserved manner, that Jehovah was wroth with him; and that He refused to hear him — refused to allow him to cross the Jordan, and called upon him to resign his office and appoint his successor.

Now, it is most edifying to hear all this from the lips of Moses himself. It teaches us a fine lesson, if only we are willing to learn it. Some of us find it very hard indeed to confess that we have done or said anything wrong — very hard to own before our brethren that we have entirely missed the Lord's mind, in any particular case. We are careful of our reputation; we are touchy and tenacious. And yet, with strange inconsistency, we admit, or seem to admit, in general terms, that we are poor, feeble, erring, creatures; and that, if left to ourselves, there is nothing too bad for us to say or to do. But it is one thing to make a most humiliating general confession, and another thing altogether to own that, in some given case, we have made a gross mistake. This latter is a confession which very few have

grace to make. Some can hardly ever admit that they have done wrong.

Not so that honoured servant whose words we have just quoted. He, notwithstanding his elevated position as the called, trusted and beloved servant of Jehovah — the leader of the congregation, whose rod had made the land of Egypt to tremble, was not ashamed to stand before the whole assembly of his brethren, and confess his mistake, own that he had said what he ought not, and that he had earnestly urged a request which Jehovah could not grant.

Does this lower Moses in our estimation? The very reverse; it raises him immensely. It is morally lovely to hear his confession; to see how meekly he bows his head to the governmental dealings of God; to mark the unselfishness of his acting toward the man who was to succeed him in his high office. There was not a trace of jealousy or envy; no exhibition of mortified pride. With beautiful self-emptiness, he steps down from his elevated position, throws his mantle over the shoulders of his successor, and encourages him to discharge with holy fidelity, the duties of that high office which he himself had to resign.

"He that humbles himself shall be exalted." How true was this in Moses' case! He humbled himself under the mighty hand of God. He accepted the holy discipline imposed upon him by the divine government. He uttered not a murmuring word at the refusal of his request. He bows to it all, and hence he was exalted in due time. If government kept him out of Canaan, grace conducted him to Pisgah's top, from whence, in company with his Lord, he was permitted to see that good land, in all its fair proportions — see it, not as inherited by Israel, but as given of God.

The reader will do well to ponder deeply the subject of grace and government. It is indeed a very weighty and practical theme, and one largely illustrated in scripture, though but little understood amongst us. It may seem wonderful to us, hard to be understood, that one so beloved as Moses should be refused an entrance into the promised land. But in this we see the solemn action of the divine government, and we have to bow our heads and worship. It was not merely that Moses, in his official capacity, or as representing the legal system, could not bring Israel into the land. This is true; but it is not all. Moses spake unadvisedly with his lips. He and Aaron his brother failed to glor-

ify God, in the presence of the congregation; and for this cause, "The Lord spake to Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." And, again, we read, "The Lord spake to Moses and Aaron in mount Hor, by the coast of the land of Edom, saying, Aaron shall be gathered to his people; for he shall not enter into the land which I have given to the children of Israel, because ye rebelled against my word at the water of Meribah. Take Aaron and Eleazar his son, and bring them up to mount Hor; and strip Aaron of his garments, and put them upon Eleazar his son; and Aaron shall be gathered to his people, and shall die there."

All this is most solemn. Here we have the two leading men in the congregation, the very men whom God had used to bring His people out of the land of Egypt, with mighty signs and wonders — "that Moses and Aaron" — men highly honoured of God; and yet refused entrance into Canaan. And for what? Let us mark the reason. "Because ye rebelled against my word".

Let these words sink down into our hearts. It is a terrible thing to rebel against the word of God; and the more elevated the position of those who so rebel, the more serious it is, in every way, and the more solemn and speedy must be the divine judgement. "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."

These are weighty words, and we ought to ponder them deeply. They were uttered in the ears of Saul, when he had failed to obey the word of the Lord; and thus we have before us examples of a prophet, a priest and a king, all judged, under the government of God, for an act of disobedience. The prophet and the priest were refused entrance into the land of Canaan, and the king was deprived of his throne simply because they disobeyed the word of the Lord.

Let us remember this. We, in our fancied wisdom, might deem all this very severe. Are we competent judges? This is the grand question, in all such matters. Let us beware how we presume to sit in judgement on the enactments of divine government. Adam was driven out of paradise; Aaron was stripped of his priestly robes; Moses was sternly refused entrance into Canaan; and Saul was deprived of his kingdom; and for what?

Was it for what men would call a grave moral offence — some scandalous sin? No; it was, in each case, for neglecting the word of the Lord. This is the serious thing for us to keep before us, in this day of human wilfulness in which men undertake to set up their own opinions, to think for themselves, and judge for themselves, and act for themselves. Men proudly put the question, "Has not every man a right to think for himself?" We reply, Most certainly not. We have a right to obey. To obey what? Not the commandments of men; not the authority of the so-called church; not the decrees of general councils; in a word, not any merely human authority, call it what you please; but simply the word of the living God — the testimony of the Holy Ghost — the voice of holy scripture. This it is that justly claims our implicit, unhesitating, unquestioning obedience. To this we are to bow down our whole moral being. We are not to reason; we are not to speculate; we are not to weigh consequences; we have nothing to do with results; we are not to say "Why?" or "Wherefore?" It is ours to obey, and leave all the rest in the hands of our Master. What has a servant to do with consequences? What business has he to reason as to results? It is of the very essence of a servant to do what he is told, regardless of all other considerations. Had Adam remembered

this, he would not have been turned out of Eden. Had Moses and Aaron remembered it, they might have crossed the Jordan; had Saul remembered it, he would not have been deprived of his throne. And so, as we pass down along the stream of human history, we see this weighty principle illustrated, over and over again; and we may rest assured, it is a principle of abiding and universal importance.

And, be it remembered, we are not to attempt to weaken this great principle by any reasonings grounded upon God's foreknowledge of all that was to happen, and all that man would do, in the course of time. Men do reason in this way, but it is a fatal mistake. What has God's foreknowledge to do with man's responsibility? Is man responsible or not? This is the question. If, as we most surely believe, he is, then, nothing must be allowed to interfere with this responsibility. Man is called to obey the plain word of God; he is, in no wise, responsible to know ought about God's secret purposes and counsels. Man's responsibility rests upon what is revealed, not upon what is secret. What, for example, did Adam know about God's eternal plans and purposes, when he was set in the garden of Eden and forbidden to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?

Was his transgression, in any wise, modified by the stupendous fact that God took occasion, from that very transgression, to display, in the view of all created intelligences, His glorious scheme of redemption through the blood of the Lamb? Clearly not. He received a plain commandment; and by that commandment his conduct should have been absolutely governed. He disobeyed, and was driven out of paradise, into a world which has, for well-nigh six thousand years, exhibited the terrible consequences of one single act of disobedience — the act of taking the forbidden fruit.

True it is, blessed be God, that grace has come into this poor sin-stricken world and there reaped a harvest which could never have been reaped in the fields of an unfallen creation. But man was judged for his transgression. He was driven out by the hand of God in government; and, by an enactment of that government, he has been compelled to eat bread in the sweat of his brow. "Whatsoever a man" no matter who — "sows, that shall he also reap."

Here we have the condensed statement of the principle which runs all through the word, and is illustrated on every page of the history of God's government. It demands our very gravest

consideration. It is, alas! but little understood. We allow our minds to get under the influence of one-sided, and therefore false ideas of grace, the effect of which is most pernicious. Grace is one thing, and government is another. They must never be confounded. We would earnestly impress upon the heart of the reader the weighty fact that the most magnificent display of God's sovereign grace can never interfere with the solemn enactments of His government.

## **Chapter 4**

Now therefore hearken O Israel, to the statutes and to the judgements which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers gives you."

Here we have, very prominently before us, the special characteristic of the entire book of Deuteronomy. "Hearken," and "do;" that ye may "live" and "possess." This is a universal and abiding principle. It was true for Israel, and it is true for us. The pathway of life and the true secret of possession is simple obedience to the holy commandments of God. We see this all through the inspired volume, from cover to cover. God has

given us His word, not to speculate upon it, or discuss it; but that we may obey it. And it is as we, through grace, yield a hearty and happy obedience to our Father's statutes and judgments, that we tread the bright pathway of life, and enter into the reality of all that God has treasured up for us in Christ. "He that has my commandments, and keeps them, he it is that loves me; and he that loves me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him."

How Precious is this! Indeed it is unspeakable. It is something quite peculiar. It would be a very serious mistake to suppose that the privilege here spoken of is enjoyed by all believers. It is not. It is only enjoyed by such as yield a loving obedience to the commandments of our Lord Jesus Christ. It lies within the reach of all, but all do not enjoy it, because all are not obedient. It is one thing to be a child, and quite another to be an obedient child. It is one thing to be saved, and quite another thing to love the Saviour, and delight in all His most precious precepts.

We may see this continually illustrated in our family circles. There, for example, are two sons, and one of them only thinks of pleasing himself, doing his will, gratifying his own desires. He takes no pleasure in his father's society; does not take any

pains to carry out his father's wishes; knows hardly anything of his mind, and what he does know he utterly neglects or despises. He is ready enough to avail himself of all the benefits which accrue to him from the relationship in which he stands to his father; ready enough to accept clothes, books, money — all, in short, that the father gives; but he never seeks to gratify the father's heart by a loving attention to his will, even in the smallest matters. The other son is the direct opposite to all this. He delights in being with his father; he loves his society, loves his ways, loves his words; he is constantly taking occasion to carry out his father's wishes, to get him something that he knows will be agreeable to him. He loves his father, not for his gifts, but for himself; and he finds his richest enjoyment in being in his father's company, and in doing his will.

Now, can we have any difficulty in seeing how very differently the father will feel towards those two sons? True, they are both his sons, and he loves them both, with a love grounded upon the relationship in which they stand to him. But, beside the love of relationship common to both, there is the love of complacency peculiar to the obedient child. It is impossible that a father can find pleasure in the society of a wilful, self-indul-

gent, careless son: such a son may occupy much of his thoughts; he may spend many a sleepless night thinking about him, and praying for him; he would gladly spend and be spent for him: but he is not agreeable to him; does not possess his confidence; cannot be the depository of his thoughts.

All this demands the serious consideration of those who really desire to be acceptable or agreeable to the heart of our heavenly Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. We may rest assured of this, that obedience is grateful to God; and "His commandments are not grievous;" nay, they are the sweet and precious expression of His love, and the fruit and evidence of the relationship, in which He stands to us. And not only so, but He graciously rewards our obedience by a fuller manifestation of Himself to our souls, and His dwelling with us. This comes out, with great fullness and beauty, in our Lord's reply to Judas not Iscariot, for whose question we may be thankful, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not to the world? Jesus answered and said to him, If a man love me he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him." (John 14.)

Here we are taught that it is not a question of the difference between "the world" and "us," inasmuch as the world knows nothing either of relationship or obedience, and is therefore, in no way, contemplated in our Lord's words. The world hates Christ, because it does not know Him. Its language is, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." "We will not have this man to reign over us."

Such is the world, even when polished by civilization, and gilded with the profession of Christianity. There is, underneath all the gilding, all the polish, a deep-seated hatred of the Person and authority of Christ. His sacred, peerless Name is tacked on to the world's religion, at least throughout baptised Christendom; but behind the drapery of religious profession, there lurks a heart at enmity with God and His Christ.

But our Lord is not speaking of the world in John 14. He is shut in with "his own," and it is of them He is speaking. Were He to manifest Himself to the world, it could only be for judgement and eternal destruction. But, blessed be His Name, He does manifest Himself to His own obedient children, to those who have His commandments, and keep them, to those who love Him and keep His words.

And, let the reader thoroughly understand that when our Lord speaks of His commandments, His words, and His sayings, He does not mean the ten commandments, or law of Moses. No doubt, those ten commandments form a part of the whole canon of scripture, the inspired word of God; but, to confound the law of Moses with the commandments of Christ, would be simply turning things upside down; it would be to confound Judaism with Christianity, law and grace. The two things are as distinct as any two things can be; and must be so maintained by all who would be found in the current of the mind of God.

We are sometimes led astray by the mere sound of words; and hence, when we meet with the word "commandments," we instantly conclude that it must needs refer to the law of Moses. But this is a very great and mischievous mistake. If the reader is not clear and established as to this, let him close this volume, and turn to the first eight chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, and the whole of the Epistle to the Galatians, and read them calmly and prayerfully, as in the very presence of God, with a mind freed from all theological bias and the influence of all previous religious training. There he will learn, in the fullest and clearest manner, that the Christian is not under law in any

way, or for any object whatsoever, either for life, for righteousness, for holiness, for walk, or for anything else. In short, the teaching of the entire New Testament goes to establish, beyond all question, that the Christian is not under law, not of the world, not in the flesh, not in his sins. The solid ground of all this is the accomplished redemption which we have in Christ Jesus, in virtue of which we are sealed by the Holy Ghost, and thus indissolubly united to, and inseparably identified with a risen and glorified Christ; so that the apostle John can say of all believers, all God's dear children, "As he [Christ] is so are we in this world." This settles the whole question, for all who are content to be governed by holy scripture. And as to all beside, discussion is worse than useless.

We have digressed from our immediate subject, in order to meet any difficulty arising from a misunderstanding of the word "commandments." The reader cannot too carefully guard against the tendency to confound the commandments spoken of in John 14 with the commandments of Moses, given in Exodus 20. And yet we reverently believe that Exodus 20 is as truly inspired as John 14. And now, ere we finally turn from the subject which has been engaging us, we would ask the reader to

refer, for a few moments, to a piece of inspired history which illustrates, in a very striking way, the difference between an obedient and disobedient child of God. He will find it in Genesis 18, 19. It is a profoundly interesting study, presenting a contrast instructive, suggestive and practical, beyond expression. We are not going to dwell upon it, having, in some measure, done so, in our "Notes on the Book of Genesis:" but we would merely remind the reader that he has before him, in these two chapters, the history of two saints of God. Lot was just as much a child of God as Abraham. We have no more doubt that Lot is amongst "the spirits of just men made perfect," than that Abraham is there. This, we think, cannot be called in question, inasmuch as the inspired apostle Peter tells us that Lot's "righteous soul was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked."

But mark the grave difference between the two men! The Lord Himself visited Abraham, sat with him, and partook, readily, of his hospitality. This was a high honour indeed, a rare privilege — a privilege which Lot never knew, an honour to which he never attained. The Lord never visited him in Sodom. He merely sent His angels, His ministers of power, the agents of

His government. And even they, at first, sternly refused to enter Lot's house or to partake of his proffered hospitality. Their withering reply was, "Nay, but we will abide in the street all night." And, when they did enter his house, it was only to protect him from the lawless violence with which he was surrounded, and to drag him out of the wretched circumstances into which, for worldly gain and position, he had plunged himself. Could contrast be more vivid?

But, further, The Lord delighted in Abraham, manifested Himself to him; opened His mind to him; told him of his plans and purposes; what He was about to do with Sodom. "Shall I," said He, "hide from Abraham that thing which I do; seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgement, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him."

We could hardly have a more telling illustration of John 14:21, 23, although the scene occurred two thousand years before the words were uttered. Have we ought like this in the history of

Lot? Alas! no. It could not be. He had no nearness to God, no knowledge of His mind, no insight into His plans and purposes. How could he? Sunk, as he was in the low moral depths of Sodom, how could he know the mind of God? Blinded by the murky atmosphere which enwrapped the guilty cities of the plain, how could he see into the future? Utterly impossible. If a man is mixed up with the world, he can only see things from the world's standpoint; he can only measure things by the world's standard, and think of them with the world's thoughts. Hence it is that the church, in its Sardis condition, is threatened with the coming of the Lord as a thief, instead of being cheered with the hope of His coming as the bright and morning star. If the professing church has sunk to the world's level — as alas! she has — she can only contemplate the future from the world's point of view. This accounts for the feeling of dread with which the great majority of professing Christians look at the subject of the Lord's coming. They are looking for Him, as a thief, instead of the blessed Bridegroom of their hearts. How few there are, comparatively, who love His appearing. The great majority of professors — we grieve to have to pen the words — find their type in Lot rather than in Abraham. The church has departed from her proper ground; she has gone down from her true

moral elevation, and mingled herself with that world which hates and despises her absent Lord.

Still, thank God, there are "a few names, even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments" — a few living stones, amid the smouldering ashes of lifeless profession — a few lights twinkling amid the moral gloom of cold, nominal, heartless, worldly Christianity. And not only so, but in the Laodicean phase of the church's history, which presents a still lower and more hopeless condition of things, when the whole professing body is about to be spued out of the mouth of "the faithful and true witness" — even at this advanced stage of failure and departure, those gracious words fall, with soul-stirring power, on the attentive ear, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him and he with me."\*

\* To apply the solemn address of Christ to the church of Laodicea, as we sometimes find it done in modern evangelical preaching, to the case of the sinner, is a great mistake. No doubt, what the preacher means is right enough; but it is not presented here. It is not Christ knocking at the door of a sinner's heart, but knocking at the door of the professing church. What a fact is this! How full of deep and awful solemnity, as regards

the church! What an end to come to! Christ outside! But what grace, as regards Christ, for He is knocking! He wants to come in! He is still lingering, in patient grace and changeless love, ready to come in to any faithful individual heart that will only open to Him. "If any man" — even one! In Sardis He could speak positively of "a few;" in Laodicea He can only speak doubtfully as to finding one. But should there be even one, He will come into him, and sup with him. Precious Saviour! Faithful Lover of our souls! "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and for ever.

Reader, need we wonder that the enemy should seek to mutilate and misapply the solemn and searching address to the church of Laodicea — the professing body in the last dreary stage of its history? We have no hesitation in saying that to apply it MERELY to the case of an unconverted soul is to deprive the professing church of one of the most pertinent, pungent and powerful appeals within the covers of the New Testament.

Thus, in the days of professing Christianity, as in the days of the Patriarchs, in the times of the New Testament, as in those of the Old, we see the same value and importance attached to a hearing ear and an obedient heart. Abraham, in the plains of Mamre, the pilgrim and the stranger, the faithful and obedient child of God, tasted the rare privilege of entertaining the Lord

of glory — a privilege which could not be known by one who had chosen his place and his portion in a sphere doomed to destruction. So also, in the days of Laodicean indifference and boastful pretension, the truly obedient heart is cheered with the sweet promise of sitting down to sup with Him who is "the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." In a word, let the condition of things be what it may, there is no limit to the blessing of the individual soul who will only hearken to the voice of Christ, and keep His commandments.

Let us remember this. Let it sink down into the very deepest depths of our moral being. Nothing can rob us of the blessings and privileges flowing from obedience. The truth of this shines out before our eyes, in every section and on every page of the volume of God. At all times, in all places, and under all circumstances, the obedient soul was happy in God, and God was happy in him. It always holds good, whatever be the character of the dispensation, that, "To this man will I look, even to him who is of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word." Nothing can ever alter or touch this. It meets us in the fourth chapter of our blessed Book of Deuteronomy, in the words with which

this section opens, "Now therefore hearken, O Israel, to the statutes and to the judgements which I teach you, for to do, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers gives you." It meets us in those precious words of our Lord, in John 14, on which we have been dwelling: "He that has my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me," &c. And again, "If a man love me, he will keep my sayings."\* It shines with peculiar brightness, in the words of the inspired apostle John, "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keeps his commandments dwells in him, and he in him." (1 John 3:21-24.)

\* There is an interesting difference between the Lord's "commandments" and "sayings." The former set forth, distinctly and definitely, what we ought to do; the latter are the expression of His mind. If I give my child a command, it is the statement of his duty; and if he loves me, he will delight to do it. But if he has heard me say I like to see such a thing done, although I have not actually told him to do it, it will touch my heart much more

deeply to see him go and do that thing, in order to gratify me, than if I had given him a positive command. Now, ought we not to try and please the heart of Christ? Should we not "labour to be agreeable to him"? He has made us accepted; surely we ought to seek, in every possible way, to be acceptable to Him. He delights in a loving obedience; it was what He Himself rendered to the Father. "I delight to do thy will; yes, thy law is within my heart." "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." Oh! that we may drink more deeply into the spirit of Jesus, walk in His blessed footsteps, and render him a more loving, devoted and whole-hearted obedience, in all things. Let us earnestly seek after these things, beloved Christian reader, that His heart may be gratified, and His Name glorified in us, and in our entire practical career from day to day.

Passages might easily be multiplied, but there is no need. Those which we have quoted set before us, in the clearest and fullest way possible, the very highest motive for obedience, namely, its being agreeable to the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ — well pleasing to God. True, we owe a hearty obedience on every ground. "We are not our own; we are bought with a price." We owe our life, our peace, our righteousness, our salvation, our everlasting felicity and glory, all to Him; so

that nothing can exceed the moral weight of His claims upon us for a life of whole-hearted obedience. But, above and beyond His moral claims stands the marvellous fact that His heart is gratified, His spirit refreshed by our keeping His commandments, and doing those things that are pleasing in His sight.

Beloved Christian reader, can anything exceed the moral power of such a motive as this? Only think of our being privileged to give pleasure to the heart of our beloved Lord! What sweetness, what interest, what preciousness, what holy dignity it imparts to every little act of obedience, to know that it is grateful to the heart of our Father! How far beyond the legal system is this! It is a most perfect contrast, in its every phase and every feature. The difference between the legal system and Christianity is the difference between death and life, bondage and liberty, condemnation and righteousness, distance and nearness, doubt and certainty. How monstrous the attempt to amalgamate these two things — to work them up into one system, as though they were but two branches from the one stem! What hopeless confusion must be the result of any such effort! How terrible the effect of seeking to place souls under the influence of the two things! As well might we attempt to combine the sun's me-

ridian beams with the profound darkness of midnight. Looked at from a divine and heavenly standpoint, judged in the light of the New Testament, measured by the standard of the heart of God, the mind of Christ, there could not be a more hideous anomaly than that which presents itself to our view in Christendom's effort to combine law and grace. And as to the dishonour done to God; the wound inflicted on the heart of Christ, the grief and despite offered to the Holy Ghost, the damage done to the truth of God, the grievous wrong perpetrated upon the beloved lambs and sheep of the flock of Christ, the terrible stumbling-block thrown in the way of both Jew and Gentile, and, in short, the serious injury done to the entire testimony of God, during the last eighteen centuries, the judgement-seat of Christ can alone declare it; and oh! what an awful declaration that will be! It is too tremendous to contemplate.

But there are many pious souls, throughout the length and breadth of the professing church, who conscientiously believe that the only possible way to produce obedience, to attain to practical holiness, to secure a godly walk, to keep our evil nature in order, is to put people under the law. They seem to fear that if souls are taken from under the schoolmaster, with

his rod and rudiments, there is an end to all moral order. In the absence of the authority of law, they look for nothing but hopeless confusion. To take away the ten commandments, as a rule of life, is, in their judgement, to remove those grand moral embankments which the hand of God has erected to stem the tide of human lawlessness.

We can fully understand their difficulty. Most of us have had to encounter it, in one shape or another. But we must seek to meet it in God's way. It is of no possible use to cling, with fond tenacity, to our own notions, in the face of the plainest and most direct teaching of holy scripture. We must, sooner or later, give up all such notions. Nothing will — nothing can stand but the word of our God — the voice of the Holy Ghost — the authority of scripture — the imperishable teachings of that peerless Revelation which our Father has, in His infinite grace, put into our hands. To that we must listen, with profound and reverent attention; to it we must bow down, with unquestioning and unqualified obedience. We must not presume to hold a single opinion of our own. God's opinion must be ours. We must clear out all the rubbish which, by the influence of mere human teaching, has accumulated in our minds, and have every

chamber thoroughly cleansed by the action of the word and Spirit of God, and thoroughly ventilated by the pure and bracing air of the new creation.

Furthermore, we must learn to confide implicitly in every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. We must not reason; we must not judge; we must not discuss; we must simply believe. If man speaks, if it be a mere question of human authority, then indeed we must judge, because man has no right to command. We must judge what he says, not by our own opinions, or by any human standard, creed, or confession of faith, but by the word of God. But when scripture speaks, all discussion is closed.

This is an unspeakable consolation. It is not within the compass of human language to set forth, adequately, the value or the moral importance of this great fact. It delivers the soul completely from the blinding power of self-will on the one hand, and of mere subjection to human authority, on the other. It brings us into direct, personal, living contact with the authority of God, and this is life, peace, liberty, moral power, true elevation, divine certainty, and holy stability. It puts an end to doubts and fears, to all the fluctuations of mere human opinion so per-

plexing to the mind, so torturing to the heart. We are no longer tossed about with every wind of doctrine, every wave of human thought. God has spoken. This is quite enough. Here the heart finds its deep and settled repose. It has made its escape from the stormy ocean of theological controversy, and cast anchor in the blessed haven of divine revelation.

Hence, therefore, we would say to the pious reader of these lines, if you would know the mind of God on the subject before us — if you would know the ground, character and object of Christian obedience, you must simply listen to the voice of holy scripture. And what does it say? Does it send us back to Moses to teach us how to live? Does it send us back "to the palpable mount in order to secure holy living? Does it put us under the law to keep the flesh in order? Hear what it says. Yes; hearken and ponder. Take the following words from Romans 6 — words of emancipating, holy power. "For sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under law, but under grace."

Now, we most earnestly entreat the reader to let these words enter into the very depths of his soul. The Holy Ghost declares, in the simplest and most emphatic manner, that Christians are not under law. If we were under law, sin would have dominion

over us. Indeed we invariably find, in scripture, that "sin," "law," and "flesh" are linked together. A soul under law cannot possibly enjoy full deliverance from the dominion of sin; and in this we can see, at a glance, the fallacy of the whole legal system; and the utter delusion of seeking to produce holy living by putting souls under the law. It is simply putting them into the very place where sin can lord it over them, and rule them with absolute sway. How is it possible, then, to produce holiness by law? It is absolutely hopeless.

But let us turn, for a moment to Romans 7. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also" — and all true believers, all God's people — "are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit to God." Now it is perfectly plain that we cannot be "dead to the law" and "under the law" at the same time. It may, perhaps, be argued that the expression, "dead to the law is merely a figure. Well, supposing it be so, we ask, "A figure of what?" Surely it cannot be a figure of persons under the law. Nay, it is a figure of the very opposite.

And let us mark particularly, the apostle does not say, the law is dead. Nothing of the kind. The law is not dead, but we are dead to it. We have passed, by the death of Christ, out of the sphere to which the law belongs. Christ took our place; He was made under the law; and, on the cross, He was made sin for us. But He died for us, and we died in Him; and He has thus taken us clean out of the position in which we were under the dominion of sin, and under law, and introduced us into an entirely new position, in living association and union with Himself, so that it can be said, "As he is, so are we, in this world." Is He under law? Assuredly not. Well, neither are we. Has sin any claim upon Him? None whatever. Neither has it any upon us. We are, as to our standing, as He is in the presence of God; and therefore to put us back under law would be a complete overturning of the entire Christian position, and a most positive and flagrant contradiction of the very plainest statements of holy scripture.

Now, we would, in all simplicity and godly sincerity ask, how could holy living be promoted by removing the very foundation of Christianity? How could indwelling sin be subdued by putting us under the very system that gave sin power over us?

How could true Christian obedience ever be produced by flying in the face of holy scripture? We confess we cannot conceive anything more thoroughly preposterous. Surely a divine end can only be gained by pursuing a divine way. Now God's way of giving us deliverance from the dominion of sin is by delivering us from under law; and hence all those who teach that Christians are under law are plainly at issue with God. Tremendous consideration for all who desire to be teachers of the law!

But let us hear further words from Romans 7. The apostle goes on to say, "For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth to death. But now we are delivered from the law, being dead [or having died] to that wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."\*

\* The rendering of Romans 7:6 in our Authorised Version is manifestly erroneous, inasmuch as it teaches that the law is dead, which is not true. "The law is good, if a man use it lawfully." (1 Tim. 1.) And again, "The law is holy." (Rom. 7) Scripture never teaches that the law is dead, but it teaches that the believer is dead to the law — a totally different thing. But, further, [apothanontes] cannot possibly apply to the law, as any well-

taught school boy can see at a glance; it applies to us — believers. Were it the law, the word would be [apothanontos]

Here, again, all is as clear as a sunbeam. What means the expression, "When we were in the flesh?" Does it, can it mean that we are still in that condition? Clearly not. If I were to say, "When I was in London," would any one understand that I am in London still! The thought is absurd.

But what does the apostle mean by the expression, "When we were in the flesh?" He simply refers to a thing of the past — to a condition that no longer obtains. Are believers, then, not in the flesh? So scripture emphatically declares. But does this mean that they are not in the body? Assuredly not. They are in the body, as to the fact of their existence; but not in the flesh, as to the ground of their standing before God.

In Romans 8 we have the most distinct statement of this point. "So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." Here we have the statement of a most solemn fact; and the setting forth of a most precious, glorious privilege. "They that are in the flesh cannot please God." They may be very moral, very admirable, very religious, very bene-

volent; but they cannot please God. Their entire position is false. The source whence all the streams flow is corrupt; the root and stem whence all the branches emanate are rotten — hopelessly bad. They cannot produce a single atom of good fruit — fruit that God can accept. "They cannot please God." They must get into an entirely new position; they must have a new life, new motives, new objects; in a word, they must be a new creation. How solemn is all this! Let us weigh it thoroughly, and see if we understand the apostle's words.

But, on the other hand, mark the glorious privilege of all true believers. "Ye are not in the flesh." Believers are no longer in a position in which they cannot please God. They have a new nature, a new life, every movement, every outflow of which is agreeable to God. The very feeblest breathing of the divine life is precious to God. Of this life, the Holy Ghost is the power, Christ the object, glory the goal, heaven the home. All is divine, and therefore perfect. True, the believer is liable to err, prone in himself to wander, capable of sinning. In him, that is in his flesh, dwells no good thing. But his standing is based on the eternal stability of the grace of God, and his state is met by the divine provision which that grace has made for him, in the

precious atonement and all-prevailing advocacy of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thus he is for ever delivered from that terrible system in which the prominent figures are, "Flesh" — "Law" — "Sin" — "Death" — melancholy group! most surely. And he is brought into that glorious scene in which the prominent figures are, "Life" — "Liberty" — "Grace" — "Peace" — "Righteousness" — "Holiness" — "Glory" — "Christ." "For ye are not come to the mount that might be touched" — that is the palpable mount — "and that burned with fire, nor to blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard, entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more. (For they could not endure that which was commanded. And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart. And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.) But ye are come to mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly, the church of the firstborn [ones] which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the

blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than Abel." (Heb. 12.)

Thus we have endeavoured to meet the difficulty of any conscientious reader who, up to the moment in which he opened this volume, had cherished the conviction that it is only by putting believers under the law that practical holiness and true obedience can be attained. We trust he has followed us through the line of scripture evidence which we have laid before him. If so, he will see that to place believers in such a position is to do away with the very foundations of Christianity — to abandon grace — to give up Christ — to go back to the flesh, in which we cannot please God, and to place ourselves under the curse. In short, the legal system of men is diametrically opposed to the teaching of the entire New Testament. It was against this system and its upholders that the blessed apostle Paul, during his whole life, ever testified. He absolutely abhorred it, and continually denounced it. The law teachers were ever seeking to sap and undermine his blessed labours, and subvert the souls of his beloved children in the faith. It is impossible to read his burning sentences in the epistle to the Galatians, his withering references, in his epistle to the Philippians, or his solemn warn-

ings in the epistle to the Hebrews, and not see how intense was His abhorrence of the whole legal system of the law-teachers, and how bitterly he wept over the ruins of the testimony so dear to his large, loving, devoted heart.

But it is possible that, after all we have written, and notwithstanding the full tide of scripture evidence to which we have called the readers attention, he may still feel disposed to ask, "Is there not a danger of unholy laxity and levity if the restraining power of the law be removed?" To this we reply, God is wiser than we are. He knows best how to cure laxity and levity, and how to produce the right sort of obedience. He tried the law, and what did it do? It worked wrath. It caused the offence to abound. It developed "the motions of sins." It brought in death. It was the strength of sin. It deprived the sinner of all power. It slew him. It was condemnation. It cursed all who had to do with it. "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." And all this, not because of any defect in the law, but because of man's total inability to keep it.

Is it not plain to the reader that neither life, nor righteousness, nor holiness, nor true Christian obedience could ever be attained under law? Is it possible, after all that has passed in re-

view before us, that he can have a single question, a single doubt, a single difficulty? We trust not. No one who is willing to bow down to the teaching and authority of the New Testament can adhere to the legal system, for an hour.

However, ere we turn from this weighty and all important subject, we shall place before the reader a passage or two of scripture in which the moral glories of Christianity shine forth with peculiar lustre, in vivid contrast to the entire Mosaic economy.

First of all, let us take that familiar passage at the opening of the eighth of Romans, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness [dikaioma] of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." (Vv. 1-4.)

Now, we must bear in mind that verse 1 sets forth the standing of every Christian — his position before God. He is "in Christ Jesus." This settles everything. He is not in the flesh; he is not

under law; he is absolutely and eternally "in Christ Jesus." Hence there is — there can be, no condemnation. The apostle is not speaking of, or referring to, our walk or our state. If he were, he could not possibly speak of "no condemnation." The most perfect Christian walk that ever was exhibited, the most perfect Christian state that ever was attained, would afford some ground for judgement and condemnation. There is not a Christian on the face of the earth who has not, daily, to judge his state and his walk — his moral condition and his practical ways. How then could "no condemnation" ever stand connected with, or be based upon, Christian walk? Utterly impossible. In order to be free from all condemnation, we must have what is divinely perfect, and no Christian walk is, or ever was that. Even a Paul had to withdraw his words. (Acts 23:5.) He repented of having written a letter. (2 Cor. 7:8.) A perfect walk and a perfect state were only found in One. In all beside — even the holiest and best, failure is found. Hence, therefore, the second clause of Romans 8 must be rejected. It is not scripture. This, we think, would be seen by any one really taught of God, apart from all question of mere criticism. Any spiritual mind would detect the incongruity between the words "no condemnation" and "walk." The two things cannot be made to harmonise. And

here, we doubt not, is just where thousands of pious souls have been plunged into difficulty as to this really magnificent and emancipating passage. The joyful sound, "No condemnation" has been robbed of its deep, full, and blessed significance, by a clause introduced by some scribe or copyist whose feeble vision was, doubtless, dazzled by the brightness of that free, absolute, sovereign grace which shines in the opening statement of the chapter. How often have we heard such words as these, "Oh! yes; I know there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. But that is if they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Now I cannot say that I walk thus. I long to do so; and I mourn over my failure. I would give worlds to be able to walk more perfectly; but alas! alas! I have to judge myself — my state, my walk, my ways, each day, each hour. This being so, I dare not apply to myself the precious words, 'no condemnation.' I hope to be able to do so, some day, when I have made more progress in personal holiness; but, in my present state, I should deem it the very height of presumption to appropriate to myself the precious truth contained in the first clause of Romans 8."

Such thoughts as these have passed through the minds of most of us, if they have not been clothed in words. But the simple and conclusive answer to all such legal reasonings is found in the fact that the second clause of Romans 8:1 is not scripture at all; but a very misleading interpolation, foreign to the spirit and genius of Christianity; opposed to the whole line of argument in the context where it occurs; and utterly subversive of the solid peace of the Christian. It is a fact well known to all who are conversant with Biblical criticism, that all the leading authorities are agreed in rejecting the second clause of Romans 8:1.\* And, in this it is simply a matter of criticism confirming, as all sound criticism must do, the conclusion at which a really spiritual mind would arrive, without any knowledge of criticism at all.

- \* It may be that the reader feels a little jealous of any interference with our excellent English Bible. He may, like many others, feel disposed to say, "How is an uneducated man to know what is scripture and what is not? Must he depend upon scholars and critics to give him certainty on so grave and important a question? If so, is it not the same old story of looking to human authority to confirm the word of God?" By no means. It is a totally different thing. We all know that all copies and translations must be, in some points, imperfect, as being human; but

we believe that the same grace which gave the word in the original Hebrew and Greek languages, has, most marvellously, watched over our English translation, so that a poor man, at the back of a mountain, may rest assured that he possesses in his common English Bible, the revelation of the mind of God. It is wonderful, after all the labours of scholars and critics, how few passages, comparatively have had to be touched; and not one affecting any foundation doctrine of Christianity. God who graciously gave us the holy scriptures, at the first, has watched over them and preserved them to His church in the most wonderful manner. Moreover, He has seen fit to make use of the labours of scholars and critics, from age to age, to clear the sacred text of errors which, through the infirmity attaching to all human agency, had crept into it. Should these corrections shake our confidence in the integrity of scripture as a whole, or lead us to doubt that we possess, in very deed, the word of God? Nay, rather should they lead us to bless God for His goodness in watching over His word in order to preserve it in its integrity for His church.

But, in addition to all that has been advanced, in reference to this question, we cannot but think that the occurrence of the clause, "who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, in verse 4, affords abundant evidence of its misplacement in

verse 1. We cannot, for a moment, admit the thought of redundancy in holy scripture. Now, in verse 4, it is a question of walk — a question of our fulfilling "the righteousness [mark the word — dikaioma] of the law, and hence the clause is in its right, because divinely fitted place. A person who walks in the Spirit — as every Christian ought — fulfils the righteousness of the law. Love is the fulfilling of the law; and love will lead us to do what the ten commandments could never effect, namely, to love our enemies. No lover of holiness, no advocate of practical righteousness, need ever be the least afraid of losing ought by abandoning the legal ground, and taking his place on the elevated platform of true Christianity — by turning from mount Sinai to mount Zion — by passing from Moses to Christ. No; he only reaches a higher source, a deeper spring, a wider sphere of holiness, righteousness and practical obedience.

And then, if any one should feel disposed to ask, "Does not the line of argument which we have been pursuing tend to rob the law of its characteristic glory?" We reply, most assuredly not. So far from this, the law was never so magnified, never so vindicated, never so established, never so glorified, as by that pre-

cious work which forms the imperishable foundation of all the privileges, the blessings, the dignities and the glories of Christianity. The blessed apostle anticipates, and answers this very question, in the earlier part of his epistle to the Romans. "Do we then," he says, "make void the law through faith. Far be the thought; yea, we establish the law. How could the law be more gloriously vindicated, honoured and magnified than in the life and death of the Lord Jesus Christ? Will any one seek, for a moment, to maintain the extravagant notion that it is magnifying the law to put Christians under it? We fondly trust the reader will not. Ah! no; all this line of things must be completely abandoned by those whose privilege it is to walk in the light of the new creation; who know Christ as their life, and Christ as their righteousness — Christ, their sanctification, Christ, their great Exemplar, Christ, their model, Christ their all and in all; who find their motive for obedience not in the fear of the curses of a broken law, but in the love of Christ, according to those exquisitely beautiful words, "The love of Christ" — not the law of Moses — "constrains us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead. And he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live to them-

selves, but to him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Cor. 5.)

Could the law ever produce ought like this? Impossible. But, blessed for ever be the God of all grace, "What the law could not do" — not because it was not holy, just and good, but "in that it was weak through the flesh" — the workman was all right, but the material was rotten and nothing could be made of it; but — "God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who — as risen with Christ, linked with Him by the Holy Ghost, in the power of a new and everlasting life — "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

This, and only this, is true, practical Christianity; and if the reader will turn to the second of Galatians, he will find another of those fine, glowing utterances of the blessed apostle, setting forth, with divine force and fullness, the special glory of Christian life and walk. It is in connection with his faithful rebuke of the apostle Peter, at Antioch, when that beloved and honoured servant of Christ, through his characteristic weakness, had been led to step down, for a moment, from the elevated moral

ground on which the gospel of the grace of God places the soul. We cannot do better than quote the entire paragraph for the reader. Every sentence of it is pregnant with spiritual power.

"But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face" — He did not go behind his back to disparage and depreciate him in the view of others, even though — "He was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by works of law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by works of law; for by works of law shall no flesh be justified.

But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid. [Or far be the thought, me genoito] For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor" — For, if the things were right, why destroy them? And, if they were wrong, why build them again? — "For I, through law, am dead to law, that I might live to God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live" not by the law, as a rule of life, but — "by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by law, then Christ is dead in vain" — or has died for nothing, [dorean] (Gal. 2:11-21)

Here, then, we have one of the very finest statements of the truth as to practical Christianity, anywhere to be found. But, what specially claims our attention, just now, is the very marked and beautiful way in which the gospel of God opens up the path of the true believer between the two fatal errors of legality, on the one side, and carnal laxity, on the other. Ver. 19 in the passage just quoted, contains the divine remedy for both

these deadly evils. To all — whoever, or wherever they be who would seek to put the Christian under the law, in any shape, or for any object whatsoever, our apostle exclaims in the ears of dissembling Jews with Peter at their head, and as an answer to all the law-teachers of every age — "I am dead to law."

What can the law have to say to a dead man: Nothing. The law applies to a living man, to curse him and kill him, because he has not kept it. It is a very grave mistake indeed to teach that the law is dead or abolished. It is nothing of the sort. It is alive in all its force, in all its stringency, in all its majesty, in all its unbending dignity. It would be a very serious mistake to say that the Law of England, against murder, is dead. But if a man is dead, the law no longer applies to him, inasmuch as he has passed entirely out of its range.

But how is the believer dead to law? The apostle replies, "I through law am dead to law. The law had brought the sentence of death into his conscience; as we read in Romans 7. "I was alive without the law once; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment which was ordained to life, I found to be to death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me."

But there is more than this. The apostle goes on to say, "I am Crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me." And, here is the triumphant answer of the Christian to those who say that, inasmuch as the Mosaic law is abrogated, there is no longer any demand for the legal restraint under which the Jews were called to live. To all who would seek liberty for self-indulgence, the answer is, "I am dead to law," not that I might give a loose rein to the flesh, but "that I might live to God."

Thus nothing can be more complete, nothing more morally beautiful than the answer of true Christianity to legality on the one hand, and licentiousness on the other. Self crucified; sin condemned; new life in Christ; a life to be lived to God; a life of faith in the Son of God; the motive spring of that life, the constraining love of Christ. What can exceed this? Will any one, in view of the moral glories of Christianity contend for putting believers under the law, putting them back into the flesh — back into the old creation — back to the sentence of death in the conscience — back to bondage, darkness, distance, fear of death, condemnation?

Is it possible that any one who has ever tasted, even in the very feeblest measure, the heavenly sweetness of God's most blessed gospel, can accept the wretched mongrel system, composed of half law and half grace, which Christendom offers to the soul? How terrible to find the children of God, members of the body of Christ, temples of the Holy Ghost, robbed of their glorious privileges and burdened with a heavy yoke which, as Peter says, "Neither our fathers nor we were able to bear." We earnestly entreat the Christian reader to consider what has been placed before him. Search the scriptures; and if you find these things to be so, then fling aside for ever the grave clothes in which Christendom enwraps its deluded votaries, and walk in the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free; tear off the bandage with which it covers the eyes of men, and gaze on the moral glories which shine with such heavenly brilliancy, in the gospel of the grace of God.

And then let us prove, by a holy, happy, gracious walk and conversation, that grace can do what law never could. Let our practical ways from day to day, in the midst of the scenes, circumstances, relationships and associations in which we are called

to live, be the most convincing reply to all who contend for the law as a rule of life.

Finally, let it be our earnest, loving desire and aim to seek, in so far as in us lies, to lead all the dear children of God into a clearer knowledge of their standing and privileges in a risen and glorified Christ. May the Lord send out His light and His truth, in the power of the Holy Ghost, and gather His beloved people round Himself to walk in the joy of His salvation, in the purity and light of His presence, and to wait for His coming!

We do not attempt to offer any apology for what may, perhaps, appear to some of our readers to be a very lengthened digression from the fourth chapter of Deuteronomy. The fact is we have been led into what we judge to be a very needed line of practical truth by the very first verse of the chapter, as quoted at the opening of this section. We felt it absolutely necessary, in speaking of the weighty question of obedience, to seek to place it on its true basis. If Israel was called to "hearken and do," how much more are we who are so richly blessed — yea "blessed with all spiritual blessings, in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." We are called to obedience, even to the obedience of Jesus Christ, as we have it in 1 Peter 1: "Elect according to the

foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." We are called to the very same character of obedience as that which marked the life of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Of course, in Him, there was no hindering influence, as alas! there is in us. But as to the character of the obedience it is the same.

This is an immense privilege. We are called to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. "He that says he abides in him, ought himself also so to walk even as he walked." Now, in pondering the path of our Lord, in considering His marvellous life, there is one point which demands our profound and reverent attention — a point which connects itself, in a very special manner, with the book of Deuteronomy; and that is the way in which He ever used the word of God — the place which He ever gave to the holy scriptures. This we consider to be a subject of the last possible importance, at the present moment. It holds a prominent place throughout the lovely book with which we are at present engaged. Indeed, as we have already remarked, it characterises the book, and marks it off from the three books which precede it in the divine canon. We shall find proofs and illustrations of

this, in abundance, as we pass along. Everywhere, the word of God gets its own paramount place, as the only rule, the only standard, the only authority for man. It meets him in every position, in every relationship, in every sphere of action, and in every stage of his moral and spiritual history. It tells him what he ought to do, and what he ought not. It furnishes him with ample guidance in every difficulty. It descends, as we shall see, to the most minute details — such details, indeed, as fill us with amazement to think that the High and Mighty One that inhabits eternity could occupy Himself with them — to think that the Omnipotent Creator and Sustainer of the vast universe could stoop to legislate about a bird's nest. (Deut. 22:6.)

Such is the word of God, that peerless Revelation, that perfect and inimitable volume which stands alone in the history of literature. And, we may say that one special charm of the book of Deuteronomy, one peculiar feature of interest is the way in which it exalts the word of God, and enforces upon us the holy and happy duty of unqualified and unhesitating obedience.

Yes; we repeat, and would fervently emphasise the words — unqualified and unhesitating obedience. We would have these wholesome words sounded in the ears of Christian professors

throughout the length and breadth of the earth. We live in a day specially marked by the setting up of man's reason, man's judgement, man's will. In short, we live in what the inspired apostle calls, "man's day." On all hands we are encountered by lofty and boastful words about human reason, and the right of every man to judge and reason and think for himself. The thought of being absolutely and completely governed by the authority of holy scripture is treated with sovereign contempt by thousands of men who are the religious guides and teachers of the professing church. For any one to assert his reverent belief in the plenary inspiration, the all-sufficiency, and the absolute authority of scripture, is quite sufficient to stamp him as an ignorant, narrow-minded man, if not a semi-lunatic, in the judgement of some who occupy the very highest position in the professing church. In our universities, our colleges and our schools, the moral glory of the Divine Volume is fast fading away, and instead thereof our young people are led and taught to walk in the light of science, the light of human reason. The word of God itself is impiously placed at the bar of man's judgement, and reduced to the level of the human understanding. Everything is rejected which soars beyond man's feeble vision.

Thus the word of God is virtually set aside. For, clearly if scripture is to be submitted to human judgement, it ceases to be the word of God. It is the very height of folly to think of submitting a divine and therefore perfect revelation to any tribunal whatsoever. Either God has given us a revelation, or He has not. If He has, that revelation must be paramount, supreme, above and beyond all question, absolutely unquestionable, unerring, divine. To its authority all must bow down, without a single question. To suppose, for a moment, that man is competent to judge the word of God, able to pronounce upon what is, or what is not worthy of God to say, or to write, is simply to put man in God's place. And this is precisely what the devil is aiming at, although many of his instruments are not aware that they are helping on his designs.

But the question is continually cropping up before us, "How can we be sure that we have, in our English Bible, the bona fide revelation of God?" We reply, God can make us sure of it. If He does not, no one can. If He does, no one need. This is our ground; and we deem it unassailable. We should like to ask all those who start this infidel question — for such we must honestly call it — supposing that God cannot give us the absolute

certainty that, in our common English Bible, we do actually possess His own most precious, priceless revelation, then whither are we to turn? Of course in such a weighty matter, on which momentous and eternal consequences hang, a single doubt is torture and misery. If I am not sure of possessing a revelation from God, I am left without a single ray of light for my path. I am plunged in darkness, gloom and mental misery. What am I to do? Can man help me by his learning, his wisdom or his reason? Can he satisfy my soul by his decision? Can he solve my difficulty, answer my question, remove my doubt, dissipate my fear? Is man better able than God to give me the assurance that God has spoken?

The idea is absolutely monstrous — monstrous in the very highest degree. The plain fact is this, reader, if God cannot give us the certainty that He has spoken, we are left without His word altogether. If we must turn to human authority, call it what you please, in order to guarantee the word of God to our souls, then that authority is higher and greater, safer and more trustworthy than the word which it guarantees. Blessed be God, it is not so. He has spoken to our hearts. He has given us His word, and that word carries its own credentials with it. It stands

in no need of letters of commendation from a human hand. What! Turn to man to accredit the word of the living God! Apply to a worm to give us the assurance that our God has spoken to us in His word! Away for ever with the blasphemous notion, and let our whole moral being — all our ransomed powers adore the matchless grace, the sovereign mercy that has not left us to grope in the darkness of our own minds, or to be bewildered by the conflicting opinions of men; but has given us His own perfect and most precious revelation, the divine light of His word to guide our feet into the path of certainty and peace; to enlighten our understandings and comfort our hearts, to preserve us from every form of doctrinal error and moral pravity, and finally, to conduct us into the rest, blessedness and glory of His own heavenly kingdom. All praise to His Name, throughout the everlasting ages!

But we must bear in mind that the marvellous privilege of which we have spoken — and truly it is most marvellous — is the basis of a most solemn responsibility. If it be true that God has, in His infinite goodness, given us a perfect revelation of His mind, then what should be our attitude in reference to it? Are we to sit in judgement upon it? Are we to discuss, argue or

reason? Alas! for all who do so. They will find themselves on terribly dangerous ground. The only true, the only proper, the only safe attitude for man in the presence of God's revelation is obedience — simple, unqualified, hearty obedience. This is the only right thing for us; and this is the thing which is pleasing to God. The path of obedience is the path of sweetest privilege, rest and blessing. This path can be trodden by the merest babe in Christ, as well as by the "young men" and the "fathers." There is the one straight and blessed path for all. Narrow it is, no doubt; but oh! it is safe, bright and elevated. The light of our Fathers approving countenance ever shines upon it; and in this blessed light the obedient soul finds the most triumphant answer to all the reproaches of those who talk, in high sounding words, about breadth of mind, liberality of thought, freedom of opinion, progress, development, and such-like. The obedient child of God can afford to put up with all this, because he feels and knows, he believes and is sure that he is treading a path indicated for him by the precious word of God. He is not careful to explain or apologise, feeling assured that those who object, oppose, and reproach are utterly incapable of understanding or appreciating his explanation. And, moreover, he feels that it is no part of his duty to explain or defend. He has but to obey;

and as for objectors and opposers, he has but to refer them to his Master.

This makes it all so simple, so plain, so certain. It delivers the heart from a thousand difficulties and perplexities. If we were to set about replying to all who undertake to raise questions or start difficulties, our whole life would be spent in the profitless task. We may rest assured the best possible answer to all infidel objectors, is the steady, earnest, onward path of unqualified obedience. Let us leave infidels, sceptics and rationalists to their own worthless theories, while we, with unswerving purpose, and firm step, pursue that blessed path of childlike obedience which, like the shining light, shines more and more, to the perfect day. Thus shall our minds be kept tranquil, for the peace of God which passes all understanding shall garrison our hearts and minds, through Christ Jesus. When the word of God which is settled for ever in heaven is hidden deep down in our hearts, there will be a calm certainty, a holy stability, and a marked progress in our Christian career which will afford the best possible answer to the gainsayer, the most effectual testimony to the truth of God; and the most convincing evidence and solid confirmation to every wavering heart.

The chapter before us abounds in the most solemn exhortation to Israel, grounded upon the fact of their having heard the word of God. Thus in the second verse, we have a sentence or two which should be deeply engraved on the tablets of every Christian's heart. "Ye shall not add to the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it."

These words involve two grand facts with regard to the word of God. It is not to be added to, for the simplest of all reasons, because there is nothing lacking. It is not to be diminished, because there is nothing superfluous. Everything we want is there; and nothing that is there can be done without. "Add thou not to his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar." To suppose that ought can be added to God's word is, upon the very face of it, to deny that it is God's word; and, on the other hand, if we admit that it is the word of God, then it follows of necessity — blessed necessity, that we could not afford to do without a single sentence of it. There would be a blank in the volume which no human hand could fill up, if a single clause were dropped from its place in the canon. We have all we want; and hence, we must not add. We want it all; and, must not diminish.

How deeply important is all this, in this day of human tampering with the word of God! How blessed to know that we have in our possession a book so divinely perfect that not a sentence, not a clause, not a word can be added to it. We speak not, of course, of translations or versions, but of the scriptures as originally given of God — His own perfect revelation. To this not a touch can be given. As well might a human finger have dared to touch the creation of God, on the morning when all the sons of God sang together, as to add a jot or a tittle to the inspired word of God. And, on the other hand, to take away a jot or a tittle from it, is to say that the Holy Ghost has penned what was unnecessary. Thus the holy volume is divinely guarded at both ends. It is securely fenced round about so that no rude hand should touch its sacred contents.

"What!" It may be said in reply, "Do you mean to say that every sentence from the opening lines of Genesis, to the close of Revelation, is divinely inspired" Yes; that is, precisely, the ground we take. We claim, for every line between the covers of the volume, a divine origin. To question this is to attack the very pillars of the Christian faith. A single flaw in the canon would be sufficient to prove it not of God. To touch a single

stone in the arch is to bring down the whole fabric in ruins around us. "All scripture is divinely inspired; and" — being so, must be — "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect [artios], throughly furnished to all good works." (2 Tim. 3.)

This stronghold must, on no account, be surrendered. Nay, it must be tenaciously held, in the face of every infidel assault. If it be given up, all is hopelessly lost. We have nothing to lean upon. Either the word of God is perfect, or we are left without any divine foundation for our faith. If there be a word too much or a word too little in the revelation which God has given us, then verily we are left like a ship without compass, rudder or chart, to be drifted about on the wild, tumultuous ocean of infidel thought. In short, if we have not an absolutely perfect revelation, we are of all men most miserable.

But, we may still be challenged with such a question as this, "Do you believe that the long string of names, in the opening Chapters of 1 Chronicles — those genealogical tables are divinely inspired? were they written for our learning? and, if so, what are we to learn from them?" We unhesitatingly declare

our reverent belief in the divine inspiration of all these; and we have no doubt whatever but that their value, interest and importance will be fully proved, by-and by, in the history of that people to whom they specially apply.

And, then, as to what we are to learn from those genealogical records, we believe they teach us a most precious lesson as to Jehovah's faithful care of His people Israel, and His loving interest in them and in all that concerns them. He watches over them, from generation to generation, even though they are scattered and lost to human view. He knows all about "the twelve tribes," and He will manifest them in due time, and plant them in their destined inheritance, in the land of Canaan, according to His promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Now, is not all this full of blessed instruction for us? Is it not full of comfort for our souls? Is it not most confirmatory of our faith to mark the gracious pains-taking of our God, His minute care and vigilance, in reference to His earthly people? Most assuredly it is. And ought not our hearts to be interested in all that interests the heart of our Father? Are we not to take an interest in anything save what directly concerns ourselves? Where is there a loving child who would not take an interest in all his

father's concerns, and delight to read every line that drops from his father's pen?

Let us not be misunderstood. We do not, by any means, attempt to imply that all portions of the word of God are of like interest and importance to us. We do not presume to assert that we are to hang with equal interest over the first chapter of First Chronicles and the seventeenth chapter of John or the eighth chapter of Romans. It seems hardly necessary to make such a statement, inasmuch as no such question is raised. But what we assert is that each of the above scriptures is divinely inspired, one just as much as another. And not only so, but we further assert, that 1 Chronicles 1 and such-like passages fill a niche which John 17 cannot fill; and do a work which Romans 8 cannot do.

And, finally, above and beyond all, we must remember that we are not competent to judge what is, and what is not worthy of a place in the inspired canon. We are ignorant and short-sighted; and the very portion which we might deem beneath the dignity of inspiration may have some very important bearing upon the history of God's ways with the world at large, or with His people in particular.

In short, it simply resolves itself into this, with every truly pious soul, every really spiritual mind, we reverently believe in the divine inspiration of every line in our precious Bible, from beginning to end. And we believe this not on the ground of any human authority whatsoever. To believe in holy scripture because it comes to us accredited by any authority upon earth, would be to set that authority above holy scripture, inasmuch as that which guarantees has more weight, more value than the thing guaranteed. Hence, we should no more think of looking to human authority to confirm the word of God, than we should of bringing out a rush-light to prove that the sun was shining.

No, reader, we must be clear and decided as to this. It must be, in the judgement of our souls, a great cardinal truth which we hold dearer than life itself — the plenary inspiration of holy scripture. Thus shall we have wherewithal to answer the cool audacity of modern scepticism, rationalism and infidelity. We do not mean to say that we shall be able to convince infidels. God will deal with them in His own way, and convince them with His own unanswerable arguments, in His own time. It is labour and time lost to argue with such men. But we feel persuaded that the most dignified and effective answer to infidel-

ity, in its every phase, will be found in the calm repose of the heart that rests in the blessed assurance that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." And again, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." The former of these precious quotations proves that scripture has come from God; the latter, that it has come to us. Both together go to prove that we must neither add to nor take from the word of God. There is nothing lacking, and nothing superfluous. The Lord be praised for this solid foundation truth, and for all the comfort and consolation that flows from it to every true believer!

We shall now proceed to quote for the reader a few of the passages in this fourth chapter of Deuteronomy which so emphatically set forth the value, importance and authority of the word of God. In them, as in the whole of this book, we shall see that it is not so much a question of any particular ordinance, rite or ceremony, but of the weight, solemnity and dignity of the word of God itself, whatever that word may set before us.

"Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgements, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land

whither ye go to possess it." — Their conduct was to be ruled and formed, in all things, by the divine commandments. Immense principle for them, for us, for all! — "Keep, therefore, and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."

Let us specially weigh these words. Their wisdom and their understanding were to consist in their simply keeping and doing the divine statutes and judgements. It was not by learned discussion or arguments that their wisdom was to be displayed; but by child-like unquestioning obedience. All the wisdom was in the statutes and judgements, not in their thoughts and reasonings respecting them. The profound and marvellous wisdom of God was seen in His word, and this was what the nations were to see and admire. The light of the divine judgements shining in the conduct and character of the people of God was to draw forth the admiring testimony of the nations around.

Alas! alas! how differently it turned out! How little did the nations of the earth learn, from the actings of Israel, about God and His word! Yea, His Name was blasphemed continually

through their ways. Instead of occupying the high and holy and happy ground of loving obedience to the divine commandments, they descended to the level of the nations around them, adopted their habits, worshipped their gods, and walked in their ways; so that those nations instead of seeing the lofty wisdom, purity, and moral glory of the divine statutes, saw only the weakness, folly, and moral degradation of a people who made their boast in being the depository of those oracles which condemned themselves. (Rom. 2:3)

Still, blessed be God, His word must stand for ever, however His people may fail to carry it out. His standard is perfect, and therefore must never be lowered; and if the power of His word be not seen in the ways of His people, it will shine in the condemnation of those ways, and ever abide for the guidance, comfort, strength and blessing of any who desire, however feebly or falteringly to tread the path of obedience.

However, in the chapter with which we are at present occupied, the lawgiver seeks to set the divine standard faithfully before the people, in all its dignity and moral glory. He fails not to unfold to them the true effect of obedience; while he solemnly warns them against the danger of turning away from the holy

commandments of God. Hear his powerful pleadings with their hearts. "What nation is there so great," he says, "who has God so nigh to them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that has statutes and judgements so righteous, as all this law, which I set before you this day?"

Here is true moral greatness, at all times and in all places, for a nation, for a people, for a household, or for an individual. To have the living God nigh to us; to have the sweet privilege of calling upon Him, in all things; to have His power and His mercy ever exercised toward us; to have the light of His blessed countenance shining approvingly upon us, in all our ways; to have the moral effect of His righteous statutes and holy commandments seen in our practical career, from day to day; to have Him manifesting Himself to us, and making His abode with us.

What human language can adequately set forth the deep blessedness of such privileges as these? And yet they are placed by infinite grace, within the reach of every child of God on the face of the earth. We do not mean to assert that every child of God enjoys them. Far from it. They are reserved, as we

have already seen, for those who, through grace, are enabled to render a loving, hearty, reverent obedience to the divine word. Here lies the precious secret of the whole matter. It was true for Israel of old; and it is true for the church now; it was true for the individual soul then; and it is true for the individual soul now that divine complacency is the priceless reward of human obedience. And, we may further add that obedience is the bounden duty and high privilege of all God's people, and of each in particular. Come what may, implicit obedience is our privilege and our duty, divine complacency our present sweet reward.

But the poor human heart is prone to wander; and manifold influences are at work around us to draw us off from the narrow path of obedience. We need not marvel, therefore, at the solemn and oft-repeated admonitions addressed by Moses, to the hearts and consciences of his hearers. He pours his large loving heart out to the congregation so dear to him, in glowing, earnest, soul-stirring accents. "Only take heed to thyself," he says, "and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life; but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons."

These are weighty words for all of us. They set before us two things of unspeakable importance, namely, individual and domestic responsibility — personal and household testimony. God's people of old were responsible to keep the heart with all diligence, lest it should let slip the precious word of God. And not only so, but they were solemnly responsible to instruct their children and their grandchildren in the same. Are we, with all our light and privilege, less responsible than Israel of old? Surely not. We are imperatively called upon to give ourselves to the careful study of the word of God. To apply our hearts to it. It is not enough that we hurry over a few verses or a chapter, as a piece of daily religious routine. This will not meet the case at all. We want to make the Bible our supreme and absorbing study; that in which we delight, in which we find our refreshment and recreation.

It is to be feared that some of us read the Bible as a matter of duty, while we find our delight and refreshment in the newspaper and light literature. Need we wonder at our shallow knowledge of scripture? How could we know ought of the living depths or the moral glories of a volume which we merely take up as a cold matter of duty, and read a few verses with a yawn-

ing indifference, while, at the same time, the newspaper or the sensational novel is literally devoured?

It will, perhaps, be said in reply, "We cannot be always reading the Bible." Would those who thus speak say, "We cannot be always reading the newspaper or the novel"? And, we would further inquire, what must be the actual state of a person who can say, "We cannot be always reading the Bible"? Can he be in a healthy condition of soul? Can he really love the word of God? Can he have any just sense of its preciousness, its excellence, its moral glories? Impossible.

What mean the following words to Israel, "Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart, and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes!" The "heart" — the "soul" — the "hand" — the "eyes" — all engaged about the precious word of God. This was real work. It was to be no empty formality, no barren routine. The whole man was to be given up, in holy devotion, to the statutes and judgements of God.

"And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way,

when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt write them upon the door posts of thine house, and upon thy gates." Do we, Christians, enter into such words as these? Has the word of God such a place, in our hearts, in our homes, and in our habits? Do those who enter our houses, or come in contact with us in daily life, see that the word of God is paramount with us? Do those with whom we do business see that we are governed by the precepts of holy scripture? Do our servants and our children see that we live in the very atmosphere of scripture, and that our whole character is formed and our conduct governed by it?

These are searching questions for our hearts, beloved Christian reader. Let us not put them away from us. We may rest assured there is no more correct indicator of our moral and spiritual condition than that afforded by our treatment of the word of God. If we do not love it — love to study it — thirst after it — delight in — long for the quiet hour in the which we can hang over its sacred page, and drink in its most precious teaching — meditate upon it, in the closet, in the family, in the street; in short, if we do not breathe its holy atmosphere — if we could ever give utterance to such a sentiment as that given above, that

"We cannot be always reading the Bible," then, verily, we have urgent need to look well to our spiritual state, for we are sadly out of health. The new nature loves the word of God — earnestly desires it; as we read in 1 Peter 2. "As new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

This is the true idea. If the sincere milk of the word be not sought after, diligently used and eagerly fed upon, we must be in a low, unhealthy, dangerous condition of soul. There may not be anything outwardly wrong in our conduct; we may not be publicly dishonouring the Lord, in our ways; but we are grieving His loving heart by our gross neglect of His word, which is but another term for the neglect of Himself. It is the very height of folly to talk of loving Christ, if we do not love, and live upon His word. It is a delusion to imagine that the new life can be in a healthy prosperous condition where the word of God is habitually neglected in the closet and the family.

We do not, of course, mean that no other book but the Bible should be read — or we should not pen these "Notes" — but nothing demands greater watchfulness than the matter of reading. All things are to be done, in the Name of Jesus, and to the glory of God; and this is amongst the "all things." We should

read no book that we cannot read to the glory of God, and on which we cannot ask God's blessing.

We feel that this entire subject demands the most serious consideration of all God's people; and we trust that the Spirit of God may use our meditation on the chapter before us to stir up our hearts and consciences in reference to what is due to the word of God, both in our hearts and in our houses.

No doubt, if it has its right place in the heart, it will have its right place also in the house. But if there be no acknowledgment of the word of God in the bosom of the family, it is hard to believe that it has its right place in the heart. Heads of houses should ponder this matter seriously. We are most fully persuaded that there ought to be, in every Christian household, a daily acknowledgment of God and His word. Some may, perhaps, look upon it as bondage, as legality, as religious routine to have regular family worship. We would ask such objectors, is it bondage for the family to assemble at meals? Are the family reunions round the social board ever regarded as a wearisome duty — a piece of dull routine? Certainly not, if the family be a well ordered and happy one. Why then should it be regarded as a burdensome thing for the head of a Christian

household to gather his children and his servants around him and read a few verses of the precious word of God, and breathe a few words of prayer before the throne of grace? We believe it to be a habit in perfect accordance with the teaching of both the Old and the New Testaments — a habit grateful to the heart of God — a holy, blessed, edifying habit.

What should we think of a professing Christian who never prayed, never read the word of God, in private? Could we possibly regard him as a happy, healthy, true Christian? Assuredly not. Indeed we should seriously question the existence of divine life in such a soul. Prayer and the word of God are absolutely essential to healthy vigorous Christian life: so that a man who habitually neglects these must be in an utterly dead state.

Now, if it be thus, in reference to an individual, how can a family be regarded as in a right state where there is no family reading, no family prayer, no family acknowledgment of God or His word? Can we conceive a God-fearing household going on from Lord's day morning to Saturday night, without any collective recognition of the One to whom they owe everything? Day after day rolls on — domestic duties are attended to — the family assemble regularly at meals, but there is no thought of

summoning the household round the word of God, or round the mercy-seat. We ask where is the difference between such a family and any poor heathen household? Is it not most sad, most deplorable to find those who make the very highest profession, and who take their places at the Lord's Table, yet living in the gross neglect of family reading, family worship?

Reader, are you the head of a household? If so, what are your thoughts on this subject? And what is your line of action? Have you family reading and family prayer, daily in your house? If not — bear with us when we ask you — why not? Search and see what is the real root of this matter. Has your heart declined from God, from His word and His ways? Do you read and pray in private? Do you love the word and prayer? Do you find delight in them? If so, how is it you neglect them in your household? Perhaps you seek to excuse yourself on the ground of nervousness and timidity. If so, look to the Lord to enable you to overcome the weakness. Just cast yourself on His unfailing grace, and gather your household around you, at a certain hour, each day, read a few verses of scripture and breathe half-a-dozen words of prayer; or if you cannot do this at first, just let

the family kneel for a few moments, in silence, before the throne.

Anything, in short, like a family acknowledgment, a family testimony — anything but a godless, careless, prayerless life in your household. Do, dear friend, suffer the word of exhortation in this matter. Let us entreat you to begin at once, looking to God to help you, as He most assuredly will, for He never fails a really trusting, dependent heart. Do not, any longer, go on neglecting God and His word in your family circle. It is really terrible. Let no arguments about bondage, legality, or formalism weigh with you, for a moment. We almost feel disposed to exclaim, "Blessed bondage!" If indeed it be bondage to read the word, we cordially welcome it, and fearlessly glory in it.

But, no; we cannot for a moment, regard it in any such light. We believe it to be a most delightful privilege for every one whom God has set at the head of a household to gather all the members of that household around him and read a portion of the blessed book, and pour out his heart in prayer to God. We believe it is specially the duty of the head so to do. It is by no means necessary to make it a long wearisome service. As a

rule, both in our houses and in our public assemblies, short, fresh, fervent exercises are by far the most edifying.

But this, of course, is an open question as to which we merely give our judgement which must go for what it is worth. The length and character of the service must, in every case, be left to the person who conducts it. But we do, most earnestly, trust that if these lines should be scanned by any one who is the head of a household, and if he has hitherto neglected the holy privilege of family worship — family reading, he will, henceforth, do so no more. May he be enabled to say, with Joshua, "Let others do as they will, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." It is not, surely, that we would lead any to imagine that the mere act of family reading takes in all that is comprehended in that weighty sentence, "We will serve the Lord." Far from it. That blessed service takes in everything belonging to our private and domestic history. It takes in the most minute details of practical daily life. All this is most true and invaluable. But we are most thoroughly persuaded that nothing can go right in any household in which family reading and family prayer are habitually neglected.

It may be said that there are many families who seem very particular about their morning and evening reading and prayer, and yet their whole domestic history, from morning till night, is a flagrant contradiction of their so-called religious service. It may be that the head of the house, instead of shedding sunlight upon the family circle, is morose in his temper, rude and coarse in his manners, rough and contradictory to his wife, arbitrary and severe to his children, unreasonable and exacting to his servants, finding fault with what is laid on the table, after having asked God's blessing upon it; and, in short, in every way giving the lie to his reading and his prayer in the family. So also as to the wife and the mother; and the children and the servants. The whole domestic economy is out of order. There is disorder and confusion; meals are unpunctual; there is a want of kindly consideration one of another; the children are rude, selfish and wilful; the servants are thoughtless, wasteful and disobedient, if not much worse. The tone, atmosphere, and style of the entire establishment are unchristian, ungodly, utterly unbecoming.

And then when you travel outside the domestic circle, and mark the conduct of the heads and members of the family to-

ward those outside — mark their business, if they be in business; hear the testimony of those who deal with them, as to the quality of their goods, the style and character of their work; the spirit and temper in which they carry on their business; such grasping and griping, such covetousness, such commercial trickery; nothing of God, nothing of Christ, nothing to distinguish them from the most thorough worldling around; yea, the conduct of those very worldlings, of those who would never think of such a thing as family worship, would put them to shame.

Under such painful and humiliating circumstances, what of the family worship — the family reading — the family altar? Alas! it is an empty formality, a powerless, worthless, unseemly proceeding — in place of being a morning and evening sacrifice, it is a morning and evening lie — a solemn mockery — an insult to God.

All this is sadly true. There is a terrible lack of household testimony — of common practical righteousness in our families and in the entire economy of our houses. There is but little of the white raiment — the fine linen, which is the righteousness of saints. We seem to forget those weighty words of the in-

spired apostle, in Romans 14. "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Some of us seem to think that, whenever we meet with the word "righteousness," it must needs mean the righteousness of God in which we stand, or righteousness imputed to us. This is a very great mistake indeed. We must remember there is a practical and human side of this question. There is the subjective as well as the objective — the walk as well as the standing — the condition as well as the position.

These things must never be separated. It is of little use to set up, or seek to maintain a family altar amid the ruins of family testimony. It is nothing short of a hideous caricature to begin and end with so-called family worship a day characterised throughout by ungodliness and unrighteousness, levity, folly and vanity. Can ought be more unsightly or more miserably inconsistent than an evening spent in song singing, charades and other light games, closed up with a contemptible bit of religion in the shape of reading and prayer?

All this line of things is most deplorable. It ought not to be found in connection with the Holy Name of Christ, with His assembly, or the holy exercises of His Table. We must measure

everything in our private life, in our domestic economy, in our daily history, in all our intercourse, and in all our business transactions, with that one standard, namely, the glory of Christ. Our one grand question, in reference to everything that comes before us, or solicits our attention must be, "Is this worthy of the Holy Name which is called upon me?" If not, let us not touch it; yea, let us turn our back upon it with stern decision, and flee from it with holy energy. Let us not listen, for a moment, to the contemptible question, "What harm is there in it?" Nothing but harm, if Christ be not in it. No truly devoted heart would ever entertain — much less put such a question. Whenever you hear any one speaking thus, you may, at once, conclude that Christ is not the governing object of the heart.

We trust the reader is not weary of all this homely, practical truth. We believe it is loudly called for in this day of high profession. We have all of us much need to consider our ways, to look well to the real state of our hearts as to Christ; for here lies the true secret of the whole matter. If the heart be not true to Him, nothing can be right — nothing in the private life, nothing in the family, nothing in the business, nothing in the as-

sembly, nothing anywhere. But if the heart be true to Him all will be — must be right.

No marvel, therefore, if the blessed apostle, when he reaches the close of that wonderful epistle to the Corinthians, sums all up with this solemn declaration, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." In the course of his letter he deals with various forms of doctrinal error and moral pravity; but when he comes to the close, instead of pronouncing his solemn sentence upon any particular error or evil, he hurls it with holy indignation against any one, no matter who or what, who does not love the Lord Jesus Christ. Love to Christ is the grand safe-guard against every form of error and evil. A heart filled with Christ has no room for ought beside; but if there be no love to Him, there is no security against the wildest error, or the worst form of moral evil.

We must now return to our chapter.

The attention of the people is specially called to the solemn scenes at Mount Horeb — scenes which should surely have deeply and abidingly impressed their hearts. "Specially the day that thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the

Lord said to me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words" — the grand and all important point for Israel of old, for the church now — for each, for all, at all times and in all places, is to be brought into direct, living contact with the eternal word of the living God, to the end — "that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children."

It is very beautiful to note the intimate connection between hearing God's word and fearing His Name. It is one of those great root principles which never change, never lose their power or their intrinsic value. The word and the Name go together; and the heart that loves the one will reverence the other, and bow down to its holy authority, in all things. "He that loves me not keeps not my sayings." "He that says, I know him, and keeps not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keeps his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected." (John 14; 1 John 2.) Every true lover of God will treasure up His word in the heart, and where the word is thus lovingly treasured in the heart, its hallowed influence will be seen in the whole life, character and conduct. God's object in giving His word is that it may govern our conduct, form our

character and shape our way; and if His word has not this practical effect upon us it is utterly vain for us to speak of loving Him; yea, it is nothing short of positive mockery which He must, sooner or later, resent.

And let us note particularly the solemn responsibility of Israel as to their children. They were not only to "hear" and "learn" for themselves; but they were also to teach their children. This is a universal and abiding duty which cannot be neglected with impunity. God attaches very great importance to this matter. We hear Him saying as to Abraham, "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgement; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he has spoken of him." (Gen. 18)

These words are most important, as setting before us the divine estimate of domestic training, and family piety. In all ages, and under all dispensations, God has been pleased to give expression to His approbation of the proper education of the children of His people — their faithful training according to His holy word. We find no such thing sanctioned in scripture, as children being allowed to grow up in ignorance, and carelessness, and

wilfulness. Some professing Christians, under the baneful influence of a certain school of theology, seem to think that it is, in some way, an interference with the sovereignty of God, with His purposes and counsels, to instruct their children in the truth of the gospel and the letter of holy scripture. They consider that the children ought to be left to the action of the Holy Ghost which they are sure to experience in God's own time, if indeed they are of God's elect; and, if not, all human effort is perfectly useless.

Now, we must, in all faithfulness to the truth of God, and to the souls of our readers, bear the clearest and strongest testimony against this one-sided view of the great practical subject before us. There is nothing more mischievous, nothing more pernicious in its effect upon the conscience, the heart, the life, the whole practical career and moral character, than one-sided theology. It does not matter what side you take, so long as you only take one. It is sure to produce what we must term a spiritual malformation. We feel we cannot too strongly and earnestly warn the reader against this sore evil. It can only lead to the most disastrous results; and, as to its effect in reference to the training of our children, and the management of our house-

holds — the subject now before us — it is mischievous in the extreme. Indeed we have seen the most deplorable consequences follow the carrying out of this line of thought. We have known the children of Christian parents to grow up in utter ignorance of divine things, in carelessness, recklessness, and open infidelity. And if a word of admonition were offered, it has been met by arguments based upon the dogmas of a one-sided divinity — and the one side turned the wrong way. It has been said, "We cannot make Christians of our children, and we must not make them formalists or hypocrites. It must be a divine work or nothing. When God's time comes, He will effectually call them, if indeed they are among the number of His elect. If not, all our efforts are perfectly useless."

To all this we reply that this line of argument, if carried to its fullest extent, would prevent the farmer from ploughing his ground or sowing his seed. It is very plain that he cannot make the seed to germinate or fructify. He could no more cause a solitary grain of wheat to grow, than he could create the universe. Does this prevent his ploughing and sowing? Does it cause him to fold his arms and say, "I can do nothing. I cannot, by any effort of mine, make corn grow. It is a divine operation; and

therefore I must wait God's time." Does any farmer reason and act like this? Surely not, unless he be a lunatic. Every sound-minded person knows that ploughing and sowing must go before the reaping; and if the former be neglected, it is the height of extravagant folly to look for the latter.

Nor is it otherwise in the matter of training our children. We know God is sovereign. We believe in His eternal counsels and purposes. We fully recognise the grand doctrines of election and predestination; yea, we are as thoroughly persuaded of them, as of the truth that God is, or that Christ died and rose again. Moreover, we believe that the new birth must take place, in every instance — in the case of our children as of all beside; we are convinced that this new birth is entirely a divine operation, effected by the Holy Ghost, through the word, as we are distinctly taught in our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, in John 3, and also in James 1:18; and 1 Peter 1:23.

But does all this touch, in the most remote way, the solemn responsibility of Christian parents to teach and train their children, diligently and faithfully, from their earliest moments? Most certainly not. Woe be to the parents who, on any plea or on any ground whatsoever, be it one-sided theology, misapplied

scripture, or anything else, deny their responsibility, or neglect their plain, bounden duty, in this holy business. True, we cannot make our children Christians; and we ought not to make them formalists or hypocrites. But we are not called to make them anything. We are simply called to do our duty by them, and leave results to God. We are instructed and commanded to bring up our children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." When is this "bringing up" to commence? When are we to begin the sacred work of training our little ones? Surely at the beginning. The very moment we enter upon a relationship, we enter also upon the responsibility which that relationship entails. We cannot deny this. We cannot shake it off. We may neglect it, and have to reap the sad consequences of our neglect, in various ways. It is a very serious thing to stand in the sacred relationship of a parent — very interesting and very delightful, no doubt; but most serious because of the responsibility involved. True it is, blessed be God, His grace is sufficient for us, in this, as in all beside; and "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally, and upbraids not; and it shall be given him." "We are not sufficient of ourselves," in this weighty matter, to think or to do anything, as ourselves;

but our sufficiency is of God; and He will meet our every need. We have simply to draw upon Him, for exigency of every hour.

But we must do our duty. Some do not like the homely word "duty." They think it has a legal ring about it. We trust the reader does not think so, for it is a very great mistake indeed. We look upon the word as a very sound and morally wholesome one; and we believe that every true Christian loves it. One thing is certain, it is only in the path of duty we can count on God. To talk of trusting God, when out of the path of duty, is a miserable conceit, and a delusion. And, in the matter of our relationship, as parents, to neglect our duty is to bring down upon us the most disastrous consequences.

We believe the whole business of Christian education is summed up in two brief sentences, namely, count on God for your children; and train your children for God. To take the first without the second, is antinomianism; to take the second without the first is legality; to take both together is sound practical Christianity — true religion in the sight of God and man.

It is the sweet privilege of every Christian parent to count, with all possible confidence, upon God, for his children. But, then,

we must remember that there is, in the government of God, an inseparable link connecting this privilege with the most solemn responsibility as to training. For a Christian parent to speak of counting on God for the salvation of his children, and for the moral integrity of their future career, in this world, while the duty of training is neglected, is simply a miserable delusion.

We press this, most solemnly, upon all Christian parents, but especially upon those who have just entered upon the relationship. There is great danger of shirking our duty to our children, of shifting it over upon others, or neglecting it altogether. We do not like the trouble of it; we shrink from the constant worry as it seems to us. But we shall find that the trouble, and the worry, and the sorrow, and the heart-scalding arising from the neglect of our duty will be a thousand times worse than all that can be involved in the discharge of it. To every true lover of God there is deep delight in treading the path of duty. Every step taken in that path strengthens our confidence to go on. And then we can always count upon the infinite resources that we have in God, when we are keeping His commandments. We have simply to betake ourselves, morning by morning, yea, hour by hour, to our Father's exhaustless treasury, and there get

all we want, in the way of grace and wisdom, and moral power to enable us to discharge aright the holy functions of our relationship. "He gives more grace." This always holds good. But if we, instead of seeking grace to discharge our duty, seek ease in neglecting it, we are simply laying up a store of sorrow which will accumulate rapidly and fall upon us heavily at a future day. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap. For he that sows to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. 6.)

This is the condensed statement of a great principle of God's moral government — a principle of universal application, and one which applies, with singular force to the subject before us. As we sow, in the matter of the education of our children, so we shall, most assuredly, reap: There is no getting out of this.

But let not any dear Christian parent whose eye may scan these lines, be at all discouraged or fainthearted. There is no reason whatever for this; but, on the contrary, every reason for the most joyful confidence in God. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it, and is safe. Let us tread, with a firm step, the path of duty; and then we can count,

with unwavering confidence, upon our ever faithful and gracious God, for the need of each day, as it rolls along. And, in due time, we shall reap the precious fruit of our labour, according to the appointment of God, and in pursuance of the enactments of His moral government.

We do not attempt to lay down any rules or regulations for the training. We do not believe in such. Children cannot be trained by dry rules. Who could attempt to embody in rules all that is wrapped up in that one sentence, "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"!

Here we have, indeed, a golden rule which takes in everything from the cradle to matured manhood. Yes, we repeat, "from the cradle;" for we are most fully persuaded that all true Christian training begins at the very beginning. Some of us have little idea of how soon and how sharply children begin to observe; and how much they take in as they gaze at us through their dear expressive eyes.

And then how marvellously susceptible they are of the moral atmosphere which surrounds them! Yes; and it is this very moral atmosphere that constitutes the grand secret of training

our families. Our children should be permitted to breathe, from day to day, the atmosphere of love and peace, purity, holiness and true practical righteousness. This has an amazing effect in forming the character. It is a great thing for our children to see their parents walking in love, in harmony, in tender care one for the other; in kind consideration for the servants; in love and sympathy for the poor. Who can measure the moral effect upon a child of the very first angry look, or unkind word between father and mother? And in cases where the daily history is one of unsightly strife and contention, the father contradicting the mother, and the mother disparaging the father; how are children to grow in such an atmosphere as this?

The fact is, it is not within the compass of human language to set forth all that is involved in the moral tone of the entire family circle — the spirit, style, and atmosphere of the whole household, the drawing room, the dining-room, the nursery, the kitchen, where circumstances admit of such distinctions, or where the family have to confine themselves to two rooms. It is not a question of rank, position or wealth, but of the beautiful grace of God shining out in all. There may be the stalled ox, or the dinner of herbs; these are not, at present, in question. But

what we press on all fathers and mothers, all heads of households, high and low, rich and poor, learned and ignorant, is the necessity of training their children in an atmosphere of love and peace, truth and holiness, purity and kindness. Thus will their households be the practical exhibition of the character of God; and all who come in contact with them will, a least, have before their eyes a practical witness to the truth of Christianity.

But, ere we turn from the subject of domestic government, there is one special point to which we desire to call the attention of Christian parents — a point of the utmost possible moment, yet too much neglected amongst us, and that is the need of inculcating upon our children the duty of implicit obedience. This cannot be too strongly insisted upon, inasmuch as it not only affects the order and comfort of our households; but, what is infinitely more important, it concerns the glory of God, and the practical carrying out of His truth. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." And again, "Children, obey your parents in all things; for this is well pleasing to the Lord." (Eph. 6; Col. 3.)

This is absolutely essential, and must be firmly insisted upon, from the very outset. The child must be taught to obey, from

his earliest moments. He must be trained to submit himself to divinely appointed authority, and that, as the apostle puts it, "in all things." If this be not attended to from the very first, it will be found almost impossible to attend to it afterwards. If the will be allowed to act, it grows, with terrible rapidity, and each day's growth increases the difficulty of bringing it under control. Hence, the parent should begin at once, to establish his authority, on a basis of moral strength and firmness; and, when this is done, he may be as gentle and tender as the most loving heart could desire. We do not believe in sternness, harshness or severity. They are, by no means, necessary, and are generally the accompaniments of bad training and the proofs of bad temper. God has put into the parent's hand the reins of government, and the rod of authority; but it is not needful — if we may so express it — to be continually chucking the reins and brandishing the rod, which are the sure proofs of moral weakness. Whenever you hear a man continually talking about his authority, you may be sure his authority is not properly established. There is a quiet dignity about true moral power which is perfectly unmistakable.

Furthermore, we judge it to be a mistake for a parent to be perpetually crossing a child's will, in matters of no moment. Such a line of action tends to break the child's spirit, whereas the object of all sound training is to break the will. The child should ever be impressed with the idea that the parent seeks only his real good; and that if he has to refuse or prohibit anything, it is not for the purpose of curtailing the child's enjoyment, but simply for the promotion of his true interests.

One grand object of domestic government is to protect each member of the household in the enjoyment of his privileges, and in the proper discharge of his relative duties. Now, inasmuch as it is the divinely appointed duty of a child to obey, the parent is responsible to see this duty discharged, for if it be neglected, some other members of the domestic circle must suffer.

There can be no greater nuisance in a house than a naughty wilful child; and, as a general rule, wherever you find such, it is to be traced to bad training. We are aware, of course, that children differ in temper and disposition; that some children have peculiarly strong wills and sturdy tempers, and are therefore specially hard to manage.

All this we quite understand; but it leaves wholly untouched the question of the parent's responsibility to insist upon implicit obedience. He can always count on God for the needed grace and power to carry out this point. Even in the case of a widowed mother, we believe, most assuredly, she can look to God to enable her to command her children and her household. In no case, therefore, should parental authority be surrendered, for a moment.

It sometimes happens that, through injudicious fondness, the parent is tempted to pamper the will of the child; but it is sowing to the flesh, and must yield corruption. It is not true love, at all, to indulge a child's will; neither can it possibly minister to his true happiness or legitimate enjoyment. An overindulged, self-willed child is miserable himself, and a grievous infliction on all who have to do with him. Children should be taught to think of others; and to seek to promote their comfort and happiness in every way. How very unseemly it is, for example, for a child to enter the house and ascend the stairs whistling, singing and shouting, in total disregard of other members of the household who may be seriously disturbed and annoyed by such conduct! No properly trained child would think of acting in such a

way; and where such unsubdued, unruly, inconsiderate conduct is allowed, there is a serious defect in the domestic government.

It is essential to family peace, harmony and comfort, that all the members should "consider one another." We are responsible to seek the good and the happiness of those around us, and not our own. If all would but remember this, what different households we should have; and what a different tale would families have to tell! Every Christian household should be the reflection of the divine character. The atmosphere should just be the very atmosphere of heaven. How is this to be? Simply by each one, parent, child, master and servant seeking to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, and manifest His Spirit. He never pleased Himself; never sought His own interest, in anything. He did always the thing that pleased the Father. He came to serve and to give. He went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil. Thus it was ever with that most blessed One — the gracious, loving, sympathising Friend of all the sons and daughters of want, weakness and sorrow; and if only the various members of each Christian family were formed on this perfect model, we should, at least, realise something of the power

and efficacy of personal and domestic Christianity, which, blessed be God, can ever be maintained and exhibited, notwithstanding the hopeless ruin of the professing church. "Thou and thy house" suggests a great golden principle which runs through the volume of God, from beginning to end. In every age, under every dispensation, in the days of the Patriarchs, in the days of the Law, and in the days of Christianity, we find, to our exceeding comfort and encouragement, that personal and domestic godliness has its place as something grateful to the heart of God and to the glory of His holy Name.

This we consider to be most consolatory, at all times, but more particularly at a time, like the present, when the professing church seems so rapidly sinking into gross worldliness and open infidelity; and not this only, but when those who most earnestly desire to walk in obedience to the word of God, and to act on the grand foundation truth of the unity of the body, find it so difficult to maintain a corporate testimony. In view of all this, we may well bless God, with overflowing hearts, that personal and family piety can always be maintained, and that from the heart and the home of every Christian a constant stream of praise may ascend to the throne of God, and a stream

of active benevolence flow out to a needy, sorrowful, sin-stricken world. May it be so, more and more, through the mighty ministry of God the Holy Ghost, that God, in all things, may be glorified, in the hearts and homes of His beloved people!

We have now to consider the very solemn warning addressed to the congregation of Israel, against the terrible sin of idolatry — a sin to which alas! the poor human heart is ever prone in one way or another. It is quite possible to be guilty of the sin of idolatry without bowing down before a graven image; wherefore it behoves us to weigh well the words of warning which fell from the lips of Israel's venerable lawgiver. They are, most assuredly, written for our learning.

"And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire to the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness" — solemn and suited accompaniments of the occasion! — "And the Lord spake to you out of the midst of the fire" — Oh, how differently He speaks in the gospel of His grace! — "Ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude" — important fact for them to ponder! — "only a voice" — And "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by

the word of God." — "And he declared to you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone. And the Lord commanded me, at that time, to teach you statutes and judgements" — not that they might discuss them, sit in judgement upon them, or argue about them, but — "that ye might do them" — the grand old story, the Deuteronomic theme of obedience, most precious! whether out of or — "in the land whither ye go over to possess it."

Here lies the solid ground of the appeal against idolatry. They saw nothing. God did not show Himself to them. He did not assume any bodily shape of which they might form an image. He gave them His word, His holy commandments, so plain that a child could understand them, and the wayfaring men though fools need not err therein. There was no need for them therefore to set about imagining what God was like; nay, this was the very sin against which they were so faithfully warned. They were called to hear God's voice, not to see His shape — to obey His commandments, not to make an image of Him. Superstition vainly seeks to do honour to God by forming and worshipping an image. Faith, on the contrary, lovingly receives and

reverently obeys His holy commandments. "If a man love me," says our blessed Lord, "he will" — what? make an image of me, and worship it? Nay, but "he will keep my words." This makes it so simple, so safe, so certain. We are not called to work up our minds to form any conception of God. We have simply to hear His word and keep His commandments. We can have no idea whatever of God, but as He has been pleased to reveal Himself. "No man has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him." "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, has shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

Jesus is declared to be the brightness of God's Glory and the exact impression of His substance. He could say, "He that has seen me has seen the Father." Thus the Son reveals the Father; and it is by the word, through the power of the Holy Ghost, that we know anything of the Son; and therefore for any one to attempt, by any efforts of his mind or workings of his imagination to conceive an image of God, or of Christ, is simply idolatry. To endeavour to arrive at any knowledge of God or of Christ, save by scripture, is simply mysticism and confusion;

may more, it is to put ourselves directly into the hands of the devil, to be led by him into the wildest, darkest, and deadliest delusion.

Hence, therefore, as Israel, at mount Horeb, was shut up to the "voice" of God, and warned against any similitude; so we are shut up to holy scripture, and warned against everything which would draw us away, the breadth of a hair, from that holy and all-sufficient standard. We must not listen to the suggestions of our own minds, nor to those of any other human mind. We must absolutely and sternly refuse to listen to anything but the voice of God — the voice of holy scripture. Here is true security, true rest. Here we have absolute certainty, so that we can say, "I know whom" — not merely what — "I have believed; and am persuaded that he," &c.

"Take ye therefore good heed to yourselves, (for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the Lord spake to you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire,) lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flies in the air, the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness

of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth; and lest thou lift up thine eyes to heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the Lord thy God has divided to all nations under the whole heaven. But the Lord has taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be to him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day."

There is a very weighty truth set before us here. The people are expressly taught that in making any image and bowing down thereto, they, in reality, lowered and corrupted themselves. Hence, when they made the golden calf, the Lord said to Moses, "Go, get thee down; for thy people which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves." It could not be otherwise. The worshipper must be inferior to the object of his worship; and therefore, in worshipping a calf, they actually put themselves below the level of the beasts that perish. Well, therefore, might He say, They "have corrupted themselves; they have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said,

These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

What a spectacle! A whole congregation, led by Aaron the high priest, bowing in worship before a thing formed by a graving tool out of the ear-rings which had just been taken from the ears of their wives and daughters! Only conceive a number of intelligent beings, people endowed with reason, understanding and conscience, saying of a molten calf, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt!" They actually displaced Jehovah by an image graven by art and man's device! And these were the people who had seen the mighty works of Jehovah, in the land of Egypt. They had seen plague after plague falling upon Egypt and its obdurate king. They had seen the land, as it were, shaken to its very centre, by the successive strokes of Jehovah's governmental rod. They had seen Egypt's first-born laid in death by the sword of the destroying angel. They had seen the Red Sea divided by one stroke of Jehovah's rod, and they had passed through upon dry ground between those crystal walls which afterwards fell, in crushing power, upon their enemies.

All these things had passed before their eyes; and yet they could, so soon, forget all, and say, of a molten calf, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Did they really believe that a molten image had made the land of Egypt to tremble, humbled its proud monarch, and brought them forth victoriously? Had a calf divided the sea for them, and led them majestically through its depths? So, at least, they said; for what will people not say when the eye and the heart are turned away from God and His word?

But, we may, perhaps, be asked, "Has all this a voice for us? Are Christians to learn anything from Israel's molten calf? And do the warnings addressed to Israel against idolatry convey any voice to the ear of the church? Are we in danger of bowing down to a graven image? Is it possible, that we, whose high privilege it is to walk in the full-orbed light of New Testament Christianity, could ever worship a molten calf?"

To all this we reply, first of all, in the language of Romans 15:4, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime" — Exodus 32 and Deuteronomy 4 included — "were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." This brief passage contains our chartered

right to range through the wide field of Old Testament scripture and gather up and appropriate its golden lessons, to feed upon its "exceeding great and precious promises;" to drink in its deep and varied consolation; and to profit by its solemn warnings, and wholesome admonitions.

And then, as to our being capable of, or liable to, the gross sin of idolatry, we have a striking answer in 1 Corinthians 10 where the inspired apostle uses the very scene at mount Horeb, as a warning to the church of God. We cannot do better than quote the entire passage for the reader. There is nothing like the word of God. May we love, prize and reverence it more and more, each day!

"Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud," — those whose carcasses fell in the wilderness, as well as those who reached the land of promise — "and all passed through the sea; and were all baptised to Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them; and that Rock was Christ" — how strong, how solemn, and how searching is this for all professors! — "But with many

of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our ensamples" — let us carefully mark this — "to the intent we should not lust after evil things" — things in any way contrary to the mind of Christ — "as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters" — so that professing Christians may be idolaters — "as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened to them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are met. Wherefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

Here we learn, in the plainest manner, that there is no depth of sin and folly, no form of moral pravity into which we are not capable of plunging, at any moment, if not kept by the mighty power of God. There is no security for us save in the moral shelter of the divine presence. We know that the Spirit of God

does not warn us against things to which we are not liable. He would not say to us, "Neither be ye idolaters," if we were not capable of being such. Idolatry takes various shapes. It is not therefore a question of the shape of the thing, but of the thing itself; not the outward form, but the root or principle of the thing. We read that, "covetousness is idolatry;" and that a covetous man is an idolater. That is, a man desiring to possess himself of more than God has given him is an idolater — is actually guilty of the sin of Israel when they made the golden calf and worshipped it. Well might the blessed apostle say to the Corinthians — say to us, "Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry." Why be warned to flee from a thing to which we are not liable? Are there any idle words in the volume of God? What mean those closing words of the first epistle of John, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols"? Do they not tell us that we are in danger of worshipping idols? Assuredly they do. Our treacherous hearts are capable of departing from the living God, and setting up, some other object beside Him; and what is this but idolatry? Whatever commands the heart is the heart's idol, be it what it may, money, pleasure, power or ought else; so that we may well see the urgent need

for the many warnings given us by the Holy Ghost against the sin of idolatry.

But we have, in Galatians 4, a very remarkable passage, and one which speaks, in most impressive accents, to the professing church. The Galatians had, like all other Gentiles, worshipped idols; but, on the reception of the gospel, had turned from idols to serve the living and true God. The Judaizing teachers, however, had come among them, and taught them that unless they were circumcised and kept the law, they could not be saved.

Now this the blessed apostle unhesitatingly pronounces to be idolatry — a going back to the grossness and moral degradation of their former days, and all this after having professed to receive the glorious gospel of Christ. Hence the moral force of the apostle's inquiry, "Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service to them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God [or rather are known of God], how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain."

This is peculiarly striking. The Galatians were not outwardly going back to the worship of idols. Is it not improbable that they would have indignantly repudiated any such idea. But, for all that, the inspired apostle asks them, "How turn ye again?" What does this inquiry mean, if they were not going back to idolatry? And what are we, now, to learn from the whole passage? Simply this, that circumcision, and getting under the law, and observing days, and months, and times, and years — that all this, though apparently so different, was nothing, more or less, than going back to their old idolatry. The observance of days and the worship of false gods were both a turning away from the living and true God; from His Son Jesus Christ; from the Holy Ghost; from that brilliant cluster of dignities and glories which belong to Christianity.

All this is peculiarly solemn for professing Christians. We question if the full import of Galatians 4:8-10 is really apprehended by the great majority of those who profess to believe the Bible. We solemnly press this whole subject upon the attention of all whom it may concern. We pray God to use it for the purpose of stirring up the hearts and consciences of His people everywhere to consider their position, their habits, ways, and

associations; and to inquire how far they are really following the example of the assemblies of Galatia; in the observance of saints' days and such-like, which can only lead away from Christ and His glorious salvation. There is a day coming which will open the eyes of thousands to the reality of these things; and then they will see what they now refuse to see, that the very darkest and grossest forms of paganism may be reproduced under the name of Christianity, and in connection with the very highest truths that ever shone on the human understanding.

But, however slow we may be to admit our tendency to fall into the sin of idolatry, it is very plain, in Israel's case, that Moses, as taught and inspired of God, felt the deep need of warning them against it, in the most solemn and affecting terms. He appeals to them on every possible ground, and reiterates his counsels and admonitions in a manner so impressive as to leave them, assuredly, without any excuse. They never could say that they fell into idolatry from want of warning, or of the most gracious and affectionate entreaty. Take such words as the following, "But the Lord has taken you, and brought you forth

out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be to him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day." (Ver. 20.)

Could anything be more affecting than this? Jehovah, in His rich and sovereign grace, and by His mighty hand brought them forth from the land of death and darkness, a redeemed and delivered people. He had brought them to Himself, that they might be to Him a peculiar treasure, above all the people upon earth. How then could they turn away from Him, from His holy covenant, and from His precious commandments?

Alas! alas! they could and did. They made a calf; and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Think of this! A calf, made by their own hands — an image, graven by art and man's device, had brought them up out of Egypt! A thing made out of the women's earrings, had redeemed and delivered them! And this has been written for our admonition. But why should it be written for us, if we are not capable of, and liable to, the very same sin! We must either admit that God the Holy Ghost has penned an unnecessary sentence, or admit our need of an admonition against the sin of idolatry; and, assuredly, our needing the admonition proves our tendency to the sin

Are we better than Israel? In no wise. We have brighter light and higher privileges; but, so far as we are concerned, we are made of the same material, have the same capabilities, and the same tendencies as they. Our idolatry may take a different shape from theirs; but idolatry is idolatry, be the shape what it may; and the higher our privileges, the greater our sin. We may, perhaps, feel disposed to wonder how a rational people could be guilty of such egregious folly as to make a calf and bow down to it, and this, too, after having had such a display of the majesty, power and glory of God. Let us remember that their folly is recorded for our admonition; and that we, with all our light, all our knowledge, all our privileges, are warned to "flee from idolatry."

Let us deeply ponder all this and seek to profit by it. May every chamber of our hearts be filled with Christ, and then we shall have no room for idols. This is our only safeguard. If we slip away, the breadth of a hair, from our precious Saviour and Shepherd, we are capable of plunging into the darkest forms of error and moral evil. Light, knowledge, spiritual privileges, church position, sacramental benefits are no security for the

soul. They are very good, in their right place, and if rightly used; but, in themselves, they only increase our moral danger.

Nothing can keep us safe, right and happy, but having Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. Abiding in Him and He in us, the wicked one touches us not. But if personal communion be not diligently maintained, the higher our position, the greater our danger and the more disastrous our fall. There was not a nation beneath the canopy of heaven more favoured and exalted than Israel, when they gathered round mount Horeb to hear the word of God. There was not a nation on the face of the earth more degraded or more guilty than they when they bowed before the golden calf, an image of their own formation.

We must now give our attention to a fact of very deep interest, presented at verse 21 of our chapter, and that is that Moses, for the third time, reminds the congregation of God's judicial dealing with himself. He had spoken of it, as we have seen, in Deut. 1:37; and again at Deut. 3:26; and here, again, he says to them, "Furthermore the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, and swore that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in to that good land which the Lord thy God gives thee for an inheritance; but I must die in this land, I must

not go over Jordan; but ye shall go over and possess that good land."

Now, we may ask, why this threefold reference to the same fact? And why the special mention, in each instance, of the circumstance that Jehovah was angry with him on their account? One thing is certain, it was not for the purpose of throwing the blame over upon the people, or of exculpating himself. No one but an infidel could think this. We believe the simple object was to give increased word force to his appeal, more solemnity to his warning voice. If Jehovah was angry with such a one as Moses; if he, for his unadvised speaking at the waters of Meribah, was forbidden to enter the promised land — much as he desired it — how needful for them to take heed! It is a serious thing to have to do with God — blessed, no doubt, beyond all human expression or thought; but most serious, as the lawgiver himself was called to prove in his own person.

That this is the correct view of this interesting question seems evident from the following words, "Take heed to yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness

of anything which the Lord thy God has forbidden thee. For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God."

This is peculiarly solemn. We must allow this statement to have its full moral weight with our souls. We must not attempt to turn aside its sharp edge by any false notions about grace. We sometimes hear it said that "God is a consuming fire to the world." By-and-by He will be so, no doubt; but now He is dealing in grace, patience, and long-suffering mercy with the world. He is not dealing in judgement with the world now. But, as the apostle Peter tells us, "The time is come that judgement must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" So also, in Hebrews 12 we read, "For our God is a consuming fire." He is not speaking of what God will be to the world, but of what He is to us. Neither is it, as some put it, "God is a consuming fire out of Christ." We know nothing of God out of Christ. He could not be "our God" out of Christ.

No, reader; scripture does not need such twistings and turnings. It must be taken as it stands. It is clear and distinct; and all we have to do is to hearken and obey. "Our God is a consuming fire," "a jealous God," not to consume us, blessed be His holy

Name; but to consume the evil in us and in our ways. He is intolerant of everything in us that is contrary to Himself — contrary to His holiness; and, therefore contrary to our true happiness, our real, solid blessing. As the "Holy Father" He keeps us, in a way worthy of Himself; and He chastens us, in order to make us partakers of His holiness. He allows the world to go on its way for the present, not interfering publicly with it. But He judges His house, and He chastens His children in order that they may more fully answer to His mind, and be the expression of His moral image.

And is not this an immense privilege? Yes, verily, it is a privilege of the very highest order — a privilege flowing from the infinite grace of our God who condescends to interest Himself in us, and occupy Himself even with our infirmities, our failures and our sins, in order to deliver us from them, and to make us partakers of His holiness.

There is a very fine passage bearing upon this subject, in the opening of Hebrews 12 which, because of its immense practical importance, we must quote for the reader. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loves he chastens, and

scourges son whom he receives. If ye endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the Father chastens not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards and not sons. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees."

There are three ways of meeting divine chastening: we may "despise" it, as something common-place, something that may happen to any one. We do not see the hand of God in it; Again, we may "faint" under it, as something too heavy for us to bear, something entirely beyond endurance. We do not see the Father's heart in it, or recognise His gracious object in it, namely, to make us partakers of His holiness. Lastly, we may be "exercised by it." This is the way to reap "the peaceable fruit

of righteousness, afterward;" We dare not "despise" a thing in which we trace the hand of God. We need not "faint" under a trial in which we plainly discern the heart of a loving Father who will not suffer us to be tried above what we are able; but will with the trial make an issue, that we may be able to bear it; and who also graciously explains to us His object in the discipline, and assures us that every stroke of His rod is a proof of His love, and a direct response to the prayer of Christ, in John 17:11, wherein He commends us to the care of the "Holy Father," to be kept according to that name and all that name involves.

Furthermore, there are three distinct attitudes of heart in reference to divine chastening, namely, subjection, acquiescence and rejoicing. When the will is broken, there is subjection when the understanding is enlightened as to the object of the chastening, there is calm acquiescence. And when the affections are engaged with the Father's heart, there is rejoicing, and we can go forth with glad hearts to reap a golden harvest of the peaceable fruit of righteousness to the praise of Him who, in His painstaking love, undertakes to care for us and to deal with

us in holy government, and concentrate His care upon each one as though there were but that one to attend to.

How wonderful is all this! And how the thought of it should help us in all our trials and exercises! We are in the hands of One whose love is infinite, whose wisdom is unerring, whose power is omnipotent, whose resources are inexhaustible. Why then should we ever be cast down? If He chastens us, it is because He loves us and seeks our real good. We may think the chastening grievous. We may feel disposed to wonder, at times, how love can inflict pain and sickness upon us; but we must remember that divine love is wise and faithful, and only inflicts the pain, the sickness or the sorrow for our profit and blessing. We must not always judge of love by the form in which it clothes itself. Look at that fond and tender mother applying a blister to her child whom she loves as her own soul. She knows full well that the blister will cause her child real pain and suffering; and yet she unhesitatingly applies it, though her heart feels keenly at having to do it. But she knows it is absolutely necessary; she believes that, humanly and medically speaking, the child's life depends upon it. She feels that a few moments' pain may, with the blessing of God, restore the health of her

precious child. Thus, while the child is only occupied with the transient suffering, the mother is thinking of the permanent good; and if the child could but think with the mother, the blister would not seem so hard to bear.

Now it is just thus in the matter of our Father's disciplinary dealings with us; and the remembrance of this would greatly help us to endure whatever His chastening hand may lay upon us. It may perhaps be said that there is a very wide difference between a blister laid on for a few minutes, and years of intense bodily suffering. No doubt there is; but there is also a very wide difference between the result reached in each case. It is only with the principle of the thing we have to do. When we see a beloved child of God, or servant of Christ, called to pass through years of intense suffering, we may feel disposed to wonder why it is; and perhaps the beloved sufferer may also feel disposed to wonder; and, at times, be ready to faint under the weight of his long protracted affliction. He may feel led to cry out "Why am I thus? Can this be love? Can this be the expression of a Father's tender care?" "Yes, verily," is faith's bright and decided reply. "It is all love — all divinely right. I would not have it otherwise for worlds. I know this transient

suffering is working out eternal blessing. I know my loving Father has put me into this furnace to purge away my dross, and bring out in me the expression of His own image. I know that divine love will always do the very best for its object, and therefore this intense suffering is the very best thing for me. Of course, I feel it, for I am not a stick or a stone. My Father means me to feel it, just as the mother means the blister to rise, for it would do no good otherwise. But I bless Him, with my whole heart, for the grace that shines in the wondrous fact of His occupying Himself with me, in this way, to correct what He sees to be wrong in me. I praise Him for putting me into the furnace; and how can I but praise Him, when I see Himself, in infinite grace and patience, sitting over the furnace to watch the process, and lift me out the moment the work is done!"

This, beloved Christian reader, is the true way, and this the right spirit in which to pass through chastening of any kind, be it bodily affliction, sore bereavement, loss of property, or pressure of circumstances. We have to trace the hand of God, to read a Father's heart, to recognise the divine object in it all. This will enable us to vindicate, justify and glorify God, in the furnace of affliction. It will correct every murmuring thought,

and hush every fretful utterance. It will fill our hearts with sweetest peace and our mouths with praise.

We must now turn, for a few moments, to the remaining verses of our chapter, in which we shall find some most touching and powerful appeals to the heart and conscience of the congregation. The lawgiver, in the deep, true and fervent love of his heart, makes use of the most solemn warnings, the most earnest admonition, and the most tender entreaties, in order to move the people to the one grand and all-important point of obedience. If he speaks to them of the iron furnace of Egypt, out of which Jehovah, in His sovereign grace, had delivered them; if he dwells upon the mighty signs and wonders wrought on their behalf; if he holds up to their view the glories of that land on which they were about to plant their foot; or if he recounts the marvellous dealings of God with them in the wilderness — it is all for the purpose of strengthening the moral basis of Jehovah's claim upon their loving and reverent obedience. The past, the present, and the future are all brought to bear upon them — all made to furnish powerful arguments in favour of their whole-hearted consecration of themselves to the service of their gracious and Almighty Deliverer. In short, there was

every reason why they should obey; and no possible excuse for disobedience. All the facts of their history, from first to last, were eminently calculated to give moral force to the exhortation and warning of the following passage.

"Take heed to yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the Lord your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of anything, which the Lord thy God has forbidden thee. For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God. When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of anything, and shall do evil in the sight of the Lord thy God, to provoke him to anger; I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you. And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell."

How solemn is all this! What faithful warnings are here! Heaven and earth are summoned to witness. Alas! how soon and how completely all this was forgotten! And how literally all those heavy denunciations have been fulfilled in the history of the nation!

But, thank God, there is a bright side of the picture. There is mercy as well as judgement; and our God, blessed for ever be His holy Name, is something more than "a consuming fire and a jealous God." True, He is a consuming fire, because He is holy. He is intolerant of evil, and must consume our dross. Moreover, He is jealous because He cannot suffer any rival to have a place in the hearts of those He loves. He must have the whole heart, because He alone is worthy of it, as He alone can fill and satisfy it for ever. And if His people turn away from Him, and go after idols of their own making, they must be left to reap the bitter fruit of their own doings, and to prove, by sad and terrible experience, the truth of these words, "their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another."

But mark how touchingly Moses presents to the people the bright side of things — a brightness springing from the eternal stability of the grace of God, and the perfect provision which

that grace has made for all His people's need, from first to last. "But," he says — and oh! how lovely are some of the "buts" of holy scripture! — "if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul" — exquisite grace! — "when thou art in tribulation" — that is the time to find what our God is — "and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient to his voice." — What then? "A consuming fire?" Nay; but "the Lord thy God is a merciful God, he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers, which he sware to them."

Here we have a remarkable onlook into Israel's future, their departure from God, and consequent dispersion among the nations; the complete breaking up of their polity, and the passing away of their national glory. But, blessed for ever be the God of all grace, there is something beyond all this failure, and sin, and ruin and judgement. When we get to the far end of Israel's melancholy history — a history which may truly be summed up in that one brief but comprehensive sentence, "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself," we are met by the magnificent display

of the grace, mercy and faithfulness of Jehovah, the God of their fathers whose heart of love tells itself out in that added sentence, "In me is thy help." Yes; the whole matter is wrapped up in these two vigorous sentences, "Thou hast destroyed thyself" — "But in me is thy help." In the former, we have the sharp arrow for Israel's conscience; in the latter, the soothing balm for Israel's broken heart.

In thinking of the nation of Israel, there are two pages which we have to study, namely, the historic and the prophetic. The page of history records, with unerring faithfulness, their utter ruin. The page of prophecy unfolds in accents of matchless grace, God's remedy. Israel's past has been dark and gloomy. Israel's future will be bright and glorious. In the former, we see the miserable actings of man; in the latter, the blessed ways of God. That gives the forcible illustration of what man is; this, the bright display of what God is. We must look at both, if we would understand aright the history of this remarkable people — "a people terrible from their beginning hitherto" — and we may truly add, a people wonderful to the end of time.

We do not, of course, attempt to adduce, in this place, proofs of our statement as to Israel's past and Israel's future. To do so

would, we may say, without any exaggeration, demand a volume, inasmuch as it would simply be to quote a very large portion of the historical books of the Bible, on the one hand; and of the prophetic books, on the other. This, we need hardly say, is out of the question; but we feel bound to press upon the reader's attention the precious teaching contained in the quotation given above. It embodies, in its brief compass, the whole truth as to Israel's past, present and future. Mark how their past is vividly portrayed in these few words, "When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of anything, and shall do evil in the sight of the Lord thy God, to provoke him to anger."

Is not this precisely what they have done? Is it not here, as it were, in a nutshell? They have done evil in the sight of Jehovah their God, to provoke Him to anger. That one word, "evil" takes all in, from the calf at Horeb to the cross at Calvary. Such is Israel's past.

And, now, what of their present. Are they not a standing monument of the imperishable truth of God? Has a single jot or tittle failed of all that God has spoken? Harken to these glowing

words: "I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed. And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you."

Has not all this been fulfilled to the letter? Who can question it! Israel's past and Israel's present alike attest the truth of God's word. And, are we not justified in declaring that, inasmuch as the past and present are a literal accomplishment of the truth of God, so shall the future assuredly. The page of history and the page of prophecy were both indited by the same Spirit; and therefore they are both alike true; and as the history records Israel's sin and Israel's dispersion, so doth the prophecy predict Israel's repentance and Israel's restoration. The one is as true to faith as the other. As surely as Israel sinned in the past, and are scattered at the present, so surely shall they repent and be restored in the future.

This, we conceive, is beyond all question; and we rejoice to think of it. There is not one of the prophets, from Isaiah to Malachi, that does not, most distinctly, set forth, in accents of

sweetest grace and most tender mercy, the future blessing, pre-eminence and glory of the seed of Abraham.\* It would be simply delightful to quote some of the sublime passages bearing upon this most interesting subject; but we must leave the reader to search them out for himself, specially commending to his notice the precious passages contained in the closing chapters of Isaiah, in which he will find a perfect feast, as well as the fullest confirmation of the apostle's statement that "All Israel shall be saved." All the prophets, "from Samuel and those that follow after" agree as to this. The teachings of the New Testament harmonise with the voices of the prophets; and hence to call in question the truth of Israel's restoration to their own land, and final blessing there, under the rule of their own Messiah, is simply to ignore or deny the testimony of Prophets and apostles, speaking and writing by the direct inspiration of God the Holy Ghost; it is to set aside a body of scripture evidence perfectly overwhelming.

\* Jonah, of course, is an exception, his mission was to Nineveh. He is the only prophet whose commission had exclusive reference to the Gentiles.

It seems passing strange that any true lover of Christ should seek to do this; yet so it is, and so it has been, through religious

prejudice, theological bias, and various other causes. But, notwithstanding all this, the glorious truth of Israel's restoration and pre-eminence in the earth shines with undimmed lustre on the prophetic page, and all who seek to set it aside, or interfere with it, in any way, are not only flying in the face of holy scripture — contradicting the unanimous voice of apostles and prophets, but also seeking to tamper — ignorantly and unwittingly, no doubt — with the counsel, purpose and promise of the Lord God of Israel, and to nullify His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

This is serious work for any one to engage in; and we believe many are doing it without being aware of it; for we must understand that any one who applies the promises made to the Old Testament fathers to the New Testament church is, in reality, doing the serious work of which we speak. We maintain that no one has the slightest warrant to alienate the promises made to the fathers. We may learn from those promises; delight in them; draw comfort and encouragement from their eternal stability and direct literal application. All this is blessedly true; but it is another thing altogether for men, under the influence of a system of interpretation falsely called "spiritualism," to apply to

the church or to believers of New Testament times, prophecies which, as simply and plainly as words can indicate, apply to Israel — to the literal seed of Abraham.

This is what we consider so very serious. We believe we have very little idea of how thoroughly opposed all this is to the mind and heart of God. He loves Israel — loves them for the fathers' sake; and we may rest assured He will not sanction our interference with their place, their portion, or their prospect. We are all familiar with the words of the inspired apostle, in Romans 11, however we may have missed or forgotten their true import and moral force.

Speaking of Israel, in connection with the olive tree of promise, he says, "And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in; for" — the most simple, solid and blessed of all reasons — "God is able" — as He is most surely willing — "to graft them in again. For if thou were cut out of the olive-tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive-tree; how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive-tree? For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in

part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in.\* And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob. For this is my covenant to them, when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief; even so have these also now not believed in your mercy (or mercy to you. See Greek] that they also may obtain mercy." That is, that instead of coming in on the ground of law, or fleshly descent, they should come in simply on the ground of sovereign mercy, just as the Gentiles — "For God has concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all."

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Here ends the section bearing upon our immediate subject; but we cannot refrain from quoting the splendid doxology which bursts forth from the overflowing heart of the inspired apostle as he closes the grand dispensational division of his epistle: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgements, and his ways past finding out! For who has know the mind of the Lord? or who has been his counselor? or who has first given to him, and it shall be recompensed to him again? For of him, — as the source — "and through him" — as the channel — "and to him" — as the object — "are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen."

The foregoing splendid passage, as indeed all scripture, is in perfect keeping with the teaching of the fourth chapter of our book. Israel's present condition is the fruit of their dark unbelief. Israel's future glory will be the fruit of God's rich sovereign mercy. "The Lord thy God is a merciful God, he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers, which he sware to them. For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of

heaven to the other" — The utmost bounds of time and space were to be appealed to, to see — "whether there has been any such thing as this great thing is, or has been heard like it? Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live? Or has God assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation, by temptations, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm, and by great terrors, according to all that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? Unto thee it was showed, that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God; there is none else beside him. Out of heaven he made thee to hear his voice, that he might instruct thee, and upon earth he showed thee his great fire; and thou heardest his words out of the midst of the fire."

Here we have set forth, with singular moral power, the grand object of all the divine actings on Israel's behalf. It was that they might know that Jehovah was the one true and living God; and that there was, and could be none beside Him. In a word, it was the purpose of God that Israel should be a witness for Him on the earth; and so they, most assuredly, shall; though hitherto they have signally failed, and caused His great and holy Name

to be blasphemed among the nations. Nothing can hinder the purpose of God. His covenant shall stand for ever. Israel shall yet be a blessed and effective witness for God on the earth, and a channel of rich and everlasting blessing to all nations. Jehovah has pledged His word as to this; and not all the powers of earth and hell, men and devils combined, can hinder the full accomplishment of all that He has spoken. His glory is involved in Israel's future; and if a single jot or tittle of His word were to fail, it would be a dishonour cast upon His great Name, and an occasion for the enemy, which is utterly impossible. Israel's future blessing and Jehovah's glory are bound together by a link which can never be snapped. If this be not clearly seen, we can neither understand Israel's past nor Israel's future. Nay more, we may assert, with all possible confidence, that unless this blessed fact be fully grasped, our system of prophetic interpretation must be utterly false.

But there is another truth set forth in our chapter — a truth of peculiar interest and preciousness. It is not merely that the glory of Jehovah is involved in Israel's future restoration and blessedness; the love of His heart is also engaged. This comes out with touching sweetness, in the following words: "And be-

cause he loved thy fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and brought thee out in his sight with his mighty power out of Egypt; to drive out nations from before thee greater and mightier than thou art, to bring thee in, to give thee their land for an inheritance, as it is this day."

Thus the truth of God's word, the glory of His great Name, and the love of His heart are all involved in His dealings with the seed of Abraham His friend; and albeit they have broken the law, dishonoured His Name, despised His mercy, rejected His prophets, crucified His Son, and resisted His Spirit — although they have done all this, and, in consequence thereof, are scattered and peeled and broken, and shall yet pass through unexampled tribulation — yet will the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob glorify His Name, make good His word, and manifest the changeless love of His heart, in the future history of His earthly people. "Nothing changes God's affection." Whom He loves, and as He loves, He loves to the end.

If we deny this, in reference to Israel, we have not so much as a single inch of solid standing ground for ourselves, If we touch the truth of God in one department, we have no security as to anything. "Scripture cannot be broken." "All the promises of

God in him are yea and in him Amen, to the glory of God." God has pledged Himself to the seed of Abraham. He has promised to give them the land of Canaan, for ever: "His gifts and calling are without repentance." He never repents of His gift or His call; and therefore for any one to attempt to alienate His promises and His gifts, or to interfere, in any way, with their application to their true and proper object, must be a grievous offence to Him. It mars the integrity of divine truth, deprives us of all certainty in the interpretation of holy scripture, and plunges the soul in darkness, doubt and perplexity.

The teaching of scripture is clear, definite and distinct. The Holy Ghost who indited the sacred Volume, means what He says, and says what He means. If He speaks of Israel, He means Israel — of Zion, He means Zion — of Jerusalem, He means Jerusalem. To apply any one of these names to the New Testament church, is to confound things that differ, and introduce a method of interpreting scripture which, from its vagueness and looseness, can only lead to the most disastrous consequences. If we handle the word of God in such a loose and careless manner, it is utterly impossible to realise its divine au-

thority over our conscience, or exhibit its formative power, in our course, conduct and character.

We must now look, for a moment, at the powerful appeal with which Moses sums up his address in our chapter. It demands our profound and reverent attention. "Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord he is God in heaven above, and upon the earth beneath; there is none else. Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God gives thee for ever." (Vers. 39, 40.)

Here we see that the moral claim upon their hearty obedience is grounded upon the revealed character of God, and His marvellous actings on their behalf. In a word, they were bound to obey — bound by every argument that could possibly act on the heart, the conscience, and the understanding. The One who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, with a mighty hand and outstretched arm; who had made that land to tremble to its very centre, by stroke after stroke of His judicial rod; who had opened up a pathway for them through the sea; who had sent

them bread from heaven, and brought forth water for them out of the flinty rock; and all this for the glory of His great Name, and because He loved their fathers — surely He was entitled to their whole-hearted obedience.

This is the grand argument, so eminently characteristic of this blessed book of Deuteronomy. And, surely, this is full of instruction for Christians now. If Israel were morally bound to obey, how much more are we! If their motives and objects were powerful, how much more so are ours! Do we feel their power? Do we consider them in our hearts? Do we ponder the claims of Christ upon us? Do we remember that we are not our own, but bought with a price, even the infinitely precious price of the blood of Christ? Do we realise this? Are we seeking to live for Him? Is His glory our ruling object — His love our constraining motive? Or, are we living for ourselves? Are we seeking to get on in the world — that world that crucified our blessed Lord and Saviour? Are we seeking to make money? Do we love it in our hearts, either for its own sake or for the sake of what it can procure? Does money govern us? Are we seeking a place in the world, either for ourselves or for our children? Let us honestly challenge our hearts, as in the divine presence, in

the light of God's truth, what is our object — our real, governing, cherished, heart-sought object?

Reader, these are searching questions. Let us not put them aside. Let us really weigh them in the very light of the judgment-seat of Christ. We believe they are wholesome, much needed questions. We live in very solemn times. There is a fearful amount of sham on every side; and in nothing is this sham so awfully apparent as in so-called religion. The very days in which our lot is cast have been sketched by a pen that never colours, never exaggerates, but always presents men and things precisely as they are. "This know also, that in the last days" — quite distinct from "The latter times" of 1 Timothy 4, — far in advance, more pronounced, more closely defined, more strongly marked, these last days in which — "perilous [or difficult] times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more [or rather] than lovers of God." And, then, mark the crown which the inspired apostle puts upon this appalling

superstructure! — "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof."(2 Tim. 3:1-5)

What a terrible picture! We have here, in a few glowing, weighty sentences, infidel Christendom; just as in 1 Timothy 4, we have superstitious Christendom. In the latter, we see popery; in the former, infidelity. Both elements are at work around us; but the latter will yet rise into prominence; indeed, even now, it is advancing with rapid strides. The very leaders and teachers of Christendom are not ashamed or afraid to attack the foundations of Christianity. A so-called Christian bishop is not ashamed or afraid to call in question the integrity of the five books of Moses, and, with them, of the whole Bible; for, most assuredly, if Moses was not the inspired writer of the Pentateuch, the entire edifice of holy scripture is swept from beneath our feet. The writings of Moses are so intimately bound up with all the other grand divisions of the divine Volume, that, if they are touched, all is gone. We boldly affirm, that if the Holy Ghost did not inspire Moses, the servant of God, to write the first five books of our English Bible, we have not an inch of solid ground to stand upon. We are positively left without a single atom of divine authority on which to rest our

souls. The very pillars of our glorious Christianity are swept away, and we are left to grope our way, in hopeless perplexity, amid the conflicting opinions and theories of infidel doctors, without so much as a single ray from inspiration's heavenly lamp.

Does this appear too strong for the reader? Does he believe that we can listen, for a moment, to the infidel denier of Moses, and yet believe in the inspiration of the Psalms, the Prophets, and the New Testament? If he does, let him be well assured he is under the power of a fatal delusion. Let him take such passages as the following, and ask himself, what do they mean, and what is wrapped up in them? Our Lord, in speaking to the Jews — who, by the way, would not have agreed with a Christian bishop in denying the authenticity of Moses — says, "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father; there is one that accuses you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" (John 5:45-47.)

Think of this. The man that does not believe in the writings of Moses — does not receive every line of his, as divinely in-

spired, does not believe in Christ's words, and therefore cannot have any divinely wrought faith in Christ Himself, cannot be a Christian at all. This makes it a very serious matter for any one to deny the divine inspiration of the Pentateuch; and equally serious for any one to listen to him, or sympathise with him. It is all very well to talk of Christian charity and liberality of spirit. But we have yet to learn that it is charity or liberality to sanction, in any way, a man who has the audacity to sweep from beneath our feet the very foundations of our faith. To speak of him as a Christian bishop or a Christian minister of any kind, is only to make the matter a thousand times worse. We can understand a Voltaire or a Paine attacking the Bible. We do not look for anything else from them; but when those who assume to be the recognised and ordained ministers of religion, and the guardians of the faith of God's elect, those who consider themselves alone entitled to teach and preach Jesus Christ, and feed and tend the church of God — when they actually call in question the inspiration of the five books of Moses, may we not well ask, where are we? What has the professing church come to?

But let us take another passage. It is the powerful appeal of the risen Saviour to the two bewildered disciples on their way to Emmaus: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself." And, again, to the eleven and others with them, He says, "These are the words which I spake to you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning me." (Luke 24:25-27, 44.)

Here we find that our Lord, in the most distinct and positive manner, recognises the law of Moses as an integral part of the canon of inspiration, and binds it up with all the other grand divisions of the divine Volume, in such a way that it is utterly impossible to touch one without destroying the integrity of the whole. If Moses is not to be trusted, neither are the prophets nor the Psalms. They stand or fall together. And not only so; but we must either admit the divine authenticity of the Pentateuch or draw the blasphemous inference that our ador-

able Lord and Saviour gave the sanction of His authority to a set of spurious documents, by quoting as the writings of Moses what Moses never wrote at all! There is, positively, not a single inch of consistent standing ground between these two conclusions.

Again, take the following most weighty and important passage at the close of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus: "Abraham says to him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one went to them from the dead, they will repent. And he said to him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead." (Luke 16:29-31.)

Finally, if we add to all this the fact that our Lord, in His conflict with Satan in the wilderness, quotes only from the writings of Moses, we have a body of evidence quite sufficient, not only to establish, beyond all question, the divine inspiration of Moses, but also to prove that the man who calls in question the authenticity of the first five books of the Bible, can really have no Bible, no divine revelation, no authority, no solid foundation for his faith. He may call himself, or be called by others, a Christian bishop or a Christian minister; but in solemn fact, he

is a sceptic, and should be treated as such by all who believe and know the truth. We cannot understand how any one with a spark of divine life in his soul could be guilty of the awful sin of denying the inspiration of a large portion of the word of God, or asserting that our Lord Christ could quote from spurious documents.

We may be deemed severe in thus writing. It seems the fashion, now-a-days, to own as Christians those who deny the very foundations of Christianity. It is a very popular notion that, provided people are moral, amiable, benevolent, charitable and philanthropic, it is of very small consequence what they believe. Life is better than creed or dogma, we are told. All this sounds very plausible; but the reader may rest assured that the direct tendency of all this manner of speech and line of argument is to get rid of the Bible — rid of the Holy Ghost — rid of Christ — rid of God — rid of all that the Bible reveals to our souls. Let him bear this in mind, and seek to keep close to the precious word of God. Let him treasure that word in his heart; and give himself, more and more, to the prayerful study of it. Thus he will be preserved from the withering influence of scepticism and infidelity, in every shape and form; his soul will be

fed and nourished by the sincere milk of the word, and his whole moral being be kept in the shelter of the divine presence continually. This is what is needed. Nothing else will do.

We must now close our meditation on this marvellous chapter which has been engaging our attention; but, ere doing so, we would glance, for a moment, at the remarkable notice of the three cities of refuge. It might, to a cursory reader, seem abrupt; but, so far from that, it is, as we might expect, in perfect and beautiful moral order. Scripture is always divinely perfect; and, if we do not see and appreciate its beauties and moral glories, it is simply owing to our blindness and insensibility.

"Then Moses severed three cities on this side Jordan toward the sun rising; that the slayer might flee thither, which should kill his neighbour unawares, and hated him not in times past; and that fleeing to one of those cities he might live. Namely, Bezer in the wilderness, in the plain country, of the Reubenites; and Ramoth in Gilead, of the Gadites; and Golan in Bashan, of the Manassites."

Here we have a lovely display of the grace of God rising, as it ever does, above human weakness and failure. The two tribes

and a half, in choosing their inheritance on this side Jordan, were manifestly stopping short of the proper portion of the Israel of God which lay on the other side of the river of death. But, notwithstanding this failure, God, in His abounding grace, would not leave the poor slayer without a refuge, in the day of his distress. If man cannot come up to the height of God's thoughts, God can come down to the depths of man's need; and so blessedly does He do so, in this case, that the two tribes and a half were to have as many cities of refuge, on this side Jordan, as the nine tribes and a half had in the land of Canaan.

This truly was grace abounding. How unlike the manner of man! How far above mere law or legal righteousness! It might, in a legal way, have been said to the two tribes and a half, "If you are going to choose your inheritance short of the divine mark, if you are content with less than Canaan, the land of promise, you must not expect to enjoy the privileges and blessings of that land. The institutions of Canaan must be confined to Canaan; and hence your manslayer must try and make his way across the Jordan and find refuge there."

Law might speak thus, but grace spoke differently. God's thoughts are not ours, nor His ways as ours. We might deem it

marvellous grace to provide even one city for the two tribes and a half. But our God does exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think; and hence the comparatively small district on this side Jordan was furnished with as full a provision of grace as the entire land of Canaan.

Does this prove that the two and a half tribes were right? Nay; but it proves that God was good; and that He must ever act like Himself, spite of all our weakness and folly. Could he leave a poor slayer without a place of refuge in the land of Gilead, though Gilead was not Canaan? Surely not. This would not be worthy of the One who says, "I bring near my righteousness." He took care to bring the city of refuge "near" to the slayer. He would cause His rich and precious grace to flow over and meet the needy one just where he was. Such is the way of our God, blessed be His holy Name, for evermore!

"And this is the law which Moses set before the children of Israel. These are the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which Moses spake to the children of Israel, after they came forth out of Egypt, on this side Jordan, in the valley over against Beth-peor, in the land of Sihon king of the Amorites, who dwelt at Heshbon, whom Moses and the children of Israel

smote, after they were come forth out of Egypt: and they possessed his land, and the land of Og king of Bashan, two kings of the Amorites, which were on this side Jordan toward the sun rising; from Aroer, which is by the bank of the river Arnon; even to mount Sion, which is Hermon, and all the plain on this side Jordan eastward, even to the sea of the plain, under the springs of Pisgah."

Here closes this marvellous discourse. The Spirit of God delights to trace the boundaries of the people, and to dwell on the most minute details connected with their history. He takes a lively and loving interest in all that concerns them — their conflicts, their victories, their possessions, all their landmarks, everything about them is dwelt upon with a minuteness which, by its touching grace and condescension, fills the heart with wonder, love and praise. Man, in his contemptible self-importance, thinks it beneath his dignity to enter upon minute details; but our God counts the hairs of our heads; puts our tears into His bottle; takes knowledge of our every care, our every sorrow, our every need. There is nothing too small for His love, as there is nothing too great for His power. He concentrates His loving care upon each one of His people as though He had only

that one to attend to; and there is not a single circumstance in our private history, from day to day, however trivial, in which He does not take a loving interest.

Let us ever remember this, for our comfort; and may we learn to trust Him better, and use, with a more artless faith, His fatherly love and care. He tells us to cast all our care upon Him, in the assurance that He cares for us. He would have our hearts as free from care as our conscience is free from guilt. "Be careful for nothing; but, in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:6-7.)

It is to be feared that the great majority of us know but little of the real depth, meaning and power of such words as these. We read them, and hear them; but we do not take them in, and make our own of them. We do not digest them and reduce them to practice. How little do we really enter into the blessed truth that our Father is interested in all our little cares and sorrows; and that we may go to Him with all our little wants and difficulties. We imagine that such things are beneath the notice of the High and Mighty One who inhabits eternity, and sits upon

the circle of the earth. This is a serious mistake, and one that robs us of incalculable blessing, in our daily history. We should ever remember that there is nothing great or small with our God. All things are alike to Him who sustains the vast universe by the word of His power, and takes notice of a falling sparrow. It is quite as easy to Him to create a world as to provide a breakfast for some poor widow. The greatness of His power, the moral grandeur of His government, and the minuteness of His tender care do, all alike, command the wonder and the worship of our hearts.

Christian reader, see that you make your own of all these things. Seek to live nearer to God in your daily walk. Lean more upon Him. Use Him more. Go to Him in all your need, and you will never have to tell your need to a poor fellow mortal. "My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." What a source! — "God." What a standard! — "His riches in glory." What a channel! — "Christ Jesus." It is your sweet privilege to place all your need over against His riches, and lose sight of the former in the presence of the latter. His exhaustless treasury is thrown open to you, in all the love of His heart; go and draw upon it, in the artless

simplicity of faith, and you will never have occasion to look to a creature stream, or lean on a creature prop.

## Chapter 5

"And Moses called all Israel, and said to them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgements which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them."

Let us carefully note these four words, so specially characteristic of the book of Deuteronomy, and so seasonable for the Lord's people, at all times and in all places — "Hear" — "Learn" — "Keep" — "Do." These are words of unspeakable preciousness to every truly pious soul — to every one who honestly desires to walk in that narrow path of practical righteousness so pleasing to God, and so safe and so happy for us.

The first of these word's places the soul in the most blessed attitude in which any one can be found, namely, that of hearing. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God." "I will hear what God the Lord will speak." "Hear; and your soul shall live." The hearing ear lies at the very foundation of all true, practical Christian life. It places the soul in the only true

and proper attitude for the creature. It is the real secret of all peace and blessedness.

It can scarcely be needful to remind the reader that, when we speak of the soul in the attitude of hearing, it is assumed that what is heard is simply the word of God. Israel had to hearken to "the statutes and judgements" of Jehovah, and to nothing else. It was not to the commandments, traditions, and doctrines of men they were to give ear; but to the very words of the living God who had redeemed and delivered them from the land of Egypt, the place of bondage, darkness and death.

It is well to bear this in mind. It will preserve the soul from many a snare, many a difficulty. We hear a good deal, in certain quarters, about obedience; and about the moral fitness of surrendering our own will, and submitting ourselves to authority. All this sounds very well; and has great weight with a large class of very religious and morally excellent people. But when men speak to us about obedience, we must ask the question, "Obedience to what?" When they speak to us about surrendering our own will, we must inquire of them, "To whom are we to surrender it?" When they speak to us about submitting to au-

thority, we must insist upon their telling us the source or foundation of the authority.

This is of the deepest possible moment to every member of the household of faith. There are many very sincere and very earnest, people who deem it very delightful to be saved the trouble of thinking for themselves, and to have their sphere of action and line of service laid out for them by wiser heads than their own. It seems a very restful and very pleasing thing to have each day's work laid out for us by some master hand. It relieves the heart of a great load of responsibility, and it looks like humility and self-distrust to submit ourselves to some authority.

But we are bound, before God, to look well to the basis of the authority to which we surrender ourselves, else we may find ourselves in an utterly false position. Take for example, a monk, or a nun, or a member of a sisterhood. A monk obeys his abbot; a nun obeys her mother abbess; "a sister" obeys her "lady superior." But the position and relationship of each is utterly false. There is not a shadow of authority in the New Testament for monasteries, convents, or sisterhoods; on the contrary, the teaching of holy scripture, as well as the voice of nature, is utterly opposed to every one of them, inasmuch as they take

men and women out of the place and out of the relationship in which God has set them, and in which they are designed and fitted to move, and form them into societies which are utterly destructive of natural affection, and subversive of all true Christian obedience.

We feel it right to call the attention of the Christian reader to this subject just now, seeing that the enemy is making a vigorous effort to revive the monastic system, in our midst, under various forms. Indeed some have had the temerity to tell us, that monastic life is the only true form of Christianity. Surely, when such monstrous statements are made and listened to, it becomes us to look at the whole subject in the light of scripture, and to call upon the advocates and adherents of monasticism to show us the foundations of the system in the word of God. Where, within the covers of the New Testament, is there anything, in the most remote degree, like a monastery, a convent, or a sisterhood? where can we find an authority for any such office as that of an abbot, an abbess, or a lady superior? There is absolutely no such thing, nor a shadow of it; and hence, we have no hesitation in pronouncing the whole system, from foundation to topstone, a fabric of superstition, alike op-

posed to the voice of nature and the voice of God; nor can we understand how any one, in his sober senses, could presume to tell us that a monk or a nun is the only true exponent of Christian life. Yet there are those who thus speak, and there are those who listen to them, and that, too, in this day when the full, clear light of our glorious Christianity is shining upon us from the pages of the New Testament.\*

\* We must accurately distinguish between "nature" and "flesh." The former is recognised in scripture; the latter is condemned and set aside. "Doth not even nature itself teach you?" says the apostle. (1 Cor. 11:14.) Jesus beholding the young ruler, in Mark 10, "loved him" although there was nothing but nature. To be without natural affection, is one of the marks of the apostasy. Scripture teaches that we are dead to sin; not to nature, else what becomes of our natural relationships?

But, blessed be God, we are called to obedience. We are called to "hear" — called to bow down, in holy and reverent submission, to authority. And here we join issue with infidelity and its lofty pretensions. The path of the devout and lowly Christian is alike removed from superstition on the one hand, and from infidelity on the other. Peter's noble reply to the council, in Acts 5, embodies, in its brief compass, a complete answer to both.

"We ought to obey God rather than men." We meet infidelity, in all its phases, in all its stages, and in its very deepest roots, with this one weighty sentence, "We ought to obey." And we meet superstition, in every garb in which it clothes itself, with the all-important clause, "We ought to obey God."

Here we have set forth, in the most simple form, the duty of every true Christian. He is to obey God. The infidel may smile, contemptuously, at a monk or a nun, and marvel how any rational being can so completely surrender his reason and his understanding to the authority of a fellow mortal, or submit himself to rules and practices so absurd, so degrading and so contrary to nature. The infidel glories in his fancied intellectual freedom, and imagines that his own reason is quite a sufficient guide for him. He does not see that he is further from God than the poor monk or nun whom he so despises. He does not know that, while priding himself in his self-will, he is really led captive by Satan, the prince and god of this world. Man is formed to obey — formed to look up to some one above him. The Christian is sanctified to the obedience of Jesus Christ — that is, to the very same character of obedience as that which was rendered by our adorable Lord and Saviour Himself.

This is of the deepest possible moment to every one who really desires to know what true Christian obedience is. To understand this is the real secret of deliverance from the self-will of the infidel, and the false obedience of superstition. It can never be right to do our own will. It may be quite wrong to do the will of our fellow. It must always be right to do the will of God. This was what Jesus came to do; and what He always did. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." "I delight to do thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is within my heart."

Now, we are called and set apart to this blessed character of obedience, as we learn from the inspired apostle Peter, in the opening of his first epistle, where he speaks of believers as "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."

This is an immense privilege; and, at the same time, a most holy and solemn responsibility. We must never forget, for a moment, that God has elected us, and the Holy Spirit has set us apart, not only to the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, but also to His obedience. Such is the obvious meaning and moral force of the words just quoted — words of unspeakable

preciousness to every lover of holiness — words which effectually deliver us from self-will, from legality, and from superstition. Blessed deliverance!

But it may be the pious reader feels disposed to call our attention to the exhortation in Hebrews 13. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account; that they may do it with joy and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you."

A deeply important word, most surely, with which we should also connect a passage in 1 Thessalonians, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." (1 Thess. 5:12-13) And again, in 1 Cor. 16:15-16, "I beseech you, Brethren — ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry [or service] of the saints — that ye submit yourselves to such, and to every one that helps with us and labours." To all these we must add another very lovely passage from the first epistle of Peter. "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a par-

taker of the glory that shall be revealed. Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away." (1 Thess. 5:1-4.)

We may be asked, "Do not the above passages set forth the principle of obedience to certain men? And, if so, why object to human authority?" The answer is very simple. Wherever Christ imparts a spiritual gift, whether it be the gift of teaching, the gift of rule, or the gift of pastorship, it is the bounden duty and privilege of Christians to recognise and appreciate such gifts. Not to do so, would be to forsake our own mercies. But then we must bear in mind that, in all such cases, the gift must be a reality — a plain, palpable, bona fide, divinely given thing. It is not a man assuming a certain place or position, or being appointed by his fellow to any so-called ministry. All this is perfectly worthless and worse than worthless; it is a daring intrusion upon a sacred domain which must, sooner or later, bring down the judgement of God.

All true ministry is of God, and is based upon the possession of a positive gift from the Head of the church; so that we may truly say, No gift, no ministry. In all the passages quoted above, we see positive gift possessed, and actual work done. Moreover, we see a true heart for the lambs and sheep of the flock of Christ; we see divine grace and power. The word in Hebrews 13 is "Obey them that guide you" (hegoumenois). Now, it is essential to a true guide that he should go before you in the way. It would be the height of folly for any one to assume the title of guide, if he were ignorant of the way, and neither able nor willing to go in it. Who would think of obeying such?

So also when the apostle exhorts the Thessalonians to "know" and "esteem" certain persons, on what does he found his exhortation? Is it upon the mere assumption of a title, an office or a position? Nothing of the kind. He grounds his appeal upon the actual, well-known fact that these persons were "over them, in the Lord," and that they admonished them. And why were they to "esteem them very highly in love"? Was it for their office or their title? No; but "for their work's sake." And why were the Corinthians exhorted to submit themselves to the

household of Stephanas? Was it because of an empty title or assumed office? By no means; but because "They addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints." They were actually in the work. They had received gift and grace from Christ, and they had a heart for His people. They were not boasting of their office or insisting upon their title, but giving themselves devotedly to the service of Christ, in the persons of His dear people.

Now this is the true principle of ministry. It is not human authority at all, but divine gift and spiritual power communicated by Christ to His servants; exercised by them, in responsibility to Him; and thankfully recognised by His saints. A man may set up to be a teacher or a pastor, or he may be appointed by his fellows to the office or title of a pastor; but unless he possessed a positive gift from the Head of the church, it is all the merest sham, a hollow assumption, an empty conceit; and his voice will be the voice of a stranger which the true sheep of Christ do not know and ought not to recognise.\*

- \* The reader will do well to ponder the fact that there is no such thing in the New Testament as human appointment to preach the gospel, teach in the assembly of God, or feed the flock of Christ. Elders and deacons were ordained by the apostles or

their delegates Timothy and Titus; but evangelists, pastors and teachers were never so ordained. We must distinguish between gift and local charge. Elders and deacons might possess a special gift or not; it had nothing to do with their local charge. If the reader would understand the subject of ministry, let him study 1 Corinthians 12-14 and Ephesians 4:8-13. In the former we have first, the basis of all true ministry in the church of God, namely, divine appointment: "God has set the members," &c. Secondly, the motive spring, "love." Thirdly, the object, "that the church may receive edifying." In Ephesians 4 we have the source of all ministry, a risen and ascended Lord. The design, "To perfect the saints for the work of the ministry." The duration, "Till we all come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

In a word, ministry, in all its departments, is entirely a divine institution. It is not of man or by man, but of God. The Master must, in every case, fit, fill and appoint the vessel. There is no authority in scripture for the notion that every man has a right to minister in the church of God. Liberty for men is radicalism and not scripture. Liberty for the Holy Ghost to minister by whom He will is what we are taught in the New Testament. May we learn it!

But, on the other hand, where there is the divinely gifted teacher, the true, loving, wise, faithful, laborious pastor, watching for souls, weeping over them waiting upon them, like a gentle, tender nurse, able to say to them, "Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord" — where these things are found, there will not be much difficulty in recognising and appreciating them. How do we know a good dentist? Is it by seeing his name on a brass plate? No; but by his work. A man may call himself a dentist ten thousand times over, but if he be only an unskilful operator who would think of employing him?

Thus it is in all human affairs, and thus it is in the matter of ministry. If a man has a gift, he is a minister; if he has not, all the appointment, authority and ordination in the world could not make him a minister of Christ. It may make him a minister of religion; but a minister of religion and a minister of Christ — a minister in Christendom and a minister in the church of God, are two totally different things. All true ministry has its source in God; it rests on divine authority, and its object is to bring the soul into His presence, and link it on to Him. False ministry, on the contrary, has its source in man; it rests on human authority, and its object is to link the soul on to itself. This

marks the immense difference between the two. The former leads to God; the latter leads away from Him; that feeds, nourishes and strengthens the new life; this hinders its progress, in every way, and plunges it in doubt and darkness. In a word, we may say, true ministry is of God, through Him, and to Him. False ministry is of man, through him and to him. The former we prize more than we can say; the latter we reject with all the energy of our moral being. We trust sufficient has been said to satisfy the mind of the reader in reference to the matter of obedience to those whom the Lord may see fit to call to the work of the ministry. We are bound, in every case, to judge by the word of God, and to be assured that it is a divine reality and not a human sham — a positive gift from the Head of the church, and not an empty title conferred by men. In all cases where there is real gift and grace, it is a sweet privilege to obey and submit ourselves, inasmuch as we discern Christ in the person and ministry of His beloved servants.

There is no difficulty, to a spiritual mind, in owning real grace and power. We can easily tell whether a man is seeking, in true love, to feed our souls with the bread of life, and lead us on in the ways of God; or whether he is seeking to exalt himself, and

promote his own interests. Those who are living near the Lord can readily discern between true power and hollow assumption. Moreover, we never find Christ's true ministers parading their authority, or vaunting themselves of their office; they do the work and leave it to speak for itself. In the case of the blessed apostle Paul, we find him referring, again and again, to the plain proofs of his ministry — the unquestionable evidence afforded in the conversion and blessing of souls. He could say to the poor misguided Corinthians when, under the influence of some self-exalting pretender, they foolishly called in question his apostleship, "Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me ... examine yourselves."

This was close, pointed dealing with them. They themselves were the living proofs of his ministry. If his ministry was not of God, what and where were they? But it was of God, and this was his joy, his comfort and his strength. He was "an apostle, not of man, nor by men; but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised him from the dead." He gloried in the source of his ministry; and, as to its character, he had but to appeal to a body of evidence quite sufficient to carry conviction to any

right mind. In his case, it could be truly said, it was not the speech, but the power.

Thus it must be, in measure, in every case. We must look for the power. We must have reality. Mere titles are nothing. Men may undertake to confer titles and appoint to offices; but they have no more authority to do so than they have to appoint admirals in her Majesty's fleet, or generals in her army. If we were to see a man assuming the style and title of an admiral or a general, without her Majesty's commission, we should pronounce him an idiot or a lunatic. This is but a feeble illustration to set forth the folly of men taking upon them the title of ministers of Christ without one atom of spiritual gift, or divine authority.

Shall we be told, we must not judge! We are bound to judge. "Beware of false prophets." How can we beware if we are not to judge? But how are we to judge? "By their fruits ye shall know them." Can the Lord's people not tell the difference between a man who comes to them, in the power of the Spirit, gifted by the Head of the church, full of love to their souls, earnestly desiring their true blessing, seeking not theirs but them, a holy, gracious, humble, self emptied servant of Christ;

and a man who comes with a self-assumed or a humanly conferred title, without a single trace of anything divine or heavenly, either in his ministry or in his life? Of course they can; no one in his senses would think of calling in question a fact so obvious.

But, further, we may ask, what mean those words of the venerable apostle John? "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." How are we to try the spirits, or how are we to discern between the true and the false, if we are not to judge? Again, the same apostle writing to "the elect lady," gives her the following most solemn admonition, "If there come any to you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed; for he that bids him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds." Was she not responsible to act on this admonition? Assuredly. But how could she, if we are not to judge? And what had she to judge? Was it as to whether those who came to her house were ordained, authorised, or licensed by any man or body of men? Nothing of the kind. The one great and all-important question for her was as to the doctrine. If they brought the true, the divine doctrine

of Christ — the doctrine of Jesus Christ come in the flesh, she was to receive them; if not, she was to shut her door, with a firm hand, against them, no matter who they were, or where they came from. If they had all the credentials that man could bestow upon them, yet if they brought not the truth, she was to reject them with stern decision. This might seem very harsh, very narrow minded, very bigoted; but with this she had nothing whatever to do. She had just to be as broad and as narrow as the truth. Her door and her heart were to be wide enough to admit all who brought Christ, and no wider. Was she to pay compliments at the expense of her Lord? Was she to seek a name for largeness of heart or breadth of mind by receiving to her house and to her table the teachers of a false Christ? The very thought is absolutely horrible.

But, finally, in the second chapter of Revelation, we find the church at Ephesus commended for having tried those who said they were apostles and were not. How could this be if we are not to judge? Is it not most evident to the reader that an utterly false use is made of our Lord's words in Matthew 7:1, "Judge not that ye be not judged;" and also of the apostle's words in 1 Corinthians 4:5, "Therefore judge nothing before the time"! It

is impossible that scripture can contradict itself; and, hence, whatever be the true meaning of our Lord's "judge not," or the apostle's "judge nothing," it is perfectly certain that they do not, in the most remote way, interfere with the solemn responsibility of all Christians, to judge the gift, the doctrine, and the life of all who take the place of preachers, teachers and pastors in the church of God.

And, then, if we be asked, as to the meaning of "judge not," and "judge nothing," we believe the words simply forbid our judging motives, or hidden springs of action. With these we have nothing whatever to do. We cannot penetrate below the surface; and, thanks be to God, we are not asked to do so; yea, we are positively forbidden. We cannot read the counsels of the heart; it is the province and prerogative of God alone to do this. But to say that we are not to judge the doctrine, the gift or the manner of life of those who take the place of preachers, teachers and pastors in the church of God, is simply to fly in the face of holy scripture, and to ignore the very instincts of the divine nature implanted in us by the Holy Ghost.

Hence, therefore, we can return, with increased clearness and decision, to our thesis of Christian obedience. It seems per-

fectly plain that the fullest recognition of all true ministry in the church, and the most gracious submission of ourselves to all those whom our Lord Christ may see fit to raise up as pastors, teachers and guides, in our midst, can never, in the smallest degree, interfere with the grand fundamental principle set forth in Peter's magnificent reply to the council, "We ought to obey God, rather than men."

It will ever be the aim and object of all true ministers of Christ to lead those, to whom they minister, in the true path of obedience to the word of God. The chapter which lies open before us, as indeed the entire book of Deuteronomy, shows us, very plainly, how Moses, that eminent servant of God, ever sought and diligently laboured to press upon the congregation of Israel, the urgent necessity of the most implicit obedience to all the statutes and judgements of God. He did not seek any place of authority for himself. He never lorded it over God's heritage. His one grand theme, from first to last, was obedience. This was the burden of all his discourses — obedience, not to him, but to his and their Lord. He rightly judged that this was the true secret of their happiness, their moral security, their dignity and their strength. He knew that an obedient people must also,

of necessity, be an invincible and innumerable people. No weapon formed against them could prosper, so long as they were governed by the word of God. In a word, he knew and believed that Israel's province was to obey Jehovah; as it was Jehovah's province to bless Israel. It was their one simple business to "hear" — "learn" — "keep" — and "do" the revealed will of God; and, so doing, they might count on Him, with all possible confidence, to be their shield, their strength, their safeguard, their refuge, their resource, their all in all. The only true and proper path for the Israel of God, is that narrow path of obedience on which the light of God's approving countenance ever shines; and all who, through grace, tread that path will find Him "a guide, a glory, a defence, to save from every fear."

This, surely, is quite enough. We have nothing to do with consequences. These we may, in simple confidence, leave to Him whose we are and whom we are responsible to serve. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runs into it, and is safe." If we are doing His will, we shall ever find His Name a strong tower. But, on the other hand, if we are not walking in a path of practical righteousness; if we are doing our own will; if we are living in the habitual neglect of the

plain word of God, then verily it is utterly vain for us to think that the Name of the Lord will be a strong tower to us; rather would His Name be a reproof to us, leading us to judge our ways, and to return to the path of righteousness from which we have wandered.

Blessed be His Name, His grace will ever meet us, in all its precious fullness and freeness, in the place of self-judgement and confession, however we may have failed and wandered; but this is a totally different thing. We may have to say, with the psalmist, "Out of the depths have I cried to thee, O Lord. Lord, hear my voice; let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared." But then, a soul crying to God from the depths, and getting forgiveness, is one thing; and a soul looking to Him in the path of practical righteousness is quite another. We must carefully distinguish between these two things. Confessing our sins and finding pardon must never be confounded with walking uprightly and counting on God. Both are blessedly true; but they are not the same thing.

We shall now proceed with our chapter.

At the second verse, Moses reminds the people of their covenant relationship with Jehovah; He says, "The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day. The Lord talked with you face to face, in the mount, out of the midst of the fire, (I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to show you the word of the Lord; for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount) saying," &c.

The reader must distinguish, and thoroughly understand the difference between the covenant made at Horeb, and the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They are essentially different. The former was a covenant of works, in which the people undertook to do all that the Lord had spoken. The latter was a covenant of pure grace, in which God pledged Himself with an oath to do all which He promised. Human language would utterly fail us to set forth the immense difference, in every respect, between these two covenants. In their basis, in their character, in their accompaniments, and in their practical result, they are as different as any two things could possibly be. The Horeb covenant rested upon human competency for the

fulfilment of its terms; and this one fact is quite sufficient to account for the total failure of the whole thing. The Abrahamic covenant rested upon divine competency for the fulfilment of its terms, and hence the utter impossibility of its failure in a single jot or tittle.

Having, in our "Notes on the Book of Exodus," gone, somewhat fully, into the subject of the law, and endeavoured to set forth the divine object in giving it; and, further, the utter impossibility of any one getting life or righteousness by keeping it, we must refer the reader to what we have there advanced on this profoundly interesting subject.

It seems strange to one taught exclusively by scripture, that such confusion of thought should prevail amongst professing Christians, in reference to a question so distinctly and definitively settled by the Holy Ghost. Were it merely a question of the divine authority of Exodus 20 or Deuteronomy 5 as inspired portions of the Bible, we should not have a word to say. We most fully believe that these chapters are as much inspired as John 17 or Romans 8.

But this is not the point. All true Christians receive, with devout thankfulness, the precious statement that, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God." And, further, they rejoice in the assurance that "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." And, finally, they believe that the morality of the law is of abiding and universal application. Murder, adultery, theft, false witness, covetousness, are wrong — always wrong — everywhere wrong. To honour our parents is right, always and everywhere right. We read, in Ephesians 4, "Let him that stole, steal no more." And, again, in Eph. 6, we read, "Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."

All this is so divinely plain and settled that discussion is definitively closed. But when we come to look at the law as a ground of relationship with God, we get into an entirely different region of thought. Scripture, in manifold places, and in the clearest possible manner, teaches as that, as Christians, as children of God, we are not on that ground at all. The Jew was on that ground, but he could not stand there with God. It was death

and condemnation. "They could not endure that which was commanded. And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned or thrust through with a dart. And so terrible was the sight that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake." The Jew found the law to be a bed on which he could not stretch himself, and a covering in which he could not wrap himself.

As to the Gentile, he was never, by any one branch of the divine economy, placed under law. His condition is expressly declared, in the opening of the epistle to the Romans, to be "without law" (anomos). "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law," etc. And, "As many as have sinned without law shall perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law."

Here the two classes are brought into sharp and vivid contrast, in the matter of their dispensational position. The Jew, under law; the Gentile, without law. Nothing can be more distinct. The Gentile was placed under government, in the person of Noah; but never under law. Should any one feel disposed to call this in question, let him produce a single line of scripture to prove that God ever placed the Gentiles under the law. Let

him search and see. It is of no possible use to argue and reason and object. It is utterly vain to say, "We think" this or that. The question is, "What says the scripture?" If it says that the Gentiles were put under the law, let the passage be produced. We solemnly declare it says nothing of the kind, but the very reverse. It describes the condition and the position of the Gentile as "without law" — "having not the law"

In Acts 10, we see God opening the kingdom of heaven to the Gentile. In Acts 14:27, we see Him opening "the door of faith" to the Gentile. In Acts 28:28, we see Him sending His salvation to the Gentile. But we search in vain, from cover to cover of the blessed Book, for a passage in which He places the Gentile under the law.

We would, very earnestly, entreat the Christian reader to give this deeply interesting and important question his calm attention. Let him lay aside all his pre-conceived thoughts, and examine the matter simply in the light of holy scripture. We are quite aware that our statements on this subject will be regarded by thousands as novel, if not actually heretical; but this does not move us, in the smallest degree. It is our one grand desire to be taught absolutely and exclusively by scripture. The opin-

ions, commandments, and doctrines of men have no weight whatever with us. The dogmas of the various schools of divinity must just go for what they are worth. We demand scripture. A single line of inspiration is amply sufficient to settle this question, and close all discussion, for ever. Let us be shown, from the word of God, that the Gentiles were ever put under the law, and we shall, at once, bow; but, inasmuch as we cannot find it there, we reject the notion altogether, and we would have the reader to do the same. The invariable language of scripture, in describing the position of the Jew, is, "under law;" and, in describing the position of the Gentile, is, "without law." This is so obvious that we cannot but marvel how any reader of the Bible can fail to see it.\*

\* The reader may perhaps feel disposed to inquire, on what ground will the Gentile be judged, if he is not under the law? Romans 1:20 teaches us distinctly that the testimony of creation leaves him without excuse. Then, in Rom. 2:15, he is taken up on the ground of conscience. "For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law to themselves which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness," &c. Finally, as regards those nations that have

become professedly Christian, they will be judged on the ground of their profession.

If the reader will turn, for a few moments, to Acts 15, he will see how the first attempt to put Gentile converts under the law was met by the apostles and the whole church at Jerusalem. The question was raised at Antioch; and God, in His infinite goodness and wisdom, so ordered that it should not be settled there, but that Paul and Barnabas should go up to Jerusalem and have the matter fully and freely discussed, and definitively settled by the unanimous voice of the twelve apostles, and the whole church.

How we can bless our God for this! We can, at once, see that the decision of a local assembly such as Antioch, even though approved by Paul and Barnabas, would not carry the same weight as that of the twelve apostles assembled in council, at Jerusalem. But the Lord, blessed be His Name, took care that the enemy should be completely confounded; and that the law-teachers of that day, and of every other day, should be distinctly and authoritatively taught that it was not according to His mind that Christians should be put under law, for any object whatsoever.

The subject is so deeply important that we cannot forbear quoting a few passages for the reader. We believe it will refresh both the reader and the writer to refer to the soul-stirring addresses delivered at the most remarkable and interesting council that ever sat.

"And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." How awful! How terribly chilling! What a death knell to ring in the ears of those who had been converted under Paul's splendid address in the synagogue at Antioch! "Be it known to you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man" — without circumcision or works of law of any kind whatsoever — "is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe" — irrespective altogether of circumcision — "are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses ... And when the Jews were gone out of the synagogue, the Gentiles besought that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath."

Such was the glorious message sent to the Gentiles, by the lips of the Apostle Paul — a message of free, full, immediate and perfect salvation — full remission of sins and perfect justifica-

tion, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. But, according to the teaching of the "certain men which came down from Judea," all this was insufficient. Christ was not enough, without circumcision and the law of Moses. Poor Gentiles who had never heard of circumcision or the law of Moses, must add to Christ and His glorious salvation the keeping of the whole law.

How must Paul's heart have burned within him to have the beloved Gentile converts brought under such monstrous teaching as this! He saw in it nothing short of the complete surrender of Christianity. If circumcision must be added to the cross of Christ — if the law of Moses must supplement the grace of God, then verily all was gone.

But, blessed for ever be the God of all grace, He caused a noble stand to be made against such deadly teaching. When the enemy came in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord raised up a standard against him. "When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring" — not the circum-

cision but — "the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren."

The brethren were in the current of the mind of Christ, and in sweet communion with the heart of God; and hence they rejoiced to hear of the conversion and salvation of the Gentiles. We may rest assured it would have afforded them no joy to hear of the heavy yoke of circumcision and the law of Moses being put upon the necks of those beloved disciples who had just been brought into the glorious liberty of the Gospel. But to hear of their conversion to God, their salvation by Christ, their being sealed by the Holy Ghost, filled their hearts with a joy which was in lovely harmony with the mind of heaven.

"And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it; was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."

Who made it "needful"? Not God, surely, inasmuch as He had, in His infinite grace, opened the door of faith to them, without

circumcision, or any command to keep the law of Moses. No; it was "certain men" who presumed to speak of such things as needful — men who have troubled the church of God, from that day to the present — men "desiring to be teachers of the law; knowing neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." Law teachers never know what is involved in their dark and dismal teaching. They have not the most distant idea of how thoroughly hateful their teaching is to the God of all grace, the Father of mercies.

But thanks be to God, the chapter from which we are now quoting affords the very clearest and most forcible evidence that could be given as to the divine mind on the subject. It proved, beyond all question, that it was not of God to put Gentile believers under the law.

"And the apostles and elders came together, for to consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing" — alas! how soon it began! — "Peter rose up, and said to them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear" — not the law of Moses or circumcision, but "the word of the gospel, and believe. And God which knows the hearts, bare

them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as to us. And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

Mark this, reader. The law had proved an intolerable yoke to those who were under it, that is the Jews; and, further, it was nothing short of tempting God to put that yoke upon the neck of Gentile Christians. Would that all the law-teachers, throughout the length and breadth of Christendom, would but open their eyes to this grand fact! And not only so, but that all the Lord's beloved people everywhere were given to see that it is in positive opposition to the will of God that they should be put under the law, for any object whatsoever. "But," adds the blessed apostle of the circumcision, "we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ" — and not by law in any shape or form — "we shall be saved, even as they."

This is uncommonly fine, coming from the lips of the apostle of the circumcision. He does not say, "They shall be saved even as we;" but, "We shall be saved even as they." The Jew is well content to come down from his lofty dispensational position,

and be saved after the pattern of the poor uncircumcised Gentile. Surely those noble utterances must have fallen, in stunning force, upon the ears of the law party. They left them, as we say, not a leg to stand upon.

"Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them." The inspiring Spirit has not thought good to tell us what Paul and Barnabas said, on this memorable occasion; and we can see His wisdom in this. It is evidently His object to give prominence to Peter and James as men whose words would, of necessity, have more weight with the law-teachers than those of the apostle to the Gentiles and his companion.

"And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken to me. Simeon has declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles" — not to convert them all, but — "to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets;" — here he brings an overwhelming tide of evidence from the Old Testament to bear down upon the Judaisers — "as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is

fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up that the residue of men might seek after the Lord. and all the Gentiles" — without the slightest reference to circumcision, or the law of Moses, but — "upon whom my name is called, says the Lord, who does all these things. Known to God are all his works, from the beginning of the world. Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God."

Here, then, we have this great question definitively settled, by the Holy Ghost, the twelve apostles, and the whole church; and we cannot but be struck with the fact that, at this most important council, none spoke more emphatically, more distinctly, or more decidedly, than Peter and James — the former, the apostle of the circumcision; and the latter, the one who specially addressed the twelve tribes, and whose position and ministry were calculated to give great weight to his words, in the judgement of all who were still, in any measure, occupying Jewish or legal ground. Both these eminent apostles were clear and decided in their judgement that the Gentile converts were not to be "troubled" or burdened with the law. They proved, in their powerful addresses, that, to place the Gentile Christians under

the law, was directly contrary to the word, the will, and the ways of God.

Who can fail to see the marvellous wisdom of God in this? The words of Paul and Barnabas are not recorded. We are simply told that they rehearsed what things God had wrought among the Gentiles. That they should be utterly opposed to putting the Gentiles under the law was only what might be expected. But, to find Peter and James so decided, would carry great weight with all parties. But if the reader would have a clear view of Paul's thoughts on the question of the law, he should study the epistle to the Galatians. There this blessed apostle, under the direct inspiration of the Holy Ghost, pours out his heart, to the Gentile converts, in words of glowing earnestness and commanding power. It is perfectly amazing how any one can read this wonderful epistle, and yet maintain that Christians are under the law, in any way, or for any purpose. Hardly has the apostle got through his brief opening address, when he plunges, with his characteristic energy, into the subject with which his large, loving, though grieved and troubled heart is full to overflowing. "I marvel," he says — and well he might — "that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into" — what?

The law of Moses? Nay, but "the grace of Christ into a different gospel which is not another;" — (heteron euaggelion ho ouk estin allo) — "but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel to you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Let all law-teachers ponder these burning words. Do they seem strong and severe? Let us remember that they are the very words of God the Holy Ghost. Yes, reader, God the Holy Ghost hurls His awful anathema at any one who presumes to add the law of Moses to the Gospel of Christ — any one who attempts to place Christians under the law. How is it that men are not afraid, in the face of such words, to contend for the law? Are they not afraid of coming under the solemn curse of God the Holy Ghost?

Some, however, seek to meet this question by telling us that they do not take the law for justification, but as a rule of life. But this is neither reasonable nor intelligent, inasmuch as we may very lawfully inquire who gave us authority to decide as

to the use we are to make of the law? We are either under the law or we are not. If we are under it at all, it is not a question of how we take it, but how it takes us.

This makes all the difference. The law knows no such distinctions as those which some theologians contend for. If we are under it, for any object whatsoever, we are under the curse, for it is written, "Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them." To say that I am born again, I am a Christian, will not meet the case at all; for what has the law to do with the question of New Birth, or of Christianity? Nothing whatever. The law is addressed to man, as a responsible being. It demands perfect obedience, and pronounces its curse upon every one who fails to render it.

Moreover, it will not do to say that, though we have failed to keep the law, yet Christ has fulfilled it in our room and stead. The law knows nothing of obedience by proxy. Its language is, "The man that does them shall live in them." Nor is it merely on the man who fails to keep the law that the curse is pronounced; but, as if to put the principle in the clearest possible light before us, we read that "as many as are of works of law

are under the curse." (See Gr.) That is, as many as take their stand on legal ground — as many as are on that principle — in a word, as many as have to do with works of law, are, of necessity, under the curse. Hence, we may see at a glance, the terrible inconsistency of a Christian's maintaining the idea of being under the law as a rule of life, and yet not being under the curse. It is simply flying in the face of the very plainest statements of holy scripture. Blessed be the God of all grace, the Christian is not under the curse. But why? Is it because the law has lost its power, its majesty, its dignity, its holy stringency? By no means. To say so were to blaspheme the law. To say that any "man" — call him what you please, Christian, Jew, or Hea-then — can be under the law, can stand on that ground, and yet not be under the curse, is to say that he perfectly fulfils the law or that the law is abrogated — it is to make it null and void. Who will dare to say this? Woe be to all who do so.

But how comes it to pass that the Christian is not under the curse? Because he is not under the law. And how has he passed from under the law? Is it by another having fulfilled it in his stead? Nay; we repeat the statement, there is no such idea, throughout the entire legal economy, as obedience by proxy.

How is it then? Here it is, in all its moral force, fullness and beauty. "I through law, am dead to law, that I might live to God."\*

- \* The omission of the article adds immensely to the force, fullness and clearness of the message. It is *dia nomou nomo apethanon*. A wonderful clause, surely. Would that it were better understood! It demolishes a vast mass of human theology. It leaves the law in its own proper sphere; but takes the believer completely from under its power, and out of its range, by death. "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit to God" — which we never could do, if under the law — "For when we were in the flesh," — a correlative term with being under the law — "the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit to death." Mark the melancholy combination! "Under the law" — "In the flesh" — "motions of sins" — "Fruit to death!" Can anything be more strongly marked? But there is another side, thank God, to this question; His own bright and blessed side. Here it is. "But now are we delivered from the law." How? Is it by another having fulfilled it for us? Nay; but, "having died to that [apothanontes en ho] wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." How perfect and

how lovely is the harmony of Romans 7 and Galatians 2. "I through law am dead to law, that I might live to God."

Now, if it be true, and the apostle says it is, that we are dead to law, how can the law, by any possibility, be a rule of life to us? It proved only a rule of death, curse and condemnation to those who were under it — those who had received it by the disposition of angels. Can it prove to be ought else to us? Did the law ever produce a single cluster of living fruit, or of the fruits of righteousness, in the history of any son or daughter of Adam? Hear the apostle's reply. "When we were in the flesh" — that is, when we were viewed as men in our fallen nature — "the motions of sins which were by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit to death." It is very important for the reader to understand the real force of the expression, "in the flesh." It does not, in this passage, mean, "in the body." It simply sets forth the condition of unconverted men and women responsible to keep the law. Now, in this condition, all that was or ever could be produced was "fruit to death" — "motions of sins." No life, no righteousness, no holiness, nothing for God, nothing right at all.\*

\* It is needful to bear in mind that, although the Gentile was never, by the dispensational dealings of God, put under the law,

yet, in point of fact, all baptised professors take that ground. Hence there is a vast difference between Christendom and the heathen, in reference to the question of the law. Thousands of unconverted people, every week, ask God to incline their hearts to keep the law. Surely, such persons stand on very different ground from the heathen who never heard of the law, and never heard of the Bible.

But, where are we now as Christians? Hear the reply, "I through law am dead to law, that I might live to God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh" — here it means in the body — "I live" — How? By the law, as a rule of life? Not a hint at such a thing, but "by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

This, and nothing else, is Christianity. Do we understand it? Do we enter into it? Are we in the power of it? There are two distinct evils from which we are completely delivered by the precious death of Christ, namely, legality, on the one hand, and licentiousness, on the other. Instead of those terrible evils, it introduces us into the holy liberty of grace — liberty to serve God — liberty to "mortify our members which are upon the

earth" — liberty to deny "ungodliness and worldly lusts" — liberty to "live soberly, righteously and godly" — liberty to "keep under the body and bring it into subjection."

Yes, beloved Christian reader, let us remember this. Let us deeply ponder the words. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me." The old "I" dead — crucified, buried. The new "I," alive in Christ. Let us not mistake this. We know of nothing more awful, nothing more dangerous, than for the old "I" to assume the new ground; or, in other words, the glorious doctrines of Christianity taken up in the flesh, unconverted people talking of being free from the law, and turning the grace of God into lasciviousness. We must confess we would rather, a thousand times, have legality than licentiousness. It is this latter that many of us have to watch against, with all possible earnestness. It is growing around us, with appalling rapidity, and paving the way for that dark and desolating tide of infidelity which shall, ere long roll over the length and breadth of Christendom.

To talk of being free from the law in any way save by being dead to it, and alive to God, is not Christianity, at all, but licentiousness, from which every pious soul must shrink with

holy horror. If we are dead to the law, we are dead to sin also; and hence we are not to do our own will, which is only another name for sin; but the will of God, which is true practical holiness.

Further, let us ever bear in mind that if we are dead to the law, we are dead to this present evil world also, and linked with a risen, ascended and glorified Christ. Hence, we are not of the world, even as Christ is not of the world. To contend for position in the world is to deny that we are dead to the law; for we cannot be alive to the one and dead to the other. The death of Christ has delivered us from the law, from the power of sin, from this present evil world, and from the fear of death. But then all these things hang together, and we cannot go delivered from one without being delivered from all. To assert our freedom from the law, while pursuing a course of carnality, self-indulgence and worldliness, is one of the darkest and deadliest evils of the last days.

The Christian is called to prove, in his daily life, that grace can produce results that law could never reach. It is one of the moral glories of Christianity to enable a man to surrender self and live for others. Law never could do this. It occupied a man

with himself. Under its rule, every man had to do the best he could for himself. If he tried to love his neighbour, it was to work out a righteousness for himself. Under grace, all is blessedly and gloriously reversed. Self is set aside as a thing crucified, dead and buried. The old "I" is gone, and the new "I" is before God in all the acceptability and preciousness of Christ. He is our life, our righteousness, our holiness, our object, our model, our all. He is in us and we are in Him; and our daily practical life is to be simply Christ reproduced in us, by the power of the Holy Ghost. Hence, we are not only called to love our neighbour, but our enemy; and this, not to work out a righteousness, for we have become the righteousness of God in Christ; it is simply the outflow of the life which we possess, which is in us; and this life is Christ. A Christian is a man who should live Christ. He is neither a Jew, "under law;" nor a Gentile "without law;" but "a man in Christ," standing in grace, called to the same character of obedience as that which was rendered by the Lord Jesus Himself.

We shall not pursue this subject further here; but we earnestly entreat the Christian reader to study, attentively, the fifteenth chapter of Acts, and the epistle to the Galatians. Let him drink

in the blessed teaching of these scriptures; and we feel assured he will arrive at a clear understanding of the great question of the law. He will see that the Christian is not under the law, for any purpose whatsoever; that his life, his righteousness, his holiness are on a different ground or principle altogether; that to place the Christian under law, in any way, is to deny the very foundations of Christianity, and contradict the plainest statements of the word. He will learn, from the third chapter of Galatians, that to put ourselves under the law is to give up Christ; to give up the Holy Ghost; to give up faith; to give up the promises.

Tremendous consequences! But there they are mainly set forth before our eyes; and truly when we contemplate the state of the professing church, we cannot but see how terribly those consequences are being realised.

May God the Holy Ghost open the eyes of all Christians to the truth of these things! May He lead them to study the scriptures and to submit themselves to their holy authority, in all things. This is the special need of this our day. We do not study scripture sufficiently. We are not governed by it. We do not see the absolute necessity of testing everything by the light of scrip-

ture, and rejecting all that will not stand the test. We go on with a quantity of things that have no foundation whatever in the word; yea, that are positively opposed to it.

What must be the end of all this? We tremble to think of it. We know, blessed be God, that our Lord Jesus Christ will soon come, and take His own beloved and blood-bought people home to the prepared place in the Father's house, to be for ever with Himself, in the ineffable blessedness of that bright home. But what of those who shall be left behind? What of that vast mass of baptised worldly profession? These are solemn questions which must be weighed in the immediate presence of God, in order to have the true — the divine answer. Let the reader ponder them there, in all tenderness of heart and teachableness of spirit, and the Holy Ghost will lead him to the true answer.

Having sought to set forth, from various parts of scripture, the glorious truth that believers are not under law, but under grace, we may now pursue our study of this fifth chapter of Deuteronomy. In it we have the ten commandments; but not exactly as we have them in the twentieth chapter of Exodus. There are

some characteristic touches which demand the reader's attention.

In Exodus 20 we have history; in Deuteronomy 5 we have not only history but commentary. In the latter, the lawgiver presents moral motives, and makes appeals which would be wholly out of place in the former. In the one, we have naked facts; in the other, facts and comments — facts and their practical application. In a word, there is not the slightest ground for imagining that Deuteronomy 5 is intended to be a literal repetition of Exodus 20; and hence the miserable arguments which infidels ground upon their apparent divergence just crumble into dust beneath our feet. They are simply baseless and utterly contemptible.

Let us, for instance, compare the two scriptures in reference to the subject of the sabbath. In Exodus 20 we read, "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is,

and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."

In Deuteronomy 5 we read, "Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God has commanded thee. Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou. And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm; therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day. (Vers. 12-15.)

Now, the reader can see, at a glance, the difference between the two passages. In Exodus 20 the command to keep the sabbath is grounded on creation. In Deuteronomy 5 it is grounded on redemption without any allusion to creation, at all. In short, the points of difference arise out of the distinct character of each book, and are perfectly plain to every spiritual mind.

With regard to the institution of the sabbath we must remember that it rests wholly upon the direct authority of the word of God. Other commandments set forth plain moral duties. Every man knows it to be morally wrong to kill or steal; but, as to the observance of the sabbath, no one could possibly recognise it as a duty had it not been distinctly appointed by divine authority. Hence its immense importance and interest. Both in our chapter, and in Exodus 20, it stands side by side with all those great moral duties which are universally recognised by the human conscience.

And not only so; but we find, in various other scriptures, that the sabbath is singled out and presented, with special prominence, as a precious link between Jehovah and Israel; a seal of His covenant with them; and a powerful test of their devotedness to Him. Every one could recognise the moral wrong of theft and murder; only those who loved Jehovah and His word would love and honour His sabbath.

Thus, in Exodus 16, in connection with the giving of the manna, we read, "And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man; and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses.

And he said to them, This is that which the Lord has said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath to the Lord: bake that which ye will bake to day, and seethe that ye will seethe; and that which remains over lay up for you, to be kept until the morning ... And Moses said Eat that to day; for to day is a sabbath to the Lord; to day ye shall not find it in the field. Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none. And it came to pass," — so little were they capable of appreciating the high and holy privilege of keeping Jehovah's sabbath — "that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said to Moses, How long refuse ye to keep my commandments and my laws?" Their neglect of the sabbath proved their moral condition to be all wrong — proved them to be astray as to all the commandments and laws of God. The sabbath was the great touchstone, the measure and gauge of the real state of their hearts toward Jehovah — "See, for that the Lord has given you the sabbath, therefore he gives you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day. So the people rested on the seventh day." They found rest and food on the holy sabbath.

Again, at the close of chapter 31, we have a very remarkable passage in proof of the importance and interest attaching to the sabbath, in the mind of Jehovah. A full description of the tabernacle and its furniture had been given to Moses, and he was about to receive the two tables of testimony from the hand of Jehovah; but, as if to prove the prominent place which the holy sabbath held in the divine mind, we read, "And the Lord spake to Moses, saying, speak thou also to the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy to you: every one that defiles it shall surely be put to death; for whosoever does any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord; whosoever does any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed." (Ex. 31:12-17.)

Now, this is a very important passage. It proves, very distinctly, the abiding character of the sabbath. The terms in which it is spoken of are quite sufficient to show that it was no mere temporary institution, "A sign between me and you, throughout your generations" — "A perpetual covenant" — "a sign for ever."

Let the reader carefully mark these words. They prove, beyond all question, first, that the sabbath was for Israel. Secondly, that the sabbath is, in the mind of God, a permanent institution. It is needful to bear these things in mind, in order to avoid all vagueness of thought, and looseness of expression on this deeply interesting subject.

The sabbath was distinctly and exclusively for the Jewish nation. It is spoken of, emphatically, as a sign between Jehovah and His people Israel. There is not the most remote hint of its being intended for the Gentiles. We shall see, further on, that it is a lovely type of the times of the restitution of all things of which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began; but this, in no wise, touches the fact of its being an exclusively Jewish institution. There is not so

much as a single sentence of scripture to show that the sabbath had any reference whatever to the Gentiles.

Some would teach us that, inasmuch as we read of the sabbath day, in Genesis 2, it must, of necessity, have a wider range than the Jewish nation. But let us turn to the passage, and see what it says. "And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made."

This is simple enough. There is no mention here of man, at all. We are not told that man rested on the seventh day. Men may infer, conclude or imagine that he did so; but the second of Genesis says nothing about it. And not only so, but we look in vain for any allusion to the sabbath throughout the entire book of Genesis. The very first notice we have of the sabbath, in connection with man, is in Exodus 16, a passage already quoted; and there we see, most distinctly, that it was given to Israel, as a people in recognised covenant relationship with Jehovah. That they did not understand or appreciate it is perfectly plain; that they never entered into it is equally plain, according

to Psalm 95 and Hebrews 4. But we are now speaking of what it was in the mind of God; and He tells us it was a sign between Him and His people Israel; and a powerful test of their moral condition, and of the state of their heart as to Him. It was not only an integral part of the law as given by Moses to the congregation of Israel, but it is specially referred to and singled out, again and again, as an institution holding a very peculiar place in the mind of God.

Thus, in the book of the prophet Isaiah, we read, "Blessed is the man that does this, and the son of man that lays hold on it; that keeps the sabbath from polluting it, and keeps his hand from doing any evil. Neither let the son of the stranger, that has joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord has utterly separated me from his people; neither let the eunuch say, Behold I am a dry tree. For thus says the Lord to the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even to them will I give in mine house, and within my walls, a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger," — here, of course, viewed in connection with Israel, as in Numbers 15

and other scriptures — "that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keeps the sabbath from polluting it, and takes hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer, their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people."

Again, "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words; then shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it." (Isaiah 58:13-14.)

The foregoing quotations are amply sufficient to show the place which the sabbath holds, in the mind of God. It is needless to multiply passages; but there is just one to which we must refer the reader, in connection with our present subject, namely, Leviticus 23. "And the Lord spake to Moses, saying,

Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, concerning the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts. Six days shall work be done; but the seventh day is the sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; ye shall do no work therein; it is the sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings." (Vers. 1-3.)

Here it stands at the head of all the feasts given in this marvelous chapter in which we have foreshadowed the entire history of God's dealings with His people Israel. The sabbath is the expression of God's eternal rest into which it is His purpose yet to bring His people, when all their toils and their trials and tribulations shall have passed away — that blessed "sabbath keeping," (sabbatismos) which "remains for the people of God." In various ways, He sought to keep this glorious rest before the hearts of His people; the seventh day, the seventh year, the year of jubilee — all these lovely sabbatic seasons were designed to set forth that blessed time when Israel shall be gathered back to their own beloved land, when the sabbath shall be kept, in all its deep, divine blessedness, as it never has been kept yet.

And this leads us, naturally, to the second point in connection with the sabbath, namely, its permanency. This is plainly

proved by such expressions as, "perpetual" "a sign for ever" — "throughout your generations." Such words would never be applied to any merely temporary institution. Thus it is, alas! that Israel never really kept the sabbath according to God; they never understood its meaning, never entered into its blessedness, never drank into its spirit. They made it a badge of their own righteousness; they boasted in it as a national institution, and used it for self-exaltation; but they never celebrated it in communion with God.

We speak of the nation, as a whole. We doubt not there were precious souls who, in secret, enjoyed the sabbath, and entered into the thoughts of God about it. But, as a nation, Israel never kept the sabbath according to God. Hear what Isaiah says, "Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting." (Chap. 1:13.)

Here we see that the precious and beautiful institution of the sabbath which God had given as a sign of His covenant with His people, had, in their hands, become a positive abomination, perfectly intolerable to Him. And when we open the pages of

the New Testament, we find the leaders and heads of the Jewish people continually at issue with our Lord Jesus Christ, in reference to the sabbath. Look, for example, at the opening verses of Luke 6. "And it came to pass on the second sabbath after the first, that he went through the corn fields; and his disciples plucked the ears of corn, and did eat, rubbing them in their hands. And certain of the Pharisees said to them, Why do ye that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath days? And Jesus answering them, said, Have ye not read so much as this, what David did, when himself was an hungered, and they which were with him; how he went into the house of God, and did take and eat the showbread, and gave also to them that were with him; which it is not lawful to eat, but for the priests alone? And he said to them, That the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath."

And, again, we read, "It came to pass also on another sabbath, that he entered into the synagogue, and taught; and there was a man whose right hand was withered. And the scribes and Pharisees watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day, that they might find an accusation against him." — Only conceive an accusation for healing a poor, afflicted fellow mortal!

— "But he knew their thoughts," — yes, He read their hearts, through to their very centre — "and said to the man which had the withered hand, Rise up, and stand forth in the midst. And he arose, and stood forth. Then said Jesus to them, I will ask you one thing; Is it lawful on the sabbath day to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or to destroy it? And looking round about upon them all, he said to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he did so; and his hand was restored whole as the other. And they were filled with madness; and communed one with another what they might do to Jesus."

What an insight we have here into the hollowness and worthlessness of man's sabbath keeping! Those religious guides would rather let the disciples starve than have their sabbath interfered with. They would allow the man to carry his withered hand to the grave, rather than have him healed on their sabbath. Alas! alas! it was indeed their sabbath, and not God's. His rest could never comport with hunger and withered hands. They had never read aright the record of David's act, in eating the showbread. They did not understand that legal institutions must give way in the presence of divine grace meeting human need. Grace rises, in its magnificence, above all legal barriers, and

faith rejoices in its lustre; but mere religiousness is offended by the activities of grace and the boldness of faith. The Pharisees did not see that the man with the withered hand was a striking commentary upon the nation's moral condition, a living proof of the fact that they were far away from God. If they were as they ought to be, there would have been no withered hands to heal; but they were not; and hence their sabbath was an empty formality, a powerless, worthless ordinance, a hideous anomaly, hateful to God, and utterly inconsistent with the condition of man.

Take another instance, in Luke 13. "And he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath" — Assuredly, the sabbath was no day of rest to Him — "And, behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said to her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her, and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God." Beautiful illustration of the work of grace in the soul, and the practical result, in every case. All on whom Christ lays

His blessed hands are "immediately made straight," and enabled to glorify God.

But man's sabbath was touched. "The ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath day." He was indignant at the gracious work of healing, though quite indifferent as to the humiliating case of infirmity — and he "said to the people, There are six days in which men ought to work; in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath day." How little this poor hollow religionist knew that he was in the very presence of the Lord of the true sabbath! How utterly insensible he was to the moral inconsistency of attempting to keep a sabbath while man's condition called aloud for divine work! "The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite! doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound, lo, these eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?"

What a withering rebuke! What an opening up of the hollowness and utter wretchedness of their whole system of Judaism! Only think of the glaring incongruity of a sabbath and a daugh-

ter of Abraham bound by the cruel hand of Satan, for eighteen years! There is nothing in all this world so blinding to the mind, so hardening to the heart, so deadening to the conscience, so demoralising to the whole being, as religion without Christ. Its deceiving and degrading power can only be thoroughly judged in the light of the divine presence. For ought that the ruler of the synagogue cared, that poor woman might have gone on to the end of her days, bowed together, and unable to lift up herself. He would have been well content to let her go on as a sad witness of the power of Satan, provided he could keep his sabbath. His religious indignation was excited, not by the power of Satan as seen in the woman's condition, but by the power of Christ, as seen in her complete deliverance.

But the Lord gave him his answer. "And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed;" — as well they might — "and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him." What a striking contrast! The advocates of a powerless, heartless, worthless religion, unmasked and covered with shame and confusion, on the one hand; and, on the other, all the people rejoicing in the glorious actings of the Son of God who had come into their midst to deliver them

from the crushing power of Satan, and fill their hearts with the joy of God's salvation, and their mouths with His praise!

We must now ask the reader to turn to the gospel of John for further illustration of our subject. We earnestly desire that this vexed question of the sabbath should be thoroughly examined in the light of scripture. We are convinced that there is very much more involved in it than many professing Christians are aware.

At the opening of John 5 we are introduced to a scene strikingly indicative of Israel's condition. We do not here attempt to go fully into the passage; we merely refer to it in connection with the subject before us.

The pool of Bethesda, or "house of mercy" — while it was, undoubtedly, the expression of the mercy of God toward His people, — afforded abundant evidence of the miserable condition of man, in general, and of Israel, in particular. Its five porches were thronged with "a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water." What a sample of the whole human family, and of the nation of Israel! What a striking illustration of their moral and

spiritual condition, as viewed from a divine standpoint. "Blind, halt, withered;" such is man's real state, if he only knew it.

But there was one man, in the midst of this impotent throng, so far gone, so feeble and helpless, that the pool of Bethesda could not meet his case. "A certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he says to him, Wilt thou be made whole?" — What grace and power in this question! It went far beyond the utmost stretch of the impotent man's thoughts. He thought only of human help, or of his own ability to get into the pool. He knew not that the speaker was above and beyond the pool, with its occasional movement; beyond angelic ministry, beyond all human help and effort, the Possessor of all power in heaven and on earth. "The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool; but while I am coming, another steps down before me." What a true picture of all those who are seeking salvation by ordinances! Each one doing the best he could for himself. No care for others. No thought of helping them. "Jesus says to him, Rise, take up thy bed, and

walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the sabbath."

Here we have man's sabbath again. It certainly was not God's sabbath. The miserable multitude gathered round the pool proved that God's full rest had not yet come — that His glorious antitype of the sabbath had not yet dawned on this sin-stricken earth. When that bright day comes, there will be no blind, halt, and withered folk thronging the porches of the pool of Bethesda. God's sabbath and human misery are wholly incompatible.

But it was man's sabbath. It was no longer the seal of Jehovah's covenant with the seed of Abraham — as it was once, and will be again — but the badge of man's self-righteousness, "The Jews therefore said to him that was cured, It is the sabbath day; it is not lawful for thee to carry thy bed." It was, no doubt, lawful enough for him to lie on that bed, week after week, month after month, year after year, while they were going on with their empty, worthless, hollow attempt at sabbath keeping. If they had had one ray of spiritual light, they would have seen the flagrant inconsistency of attempting to maintain their traditional notions respecting the sabbath in the presence of human

misery, disease and degradation. But they were utterly blind; and hence when the glorious fruits of Christ's ministry were being displayed, they had the temerity to pronounce them unlawful.

Nor this only; but "therefore did the Jews persecute Jesus, and sought to slay him, because he had done these things on the sabbath day." What a spectacle! Religious people, yea the leaders and teachers of religion — the guides of the professed people of God, seeking to slay the Lord of the sabbath because He had made a man every whit whole on the sabbath day!

But mark our Lord's reply. "My Father works hitherto, and I work." This brief but comprehensive statement gives us the root of the whole matter. It opens up to us the real condition of mankind in general, and of Israel in particular; and, in the most affecting manner, presents the grand secret of our Lord's life and ministry. Blessed be His Name, He had not come into this world to rest. How could He rest — how could He keep a sabbath, in the midst of human need and misery? Ought not that impotent, blind, halt, and withered multitude which thronged the porches of the pool of Bethesda to have taught "the Jews" the folly of their notions about the sabbath? For what was that

multitude but a sample of the condition of the nation of Israel, and of the whole human family? And how could divine love rest in the midst of such a condition of things? Utterly impossible. Love can only be a worker in a scene of sin and sorrow. From the moment of man's fall, the Father had been working. Then the Son appeared to carry on the work. And, now, the Holy Ghost is working. Work, and not rest, is the divine order, in a world like this. "There remains therefore a rest to the people of God."

The blessed Lord Jesus went about doing good, on the sabbath day, as well as every other day; and, finally, having accomplished the glorious work of redemption, He spent the sabbath in the grave, and rose on the first day of the week, as the First-begotten from the dead, and Head of the new creation, in which all things are of God, and to which, we may surely add, the question of "days and months, and times and years" can have no possible application. No one who thoroughly understands the meaning of death and resurrection could sanction, for a moment, the observance of days. The death of Christ put an end to all that order of things; and His resurrection introduces us into another sphere entirely where it is our high privilege to walk in

the light and power of those eternal realities which are ours in Christ, and which stand in vivid contrast with the superstitious observances of a carnal and worldly religiousness.

But here we approach a very interesting point in our subject, namely, the difference between the sabbath and the Lord's day, or first day of the week. These two are often confounded. We frequently hear, from the lips of truly pious people, the phrase, "Christian sabbath," an expression nowhere to be found in the New Testament. It may be that some who make use of it mean a right thing; but we should not only mean right, but also seek to express ourselves according to the teaching of holy scripture.

We are persuaded that the enemy of God and of His Christ has had a great deal more to do with the conventionalisms of Christendom than many of us are aware; and this it is which makes the matter so very serious. The reader may perhaps feel disposed to pronounce it mere hair-splitting to find any fault with the term "Christian sabbath." But he may rest assured it is nothing of the sort; on the contrary, if he will only calmly examine the matter in the light of the New Testament, he will find that it involves questions not only interesting but also weighty and important. It is a common saying, "There is nothing in a

name;" but, in the matter now before us, there is much in a name.

We have already remarked that our Lord spent the sabbath in the grave. Is not this a telling and deeply significant fact? We cannot doubt it. We read in it, at least, the setting aside of the old condition of things, and the utter impossibility of keeping a sabbath in a world of sin and death. Love could not rest in a world like this; it could only labour and die. This is the inscription which we read on the tomb where the Lord of the sabbath lay buried.

But what of the first day of the week? Is not it the sabbath on a new footing — the Christian sabbath? It is never so called in the New Testament. There is not so much as a hint of anything of the kind. If we look through the Acts of the Apostles, we shall find the two days spoken of in the most distinct way. On the sabbath, we find the Jews assembled in their synagogues for the reading of the law and the prophets. On the first day of the week, we find the Christians assembled to break bread. The two days were as distinct as Judaism and Christianity; nor is there so much as a shadow of scripture foundation for the idea that the sabbath was merged in the first day of the week. Where

is there the slightest authority for the assertion that the sabbath is changed from the seventh day to the eighth, or first day of the week? Surely, if there be any, nothing is easier than to produce it. But there is absolutely none.

And, be it remembered, that the sabbath is not merely a seventh day, but the seventh day. It is well to note this, inasmuch as some entertain the idea that provided a seventh portion of time be given to rest, and the public ordinances of religion, it is quite sufficient, and it does not matter what you call it; and thus different nations and different religious systems have their sabbath day. But this can never satisfy any one who desires to be taught exclusively by scripture. The sabbath of Eden was the seventh day. The sabbath for Israel was the seventh day. But the eighth day leads our thoughts onward into eternity: and, in the New Testament, it is called "the first day of the week" as indicating the beginning of that new order of things of which the cross is the imperishable foundation, and a risen Christ the glorious Head and Centre. To call this day the "Christian sabbath" is simply to confound things earthly and heavenly. It is to bring the Christian down from his elevated position as associated with a risen and glorified Head in the heavens, and occupy

him with the superstitious observance of days, the very thing which made the blessed apostle stand in doubt of the assemblies in Galatia.

In short, the more deeply we ponder the phrase "Christian sabbath," the more we are convinced that its tendency is, like many other formularies of Christendom, to rob the Christian of all those grand distinctive truths of the New Testament which mark off the church of God from all that went before, and all that is to follow after. The church, though on the earth, is not of this world, even as Christ is not of this world. It is heavenly in its origin, heavenly in its character, heavenly in its principles, walk and hope. It stands between the cross and the glory. The boundaries of its existence on earth are the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down to form it, and the coming of Christ to receive it to Himself.

Nothing can be more strongly marked than this; and, hence, for any one to attempt to enjoin upon the church of God the legal or superstitious observance of "days and months, and times and years," is to falsify the entire Christian position; mar the integrity of divine revelation, and rob the Christian of the place and

portion which belong to him, through the infinite grace of God, and the accomplished atonement of Christ.

Does the reader deem this statement unwarrantably strong? If so, let him ponder the following splendid passage from Paul's Epistle to the Colossians — a passage which ought to be written in letters of gold. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him; rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil [or make a prey of] you through philosophy and vain deceit" — mark the combination! not very flattering to philosophy — "after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ, For in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead [Theotes, deity] bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power." — What more can we possibly want? — "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who has raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of

your flesh, has he quickened together with him having forgiven you all trespasses; blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

Magnificent victory! A victory gained single handed — gained for us! Universal and eternal homage to His peerless Name! What remains? "Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holy day, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath: which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ."

What can one who is complete and accepted in a risen and glorified Christ have to do with meats, drinks or holy days? What can philosophy, tradition or human religiousness do for him? What can passing shadows add to one who has grasped, by faith, the eternal substance? Surely nothing; and hence the blessed apostle proceeds, "Let no man beguile you of your reward, in a voluntary humility, and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding the Head, from which

all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increases with the increase of God. Wherefore, if we be dead with Christ, from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances" — such as — "touch not;" — this — "taste not," — that — "handle not" — the other — which all are to perish with the using, after the commandments and doctrines of men? Which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour, to the satisfying of the flesh." — That is, not giving the measure of honour to the body which is due to it as God's vessel, but puffing up the flesh with religious pride, fed by a hollow and worthless sanctimoniousness. (Col. 2:6-23.)

We do not dare to offer any apology for this lengthened quotation. An apology for quoting scripture! Far be the thought! It is not possible for any one to understand this marvellous passage and not have a complete settlement, not only of the sabbath question, but also of that entire system of things with which this question stands connected. The Christian, who understands his position, is done, for ever, with all questions of meats and drinks, days and months and times and years. He knows noth-

ing of holy seasons and holy places. He is dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, and, as such, is delivered from all the ordinances of a traditional religion. He belongs to heaven, where new moons, holy days and sabbaths have no place. He is in the new creation, where all things are of God; and hence he can see no moral force in such words as "touch not; taste not; handle not." They have no possible application to him. He lives in a region where the clouds, vapours and mists of monasticism and asceticism are never seen. He has given up all the worthless forms of mere fleshly pietism, and got, in exchange, the solid realities of Christian life. His ear has been opened to hear, and his heart to understand the powerful exhortation of the inspired apostle, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth."

Here we have unfolded before our eyes some of the glories of true, practical, vital Christianity, in striking contrast with all the

barren and dreary forms of carnal and worldly religiousness. Christian life does not consist in the observance of certain rules, commandments or traditions of men. It is a divine reality. It is Christ in the heart, and Christ reproduced in the daily life, by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is the new man, formed on the model of Christ Himself, and displaying itself in all the most minute details of our daily history, in the family, in the business, in all our intercourse with our fellow men, in our temper, spirit, style, deportment, all. It is not a matter of mere profession, or of dogma, or of opinion, or of sentiment; it is an unmistakable, living reality. It is the kingdom of God, set up in the heart, asserting its blessed sway over the whole moral being, and shedding its genial influence upon the entire sphere in which we are called to move, from day to day. It is the Christian walking in the blessed footsteps of Him who went about doing good; meeting, so far as in him lies, every form of human need; living not for himself but for others; finding his delight in serving and giving; ready to soothe and sympathise wherever he finds a crushed spirit or a bereaved and desolate heart.

This is Christianity. And oh! how it differs from all the forms in which legality and superstition clothe themselves! How different from the unintelligent and unmeaning observance of days, and months, and times and years, abstaining from meats, forbidding to marry, and such-like! How different from the vapourings of the mystic, the gloom of the ascetic, and the austerities of the monk! How totally different from all these! Yes, reader; and we may add, how different from the unsightly union of high profession and low practice; lofty truths held in the intellect, professed, taught and discussed, and worldliness, self-indulgence, and unsubduedness! The Christianity of the New Testament differs alike from all these things. It is the divine, the heavenly, and the spiritual, displayed amid the human, the earthly and the natural. May it be the holy purpose of the writer and the reader of these lines to be satisfied with nothing short of that morally glorious Christianity revealed in the pages of the New Testament!

It is needless, we trust, to add more on the question of the sabbath. If the reader has, at all, seized the import of those scriptures which have passed before us, he will have little difficulty in seeing the place which the sabbath holds, in the dispensa-

tional ways of God. He will see that it has direct reference to Israel and the earth — that it was a sign of the covenant between Jehovah and His earthly people, and a powerful test of their moral condition.

Furthermore, he will see that Israel never really kept the sabbath, never understood its import, never appreciated its value. This was made manifest in the life, ministry and death of our Lord Jesus Christ who performed many of His works of healing on the sabbath day, and, at the end, spent that day in the tomb.

Finally, he will clearly understand the difference between the Jewish sabbath and the first day of the week, or the Lord's day; that the latter is never once called the sabbath, in the New Testament; but, on the contrary, is constantly presented in its own proper distinctness; it is not the sabbath changed or transferred, but a new day altogether, having its own special basis and its own peculiar range of thought, leaving the sabbath wholly untouched, as a suspended institution, to be resumed, by-and-by, when the seed of Abraham shall be restored to their own land. (See Ezek 46:1, 12.)

But we cannot, happily, turn from this interesting subject without a few words on the place assigned, in the New Testament, to the Lord's day, or first day of the week. Though it is not the sabbath; and though it has nothing to do with holy days, or new moons, or "days and months, and times and years;" yet it has its own unique place in Christianity, as is evident from manifold passages in the scriptures of the New Testament.

Our Lord rose from the dead, on that day. He met His disciples, again and again, on that day. The apostle and the brethren at Troas came together to break bread on that day. (Acts 20:7) The apostle instructs the Corinthians, and all that, in every place, call on the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to lay by their offerings on that day; thus teaching us, distinctly, that the first day of the week was the special day for the Lord's people to assemble for the Lord's Supper, and the worship, communion and ministry connected with that most precious institution. The blessed Apostle John expressly tells us that he was in the Spirit, on that day, and received that marvellous revelation which closes the Divine Volume.\*

\* Some are of opinion that the expression, "On the Lord's day" ought to be rendered, "Of the day of the Lord," meaning that the apostle was in the spirit of that day when our Lord Christ shall

take to Himself His great power and reign. But to this view there are two grave objections. In the first place, the words *te kuriake hemera*, rendered, in Revelation 1:10, "the Lord's day," are quite distinct from *te hemera kuriou*, in 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 2 Peter 3:10, properly rendered, "The day of the Lord." This we consider a very weighty objection, and one quite sufficient to settle the question. But, in addition to this, we have the argument based on the fact that by far the greater portion of the book of Revelation is occupied, not with "the day of the Lord" but with events prior thereto. Hence, therefore, we feel persuaded that "the Lord's day" and "the first day of the week" are identical; and this we deem a very important fact as proving that that day has a very special place in the word of God — a place which every intelligent Christian will thankfully own.

Thus then, we have a body of scripture evidence before us amply sufficient to prove to every pious mind that the Lord's day must not be reduced to the level of ordinary days. It is, to the true Christian, neither the Jewish sabbath, on the one hand, nor the Gentile Sunday, on the other; but the Lord's day, on which His people gladly and thankfully assemble round His Table, to keep that precious feast by which they show forth His death, until He come.

Now, it is needless to say that there is not a shade of legal bondage or of superstition connected with the first day of the week. To say so, or to think so, would be to deny the entire circle of truths with which that day stands connected. We have no direct commandment respecting the observance of the day; but the passages already referred to are amply sufficient, for every spiritual mind; and, further, we may say that the instincts of the divine nature would lead every true Christian to honour and love the Lord's day, and to set it apart, in the most reverent manner, for the worship and service of God. The very thought of any one, professing to love Christ, engaging in business, or unnecessary travelling, on the Lord's day, would, in our judgment, be revolting to every pious feeling. We believe it to be a hallowed privilege to retire, as much as possible, from all the distractions of natural things, and to devote the hours of the Lord's day to Himself and to His service.

It will, perhaps be said that the Christian ought to devote every day to the Lord. Most surely; we are the Lord's, in the very fullest and highest sense. All we have and all we are belongs to Him. This we fully, gladly, own. We are called to do everything in His Name, and to His glory. It is our high privilege to buy

and sell, eat and drink, yea, to carry on all our business, under His eye and in the fear and love of His holy Name. We should not put our hand to anything, on any day in the week, on which we could not, with the fullest confidence, ask the Lord's blessing.

All this is most fully admitted. Every true Christian joyfully owns it. But, at the same time, we deem it impossible to read the New Testament and not see that the Lord's day gets a unique place; that it is marked off for us, in the most distinct way; that it has a significance and an importance which cannot, with justice, be claimed for any other day in the week. Indeed so fully are we convinced of the truth of all this, that, even though it were not the law of England, that the Lord's day should be observed, we should deem it to be both our sacred duty and holy privilege to abstain from all business engagements, save such as were absolutely unavoidable.

Thanks be to God, it is the law of England that the Lord's day should be observed. This is a signal mercy to all who love the day for the Lord's sake. We cannot but own His great goodness in having wrested the day from the covetous grasp of the

world, and bestowed it upon His people and His servants to be devoted to His worship and to His work.

What a boon is the Lord's day, with its profound retirement from worldly things! What should we do without it? What a blessed break in upon the week's toil! How refreshing its exercises to the spiritual mind! How precious the assembly round the Lord's Table to remember Him, to show forth His death, and celebrate His praise! How delightful the varied services of the Lord's day, whether those of the evangelist, the pastor, the teacher, the Sunday-school worker, or the tract distributor! What human language can adequately set forth the value and interest of all these things? True it is that the Lord's day is anything but a day of bodily rest to His servants; indeed they are often more fatigued on that day than on any other day of the week. But oh! it is a blessed fatigue; a delightful fatigue; a fatigue which will meet its bright reward in the rest that remains for the people of God.

Once more, then, beloved Christian reader, let us lift up our hearts in a note of praise to our God for the blessed boon of the Lord's day. May He continue it to His church until He come! May He countervail, by His Almighty power, every effort of

the infidel and the atheist to remove the barriers which English law has erected around the Lord's day. Truly it will be a sad day for England when those barriers are removed.

It may, perhaps, be said, by some that the Jewish sabbath is done away, and is, therefore, no longer binding. A large number of professing Christians have taken this ground, and pleaded for the opening of the parks and places of public recreation on the Sunday. Alas! it is easily seen where such people are drifting to, and what they are seeking. They would set aside the law, in order to procure a licence for fleshly indulgence. They do not understand that the only way in which any one can be free from the law is by being dead to it; and, if dead to the law, we are also of blessed necessity, dead to sin, and dead to the world.

This makes it a different matter altogether. The Christian is, thank God, free from the law; but, if he is, it is not that he may amuse and indulge himself, on the Lord's day, or any other day; but that he may live to God. "I, through law, am dead to law; that I might live to God." This is Christian ground; and it can only be occupied by those who are truly born of God. The world cannot understand it; neither can they understand the holy privileges and spiritual exercises of the Lord's day.

All this is true; but, at the same time, we are thoroughly convinced that were England to remove the barriers which surround the Lord's day, it would afford a melancholy proof of her abandonment of that profession of religion which has, so long characterised her, as a nation, and of her drifting away in the direction of infidelity and atheism. We must not lose sight of the weighty fact that England has taken the ground of being a Christian nation — a nation professing to be governed by the word of God. She is therefore much more responsible than those nations wrapped in the dark shades of heathenism. We believe that nations, like individuals, will be held responsible for the profession they make; and, hence, those nations which profess and call themselves Christian shall be judged not merely by the light of creation, nor by the law of Moses, but by the full-orbed light of that Christianity which they profess — by all the truth contained within the covers of that blessed book which they possess, and in which they make their boast. The heathen shall be judged on the ground of creation; the Jew, on the ground of the law; the nominal Christian, on the ground of the truth of Christianity.

Now this grave fact renders the position of England and all other professing Christian nations most serious. God will, most assuredly, deal with them on the ground of their profession. It is of no use to say they do not understand what they profess; for why profess what they do not understand and believe? The fact is they profess to understand and believe; and by this fact they shall be judged. They make their boast in this familiar sentence that "The Bible, and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants."

If this be so, how solemn is the thought of England judged by the standard of an open Bible! What will be her judgement? — what her end? Let all whom it may concern ponder the appalling answer.

We must, now, turn from the deeply interesting subject of the sabbath and the Lord's day, and draw this section to a close by quoting for the reader the remarkable paragraph with which our chapter ends. It does not call for any lengthened comment, but we deem it profitable, in these "Notes on Deuteronomy," to furnish the reader with very full quotations from the book itself, in order that he may have before him the very words of the Holy

Ghost, without even the trouble of laying aside the volume which he holds in his hand.

Having laid before the people the ten commandments, the law-giver proceeds to remind them of the solemn circumstances which accompanied the giving of the law, together with their own feelings and utterances, on the occasion.

"These words the Lord spake to all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice; and he added no more; and he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them to me. And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness — for the mountain did burn with fire — that ye came near to me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders; and ye said, Behold, the Lord our God has showed us his glory, and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire; we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he lives. Now therefore why should we die? For this great fire will consume us; if we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, then we shall die. For who is there of all flesh that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have and lived? Go thou near, and hear all

that the Lord our God shall say; and speak thou to us all that the Lord our God shall speak to thee; and we will hear it, and do it. And the Lord heard the voice of your words, when ye spake to me; and the Lord said to me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken to thee; they have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever! Go say to them, Get you into your tents again; but as for thee, stand thou here by me, and I will speak to thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgements, which thou shalt teach them, that they may do them in the land which I give them to possess it. Ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God has commanded you; ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God has commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess."

Here the grand principle of the book of Deuteronomy shines out with uncommon lustre. It is embodied in those touching

and forcible words which form the very heart's core of the splendid passage just quoted. "Oh that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!"

Precious words! They set before us, most blessedly, the secret spring of that life which we, as Christians are called to live, from day to day — the life of simple, implicit and unqualified obedience, namely, a heart fearing the Lord — fearing Him, not in a servile spirit, but with all that deep, true, adoring love which the Holy Ghost sheds abroad in our hearts. It is this that delights the heart of our loving Father. His word to us is, "My son, give me thine heart." Where the heart is given, all follows, in lovely moral order. A loving heart finds its very deepest joy in obeying all God's commandments; and nothing is of any value to God but what springs from a loving heart. The heart is the source of all the issues of life; and, hence, when it is governed by the love of God there is a loving response to all His commandments. We love His commandments because we love Him. Every word of His is precious to the heart that loves Him. Every precept, every statute, every judgement, in a word, His

whole law is loved, revered, and obeyed, because it has His Name, and His authority attached to it.

The reader will find, in Psalm 119, an uncommonly fine illustration of the special point now before us — a most striking example of one who blessedly answered to the words quoted above; — "Oh that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always." It is the lovely breathing of a soul who found its deep, unending, constant delight in the law of God. There are no less than one hundred and seventy allusions to that precious law, under some one title or another. We find scattered along the surface of this marvellous psalm, in rich profusion, such gems as the following.

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." "I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies as much as in all riches." "I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect to thy ways." "I will delight myself in thy statutes; I will not forget thy word." "My soul breaks for the longing that it has to thy judgements at all times." "Thy testimonies also are my delight, and my counsellors." "I have stuck to Thy testimonies." "Behold, I have longed after thy precepts." "I trust in thy

word." "I have hoped in thy judgements." "I seek; thy precepts." "I will delight myself in thy commandments which I have loved." "I remembered thy judgements." "Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage." "I turned my feet to thy testimonies." "I have believed thy commandments." "The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver." "I have hoped in thy word." "Thy law is my delight." "Mine eyes fail for thy word." "All thy commandments are faithful." "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." "I will never forget thy precepts." "I have sought thy precepts." "I will consider thy testimonies." "Thy commandment is exceeding broad." "O how love I thy law; it is my meditation all the day." "How sweet are thy words to my taste? yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart." "I Will have respect to thy statutes continually" "I love thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold." "I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right." "Thy testimonies are wonderful." "I opened my mouth, and panted, for I longed for Thy commandments." "Upright are thy judgements." "Thy testimonies ... are righteous, and very faithful." "Thy word is very pure." "Thy law is the truth." "The right-

eousness of thy testimonies is everlasting." "All thy commandments are truth." "Thy word is true from the beginning; and every one of thy righteous judgements endures for ever." "My heart stands in awe of Thy word." "I rejoice at thy word, as one that finds great spoil." "Great peace have they that love thy law." "My soul has kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly." "I have chosen thy precepts." "Thy law is my delight."

Truly it does the heart good, and refreshes the spirit, to transcribe such utterances as the foregoing, many of which are the suited utterances of our Lord Himself, in the days of His flesh. He ever lived upon the word. It was the food of His soul; the authority of His path, the material of His ministry. By it He vanquished Satan; by it He silenced Sadducees, Pharisees and Herodians. By it He taught His disciples. To it He commended His servants, as He was about to ascend into the heavens.

How important is all this for us! How intensely interesting! How deeply practical! What a place it gives the holy scriptures! For we remember that it is, in very deed, the blessed Volume of inspiration which is brought before us in all those golden sentences culled from Psalm 119. How strengthening, refreshing

and encouraging for us to mark the way in which our Lord uses the holy scriptures, at all times, the place He gives them, and the dignity He puts upon them! He appeals to them, on all occasions, as a divine authority, from which there can be no appeal. He, though Himself as God over all, the Author of the Volume, having taken His place as man, on the earth, sets forth, with all possible plainness, what is man's bounden duty and high privilege, namely, to live by the word of God — to bow down, in reverent subjection, to its divine authority.

And have we not here a very complete answer to the oft-raised question of infidelity, "How do we know that the Bible is the word of God?" If indeed we believe in Christ; if we own Him to be the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh, very God and very man, we cannot fail to see the moral force of the fact that this divine Person constantly appeals to the scriptures — to Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms, as to a divine standard. Did He not know them to be the word of God? Undoubtedly. As God, He had given them; as Man, He received them, lived by them, and owned their paramount authority, in all things.

What a weighty fact is here for the professing church! What a withering rebuke to all those so called Christian doctors and

writers who have presumed to tamper with the grand fundamental truth of the plenary inspiration of the holy scriptures in general, and of the five books of Moses in particular! How terrible to think of the professed teachers of the church of God daring to designate as spurious, writings which our Lord and Master received and owned as divine!

And yet we are told, and we are expected to believe that things are improving! Alas! alas! it is a miserable delusion. The degrading absurdities of ritualism, and the blasphemous reasonings of infidelity are rapidly increasing around us; and where these influences are not actually dominant, we observe, for the most part, a cold indifference, carnal ease, self indulgence, and worldliness — anything and everything, in short, but the evidence of improvement. If people are not led away by infidelity, on the one hand, or by ritualism, on the other, it is, for the most part, owing to the fact that they are too much occupied with pleasure and gain to think of anything else. And as to the religion of the day, if you subtract money and music, you will have a lamentably trifling balance.

Hence, therefore, it is impossible to shake off the conviction that the combined testimony of observation and experience is

directly opposed to the notion that things are improving. Indeed, for any one, in the face of such an array of evidence to the contrary, to cling to such a theory can only be regarded as the fruit of a most unaccountable credulity.

But, perhaps, some may feel disposed to say that we must not judge by the sight of our eyes; we must be hopeful. True, provided only we have a divine warrant for our hopefulness. If a single line of scripture can be produced to prove that the present system of things is to be marked by gradual improvement, religiously, politically, morally, or socially, then, by all means, be hopeful. Yes; hope against hope. A single clause of inspiration is quite sufficient to form the basis of a hope which will lift the heart above the very darkest and most depressing surroundings.

But where is such a clause to be found? Simply, nowhere. The testimony of the Bible, from cover to cover; the distinct teaching of holy scripture, from beginning to end; the voices of prophets and apostles, in unbroken harmony — all, without a single divergent note, go to prove, with a force and clearness perfectly unanswerable, that the present condition of things, so far from gradually improving, will grow rapidly worse; that ere

the bright beams of millennial glory can gladden this groaning earth, the sword of judgement must do its appalling work. To quote the passages, in proof of our assertion, would literally fill a volume; it would simply be to transcribe a large portion of the prophetic scriptures of the Old and New Testament.

This, of course, we do not attempt. There is no need. The reader has his Bible before him. Let him search it diligently. Let him lay aside all his preconceived ideas, all the conventionalisms of Christendom, all the ordinary phraseology of the religious world, all the dogmas of the schools of divinity, and come, with the simplicity of a little child, to the pure fountain of holy scripture, and drink in its heavenly teaching. If he will only do this, he will rise from the study with the clear and settled conviction that the world will, most assuredly, not be converted by the means now in operation — that it is not the gospel of peace but the besom of destruction that shall prepare the earth for glory.

Is it, then, that we deny the good that is being done? Are we insensible to it? Far be the thought! We heartily bless God for every atom of it. We rejoice in every effort put forth to spread the precious gospel of the grace of God; we render thanks for

every soul gathered within the blessed circle of God's salvation. We delight to think of eighty-five millions of Bibles scattered over the earth. What human mind can calculate the results of all these, yea, the results of a single copy? We earnestly wish God speed to every true-hearted missionary who goes forth with the glad tidings of salvation, whether into the lanes and court-yards of London, or to the most distant parts of the earth.

But, admitting all this, as we most heartily do, we nevertheless do not believe in the conversion of the world by the means now in operation. Scripture tells us that it is when the divine judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world shall learn righteousness. This one clause of inspiration ought to be sufficient to prove that it is not by the gospel that the world is to be converted, and there are hundreds of clauses which speak the same language and teach the same truth. It is not by grace, but by judgement, that the inhabitants of the world shall learn righteousness.

What then is the object of the gospel? If it be not to convert the world, for what purpose is it preached? The Apostle James, in his address at the memorable council at Jerusalem, gives an answer, direct and conclusive, to the question. He says, "Simeon

has declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles." For what? To convert them all? The very reverse: "To take out of them a people for his name." Nothing can be more distinct than this. It sets before us that which ought to be the grand object of all missionary effort — that which every divinely sent and divinely taught missionary will keep before his mind, in all his blessed labours. It is "to take out a people for his name."

How important to remember this! How needful to have ever before us a true object, in all our work! Of what possible use can it be to work for a false object? Is it not much better to work with a direct view to what God is doing? Will it cripple the missionary's energies or clip his wings to keep before his eyes the divine purpose in his work? Surely not. Take the case of two missionaries going forth to some distant mission-field; the one has for his object the conversion of the world; the other, the gathering out of a people. Will the latter, by reason of his object, be less devoted, less energetic, less enthusiastic than the former? We cannot believe it; on the contrary, the very fact of his being in the current of the divine mind will impart stability and consistency to his work; and, at the same time, encour-

age his heart in the face of the difficulties and hindrances which surround him.

But, however this may be, it is perfectly plain that the apostles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ had no such object, in going forth to their work, as the conversion of the world. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believes and is baptised shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned."

This was to the twelve. The world was to be their sphere. The aspect of their message was to every creature; the application, to him that believes. It was, pre-eminently, an individual thing. The conversion of the whole world was not to be their object; that will be effected by a different agency altogether, when God's present action by the gospel shall have resulted in the gathering out of a people for the heavens.\* The Holy Ghost came down, on the day of Pentecost, not to convert the world, but to "convict" (elegxei) it, or demonstrate its guilt, in having rejected the Son of God.\*\* The effect of His presence was to prove the world guilty; and as to the grand object of His mission, it was to form a body composed of believers from amongst both Jews and Gentiles. With this He has been occu-

pied for the last eighteen hundred years. This is "the mystery" of which the Apostle Paul was made a minister, and which he unfolds, so fully and blessedly, in his epistle to the Ephesians. It is impossible for any one to understand the truth set forth in this marvellous document, and not see that the conversion of the world and the formation of the body of Christ are two totally different things which could not possibly go on together.

\* We would commend to the reader's attention Psalm 47. It is one of a large class of passages which prove that the blessing of the nations is consequent upon Israel's restoration. "God be merciful to us [Israel] and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us, that thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations ... God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him." There could not be a more lovely or forcible proof of the fact that it is Israel, and not the church, that will be used for the blessing of the nations.

\*\* The application of John 16:8-11 to the Spirit's work in the individual is, in our judgement, a serious mistake. It refers to the effect of His presence on earth, in reference to the world as a whole. His work in the soul is a precious truth, we need hardly say; but it is not the truth taught in this passage.

Let the reader ponder the following beautiful passage: "For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye

have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which is given me to you-ward; how that by revelation he made known to me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men" — not made known in the scriptures of the Old Testament; nor revealed to the Old Testament saints or prophets — "as it is now revealed to his holy apostles and prophets" — that is, to the New Testament prophets — "by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see, what is the dispensation [oikonomia] of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now to the principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." (Eph. 3:1-10)

Take another passage from the epistle to the Colossians. "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for his body's sake, which is the church; whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to complete the word of God; even the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus; whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which works in me mightily." (Col. 1:23-29.)

From these, and numerous other passages, the reader may see the special object of Paul's ministry. Assuredly, he had no such thought in his mind as the conversion of the world. True, he

preached the gospel, in all its depth, fullness and power — preached it "from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum" — "preached among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;" but with no thought of converting the world. He knew better. He knew and taught that the world was ripening for judgement — yes, ripening rapidly; that "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse;" that, "In the latter times, some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God had created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth."

And, further still, this faithful and divinely inspired witness taught that "in the last days" — far in advance of "the latter times" — "perilous [or difficult] times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; hav-

ing a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." (Compare 1 Tim. 4:1-3 with 2 Tim. 3:1-5)

What a picture! It brings us back to the close of the first of Romans, where the same inspired pen portrays for us the dark forms of heathenism; but with this terrible difference that in 2 Timothy it is not heathenism but nominal Christianity — "a form of godliness." And is this to be the end of the present condition of things? Is this the converted world of which we hear so much? Alas! alas! there are false prophets abroad. There are those who cry Peace, peace, when there is no peace. There are those who attempt to daub the crumbling walls of Christendom with untempered mortar.

But it will not do. Judgement is at the door. The professing church has utterly, shamefully failed; she has grievously departed from the word of God, and revolted from the authority of her Lord. There is not a single ray of hope for Christendom. It is the darkest moral blot in the wide universe of God, or on the page of history. The same blessed apostle from whose writings we have already so largely quoted, tells us that the mystery of iniquity doth already work;" hence it has been working now for over eighteen centuries. "Only he that now hinders will hinder

until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming. Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thess. 2:7-12.)

How awful is the doom of Christendom! Strong delusion! Dark damnation! And all this in the face of the dreams of those false prophets who talk to the people about "the bright side of things." Thank God, there is a bright side for all those who belong to Christ. To them the apostle can speak in bright and cheering accents. "We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by

our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." (2 Thess. 2:13-14.)

Here we have, most surely, the bright side of things — the bright and blessed hope of the church of God — the hope of seeing "the bright and morning Star." All rightly instructed Christians are on the look out, not for an improved or a converted world, but for their coming Lord and Saviour who has gone to prepare a place for them in the Father's house; and is coming again to receive them to Himself, that where He is, there they may be also. This is His own sweet promise, which may be fulfilled at any moment. He only waits, as Peter tells us, in long suffering mercy, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But when the last member shall be incorporated, by the Holy Ghost, into the blessed body of Christ, then shall the voice of the archangel and the trump of God summon all the redeemed, from the beginning, to meet their descending Lord, in the air, to be for ever with Him.

This is the true and proper hope of the church of God — a hope which He would have ever shining down into the hearts of all His beloved people, in its purifying and elevating power. Of this blessed hope the enemy has succeeded in robbing a large

number of the Lord's people. Indeed, for centuries it was well nigh blotted out from the church's horizon; and it has only been partially recovered within the last fifty years. And alas! how partially! Where do we hear of it, throughout the length and breadth of the professing church? Do the pulpits of Christendom ring with the joyful sound, "Behold the Bridegroom comes"? Far from it. Even the few beloved servants of Christ who are looking for His coming, hardly dare to preach it, because they fear it would be utterly rejected. And so it would. We are thoroughly persuaded that, in the vast majority of cases, men who should venture to preach the glorious truth that the Lord is coming for His church, would speedily have to vacate their pulpits.

What a solemn and striking proof of Satan's blinding power! He has robbed the church of divinely given hope; and, instead thereof, he has given her a delusion — a lie. Instead of looking out for "The bright and morning Star," he has set her looking for a converted world — a millennium without Christ. He has succeeded in casting such a haze over the future, that the church has completely lost bearings. She does not know where she is. She is like a vessel tossed on the stormy ocean, having

neither compass nor rudder, seeing neither sun nor stars. All is darkness and confusion.

And how is this? Simply because the church has lost sight of the pure and precious word of her Lord; and has accepted, instead, those bewildering creeds and confessions of men which so mar and mutilate the truth of God, that Christians seem utterly at sea as to their proper standing and their proper hope.

And yet they have the Bible in their hands. True but so had the Jews, and yet they rejected the blessed One who is the great theme of the Bible from beginning to end. This was the moral inconsistency with which our Lord charged them, in John 5 "Ye search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me; and ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."\*

- \* the word *ereunate* may be either imperative or indicative but the context, we judge, demands the latter. They had scriptures; they were read in their synagogues every sabbath day; they professed to believe that in them they had life; they testified of Him; and yet they would not come Him. Here was the flagrant inconsistency. Now if *ereunate* be taken as a command, the whole force of the passage is lost. Need we remind the reader that there are plenty of arguments and inducements leading us to search the

scriptures, without appealing to what we believe to be an inaccurate rendering of John 5:39

And why was this? Simply because their minds were blinded by religious prejudice. They were under the influence of the doctrines and commandments of men. Hence, although they had the scriptures, and boasted of having them, they were as ignorant of them, and as little governed by them as the poor dark heathen around them. It is one thing to have the Bible in our hands, in our homes, and in our assemblies, and quite another thing to have the truths of the Bible acting on our hearts and consciences, and shining in our lives.

Take, for instance, the great subject now before us, and which has led us into this very lengthened digression. Can anything be more plainly taught in the New Testament than this, namely, that the end of the present condition of things will be terrible apostasy from the truth, and open rebellion against God and the Lamb? The Gospels, the Epistles and the Revelation all agree in setting forth this most solemn truth, with such distinctness and simplicity that a babe in Christ may see it.

And yet how few comparatively believe it! The vast majority believe the very reverse. They believe that by means of the

various agencies now in operation all nations shall be converted. In vain we call attention to our Lord's parables in Matthew 13; the tares, the leaven, and the mustard seed. How do these agree with the idea of a converted world? If the whole world is to be converted by a preached gospel, how is it that tares are found in the field at the end of the age? How is it that there are as many foolish virgins as wise ones, when the Bridegroom comes? If the whole world is to be converted by the gospel, then on whom will "the day of the Lord so come as a thief in the night"? Or what mean those awful words, "For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction comes upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape"? In view of a converted world, what would be the just application, what the moral force of those most solemn words, in the first of Revelation, "Behold, he comes with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him"? Where are all those wailing kindreds to be found, if the whole world is to be converted?

Reader, is it not as clear as a sunbeam that the two things cannot stand, for a moment together. Is it not perfectly plain that

the theory of a world converted by the gospel is diametrically opposed to the teaching of the entire New Testament? How is it then that the vast majority of professing Christians persist in holding it? There can be but the one reply, and that is, they do not bow to the authority of scripture. It is most sorrowful and solemn to have to say it; but it is, alas! too true. The Bible is read in Christendom; but the truths of the Bible are not believed — nay, they are persistently rejected. And all this in view of the oft-repeated boast that "the Bible, and the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants."

But we shall not pursue this subject further here, much as we feel its weight and importance. We trust the reader may be led by the Spirit of God to feel its deep solemnity. We believe the Lord's people everywhere need to be thoroughly roused to a sense of how entirely the professing church has departed from the authority of scripture. Here, we may rest assured, lies the real cause of all the confusion, all the error, all the evil in our midst. We have departed from the word of the Lord, and from Himself. Until this is seen, felt and owned, we cannot be right. The Lord looks for true repentance, real brokenness of spirit, in

His presence. "To this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word."

This always holds good. There is no limit to the blessing, when the soul is in this truly blessed attitude. But it must be a reality, being "poor and contrite;" We must be in the condition. It is an individual matter. "To this man will I look"

Oh! may the Lord, in His infinite mercy, lead us, every one, into true self judgement, under the action of His word! May our ears be opened to hear His voice! May there be a real turning of our hearts to Himself and to His word! May we turn our backs, in holy decision, once and for ever, upon everything that will not stand the test of scripture! This, we are persuaded, is what our Lord Christ looks for on the part of all who belong to Him, amid the terrible and hopeless debris of Christendom.

## **Chapter 6**

"Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the Lord your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it: that thou mightest fear the Lord thy God, to keep all his statutes and

his commandments, which I command thee; thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged. Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it, that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the Lord God of thy fathers has promised thee, in the land that flows with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord."

We have here presented to us that great cardinal truth which the nation of Israel was specially responsible to hold fast and confess, namely, the unity of the Godhead. This truth lay at the very foundation of the Jewish economy. It was the grand centre round which the people were to rally. So long as they maintained this, they were a happy, prosperous, fruitful people; but when it was let go, all was gone. It was their great national bulwark, and that which was to mark them off from all the nations of the east. They were called to confess this glorious truth in the face of an idolatrous world, with "its gods many, and lords many." It was Israel's high privilege and holy responsibility to bear a steady witness to the truth contained in that one weighty sentence, "The Lord our God is one Lord," in marked opposition to the false gods innumerable of the heathen around. Their

father Abraham had been called out from the very midst of heathen idolatry, to be a witness to the one true and living God, to trust Him; to walk with Him; to lean on Him; and to obey Him.

If the reader will turn to the last chapter of Joshua, he will find a very striking allusion to this fact, and a very important use made of it, in his closing address to the people. "And Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, and for their heads, and for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, even Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor; and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac."

Here, Joshua reminds the people of the fact that their fathers had served other gods — a very solemn and weighty fact, most surely; and one which they ought never to have forgotten, inasmuch as the remembrance of it would have taught them their deep need of watchfulness over themselves, lest, by any means,

they should be drawn back into that gross and terrible evil out of which God, in His sovereign grace, and electing love, had called their father Abraham. It would have been their wisdom to consider that the self-same evil in which their fathers had lived, in the olden time, was just the one into which they themselves were likely to fall.

Having presented this fact to the people, Joshua brings before them, with uncommon force and vividness, all the leading events of their history, from the birth of their father Isaac, down to the moment in which he was addressing them; and then sums up with the following telling appeal, "Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Mark the repeated allusion to the fact that their fathers had worshipped false gods; and, further, that the land into which Je-

hovah had brought them had been polluted, from one end to the other, by the dark abominations of heathen idolatry.

Thus does this faithful servant of the Lord, evidently by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, seek to set before the people their danger of living up the grand central and foundation truth of the One true and living God, and falling back into the worship of idols. He urges upon them the absolute necessity of whole-hearted decision. "Choose you this day whom ye will serve." There is nothing like plain, out and out decision for God. It is due to Him always. He had proved Himself to be unmistakably for them, in redeeming them from the bondage of Egypt, bringing them through the wilderness, and planting them in the land of Canaan. Hence, therefore, that they should be wholly for Him was nothing more than their reasonable service.

How deeply Joshua felt all this, for himself, is evident from those very memorable words, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Lovely words! Precious decision! National religion might, and alas! did go to ruin; but personal and family religion could, by the grace of God, be maintained, everywhere, and at all times.

Thank God for this! May we never forget it! "Me and my house" is faith's clear and delightful response to God's "Thou and thy house." Let the condition of the ostensible, professed people of God, at any given time, be what it may, it is the privilege of every true-hearted man of God to adopt and act upon this immortal decision, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

True, it is only by the grace of God, continually supplied, that this holy resolution can be carried out; but, we may rest assured that, where the bent of the heart is to follow the Lord fully, all needed grace will be ministered, day by day; for those encouraging words must ever hold good, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Let us now look, for a moment, at the apparent effect of Joshua's soul-stirring appeal to the congregation. It seemed very promising. "The people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods; for the Lord our God, he it is that brought us up and our fathers out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and which did

those great signs in our sight, and preserved us in all the way wherein we went, and among all the people through whom we passed; and the Lord drove out from before us all the people, even the Amorites which dwelt in the land: therefore will we also serve the Lord; for he is our God."

All this sounded very well, and looked very hopeful. They seemed to have a clear sense of the moral basis of Jehovah's claim upon them for implicit obedience. They could accurately recount all His mighty deeds on their behalf, and make very earnest and, no doubt, sincere protestations against idolatry, and promises of obedience to Jehovah, their God.

But it is very evident that Joshua was not particularly sanguine about all this profession, for "He said to the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord: for he is an holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins. If ye forsake the Lord, and serve strange gods, then he will turn and do you hurt, and consume you, after that he has done you good. And the people said to Joshua, Nay; but we will serve the Lord. And Joshua said to the people, Ye are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you the Lord, to serve him. And they said, We are witnesses. Now therefore put away, said he, the strange

gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel. And the people said to Joshua, The Lord our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey."

We do not now stop to contemplate the aspect in which Joshua presents God to the congregation of Israel, inasmuch as our object in referring to the passage is to show the prominent place assigned, in Joshua's address, to the truth of the unity of the Godhead. This was the truth to which Israel was called to bear witness, in view of all the nations of the earth, and in which they were to find their moral safe-guard against the ensnaring influences of idolatry.

But alas! this very truth was the one as to which they most speedily and signally failed. The promises, vows, and resolutions made under the powerful influence of Joshua's appeal soon proved to be like the early dew and the morning cloud that passes away. "The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel. And Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old ... And also all that generation were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another gen-

eration after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim; and they forsook the Lord God of their fathers, which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves to them, and provoked the Lord to anger. And they forsook the Lord, and served Baal and Ashtaroth." (Judges 2:7-13)

Reader, how admonitory is all this! How full of solemn warning to us all! The grand, all-important, special and characteristic truth so soon abandoned! The one only true and living God given up for Baal and Ashtaroth! So long as Joshua and the elders lived, their presence and their influence kept Israel from open apostasy. But no sooner were those moral embankments removed than the dark tide of idolatry rolled in and swept away the very foundations of the national faith. Jehovah of Israel was displaced by Baal and Ashtaroth. Human influence is a poor prop, a feeble barrier. We must be sustained by the power of God, else we shall, sooner or later, give way. The faith that stands merely in the wisdom of men, and not in the power of God, must prove a poor, flimsy worthless faith. It will

not stand the day of trial; it will not bear the furnace; it will, most assuredly, break down.

It is well to remember this. Second-hand faith will never do. There must be a living link connecting the soul with God. We must have to do with God for ourselves, individually, else we shall give way when the testing time comes. Human example and human influence may be all very good in their place. It was all very well to look at Joshua and the elders, and see how they followed the Lord. It is quite true that, "As iron sharpens iron, so doth the countenance of a man his friend." It is very encouraging to be surrounded by a number of truly devoted hearts; very delightful to be borne along upon the bosom of the tide of collective loyalty to Christ — to His Person and to His cause. But if this be all; if there be not the deep spring of personal faith and personal knowledge; if there be not the divinely formed, and the divinely sustained link of individual relationship and communion, then when the human props are removed; when the tide of human influence ebbs, when general declension sets in, we shall be, in principle, like Israel following the Lord, all the days of Joshua and the elders, and then giving up the confession of His name, and returning to the follies and

vanities of this present world — things no better, in reality, than Baal and Ashtaroth.

But, on the other hand, when the heart is thoroughly established in the truth and grace of God; when we can say — as it is the privilege of each true believer to say — "I know whom I have believed; and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day; then, although all should turn aside from the public confession of Christ; although we should find ourselves left without the help of a human countenance, or the support of a human arm, we shall find "the foundation of God" as sure as ever; and the path of obedience as plain before us as though thousands were treading it with holy decision and energy.

We must never lose sight of the fact that it is the divine purpose that the professing church of God should learn deep and holy lessons from the history of Israel. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning; that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." Nor is it, by any means, necessary, in order to our thus learning from the Old Testament scriptures, that we should occupy ourselves in searching out fanciful analogies, curious the-

ories, or far-fetched illustrations. Many alas! have tried these things, and, instead of finding "comfort" in the scriptures, they have been led away into empty and foolish conceits, if not into deadly errors.

But our business is with the living facts recorded on the page of inspired history. These are to be our study; from these we are to draw our great practical lessons. Take, for example, the weighty and admonitory fact now before us — a fact standing out, in characters deep and broad, on the page of Israel's history from Joshua to Isaiah — the fact of Israel's lamentable departure from that very truth which they were specially called to hold and confess — the truth of the unity of the Godhead. The very first thing they did was to let go this grand and all-important truth, this keystone of the arch, the foundation of the whole edifice, the very heart of their national existence, the living centre of their national polity. They gave it up, and turned back to the idolatry of their fathers on the other side of the flood, and of the heathen nations around them. They abandoned that most glorious and distinctive truth on the maintenance of which their very existence, as a nation, depended. Had they only held fast this truth, they would have been invincible; but, in surrendering

it, they surrendered all, and became much worse than the nations around them, inasmuch as they sinned against light and knowledge — sinned, with their eyes open — sinned in the face of the most solemn warnings and earnest entreaties; and, we may add, in the face of the most vehement and oft-repeated promises and protestations of obedience.

Yes, reader, Israel gave up the worship of the One true and living God, Jehovah Elohim, their covenant God; not only their Creator, but their Redeemer; the One who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt; conducted them through the Red Sea; led them through the wilderness; brought them across the Jordan, and planted them, in triumph, in the inheritance which He had promised to Abraham their father. A land flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands."They turned their backs upon Him, and gave themselves up to the worship of false gods. "They provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images."

It seems perfectly wonderful that a people who had seen and known so much of the goodness and loving kindness of God; His mighty acts, His faithfulness, His majesty, His glory, could ever bring themselves to bow down to the stock of a tree. But

so it was. Their whole history, from the days of the calf, at the foot of Mount Sinai, to the day in which Nebuchadnezzar reduced Jerusalem to ruins, is marked by an unconquerable spirit of idolatry. In vain did Jehovah, in His long-suffering mercy and abounding goodness, raise up deliverers for them, to lift them from beneath the terrible consequences of their sin and folly. Again and again, in His inexhaustible mercy and patience, He saved them from the hand of their enemies. He raised up an Othniel, an Ehud, a Barak, a Gideon, a Jephthah, a Samson, those instruments of His mercy and power, those witnesses of His deep and tender love and compassion toward His poor infatuated people. No sooner had each judge passed off the scene, than back the nation plunged into their besetting sin of idolatry.

So also, in the days of the kings. It is the same melancholy, heart-rending story. True, there were bright spots, here and there, some brilliant stars shining out through the deep gloom of the nation's history; we have a David, an Asa, a Jehoshaphat, a Hezekiah, a Josiah — refreshing and blessed exceptions to the dark and dismal rule. But even men like these failed to eradicate from the heart of the nation the pernicious root of id-

olatri. Even amid the unexampled splendours of Solomon's reign, that root sent forth its bitter shoots, in the monstrous form of high places to Ashtaroth, the goddess of the Zidonians; Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites; and Chemosh, the abomination of Moab.

Reader, only think of this. Pause for a moment, and contemplate the astounding fact of the writer of the Canticles, Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs bowing at the shrine of Molech! Only conceive the wisest, the wealthiest and the most glorious of Israel's monarchs, burning incense, and offering sacrifices upon the altar of Chemosh!

Truly, there is something here for us to ponder. It was written for our learning. The reign of Solomon affords one of the most striking and impressive evidences of the fact which is just now engaging our attention, namely, Israel's complete and hopeless apostasy from the grand truth of the unity of the Godhead — their unconquerable spirit of idolatry. The truth which they were specially called out to hold and confess, was the very truth which they, first of all and most persistently, abandoned.

We shall not pursue the dark line of evidence further; neither shall we dwell upon the appalling picture of the nation's judgement, in consequence of their idolatry. They are now in the condition of which the prophet Hosea speaks: "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim." — "The unclean spirit of idolatry has gone out of them," during these "many days," to return, by-and-by, with "seven other spirits more wicked than himself" — the very perfection of spiritual wickedness. And then will come days of unparalleled tribulation upon that long misguided and deeply revolted people — "The time of Jacob's trouble."

But deliverance will come, blessed be God! Bright days are in store for the restored nation — "days of heaven upon earth" — as the same prophet Hosea tells us: "Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their King; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days." All the promises of God to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David shall be blessedly accomplished; all the brilliant predictions of the prophets, from Isaiah to Malachi, shall be glori-

ously fulfilled. Yes, both promises and prophecies shall be literally and gloriously made good to restored Israel, in the land of Canaan; for "the scripture cannot be broken." The long, dark, dreary night shall be followed by the brightest day that has ever shone upon this earth; the daughter of Zion shall bask in the bright and blessed beams of "the Sun of Righteousness;" and "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

It would indeed be a most delightful exercise to reproduce upon the pages of this volume those glowing passages from the prophets which speak of Israel's future; but this we cannot attempt; it is not needful; and we have a duty to fulfil which, if not so pleasing to us, or so refreshing to the reader, will, we earnestly hope, prove not less profitable.

The duty is this, to press upon the attention of the reader — and upon the attention of the whole church of God — the practical application of that solemn fact in Israel's history on which we have dwelt at such length — the fact of their having so speedily, and so completely given up the great truth set forth in Deuteronomy 6:4, "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord."

We may, perhaps, be asked, "What bearing can this fact have upon the church of God?" We believe it has a most solemn bearing; and, further, we believe we should be guilty of a very culpable shirking of our duty to Christ and to His church, if we failed to point it out. We know that all the great facts of Israel's history are full of instruction, full of admonition, full of warning, for us. It is our business, our bounden duty to see that we profit by them — to take heed that we study them aright.

Now, in contemplating the history of the church of God, as a public witness for Christ, on the earth, we find that, hardly had it been set up, in all the fullness of blessing and privilege which marked the opening of its career, ere it began to slip away from those very truths which it was specially responsible to maintain and confess. Like Adam, in the garden of Eden; like Noah, in the restored earth; like Israel, in Canaan; so the church, as the responsible steward of the mysteries of God, was no sooner set in its place, than it began to totter and fall. It almost immediately began to give up those grand truths which were characteristic of its very existence, and which were to mark off Christianity from all that had gone before. Even under the eyes of the apostles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, errors and

evils had begun to work which sapped the very foundations of the church's testimony.

Are we asked for proofs? Alas! we have them, in melancholy abundance. Hear the words of that blessed apostle who shed more tears and heaved more sighs over the ruins of the church than any man that ever lived. "I marvel," he says; and well he might, "that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, to another gospel: which is not another." "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" "Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service to them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years;" Christian festivals, so called, very imposing and gratifying to religious nature; but, in the judgement of the apostle, the judgement of the Holy Ghost, it was simply giving up Christianity and going back to the worship of idols. "I am afraid of you," and no wonder, when they could thus so speedily turn away from the grand

characteristic truths of a heavenly Christianity, and occupy themselves with superstitious observances. "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." "Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion comes not of him that calls you. A little leaven leavens the whole lump."

And all this in the apostle's own day. The departure was even more rapid than in Israel's case; for they served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua; but, in the church's sad and humiliating history, the enemy succeeded, almost immediately, in introducing leaven into the meal, tares among the wheat. Ere the apostles themselves had left the scene, seed was sown which has been bearing its pernicious fruit ever since, and shall continue to bear, till angelic reapers clear the field.

But we must give further proof from scripture. Let us hearken to the same inspired witness, near the close of his ministry, pouring out his heart to his beloved son Timothy, in accents, at once pathetic and solemn. "This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me." Again, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, ex-

hort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables."

Here is the testimony of the man who, as a wise master builder, had laid the foundation of the church. And what was his own personal experience? He was, like his blessed Master, left alone, deserted by those who had once gathered round him in the freshness, bloom, and ardour of early days. His large, loving heart was broken by Judaising teachers who sought to overturn the very foundations of Christianity, and to overthrow the faith of God's elect. He wept over the ways of many who, while they made a profession, were, nevertheless, "the enemies of the cross of Christ."

In a word, the Apostle Paul, as he looked forth from his prison at Rome, saw the hopeless wreck and ruin of the professing body. He saw that it would happen to that body, as it had happened to the ship in which he had made his last voyage — a voyage strikingly significant and illustrative of the church's sad history in this world. But here let us just remind the reader, that

we are dealing now only with the question of the church, as a responsible witness for Christ on the earth. This must be distinctly seen, else we shall greatly err in our thoughts on the subject. We must accurately distinguish between the church as the body of Christ, and as His light bearer or witness in the world. In the former character, failure is impossible; in the latter, the ruin is complete and hopeless.

The church, as the body of Christ, united to her living and glorified Head in the heavens, by the presence and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, can never, by any possibility, fail — never be smashed to pieces, like Paul's ship, by the storms and billows of this hostile world. It is as safe as Christ Himself. The Head and the body are one — indissolubly one. No power of earth or hell, men or devils can ever touch the feeblest and most obscure member of that blessed body. All stand before God, all are under His gracious eye, in the fullness, beauty and acceptability of Christ Himself. As is the Head, so are the members — all the members together — each member in particular. All stand in the full eternal results of Christ's finished work on the cross. There is — there can be no question of responsibility here. The Head made Himself responsible for the members. He

perfectly met every claim, and discharged every liability. Nothing remains but love — love, deep as the heart of Christ, perfect as His work, unchanging as His throne. Every question that could possibly be raised against any one, or all of the members of the church of God, was raised, gone into, and definitively settled, between God and His Christ, on the cross. All the sins, all the iniquities, all the transgressions, all the guilt of each member in particular, and all the members together — yes all, in the fullest and most absolute way, was laid on Christ and borne by Him. God, in His inflexible justice, in His infinite holiness, in His eternal righteousness, dealt with everything that could ever, in any possible manner, stand in the way of the full salvation, perfect blessedness, and everlasting glory of every one of the members of the body of Christ — the assembly of God. Every member of the body is permeated by the life of the Head; every stone in the building is animated by the life of the chief corner-stone. All are bound together in the power of a bond which can never, no never, be dissolved.

And, furthermore, let it be distinctly understood that the unity of the body of Christ is absolutely indissoluble. This is a cardinal point which must be tenaciously held, and faithfully con-

fessed. But, obviously, it cannot be held and confessed, unless it is understood and believed; and, judging from the expressions which one sometimes hears, in speaking on the subject, it is very questionable indeed if people, so expressing themselves, have ever grasped, in a divine way, the glorious truth of the unity of the body of Christ — a unity maintained, on earth, by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost.

Thus, for example, we sometimes hear people speak of "rending the body of Christ." It is a complete mistake. Such a thing is utterly impossible. The Reformers were accused of rending the body of Christ, when they turned their backs upon the Romish system. What a gross misconception! It simply amounted to the monstrous assumption that a vast mass of moral evil, doctrinal error, ecclesiastical corruption, and debasing superstition was to be owned as the body of Christ! How could any one, with the New Testament in his hand, regard the so-called church of Rome, with its numberless and nameless abominations, as the body of Christ? How could any one, possessing the very faintest idea of the true church of God, ever think of bestowing that title upon the darkest mass of wickedness, the greatest masterpiece of Satan the world has ever beheld?

No, reader; we must never confound the ecclesiastical systems of this world — ancient, medieval, or modern, Greek, Latin, Anglican, National or Popular, Established or Dissenting — with the true church of God, the body of Christ. There is not, beneath the canopy of heaven, this day, nor ever was, a religious system, call it what you please, possessing the very smallest claim to be called, "The church of God," or "The body of Christ." And, as a consequence, it can never be, rightly or intelligently, called schism, or rending the body of Christ, to separate from such systems; nay, on the contrary, it is the bounden duty of every one who would faithfully maintain and confess the truth of the unity of the body, to separate with the most unqualified decision, from everything falsely calling itself a church. It can only be viewed as schism to separate from those who are, unmistakably and unquestionably, gathered on the ground of the assembly of God.

No body of Christians can now lay claim to the title of the body of Christ, or church of God. The members of that body are scattered everywhere; they are to be found in all the various religious organisations of the day, save such as deny the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot admit the idea that any

true Christian could continue to frequent a place where his Lord is blasphemed. But, although no body of Christians can lay claim to the title of the assembly of God, all Christians are responsible to be gathered on the ground of that assembly, and on no other.

And if we be asked, "How are we to know — where are we to find this ground?" We reply, "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine." "There is a path" — thanks be to God for it, though — "no fowl knows, and the vulture's eye has not seen it. The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it." Nature's keenest vision cannot see this path, nor its greatest strength tread it. Where is it then? Here it is, "Unto man — to the reader and to the writer, to each, to all "he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding." (Job 28.) But there is another expression which we not infrequently hear from persons from whom we might expect more intelligence, namely, "cutting off the members of the body of Christ."\* This too, blessed be God, is impossible. Not a single member of the body of Christ can ever be severed from the Head, or ever disturbed from the

place into which he has been incorporated by the Holy Ghost, in pursuance of the eternal purpose of God, and in virtue of the accomplished atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. The divine Three in One are pledged for the eternal security of the very feeblest member of the body; and for the maintenance of the indissoluble unity of the whole.

- \* The expression, "cutting off the members of Christ's body" is generally applied in cases of discipline. But it is quite a misapplication. The discipline of the assembly can never touch the unity of the body. A member of the body may so fail in morals or err in doctrine, as to call for the action of the assembly, in putting him away from the Table; but that has nothing to do with his place in the body, The two things are perfectly distinct.

In a word, then, it is as true, today, as it was when the inspired apostle penned the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians, that "There is one body," of which Christ is Head, of which the Holy Ghost is the formative power; and of which all true believers are members. This body has been on earth, since the day of Pentecost, is on earth now, and shall continue on earth until that moment, so rapidly approaching, when Christ shall come and take it to His Father's house. It is the same body, with a continual succession of members, just as we speak

of a certain regiment of her Majesty's army having been at Waterloo, and now quartered at Aldershot, though not a man in the regiment of today appeared at the memorable battle of 1815.

Does the reader feel any difficulty as to all this? It may be that he finds it hard, in the present broken and scattered condition of the members, to believe and confess the unbroken unity of the whole. He may feel disposed, perhaps, to limit the application of Ephesians 4:4, to the day in which the apostle penned the words, when Christians were manifestly one; and when there was no such thing thought of as being a member of this church or a member of that church; because all believers were members of the one church.\*

\* The unity of the church may be compared to a chain thrown across a river; we see it at each side, but it dips in the middle. But though it dips, it is not broken; though we do not see the union in the middle, we believe it is there all the same. The church was seen in its unity on the day of Pentecost, and it will be seen in its unity in the glory; and although we do not see it now, we nevertheless believe it most surely.

And, be it remembered, that the unity of the body is a great practical, formative truth; and one very weighty practical deduction from it is that the state and walk of each member affect

the whole body. "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." A member of what? Some local assembly? Nay; but a member of the body. We must not make the body of Christ a matter of geography.

"But," we may be asked, "are we affected by what we do not see or know?" Assuredly. Are we to limit the grand truth of the unity of the body with all its practical consequences, to the measure of our personal knowledge and experience? Far be the thought. It is the presence of the Holy Ghost that unites the members of the body to the Head and to one another; and hence it is that the walk and ways of each affect all. Even in Israel's case, where it was not a corporate but a national unity, when Achan sinned, it was said, "Israel has sinned;" and the whole congregation suffered a humiliating defeat on account of a sin of which they were ignorant.

It is perfectly marvellous how little the Lord's people seem to understand the glorious truth of the unity of the body, and the practical consequences flowing from it.

In reply, we must protest against the very idea of limiting the word of God. What possible right have we to single out one clause from Ephesians 4:4-6 and say it only applied to the days of the apostles? If one clause is to be so limited, why not all? Are there not still, "one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one bap-

tism, one God and Father of all"? Will any question this? Surely not. Well then it follows that there is as surely one body as there is one Spirit, one Lord, one God. All are intimately bound up together, and you cannot touch one without touching all. We have no more right to deny the existence of the one body than we have to deny the existence of God, inasmuch as the self-same passage that declares to us the one, declares to us the other also.

But some will, doubtless, inquire, "Where is this one body to be seen? Is it not an absurdity to speak of such a thing, in the face of the almost numberless denominations of Christendom?" Our answer is this, We are not going to surrender the truth of God because man has so signally failed to carry it out. Did not Israel utterly fail to maintain, confess and carry out, the truth of the unity of the Godhead? And was that glorious truth, in the smallest degree, touched by their failure? Was it not as true that there was one God, though there were as many idolatrous altars as streets in Jerusalem, and every housetop sent up a cloud of incense to the queen of heaven, as when Moses sounded forth in the ears of the whole congregation, those sublime words, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord"? Blessed be

God, His truth does not depend upon the faithless, foolish ways of men. It stands in its own divine integrity; it shines in its own heavenly, undimmed lustre, spite of the grossest human failure. Were it not so, what should we do? Whither should we turn? or what would become of us? In fact, it comes to this, if we were only to believe the measure of truth which we see practically carried out in the ways of men, we might give up in despair, and be of all men most miserable.

But how is the truth of the one body to be practically carried out? By refusing to own any other principle of Christian fellowship — any other ground of meeting. All true believers should meet on the simple ground of membership of the body of Christ; and on no other. They should assemble, on the first day of the week, round the Lord's Table, and break bread, as members of the one body, as we read in 1 Corinthians 10, "For we, being many, are one loaf, one body; for we are all partakers of that one loaf." This is as true, and as practical, today, as it was when the apostle addressed the assembly at Corinth. True, there were divisions; at Corinth as there are divisions in Christendom; but that did not, in any wise, touch the truth of God. The apostle rebuked the divisions — pronounced them

carnal. He had no sympathy with the poor low idea which one sometimes hears advocated, that divisions are good things as superinducing emulation. He believed they were very bad things — the fruit of the flesh, the work of Satan.

Neither — we feel persuaded — would the apostle have accepted the popular illustration that divisions in the church are like so many regiments, with different facings, all fighting under the same commander-in-chief. It would not hold good for a moment; indeed, it has no application whatever, but rather gives a flat contradiction to that distinct and emphatic statement, "There is one body."

Reader, this is a most glorious truth. Let us ponder it deeply. Let us look at Christendom in the light of it. Let us judge our own position and ways by it. Are we acting on it? Do we give expression to it, at the Lord's Table, every Lord's day? Be assured it is our sacred duty and high privilege so to do. Say not there are difficulties of all sorts; many stumbling-blocks in the way; much to dishearten us in the conduct of those who profess to meet on this very ground of which we speak.

All this is, alas! but too true. We must be quite prepared for it. The devil will leave no stone unturned to cast dust in our eyes so that we may not see God's blessed way for His people. But we must not give heed to his suggestions or be snared by his devices. There always have been, and there always will be difficulties in the way of carrying out the precious truth of God; and perhaps one of the greatest difficulties is found in the inconsistent conduct of those who profess to act upon it.

But then we must ever distinguish between the truth and those who profess it; between the ground and the conduct of those who occupy it. Of course, they ought to harmonise; but they do not; and hence we are imperatively called to judge the conduct by the ground, not the ground by the conduct. If we saw a man farming on a principle which we knew to be thoroughly sound, but he was a bad farmer, what should we do? Of course, we should reject his mode of working, but hold the principle all the same.

Not otherwise is it, in reference to the truth now before us. There were heresies at Corinth, schisms, errors, evils, of all sorts. What then? Was the truth of God to be surrendered as a myth, as something wholly impracticable? Was it all to be

given up? Were the Corinthians to meet on some other principle? Were they to organise themselves on some new ground? Were they to gather round some fresh centre? No, thank God! His truth was not to be surrendered, for a moment, although Corinth was split up into ten thousand sects, and its horizon darkened by ten thousand heresies. The body of Christ was one; and the apostle simply displays in their view the banner with this blessed inscription, "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

Now these words were addressed, not merely "to the church at Corinth," but also "to all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." Hence, the truth of the one body is abiding and universal. Every true Christian is bound to recognise it, and to act on it; and every assembly of Christians, wherever convened, should be the local expression of this grand and all-important truth.

Some might, perhaps, feel disposed to ask how it could be said to any one assembly, "Ye are the body of Christ"? Were there not saints at Ephesus, Colosse and Philippi? No doubt? and had the apostle been addressing them on the same subject, he could have said to them likewise, "Ye are the body of Christ," inas-

much as they were the local expression of the body; and not only so, but, in addressing them, he had before his mind all saints, to the end of the church's earthly career.

But we must bear in mind that the apostle could not possibly address such words to any human organisation, ancient or modern. No; nor if all such organisations, call them what you please, were amalgamated into one, could he speak of it as "the body of Christ." That body, let it be distinctly understood, consists of all true believers on the face of the earth. That they are not gathered on that only divine ground, is their serious loss, and their Lord's dishonour. The precious truth holds good, all the same — "There is one body;" and this is the divine standard by which to measure every ecclesiastical association and every religious system under the sun.

We deem it needful to go somewhat fully into the divine side of the question of the church, in order to guard the truth of God from the results of misapprehension; and also that the reader may clearly understand that, in speaking of the utter failure and ruin of the church, we are looking at the human side of the subject. To this latter, we must return for a moment.

It is impossible to read the New Testament, with a calm and unprejudiced mind, and not see that the church, as a responsible witness for Christ on the earth, has, most signally and shamefully, failed. To quote all the passages in proof of this statement would, literally, fill a small volume. But, let us glance at the second and third chapters of the book of Revelation where the church is seen under judgement. We have, in these solemn chapters, what we may call a divine church history. Seven assemblies are taken up, as illustrative of the various phases of the church's history, from the day in which it was set up, in responsibility, on the earth, until it shall be spued out of the Lord's mouth, as something utterly intolerable. If we do not see that these two chapters are prophetic, as well as historic, we shall deprive ourselves of a vast field of most valuable instruction. For ourselves, we can only assure the reader that no human language could adequately set forth what we have gathered from Revelation 2 and 3, in their prophetic aspect.

However, we are only referring to them now as the last of a series of scripture proofs of our present thesis. Take the address to Ephesus, the self-same church to which the Apostle Paul wrote his marvellous epistle, opening up, so blessedly, the

heavenly side of things, God's eternal purpose respecting the church — the position and portion of the church, as accepted in Christ, and blessed with all spiritual blessings, in the heavenlies in Him. No failure here. No thought of such a thing. No possibility of it. All is in God's hands here. The counsel is His; the work His. It is His grace, His glory, His mighty power, His good pleasure; and all founded upon the blood of Christ. There is no question of responsibility here. The church was "dead in trespasses and sins;" but Christ died for her; He placed Himself judicially where she was morally; and God, in His sovereign grace, entered the scene and raised up Christ from the dead, and the church in Him glorious fact! Here all is sure and settled. It is the church in the heavenlies, in Christ, not the church on earth for Christ. It is the body "accepted," not the candlestick judged. If we do not see both sides of this great question, we have much to learn.

But there is the earthly side, as well as the heavenly; the human as well as the divine; the candlestick as well as the body. Hence it is that in the judicial address, in Revelation 2, we read such solemn words as these, "I have against thee, that thou hast left thy first love."

How very distinct! Nothing like this in Ephesians; nothing against the body, nothing against the bride; but there is something against the candlestick. The light had, even already, become dim. Hardly had it been lighted, ere the snuffers were needed.

Thus, at the very outset, symptoms of decline showed themselves, unmistakably, to the penetrating eye of Him who walked amongst the seven golden candlesticks; and when we reach the close, and contemplate the last phase of the church's condition — the last stage of its earthly history, as illustrated by the assembly, at Laodicea, there is not a single redeeming feature. The case is almost hopeless. The Lord is outside the door. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock." It is not, here, as at Ephesus, "I have somewhat against thee." The whole condition is bad. The whole professing body is about to be given up. "I will spue thee out of my mouth." He still lingers, blessed be His Name, for He is ever slow to leave the place of mercy, or enter the place of judgement. It reminds us of the departure of the glory, in the opening of Ezekiel. It moved, with a slow and measured pace, loath to leave the house, the people and the land. "Then the glory of the Lord went up from the cherub, and

stood over the threshold of the house; and the house was filled with the cloud, and the court was full of the brightness of the Lord's glory." "Then the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubims." And, finally, "The glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city. (Ezek 10:4, 18; 11:23.)

This is deeply affecting. How striking the contrast between this slow departure of the glory and its speedy entrance, in the day of Solomon's dedication of the house, in 2 Chronicles 7:1. Jehovah was quick to enter His abode, in the midst of His people; slow to leave it. He was, to speak after the manner of men, forced away by the sins and hopeless impenitence of His infatuated people.

So also, with the church. We see, in the second of Acts, His rapid entrance into His spiritual house. He came, like a rushing mighty wind, to fill the house with His glory. But, in the third of Revelation, see His attitude. He is outside. Yes; but He is knocking. He lingers, not indeed with any hope of corporate restoration; but if haply "any man would hear his voice and

open the door." The fact of His being outside, shows what the church is. The fact of His knocking, shows what He is.

Christian reader, see that you thoroughly understand this whole subject. It is of the very last importance that you should. We are surrounded, on all sides, with false notions as to the present condition and future destiny of the professing church. We must fling these all behind our backs, with holy decision, and listen, with circumcised ear, and reverent mind, to the teaching of holy scripture. That teaching is as clear as noon-day. The professing church is a hopeless ruin, and judgement is at the door. Read the epistle of Jude; read 2 Peter 2 and 3; read 2 Timothy. Just lay aside this volume, and look closely into those solemn scriptures, and we feel persuaded you will rise from the study with the deep and thorough conviction that there is nothing whatever before Christendom but the unmitigated wrath of Almighty God. Its doom is set forth in that brief but solemn sentence in Romans 11, "Thou also shalt be cut off."

Yes; such is the language of scripture. "Cut off" — "spued out." The professing church has utterly failed as Christ's witness on the earth. As with Israel, so with the church, the very truth which she was responsible to maintain and confess she has

faithlessly surrendered. Hardly had the canon of New Testament scripture closed, hardly had the first set of labourers left the field, ere gross darkness set in, and settled down upon the whole professing body. Turn where you will, range through the ponderous tomes of "the fathers" as they are called, and you will not find a trace of those grand characteristic truths of our glorious Christianity. All, all was shamefully abandoned. As Israel, in Canaan, abandoned Jehovah for Baal and Ashtaroth, so the church abandoned the pure and precious truth of God for puerile fables and deadly errors. The rapid departure is perfectly astounding; but it was just as the Apostle Paul forewarned the elders of Ephesus. "Take heed therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." (Acts 20)

How truly deplorable! The holy apostles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, almost immediately succeeded by "grievous

wolves," and teachers of perverse things. The whole church plunged into thick darkness. The lamp of divine revelation almost hidden from view. Ecclesiastical corruption, in every form; priestly domination with all its terrible accompaniments. In short, the history of the church — the history of Christendom is the most appalling record ever penned.

True it is, thanks be to God, He left not Himself without a witness. Here and there, from time to time, just as in Israel of old, He raised up one and another to speak for Him. Even amid the deepest gloom of the middle ages, an occasional star appears upon the horizon. The Waldenses and others were enabled, by the grace of God, to hold fast His word and to confess the Name of Jesus in the face of Rome's dark and terrible tyranny, and diabolical cruelty.

Then came that gracious season, in the sixteenth century, when God raised up Luther and his beloved and honoured fellow-labourers, to preach the great truth of justification by faith, and to give the precious volume of God to the people, in their own tongue wherein they were born. It is not within the compass of human language to set forth the blessing of that memorable time. Thousands heard the glad tidings of salvation — heard,

believed, and were saved. Thousands who had long groaned beneath the intolerable weight of Romish superstition, hailed, with profound thankfulness, the heavenly message. Thousands flocked, with intense delight, to draw water from those wells of inspiration which had been stopped for ages by papal ignorance and intolerance. The blessed lamp of divine revelation, so long hidden by the enemy's hand, was permitted to cast its rays athwart the gloom, and thousands rejoiced in its heavenly light.

But while we heartily bless God for all the glorious results of what is commonly called the Reformation, in the sixteenth century, we should make a very grave mistake indeed were we to imagine that it was anything approaching to a restoration of the church to its original condition. Far — very far from it. Luther and his companions, if we are to judge from their writings — precious writings, many of them — never grasped the divine idea of the church as the body of Christ. They did not understand the unity of the body; the presence of the Holy Ghost in the assembly, as well as His indwelling in the individual believer. They never reached the grand truth of ministry in the church, "its nature, source, power and responsibility." They never got beyond the idea of human authority as the basis of

ministry. They were silent as to the specific hope of the church, namely, the coming of Christ for His people — the bright and morning Star. They failed to seize the proper scope of prophecy, and proved themselves incompetent rightly to divide the word of truth.

Let us not be misunderstood. We love the memory of the Reformers. Their names are familiar household words amongst us. They were dear, devoted, earnest, blessed servants of Christ. Would that we had their like amongst us, in this day of revived popery, and rampant infidelity. We would yield to none in our love and esteem for Luther, Melancthon, Farel, Latimer and Knox. They were truly bright and shining lights in their day; and thousands — yea millions will thank God, throughout eternity, that they ever lived and preached and wrote. And not only so, but, looked at in their private life and public ministry, they put to shame many of those who have been favoured with a range of truth for which we look in vain in the voluminous writings of the Reformers.

But, admitting all this, as we most freely and gratefully do, we are nevertheless convinced that those beloved and honoured servants of Christ failed to seize and therefore failed to preach

and teach many of the special and characteristic truths of Christianity; at least, we have failed to find these truths in their writings. They preached the precious truth of justification by faith; they gave the holy scriptures to the people; they trampled under foot much of the rubbish of Romish superstition.

All this they did, by the grace of God; and for all this we bow our heads in deep thankfulness and praise to the Father of mercies. But Protestantism is not Christianity; nor are the so-called churches of the Reformation, whether National or Dissenting, the church of God. Far from it. We look back over the course of eighteen centuries, and, spite of the occasional revivals, spite of the brilliant lights which, at various times, have shone upon the church's horizon — lights which appeared all the brighter in contrast with the deep gloom that surrounded them — spite of the many gracious visitations of God's Spirit, both in Europe and America, during the past and present century — spite of all these things, for which we most heartily bless God, we return, with decision to the statement already advanced, that the professing church is a hopeless wreck; that Christendom is rapidly hastening down the inclined plane, to the blackness of darkness for ever; that those highly favoured lands, where much evan-

getical truth has been preached; where Bibles have been circulated in millions, and gospel tracts in billions, shall yet be covered with thick darkness — given over to strong delusion to believe a lie!

And then? — Ah! what then? A converted world? Nay, but a judged church. The true saints of God, scattered throughout Christendom — all the true members of the body of Christ, will be caught up to meet their coming Lord — the dead saints raised, the living changed in a moment, and all taken up together to be for ever with the Lord. Then the mystery will rise to a head in the person of the man of sin — the lawless one, the Antichrist. The Lord Jesus shall come, and all His saints with Him, to execute judgement on the beast, or revived Roman empire, and the false prophet, or Antichrist — the former in the West, the latter in the East.

This will be a summary act of direct warrior judgement, without any judicial process whatever, inasmuch as both the beast and false prophet shall be found in open rebellion and blasphemous opposition to God and the Lamb. Then comes the sessional judgement of the living nations, as recorded in Matthew 25:31-46.

Thus, all evil having been put down, Christ shall reign, in righteousness and peace, for a thousand years — a bright and blessed time, the true sabbath for Israel and the whole earth — a period marked by the grand facts, Satan bound, and Christ reigning. Glorious facts! The very reference to them causes the heart to overflow in praise and thanksgiving. What will the reality be?

But Satan shall be loosed from his thousand years' captivity, and allowed to make one more effort against God and His Christ. "And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, the number of whom is as the sand of the sea.\* And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city; and fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them. And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." (Rev. 20:7, 10.)

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This will be Satan's last effort, issuing in his eternal perdition. Then we have the judgement of the dead, "small and great" — the sessional judgement of all those who shall have died in their sins, from the days of Cain down to the last apostate from millennial glory. Tremendous scene! No heart can conceive, no tongue, no pen, set forth its awful solemnity.

Finally, we have unfolded to the vision of our souls the everlasting state, the new heaven and the new earth wherein righteousness shall dwell, throughout the golden ages of eternity.

Such is the order of events, as set forth, with all possible clearness, on the pages of inspiration. We have given a brief summary of them in connection with the line of truth on which we have been dwelling — a line, as we are fully aware, by no means popular; but we dare not withhold it on that account. Our business is to declare the whole counsel of God, not to seek popularity. We do not expect the truth of God to be popular in Christendom; so far from this, we have been seeking to prove that just as Israel abandoned the truth which they were

responsible to maintain, so the professing church has let slip all those great truths which characterise the Christianity of the New Testament. And we may assure the reader that our one object in pursuing this line of argument is to arouse the hearts of all true Christians to a sense of the value of those truths, and of their responsibility not only to receive them, but to seek a fuller realisation and a bolder confession of them. We long to see a band of men raised up, in these closing hours of the church's earthly history, who shall go forth, in true spiritual power, and proclaim, with unction and energy — the long-forgotten truths of the gospel of God. May God, in His great mercy to His people, raise up such and send them forth. May the Lord Jesus knock louder and louder, at the door, so that many may hear and open to Him, according to the desire of His loving heart, and taste the blessedness of deep personal communion with Himself, while waiting for His coming.

Blessed be God, there is no limit whatever to the blessing of the individual soul who hears Christ's voice and opens the door; and what is true of one is true of hundreds or thousands. Only let us be real, and simple, and true, feeling and owning our utter feebleness, and nothingness; laying aside all assump-

tion and empty pretension; not seeking to be anything, or to set up anything; but holding fast Christ's word, and not denying His Name; finding our happy place at His feet, our satisfying portion in Himself, and our real delight in serving Him in any little way. Thus we shall get on harmoniously, lovingly, and happily together, finding our common centre in Christ, and our common object in seeking to further His cause and promote His glory. Oh! that it were thus with all the Lord's beloved people, in this our day; we should then have a very different tale to tell, and present a very different aspect to the world around. May the Lord revive His work!

It may perhaps seem to the reader that we have wandered a long way from Deuteronomy 6; but we must remind him, once for all, that it is not merely what each chapter contains that demands our attention, but also what it suggests. And further, we may add that, in sitting down to write, from time to time, it is our one desire to be led by God's Spirit into the very line of truth which may be suited to the need of all our readers. If only the beloved flock of Christ be fed, instructed and comforted, we care not whether it be by well connected notes or broken fragments.

We shall now proceed with our chapter.

Moses, having laid down the grand foundation truth contained in the fourth verse, "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord," proceeds to press upon the congregation their sacred duty in respect to this blessed One. It was not merely that there was a God, but He was their God. He had deigned to link Himself with them, in covenant relationship. He had redeemed them, borne them on eagles' wings, and brought them to Himself, in order that they might be to Him a people, and that He might be their God.

Blessed fact! Blessed relationship! But Israel had to be reminded of the conduct suited to such a relationship — conduct which could only flow from a loving heart. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Here lies the secret of all true practical religion. Without this all is valueless to God. "My son, give me thine heart." Where the heart is given, all will be right. The heart may be compared to the regulator of a watch which acts on the hair-spring, and the hair-spring acts on the main-spring, and the main-spring acts on the hands, as they move round the dial. If your watch goes wrong, it will not do merely to alter the

hands, you must touch the regulator. God looks for real heart-work, blessed be His Name! His word to us is, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth."

How we ought to bless Him for such touching words! They do so reveal His own loving heart to us. Assuredly, He loved us in deed and in truth; and He cannot be satisfied with anything else, whether in our ways with Him or our ways one with another. All must flow straight from the heart.

"And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart" — at the very source of all the issues of life. This is peculiarly precious. Whatever is in the heart comes out through the lips, and in the life. How important then, to have the heart full of the word of God, so full that we shall have no room for the vanities and follies of this present evil world. Thus shall our conversation be always with grace, seasoned with salt. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." Hence we can judge of what is in the heart by what comes out of the mouth. The tongue is the organ of the heart — the organ of the man. "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart brings forth good things; and an evil man, out of the

evil treasure brings forth evil things." When the heart is really governed by the word of God, the whole character reveals the blessed result. It must be so, inasmuch as the heart is the main-spring of our entire moral condition; it lies at the centre of all those moral influences which govern our personal history and shape our practical career.

In every part of the divine volume, we see how much importance God attaches to the attitude and state of the heart, with respect to Him or to His word, which is one and the same thing. When the heart is true to Him, all is sure to come right; but, on the other hand, we shall find that, where the heart grows cold and careless as to God and His truth, there will, sooner or later, be open departure from the path of truth and righteousness. There is, therefore, much force and value in the exhortation addressed by Barnabas to the converts at Antioch: "He exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave to the Lord."

How needful, then, now, always! This "purpose of heart" is most precious to God. It is what we may venture to call the grand moral regulator. It imparts a lovely earnestness to the Christian character which is greatly to be coveted by all of us.

It is a divine antidote against coldness, deadness and formality, all of which are so hateful to God. The outward life may be very correct, and the creed may be very orthodox; but if the earnest purpose of heart be lacking — the affectionate cleaving of the whole moral being to God and His Christ, all is utterly worthless.

It is through the heart that the Holy Ghost instructs us. Hence, the apostle prayed for the saints at Ephesus that, "The eyes of their heart [kardias, not dianoias] might be enlightened." And again, "That Christ may dwell in your heart by faith."

Thus we see how all scripture is in perfect harmony with the exhortation recorded in our chapter, "And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart." How near this would have kept them to their covenant God! How safe, too, from all evil, and specially from the abominable evil of idolatry — their national sin, their terrible besetment! If Jehovah's precious words had only found their right place in the heart, there would have been little fear of Baal, Chemosh or Ashtoreth. In a word, all the idols of the heathen would have found their right place, and been estimated as their true value, if only the word of Jehovah had been allowed to dwell in Israel's heart.

And be it specially noted here how beautifully characteristic all this is of the book of Deuteronomy. It is not so much a question of keeping up a certain order of religious observances, the offering of sacrifices or attention to rites and ceremonies. All these things, no doubt, had their place, but they are, by no means, the prominent or paramount thing in Deuteronomy. No; THE WORD is the all-important matter here. It is Jehovah's word in Israel's heart.

The reader must seize this fact, if he really desires to possess the key to the lovely book of Deuteronomy. It is not a book of ceremonial; it is a book of moral and affectionate obedience. It teaches, in almost every section, that invaluable lesson, that the heart that loves, prizes and honours the word of God is ready for every act of obedience, whether it be the offering of a sacrifice or the observance of a day. It might so happen that an Israelite would find himself in a place, and under circumstances in which a rigid adherence to rites and ceremonies would be impossible; but he never could be in a place or in circumstances in which he could not love, reverence and obey the word of God. Let him go where he would; let him be carried, as a captive exile, to the ends of the earth, nothing could rob

him of the high privilege of uttering and acting on those blessed words,

"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

Precious words! They contain in their brief compass, the great principle of the book of Deuteronomy; and we may add, the great principle of the divine life, at all times, and in all places. It can never lose its moral force and value. It always holds good. It was true in the days of the patriarchs; true for Israel in the land; true for Israel scattered to the ends of the earth; true for the church as a whole; true for each individual believer, amid the church's hopeless ruins. In a word, obedience is always the creature's holy duty and exalted privilege — simple, unhesitating, unqualified obedience to the word of the Lord. This is an unspeakable mercy for which we may well praise our God, day and night. He has given us His word, blessed be His Name, and He exhorts us to let that word dwell in us richly — dwell in our hearts, and assert its holy sway over our entire course and character.

"And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."

All this is perfectly beautiful. The word of God hidden in the heart; flowing out, in loving instruction, to the children, and in holy conversation, in the bosom of the family; shining out in all the activities of daily life, so that all who came inside the gates or entered the house might see that the word of God was the standard for each, for all, and in everything.

Thus it was to be with Israel of old; and surely thus it ought to be with Christians now. But is it so? Are our children thus taught? Is it our constant aim to present the word of God, in all its heavenly attractiveness, to their young hearts? Do they see it shining out in our daily life? Do they see its influence upon our habits, our temper, our family intercourse, our business transactions? This is what we understand by binding the word as a

sign upon the hands, having it as a frontlet between the eyes, writing it upon the door posts, and upon the gates.

Reader, is it thus with us? It is of little use attempting to teach our children the word of God, if our lives are not governed by that word. We do not believe in making the blessed word of God a mere school book for our children; to do so is to turn a delightful privilege into a wearisome drudgery. Our children should see that we live in the very atmosphere of scripture; that it forms the material of our conversation when we sit in the bosom of the family, in our moments of relaxation.

Alas! how little is this the case! Have we not to be deeply humbled, in the presence of God, when we reflect upon the general character and tone of our conversation at table, and in the family circle? How little there is of Deuteronomy 6:7! How much of "foolish talking and jesting which are not convenient!" How much evil speaking of our brethren, our neighbours, our fellow-labourers! How much idle gossip! How much worthless small talk!

And from what does all this proceed? Simply from the state of the heart. The word of God, the commandments and sayings of

our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, are not dwelling in our hearts; and hence they are not welling up and flowing out in living streams of grace and edification.

Will any one say that Christians do not need to consider these things? If so, let him ponder the following wholesome words, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers." And again, "Be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things to God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Eph. 4:29; 5:18-20.)

These words were addressed to the saints at Ephesus; and, most assuredly, we should apply our hearts diligently to them. We are little aware, perhaps, of how deeply and constantly we fail in maintaining the habit of spiritual conversation. It is specially in the bosom of the family, and in our ordinary intercourse, that this failure is most manifest. Hence our need of those words of exhortation which we have just penned. It is evident the Holy Spirit foresaw the need, and graciously anticipated it. Hear what He says "to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ at

Colosse." — "Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." (Col. 3.)

Lovely picture of ordinary Christian life! It is but a fuller and higher development of what we have in our chapter, where the Israelite is seen in the midst of his family, with the word of God flowing forth from his heart, in loving instruction to his children — seen, in his daily life, in all his intercourse at home and abroad, under the hallowed influence of Jehovah's words.

Beloved Christian reader, do we not long to see more of all this in our midst? Is it not, at times, very sorrowful and very humbling to mark the style of conversation that obtains in the midst of our family circles? Should we not sometimes blush if we could see our conversation reproduced in print? What is the remedy? Here it is — a heart filled with the peace of Christ, the word of Christ, Christ Himself. Nothing else will do. We must begin with the heart, and where that is thoroughly pre-occupied

with heavenly things we shall make very short work with all attempts at evil speaking, foolish talking and jesting.

"And it shall be, when the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he swore to thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, and houses full of all good things which thou filledst not, and wells digged which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten, and be full; then beware lest thou forget the Lord which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage." (Vers. 10-12.)

Amid all the blessing, the mercies and the privileges of the land of Canaan, they were to remember that gracious and faithful One who had redeemed them out of the land of bondage. They were to remember, too, that all these things were His free gift. The land, with all that it contained, was bestowed upon them in virtue of His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Cities built and houses furnished, flowing wells, fruitful vineyards and olive yards, all ready to their hand, the free gift of sovereign grace and covenant mercy. All they had to do was to take possession, in simple faith; and to keep ever in the remem-

brance of the thoughts of their hearts the bounteous Giver of it all. They were to think of Him, and find in His redeeming love the true motive spring of a life of loving obedience. Wherever they turned their eyes they beheld the tokens of His great goodness, the rich fruit of His marvellous love. Every city, every house, every well, every vine, olive and fig tree spoke to their hearts of Jehovah's abounding grace, and furnished a substantial proof of His infallible faithfulness to His promise.

"Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name. Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you. (For the Lord thy God is a jealous God among you,) lest the anger of the Lord thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth."

There are two great motives set before the congregation, in our chapter, namely, "love" in verse 5; and "fear," in verse 13. These are found all through scripture; and their importance, in guiding the life and forming the character, cannot possibly be too highly estimated. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." We are exhorted to be "in the fear of the Lord all the day." It is a grand moral safeguard against all evil. Unto man

He said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

The blessed Book abounds in passages setting forth, in every possible form, the immense importance of the fear of God. "How," says Joseph, "can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" The man who walks habitually in the fear of God is preserved from every form of moral pravity. The abiding realisation of the divine presence must prove an effectual shelter from every temptation. How often do we find the presence of some very holy and spiritual person a wholesome check upon levity and folly; and if such be the moral influence of a fellow mortal, how much more powerful would be the realised presence of God!

Christian reader, let us give our serious attention to this weighty matter. Let us seek to live in the consciousness that we are in the immediate presence of God. Thus shall we be preserved from a thousand forms of evil to which we are exposed from day to day, and to which, alas! we are pre-disposed. The remembrance that the eye of God rests upon us, would exert a far more powerful influence upon our life and conversation than the presence of all the saints upon earth, and all the angels

in heaven. We could not speak falsely; we could not utter with our lips what we do not feel in the heart; we could not talk folly; we could not speak evil of our brother or our neighbour; we could not speak unkindly of any one, if only we felt ourselves in the presence of God. In a word, the holy fear of the Lord, of which scripture speaks so much, would act as a most blessed restraint upon evil thoughts, evil words, evil ways, evil in every shape and form.

Moreover, it would tend to make us very real and genuine, in all our sayings and doings. There is a sad amount of sham and nonsense about us. We frequently say a great deal more than we feel. We are not honest. We do not speak, every man, truth with our neighbour. We give expression to sentiments which are not the genuine utterance of the heart. We act the hypocrite, one with another.

All these things afford melancholy proof of how little we live, move and have our being in the presence of God. If we could only bear in mind that God hears us and sees us — hears our every word, and sees our every thought, our every way, how differently we should carry ourselves! What holy watchfulness we should maintain over our thoughts, our tempers, and our

tongues! What purity of heart and mind! What truth and uprightness in all our intercourse with our fellows! What reality and simplicity in our deportment! What happy freedom from all affectation, assumption, and pretension! What deliverance from every form of self-occupation! Oh, to live ever in the deep sense of the divine presence! To walk in the fear of the Lord, all the day long!

And then to prove the "vast constraining influence" of His love! To be led out in all the holy activities which that love would ever suggest! To find our delight in doing good! To taste the spiritual luxury of making hearts glad! To be continually meditating plans of usefulness! To live close by the fountain of divine love, so that we must be streams of refreshing in the midst of this thirsty scene — rays of light amid the moral gloom around us! "The love of Christ," says the blessed apostle, "constrains us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live to themselves, but to him which died for them, and rose again."

How morally lovely is all this! Would that it were more fully realised and faithfully exhibited amongst us! May the fear and

love of God be continually in our hearts, in all their blessed power, and formative influence, that thus our daily life may shine to His praise, and the real profit, comfort and blessing of all who come in contact with us whether in private or in public! God, in His infinite mercy, grant it, for Christ's sake!

The sixteenth verse of our chapter demands our special attention. "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted him in Massah." These words were quoted by our blessed Lord when tempted by Satan to cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple. "Then the devil takes him up into the holy city, and sets him on a pinnacle of the temple, and says to him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down; for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone."

This is a very remarkable passage. It proves how Satan can quote scripture when it suits his purpose. But he omits a most important clause — "To keep thee in all thy ways." Now, it formed no part of the ways of Christ to cast Himself from the pinnacle of the temple. It was not the path of duty. He had no command from God to do any such thing; and hence He re-

fused to do it. He had no need to tempt God — to put Him to the test. He had, as a man, the most perfect confidence in God — the fullest assurance of His protection.

Moreover, He was not going to abandon the path of duty, in order to prove God's care of Him; and herein He teaches us a most valuable lesson. We can always count on God's protecting hand, when we are treading the path of duty. But, if we are walking in a self-chosen path; if we are seeking our own pleasure, or our own interest, our own ends or objects, then, to talk of counting on God would be simply wicked presumption.

No doubt, our God is very merciful, very gracious, and His tender mercy is over us, even when we wander off the path of duty; but this is another thing altogether, and it leaves wholly untouched the statement that we can only count on divine protection when our feet are in the pathway of duty. If a Christian goes out boating for his amusement; or if he goes clambering over the Alps merely for sightseeing, has he any right to believe that God will take care of him? Let conscience give the answer. If God calls us to cross a stormy lake, to preach the gospel; if He summons us to cross the Alps on some special service for Him, then, assuredly, we can commit ourselves to

His mighty hand to protect us from all evil. The grand point for all of us is to be found in the holy path of duty. It may be narrow, rough and lonely; but it is a path overshadowed by the wings of the Almighty and illumined by the light of His approving countenance.

Ere turning from the subject suggested by verse 16, we would briefly notice the very interesting and instructive fact, that our Lord, in His reply to Satan, takes no notice whatever of his misquotation of Psalm 91:11. Let us carefully note this fact, and seek to bear it in mind. In place of saying to the enemy, "You have left out a most important clause of the passage which you undertake to quote," He simply quotes another passage, as authority for His own conduct. Thus He vanquished the tempter; and thus He left us a blessed example.

It is worthy of our special notice that the Lord Jesus Christ did not overcome Satan, in virtue of His divine power. Had He done so, it could not be an example for us. But when we see Him, as a man, using the word as His only weapon, and thus gaining a glorious victory, our hearts are encouraged and comforted; and not only so, but we learn a most precious lesson as to how we, in our sphere and measure, are to stand in the con-

flict. The man, Christ Jesus, overcame by simple dependence upon God, and obedience to His word.

Blessed fact! A fact full of comfort and consolation for us. Satan could do nothing with one who would only act by divine authority, and by the power of the Spirit. Jesus never did His own will, though, as we know, blessed be His holy Name, His will was absolutely perfect. He came down from heaven, as He Himself tells us, in John 6, not to do His own will, but the will of the Father that sent Him. He was a perfect servant, from first to last. His rule of action was the word of God; His power of action, the Holy Ghost; His only motive for action, the will of God; hence the prince of this world had nothing in Him. Satan could not, by all his subtle wiles, draw Him out of the path of obedience, or out of the place of dependence.

Christian reader, let us consider these things. Let us deeply ponder them. Let us remember that our blessed Lord and Master left us an example that we should follow His steps. Oh! may we follow them diligently during the little while that yet remains! May we, by the gracious ministry of the Holy Ghost, enter more fully into the great fact that we are called to walk even as Jesus walked. He is our great Exemplar, in all things.

Let us study Him more profoundly, so that we may reproduce Him more faithfully!

We shall now close this lengthened section by quoting for the reader the last paragraph of the chapter on which we have been dwelling; it is a passage of singular fullness, depth and power, and strikingly characteristic of the entire book of Deuteronomy.

"Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and his testimonies, and His statutes, which he has commanded thee. And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the Lord swore to thy fathers; to cast out all thine enemies from before thee, as the Lord has spoken. And when thy son asks thee in time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgements, which the Lord our God has commanded you? Then thou shalt say to thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; and the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes; and he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he

sware to our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the Lord our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day. And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the Lord our God, as he has commanded us."

How prominently is the word of God kept before the soul, in every page and every paragraph of this book! It is the one great subject on the heart and in all the discourses of the revered law-giver. It is His one aim to exalt the word of God, in all its aspects, whether in the form of testimonies, commandments, statutes or judgements; and to set forth the moral importance, yea, the urgent necessity of whole-hearted, earnest, diligent obedience, on the part of the people. "Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God" And again, "Thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the Lord."

All this is morally lovely. We have here unfolded before our eyes those eternal principles which no change of dispensation, no change of scene, place or circumstances can ever touch, "That which is right and good" must ever be of universal and abiding application. It reminds us of the words of the Apostle John to his beloved friend Gaius, "Beloved, follow not that

which is evil; but that which is good." The assembly might be in a very low condition; there might be very much to try the heart and depress the spirit of Gaius; Diotrefes might be carrying himself most unbecomingly and unwarrantably toward the beloved and venerable apostle and others; all this might be true, and much more, yea, the whole professing body might go wrong. What then? What remained for Gaius to do? Simply to follow that which was right and good; to open his heart and his hand and his house to every one who brought the truth; to seek to help on the cause of Christ, in every right way.

This was the business of Gaius in his day; and this is the business of every true lover of Christ, at all times, in all places, and under all circumstances. We may not have many to join us; we may perhaps find ourselves, at times, almost alone; but we are still to follow what is good, cost what it may. We are to depart from iniquity — purge ourselves from dishonourable vessels — flee youthful lusts — turn away from powerless professors. And what then? "Follow righteousness, faith, love, peace" — How? In isolation? Nay. I may find myself alone in any given place for a time; but there can be no such thing as isolation, so long as the body of Christ is on earth, and that will be till He

comes for us. Hence we never expect to see the day in which we cannot find a few that call on the Lord out of a pure heart; whoever they are, and wherever they are, it is our bounden duty to find them; and, having found them, to walk with them in holy fellowship, until the end"

P.S. — We must reserve the remaining chapters of Deuteronomy for another volume. May the Lord be graciously pleased to grant His rich blessing upon our meditation thus far! May He clothe these pages with the power of the Holy Ghost, and make them to be a direct message from Himself to the hearts of His people throughout the whole world! May He also grant spiritual power to unfold the truth contained in the remaining sections of this most profound, comprehensive and suggestive book!

We earnestly beseech the Christian reader to join us in prayer as to all this, remembering those most precious words, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them by my Father which is in heaven" C. H. M.}

## Chapter 7

When the Lord thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and has cast out many nations before thee, ... seven nations greater and mightier than thou. And when the Lord thy God shall delivered them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy to them."

In reading the record of God's dealings with the nations, in connection with His people Israel, we are reminded of the opening words of Psalm 101 "I will sing of mercy and of judgement." We see the display of mercy to His people, in pursuance of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and we see also the execution of judgement upon the nations, in consequence of their evil ways. In the former, we see divine sovereignty; in the latter, divine justice; in both, divine glory shines out. All the ways of God, whether in mercy or in judgement, speak His praise, and shall call forth the homage of His people for ever. "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of nations.\* Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou art holy; for

all nations shall come and worship before thee; for Thy judgements are made manifest." (Rev. 15:3-4.)

\* "Nations" is read by most editors. Christ is not called the "king of saints."

This is the true spirit in which to contemplate the ways of God in government. Some persons, allowing themselves to be influenced by a morbid feeling and false sentimentality, rather than by an enlightened judgement, find difficulty in the directions given to Israel in reference to the Canaanites, in the opening of our chapter. It seems to them inconsistent with a benevolent Being to command His People to smite their fellow-creatures, and to show them no mercy. They cannot understand how a merciful God could commission His people to slay women and children with the edge of the sword.

It is very plain that such persons could not adopt the language of Revelation 15:3-4. They are not prepared to say, "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of nations." They cannot justify God in all His ways; nay, they are actually sitting in judgement upon Him. They presume to measure the actings of divine government by the standard of their own shallow thoughts — to

scan the infinite by the finite. In short, they measure God by themselves.

This is a fatal mistake. We are not competent to form a judgement upon the ways of God, and hence it is the very height of presumption for poor, ignorant, short-sighted mortals to attempt to do so. We read in the seventh chapter of Luke, that "Wisdom is justified of all her children." Let us remember this, and hush all our sinful reasonings. "Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."

Is the reader, at all, troubled with difficulties on this subject? If so, we should much like to quote a very fine passage which may help him. "O give thanks to the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endures for ever ... To him that smote Egypt in their first-born; for his mercy endures for ever; and brought out Israel from among them; for his mercy endures for ever; with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm; for his mercy endures for ever. To him which divided the Red Sea into parts; for his mercy endures for ever. And made Israel to pass through the midst of it; for his mercy endures for ever; but overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea; for his mercy endures for

ever. To him which smote great kings; for his mercy endures for ever; and slew famous kings; for his mercy endures for ever; Sihon, king of the Amorites; for his mercy endures ever; and Og, the king of Bashan; for his mercy for ever. And gave their land for an heritage; for his mercy endures for ever; even an heritage to Israel his servant; for his mercy endures for ever." (Ps. 136.)

Here we see that the smiting of Egypt's first-born, and the deliverance of Israel; the passage through the Red Sea and the utter destruction of Pharaoh's host; the slaughter of the Canaanites and giving their lands to Israel — all alike illustrated the everlasting mercy of Jehovah.\* Thus it was; thus it is; and thus it shall be. All must redound to the glory of God. Let us remember this, and fling to the winds all our silly reasonings and ignorant arguments. It is our privilege to justify God in all His ways, to bow our heads, in holy worship, in view of His unsearchable judgements, and rest in the calm assurance that all God's ways are right. We do not understand them all; this would be impossible. The finite cannot grasp the infinite. This is where so many go wrong. They reason upon the actings of God's government, not considering that those actings lie as far

beyond the range of human reason as the Creator is beyond the creature. What human mind can unravel the profound mysteries of divine providence? Can we account for the fact of a city full of human beings, men, women, and children, in one hour, plunged beneath a tide of burning lava? Utterly impossible; and yet this is but one fact of thousands that stand recorded on the page of human history, all lying far beyond the grasp of the most gigantic intellect. Go through the lanes, alleys, wynds, closes and courtyards of our cities and towns; see the thousands of human beings that throng these places, living in squalid misery, poverty, wretchedness and moral degradation. Can we account for all this? Can we tell why God permits it? Are we called upon to do so? Is it not perfectly plain to the reader that it is no part of our business to discuss such questions? And if we, in our ignorance and stupid folly, set about reasoning and speculating upon the inscrutable mysteries of the divine government, what can we expect but utter bewilderment, if not positive infidelity?

- \* Very many Christians find considerable difficulty in interpreting and applying the language of a large number of the Psalms which call for judgement upon the wicked. Such language would, of course, be quite unsuitable for Christians now, inas-

much as we are taught to love our enemies, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us and persecute us.

But we must remember that what would be wholly out of place for the church of God, a heavenly people, under grace, was, and will yet be perfectly consistent for Israel, an earthly people, under government. No intelligent Christian could think for a moment of calling down vengeance upon his enemies or upon the wicked. It would be grossly inconsistent. We are called to be the living exponents of the grace of God to the world — to walk in the footsteps of the meek and lowly Jesus — to suffer for righteousness — not to resist evil. God is now dealing in long-suffering mercy with the world. "He makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." This is to be our model. We are in this, to be "perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect." For a Christian to deal with the world on the principle of righteous judgment, would be to misrepresent his heavenly Father and falsify his profession.

But, by-and-by, when the church shall have left the scene, God will deal with the world in righteousness; He will judge the nations for their treatment of His people Israel.

We do not attempt to quote passages, but merely call the reader's attention to the principle, in order to enable him to understand the just application of the prophetic Psalms.

The foregoing line of thought will enable the reader to understand the opening lines of our chapter. The Canaanites were to receive no mercy at the hands of Israel. Their iniquities had reached the culminating point, and nothing remained but the stern execution of divine judgement. "Thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy to them; neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give to his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take to thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods, so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire."

Such were the instructions given by Jehovah to His people. They were clear and explicit. No mercy for the Canaanites, no covenant with them, no union, no fellowship of any kind; unsparing judgement, intense separation.

We know, alas! how soon, and how completely Israel failed to carry out these instructions. Hardly had they planted their foot upon the land of Canaan ere they made a covenant with the Gibeonites. Even Joshua himself fell into the snare. The tattered garments and mouldy bread of those wily people beguiled the princes of the congregation, and caused them to act in direct opposition to the plain commandment of God. Had they been governed by the authority of the word, they would have been preserved from the grave error of making a league with people who ought to have been utterly destroyed. But they judged by the sight of their eyes, and had to reap the consequences.\*

\* It is, at once, instructive and admonitory to see that the garments, the mouldy bread, and the plausible words of the Gibeonites did what the walls of Jericho could not do. Satan's wiles are more to be dreaded than his power. "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." The more deeply we ponder the various parts of the whole armour of God, the more clearly we shall see that they are ranged under these two heads, obedience and dependence. The soul that is really governed by the authority of the word, and wholly dependent upon the power of the Spirit, is fully equipped for the conflict. It was thus the Man Christ Jesus van-

quished the enemy. The devil could do nothing with a man who was perfectly obedient and perfectly dependent. May we study, in this, as in all beside, our great Exemplar!

Implicit obedience is the grand moral safeguard against the wiles of the enemy. No doubt the story of the Gibeonites was very plausible, and their whole appearance gave a show of truth to their statements; but none of these things should have had the slightest moral weight with Joshua and the princes; nor would they, if they had but remembered the word of the Lord. But they failed in this. They reasoned on what they saw, instead of obeying what they had heard. Reason is no guide for the people of God; we must be, absolutely and completely, guided and governed by the word of God.

This is a privilege of the very highest order, and it lies within the reach of the simplest and most unlettered child of God. The Father's word, the Father's voice, the Father's eye, can guide the youngest, feeblest child in His family. All we need is the lowly and obedient heart. It does not demand great intellectual power or cleverness; if it did, what would become of the vast majority of Christians? If it were only the educated, the deep-thinking

and the far-seeing that were capable of meeting the wiles of the adversary, then verily most of us might give up in despair.

But, thanks be to God, it is not so; indeed, on the contrary, we find, in looking through the history of the people of God, in all ages, that human wisdom, human learning, human cleverness, if not kept in their right place, have proved a positive snare, and rendered their possessors only the more efficient tools in the enemy's hand. By whom have most, if not all of the heresies been introduced which have disturbed the church of God, from age to age? Not by the simple, and the unlearned, but by the educated and the intellectual. And, in the passage to which we have just referred, in the book of Joshua, who was it that made a covenant with the Gibeonites? The common people? Nay, but the princes of the congregation. No doubt, all were involved in the mischief; but it was the Princes that led the way. The heads and leaders of the assembly fell into the snare of the devil through neglect of the plain word of God.

"Thou shalt make no covenant with them." Could ought be plainer than this? Could tattered garments, old shoes and mouldy bread alter the meaning of the divine command, or do away with the urgent necessity for strict obedience on the part

of the congregation? Assuredly not. Nothing can ever afford a warrant for lowering, the breadth of a hair, the standard of obedience to the word of God. If there are difficulties in the way, if perplexing circumstances come before us, if things crop up for which we are not prepared, and as to which we are unable to form a judgement, what are we to do? Reason? Jump to conclusions? Act on our own, or on any human judgement? Most certainly not. What then? Wait on God; wait patiently, humbly, believingly; and He will assuredly counsel and guide. "The meek will he guide in judgement; and the meek will he teach his way. Had Joshua and the princes acted thus, they never would have made a league with the Gibeonites; and if the reader acts thus, he will be delivered from every evil work and preserved to the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

In verse 6 of our chapter Moses sets before the people the moral ground of the line of action which they were to adopt in reference to the Canaanites — the rigid separation and the un-sparing judgement. "For thou art an holy people to the Lord thy God; the Lord thy God has chosen thee to be a special people to himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth."

The principle here laid down is of the very weightiest character. Why were the people to maintain the most marked separation from the Canaanites? Why were they to refuse, with firm decision, to make any covenant, or form any matrimonial alliance with them? Why were they to demolish their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves? Simply because they were a holy people. And who had constituted them a holy people? Jehovah. He had chosen them and set His love upon them; He had redeemed them, and separated them to Himself; and hence it was His province and prerogative to prescribe what they were to be, and how they were to act. "Be ye holy, for I am holy.

It was not, by any means, on the principle of "Stand by thyself, I am holier than thou." This is manifest, from what follows. "The Lord did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn to your fathers, has the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." (Vs. 7, 8.)

Seasonable words these for Israel! Most healthful and needful! They were to remember that they owed all their dignity, all their privileges, all their blessings, not to ought in themselves, their own goodness or their own greatness, but simply to the fact of Jehovah's having identified Himself with them, in His infinite goodness and sovereign grace, and in virtue of His covenant with their fathers — "a covenant ordered in all things and sure." This, while it furnished a divine antidote against self-complacency and self-confidence, formed the solid basis of their happiness and their moral security. All rested upon the eternal stability of the grace of God, and therefore human boasting was excluded. "My soul shall make her boast in the Lord; the humble shall hear thereof and be glad."

It is the settled purpose of God that "no flesh shall glory in his presence." All human pretension must be set aside. He will hide pride from man. Israel had to be taught to remember their origin, and their true condition — "bondmen in Egypt" — "fewest of all people" — no room for pride or boasting. They were, in no wise, better than the nations around them; and therefore, if called to account for their high elevation and moral greatness, they had simply to trace it all up to the free love of God, and

His faithfulness to His oath. "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake."  
(Ps. 115:1.)

"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is the faithful God, which keeps covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations; and repays them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: He will not be slack to him that hates him, he will repay him to his face."  
(Vers. 9, 10.)

We have two weighty facts set before us here; one, full of rich consolation and comfort to every true lover of God; the other fraught with deep solemnity every hater of God. All who really love God and His commandments may count on His infallible faithfulness and tender mercy, at all times and under circumstances. "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." If, through infinite grace, we have the love of God in our hearts, and His fear before our eyes, we may move on with good courage and joyful confidence, assured that all shall be well — must be well. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we re-

ceive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

This is a grand eternal truth — a truth for Israel, a truth for the church. Dispensations make no difference as to this. Whether we study Deuteronomy 7, or 1 John 3, we learn the same great practical truth, that God delights in those who fear Him and love Him, and keep His commandments.

Is there ought of the legal element in this? Not a tinge. Love and legality have nothing in common; they are as far removed as the poles. "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous." The spirit and genius, the ground and character of our obedience all go to prove it the very reverse of legality. It is our deep and settled conviction that those persons, who are ever ready to cry out, "Legal! Legal!" whenever obedience is pressed upon them, are sadly and grossly mistaken. If indeed it were taught that we must earn by our obedience the high position and relationship of children of God, then verily the solemn charge of legality might justly be urged. But to bestow such an epithet on Christian obedience, is, we repeat, a serious moral mistake. Obedi-

ence could never precede sonship; but sonship should ever be followed by obedience.

And while we are on this subject, we must call the attention of the reader to a passage or two of New Testament scripture as to which there is a want of clearness in many minds. In Matthew 5, we read, "Ye have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour; and hate thine enemy; but I say to you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the sons (huiioi) of your Father which is in heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust ... Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Vers. 43-48.)

This passage might, in the judgement of some, seem to teach that the relationship of children can be attained by a certain line of action; but it is not so. It is a question of moral conformity or suitability to the character and ways of our Father. We sometimes hear, in every-day life, the saying, "You would not be your father's son if you were to act in such a way." It is as though our Lord had said, "If you want to be the sons of your

heavenly Father, you must act in grace to all; for that is what He is doing."

Again, in 2 Corinthians 6 we read, "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you; and will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty. Here, it is not a question of the secret relationship of children, formed by a divine operation, but the public acknowledgment of the position of sons (huios) as the result of our separation from evil.\*

\* Speaking in a general way, the word teknon, child, is a term of endearment; huios, son, of moral dignity; pais, is either a child or a servant; nepios, a babe.

It will be well for the reader to seize this important distinction. It is of great practical value. We do not become children by separation from the world, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." "As many as received him, to them gave he power [or authority, exousia] to become children (tekna) of God, to them that believe on his name; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (Gal. 3:26; John 1:12-13.) "Of his own will

begat he us by the word of truth." (James 1:18.) We become children by new birth which, thanks be to God, is a divine operation, from first to last. What had we to do with our natural birth? Nothing. And what have we to do with our spiritual birth? Clearly nothing.

But then we must remember that God can only identify Himself with, and publicly acknowledge those who, through grace, seek to walk in a way worthy of Him — a way befitting the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. If our ways are unlike Him, if we are mixed up with all sorts of wrong things, if we are unequally yoked together with unbelievers, how can we expect God to own us as His sons? We read, in Hebrews 11 of those who "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth," and who "declared plainly that they sought a country;" and of them we are told that "God was not ashamed to be called their God." He could publicly identify Himself with them, and acknowledge them. He could own them as His.

Reader, let us seriously apply our hearts to the consideration of this great practical question. Let us look, seriously and honestly, to our ways. Let us, in truthfulness and uprightness of heart, inquire whether we are "unequally yoked together with

unbelievers," on any ground, or for any object whatever. If so, let us give earnest heed to the words, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing." It may be that the carrying out of this holy commandment will expose us to the charge of bigotry, narrowness and intolerance; it may mean the aspect of pharisaic pride and self-complacency. We may be told, we are not to judge, or set ourselves up to be holier or better than other people.

To all this line of argument, we have the one simple, conclusive answer, namely, God's plain command. He tells us to be separate, to come out, to touch not the unclean; and all this in order to His receiving us, and acknowledging us as His sons and daughters. This ought to be quite sufficient for us. Let people think or say what they will of us, let them call us what they please; God will settle the matter with them, sooner or later; our duty is to separate ourselves from unbelievers, if we would be received and owned of God. If believers are mixed up with unbelievers, how are they to be known or distinguished as the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty?

But we may perhaps be asked, "How are we to know who are unbelievers? All profess to be Christians; all take the ground of

belonging to Christ; we are not surrounded by ignorant heathen or unbelieving Jews; how then are we to judge? It was plain enough in the early days of Christianity, when the apostle wrote his epistle to the assembly at Corinth; then the line of demarcation was as clear as a sunbeam; there were the three distinct classes, 'The Jew, the Gentile, and the church of God;' but now all is changed; we live in a Christian land, under a Christian government, we are surrounded, on all hands, by Christians, and therefore 2 Cor. 6 cannot apply to us; it was all very well when the church was in its infancy, having just emerged from Judaism, on the one hand, and heathenism, on the other; but to think of applying such a principle, at this advanced stage of the church's history, is wholly out of the question.

To all who take this ground, we would put a very plain question: Is it true that the church has reached a stage of her history in which the New Testament is no longer her guide and authority? Have we got beyond the range of holy scripture? If so, what are we to do? Whither are we to turn for guidance? If we admit, for a moment, that 2 Corinthians 6 does not apply to Christians now, what warrant have we for appropriating to ourselves any portion of the New Testament?

The fact is, scripture is designed for the church of God, as a whole, and for each member of that church, in particular; and hence, as long as the church is on earth, so long will the scripture apply. To question this is to offer a flat contradiction to the words of the inspired apostle when he tells us that the holy scriptures are able to make us "wise to salvation," that is "wise" right onward to the day of glory, for such is the blessed force of the word "salvation," in 2 Timothy 3:15.

We want no new light, no fresh revelation; we have "all truth," within the covers of our precious Bible. Thank God for it! We do not want science or philosophy to make us wise. All true science and all sound philosophy will leave untouched the testimony of holy scripture; they cannot add to it; but they will not contradict it. When infidels talk to us about "progress," "development," "the light of science," we fall back, in holy confidence and tranquility, upon those precious words, "all truth," "wise to salvation." It is blessedly impossible to get beyond these. What can be added to "all truth"? What more do we or can we want than to be made wise right onward to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ?

And further, let us remember that there is no change whatever in the relative position of the church and the world. It is as true today, as it was eighteen hundred and fifty years ago, when our Lord uttered the words, that His people are not of the world, even as He Himself is not of the world. (John 17) The world is the world still. It may, in some places, have changed its dress, but not its true character, spirit and principles. Hence therefore it is as wrong today for Christians to be "unequally yoked together with unbelievers" as it was when Paul penned his epistle to the church at Corinth. We cannot get over this. We cannot set aside our responsibility in this matter. It will not, by any means, meet the case to say, "We must not judge." We are bound to judge. If we refuse to judge, we refuse to obey, and what is this but positive rebellion? God says, "Come out from among them and be separate"; If we reply, we cannot judge," where are we? The fact is we are absolutely commanded to judge. "Do ye not judge them that are within? But them that are without God judges." (1 Cor. 5:12-13.)

But we shall not pursue this line of argument any further. We trust the reader is one who fully owns the direct application to himself of the passage which we have just quoted. It is as plain

as it is pointed; it calls upon all God's people to come out and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing. This is what God requires of His people, in order to His owning them as His; and surely it ought to be the deep and earnest desire of our hearts to respond to His gracious will in this matter, utterly regardless of the world's thoughts respecting us. Some of us are as much afraid of being thought narrow and bigoted; but oh! how little it imports to a truly devoted heart what men think of us! Human thoughts perish in an hour. When we are manifested before the judgement-seat of Christ, when we stand in the full blaze of the glory, what will it matter to us whether men considered us narrow or broad, bigoted or liberal? And what should it matter to us now? Not the weight of a feather. Our one grand object should be so to act, so to carry ourselves as to be "acceptable" to Him who has made us "accepted." May it be so with the writer and the reader, and with every member of the body of Christ!

Let us now turn, for a moment, to the weighty and very solemn truth presented to us in verse 10 of our chapter. "He will not be slack to him that hates him, he will repay him to his face." If the lovers of God are comforted, in verse 9 and most blessedly

encouraged to keep His commandments; the haters of God are called to hearken to a warning note in verse 10.

There is a time coming when God will deal personally — face to face, with His enemies. How awful the thought that any one should be a hater of God — a hater of that One who is said to be and who is "Light" and "Love;" the very fountain of goodness, the Author and Giver of every good and perfect gift, the Father of lights; the One whose liberal hand supplies the need of every living thing, who hears the cry of the young raven, and quenches the thirst of the wild ass; the infinitely good, the only wise, the perfectly holy God, the Lord of all power and might, the creator of the ends of the earth, and the One who has power to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Only think, reader, of any one being a hater of such a One as God; and we know that all who are not lovers must be haters. People may not see this; very few would be disposed to own themselves to be absolute haters of God; but there is no neutral ground in this great question; we must either be for or against; and, in point of fact, people are not slow in showing their colours. It often happens that the heart's deep seated enmity to God comes out in hatred to His people, to His word, His wor-

ship, His service. How frequently do we hear such expressions as, "I hate religious people" — "I hate all cant" — "I hate preachers." The truth is, it is God Himself that is hated. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be; and this enmity comes out in reference to every one and everything connected with God. There lies deep down in every unconverted heart the most positive enmity to God. Every man, in his natural state, hates God.

Now, God declares, in Deuteronomy 7:10, that "He will not be slack to him that hates him; he will repay him to his face." This is a most solemn truth, and one which ought to be more pressed upon the attention of all whom it may concern. Men do not like to hear it; many affect and profess not to believe it. They would fain persuade themselves and persuade others also that God is too good, too kind, too merciful, too benevolent to deal in stern judgement with His creatures. They forget that God's ways in government are as perfect as His ways in grace. They imagine that the government of God will pass over or deal lightly with evil and evil doers.

This is a most miserable and fatal mistake, and men will find it to be so to their heavy and eternal cost. True it is, blessed be

God, He can, in His rich sovereign grace and mercy, forgive us our sins, blot out our transgressions, cancel our guilt, justify us perfectly, and fill our hearts with the spirit of adoption. But this is another thing altogether. This is grace reigning, through righteousness, to eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. It is God, in His wondrous love, providing righteousness for the poor, guilty, hell-deserving sinner who knows and feels and owns that he has no righteousness of his own, and never could have it. God, in the marvellous love of His heart, has provided a means whereby He can be just and the justifier of every poor broken-hearted bankrupt sinner that simply believes in Jesus.

But how, we may ask, was all this done? Was it by passing over sin, as though it were nothing? Was it by relaxing the claims of the divine government, lowering the standard of divine holiness, or touching in the most remote way, the dignity, stringency and majesty of the Law? No; thanks and praise to redeeming love, it was the very reverse. Never was there or could there be a more terrible expression of God's eternal hatred of sin, or of His unflinching purpose to condemn it utterly and punish it eternally; never was there or could there be a more glorious vindication of the divine government, a more perfect

maintenance of the standard of divine holiness, truth and righteousness; never was the law more gloriously vindicated or more thoroughly established, than by that most glorious scheme of redemption planned, executed and revealed by the Eternal Three in One — planned by the Father, executed by the Son, and revealed by the Holy Ghost.

If we would have a just sense of the awful reality of the government of God, His wrath against sin and the true character of His holiness, we must gaze at the cross; we must hearken to that bitter cry that issued from the heart of the Son of God and broke through the dark shadows of Calvary, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Never had such a question been asked before; never has such a question been asked since; and never shall — never can such a question be asked again. Whether we consider the One who asked it, the One of whom it was asked, or the answer, we must see that the question stands absolutely alone in the annals of eternity. The cross is the measure of God's hatred of sin, as it is the measure of His love to the sinner. It is the imperishable foundation of the throne of grace, the divinely righteous ground on which God can pardon

our sins, and constitute us perfectly righteous in a risen and glorified Christ.

But then if men despise all this, and persist in their hatred of God, and yet talk of His being too good and too kind to punish evil doers, how will it be with them? "He that obeys not (apeithon) the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides upon him." (John 3:36).<sup>\*</sup> Can it be possible — can we believe, for a moment, that a just God should execute judgment upon His only-begotten Son, His well-beloved, His eternal delight, because He was bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, and yet allow impenitent sinners to escape? Had Jesus, the spotless, holy, perfect Man — the only perfect man that ever trod this earth — had He to suffer for sins, the just for the unjust, and shall evil doers, unbelievers and haters of God be saved and blessed and taken to heaven? And all this forsooth because God is too kind and too good to punish sinners in hell for ever! Did it cost God the giving up, the forsaking and the bruising of His beloved Son in order to save His people from their sins, and shall ungodly sinners, despisers and rebels, be saved in their sins? Did the Lord Jesus Christ die for nothing? Did Jehovah put Him to grief and hide His face from

Him when there was no necessity? Why the awful horrors of Calvary? why the three hours' darkness? why that bitter cry, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Why all this, if sinners can get to heaven without it? Why all this inconceivable sorrow and suffering for our blessed Lord, if God is too kind, and too gracious, and too tender to send sinners to hell?

\* John 3:36 is a passage of immense weight and importance. It not only sets forth the great truth that all who believe in the Son of God are the privileged possessors of eternal life, but it also cuts up by the roots two leading heresies of the day, namely, universalism and annihilationism. The universalist professes to believe that, ultimately, all shall be restored and blessed. Not so, says our passage; for those who obey not the Son, "shall not see life."

The annihilationist professes to believe that all who are out of Christ shall perish like the beasts. Not so, for "the wrath of God abides" upon the disobedient. Abiding wrath and annihilation are wholly incompatible. It is utterly impossible to reconcile them.

It is interesting and instructive to notice the difference between the Greek words *ho pisteuon* — "he that believes" — and — *ho apeithon* — "he that obeys not." They give us the two sides of the subject of faith.

What egregious folly! What will not men believe, provided it be not the truth of God? The poor dark human mind will affect to believe the most monstrous absurdity in order to get a plea for rejecting the plain teaching of holy scripture. The very thing which men would never think of attributing to a good human government they do not hesitate to attribute to the government of the only wise, the only true, the only just God. What should we think of a government that could not or would not punish evil doers? Would we like to live under it? What should we think of the government of England if, because her Majesty is so kind, so gracious, so tender hearted, she could not allow criminals to be punished as the law directs? Who would care to live in England?

Reader, do you not see how that one verse, which is now before us, demolishes completely all the theories and arguments which men in their folly and ignorance have advanced on the subject of the divine government? "The Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God which ... repays them that hate him to their face, to destroy them; he will not be slack to him that hates him, he will repay him to his face."

Oh! that men would hearken to the word of God! That they would be warned by its dear, emphatic and solemn statements as to coming wrath, judgement and eternal punishment! That, instead of seeking to persuade themselves and others that there is no hell, no deathless worm and unquenchable fire, no eternal torment, they would listen to the warning voice and, ere it be too late, flee for refuge to the hope set before them in the gospel. Truly this would be their wisdom. God declares that He will repay those that hate Him. How awful the thought of this repayment! Who can meet it? The government of God is perfect; and because it is so, it is utterly impossible that it can allow evil to pass unjudged. Nothing can be plainer than this. All scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, sets it forth in terms so clear and forcible as to render it the very height of folly for men to argue against it. How much better and wiser and safer to flee from the wrath to come than to deny that it is coming, and that when it does come it will be eternal in its duration. It is utterly vain for any one to attempt to reason in opposition to the truth of God. Every word of God shall stand for ever. We see the actings of His government in reference to His people Israel, and in reference to Christians now. Did He pass over evil in His people of old? Nay; on the contrary, He visited them

continually with His chastening rod, and this, too, just because they were His people, as He said to them by His prophet Amos, "Hear this word that the Lord has spoken against you, O children of Israel, against the whole family which I brought up from the land of Egypt, saying, You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities. (Amos 3:1-2.)

We have the same weighty principle set forth in the first Epistle of Peter, in its application to Christians now. "For the time is come that judgement must begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (Chap. 4:17-18.)

God chastens His own, just because they are His own, and that they may not be condemned with the world. (1 Cor. 11) The children of this world are allowed to go on their way: but their day is coming — a dark and heavy day — a day of judgement and unmitigated wrath. Men may question and argue and reason, but scripture is distinct and emphatic. "God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by

that man whom he has ordained." The great day of reckoning is at hand when God will repay every man to his face.

It is truly edifying to mark the way in which Moses, that beloved and honoured servant of God, led assuredly by the Spirit of God, pressed the grand and solemn realities of the divine government upon the conscience of the congregation. Hear how he pleads and exhorts. "Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgements, which I command thee this day, to do them. Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgements, and keep, and do them, that the Lord thy God shall keep to thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware to thy fathers. And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee; he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware to thy fathers to give thee. Thou shalt be blessed above all people; there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle. And the Lord will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee. And thou shalt consume

all the people which the Lord thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them; neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that will be a snare to thee." (Vers. 11-16.)

What a powerful appeal! How affecting! Mark the two groups of words. Israel was to "hearken," "keep" and "do." Jehovah was to "love," "bless," and "multiply." Alas! alas! Israel failed, sadly, shamefully failed, under law and under government; and hence, instead of the love and the blessing and the multiplying, there has been judgement, curse, barrenness, dispersion, desolation.

But, blessed be the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, if Israel has failed under law and government, He has not failed in His rich and precious sovereign grace and mercy. He will keep the covenant and the mercy He swore to their fathers. Not one jot or tittle of His covenant promise shall ever fail. He will make all good by-and-by. He will fulfil to the very letter all His gracious promises. Though He cannot do this on the ground of Israel's obedience, He can and will do it through the blood of the ever-lasting covenant, the precious blood of Jesus, His eternal Son — all homage to His peerless Name!

Yes reader, the God of Israel cannot suffer one of His precious promises to fall to the ground. What would become of us if He could? What security, what rest, what peace could we have, if Jehovah's covenant with Abraham were to fail in any single point? True it is that Israel has forfeited all claim. If it be a question of fleshly descent, Ishmael and Esau have a prior claim. If it be a question of legal obedience, the golden calf and the broken tables tell their melancholy tale. If it be a question of government on the ground of the Moab covenant, they have not a single plea to urge.

But God will be God, spite of Israel's lamentable unfaithfulness. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" and hence "All Israel shall be saved." God will most assuredly make good His oath to Abraham, spite of all the wreck and ruin of Abraham's seed. We must steadfastly hold to this, in the face of every opposing thought, feeling or opinion. Israel shall be restored, and blessed, and multiplied in their own beloved and holy land. They shall take down their harps from the willows and, beneath the peaceful shade of their own vines and fig-trees, chant the high praises of their loving Saviour and God throughout that bright millennial sabbath which lies before

them. Such is the unvarying testimony of scripture, from beginning to end, which must be maintained in its integrity, and made good in every particular, to the glory of God, and on the ground of His everlasting covenant.

But we must return to our chapter, the closing verses of which demand our special attention. It is very touching and beautiful to mark the way in which Moses seeks to encourage the heart of the people in reference to the dreaded nations of Canaan. He enters into, and anticipates their very inmost thoughts and feelings.

"If thou shalt say in thine heart, These nations are more than I; how can I dispossess them? Thou shalt not be afraid of them; but shalt well remember what the Lord thy God did to Pharaoh, and to all Egypt; the great temptations which thine eyes saw, and the signs, and the wonders, and the mighty hand, and the stretched out arm, whereby the Lord thy God brought thee out: so shall the Lord thy God do to all the people of whom thou art afraid. Moreover, the Lord thy God will send the hornet among them, until they that are left, and hide themselves from thee, be destroyed. Thou shalt not be affrighted at them; for the Lord thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible. And the

Lord thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee. But the Lord thy God shall deliver them to thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed. And he shall deliver their kings into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven: there shall no man be able to stand before thee, until thou have destroyed them. The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire, thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it to thee, lest thou be snared therein; for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God. Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it; but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing." (Vers. 17-26.)

The grand remedy for all unbelieving fears is simply to fix the eye upon the living God: thus the heart is raised above the difficulties whatever they may be. It is of no possible use to deny that there are difficulties and opposing influences of all sorts. This will not minister comfort and encouragement to the sinking heart. Some people affect a certain style of speaking of trials and difficulties which just goes to prove, not their practical

knowledge of God, but their profound ignorance of the stern realities of life. They would fain persuade as that we ought not to feel the trials, sorrows and difficulties of the way. They might as well tell us that we ought not to have a head on our shoulders or a heart in our bosom. Such persons know not how to comfort those that are cast down. They are mere visionary theorists, wholly unfit to deal with souls passing through conflict or grappling with the actual facts of our daily history.

How did Moses seek to encourage the hearts of his brethren? "Be not affrighted," he says; but why? Was it that there were no enemies, no difficulties, no dangers? No, but "the Lord thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible. Here is the true comfort and encouragement; the enemies were there but God is the sure resource. Thus it was that Jehoshaphat, in his time of trial and pressure, sought to encourage himself and his brethren. "O our God, wilt thou not judge them? For we have no might against this great company that comes against us, neither know we what to do; but our eyes are upon Thee."

Here lies the precious secret. The eyes are upon God. His power is brought in, and this settles everything; "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Moses meets, by his precious min-

istry, the rising fears in the heart of Israel, "These nations are more than I." Yes, but they are not more than the "mighty and terrible God." What nations could stand before Him? He had a solemn controversy with those nations because of their terrible sins; their iniquity was full; the reckoning time had come, and the God of Israel was going to drive them out before His people.

Hence, therefore, Israel had no need to fear the power of the enemy. Jehovah would see to that. But there was something far more to be dreaded than the enemy's power, and that was the ensnaring influence of their idolatry. "The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire." "What!" the heart might say, "are we to destroy the gold and silver that adorn these images? Might not that be turned to some good account? Is it not a pity to destroy what is so very valuable in itself? It is all right to burn the images, but why not spare the gold and silver?"

Ah! it is just thus the poor heart is prone to reason. Thus, oft-times we deceive ourselves when called to judge and abandon what is evil. We persuade ourselves of the rightness of making some reserve; we imagine we can pick and choose and make some distinction. We are prepared to give up some of the evil,

but not all. We are ready to burn the wood of the idol, but spare the gold and silver.

Fatal delusion! "Thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it to thee, lest thou be snared therein; for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God." All must be given up, all destroyed. To retain an atom of the accursed thing is to fall into the snare of the devil, and link ourselves with that which, however highly esteemed among men, is an abomination in the sight of God.

And let us mark and ponder the closing verses of our chapter. To bring an abomination into the house is to become like it! How very solemn! Do we fully understand it? The man who brought an abomination into his house became a cursed thing like it!

Reader, may the Lord keep our hearts separated from all evil, and true and loyal to Himself!

## **Chapter 8**

"All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and

possess the land which the Lord swore to your fathers. And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no." (Vers. 1, 2.)

It is, at once, refreshing, edifying and encouraging to look back over the whole course along which the faithful hand of our God has conducted us; to trace His wise and gracious dealings with us; to call to mind His many marvellous interpositions on our behalf, how He delivered us out of this strait and that difficulty; how, oft-times, when we were at our wits' end, He appeared for our help, and opened the way before us, rebuking our fears and filling our hearts with songs of praise and thanksgiving.

We must not, by any means, confound this delightful exercise with the miserable habit of looking back at our ways, our attainments, our progress, our service, what we have been able to do, even though we are ready to admit, in a general way, that it was only by the grace of God that we were enabled to do any little work for Him. All this only ministers to self complacency, which is destructive of all true spirituality of mind. Self-retrospection, if we may be allowed to use such a term, is quite as

injurious in its moral effect as self-introspection. In short self occupation, in any of its multiplied phases, is most pernicious; it is, in so far as it is allowed to operate, the death-blow to fellowship. Anything that tends to bring self before the mind must be judged and refused, with stern decision; it brings in barrenness, darkness and feebleness. For a person to sit down to look back at his attainments or his doings, is about as wretched an occupation as any one could engage in. We may be sure it was not to any such thing as this that Moses exhorted the people when he charged them to "Remember all the way by which the Lord their God had led them."

We may here recur, for a moment, to the memorable words of the apostle in Philippians 3. "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Now, the question is, what were the "things" of which the blessed apostle speaks? Did he forget the precious dealings of God with his soul, throughout the whole of his wilderness journey? Impossible; indeed we have the very fullest and clearest

evidence to the contrary. Hear his touching words before Agrippa: "Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue to this day, witnessing both to small and great." So also, in writing to his beloved son and fellow-labourer, Timothy, he reviews the past, and speaks of the persecutions and afflictions which he had endured: "But," he adds, "Out of them all the Lord delivered me." And again, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all forsook me; I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion."

To what then does the apostle refer when he speaks of "forgetting the things which are behind"? We believe he refers to all those things which had no connection with Christ — things in which the heart might rest, and nature might glory — things which might act as weights and hindrances; all these were to be forgotten in the ardent pursuit of those grand and glorious realities which lay before him. We do not believe that Paul, or any other child of God or servant of Christ, could ever desire to forget a single scene or circumstance, in his whole earthly career,

in any way illustrative of the goodness, the loving kindness, the tender mercy, the faithfulness of God. On the contrary, we believe it will ever be one of our very sweetest exercises to dwell upon the blessed memory of all our Father's ways with us while passing across the desert, home to our everlasting rest.

*"There with what joy reviewing  
Past conflicts, dangers, fears,  
Thy hand our foes subduing,  
And drying all our tears;  
Our hearts with rapture burning,  
The path we shall retrace.  
Where now our souls are learning  
The riches of thy grace."*

But let us not be misunderstood. We do not, by any means, wish to give countenance to the habit of dwelling merely upon our own experience. This is often very poor work, and resolves itself into self occupation. We have to guard against this as one of the many things which tend to lower our spiritual tone and draw our hearts away from Christ. But we need never be afraid of the result of dwelling upon the record of the Lord's dealings

and ways with us. This is a blessed habit, tending ever to lift us out of ourselves, and fill us with praise and thanksgiving.

Why, we may ask, were Israel charged to "remember all the way" by which the Lord their God had led them? Assuredly, to draw out their hearts in praise for the past, and to strengthen their confidence in God for the future. Thus it must ever be. "We'll praise Him for all that is past, and trust Him for all that's to come." May we do so more and more! May we just move on, day by day, praising and trusting, trusting and praising. These are the two things which redound to the glory of God, and to our peace and joy in Him. When the eye rests on the "Eben-ezers" which lie all along the way, the heart must give forth its sweet "Hallelujahs" to Him who has helped us hitherto, and will help us right on to the end. He has delivered, and He doth deliver, and He will deliver. Blessed chain! Its every link is divine deliverance.

Nor is it merely upon the signal mercies and gracious deliverances of our Father's hand that we are to dwell, with devout thankfulness, but also upon the "humblings" and the "provings" of His wise, faithful and holy love. All these things are full of richest blessing to our souls. They are not, as people sometimes

call them, "mercies in disguise," but plain, palpable, unmistakable mercies for which we shall have to praise our God throughout the golden ages of that bright eternity which lies before us.

"Thou shalt remember all the way" — every stage of the journey, every scene of wilderness life, all the dealings of God, from first to last, with the special object thereof, "to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart."

How wonderful to think of God's patient grace and painstaking love with His people in the wilderness! What precious instruction for us! With what intense interest and spiritual delight we can hang over the record of the divine dealings with Israel in all their desert wanderings! How much we can learn from the marvellous history! We, too, have to be humbled and proved, and made to know what is in our hearts. It is very profitable and morally wholesome. On our first setting out to follow the Lord, we know but little of the depths of evil and folly in our hearts. Indeed, we are superficial in everything. It is as we get on in our practical career that we begin to prove the reality of things; we find out the depths of evil in ourselves, the utter hollowness and worthlessness of all that is in the world, and the

urgent need of the most complete dependence upon the grace of God, every moment. All this is very good; it makes us humble and self-distrusting; it delivers us from pride and self-sufficiency, and leads us to cling, in child-like simplicity, to the One who alone is able to keep us from falling. Thus as we grow in self-knowledge we get a deeper sense of grace, a more profound acquaintance with the wondrous love of the heart of God, His tenderness toward us, His marvellous patience in bearing with all our infirmities and failings, His rich mercy in having taken us up at all, His loving ministry to all our varied need, His numberless interpositions on our behalf, the exercises through which He has seen fit to lead us for our souls' deep and permanent profit.

The practical effect of all this is invaluable; it imparts depth, solidity and mellowness to the character; it cures us of all our crude notions, and vain theories; it delivers us from one-sidedness and wild extremes; it makes us tender, thoughtful, patient and considerate toward others; it corrects our harsh judgements and gives a gracious desire to put the best possible construction upon the actions of others, and a readiness to attribute the best motives in cases which may seem to us equivocal. These are

precious fruits of wilderness experience which we may all earnestly covet.

"And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know, that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live." (Ver. 3.)

This passage derives special interest and importance from the fact that it is the first of our Lord's quotations from the book of Deuteronomy, in His conflict with the adversary in the wilderness. Let us ponder this deeply. It demands our earnest attention. Why did our Lord quote from Deuteronomy? Because that was the book which, above all others, specially applied to the condition of Israel, at the moment. Israel had utterly failed, and this weighty fact is assumed in the book of Deuteronomy, from beginning to end. But not withstanding the failure of the nation, the path of obedience lay open to every faithful Israelite. It was the privilege and duty of every one who loved God, to abide by His word, under all circumstances; and in all places.

Now, our blessed Lord was divinely true to the position of the Israel of God; Israel after the flesh had failed and forfeited everything; He was there, in the wilderness, as the true Israel of God, to meet the enemy by the simple authority of the word of God. "And Jesus, being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing; and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. And the devil said to him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God." (Luke 4.)

Here then is something for us to ponder. The perfect Man, the true Israel, in the wilderness, surrounded by the wild beasts, fasting for forty days, in the presence of the great adversary of God, of man, of Israel. There was not a single feature in the scene to speak for God. It was not with the second Adam as it was with the first; He was not surrounded with all the delights of Eden, but with all the dreariness and desolation of a desert, there in loneliness and hunger — but there for God!

Yes; blessed be His Name, and there for man; there to show man how to meet the enemy in all his varied temptations; there to show man how to live. We must not suppose, for a moment, that our adorable Lord met the adversary as God over all; true, He was God, but if it were only as such that He stood in the conflict, it could not afford any example for us. Besides, it would be needless to tell us that God was able to vanquish and put to flight a creature which His own hand had formed. But to see One who was, in every respect, a man, and in all the circumstances of humanity, sin excepted; to see Him there in weakness, in hunger, standing amid the consequences of man's fall, and to find Him triumphing completely over the terrible foe; it is this which is so full of comfort, consolation, strength and encouragement for us.

And how did He triumph? This is the grand and all-important question for us, a question demanding the most profound attention of every member of the church of God, a question the magnitude and importance of which it would be utterly impossible to overstate. How then did the Man Christ Jesus vanquish Satan in the wilderness? Simply by the word of God. He overcame not as the Almighty God, but as the humble, depend-

ent, self-emptied, and obedient Man. We have before us the magnificent spectacle of a man, standing in the presence of the devil, and utterly confounding him with no other weapon whatsoever save the word of God. It was not by the display of divine power, for that could be no model for us; it was simply with the word of God in His heart and in His mouth, that the second Man confounded the terrible enemy of God and man.

And let us carefully note that our blessed Lord does not reason with Satan. He does not appeal to any facts connected with Himself — facts with which the enemy was well acquainted. He does not say, "I know I am the Son of God; the opened heavens, the descending Spirit, the Father's voice have all borne witness to the fact of my being the Son of God." No; this would not do; it would not and could not be an example for us. The one special point for us to seize and learn from is that our Great Exemplar, when meeting all the temptations of the enemy, used only the weapon which we have in our possession, namely, the simple, precious, written, word of God.

We say, "all the temptations," because in all the three instances our Lord's unvarying reply is, "It is written." He does not say, "I know" — "I think" — "I feel" — "I believe" this, that or the

other; He simply appeals to the written word of God — the book of Deuteronomy in particular, that very book which infidels have dared to insult, but which is pre-eminently the book for every obedient man, in the face of total, universal, hopeless wreck and ruin.

This is of unspeakable moment for us, beloved reader. It is as though our Lord Christ had said to the adversary, "Whether I am the Son of God or not, is not now the question, but how man is to live, and the answer to this question is only to be found in holy scripture; and it is to be found there as clear as a sunbeam, quite irrespective of all questions respecting me. Whoever I am, the scripture is the same, "Man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord."

Here we have the only true, the only safe, the only happy attitude for man, namely, hanging in earnest dependence upon "every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord." Blessed attitude! we may well say; there is nothing like it in all this world. It brings the soul into direct, living, personal contact with the Lord Himself, by means of His word. It makes the word so absolutely essential to us, in everything; we cannot do

without it. As the natural life is sustained by bread, so the spiritual life is sustained by the word of God. It is not merely going to the Bible to find doctrines there, or to have our opinions or views confirmed; it is very much more than this; it is going to the Bible for the staple commodity of life — the life of the new man; it is going there for food, for light, for guidance, for comfort, for authority, for strength, for all, in short, that the soul can possibly need, from first to last.

And let us specially note the force and value of the expression, "every word." How fully it shows that we cannot afford to dispense with a single word that has proceeded out of the mouth of the Lord. We want it all. We cannot tell the moment in which some exigency may present itself for which scripture has already provided. We may not; perhaps, have specially noticed the scripture before, but when the difficulty arises, if we are in a right condition of soul, the true posture of heart, the Spirit of God will furnish us with the needed scripture; and we shall see a force, beauty, depth and moral adaptation in the passage which we had never seen before. Scripture is a divine, and therefore exhaustless treasury in which God has made ample provision for all the need of His people, and for each believer

in particular, right on to the end. Hence we should study it all, ponder it, dig deeply into it, and have it treasured up in our hearts, ready for use when the demand arises.

There is not a single crisis occurring in the entire history of the church of God, not a single difficulty in the entire path of any individual believer, from beginning to end, which has not been perfectly provided for in the Bible. We have all we want in that blessed volume; and hence we should be ever seeking to make ourselves more and more acquainted with what that volume contains so as to be "thoroughly furnished" for whatever may arise, whether it be a temptation of the devil, an allurements of the world, or a lust of the flesh; or, on the other hand, for equipment for that path of good works which God has afore prepared that we should walk in it.

And we should further give special attention to the expression, "Out of the mouth of the Lord." This is unspeakably precious. It brings the Lord so very near to us, and gives us such a sense of the reality of feeding upon His every word, yea, of hanging upon it as something absolutely essential and indispensable. It sets forth the blessed fact that our souls can no more exist without the word than our bodies could without food. In a

word, we are taught by this passage that man's true position, his proper attitude, his only place of strength, safety, rest and blessing is to be found in habitual dependence upon the word of God.

This is the life of faith which we are called to live, — the life of dependence — the life of obedience — the life that Jesus lived perfectly. That blessed One would not move a step, utter a word, or do a single thing save by the authority of the word of God. No doubt He could have turned the stone into bread, but He had no command from God to do that; and inasmuch as He had no command, He had no motive for action. Hence Satan's temptations were perfectly powerless. He could do nothing with a Man who would only act on the authority of the word of God.

And we may also note, with very much interest and profit, that our blessed Lord does not quote scripture for the purpose of silencing the adversary; but simply as authority for His position and conduct. Here is where we are so apt to fail; we do not sufficiently use the precious word of God in this way; we quote it, at times, more for victory over the enemy than for power and authority for our own souls. Thus it loses its power in our

hearts. We want to use the word as a hungry man uses bread, or as a mariner uses his chart and his compass; it is that on which we live and by which we move and act, and think and speak. Such it really is, and the more fully we prove it to be all this to us, the more we shall know of its infinite preciousness. Who is it that knows most of the real value of bread? Is it a chemist? No; but a hungry man. A chemist may analyse it and discuss its component parts, but a hungry man proves its worth. Who knows most of the real value of a chart; is it the teacher of navigation? No; but the mariner as he sails along an unknown and dangerous coast.

These are but feeble figures to illustrate what the word of God is to the true Christian. He cannot do without it. It is absolutely indispensable, in every relationship of life, and in every sphere of action. His hidden life is fed and sustained by it; his practical life is guided by it; in all the scenes and circumstances of his personal and domestic history, in the privacy of his closet, in the bosom of his family, in the management of his affairs, he is cast upon the word of God for guidance and counsel.

And it never fails those who simply cleave to it, and confide in it. We may trust scripture without a single shade of misgiving.

Go to it when we will, we shall always find what we want. Are we in sorrow? Is the poor heart bereaved, crushed and desolate? What can soothe and comfort us like the balmy words which the Holy Spirit has penned for us? One sentence of holy scripture can do more, in the way of comfort and consolation, than all the letters of condolence that ever were penned by human hand. Are we discouraged, faint-hearted and cast down? The word of God meets us with its bright and soul-stirring assurances. Are we pressed by pinching poverty? The Holy Ghost brings home to our hearts some golden promise from the page of inspiration, recalling us to Him who is "The Possessor of heaven and earth," and who, in His infinite grace, has pledged Himself to "supply all our need according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." Are we perplexed and harassed by the conflicting opinions of men, by the dogmas of conflicting schools of divinity, by religious and theological difficulties? A few sentences of holy scripture will pour in a flood of divine light upon the heart and conscience, and set us at perfect rest, answering every question, solving every difficulty, removing every doubt, chasing away every cloud, giving us to know the mind of God, putting an end to conflicting opinions by the one divinely competent authority.

What a boon, therefore, is holy scripture! What a precious treasure we possess in the word of God! How we should bless His holy Name for having given it to us! Yes; and bless Him, too, for everything that tends to make us more fully acquainted with the depth, fullness and power of those words of our chapter, "Man shall not live by bread only, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live."

Truly precious are these words to the heart of the believer! And hardly less so are those that follow, in which the beloved and revered lawgiver refers with touching sweetness to Jehovah's tender care throughout the whole of Israel's desert wanderings. "Thy raiment," he says, "waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years."

What marvellous grace shines out in these words! Only think, reader, of Jehovah looking after His people, in such a manner, to see that their garments should not wax old or their foot swell! He not only fed them, but clothed them and cared for them in every way. He even stooped to look after their feet, that the sand of the desert might not injure them! Thus, for forty years, did He watch over them, with all the exquisite tenderness of a father's heart. What will not love undertake to do for

its object? Jehovah had set His love upon His people, and this one blessed fact secured everything for them, had they only understood it. There was not a single thing within the range of Israel's necessities, from Egypt to Canaan, which was not secured to them and included in the fact that Jehovah had undertaken to do for them. With infinite love and almighty power on their side, what could be lacking?

But then, as we know, love clothes itself in various forms. It has something more to do than to provide food and raiment for its objects. It has not only to take account of their physical but also of their moral and spiritual wants. Of this the lawgiver does not fail to remind the people. "Thou shalt also consider," he says, "in thine heart" — the only true and effective way to consider — "that, as a man chastens his son, so the Lord thy God chastens thee."

Now, we do not like chastening; it is not joyous, but grievous. It is all very well for a son to receive food and raiment from a father's hand, and to have all his comforts provided by a father's thoughtful love; but he does not like to see him taking down the rod. And yet that dreaded rod may be the very best thing for the son; it may do for him what no material benefits

or earthly blessings could effect; it may correct some bad habit, or deliver him from some wrong tendency, or save him from some evil influence, and thus prove a great moral and spiritual blessing for which he shall have to be for ever thankful. The grand point for the son is to see a father's love and care in the discipline and chastening, just as distinctly as in the various material benefits which strew his path from day to day.

Here is precisely where we so signally fail, in reference to the disciplinary dealings of our Father. We rejoice in His benefits and blessings; we are filled with praise and thankfulness as we receive, day by day, from His liberal hand, the rich supply of all our need; we delight to dwell upon His marvellous interposition on our behalf, in times of pressure and difficulty; it is a most precious exercise to look back over the path by which His good hand has led us, and mark those "Eben-ezers" which tell of gracious help supplied all along the road.

All this is very good, and very right, and very precious; but then there is great danger of our resting in the mercies, the blessings and the benefits which flow, in such rich profusion, from our Father's loving heart and liberal hand. We are apt to rest in these things, and say with the psalmist, "In my prosper-

ity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong." True it is, "by thy favour," but yet we are prone to be occupied with our mountain, and our prosperity; we allow these things to come in between our hearts and the Lord, and thus they become a snare to us. Hence the need of chastening. Our Father, in His faithful love and care is watching over us; He sees the danger and He sends trial, in one shape or another. Perhaps a telegram comes announcing the death of a beloved child, or the crash of a bank involving the loss of our earthly all. Or, it may be, we are laid on a bed of pain and sickness, or called to watch by the sick bed of a beloved relative.

In a word, we are called to wade through deep waters which seem to our poor feeble coward hearts absolutely overwhelming. The enemy suggests the question, "Is this love?" Faith replies, without hesitation and without reserve, "Yes!" it is all love, perfect love; the death of the child, the loss of the property, the long, heavy, painful illness, all the sorrow, all the pressure, all the exercise, the deep waters and dark shadows — all, all is love — perfect love and unerring wisdom. I feel assured of it, even now; I do not wait to know it by-and-by, when I

shall look back on the path from amid the full light of the glory; I know it now, and delight to own it to the praise of the infinite grace which has taken me up from the depth of my ruin, and charged itself with all that concerns me, and which deigns to occupy itself with my very failures, follies and sins, in order to deliver me from them, to make me a partaker of divine holiness, and conform me to the image of that blessed One who "loved me and gave himself for me."

Christian reader, this is the way to answer Satan, and to hush the dark reasonings which may spring up in our hearts. We must always justify God. We must look at all His disciplinary dealings in the light of His love. "Thou, shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chastens his son, so the Lord thy God chastens thee." Most surely we should not like to be without the blessed pledge and proof of sonship. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives. If ye endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chastens not?" But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence; shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed." Heb. 12:5-13.

It is, at once, interesting and profitable to mark the way in which Moses presses upon the congregation the varied motives of obedience arising from the past, the present and the future. Everything is brought to bear upon them to quicken and deepen their sense of Jehovah's claims upon them. They were to "remember" the past; they were to "consider" the present; and they were to anticipate the future; and all this was to act on their hearts, and lead them forth in holy obedience to that blessed and gracious One who had done, who was doing, and who would do such great things for them.

The thoughtful reader can hardly fail to observe in this constant presentation of moral motives a marked feature of this lovely book of Deuteronomy, and a striking proof that it is no mere attempt at a repetition of what we have in Exodus; but, on the contrary, that our book has a province, a range, a scope and design entirely its own. To speak of mere repetition is absurd; to speak of contradiction is impious.

"Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him." The word "therefore" had a retrospective and prospective force. It was designed to lead the heart back over the past dealings of Jehovah, and forward into the future. They were to think of the marvellous history of those forty years in the desert, the teaching, the humbling, the proving, the watchful care, the gracious ministry, the full supply of all their need, the manna from heaven, the stream from the smitten rock, the care of their garments and of their very feet, the wholesome discipline for their moral good. What powerful moral motives were here for Israel's obedience!

But this was not all, they were to look forward into the future; they were to anticipate the bright prospect which lay before them; they were to find in the future, as well as in the past and

the present, the solid basis of Jehovah's claims upon their reverent and whole-hearted obedience.

"For the Lord thy God brings thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig-trees, and pomegranates, a land of oil olive, and honey; a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass."

How fair was the prospect! How bright the vision! How marked the contrast to the Egypt behind them and the wilderness through which they had passed! The Lord's land lay before them in all its beauty and verdure, its vine-clad hills and honey-eyed plains, its gushing fountains and flowing streams. How refreshing the thought of the vine, the fig-tree, the pomegranate and the olive! How different from the leeks, onions and garlic of Egypt! Yes, all so different! It was the Lord's own land: this was enough. It produced and contained all they could possibly want. Above its surface, rich profusion; below, untold wealth, exhaustless treasure.

What a prospect! How the faithful Israelite would long to enter upon it! — long to exchange the sand of the desert for that bright inheritance! True, the desert had its deep and blessed experiences, its holy lessons, its precious memories. There they had known Jehovah in a way they could not know Him even in Canaan; all this was quite true, and we can fully understand it; but still the wilderness was not Canaan, and every true Israelite would long to set his foot on the land of promise, and truly we may say that Moses presents the land, in the passage just quoted, in a way eminently calculated to attract the heart. "A land," he says, "wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack anything in it." What more could be said? Here was the grand fact, in reference to that good land into which the hand of covenant love was about to introduce them. All their wants would be divinely met. Hunger and thirst should never be known there. Health and plenty, joy and gladness, peace and blessing were to be the assured portion of the Israel of God, in that fair inheritance upon which they were about to enter. Every enemy was to be subdued; every obstacle swept away; "the pleasant land," was to pour forth its treasures for their use; watered continually by heaven's rain, and warmed

by its sunlight, it was to bring forth, in rich abundance, all that the heart could desire.

What a land! what an inheritance! What a home! Of course, we are looking at it now from a divine standpoint; looking at it according to what it was in the mind of God, and what it shall, most assuredly, be to Israel, during that bright millennial age which lies before them. We should have but a very poor idea indeed of the Lord's land, were we to think of it merely as possessed by Israel in the past, even in the very brightest days of its history, as it appeared amid the splendours of Solomon's reign. We must look onward to "the times of the restitution of all things," in order to have anything like a true idea of what the land of Canaan will yet be to the Israel of God.

Now Moses speaks of the land according to the divine idea of it. He presents it as given by God, and not as possessed by Israel. This makes all the difference. According to his charming description, there was neither enemy nor evil occurrent: nothing but fruitfulness and blessing from end to end. That is what it would have been, that is what it should have been, and that is what it shall be, by-and-by, to the seed of Abraham, in pursuance of the covenant made with their fathers — the new, the

everlasting covenant, founded on the sovereign grace of God, and ratified by the blood of the cross. No power of earth or hell can hinder the purpose or the promise of God. "Has he said, and shall he not do it?" God will make good to the letter every word, spite of all the enemy's opposition, and the lamentable failure of His people. Though Abraham's seed have utterly failed under law and under government, yet Abraham's God will give grace and glory, for His gifts and calling are without repentance.

Moses fully understood all this. He knew how it would turn out with those who stood before him, and with their children after them, for many generations; and he looked forward into that bright future in which a covenant God would display, in the view of all created intelligences, the triumphs of His grace in His dealings with the seed of Abraham His friend.

Meanwhile, however, the faithful servant of Jehovah, true to the object before his mind, in all those marvellous discourses in the opening of our book, proceeds to unfold to the congregation the truth as to their mode of acting in the good land on which they were about to plant their foot. As he had spoken of the past and of the present, so would he make use of the future;

he would turn all to account in his holy effort to urge upon the people their obvious, bounden duty to that blessed One who had so graciously and tenderly cared for them all their journey through, and who was about to bring them in and plant them in the mountain of His inheritance. Let us hearken to His touching and powerful exhortations.

"When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the Lord thy God for the good land which he has given thee." How simple! How lovely! How morally suitable! Filled with the fruit of Jehovah's goodness, they were to bless and praise His holy Name. He delights to surround Himself with hearts filled to overflowing with the sweet sense of His goodness, and pouring forth songs of praise and thanksgiving. He inhabits the praises of His people. He says, "Whoso offers praise glorifies me." The feeblest note of praise from a grateful heart ascends as fragrant incense to the throne and to the heart of God.

Let us remember this, beloved reader. It is as true for us, most surely, as it was for Israel, that praise is comely. Our grand primary business is to praise the Lord. Our every breath should be a hallelujah. It is to this blessed and most sacred exercise the Holy Ghost exhorts us, in manifold places. "By him therefore

let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name." We should ever remember that nothing so gratifies the heart and glorifies the Name of our God as a thankful worshipping spirit on the part of His people. It is well to do good and communicate. God is well pleased with such sacrifices. It is our high privilege, while we have opportunity, to do good to all men, and especially to them who are of the household of faith. We are called to be channels of blessing between the loving heart of our Father and every form of human need that comes before us in our daily path. All this is most blessedly true; but we must never forget that the very highest place is assigned to praise. It is this which shall employ our ransomed powers, throughout the golden ages of eternity, when the sacrifices of active benevolence shall no longer be needed.

But the faithful lawgiver knew but too well the sad proneness of the human heart to forget all this, to lose sight of the gracious Giver, and rest in His gifts. Hence he addresses the following admonitory words to the congregation — wholesome words, truly, for them and for us. May we bend our ears and

our hearts to them, in holy reverence and teachableness of spirit!

"Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgements, and his statutes, which I command thee this day. Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought; where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint, who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end: and thou say in thine heart, My power, and the might of mine hand has gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is he that gives thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant, which he sware to thy fathers, as it is this day. And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the

Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day, that ye shall utterly perish. As the nations which the Lord destroys before your face, so shall ye perish, because ye would not be obedient to the voice of the Lord your God." (Vers. 11-20.)

Here is something for us to ponder deeply. It has, most assuredly, a voice for us, as it had for Israel. We may perhaps feel disposed to marvel at the frequent reiteration of the note of warning and admonition, the constant appeals to the heart and conscience of the people as to their bounden duty to obey, in all things, the word of God; the recurrence again and again to those grand soul-stirring facts connected with their deliverance out of Egypt, and their journey through the wilderness.

But wherefore should we marvel? In the first place, do we not deeply feel and fully admit our own urgent need of warning, admonition and exhortation? Do we not need line upon line, precept upon precept, and that continually? Are we not prone to forget the Lord our God, to rest in His gifts instead of Himself? Alas! alas! we cannot deny it. We rest in the stream, instead of getting up to the Fountain. We turn the very mercies, blessings and benefits which strew our path, in rich profusion, into an oc-

casation of self-complacency and gratulation, instead of finding in them the blessed ground of continual praise and thanksgiving.

And then, as to those great facts of which Moses so continually reminds the people, could they ever lose their moral weight, power or preciousness? Surely not. Israel might forget and fail to appreciate those facts, but the facts remained the same. The terrible plagues of Egypt, the night of the passover, their deliverance from the land of darkness, bondage and degradation, their marvellous passage through the Red Sea, the descent of that mysterious food from heaven, morning by morning, the refreshing stream gushing forth from the flinty rock: how could such facts as these ever lose their power over a heart possessing a spark of genuine love to God? And why should we wonder to find Moses, again and again, appealing to them and using them as a most powerful lever wherewith to move the hearts of the people? Moses felt the mighty moral influence of these things himself, and he would fain lead others to feel it also. To him they were precious beyond expression, and he longed to make his brethren feel their preciousness as well as himself. It was his one object to set before them, in every pos-

sible way the powerful claims of Jehovah upon their hearty and unreserved obedience.

This, reader, will account for what might, to an unspiritual, un-intelligent, cursory reader, seem the too frequent recurrence to the scenes of the past, in those wonderful discourses of Moses. We are reminded, as we read them, of the lovely words of Peter, in his second epistle: "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance." (2 Peter 1:12-15.)

How striking the unity of spirit and purpose in these two beloved and venerable servants of God! Both the one and the other felt the tendency of the poor human heart to forget the things of God, of heaven and of eternity; and they felt the supreme importance and infinite value of the things of which they spoke. Hence their earnest desire to keep them continually be-

fore the hearts and abidingly in the remembrance of the Lord's beloved people. Unbelieving, restless nature might say to Moses or to Peter, "Have you nothing new to tell us? Why are you perpetually dwelling on the same old themes? We know all you have got to say; we have heard it again and again. Why not strike out into some new field of thought? Would it not be well to try and keep abreast of the science of the day? If we keep perpetually moping over those antiquated themes, we shall be left stranded on the bank while the stream of civilization rushes on. Pray give us something new."

Thus might the poor unbelieving mind, the worldly heart reason; but faith knows the answer to all such miserable suggestions. We can well believe that both Moses and Peter would have made short work with all such reasonings. And so should we. We know whence they emanate, whither they tend, and what they are worth; and we should have, if not on our lips, at least deep down in our hearts a ready answer — an answer perfectly satisfactory to us, however contemptible it may seem to the men of this world. Could a true Israelite ever tire of hearing of what the Lord had done for him, in Egypt, in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness? Never! Such themes would be ever

fresh, ever welcome to his heart. And just so with the Christian; can he ever tire of the cross and all the grand and glorious realities that cluster round it? Can he ever tire of Christ, His peerless glories and unsearchable riches — His Person, His work, His offices? Never! No, never, throughout the bright ages of eternity. Does he crave anything new? Can science improve upon Christ? Can human learning add ought to the great mystery of godliness which has for its foundation God manifest in the flesh, and for its topstone a Man glorified in heaven? Can we ever get beyond this? No, reader, we could not if we would, and we would not if we could.

And even were we, for a moment, to take a lower range, and look at the works of God in creation; do we ever tire of the sun? He is not new; he has been pouring his beams upon this world for well-nigh six thousand years, and yet those beams are as fresh and as welcome today as they were when first created. Do we ever tire of the sea? It is not new; its tide has been ebbing and flowing for nearly six thousand years, but its waves are as fresh and as welcome on our shores as ever. True, the sun is often too dazzling to man's feeble vision, and the sea often swallows up, in a moment, man's boasted works; but yet the

sun and the sea never lose their power, their freshness, their charm. Do we ever tire of the dew-drops that fall in refreshing virtue upon our gardens and fields? Do we ever tire of the perfume that emanates from our hedgerows? Do we ever tire of the notes of the nightingale and the thrush?

And what are all these when compared with the glories which cluster round the Person and the cross of Christ? What are they when put in contrast with the grand realities of that eternity which is before us?

Reader, let us beware how we listen to such suggestions, whether they come from without or spring from the depths of our own evil hearts, lest we be found, like Israel after the flesh, loathing the heavenly manna and despising the pleasant land; or like Demas who forsook the blessed apostle, having loved this present age; or like those of whom we read in the sixth of John, who, offended by our Lord's close and pointed teaching, "went back, and walked no more with him." May the Lord keep our hearts true to Himself, and fresh and fervent in His blessed cause, till He come!

## Chapter 9.

"Hear, O Israel; thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven; a people great and tall, the children of the Anakims, whom thou knowest, and of whom thou hast heard say, Who can stand before the children of Anak!" (Vers. 1, 2.)

This chapter opens with the same grand Deuteronomic sentence, "Hear, O Israel." This, we may say, is the key note of this most blessed book, and especially of those opening discourses which have been engaging our attention. But the chapter which now lies open before us presents subjects of immense weight and importance. In the first place, the lawgiver sets before the congregation, in terms of deep solemnity, that which lay before them, in their entrance upon the land. He does not hide from them the fact that there were serious difficulties and formidable enemies to be encountered. This he does, we need hardly say, not to discourage their hearts, but that they might be forewarned, forearmed, and prepared. What that preparation was we shall see presently; but the faithful servant of

God felt the rightness, yea, the urgent need of putting the true state of the case before his brethren.

There are two ways of looking at difficulties; we may look at them from a human stand-point, or from a divine one; we may look at them in a spirit of unbelief, or we may look at them in the calmness and quietness of confidence in the living God. We have an instance of the former, in the report of the unbelieving spies, in Numbers 13; We have an instance of the latter, in the opening of our present chapter.

It is not the province nor the path of faith to deny that there are difficulties to be encountered by the people of God; it would be the height of folly to do so, inasmuch as there are difficulties, and it would be but fool-hardiness, fanaticism, or fleshly enthusiasm to deny it. It is always well for people to know what they are about, and not to rush blindly into a path for which they are not prepared. An unbelieving sluggard may say, "There is a lion in the way;" a blind enthusiast may say, "There is no such thing;" the true man of faith will say, "Though there were a thousand lions in the way, God can soon dispose of them".

But, as a great practical principle of general application, it is very important for all the Lord's people to consider deeply and calmly what they are about, ere they enter upon any particular path of service or line of action. If this were more attended to, we should not witness so many moral and spiritual wrecks around us. What mean those most solemn, searching and testing words addressed by our blessed Lord to the multitudes that thronged around Him, in Luke 14? "He turned and said to them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, his wife, and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sits not down first, and counts the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish" (Vers. 26-30.)

These are solemn and seasonable words for the heart. How many unfinished buildings meet our view, as we look forth over the wide field of Christian profession, giving sad occasion

to the beholders for mockery! How many set out upon a path of discipleship, under some sudden impulse, or under the pressure of mere human influence, without a proper understanding or a due consideration of all that is involved; and then when difficulties arise, when trials come, when the path is found to be narrow, rough, lonely, unpopular, they give it up, thus proving that they had never really counted the cost, never taken the path in communion with God, never understood what they were doing.

Now, such cases are very sorrowful; they bring great reproach on the cause of Christ, give occasion to the adversary to blaspheme, and greatly dishearten those who care for the glory of God and the good of souls. Better far not to take the ground at all than, having taken it, to abandon it in dark unbelief and worldly-mindedness.

Hence, therefore, we can perceive the wisdom and faithfulness of the opening words of our chapter. Moses tells the people plainly what was before them; not, surely, to discourage them, but to preserve them from self-confidence which is sure to give way in the moment of trial; and to cast them upon the living God who never fails a trusting heart.

“Understand therefore this day, that the Lord thy God is he which goes over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the Lord has said to thee.”

Here, then, is the divine answer to all difficulties, be they ever so formidable. What were mighty nations, great cities, fenced walls, in the presence of Jehovah? Simply as chaff before the whirlwind. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" The very things which scare and stumble the coward heart afford an occasion for the display of God's power, and the magnificent triumphs of faith. Faith says, "Grant me but this, that God is before me and with me, and I can go anywhere." Thus the only thing in all this world that really glorifies God is the faith that can trust Him and use Him and praise Him; and inasmuch as faith is the only thing that glorifies God, so is it the only thing that gives man his proper place, even the place of complete dependence upon God, and this ensures victory and inspires praise — unceasing praise.

But we must never forget that there is moral danger in the very moment of victory — danger arising out of what we are in

ourselves. There is the danger of self-gratulation — a terrible snare to us poor mortals. In the hour of conflict, we feel our weakness, our nothingness, our need. This is good and morally safe. It is well to be brought down to the very bottom of self and all that pertains to it, for there we find God, in all the fullness and blessedness of what He is, and this is sure and certain victory and consequent praise.

But our treacherous and deceitful hearts are prone to forget whence the strength and victory come. Hence the moral force, value and seasonableness of the following admonitory words addressed by the faithful minister of God to the hearts and consciences of his brethren, "Speak not thou in thine heart" — here is where the mischief always begins — "after that the Lord has cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this land; but for the wickedness of those nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee."

Alas! what materials there are in us! What ignorance of our own hearts! What a shallow sense of the real character of our ways! How terrible to think that we are capable of saying in our hearts such words as, "For my righteousness!" Yes, reader

we are verily capable of such egregious folly; for as Israel was capable of it so are we, inasmuch as we are made of the very same material; and that they were capable of it is evident from the fact of their being warned against it; for, most assuredly, the Spirit of God does not warn against phantom dangers or imaginary temptations. We are verily capable of turning the actings of God on our behalf into an occasion of self-complacency; instead of seeing in those gracious actings a ground for heartfelt praise to God, we use them as a ground for self exaltation.

Hence, therefore, we would do well to ponder the words of faithful admonition addressed by Moses to the hearts and consciences of the people; they furnish a very wholesome antidote for the self-righteousness so natural to us as well as to Israel. "Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land; but for the wickedness of those nations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the Lord sware to thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Understand therefore, that the Lord gives thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiff-necked people. Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the Lord thy God

to wrath in the wilderness; from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came to this place, ye have been rebellious against the Lord." (Vers. 5-7.)

This paragraph sets forth two great principles which, if fully laid hold of, must put the heart into a right moral attitude. In the first place, the people were reminded that their possession of the land of Canaan was simply in pursuance of God's promise to their fathers. This was placing the matter on the most solid basis — a basis which nothing could ever disturb.

As to the seven nations who were to be dispossessed, it was on the ground of their wickedness that God, in the exercise of His righteous government, was about to drive them out. Every landlord has a perfect right to eject bad tenants; and the nations of Canaan had not only failed to pay their rent, as we say, but they had injured and defiled the property to such an extent that God could no longer endure them; and therefore He was going to drive them out, irrespective altogether of the incoming tenants. Whoever was going to get possession of the property, these dreadful tenants must be evicted. The iniquity of the Amorites had reached its highest point, and nothing remained but that judgement should take its course. Men might argue and

reason as to the moral fitness and consistency of a benevolent Being unroofing the houses of thousands of families and putting the occupants to the sword; but we may depend upon it the government of God will make very short work with all such arguments. God, blessed for ever be His holy Name, knows how to manage His own affairs, and that too without asking man's opinion. He had borne with the wickedness of the seven nations to such a degree that it had become absolutely insufferable; the very land itself could not bear it. Any further exercise of forbearance would have been a sanction of the most terrible abominations; and this of course was a moral impossibility. The glory of God absolutely demanded the expulsion of the Canaanites.

Yes; and we may add, the glory of God demanded the introduction of the seed of Abraham into possession of the property to hold, as tenants for ever under the Lord God Almighty, the most High God, Possessor of heaven and earth. Thus the matter stood for Israel, had they but seen it. Their possession of the land of promise and the maintenance of the divine glory were so bound up together that one could not be touched without touching the other. God had promised to give the land of

Canaan to the seed of Abraham, as an everlasting possession. Had He not a right to do so? Will infidels question God's right to do as He will with His own? Will they refuse to the Creator and Governor of the universe a right which they claim for themselves? The land was Jehovah's, and He gave it to Abraham His friend for ever; and although this was true, yet were not the Canaanites disturbed in their tenure of the property until their wickedness had become positively unbearable.

Thus we see that in the matter both of the outgoing and incoming tenants, the glory of God was involved. That glory demanded that the Canaanites should be expelled because of their ways; and that glory demanded that Israel should be put in possession because of the promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

But, in the second place, Israel had no ground for self-complacency, as Moses most plainly and faithfully instructs them. He rehearses in their ears, in the most touching and impressive manner, all the leading scenes of their history from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea; he refers to the golden calf, to the broken tables of the covenant, to Taberah and Massah, and Kibroth-hattaavah; and sums all up, at verse 24, with these pungent

humbling words, "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you."

This was plain dealing with heart and conscience. The solemn review of their whole career was eminently calculated to correct all false notions about themselves; every scene and circumstance in their entire history, if viewed from a proper standpoint, only brought to light the humbling fact of what they were, and how near they had been, again and again, to utter destruction. With what stunning force must the following words have fallen upon their ears! "And the Lord said to me, Arise, get thee down quickly from hence, for thy people which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt have corrupted themselves; they are quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten image. Furthermore, the Lord spake to me, saying, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people; let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they." (Vers. 12-14.)

How withering was all this to their natural vanity, pride and self-righteousness! How should their hearts have been moved

to their very deepest depths by those tremendous words, "Let me alone, that I may destroy them!" How solemn to reflect upon the fact which these words revealed — their appalling nearness to national ruin and destruction! How ignorant they had been of all that passed between Jehovah and Moses, on the top of mount Horeb! They had been on the very brink of an awful precipice. Another moment might have dashed them over. The intercession of Moses had saved them, the very man whom they had accused of taking too much upon him. Alas! how they had mistaken and misjudged him! How utterly astray they had been in all their thoughts! Why the very man whom they had accused of self-seeking and desiring to make himself altogether a prince over them, had actually refused a divinely given opportunity of becoming the head of a greater and mightier nation than they! Yes, and this same man had earnestly requested that if they were not to be forgiven and brought into the land, his name might be blotted out of the book.

How wonderful was all this! What a turning of the tables upon them! How exceedingly small they must have felt, in view of all these wonderful facts! Surely as they reviewed all these things, they might well see the utter folly of the words, "For my

righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this land." How could the makers of a molten image use such language! Ought they not rather to see and feel and own themselves to be no better than the nations that were about to be driven out from before them? For what had made them to differ? The sovereign mercy and electing love of their covenant God. And to what did they owe their deliverance out of Egypt, their sustenance in the wilderness, and their entrance into the land? Simply to the eternal stability of the covenant made with their fathers, "a covenant ordered in all things and sure," a covenant ratified and established by the blood of the Lamb, in virtue of which all Israel shall yet be saved and blessed in their own land.

But we must now quote for the reader the splendid paragraph with which our chapter closes — a paragraph eminently fitted to open Israel's eyes to the utter folly of all their thoughts respecting Moses, their thoughts respecting themselves, and their thoughts respecting that blessed One who had so marvellously borne with all their dark unbelief and daring rebellion.

"Thus I fell down before the Lord forty days and forty nights, as I fell down at the first; because the Lord had said he would destroy you. I prayed therefore to the Lord, and said, O Lord

God, destroy not thy people and thine inheritance which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not to the stubbornness of this people, nor to their uncleanness, nor to their sin : lest the land whence thou broughtest us out say, Because the Lord was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he has brought them out to slay them in the wilderness. Yet they are Thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power, and by thy stretched out arm."

What marvellous words are these to be addressed by a human being to the living God! What powerful pleadings for Israel! What self-renunciation! Moses refuses the offered dignity of being the founder of a greater and mightier nation than Israel. He only desires that Jehovah should be glorified, and Israel pardoned, blessed and brought into the promised land. He could not endure the thought of any reproach being brought upon that glorious Name so dear to his heart; neither could he bear to witness Israel's destruction. These were the two things he dreaded; and as to his own exaltation, it was just the thing

about which he cared nothing at all. This beloved and honoured servant cared only for the glory of God and the salvation of His people; and as to himself, his hopes, his interests, his all, he could rest, with perfect composure, in the assurance that his individual blessing and the divine glory were bound together by a link which could never be snapped.

And oh! how grateful must all this have been to the heart of God! How refreshing to His spirit were those earnest, loving pleadings of His servant! How much more in harmony with His mind than the intercession of Elias against Israel, hundreds of years afterwards! How they remind us of the blessed ministry of our Great High Priest who ever lives to make intercession for His people, and whose active intervention on our behalf never ceases for a single moment!

And then how very touching and beautiful to mark the way in which Moses insists upon the fact that the people were Jehovah's inheritance, and that He had brought them up out of Egypt. The Lord had said, "Thy people which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt." But Moses says, "They are Thy people, and thine inheritance, which Thou broughtest out." This

is perfectly exquisite. Indeed this whole scene is full of profound interest.

## Chapter 10

"At that time the Lord said to me, Hew thee two tables of stone like to the first, and come up to me into the mount, and make thee an ark of wood: and I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables which thou brokest, and thou shalt put them in the ark. And I made an ark of shittim wood, and hewed two tables of stone like to the first, and went up into the mount, having the two tables in mine hand. And he wrote on the tables, according to the first writing, the ten commandments, which the Lord spake to you in the mount out of the midst of the fire, in the day of the assembly: and the Lord gave them to me. And I turned myself and came down from the mount, and put the tables in the ark which I had made? and there they be, as the Lord commanded me." (Vers. 1-5.)

The beloved and revered servant of God seemed never to weary of rehearsing in the ears of the people, the interesting, momentous and significant sentences of the past. To him they were ever fresh, ever precious. His heart delighted in them.

They could never lose their charm in his eyes; he found in them an exhaustless treasury for his own heart, and a mighty moral lever wherewith to move the heart of Israel.

We are constantly reminded, in these powerful and deeply affecting addresses, of the inspired apostle's words to his beloved Philippians, "To write the same things to you, to me is not grievous, but for you it is safe." The poor restless, fickle, vagrant heart might long for some new theme; but the faithful apostle found his deep and unfailling delight in unfolding and dwelling upon those precious subjects which clustered, in rich luxuriance, around the Person and the cross of his adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He had found in Christ all he needed, for time and eternity. The glory of His Person had completely eclipsed all the glories of earth and of nature. He could say, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ." (Phil. 3:7-8.)

This is the language of a true Christian, of one who had found a perfectly absorbing and commanding object in Christ. What

could the world offer to such an one? What could it do for him? Did he want its riches, its honours, its distinctions, its pleasures? He counted them all as dung. How was this? Because he had found Christ. He had seen an object in Him which so riveted his heart that to win Him, and know more of Him, and be found in Him was the one ruling desire of his soul. If any one had talked to Paul about something new, what would have been his answer? If any one had suggested to him the thought of getting on in the world or of seeking to make money, what would have been his reply? Simply this, "I have found my ALL in Christ; I want no more. I have found in Him 'unsearchable riches' — 'durable riches and righteousness.' In Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. What do I want of this world's riches, its wisdom or its learning? These things all pass away like the vapours of the morning; and even while they last, are wholly inadequate to satisfy the desires and aspirations of an immortal spirit. Christ is an eternal object, heaven's centre, the delight of the heart of God; He shall satisfy me throughout the countless ages of that bright eternity which is before me; and surely if He can satisfy me for ever, He can satisfy me now. Shall I turn to the wretched rubbish of this world, its pursuits, its pleasures, its amusements, its theatres, its concerts, its

riches or its honours to supplement my portion in Christ? God forbid! All such things would be simply an intolerable nuisance to me. Christ is my all, and in all, now and for ever!"

Such, we may well believe, would have been the distinctly pronounced reply of the blessed apostle; such was the distinct reply of his whole life; and such, beloved Christian reader, should be ours also. How truly deplorable, how deeply humbling to find a Christian turning to the world for enjoyment, recreation or pastime! It simply proves that he has not found a satisfying portion in Christ. We may set it down as a fixed principle that the heart which is filled with Christ has no room for ought beside. It is not a question of the right or the wrong of things; the heart does not want them, would not have them; it has found its present and everlasting portion and rest in that blessed One that fills the heart of God, and will fill the vast universe with the beams of His glory, throughout the everlasting ages.

We have been led into the foregoing line of thought in connection with the interesting fact of Moses' unwearied rehearsal of all the grand events in Israel's marvellous history from Egypt to the borders of the promised land. To him they furnished a per-

petual feast; and he not only found his own deep personal delight in dwelling upon them, but he also felt the immense importance of unfolding them before the whole congregation. To him, most surely, it was not grievous, but for them it was safe. How delightful for him, and how good and needful for them, to dwell upon the facts connected with the two sets of tables — the first set smashed to atoms, at the foot of the mountain and the second set enclosed in the ark.

What human language could possibly unfold the deep significance and moral weight of such facts as these? Those broken tables! How impressive! How pregnant with wholesome instruction for the people. How powerfully suggestive! Will any one presume to say that we have here a mere barren repetition of the facts recorded in Exodus? Certainly no one who reverently believes in the divine inspiration of the Pentateuch.

No, reader, the tenth of Deuteronomy fills a niche and does a work entirely its own. In it the lawgiver holds up to the hearts of the people past scenes and circumstances in such a way as to rivet them upon the very tablets of the soul. He allows them to hear the conversation between Jehovah and himself; he tells them what took place during those mysterious forty days upon

that cloud-capped mountain. He lets them hear Jehovah's reference to the broken tables — the apt and forcible expression of the utter worthlessness of man's covenant. For why were those tables broken? Because they had shamefully failed. Those shattered fragments told the humiliating tale of their hopeless ruin on the ground of the law. All was gone. Such was the obvious meaning of the fact. It was striking, impressive, unmistakable. Like a broken pillar over a grave which tells, at a glance, that the prop and stay of the family lies mouldering beneath. There is no need of any inscription, for no human language could speak with such eloquence to the heart as that most expressive emblem. So the broken tables were calculated to convey to the heart of Israel the tremendous fact that, so far as their covenant was concerned, they were utterly ruined, hopelessly undone; they were complete bankrupts on the score of righteousness.

But then, that second set of tables, what of them? Thank God, they told a different tale altogether. They were not broken. God took care of them. "I turned myself and came down from the mount, and put the tables in the ark which I had made; and there they be, as the Lord commanded me."

Blessed fact! "There they be." Yes, covered up in that ark which spoke of Christ, that blessed One who magnified the law and made it honourable, who established every jot and tittle of it, to the glory of God and the everlasting blessing of His people. Thus, while the broken fragments of the first tables told the sad and humbling tale of Israel's utter failure and ruin, the second tables, shut up intact in the ark set forth the glorious truth that Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile.

We do not, of course, mean to say that Israel understood the deep meaning and far-reaching application of those wonderful facts which Moses rehearsed in their ears. As a nation, they certainly did not then, though, through the sovereign mercy of God, they will, by-and-by. Individuals may, and doubtless did enter into somewhat of their significance. This is not now the question. It is for us to see and make our own of the precious truth set forth in those two sets of tables, namely, the failure of everything in the hands of man, and the eternal stability of God's covenant of grace, ratified by the blood of Christ, and to be displayed in all its glorious results, in the kingdom, by-and-by, when the Son of David shall reign from sea to sea, and from

the river to the ends of the earth; when the seed of Abraham shall possess, according to the divine gift, the land of promise; and when all the nations of the earth shall rejoice under the beneficent reign of the Prince of peace.

Bright and glorious prospect for the now desolate land of Israel, and this groaning earth of ours! The King of righteousness and peace will then have it all His own way. All evil will be put down with a powerful hand. There will be no weakness in that government. No rebel tongue will be permitted to prate, in accents of insolent sedition, against the decrees and enactments thereof. No rude and senseless demagogue will be allowed to disturb the peace of the people, or to insult the majesty of the throne. Every abuse will be put down, every disturbing element will be neutralised, every stumbling-block will be removed, and every root of bitterness eradicated. The poor and the needy shall be well looked after; yea, all shall be divinely attended to; toil, sorrow, poverty and desolation shall be unknown; the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. "Behold a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgement. And a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from

the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

Reader, what glorious scenes are yet to be enacted in this poor sin-stricken, Satan-enslaved, sorrowful world of ours! How refreshing to think of them! What a relief to the heart amid all the mental misery, the moral degradation, and physical wretchedness exhibited around us, on every side! Thank God, the day is rapidly approaching when the prince of this world shall be hurled from his throne and consigned to the bottomless pit, and the Prince of heaven, the glorious Emmanuel shall stretch forth His blessed sceptre over the wide universe of God, and heaven and earth shall bask in the sunlight of His royal countenance. Well may we cry out, O Lord, hasten the time!

"And the children of Israel took their journey from Beeroth of the children of Jaakan to Mosera; there Aaron died, and there he was buried; and Eleazar his son ministered in the priest's office in his stead. From thence they journeyed to Gudgodah; and from Gudgodah to Jotbath, a land of rivers of waters. At that time the Lord separated the tribe of Levi, to bear the ark of the covenant, to stand before the Lord to minister to him, and to bless in his name, to this day. Wherefore Levi has no part nor

inheritance with his brethren; the Lord is his inheritance, according as the Lord thy God promised him."

The reader must not allow his mind to be disturbed by any question of historical sequence in the foregoing passage. It is simply a parenthesis in which the lawgiver groups together, in a very striking and forcible manner, circumstances culled, with holy skill, from the history of the people, illustrative, at once, of the government and grace of God. The death of Aaron exhibits the former; the election and elevation of Levi, presents the latter. Both are placed together not with a view to chronology, but for the grand moral end which was ever present to the mind of the lawgiver — an end which lies far away beyond the range of infidel reason, but which commends itself to the heart and understanding of the devout student of scripture.

How utterly contemptible are the quibbles of the infidel when looked at in the brilliant light of divine inspiration! How miserable the condition of a mind which can occupy itself with chronological hair splittings in order, if possible, to find a flaw in the divine Volume, instead of grasping the real aim and object of the inspired writer!

But why does Moses bring in, in this parenthetical and apparently abrupt manner, those two special events in Israel's history? Simply to move the heart of the people toward the one grand point of obedience. To this end he culls and groups according to the wisdom given to him. Do we expect to find in this divinely taught servant of God the petty preciseness of a mere copyist? Infidels may affect to do so; but true Christians know better. A mere scribe could copy events in their chronological order; a true prophet will bring those events to bear, in a moral way, upon the heart and conscience. Thus, while the poor deluded infidel is groping amid the shadows of his own creation, the pious student delights himself in the moral glories of that peerless Volume which stands like a rock, against which the waves of infidel thought dash themselves with contemptible impotency.

We do not attempt to dwell upon the circumstances referred to in the above parenthesis; they have been gone into elsewhere, and therefore we only feel it needful, in this place, to point out to the reader what we may venture to call the Deuteronomic bearing of the facts — the use which the lawgiver makes of them to strengthen the foundation of his final appeal to the

heart and conscience of the people, to give pungency and power to his exhortation, as he urged upon them the absolute necessity of unqualified obedience to the statutes and judgments of their covenant God. Such was his reason for referring to the solemn fact of the death of Aaron. They were to remember that, notwithstanding Aaron's high position as the high priest of Israel, yet he was stripped of his robes and deprived of his life for disobedience to the word of Jehovah. How important, then, that they should take heed to themselves! The government of God was not to be trifled with, and the very fact of Aaron's elevation only rendered it all the more needful that his sin should be dealt with, in order that others might fear.

And then they were to remember the Lord's dealings with Levi in which grace shines with such marvellous lustre. The fierce, cruel, self-willed Levi was taken up from the depths of his moral ruin and brought nigh to God, "to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord, to minister to him, and to bless in his name.

But why should this account of Levi be coupled with the death of Aaron? Simply to set forth the blessed consequences of obedience. If the death of Aaron displayed the awful result of

disobedience, the elevation of Levi illustrates the precious fruit of obedience. Hear what the prophet Malachi says on this point. "And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment to you, that my covenant might be with Levi, says the Lord of hosts. My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips; he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity." Mal. 2:4-6.

This is a very remarkable passage, and throws much light upon the subject now before us. It tells us distinctly that Jehovah gave His covenant of life and peace to Levi "for the fear wherewith he feared" Him on the terrible occasion of the golden calf which Aaron (himself a Levite of the very highest order) made. Why was Aaron judged? Because of his rebellion at the waters of Meribah. (Num. 20:24.) Why was Levi blessed? Because of his reverent obedience at the foot of mount Horeb. (Ex. 32.) Why are both grouped together in Deuteronomy 10? In order to impress upon the heart and conscience of the congregation the urgent necessity of implicit obedience to the commandments of their covenant God. How perfect is scripture in all its parts!

How beautifully it hangs together! And how plain it is to the devout reader that the lovely book of Deuteronomy has its own divine niche to fill, its own distinctive work to do, its own appointed sphere, scope and object! How manifest it is that the fifth division of the Pentateuch is neither a contradiction nor a repetition, but a divine application of its divinely inspired predecessors! And, finally, we cannot help adding — how convincing the evidence that infidel writers know neither what they say nor whereof they affirm, when they dare to insult the Oracles of God — yea, that they greatly err, not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God!\*

\* We have, in human writings, numerous examples of the same thing that infidels object to in Deuteronomy 10:6-9. Suppose a man is anxious to call the attention of the English nation to some great principle of political economy, or some matter of national importance; he does not hesitate to select facts however widely separated on the page of history, and group them together in order to illustrate his subject. Do infidels object to this? No; not when found in the writings of men. It is only when it occurs in scripture, because they hate the word of God, and cannot bear the idea that He should give to His creatures a book-revelation of His mind. Blessed be His Name, He has given it notwithstanding, and we have it in all its infinite pre-

ciousness, and divine authority, for the comfort of our hearts, and the guidance of our path, amid all the darkness and confusion of this scene through which we are passing home to glory.

At verse 10 of our chapter, Moses returns to the subject of his discourse. "And I stayed in the mount, according to the first time, forty days and forty nights; and the Lord hearkened to me at that time also, and the Lord would not destroy thee. And the Lord said to me, Arise, take thy journey before the people, that they may go in and possess the land which I sware to their fathers to give to them."

Jehovah would accomplish His promise to the fathers, spite of every hindrance. He would put Israel in full possession of the land concerning which He had sworn to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give it to their seed for an everlasting inheritance.

"And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul. To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day, for thy good." It was all for their real good, their deep, full blessing to walk in the way of the divine commandments. The path of whole-

hearted obedience is the only path of true happiness; and blessed be God, this path can always be trodden by those who love the Lord.

This is an unspeakable comfort, at all times. God has given us His precious word, the perfect revelation of His mind; and He has given us what Israel had not, even His Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts whereby we can understand and appreciate His word. Hence our obligations are vastly higher than were Israel's. We are bound to a life of obedience by every argument that could be brought to bear on the heart and understanding.

And surely it is for our good to be obedient. There is indeed "great reward" in keeping the commandments of our loving Father. Every thought of Him and of His gracious ways, every reference to His marvellous dealings with us — His loving ministry, His tender care, His thoughtful love — all should bind our hearts in affectionate devotion to Him, and quicken our steps in treading the path of loving obedience to Him. Wherever we turn our eyes we are met by the most powerful evidences of His claim upon our heart's affections and upon all the energies of our ransomed being. And, blessed be His Name, the more fully we are enabled by His grace to respond to His

most precious claims, the brighter and happier our path must be. There is nothing in all this world more deeply blessed than the path and portion of an obedient soul. "Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them." The lowly disciple, who finds his meat and his drink in doing the will of his beloved Lord and Master, possesses a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. True, he may be misunderstood and misinterpreted; he may be dubbed narrow and bigoted, and such-like; but none of these things move him. One approving smile from his Lord is more than ample recompense for all the reproach that men can heap upon him. He knows how to estimate at their proper worth the thoughts of men; they are to him as the chaff which the wind drives away. The deep utterance of his heart, as he moves steadily along the sacred path of obedience, is

*"Let me my febleness recline  
On that eternal love of Thine,  
And human thoughts forget;  
Child-like attend what Thou wilt say  
Go forth and serve Thee while 'tis day,  
Nor leave Thy sweet retreat."*

In the closing verses of our chapter, the lawgiver seems to rise higher and higher in his presentation of moral motives for obedience, and to come closer and closer to the hearts of the people. "Behold," he says, "the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the Lord's thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day." What a marvellous privilege to be chosen and loved by the Possessor of heaven and earth! What an honour to be called to serve and obey Him! Surely nothing in all this world could be higher or better. To be identified and associated with the Most High God, to have His Name called upon them, to be His peculiar people, His special possession, the people of His choice, to be set apart from all the nations of the earth to be the servants of Jehovah and His witnesses. What, we may ask, could exceed this, except it be that to which the church of God, and the individual believer are called?

Assuredly, our privileges are higher, inasmuch as we know God in a higher, deeper, nearer, more intimate manner than the nation of Israel ever did. We know Him as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as our God and Father. We have

the Holy Ghost dwelling in us, shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts, and leading us to cry, Abba, Father. All this is far beyond anything that God's earthly people ever knew or could know; and, inasmuch as our privileges are higher, His claims upon our hearty and unreserved obedience are also higher. Every appeal to the heart of Israel should come home, with augmented force to our hearts, beloved Christian reader; every exhortation addressed to them should speak, far more powerfully to us. We occupy the very highest ground on which any creature could stand. Neither the seed of Abraham on earth, nor the angels of God in heaven could say what we can say, or know what we know. We are linked and eternally associated with the risen and glorified Son of God. We can adopt as our own the wondrous language of 1 John 4.17, and say, "As he is so are we in this world." What can exceed this, as to privilege and dignity? Surely nothing save to be, in body, soul and spirit, conformed to His adorable image, as we shall be, ere long, through the abounding grace of God.

Well then let us ever bear in mind — yea, let us have it deep, deep, down in our hearts, that according to our privileges are our obligations. Let us not refuse the wholesome word "obliga-

tion" as though it had a legal ring about it. Far from it; it would be utterly impossible to conceive anything further removed from all thought of legality than the obligations which flow out of the Christian's position. It is a very serious mistake to be continually raising the cry of "Legal! Legal!" whenever the holy responsibilities of our position are pressed upon us. We believe that every truly pious Christian will delight in all the appeals and exhortations which the Holy Ghost addresses to us as to our obligations, seeing they are all grounded upon privileges conferred upon us by the sovereign grace of God, through the precious blood of Christ, and made good to us by the mighty ministry of the Holy Ghost.

But let us hearken still further to the stirring appeals of Moses. They are truly profitable for us, with all our higher light, knowledge and privilege.

"Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart and be no more stiff-necked. For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regards not persons, nor takes reward. He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loves the stranger, in giving him food and raiment."

Here Moses speaks not merely of God's doings and dealings and ways, but of Himself, of what He is. He is high over all, the great, the mighty and the terrible. But He has a heart for the widow and the fatherless — those helpless objects deprived of all earthly and natural props, the poor bereaved and broken-hearted widow, and the desolate orphan. God thinks of, and cares for such, in a very special way; they have a claim upon His loving heart and mighty hand. "A Father of the fatherless, and a Judge of the widow is God in his holy habitation." "She that is a widow indeed and desolate trusts in God, and continues in supplications and prayers night and day." "Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me."

What a rich provision is here for widows and orphans! How wondrous God's care of such! How many widows are much better off than when they had their husbands! How many orphans are better cared and provided for than when they had their parents! God looks after them! This is enough. Thousands of husbands and thousands of parents are worse by far than none; but God never fails those who are cast upon Him. He is ever true to His own Name, whatever relationship He takes. Let

all widows and orphans remember this for their comfort and encouragement.

And then the poor stranger! He is not forgotten. "He loves the stranger, in giving him food and raiment." How precious is this! Our God cares for all those who are bereft of earthly props, human hopes, and creature confidences. All such have a special claim upon Him to which He will, most surely, respond according to all the love of His heart. The widow, the fatherless and the stranger are the special objects of His tender care, and as such have but to look to Him, and draw upon His exhaustless resources in all their varied need.

But then He must be known in order to be trusted. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee; for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee." Those who do not know God would vastly prefer an insurance policy or a government annuity to His promise. But the true believer finds in that promise the unfailing stay of his heart, because he knows, and trusts, and loves the Promiser. He delights in the thought of being absolutely shut up to God, wholly dependent upon Him. He would not, for worlds, be in any other position. The very thing which would almost drive an unbeliever out of his senses is to

the Christian — the man of faith, the very deepest joy of his heart. The language of such an one will ever be, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock." Blessed position! Precious portion! May the reader know it as a divine reality, a living power, in his heart, by the mighty ministry of the Holy Ghost! Then will he be able to sit loose to earthly things. He will be able to tell the world that he is independent of it, having found all he wants, for time and eternity, in the living God and His Christ.

*"Thou, O Christ, art all I want;  
More than all in Thee I find."*

But let us specially note the provision which God makes for the stranger. It is very simple — "food and raiment." This is enough for a true stranger, as the blessed apostle says to his son Timothy, "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content."

Christian reader, let us ponder this. What a cure for restless ambition is here! What an antidote against covetousness! What a blessed deliverance from the feverish excitement of commer-

cial life, the grasping spirit of the age in which our lot is cast! If we were only content with the divinely appointed provision for the stranger, what a different tale we should have to tell! How calm and even would be the current of our daily life! How simple our habits and tastes! How unworldly our spirit and style! What moral elevation above the self-indulgence and luxury so prevalent amongst professing Christians! We should simply eat and drink to the glory of God, and to keep the body in proper working order. To go beyond this, either in eating or drinking, is to indulge in "fleshly lusts which war against the soul."

Alas! alas! how much of this there is, specially in reference to drink! It is perfectly appalling to think of the consumption of intoxicating drink amongst professing Christians. It is our thorough conviction that the devil has succeeded in ruining the testimony of hundreds, and in causing them to make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, by the use of stimulants. Thousands ruin their fortunes, ruin their families, ruin their health, ruin their souls through the senseless, vile and cursed desire for stimulants.

We are not going to preach a crusade against stimulants or narcotics. The wrong is not in the things themselves but in our inordinate and sinful use of them. It not infrequently happens that persons who fall under the horrible dominion of drink seek to lay the blame on their medical adviser; but surely no proper medical man would ever advise his patient to indulge in the use of stimulants. He may prescribe the use of "a little wine, for the stomach's sake and frequent infirmities," and he has the very highest authority for so doing; but why should this lead any one to become a drunkard? Each one is responsible to walk in the fear of God in reference to both eating and drinking. If a doctor prescribes a little nourishing food for his patient, is he to be blamed if that patient becomes a glutton? Surely not; the evil is not in the doctor's prescription, or in the stimulant, or in the nourishment, but in the wretched lust of the heart.

Here, we are persuaded, lies the root of the evil; and the remedy is found in that precious grace of God which while it brings salvation to all men, teaches those who are saved "to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world." And be it remembered that "to live soberly" means a great deal more than temperance in eating and drinking; it means this most

surely, but it takes in also the whole range of inward self-government — the government of the thoughts, the government of the temper, the government of the tongue. The grace that saves us not only tells us how to live, but teaches how to do it, and if we follow its teachings we shall be well content with God's provision for the stranger.

It is, at once, interesting and edifying to notice the way in which Moses sets the divine example before the people as their model. Jehovah "loves the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt." This is very touching. They were not only to keep before their eyes the divine model, but also to remember their own past history and experience, in order that their hearts might be drawn out in sympathy and compassion toward the poor homeless stranger. It was the bounden duty and high privilege of the Israel of God to place themselves in the circumstances and enter into the feelings of others. They were to be the moral representatives of that blessed One whose people they were, and whose Name was called upon them. They were to imitate Him in meeting the wants and gladdening the hearts of the fatherless, the widow, and the stranger. And if

God's earthly people were called to this lovely course of action, how much more are we who are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus." May we abide more in His presence, and drink more into His Spirit, that so we may more faithfully reflect His moral glories upon all with whom we come in contact!

The closing lines of our chapter give us a very fine summing up of the practical teaching which has been engaging our attention. "Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name. He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that has done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen. Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the Lord has made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude." Vers. 20-22.

How thoroughly bracing is all this to the moral being! This binding of the heart to the Lord Himself by means of all that He is and all His wondrous actings and gracious ways, is unspeakably precious. It is, we may truly say, the secret spring of all true devotedness. God grant that the writer and the reader may abidingly realise its motive power!

## Chapter 11

"Therefore thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgements, and his commandments, alway. And know ye this day; for I speak not with your children which have not known, and which have not seen the chastisements of the Lord your God, his greatness, his mighty hand, and his stretched out arm, and his miracles and his acts, which he did in the midst of Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt, and to all his land; and what he did to the army of Egypt, to their horses, and to their chariots; how he made the water of the Red Sea to overflow them as they pursued after you, and how the Lord has destroyed them to this day; and what he did to you in the wilderness, until ye came to this place; and what he did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben; how the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up, and their households, and their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel; but your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord which he did."

Moses felt it to be of the very highest importance that all the mighty acts of Jehovah should be kept prominently before the

hearts of the people, and deeply engraved on the tablets of their memory. The poor human mind is vagrant, and the heart volatile; and, notwithstanding all that Israel had seen of the solemn judgements of God upon Egypt and upon Pharaoh, they were in danger of forgetting them, and losing the impression which they were designed and eminently fitted to make upon them.

It may be we feel disposed to wonder how Israel could ever forget the impressive scenes of their history in Egypt from first to last — the descent of their fathers thither as a mere handful, their steady growth and progress, as a people, spite of formidable difficulties and hindrances, so that from the insignificant few they had become, by the good hand of their God upon them, as the stars of heaven for multitude.

And then those ten plagues upon the land of Egypt! How full of awful solemnity! How pre-eminently calculated to impress the heart with a sense of the mighty power of God, the utter impotency and insignificance of man, in all his boasted wisdom, strength and glory, and the egregious folly of his attempting to set himself up against the Almighty God! What was all the power of Pharaoh and of Egypt in the presence of the Lord God of Israel! In one hour all was plunged into hopeless ruin and

destruction. All the chariots of Egypt, all the pomp and glory, the valour and might of that ancient and far-famed nation — all was overwhelmed in the depths of the sea.

And why? Because they had presumed to meddle with the Israel of God; they had dared to set themselves in opposition to the eternal purpose and counsel of the Most High. They sought to crush those on whom He had set His love. He had sworn to bless the seed of Abraham, and no power of earth or hell could possibly annul His oath. Pharaoh, in his pride and hardness of heart, attempted to countervail the divine actings, but he only meddled to his own destruction. His land was shaken to its very centre, and himself and his mighty army overthrown in the Red Sea, a solemn example to all who should ever attempt to stand in the way of Jehovah's purpose to bless the seed of Abraham His friend.

Nor was it merely what Jehovah had done to Egypt and to Pharaoh that the people were called to remember, but also what He had done amongst themselves. How soul-subduing the judgement upon Dathan and Abiram and their households! How awful the thought of the earth opening her mouth and swallowing them up! And for what? For their rebellion against

the divine appointment. In the history given in Numbers, Korah, the Levite, is the prominent character; but here he is omitted, and the two Reubenites are named — two members of the congregation, because Moses is seeking to act on the whole body of the people by setting before them the terrible consequence of self-will in two of their number — two ordinary members, as we should say, and not merely a privileged Levite.

In a word, then, whether the attention was called to the divine actings without or within, abroad or at home, it was all for the purpose of impressing their hearts and minds with a deep sense of the moral importance of obedience. This was the one grand aim of all the rehearsals, all the comment, all the exhortations of the faithful servant of God who was so soon to be removed from their midst. For this he ranges over their history for centuries, culling, grouping, commenting, taking up this fact and omitting that, as guided by the Spirit of God. The journey down to Egypt, the sojourn there, the heavy judgements upon the self-willed Pharaoh, the exodus, the passage through the sea, the scenes in the wilderness, and specially, the awful fate of the two rebellious Reubenites — all is brought to bear, with marvellous force and clearness, upon the conscience of the people,

in order to strengthen the basis of Jehovah's claim upon their unqualified obedience to His holy commandments.

"Therefore shall ye keep all the commandments which I command you this day, that ye may be strong, and go in and possess the land, whither ye go to possess it; and that ye may prolong your days in the land, which the Lord sware to your fathers to give to them and to their seed, a land that flows with milk and honey."

Let the reader note the beautiful moral link between those two clauses, "Keep all the commandments" — "That ye may be strong." There is great strength gained by unreserved obedience to the word of God. It will not do to pick and choose. We are prone to this, prone to take up certain commandments and precepts which suit ourselves; but this is really self-will. What right have we to select such and such precepts from the word, and neglect others! None whatever. To do so is, in principle, simply self-will and rebellion. What business has a servant to decide as to which of his master's commands he will obey? Surely none whatever; each commandment stands clothed with the masters authority, and therefore claims the servant's attention; and, we may add, the more implicitly the servant obeys,

the more he bends his respectful attention to every one of his master's commands, be it ever so trivial, the more does he strengthen himself in his position and grow in his master's confidence and esteem. Every master loves and values an obedient, faithful, devoted servant. We all know what a comfort it is to have a servant whom we can trust, one who finds his delight in carrying out our every wish, and who does not require perpetual looking after, but knows his duty and attends to it.

Now, ought we not to seek to refresh the heart of our blessed Master, by a loving obedience to all His commandments? Only think, reader, what a privilege it is to be allowed to give joy to the heart of that blessed One who loved us and gave Himself for us. It is something wonderful that poor creatures such as we can in any way refresh the heart of Jesus; yet so it is, blessed be His Name! He delights in our keeping His commandments; and assuredly the thought of this should stir our whole moral being, and lead us to study His word, in order to find out, more and more, what His commandments are — so that we may do them.

We are forcibly reminded, by those words of Moses which we have just quoted, of the apostle's prayer for "the saints and faithful brethren in Christ at Colosse." "For this cause we also,

since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord to all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, to all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks to the Father, which has made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light; who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." (Col. 1:9-14.)

Making allowance for the difference between the earthly and the heavenly — between Israel and the church, there is a striking similarity between the words of the law-giver and the words of the apostle. Both together are eminently fitted to set forth the beauty and preciousness of a willing-hearted loving obedience. It is precious to the Father, precious to Christ, precious to the Holy Ghost; and this surely ought to be enough to create and strengthen in our hearts the desire to be filled with the knowledge of His will, that so we might walk worthy of

Him to all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God. It should lead us to a more diligent study of the word of God, so that we might be ever finding out more and more of our Lord's mind and will, learning what is well-pleasing to Him, and looking to Him for grace to do it. Thus should our hearts be kept near to Him, and we should find an ever-deepening interest in searching the scriptures not merely to grow in the knowledge of truth, but in the knowledge of God, the knowledge of Christ — the deep, personal, experimental knowledge of all that it treasured up in that blessed One who is the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Oh! may the Spirit of God, by His most precious and powerful ministry, awaken in us a more intense desire to know and to do the will of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, that thus we may refresh His loving heart and be well-pleasing to Him in all things!

We must now turn, for a moment, to the lovely picture of the promised land which Moses holds up before the eyes of the people. "For the land whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of

herbs: but the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinks water of the rain of heaven; a land which the Lord thy God cares for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even to the end of the year." (Vers. 10-12.)

What a vivid contrast between Egypt and Canaan! Egypt had no rain from heaven. It was all human effort there. Not so in the Lord's land; the human foot could do nothing there, nor was there any need, for the blessed rain from heaven dropped upon it; Jehovah Himself cared for it and watered it with the early and latter rain. The land of Egypt was dependent upon its own resources; the land of Canaan was wholly dependent upon God — upon what came down from heaven. "My river is mine own," was the language of Egypt. "The river of God" was the hope of Canaan. The habit in Egypt was to water with the foot; the habit in Canaan was to look up to heaven.

We have in the sixty-fifth Psalm a lovely statement of the condition of things in the Lord's land, as viewed by the eye of faith. "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it; thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God which is full of water; thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it. Thou wa-

terest the ridges thereof abundantly; thou settlest the furrows thereof; thou makest it soft with showers; thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness; and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing." (Vers. 9-13.)

How perfectly beautiful! Only think of God watering the ridges, and settling the furrows! Think of His stooping down to do the work of a husbandman for His people! Yes, and delighting to do it! It was the joy of His heart to pour His sunbeams and His refreshing showers upon the "hills and valleys" of His beloved people. It was refreshing to His spirit, as it was to the praise of His Name to see the vine, the fig-tree and the olive flourishing, the valleys covered with the golden grain, and the rich pastures covered with flocks of sheep.

Thus it should ever have been, and thus it would have been, had Israel only walked in simple obedience to the holy law of God. "It shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently to my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart, and with

all your soul, that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full." (Vers. 13-15)

Thus the matter stood between the God of Israel, and the Israel of God. Nothing could be simpler, nothing more blessed. It was Israel's high and holy privilege to love and serve Jehovah; it was Jehovah's prerogative to bless and prosper Israel. Happiness and fruitfulness were to be the sure accompaniments of obedience. The people and their land were wholly dependent upon God; all their supplies were to come down from heaven, and hence so long as they walked in loving obedience the copious showers dropped upon their fields and vineyards; the heavens dropped down the dew, and the earth responded in fruitfulness and blessing.

But, on the other hand, when Israel forgot the Lord, and forsook His precious commandments, the heaven became brass and the earth iron; barrenness, desolation, famine and misery were the melancholy accompaniments of disobedience. How could it be otherwise? "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall

eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

Now, in all this there is deep practical instruction for the church of God. Although we are not under law, we are called to obedience, and as we are enabled through grace to yield a loving hearty obedience, we are blessed in our own spiritual state, our souls are watered, refreshed and strengthened, and we bring forth the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

The reader may refer with much profit, in connection with this great practical subject, to the opening of John 15 — a most precious scripture, and one demanding the earnest attention of every true-hearted child of God. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that bears not fruit he takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, he purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abides in me, and I in him, the

same brings forth much fruit; for without [or apart from] me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men 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 what ye will, and it shall be done to you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." (Vers. 1-10.)

This weighty passage of scripture has suffered immensely through theological controversy and religious strife. It is as plain as it is practical, and only needs to be taken as it stands, in its own divine simplicity. If we seek to import into it what does not belong to it, we mar its integrity and miss its true application. In it we have Christ, the true vine, taking the place of Israel who had become to Jehovah the degenerate plant of a strange vine. The scene of the parable is obviously earth and not heaven; we do not think of a vine and a husbandman (georgos) in heaven. Besides, our Lord says, "I am the true vine."

The figure is very distinct. It is not the Head and the members, but a tree and its branches. Moreover, the subject of the parable is as distinct as the parable itself; it is not eternal life, but fruit-bearing. If this were borne in mind, it would greatly help to an understanding of this much misunderstood passage of scripture.

In a word then, we learn from the figure of the vine and its branches that the true secret of fruit-bearing is to abide in Christ, and the way to abide in Christ is to keep His precious commandments. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love." This makes it all so simple. The way to bear fruit in season is to abide in the love of Christ, and this abiding is proved by our treasuring up His commandments in our hearts and a loving obedience to every one of them. It is not running hither and thither in the mere energy of nature; it is not the excitement of mere fleshly zeal displaying itself in spasmodic efforts after devotedness. No; it is something quite different from all this; it is the calm and holy obedience of the heart — a loving obedience to our own beloved Lord which refreshes His heart and glorifies His Name.

*"How blest are they who still abide*

*Close sheltered by Thy watchful side;  
Who life and strength from Thee receive,  
And with Thee move and in Thee live."*

Reader, may we apply our hearts diligently to this great subject of fruit-bearing. May we better understand what it is. We are apt to make great mistakes about it. It is to be feared that much — very much of what passes for fruit would not be accredited in the divine presence. God cannot own anything as fruit which is not the direct result of abiding in Christ. We may earn a great name among our fellows for zeal, energy and devotedness; we may be abundant in labours, in every department of the work; we may acquit ourselves as great travellers, great preachers, earnest workers in the vineyard, great philanthropists and moral reformers; we may spend a princely fortune in promoting all the great objects of Christian benevolence, and all the while not produce a single cluster of fruit acceptable to the Father's heart.

And, on the other hand, it may be our lot to pass the time of our sojourn here in obscurity and retirement from human gaze; we may be little accounted of by the world and the professing church; we may seem to leave but little mark on the sands of

time; but if only we abide in Christ, abide in His love, treasure up His precious words in our hearts, and yield ourselves up to a holy and loving obedience to His commandments, then shall our fruit be in season, and our Father will be glorified, and we shall grow in the experimental knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We shall now look for a moment at the remainder of our chapter in which Moses, in words of intense earnestness, presses upon the congregation the urgent need of watchfulness and diligence in reference to all the statutes and judgments of the Lord their God. The beloved and faithful servant of God, and true lover of the people was unwearied in his efforts to brace them up to that whole-hearted obedience which he knew to be, at once, the spring of their happiness and their fruitfulness; and just as our blessed Lord warns His disciples by setting before them the solemn judgement of the unfruitful branch, so does Moses warn the people as to the sure and terrible consequences of disobedience.

"Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them." Sad progress downward! The heart deceived. This is the beginning

of all declension. "And ye turn aside." The feet are sure to follow the heart. Hence the deep need of keeping the heart with all diligence; it is the citadel of the whole moral being, and so long as it is kept for the Lord, the enemy can gain no advantage; but when once it is surrendered, all is really gone; there is the turning aside; the secret departure of the heart is proved by the practical ways; "other gods" are served and worshipped. The descent down along the inclined plane is terribly rapid.

"And then" — mark the sure and solemn consequences — "the Lord's wrath be kindled against you, and he shut up the heaven, that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit; and ye perish quickly from off the good land which the Lord gives you." What barrenness and desolation there must be when heaven is shut up! No refreshing showers coming down, no dewdrops falling, no communication between the heaven and the earth. Alas! how often had Israel tasted the awful reality of this! "He turns rivers into a wilderness, and the water-springs into dry ground; a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein."

And may we not see in the barren land and the desolate wilderness an apt and striking illustration of a soul out of communion

through disobedience to the precious commandments of Christ? Such an one has no refreshing communications with heaven — no showers coming down — no unfoldings of the preciousness of Christ to the heart — no sweet ministrations of an unrieved Spirit to the soul; the Bible seems a sealed book; all is dark, dreary and desolate. Oh! there cannot be anything more miserable in all this world than a soul in this condition. May the writer and the reader never experience it! May we bend our ears to the fervent exhortations addressed by Moses to the congregation of Israel! They are most seasonable, most healthful, most needful in this day of cold indifferentism and positive wilfulness. They set before us the divine antidote against the special evils to which the church of God is exposed at this very hour — an hour critical and solemn beyond all human conception.

"Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up; and thou shalt write them upon

the door-posts of thine house, and upon thy gates, that your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord sware to your fathers to give them, as the days of heaven upon the earth."

Blessed days! And oh! how ardently the large, loving heart of Moses longed that the people might enjoy many such days! And how simple the condition! Truly nothing could be simpler, nothing more precious. It was not a heavy yoke laid upon them, but the sweet privilege of treasuring up the precious commandments of the Lord their God, in their hearts, and breathing the very atmosphere of His holy word. All was to hinge upon this. All the blessings of the land of Canaan — that goodly, highly favoured land, a land flowing with milk and honey, a land on which Jehovah's eyes ever rested in loving interest and tender care — all its precious fruits, all its rare privileges were to be theirs in perpetuity, on the one simple condition of loving obedience to the word of their covenant God.

"For if ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to cleave to him; then will the Lord drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess

greater nations and mightier than yourselves." In a word, sure and certain victory was before them, a most complete overthrow of all enemies and obstacles, a triumphal march into the promised inheritance — all secured to them on the blessed ground of affectionate and reverential obedience to the most precious statutes and judgments that had ever been addressed to the human heart — statutes and judgements every one of which was but the very voice of their most gracious Deliverer.

"Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours; from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even to the uttermost sea, shall your coast be. There shall no man be able to stand before you; for the Lord your God shall lay the fear of you and the dread of you upon all the land that ye shall tread upon, as he has said to you."

Here was the divine side of the question. The whole land, in its length, breadth and fulness, lay before them; they had but to take possession of it, as the free gift of God; it was for them simply to plant the foot, in artless appropriating faith, upon that fair inheritance which sovereign grace had bestowed upon them. All this we see made good in the Book of Joshua, as we read in Joshua 11. "So Joshua took the whole land, according to

all that the Lord said to Moses; and Joshua gave it for an inheritance to Israel, according to their divisions by their tribes. And the land rested from war." (Ver. 23.)\*

\* No doubt it was in faith that Joshua took — and could take nothing less than — the whole land. But as to actual possession, Joshua 13:1 shows there was "yet much land to be possessed."

But alas! there was the human side of the question as well as the divine. Canaan as promised by Jehovah and made good by the faith of Joshua, was one thing; and Canaan as possessed by Israel, was quite another. Hence the vast difference between Joshua and Judges. In Joshua we see the infallible faithfulness of God to His promise; in Judges, we see Israel's miserable failure from the very outset. God pledged His immutable word that not a man should be able to stand before them; and the sword of Joshua — type of the great Captain of our salvation — made good this pledge in its every jot and tittle. But the Book of Judges records the melancholy fact that Israel failed to drive out the enemy — failed to take possession of the divine grant in all its royal magnificence.

What then? Is the promise of God made of none effect? Nay, verily, but the utter failure of man is made apparent. At

"Gilgal" the banner of victory floated over the twelve tribes, with their invincible captain at their head. At "Bochim" the weepers had to mourn over Israel's lamentable defeat.

Have we any difficulty in understanding the difference? None whatever; we see the two things running all through the divine Volume. Man fails to rise to the height of the divine revelation — fails to take possession of what grace bestows. This is as true in the history of the church as it was in the history of Israel. In the New Testament, as well as in the Old, we have Judges as well as Joshua.

Yes, reader, and in the history of each individual member of the church we see the same thing. Where is the Christian, beneath the canopy of heaven, that lives up to the height of his spiritual privileges? Where is the child of God who has not to mourn over his humiliating failure in grasping and making good practically the high and holy privileges of his calling of God? But does this make the truth of God of none effect? No; blessed for ever be His Holy Name! His word holds good in all its divine integrity and eternal stability. Just as in Israel's case, the land of promise lay before them in all its fair proportions and divinely given attractions; and not only so, but they could count on the

faithfulness and almighty power of God to bring them in and put them in full possession; so with us, we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ; there is absolutely no limit to the privileges connected with our standing, and as to our actual enjoyment it is only a question of faith taking possession of all that God's sovereign grace has made ours in Christ.

We must never forget that it is the privilege of the Christian to live at the very height of the divine revelation. There is no excuse for a shallow experience or a low walk. We have no right whatever to say that we cannot realise the fulness of our portion in Christ, that the standard is too high, the privileges are too vast, that we cannot expect to enjoy such marvellous blessings and dignities in our present imperfect state.

All this is downright unbelief, and should be so treated by every true Christian. The question is, Has the grace of God bestowed the privileges upon us? Has the death of Christ made good our title to them? And has the Holy Ghost declared them to be the proper portion of the very feeblest member of the body of Christ? If so — and scripture declares it is so — why should we not enjoy them? There is no hindrance on the divine

side. It is the desire of the heart of God that we should enter into the fulness of our portion in Christ. Hear the earnest breathing of the inspired apostle, on behalf of the saints at Ephesus, and of all saints. "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and has put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that fills all in all" (Eph. 1:15-23.)

From this marvellous prayer we may learn how earnestly the Spirit of God desires that we should apprehend and enjoy the glorious privileges of the true Christian position. He would ever, by His precious and powerful ministry, keep our hearts up to the mark; but alas! like Israel, we grieve Him by our sinful unbelief, and rob our own souls of incalculable blessing.

But, all praise to the God of all grace, the Father of glory, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, He will yet make good every jot and tittle of His most precious truth, both as to His earthly and heavenly people. Israel shall yet enjoy to the full all the blessings secured to them by the everlasting covenant; and the church shall yet enter upon the perfect fruition of all that which eternal love and divine counsels have laid up for her in Christ; and not only so, but the blessed Comforter is able and willing to lead the individual believer into the present enjoyment of the hope of God's glorious calling, and the practical power of that hope, in detaching the heart from present things and separating it to God in true holiness and living devotedness.

May our hearts, beloved Christian reader, long more ardently after the full realisation of all this, that thus we may live more

as those who are finding their portion and their rest in a risen and glorified Christ! God, in His infinite goodness, grant it, for Jesus Christ's Name and glory's sake!

The remaining verses of our chapter close the first division of the Book of Deuteronomy which, as the reader will notice, consists of a series of discourses addressed by Moses to the congregation of Israel — memorable discourses, most surely, in whatever way we view them. The closing sentences are, we need hardly say, in perfect keeping with the whole, and breathe the same deep-toned earnestness in reference to the subject of obedience — a subject which, as we have seen, formed the special burden on the heart of the beloved speaker in his affecting farewell addresses to the people.

"Behold, I set before you this day s blessing and a curse" — How pointed and solemn is this! — "A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day; and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known. And it shall come to pass, when the Lord thy God has brought thee in to the land whither thou goest to possess it, that

thou shalt put the blessing upon mount Gerazim, and the curse upon mount Ebal. Are they not on the other side Jordan, by the way where the sun goes down, in the land of the Canaanites, which dwell in the champaign over against Gilgal, beside the plains of Moreh? For ye shall pass over Jordan, to go in to possess the land which the Lord your God gives you, and ye shall possess it, and dwell therein. AND YE SHALL OBSERVE TO DO ALL THE STATUTES AND JUDGMENTS WHICH I SET BEFORE YOU THIS DAY." (Vers. 26-32.)

Here we have the summing up of the whole matter. The blessing is linked on to obedience; the curse, to disobedience. Mount Gerazim stands over against mount Ebal — fruitfulness and barrenness. We shall see, when we come to Deuteronomy 27, that mount Gerazim and its blessings are entirely passed over. The curses of mount Ebal fall, with awful distinctness, on Israel's ear, while terrible silence reigns on mount Gerazim. "As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." The blessing of Abraham can only come on those who are on the ground of faith. But more of this, by-and-by.

## **Chapter 12.**

We now enter upon a new section of our marvellous book. The discourses contained in the first eleven chapters having established the all-important principle of obedience, we now come to the practical application of the principle to the habits and ways of the people when settled in possession of the land. "These are the statutes and judgements which ye shall observe to do in the land which the Lord God of thy fathers gives thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth"

It is of the utmost moral importance that the heart and conscience should be brought into their true attitude in reference to divine authority, irrespective altogether of any question as to details. These will find their due place when once the heart is taught to bow down, in complete and absolute submission, to the supreme authority of the word of God.

Now, as we have seen in our studies on the first eleven chapters, the law-giver labours, most earnestly and faithfully, to lead the heart of Israel into this all-essential condition. He felt, to speak after the manner of men, it was of no use entering upon practical details until the grand foundation principle of all morality was fully established in the very deepest depths of the

soul. The principle is this — let us Christians apply our hearts to it — It is man's bounden duty to bow implicitly to the authority of the word of God. It matters not, in the smallest degree, what that word may enjoin, or whether we can see the reason of this, that or the other institution. The one grand, all-important and conclusive point is this, Has God spoken? If He has, that is quite enough. There is no room, no need for any further question.

Until this point is fully established, or rather until the heart is brought directly under its full moral force, we are not in a condition to enter upon details. If self-will be allowed to operate, if blind reason be permitted to speak, the heart will send up its endless questionings; as each divine institution is laid before us, some fresh difficulty will present itself as a stumbling-block in the path of simple obedience.

"What!" it may be said, "Are we not to use our reason? If not, to what end was it given?" To this we have a twofold reply. In the first place, our reason is not as it was when God gave it. We have to remember that sin has come in; man is a fallen creature, his reason, his judgement, his understanding, his whole moral being is a complete wreck; and moreover, it was

the neglect of the word of God that caused all this wreck and ruin.

And, then, in the second place, we must bear in mind that if reason were in a sound condition, it would prove its soundness by bowing to the word of God. But it is not sound; it is blind and utterly perverted; it is not to be trusted for a moment, in things spiritual, divine or heavenly.

If this simple fact were thoroughly understood, it would settle a thousand questions and remove a thousand difficulties. It is reason that makes all the infidels. The devil whispers into man's ear, "You are endowed with reason; why not use it? It was given to be used, used in everything; you ought not to give your assent to anything which your reason cannot grasp. It is your chartered right, as a man, to submit everything to the test of your reason; it is only for a fool or an idiot to receive, in blind credulity, all that is set before him."

What is our answer to such wily and dangerous suggestions? A very simple and conclusive one, namely this. The word of God is above and beyond reason altogether; it is as far above reason as God is above the creature, or heaven above earth. Hence,

when God speaks, all reasonings must be cast down. If it be merely man's word, man's opinion, man's judgement, then verily reason may exert its powers; or rather, to speak more correctly, we must judge what is said by the only perfect standard, the word of God. But if reason be set to work on the word of God, the soul must inevitably be plunged in the thick darkness of infidelity from which the descent to the awful blackness of atheism is but too easy.

In a word, then, we have to remember, yea, to cherish in the very deepest depths of our moral being, that the only safe ground for the soul is divinely wrought faith in the paramount authority, divine majesty, and all-sufficiency of the word of God. This was the ground which Moses occupied in dealing with the heart and conscience of Israel. His one grand object was to lead the people into the attitude of profound, unqualified subjection to divine authority. Without this all was useless. If every statute, every judgement, every precept, every institution were to be submitted to the action of human reason, then farewell to divine authority, farewell to scripture, farewell to certainty, farewell to peace. But, on the other hand, when the soul is led by God's Spirit into the delightful attitude of abso-

lute and unquestioning submission to the authority of God's word, then every one of His judgements, every one of His commandments, every sentence of His blessed Book is received as coming direct from Himself; and the most simple ordinance or institution, stands invested with all the importance which His authority is fitted to impart. We may not be able to understand the full meaning or exact bearing of each statute and judgement; that is not the question; it is sufficient for us to know that it comes from God; He has spoken; this is conclusive. Till this great principle is grasped, or rather till it takes full possession of the soul, nothing is done; but when it is fully understood and submitted to, the solid foundation is laid of all true morality.

The foregoing line of thought will enable the reader to seize the connection between the chapter which now lies open before us, and the preceding section of this book; and not only will it do this, but we trust it will also help him to understand the special place and bearing of the opening verses of chapter 12.

"Ye shall utterly destroy all the places wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree. And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn

their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place." (Vers. 2, 3)

The land was Jehovah's; they were to hold as tenants under Him, and therefore their very first duty on entering upon possession, was to demolish every trace of the old idolatry. This was absolutely indispensable. It might, according to human reason, seem to be very intolerant to act in this way towards other people's religion. We reply, without any hesitation, Yes, it was intolerant, for how could the one only true and living God be otherwise than intolerant of all false gods and false worships. To suppose, for moment, that He could permit the worship of idols in His land, would be to suppose that He could deny Himself, which were simply blasphemy.

Let us not be misunderstood. It is not that God does not bear with the world, in His long-suffering mercy. It seems hardly needful to state this, with the history of well-nigh six thousand years of divine forbearance before our eyes. Blessed for ever be His holy Name, He has borne with the world most marvelously, from the days of Noah, and He still bears with it, though stained with the guilt of crucifying His beloved Son.

All this is vain, but it leaves wholly untouched the great principle laid down in our chapter. Israel had to learn that they were about to take possession of the Lord's land, and that, as His tenants, their first and indispensable duty was to obliterate every trace of idolatry. To them there was to be but "the one God." His Name was called upon them. They were His people, and He could not permit them to have fellowship with demons. "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God; and him only shalt thou serve."

This might, in the judgement of the uncircumcised nations around, seem very intolerant, very narrow, very bigoted. They indeed might boast of their freedom, and glory in the broad platform of their worship which admitted "gods many and lords many." It might, according to their thinking, argue greater breadth of mind to let every one think for himself in matters of religion, and choose his own object of worship, and his own mode of worshipping also. Or, still further, it might give evidence of a more advanced condition of civilisation, greater polish and refinement to erect, as in Rome, a pantheon in which all the gods of Heathendom might find a place. "What did it matter about the form of a man's religion, or the object of his worship,

provided he himself were sincere? All would be sure to come right in the end; the great point for all was to attend to material progress, to help on national prosperity as the surest means of securing individual interests. Of course, it is all right for every man to have some religion, but as to the form of that religion it is immaterial. The great question is what you are yourself, not what your religion is."

All this, we can well conceive, would admirably suit the carnal mind, and be very popular amongst the uncircumcised nations. But as for Israel, they had to remember that one commanding sentence, "The Lord thy God is one God." And again, "Thou shalt have none other gods before me;" This was to be their religion; the platform of their worship was to be as wide and as narrow as the one true and living God, their Creator and Redeemer. That, assuredly, was broad enough for every true worshipper, every member of the circumcised assembly, all whose high and holy privilege it was to belong to the Israel of God. They were not to concern themselves with the opinions or observations of the uncircumcised nations around. What were they worth? Not the weight of a feather. What could they know about the claims of the God of Israel upon His circumcised

people? Just nothing. Were they competent to decide as to the proper breadth of Israel's platform? Clearly not; they were wholly ignorant of the subject. Hence their thoughts, reasonings, arguments and objections were perfectly worthless, not to be listened to for a moment. It was Israel's one simple, bounden duty to bow down to the supreme and absolute authority of the word of God; and that word insisted upon the complete abolition of every trace of idolatry from that goodly land which they were privileged to hold as tenants under Him.

But not only was it incumbent upon Israel to abolish all the places in which the heathen had worshipped their gods; this they were solemnly bound to do, most surely; but there was more than this. The heart might readily conceive the thought of doing away with idolatry, in the various places, and setting up the altar of the true God instead. This might seem to be the right course to adopt. But God thought differently. "Ye shall not do so to the Lord your God. But to the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes, to put his name there, even to his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come; and thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand,

and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks; and there ye shall eat before the Lord your God; and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand to, ye and your households, wherein the Lord thy God has blessed thee."

Here a great cardinal truth is unfolded to the congregation of Israel. They were to have one place of worship — a place chosen of God and not of man. His habitation — the place of His presence was to be Israel's grand centre; thither they were to come with their sacrifices and their offerings, and there they were to offer their worship, and find their common joy.

Does this seem exclusive? Of course it was exclusive; how else could it be? If God was pleased to select a spot in which He would take up His abode in the midst of His redeemed people, surely they were, of necessity, shut up to that spot as their place of worship. This was divine exclusiveness, and every pious soul would delight in it. Every true lover of Jehovah would say, with all his heart, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwells." And, again, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longs; yea, even faints for the courts of the Lord; my heart and

my flesh cries out for the living God..... Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee ... A day in Thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." (Psalms 26:84.)

Here was the one grand and all-important point. It was the dwelling-place of Jehovah which was dear to the heart of every true Israelite. Restless self-will might desire to run hither and thither; the poor vagrant heart might long for some change; but, for the heart that loved God, any change from the place of His presence, the place where He had recorded His blessed Name, could only be a change for the worse. The truly devout worshipper could find satisfaction and delight, blessing and rest only in the place of the divine presence; and this, on the double ground, the authority of His precious word, and the powerful attractions of His presence. Such an one could never think of going anywhere else. Whither could he go? There was but one altar, one habitation, one God, that was the place for every right-minded, every true-hearted Israelite. To think of any other place of worship would, in his judgement, be not only a departure from the word of Jehovah, but from His holy habitation.

This great principle is largely insisted upon throughout the whole of our chapter. Moses reminds the people that from the moment they entered Jehovah's land, there was to be an end to all the irregularity and self-will that had characterised them in the plains of Moab or in the wilderness. "Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes. For ye are not as yet come to the rest, and to the inheritance, which the Lord your God gives you. But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God gives you to inherit, and when he gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety; then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose, to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you ... Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt-offerings in every place that thou seest; but in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee." (Vers. 4-14.)

Thus, not only in the object, but also in the place and mode of Israel's worship, they were absolutely shut up to the commandment of Jehovah. Self pleasing, self-choosing, self-will was to

have an end, in reference to the worship of God, the moment they crossed the river of death, and, as a redeemed people planted their foot on their divinely given inheritance. Once there, in the enjoyment of Jehovah's land, and the rest which the land afforded, obedience to His word was to be their reasonable, their intelligent service. Things might be allowed to pass in the wilderness which could not be tolerated in Canaan. The higher the range of privilege, the higher the responsibility and the standard of action.

Now, it may be that our broad thinkers, and those who contend for freedom of will and freedom of action, for the right of private judgement in matters of religion, for liberality of mind and catholicity of spirit, will be ready to pronounce all this, which has been engaging our attention, extremely narrow, and wholly unsuited to our enlightened age, and to men of intelligence and education.

What is our answer to all who adopt this form of speech? A very simple and conclusive one; it is this, Has not God a right to prescribe the mode in which His people should worship Him? Had He not a perfect right to fix the place where He would meet His people Israel? Surely we must either deny His

existence, or admit His absolute and unquestionable right to set forth His will as to how, when and where His people should approach Him. Will any one, however educated and enlightened, deny this? Is it a proof of high culture, refinement, breadth of mind or catholicity of spirit, to deny God His rights.

If then God has a right to command, is it narrowness or bigotry for His people to obey? This is just the point. It is, in our judgment, as simple as anything can be. We are thoroughly convinced that the only true breadth of mind, largeness of heart and catholicity of spirit, is to obey the commandments of God. Hence, when Israel were commanded to go to one place and there offer their sacrifices, it most assuredly was neither bigotry nor narrowness on their part to go thither, and to refuse, with holy decision, to go anywhere else. Uncircumcised Gentiles might go where they pleased; the Israel of God were to go only to the place of His appointment.

And oh! what an unspeakable privilege for all who loved God and loved one another to assemble themselves at the place where He recorded His Name! And what touching grace shines in the fact of His desiring to gather His people round Himself, from time to time! Did that fact infringe their personal rights

and domestic privileges? Nay, it enhanced them immensely. God, in His infinite goodness, took care of this. It was His delight to minister to the joy and blessing of His people, privately, socially and publicly. Hence we read, "When the Lord thy God shall enlarge thy border, as he has promised thee, and thou shalt say, I will eat flesh, because thy soul longs to eat flesh, thou mayest eat flesh, whatsoever thy soul lusts after. If the place which the Lord thy God has chosen to put his name there be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the Lord has given thee, as I have commanded thee, and thou shalt eat in thy gates whatsoever thy soul lusts after, even as the roebuck and the hart is eaten, so thou shalt eat them; the unclean and the clean shall eat of them alike."

Here we have, most surely, a broad margin afforded by the goodness and tender mercy of God, for the fullest range of personal and family enjoyment. The only restriction was in reference to the blood. "Only be sure that thou eat not the blood; for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh, Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water. Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and

with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the Lord."

This was a great cardinal principle under the law, to which reference has been made in our "Notes on Leviticus." How far Israel understood it is not the question; they were to obey that it might go well with them, and with their children after them. They were to own, in this matter, the sovereign rights of God.

Having made this exception, in reference to personal and family habits, the law-giver returns to the all-important subject of their public worship. "Only thy holy things which thou hast, and thy vows, thou shalt take, and go to the place which the Lord shall choose; and thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of the Lord thy God; and the blood of thy sacrifices shall be poured out upon the altar of the Lord thy God, and thou shalt eat the flesh." (Vers. 26, 27.)

If reason, or self-will were permitted to speak, it might say, "Why must we all go to this one place? Can we not have an altar at home? Or, at least, an altar in each principal town, or in the centre of each tribe?" The conclusive answer is, "God has commanded otherwise; this is enough for every true Israelite.

Even though we may not be able, by reason of our ignorance, to see the why or the wherefore, simple obedience is our obvious and bounden duty. It may be, moreover, that, as we cheerfully tread the path of obedience, light will break in upon our souls as to the reason, and we shall find abundant blessing in doing that which is well-pleasing to the Lord our God."

Yes; reader, this is the proper method of answering all the reasonings and questionings of the carnal mind which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Light is sure to break in upon our souls, as we tread, with a lowly mind, the sacred path of obedience; and, not only so, but untold blessing will flow into the heart in that conscious nearness to God which is only known to those who lovingly keep His most precious commandments. Are we called upon to explain to carnal objectors and infidels our reasons for doing this or that? Most certainly not; that is no part of our business; it would be time and labour lost, inasmuch as objectors and reasoners are wholly incapable of understanding or appreciating our reasons.

For example, in the matter now under our consideration, could a carnal mind, an unbeliever, a mere child of nature, understand why Israel's twelve tribes were commanded to worship at one

altar — to gather in one place — to cluster round one centre? Not in the smallest degree. The grand moral reason of such a lovely institution lies far away beyond his ken.

But to the spiritual mind all is as plain as it is beautiful. Jehovah would gather His beloved people around Himself, from time to time, that they might rejoice together before Him and that He might have His own peculiar joy in them.

Was not this something most precious? Assuredly it was to all who really loved the Lord.

No doubt, if the heart were cold and careless toward God, it would matter little about the place of worship; all places would be alike. But we may set it down as a fixed principle that every loyal loving heart from Dan to Beersheba would rejoice to flock to the place where Jehovah had recorded His Name, and where He had appointed to meet His people. "I was glad when they said to me, Let us go to the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem [God's centre for Israel]. Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together; whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, to the testimony of Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord. For there —

and nowhere else — "are set thrones of judgement, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good." (Ps. 122.)

Here we have the lovely breathings of a heart that loved the habitation of the God of Israel — His blessed centre — the gathering-place of Israel's twelve tribes — that hallowed spot which was associated in the mind of every true Israelite with all that was bright and joyous in connection with the worship of Jehovah and the communion of His people.

We shall have occasion to refer to this most delightful theme again, when we come to study Deuteronomy 16, and shall draw this section to a close by quoting for the reader the last paragraph of the chapter before us.

"When the Lord thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land; take heed to thyself, that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed

from before thee; and that thou inquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise. Thou shalt not do so to the Lord thy God; for every abomination to the Lord, which he hates, have they done to their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods. What thing soever I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." (Vers. 29-32.)

The precious word of God was to form a sacred enclosure round about His people, within which they might enjoy His presence, and delight themselves in the abundance of His mercy and loving-kindness; and wherein, they were to be entirely apart from all that was offensive to Him whose presence was to be, at once, their glory, their joy and their grand moral safeguard from every snare and every abomination.

Alas! alas! they did not abide within that enclosure; they speedily broke down the walls thereof, and wandered away from the holy commandment of God. They did the very things they were told not to do, and they have had to reap the terrible consequences. But more of this and of their future by-and-by.

## **Chapter 13.**

This chapter abounds in most weighty principles. It consists of three distinct sections, each one of which claims our deep attention. We must not attempt to weaken the admonitory force of such a scripture, or turn aside its keen edge, by saying that it does not apply to Christians; that it is wholly Jewish in its scope and application. No doubt, primarily, it was addressed to Israel; this is so obvious as not to admit of a question. But let us not forget that it was "written for our learning;" and not only so, but the more closely we study it, the more we shall see that its teaching is of universal importance.

"If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and gives thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake to thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them: thou shalt not hearken to the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God proves you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave to him. And that prophet or that

dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he has spoken to turn you away from the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the Lord thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee." (Vv. 1-5)

Here we have divine provision made for all cases of false teaching, and false religious influence. We all know how easily the poor human heart is led astray by anything in the shape of a sign or a wonder, and especially when such things stand connected with religion. This is not confined to the nation of Israel; we see it everywhere and at all times. Anything supernatural, anything involving an infringement of what are called the ordinary laws of nature is almost sure to act powerfully on the human mind. A prophet rising up, in the midst of the people, and confirming his teaching by miracles, signs and wonders, would be almost sure to get a hearing, and obtain an influence.

In this way, Satan has worked in all ages, and he will work yet more powerfully, at the end of this present age, in order to deceive and lead to their everlasting destruction those who will not hearken to the precious truth of the gospel. "The mystery of

iniquity," which has been working in the professing church for eighteen centuries, will be headed up, in the person of "that Wicked whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming; even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." (2 Thess. 2:8-12.)

So also, in the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, our Lord warns His disciples against the same kind of influence. "Then if any man shall say to you, Lo here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before." (Vers. 23-25.)

Again, in Revelation 13, we read of the second beast, coming up out of the earth, the great false prophet, the antichrist, doing

great wonders, "so that he makes fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceives them that dwell on the earth by means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live." (Vers. 13, 14.)

Now, each of the above three passages of holy scripture refers to scenes which shall be enacted after the church has been taken away out of this world; but on this we do not dwell, inasmuch as our object in quoting them for the reader is to let him see how far the devil can go in the way of signs and wonders, to lead people away from the truth; and also to set before him the one divine and therefore perfect safeguard against all the delusive power of the enemy.

The human heart has no ability whatever to resist the influence of "great signs and wonders" put forth in favour of the most deadly error. There is but the one thing which can fortify the soul, and enable it to resist the devil and all his deadly delusions, and that is the word of God. To have the precious truth of God treasured up in the heart is the divine secret of preserva-

tion from all error, even though backed up by the most astounding miracles.

Hence, in the first of the above quotations we see that the reason why people will be deceived by the signs and lying wonders of "that wicked" one is "because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved." It is the love of the truth that preserves from error, be it ever so persuasive, ever so fascinating, ever so strongly supported by the powerful evidence of "great signs and wonders." It is not cleverness, intellectual power, mental grasp, extensive learning; all these things are perfectly powerless in the presence of Satan's wiles and machinations. The most gigantic human intellect must fall an easy prey to the wiles of the serpent.

But, blessed be God, the craft, the subtlety, the signs and lying wonders, all the resources of Satan, all the machinery of hell are perfectly powerless with a heart that is governed by the love of the truth. A little child who knows and believes and loves the truth is blessedly shielded, sheltered and divinely preserved from the blinding and deceiving power of the wicked one. If ten thousand false prophets were to arise and perform the most extraordinary miracles that were ever presented to the

human gaze, in order to prove that the Bible is not the inspired word of God, or that our Lord Jesus Christ is not God over all blessed for ever, or in order to set aside the glorious truth that the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin, or any other precious truth revealed in holy scripture, it could have no effect whatever on the very simplest babe in Christ whose heart is governed by the word of God. Yea, if an angel from heaven were to come down and preach anything contrary to what we are taught in the word of God, we have a divine warrant to pronounce him anathema, without any discussion or argument whatever.

This is an unspeakable mercy. It puts the simple hearted, unlettered child of God into the most blessed position — a position, not only of moral security, but of sweetest repose. We are not called upon to analyse the false doctrine, or to weigh the evidence advanced in favour of it; we reject, with stern decision, both the one and the other, simply because we have the certainty of the truth and the love of it in our hearts. "Thou shalt not hearken to the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams;" — although the sign or the wonder had come to pass — "for the Lord your God proves you to know whether ye

love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul."

Here, beloved reader, was the all-important point for Israel; and it is the same for us. Then, now, and always, the true moral security is in having the heart fortified with the love of the truth, which is only another way of expressing the love of God. The faithful Israelite who loved Jehovah, with all his heart and with all his soul, would have a ready and conclusive answer for all the false prophets and dreamers who might arise — a thoroughly effectual method of dealing with them. "Thou shalt not hearken." If the enemy does not get the ear, he is not likely to reach the heart. The sheep follow the Shepherd; "for they know his voice. And a stranger" — even though showing signs and wonders — "will they not follow, but will flee from him." Why? Is it because they are able to discuss and argue and analyse? No, thanks and praise to God! but because "they know not the voice of strangers." The simple fact of not knowing the voice is a sufficient reason for not following the speaker.

All this is full of comfort and consolation for the beloved lambs and sheep of the flock of Christ. They can hear the voice of their loving, faithful shepherd; they can gather round Him,

and find in His presence true rest and perfect safety. He makes them to lie down in green pastures, and leads them by the still waters of His love. This is enough. They may be very weak, yea, perfect weakness in themselves; but this is no hindrance to their rest and blessing; quite the contrary, it only casts them more upon His almighty power. We need never be afraid of weakness, it is fancied strength we have to dread, vain confidence in our own wisdom, our own intelligence, our scriptural knowledge, our spiritual attainments; these are the things we have to fear; but as for our weakness, the more deeply we feel it the better, for our Shepherd's strength is made perfect in weakness, and His precious grace is amply sufficient for all the need of His beloved and blood bought flock as a whole, and for each member, in particular. Only let us keep near to Him in the abiding sense of our own perfect helplessness and nothingness; let us treasure up His precious word in our hearts, let us feed upon it, as the very sustenance of our souls, day by day, the staple article of our lives, the living bread for the strengthening of the inward man. Thus shall we be safe from every strange voice, every false prophet, every snare of the devil, every influence which might tend to draw us away from the path of obedience, and the practical confession of the Name of Christ.

We must now quote for the reader the second paragraph of our chapter, in which the Lord's people are warned against another snare of the devil. Oh! how many and varied are his snares and wiles! How manifold are the dangers of the people of God! But, blessed be His holy Name, there is full provision in His word for all.

"If thy brother, the son of thy mother," nearer, dearer and more tender than the son of the father — "or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers, namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh to thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth; thou shalt not consent to him, nor hearken to him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him; but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones that he die; because he has sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage. And all Israel

shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you" (Vv. 6-11.)

Here, then, we have something quite different from the false prophet or the dreamer of dreams. Thousands might be proof against the influence of these, and yet fall before the ensnaring and seductive power of natural affection. It is very hard to resist the action of this latter. It demands deep-toned devotedness, great singleness of eye, firm purpose of heart, to deal faithfully with those who live deep down in our hearts' tender affections. The trial to some of withstanding and rejecting a prophet or a dreamer with whom there was no personal relationship, no tender link of fond affection, would be as nothing compared with having to treat with stern and severe decision the wife of the bosom, the beloved brother or sister, the devoted and tenderly loved friend.

But where the claims of God, of Christ, of truth are at stake, there must be no hesitation. If any should seek to make use of the ties of affection in order to draw us aside from our allegiance to Christ, we must resist them, with unqualified decision. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother,

and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." (Luke 10:26)

Let us see that we thoroughly understand this aspect of the truth, and also that we give it its proper place. If poor blind reason be listened to, it will be sure to present to the mind the most hideous perversion of this great practical subject. Reason, whenever it attempts to exercise its powers in the things of God, is sure to prove itself the active and efficient agent of the devil in opposition to the truth. In things human and earthly, reason may go for what it is worth; but in things divine and heavenly, it is not only worthless, but positively mischievous.

What then, we may ask, is the true moral force of Luke 14:26, and Deuteronomy 13:8-10? Most assuredly, they do not mean that we are to be "without natural affection," which is one of the special marks of the apostasy of the last days. This is perfectly clear. God Himself has established our natural relationships, and each of these relationships has its characteristic affections the exercise and display of which are in lovely harmony with the mind of God. Christianity does not interfere with our relationships in nature, but it introduces a power whereby the responsibilities which attach to those relationships

can be duly fulfilled to the glory of God. And not only so, but in the various epistles, the Holy Ghost has given the most ample instructions to husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, thus proving, in the very fullest and most blessed manner, the divine sanction of those relationships and the affections which belong to them.

All this is perfectly plain; but still we have to inquire how it fits in with Luke 14 and Deuteronomy 13? The answer is simply this. The harmony is divinely perfect. Those scriptures apply only to cases in which our natural relationships and affections interfere with the claims of God and of Christ. When they operate in this way, they must be denied and mortified. If they dare to intrude upon a domain which is wholly divine, the sentence of death must be written upon them.

In contemplating the life of the only perfect man that ever trod this earth of ours, we can see how beautifully He adjusted the various claims which as a man and a servant, He had to meet. He could say to His mother, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" And, yet, at the fitting moment, He could, with exquisite tenderness, commend that mother to the care of the disciple whom He loved. He could say to His parents, "Wist ye not that

I must be about my Father's business?" and, at the same time, go home with them and be sweetly subject to parental authority. Thus the written teachings of holy scripture, and the perfect ways of the living Christ do both combine to teach us how to discharge aright the claims of nature and the claims of God.

But it may be that the reader feels considerable difficulty in reference to the line of action enjoined in Deuteronomy 13:9-10. He may find it hard to reconcile it with a God of love, and with the grace, gentleness and tenderness inculcated in the New Testament scriptures. Here again we must keep a vigilant eye upon reason. It always affects to find ample scope for its powers in the stern enactments of the divine government; but, in reality, it only displays its blindness and folly. Still, though we would make very short work with infidel reason, we earnestly desire to help any honest soul who may not be able to see his way through this question.

We have had occasion, in our studies on the earlier chapters of this book, to refer to the very weighty subject of God's governmental dealings, both with Israel and the nations; but, in addition to what has already come under our notice, we have to bear in mind the very important difference between the two

economies of law and grace. If this be not clearly apprehended, we shall find very considerable difficulty in such passages as Deuteronomy 13:9-10. The great characteristic principle of the Jewish economy was righteousness; the characteristic principle of Christianity is grace — pure, unqualified grace.

If this fact be fully grasped, all difficulty vanishes. It was perfectly right, perfectly consistent, and in perfect harmony with the mind of God for Israel to slay their enemies. God commanded them to do so. And, in like manner, it was right and consistent for them to execute righteous judgement, even to death, upon any member of the congregation who should seek to draw them aside after false gods, as in the passage before us. To do so was in full moral harmony with the grand ruling principles of government and law, under which they were placed, in accordance with the dispensational wisdom of God.

All this is perfectly plain. It runs through the entire canon of Old Testament scripture. God's government in Israel, and His government of the world, in connection with Israel was on the strict principle of righteousness. And as it was in the past, so it shall be in the future. "A king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgement."

But, in Christianity, we see something quite different. The moment we open the pages of the New Testament, and hearken to the teachings, and mark the actings of the Son of God, we find ourselves on entirely new ground, and in a new atmosphere. In a word, we are in the atmosphere and on the ground of pure, unqualified grace.

Thus, as a sample of the teaching, take a passage or two from what is called the Sermon on the Mount — that marvellous and precious compendium of the principles of the kingdom of heaven. "Ye have heard that it has been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but I say to you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain." Again, "Ye have heard that it has been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy; but I say to you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the sons [huioin] of your Father which is in heaven; for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the

good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust ... Be ye therefore perfect [teleioi] even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." (Matt. 5:38-48)

We cannot now dwell upon those blessed sentences; we merely quote them for the reader in order to let him see the immense difference between the Jewish and Christian economy. What was perfectly right and consistent for a Jew, might be quite wrong and inconsistent for a Christian.

This is so plain that a child may see it; and yet, strange to say, many of the Lord's beloved people seem to be clouded on the subject. They judge it to be perfectly right for Christians to deal in righteousness, and go to war, and to exercise worldly power. Well, then, if it be right for Christians to act thus, we would simply ask, Where is it taught in the New Testament? Where have we a single sentence from the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ, or from the pen of the Holy Ghost to warrant or sanction such a thing? As we have said, in reference to other questions that have come before us in our studies on this book, it is of no possible use for us to say, "We think so and so." Our thoughts are simply worth nothing. The one grand question, in all matters of Christian faith and morals is, "What says the New

Testament?" What did our Lord and Master teach, and what did He do? He taught that His people now are not to act as His people of old acted. Righteousness was the principle of the old economy; grace is the principle of the new.

This was what Christ taught, as may be seen in numberless passages of scripture. And how did He act? Did He deal in righteousness with people? Did He assert His rights? Did He exercise worldly power? Did He go to law? Did He vindicate Himself, or retaliate? When His poor disciples, in utter ignorance of the heavenly principles which He taught, and in total forgetfulness of His whole course of action, said to Him, on one occasion in the which a certain village of the Samaritans refused to receive Him, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?" What was His answer? "He turned and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of, For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives but to save. And they went to another village." It was perfectly consistent with the spirit, principle and genius of the dispensation of which Elias was the exponent and representative, to call down fire from heaven to consume the men sent by a godless king to arrest

him. But the blessed Lord was the perfect Exponent and divine Representative of another dispensation altogether. His was a life of perfect self-surrender, from first to last. He never asserted His rights. He came to serve and to give. He came to represent God, to be the perfect expression of the Father in every way. The Father's character shone out in His every look, His every word, His every act, His every movement.

Such was the Lord Christ when He was down here among men; and such was His teaching. He did what He taught, and He taught what He did. His words expressed what He was, and His ways illustrated His words. He came to serve and to give; and His whole life was marked by those two things, from the manger to the cross. We may truly say, time would fail us to quote the passages in proof and illustration of this, nor is there any need, inasmuch as the truth of it will hardly be called in question.

Well, then, is not He our great Exemplar in all things? Is it not by His teaching and ways that our course and character as Christians are to be formed? How are we to know how we ought to walk save by hearkening to His blessed words and gazing on His perfect ways? If we as Christians are to be

guided and governed by the principles and precepts of the Mosaic economy, then, assuredly, it would be right for us to go to law, to contend for our rights, to engage in war, to destroy our enemies. But then what becomes of the teaching and example of our adorable Lord and Saviour? What of the teachings of the Holy Ghost. What of the New Testament? Is it not as plain as a sunbeam to the reader that for a Christian to do these things is to act in flagrant opposition to the teaching and example of his Lord?

Here, however, we may be met by the old and oft-repeated inquiry, "What would become of the world, what would become of its institutions, what would become of society, if such principles were to be universally dominant?" The infidel historian, in speaking of the early Christians, and their refusal to join the Roman army, sneeringly inquires, "What would have become of the empire, surrounded as it was on all sides, by barbarians, if every one had indulged in such pusillanimous ideas as these?"

We reply at once, If those spiritual and heavenly principles were universally dominant, there would be no wars, no fighting, and hence, there would be no need of soldiers, no need of

standing armies or navies, no need of constabulary or police; there would be no wrong doings, no strife about property, and hence no need of courts of law, judges or magistrates; in short, the world, as it now is, would have an end; the kingdoms of this world would have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

But the plain fact is, those heavenly principles of which we speak, are not intended for the world at all, inasmuch as the world could not adopt them, or act upon them for a single hour; to do so would involve the immediate and complete break up of the present system of things, the dissolution of the entire framework of society as at present constituted.

Hence, the objection of the infidel crumbles into dust beneath our feet, like all other infidel objections, and the questions and the difficulties which are based upon them. They are deprived of every atom of moral force. Heavenly principles are not designed for "this present evil world," at all; they are designed for the church which is not of the world, even as Jesus is not of the world. "If," said our Lord to Pilate, "my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence."

Mark the word "now." By-and-by, the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord; but now He is rejected, and all who belong to Him — His church — His people are called to share His rejection, to follow Him into the outside place, and walk as pilgrims and strangers here below, waiting for the moment when He shall come to receive them to Himself, that where He is, there they may be also.

Now, it is the attempt to mix the world and the church together that produces such terrible confusion. It is one of Satan's special wiles; and it has done more to mar the testimony of the church of God, and hinder its progress than most of us are aware. It involves a complete turning of things upside down, a confounding of things that differ essentially, an utter denial of the church's true character, her position, her walk and her hope. We sometimes hear the expression, "Christian world." What does it mean? It is simply an attempt to combine two things which in their source, nature and character, are as diverse as light and darkness. It is an effort to tack a new piece upon an old garment which, as our Lord tells us, only makes the rent worse.

It is not God's object to Christianise the world, but to call His people out of the world to be a heavenly people, governed by heavenly principles, formed by a heavenly object, and cheered by a heavenly hope. If this be not clearly seen, if the truth as to the church's true calling and course be not realised as a living power in the soul, we shall be sure to make the most grievous mistakes in our work, walk and service. We shall make an entirely wrong use of the Old Testament scriptures, not only on prophetic subjects, but in reference to the whole range of practical life; indeed, it would be utterly impossible to calculate the loss which must result from not seeing the distinctive calling, position and hope of the church of God, her association and identification — her living union with a rejected, risen and glorified Christ.

We cannot attempt to enlarge upon this most precious and interesting theme; but we should just like to point out to the reader an instance or two illustrative of the Spirit's method of quoting and applying Old Testament scripture. Take, for example, the following passage from that lovely thirty-fourth Psalm: "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth." Now, mark the

way in which the Holy Spirit quotes this passage in the first epistle of Peter. "The face of the Lord is against them that do evil." (1 Peter 3:12.) Not a word about cutting off. Why is this? Because the Lord is not now acting upon the principle of cutting off. He acted upon it under the law; and He will act upon it, in the kingdom, by-and-by. But, just now, He is acting in grace, and long-suffering mercy. His face is quite as much and quite as decidedly against all evil-doers as ever it was, or ever it will be, but not now to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The most striking illustration of this marvellous grace and forbearance, and of the difference between the two principles on which we have been dwelling is seen in the fact that the very men who, with wicked hands, crucified His only-begotten and well-beloved Son — evil-doers, surely, of the most pronounced type — instead of being cut off from the earth, were the very first to hear the message of full and free pardon through the blood of the cross.

Now, it may appear to some that we are making too much of the mere omission of a single clause of Old Testament scripture. Let not the reader think so. Even had we but this one instance, it would be a serious mistake to treat it with anything

like indifference. But the fact is there are scores of passages of the same character as the one just quoted, all illustrative of the contrast between the Jewish and Christian economies, and also between Christianity and the coming kingdom.

God is now dealing in grace with the world, and so should His people, if they want to be like Him, and such they are called to be. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" and again, "Be ye therefore imitators of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour. (Eph. 5:1)

This is our model. We are called to copy our Father's example, to imitate Him. He is not going to law with the world; He is not enforcing His rights with the strong hand of power. By-and-by, He will; but just now, in this day of grace, He showers His blessings and benefits, in rich profusion, upon those whose whole life is one of enmity and rebellion against Him.

All this is perfectly marvellous; but thus it is, and we, as Christians, are called to act on this morally glorious principle. It may be said, by some, "How could we ever get on in the world, how

could we conduct our business, on such a principle as this? We should be robbed and ruined; designing people would take advantage of us, if they knew that we would not go to law with them; they would take our goods, or borrow our money, or occupy our houses, and refuse to pay us. In short, we could never get on in a world like this, if we did not assert our rights and establish our claims by the strong hand of power. What is the law for but to make people behave themselves? Are not the powers that be ordained of God for the very purpose of maintaining peace and good order in our midst? What would become of society, if we had not soldiers, policemen, magistrates and judges? And if God has ordained that such things should be, why should not His people avail themselves of them? And not only so, but who so fit to occupy places of authority and power, or to wield the sword of justice as the people of God?

There is, no doubt, very great apparent force in all this line of argument. The powers that be are ordained of God. The king, the governor, the judge, the magistrate are, each in his place, the expression of the power of God. It is God who invests each with the power which he wields; it is He who has put the sword into his hand, for the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise

of them that do well. We bless God with all our hearts for the constituted authorities of the country. Day and night, in private and in public, we pray for them. It is our bounden duty to obey and submit ourselves to them, in all things, provided always that they do not call upon us to disobey God, or do violence to conscience. If they do this, we must — what? Resist? Nay, but suffer.

All this is perfectly plain. The world, as it now is, could not go on for a single day, if men were not kept in order by the strong hand of power. We could not live, or at least life would be perfectly intolerable, were it not that evil-doers are kept in terror of the glittering sword of justice. Even as it is, through lack of moral power on the part of those who bear the sword, lawless demagogues are allowed to stir up the evil passions of men to resist the law of the land, and disturb the peace, and threaten the lives and property of well-disposed and harmless subjects of the government.

But, admitting all this, in the fullest possible manner, as every intelligent Christian, every one taught by scripture, most assuredly will, it leaves wholly untouched the question of the Christian's path in this world. Christianity fully recognises all

the governmental institutions of the country. It forms no part of the Christian's business to interfere, in any one way, with such institutions. Wherever he is, whatever be the principle or character of the government of the country in which his lot is cast, it is his duty to recognise its municipal and political arrangements, to pay taxes, pray for the government, honour governors in their official capacity, wish well to the legislature and the executive, pray for the peace of the country, live in peace with all, so far as in him lies.

We see all this in the blessed Master Himself, in perfection, blessed be His holy Name for evermore! In His memorable reply to the crafty Herodians, He recognises the principle of subjection to the powers that be: "Render to Caesar the things that be Caesar's; and to God the things that be God's." And not only so, but we find Him also paying tribute, although personally free. They had no right to demand it of Him, as He plainly shows to Peter; and it might be said, "Why did He not appeal?" Appeal! Nay; He shows us something quite different. Hear His exquisite reply to His mistaken apostle, "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first comes up; and when thou hast

opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take and give to them for me and thee.\* (Matt. 17.)

\* The fact that the tribute money may have been for the temple does not touch the principle set forth in the text.

And here we get back, with increased moral force, to our thesis, namely, the Christian's path in this world. What is it? He is to follow his Master — to imitate Him in all things. Did He assert His rights? Did He go to law? Did He try to regulate the world? Did He meddle with municipal or political matters? Was He a politician? Did He wield the sword? Did He consent to be a judge or a divider, even when appealed to, as we say, to arbitrate about property? Was not His whole life one of complete self-surrender, from first to last? Was He not continually giving up until, at the cross, He gave up His precious life as a ransom for many?

We shall leave these questions to find their answer deep down in the heart of the Christian reader, and to produce their practical effect in his life. We trust that the foregoing line of truth will enable him to interpret aright such passages as Deuteronomy 13:9-10. Our opposition to idolatry, and our separation from evil, in every shape and form, while not less intense and

decided, most surely, than that of Israel of old, is not to be displayed in the same way. The church is imperatively called upon to put away evil, and evil-doers, but not after the same fashion as Israel. It is no part of her duty to stone idolaters and blasphemers, or burn witches. The church of Rome has acted upon this principle; and even Protestants — to the shame of Protestantism — have followed her example.\* The church is not called — nay, she is positively and peremptorily forbidden to use the temporal sword. It is a flat denial of her calling, character and mission to do so. When Peter, in ignorant zeal and carnal haste, drew the sword in defence of his blessed Master, he was at once corrected by his Master's faithful word, and instructed by his Master's gracious act: "Put up thy sword into the sheath; for all they that take the sword shall perish by the sword." And having thus reproved the act of His mistaken though well-meaning servant, He undid the mischief by His gracious touch. "The weapons of our warfare," says the inspired apostle, "are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:4-5.)

- \* The burning of Servetus, in 1553, for his theological opinions, is a frightful blot upon the Reformation, and upon the man who sanctioned such an unchristian proceeding. True, the opinions of Servetus were fatally and fundamentally false. He held the Arian heresy, which is simply blasphemy against the Son of God. But to burn him, or any one else for false doctrine was a flagrant sin against the spirit, genius and principle of the gospel, the deplorable fruit of ignorance as to the essential difference between Judaism and Christianity.

The professing church has gone all astray as to this great and most important question. She has joined herself with the world, and sought to further the cause of Christ by carnal and worldly agency. She has ignorantly attempted to maintain the Christian faith by the most shameful denial of Christian practice. The burning of heretics stands as a most fearful moral blot upon the page of the church's history. We can form no adequate idea of the terrible consequences resulting from the notion that the church was called to take Israel's place and act on Israel's principles.\* It completely falsified her testimony, robbed her of her entirely spiritual and heavenly character, and led her upon a path which ends in Revelation 17 and 18. Let him that reads understand.

- \* It is one thing for the church to learn from the history of Israel, and another thing altogether to take Israel's place, act on Israel's principles, and appropriate Israel's promises. The former is the church's duty and privilege; the latter has been the church's fatal mistake.

But we must not pursue this line of things further here. We trust that what has passed before us will lead all whom it may concern to consider the whole subject in the light of the New Testament, and thus be the means, through the infinite goodness of God, of leading them to see the path of entire separation which we as Christians are called to tread; in the world but not of it, even as our Lord Christ is not of it. This will solve a thousand difficulties, and furnish a grand general principle which can be practically applied to a thousand details.

We shall now conclude our study of Deuteronomy 13 by a glance at its closing paragraph.

"If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the Lord thy God has given thee to dwell there, saying, Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known. Then shalt thou in-

quire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you; thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword. And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every whit, for the Lord thy God; and it shall be an heap for ever; it shall not be built again. And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand; that the Lord may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and show thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he has sworn to thy fathers; when thou shalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the Lord thy God." (Vers. 12-18.)

Here we have instruction of the most solemn and weighty character. But the reader must bear in mind that, solemn and weighty as it most surely is, It is based upon a truth of unspeakable value, and that is Israel's national unity. If we do not see this, we shall miss the real force and meaning of the foregoing

quotation. A case is supposed of grave error in some one of the cities of Israel; and the question might naturally arise, "Are all the cities involved in the evil of one?"\*

- \* It is, of course, needful to bear in mind that the evil referred to in the text was of the very gravest character. It was an attempt to draw the people away from the one living and true God. It touched the very foundation of Israel's national existence. It was not merely a local or municipal question, but a national one.

Assuredly, inasmuch as the nation was one. The cities and tribes were not independent, they were bound up together by a sacred bond of national unity — a unity which had its centre in the place of the divine presence. Israel's twelve tribes were indissolubly bound together. The twelve loaves on the golden table in the sanctuary formed the beautiful type of this unity, and every true Israelite owned and rejoiced in this unity. The twelve stones in Jordan's bed; the twelve stones on Jordan's bank; Elijah's twelve stones on mount Carmel, all set forth the same grand truth — the indissoluble unity of Israel's twelve tribes. The good king Hezekiah recognised this truth, when he commanded that the burnt-offering and the sin-offering should be made for all Israel. (2 Chr. 29:24.) The faithful Josiah owned it and acted upon it, when he carried his reformatory op-

erations into all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel. (2 Chr. 34:33.) Paul, in his magnificent address before king Agrippa, bears witness to the same truth, when he says, "Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God, night and day, hope to come."\* (Acts 26:7.) And when we look forward into the bright future, the same glorious truth shines, with heavenly lustre, in the seventh chapter of Revelation, where we see the twelve tribes sealed and secured for blessing, rest and glory, in connection with a countless multitude of the Gentiles. And, finally, in Revelation 21 we see the names of the twelve tribes engraved on the gates of the holy Jerusalem, the seat and centre of the glory of God and the Lamb.

\* It may interest the reader to know that the word rendered, in the above passage, "twelve tribes," is singular, to; dodekaphulon. It certainly gives very full and vivid expression to the grand idea of indissoluble unity which is so precious to God, and therefore so precious to faith.

Thus, from the golden table in the sanctuary, to the golden city descending out of heaven from God, we have a marvellous chain of evidence in proof of the grand truth of the indissoluble unity of Israel's twelve tribes.

And, then, if the question be asked, where is this unity to be seen? or how did Elijah, or Hezekiah, or Josiah, or Paul see it? The answer is a very simple one, They saw it by faith; they looked within the sanctuary of God, and there on the golden table, they beheld the twelve loaves setting forth the perfect distinctness and yet the perfect oneness of the twelve tribes. Nothing can be more beautiful. The truth of God must stand for ever. Israel's unity was seen in the past, and it will be seen in the future; and though, like the higher unity of the church, it is unseen in the present, faith believes it all the same, holds it and confesses it in the face of ten thousand hostile influences.

And, now, let us look, for a moment, at the practical application of this most glorious truth, as presented in the closing paragraph of Deuteronomy 13. A report reaches a city in the far north of the land of Israel of serious error taught in a certain city in the extreme south — deadly error, tending to draw the inhabitants away from the true God.

What is to be done? The law is as plain as possible; the path of duty is laid down with such distinctness, that it only needs a single eye to see it, and a devoted heart to tread it. "Then shalt

thou inquire, and make search, and ask diligently." This surely is simple enough.

But some of the citizens might say, "What have we in the north to do with error taught in the south? Thank God, there is no error taught amongst us; it is entirely a local question; each city is responsible for the maintenance of the truth within its own walls. How could we be expected to examine into every case of error which may spring up here and there all over the land; our whole time would be taken up, so that we could not attend to our fields, our vineyards, our oliveyards, our flocks and our herds. It is quite as much as we can do to keep our own borders all right. We certainly condemn the error, and if any one holding or teaching it were to come here, and that we knew of it, we should most decidedly shut our gates against him. Beyond this, we do not feel ourselves responsible to go."

Now what, we may ask, would be the reply of the faithful Israelite to all this line of argument which, in the judgement of mere nature, seems so exceedingly plausible? A very simple and very conclusive one, we may be sure. He would say it was simply a denial of Israel's unity. If every city and every tribe were to take independent ground, then verily the high priest

might take the twelve loaves off the golden table before the Lord and scatter them here and there and everywhere; our unity is gone; we are all broken up into independent atoms having no national ground of action.

Besides, the commandment is most distinct and explicit, "Thou shalt inquire, and make search, and ask diligently." We are bound therefore, on the double ground of the nation's unity and the plain command of our covenant God. It is of no possible use to say there is no error taught amongst us, unless we want to separate ourselves from the nation; if we belong to Israel, then verily the error is taught amongst us, as the word says — "Such abomination is wrought among you." How far does the "you" extend? As far as the national boundaries. Error taught at Dan affects those dwelling at Beersheba. How is this? Because Israel is one.

And then the word is so plain, so distinct, so emphatic. We are bound to search into it. We cannot fold our arms and sit down in cold indifference and culpable neutrality, else we shall be involved in the awful consequences of this evil; yea, we are involved until we clear ourselves of it by judging it, with unflinching decision, and unsparing severity.

Such, beloved reader, would be the language of every loyal Israelite, and such his mode of acting in reference to error and evil wherever found. To speak or act otherwise, would simply be indifference as to the truth and glory of God, and independency as regards Israel. For any to say that they were not responsible to act according to the instructions given in Deuteronomy 13:12-18, would be a complete surrender of the truth of God, and of Israel's unity. All were bound to act or else be involved in the judgement of the guilty city.

And surely if all this was true in Israel of old, it is not less true in the church of God now. We may rest assured that anything like indifference, where Christ is concerned, is most hateful to God. It is the eternal purpose and counsel of God to glorify His Son; that every knee should bow to Him, and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father. "That all should honour the Son even as they honour the Father."

Hence, if Christ be dishonoured, if doctrines be taught derogatory to the glory of His Person, the efficacy of His work, or the virtue of His offices, we are bound by every motive which could possibly act on our hearts to reject, with stern decision, such doctrines. Indifference or neutrality, where the Son of God

is concerned, is high treason in the judgement of the high court of Heaven. We would not be indifferent if it were a question of our own reputation, our personal character, or our personal or family property; we should be thoroughly alive to anything affecting ourselves or those dear to us. How much more deeply ought we to feel in reference to what concerns the glory and honour, the Name and cause of the One to whom we owe our present and everlasting all — the One who laid aside His glory, came down into this wretched world, and died a shameful death upon the cross in order to save us from the everlasting flames of hell! Could we be indifferent to Him? Neutral where He is concerned? God, in His great mercy forbid!

No; reader, it must not be. The honour and glory of Christ must be more to us than all beside — reputation, property, family, friends, all must stand aside if the claims of Christ are involved. Does not the Christian reader own this, with all the energy of his ransomed soul? We feel persuaded he does even now; and oh! how shall we feel when we see Him face to face, and stand in the full light of His moral glory? With what feelings shall we then contemplate the idea of indifference or neutrality with respect to Him?

And are we not justified in declaring that next to the glory of the Head stands the great truth of the unity of His body, the church? Unquestionably. If the nation of Israel was one, how much more is the body of Christ one! And if independency was wrong in Israel, how much more wrong in the church of God! The plain fact is this, the idea of independency cannot be maintained for a moment, in the light of the New Testament. As well might we say that the hand is independent of the foot, or the eye of the ear, as assert that the members of the body of Christ are independent one of another. "For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ" — a very remarkable statement, setting forth the intimate union of Christ and the church — "For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now has God set the

members every one of them in the body, as it has pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more, those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary; and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need; but God has tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked. That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. NOW YE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST, AND MEMBERS IN PARTICULAR." (1 Cor. 12:12-27.)

We do not attempt to dwell upon this truly marvellous scripture; but we earnestly desire to call the attention of the Christian reader to the special truth which it so forcibly sets before us — a truth which intimately concerns every true believer on

the face of the earth, namely, that he is a member of the body of Christ. This is a great practical truth, involving, at once, the very highest privileges, and the very weightiest responsibilities. It is not merely a true doctrine, a sound principle, or an orthodox opinion; it is a living fact, designed to be a divine power in the soul. The Christian can no longer view himself as an independent person, having no association, no vital link with others. He is livingly bound up with all the children of God, all true believers, all the members of Christ's body upon the face of the earth.

"By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body." The church of God is not a mere club, or a society, an association, or a brotherhood; it is a body united by the Holy Ghost to the Head, in heaven; and all its members on earth are indissolubly bound together. This being so, it follows of necessity, that all the members of the body are affected by the state and walk of each. "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." That is, all the members of the body. If there is anything wrong with the foot, the hand feels it. How? Through the head. So in the church of God, if anything goes wrong with an individual

member, all feel it through the Head with whom all are livingly connected by the Holy Ghost.

Some find it very hard to grasp this great truth. But there it stands plainly revealed on the inspired page, not to be reasoned about, or submitted, in any way, to the human judgement, but simply to be believed. It is a divine revelation. No human mind could ever have conceived such a thought; but God reveals it, faith believes it, and walks in the blessed power of it.

It may be the reader feels disposed to ask, "How is it possible for the state of one believer to affect those who know nothing about it?" The answer is, "If one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." All the members of what? Is it of any mere local assembly or company who may happen to know or be locally connected with the person concerned? Nay, but the members of the body wherever they are. Even in the case of Israel, where it was only a national unity, we have seen that if there was evil in any one of their cities, all were concerned, all involved, all affected. Hence, when Achan sinned, although there were myriads of people totally ignorant of the fact, the Lord said, "Israel has sinned," and the whole assembly suffered a humiliating defeat.

Can reason grasp this weighty truth? No; but faith can. If we listen to reason we shall believe nothing; but, by the grace of God, we shall not listen to reason, but believe what God says because He says it.

And oh! beloved Christian reader, what an immense truth is this unity of the body! What practical consequences flow out of it! How eminently calculated it is to minister to holiness of walk and life! How watchful it would make us over ourselves, our habits, our ways, our whole moral condition! How careful it would make us not to dishonour the Head to whom we are united, or grieve the Spirit by whom we are united, or injure the members with whom we are united!

But we must close this chapter, much as we should like to linger over one of the very grandest, most profound, and most powerfully formative truths that can possibly engage our attention. May the Spirit of God make it a living power in the soul of every true believer on the face of the earth!

## Chapter 14

"Ye are the children of the Lord your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead: for thou art an holy people to the Lord thy God, and the Lord has chosen thee to be a peculiar people to himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth." (Vers. 1, 2.)

The opening clause of this chapter sets before us the basis of all the privileges and responsibilities of the Israel of God. It is a familiar thought amongst us that we must be in a relationship before we can know the affections or discharge the duties which belong to it. This is a plain and undeniable truth. If a man were not a father, no amount of argument or explanation, could make him understand the feelings or affections of a father's heart; but the very moment he enters upon the relationship, he knows all about them.

Thus it is as to every relationship and position; and thus it is in the things of God. We cannot understand the affections or the duties of a child of God until we are on the ground. We must be Christians before we can perform Christian duties. Even when we are Christians, it is only by the gracious aid of the Holy Ghost that we can walk as such; but clearly if we are not on

Christian ground, we can know nothing of Christian affections or Christian duties. This is so obvious, that argument is needless.

Now, most evidently, it is God's prerogative to declare how His children ought to conduct themselves, and it is their high privilege and holy responsibility to seek, in all things, to meet His gracious approval. "Ye are the children of the Lord your God: ye shall not cut yourselves." They were not their own; they belonged to Him, and therefore they had no right to cut themselves or disfigure their faces for the dead. Nature, in its pride and self-will, might say, "Why may we not do like other people? What harm can there be in cutting ourselves, or making a baldness between our eyes? It is only an expression of grief, an affectionate tribute to our loved departed ones. Surely there can be nothing morally wrong in such a suited expression of sorrow!

To all this there was one simple but conclusive answer, "Ye are the children of the Lord your God" This fact altered everything. The poor ignorant and uncircumcised Gentiles around them might cut and disfigure themselves, inasmuch as they knew not God, and were not in relationship to Him. But as for Israel,

they were on the high and holy ground of nearness to God, and this one fact was to give tone and character to all their habits. They were not called upon to adopt or refrain from any particular habit or custom, in order to be the children of God. This would be, as we say, beginning at the wrong end; but, being His children, they were to act as such.

"Thou art an holy people to the Lord thy God." He does not say, "Ye ought to be an holy people." How could they ever make themselves an holy people, or a peculiar people to Jehovah? Utterly impossible. If they were not His people, no effort of theirs could ever make them such. But God, in His sovereign grace, in pursuance of His covenant with their fathers, had made them His children, made them a peculiar people above all the nations that were upon the earth. Here was the solid foundation of Israel's moral edifice. All their habits and customs, all their doings and ways, their food and their clothing, what they did and what they did not do — all was to flow out of the one grand fact, with which they had no more to do than with their natural birth, namely, that they actually were the children of God, the people of His choice, the people of His own special possession.

Now, we cannot but acknowledge it to be a privilege of the very highest order to have the Lord so near to us, and so interested in all our habits and ways. To mere nature, no doubt, to one who does not know the Lord, is not in relationship to Him, the very idea of His holy presence, or of nearness to Him would be simply intolerable. But to every true believer, every one who really loves God, it is a most delightful thought to have Him near us, and to know that He interests Himself in all the most minute details of our personal history, and most private life; that He takes cognisance of what we eat and what we wear; that He looks after us by day and by night, sleeping and waking, at home and abroad; in short, that His interest in and care for us go far beyond those of the most tender, loving mother for her babe.

All this is perfectly wonderful; and surely if we only realised it more fully we should live a very different sort of life, and have a very different tale to tell. What a holy privilege, what a precious reality to know that our loving Lord is about our path by day, and about our bed by night; that His eye rests upon us when we are dressing in the morning, when we sit down to our meals, when we go about our business, and in all our inter-

course, from morning till night. May the sense of this be a living and abiding power in the heart of every child of God on the face of the earth!

From verse 3 to 20, we have the law as to clean and unclean beasts, fishes and fowls. The leading principles as to all these have already come under our notice in Leviticus 11.\* But there is a very important difference between the two scriptures. The instructions in Leviticus are given primarily to Moses and Aaron; in Deuteronomy they are given directly to the people. This is perfectly characteristic of the two books. Leviticus may be specially termed, the priest's guide book. In Deuteronomy the priests are almost entirely in the background, and the people are prominent. This is strikingly apparent all through the book, so that there is not the slightest foundation for the idea that Deuteronomy merely repeats Leviticus. Nothing can be further from the truth. Each book has its own peculiar province, its own design, its own work. The devout student sees and owns this with deep delight. Infidels are wilfully blind, and can see nothing.

\* As we have given in our "Notes on the Book of Leviticus," chapter 11, what we believe to be the scriptural import of Verses

4-20 of our chapter, we must refer the reader to what is there advanced.

In verse 21 of our chapter, the marked distinction between the Israel of God and the stranger is strikingly presented. "Ye shall not eat of anything that dies of itself; thou shalt give it to the stranger that is in thy gates; that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it to an alien; for thou art an holy people to the Lord thy God." The grand fact of Israel's relationship to Jehovah marked them off from all the nations under the sun. It was not that they were, in themselves, a whit better or holier than others; but Jehovah was holy, and they were His people. "Be ye holy, for I am holy."

Worldly people often think that Christians are very Pharisaic in separating themselves from other people, and refusing to take part in the pleasures and amusements of the world; but they do not really understand the question. The fact is, for a Christian to participate in the vanities and follies of a sinful world would be, to use a typical phrase, like an Israelite eating that which had died of itself. The Christian, thank God, has gotten something better to feed upon than the poor dead things of this world. He has the living bread that came down from heaven,

the true manna; and not only so, but he eats of "the old corn of the land of Canaan," type of the risen and glorified Man in the heavens. Of these most precious things the poor unconverted worldling knows absolutely nothing and, hence, he must feed upon what the world has to offer him. It is not a question of the right or the wrong of things looked at in themselves. No one could possibly have known ought about the wrong of eating of anything that had died of itself, if God's word had not settled it.

This is the all-important point for us. We cannot expect the world to see or feel with us as to matters of right and wrong. It is our business to look at things from a divine standpoint. Many things may be quite consistent for a worldly man to do which a Christian could not touch at all, simply because he is a Christian. The question which the true believer has to ask as to everything which comes before him is simply, "Can I do this to the glory of God? Can I connect the Name of Christ with it?" If not, he must not touch it.

In a word, the Christian's standard and test for everything is Christ. This makes it all so simple. Instead of asking, Is such a thing consistent with our profession, our principles, our character or our reputation? we have to ask, Is it consistent with

Christ? This makes all the difference. Whatever is unworthy of Christ is unworthy of a Christian. If this be thoroughly understood and laid hold of it will furnish a great practical rule which may be applied to a thousand details. If the heart be true to Christ, if we walk according to the instincts of the divine nature, as strengthened by the ministry of the Holy Ghost, and guided by the authority of holy scripture, we shall not be much troubled with questions of right or wrong in our daily life.

Before proceeding to quote for the reader the lovely paragraph which closes our chapter, we would very briefly call his attention to the last clause of verse 21. "Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk." The fact that this commandment is given three times, in various connections, is sufficient to mark it as one of special interest and practical importance. The question is, what does it mean? what are we to learn from it? We believe it teaches very plainly that the Lord's people must carefully avoid everything contrary to nature. Now, it was, manifestly, contrary to nature that what was intended for a creature's nourishment should be used to seethe it.

We find, all through the word of God, great prominence given to what is according to nature — what is comely. "Does not

even nature itself teach you?" says the inspired apostle, to the assembly at Corinth. There are certain feelings and instincts implanted in nature, by the Creator, which must never be outraged. We may set it down as a fixed principle, an axiom in Christian ethics, that no action can possibly be of God that offers violence to the sensibilities proper to nature. The Spirit of God may, and often does, lead us beyond and above nature, but never against it.

We shall now turn to the closing verses of our chapter, in which we shall find some uncommonly fine practical instruction. "Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field brings forth year by year. And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always. And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the Lord thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the Lord thy God has blessed thee; then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go to the place which the Lord thy God shall choose;

and thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusts after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desires; and thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household, and the Levite that is within thy gates; thou shalt not forsake him; for he has no part nor inheritance with thee. At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates. And the Levite (because he has no part nor inheritance with thee) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat, and be satisfied, that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest." (Vers. 22-29.)

This is a deeply interesting and most important passage, setting before us, with special simplicity, the basis, the centre and practical features of Israel's national and domestic religion. The grand foundation of Israel's worship was laid in the fact that both they themselves and their land belonged to Jehovah. The land was His, and they held as tenants under Him. To this precious truth they were called, periodically, to bear testimony by faithfully tithing their land. "Thou shalt truly tithe all the in-

crease of thy seed, that thy field brings forth year by year." They were to own, in this practical way, the proprietorship of Jehovah, and never lose sight of it. They were to own no other landlord but the Lord their God. All they were and all they had belonged to Him. This was the solid groundwork of their national worship — their national religion.

And then as to the centre, it is set forth with equal clearness. They were to gather to the place where Jehovah recorded His Name. Precious privilege for all who truly loved that glorious Name! We see in this passage, as also in many other portions of the word of God, what importance He attached to the periodical gatherings of His people around Himself. Blessed be His Name, He delighted to see His beloved people assembled in His presence, happy in Him and in one another; rejoicing together in their common portion, and feeding in sweet and loving fellowship on the fruit of Jehovah's land. "Thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which He shall choose, to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn ... that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always."

There was — there could be, no other place like that, in the judgement of every faithful Israelite, every true lover of Je-

hovah. All such would delight to flock to the hallowed spot where that beloved and revered Name was recorded. It might seem strange and unaccountable to those who knew not the God of Israel, and cared nothing about Him, to see the people travelling — many of them — a long distance from their homes, and carrying their tithes to one particular spot. They might feel disposed to call in question the needs-be for such a custom. "Why not eat at home? they might say. But the simple fact is, such persons knew nothing whatever about the matter, and were wholly incapable of entering into the preciousness of it. To the Israel of God, there was the one grand moral reason for journeying to the appointed place, and that reason was found in the glorious motto — Jehovah Shammah — "the Lord is there." If an Israelite had wilfully determined to stay at home, or to go to some place of his own choosing, he would neither have met Jehovah there, nor his brethren, and hence he would have eaten alone. Such a course would have incurred the judgement of God; it would have been an abomination. There was but one centre, and that was not of man's choosing, but of God's. The godless Jeroboam, for his own selfish political ends, presumed to interfere with the divine order, and set up his calves at Bethel and Dan; but the worship offered there was

offered to demons and not to God. It was a daring act of wickedness which brought down upon him and upon his house the righteous judgement of God; and we see, in Israel's after history, that "Jeroboam the son of Nebat" is used as the terrible model of iniquity for all the wicked kings.

But all the faithful in Israel were sure to be found at the one divine centre, and nowhere else. You would not find such making all sorts of excuses for staying at home; neither would you find them running hither and thither to places of their own or other people's choosing; no, you would find them gathered to Jehovah Shammah, and there alone. Was this narrowness and bigotry? Nay, it was the fear and love of God. If Jehovah had appointed a place where He would meet His people, assuredly His people should meet Him there.

And not only had He appointed the place, but in His abounding goodness, He devised a means of making that place as convenient as possible for His worshipping people. Thus we read, "And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee which the Lord thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the Lord thy God has blessed thee; then thou shalt turn it into money, and bind up

the money in thine hand, and shalt go to the place which the Lord thy God shall choose ... And thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou and thy household."

This is perfectly beautiful. The Lord, in His tender care and considerate love, took account of everything. He would not leave a single difficulty in the way of His beloved people, in the matter of their assembling round Himself. He had His own special joy in seeing His redeemed people happy in His presence; and all who loved His Name would delight to meet the loving desire of His heart by being found at the divinely appointed centre.

If any Israelite were found neglecting the blessed occasion of assembling with his brethren, at the divinely chosen place and time, it would have simply proved that he had no heart for God or for His people, or, what was worse, that he was wilfully absent. He might reason as he pleased about his being happy at home, happy elsewhere; it was a false happiness, inasmuch as it was happiness found in the path of disobedience, the path of wilful neglect of the divine appointment.

All this is full of most valuable instruction for the church of God now. It is the will of God now, no less than of old, that His people should assemble in His presence, on divinely appointed ground, and to a divinely appointed centre. This, we presume, will hardly be called in question by any one having a spark of divine light in his soul. The instincts of the divine nature, the leadings of the Holy Ghost, and the teachings of holy scripture, do all, most unquestionably, lead the Lord's people to assemble themselves together for worship, communion, and edification. However dispensations may differ, there are certain great principles and leading characteristics which always hold good; and the assembling of ourselves together is, most assuredly, one of these. Whether under the old economy or under the new, the assembling of the Lord's people is a divine institution.

Now, this being so, it is not a question of our happiness, one way or the other; though we may be perfectly sure that all true Christians will be happy in being found in their divinely appointed place. There is ever deep joy and blessing in the assembly of God's people. It is impossible for us to find ourselves together in the Lord's presence and not be truly happy. It is simply heaven upon earth for the Lord's dear people — those

who love His Name, love His Person, love one another, to be together, round His table, around Himself. What can exceed the blessedness of being allowed to break bread together in remembrance of our beloved and adorable Lord, to show forth His death until He come; to raise, in holy concert, our anthems of praise to God and the Lamb; to edify, exhort and comfort one another, according to the gift and grace bestowed upon us by the risen and glorified Head of the church; to pour out our hearts, in sweet fellowship, in prayer, supplication, intercession and giving of thanks for all men, for kings and all in authority, for the whole household of faith, the church of God, the body of Christ, for the Lord's work and workmen all over the earth.

Where, we would ask, with all possible confidence, is there a true Christian, in a right state of soul, who would not delight in all this, and say, from the very depths of his heart, that there is nothing this side the glory to be compared with it?

But, we repeat, our happiness is not the question; it is less than secondary. We are to be ruled, in this, as in all beside, by the will of God as revealed in His holy word. The question for us is simply this, Is it according to the mind of God that His people should assemble themselves together for worship and mutual

edification? If this be so, woe be to all who wilfully refuse, or indolently neglect to do so, on any ground whatsoever; they not only suffer serious loss, in their own souls, but they are offering dishonour to God, grieving His Spirit, and doing injury to the assembly of His people.

These are very weighty consequences, and they demand the serious attention of all the Lord's people. It must be obvious to the reader that it is according to the revealed will of God that His people should assemble themselves together, in His presence. The inspired apostle exhorts us, in the tenth chapter of his Epistle to the Hebrews, not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. There is special value, interest and importance attaching to the assembly. The truth as to this begins to dawn upon us in the opening pages of the New Testament. Thus, in Matt. 18:20, we read the words of our blessed Lord, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Here we have the divine centre. "My Name." This answers to "The place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name there," so constantly named, and so strongly insisted upon in the book of Deuteronomy. It was absolutely essential that Israel should gather at

that one place. It was not a matter as to which people might choose for themselves. Human choice was absolutely and rigidly excluded. It was "The place which the Lord thy God shall choose," and no other. This we have seen distinctly. It is so plain that we have only to say, "How readest thou?"

Nor is it otherwise with the church of God. It is not human choice, or human judgement, or human opinion, or human reason, or human anything. It is absolutely and entirely divine. The ground of our gathering is divine, for it is accomplished redemption. The centre round which we are gathered is divine, for it is the Name of Jesus. The power by which we are gathered is divine, for it is the Holy Ghost. And the authority for our gathering is divine, for it is the word of God.

All this is as clear as it is precious; and all we need is the simplicity of faith to take it in and act upon it. If we begin to reason about it, we shall be sure to get into darkness; and if we listen to human opinions, we shall be plunged in hopeless perplexity between the conflicting claims of Christendom's sects and parties. Our only refuge, our only resource, our only strength, our only comfort, our only authority is the precious

word of God. Take away that, and we have absolutely nothing. Give us that, and we want no more.

This is what makes it all so real and so solid for our souls. Yes; reader, and so consolatory and tranquillizing, too. The truth as to our assembly is as clear, and as simple, and as unquestionable as the truth in reference to our salvation. It is the privilege of all Christians to be as sure that they are gathered on God's ground, around God's centre, by God's power, and on God's authority, as that they are within the blessed circle of God's salvation.

And, then, if we be asked, "How can we be certain of being round God's centre?" We reply, simply by the word of God. How could Israel of old be sure as to God's chosen place for their assembly? By His express commandment. Were they at any loss for guidance? Surely not; His word was as clear and as distinct as to their place of worship as it was in reference to everything else. It left not the slightest ground for uncertainty. It was so plainly set before them that, for any one to raise a question, could only be regarded as wilful ignorance or positive disobedience.

Now, the question is, Are Christians worse off than Israel in reference to the great subject of their place of worship, the centre and ground of their assembly? Are they left in doubt and uncertainty? Is it an open question? Is it a matter as to which every man is left to do what is right in his own eyes? Has God given us no positive, definite instruction on a question so intensely interesting, and so vitally important? Could we imagine, for a moment, that the One who graciously condescended to instruct His people of old in matters which we, in our fancied wisdom, would deem unworthy of notice, would leave His church now without any definite guidance as to the ground, centre, and characteristic features of our worship? Utterly impossible! Every spiritual mind must reject, with decision and energy, any such idea.

No, beloved Christian reader, you know it would not be like our gracious God to deal thus with His heavenly people. True, there is no such thing now as a particular place to which all Christians are to betake themselves periodically for worship. There was such a place, for God's earthly people; and there will be such a place for restored Israel and for all nations by-and-by. "It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the

Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isa. 2) And again, "It shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth, to Jerusalem, to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain." (Zech. 14:16-17.)

Here are two passages culled, one from the first, and the other from the last but one, of the divinely inspired prophets, both pointing forward to the glorious time when Jerusalem shall be God's centre for Israel and for all nations. And we may assert, with all possible confidence, that the reader will find all the prophets, with one consent, in full harmony with Isaiah and Zechariah, on this profoundly interesting subject. To apply

such passages to the church, or to heaven, is to do violence to the clearest grandest utterances that ever fell on human ears; it is to confound things heavenly and earthly, and to give a flat contradiction to the divinely harmonious voices of prophets and apostles.

It is needless to multiply quotations. All scripture goes to prove that Jerusalem was and will yet be God's earthly centre for His people, and for all nations. But, just now, that is to say, from the day of Pentecost, when God the Holy Ghost came down, to form the church of God, the body of Christ, until the moment when our Lord Jesus Christ shall come to take His people away out of this world, there is no place, no city, no sacred locality, no earthly centre for the Lord's people. To talk to Christians about holy places or consecrated ground is as thoroughly foreign to them — at least it ought to be — as it would have been to talk to a Jew about having his place of worship in heaven. The idea is wholly out of place, wholly out of character.

If the reader will turn, for a moment, to the fourth chapter of John, he will find, in our Lord's marvellous discourse with the woman of Sychar, the most blessed teaching on this subject. "The woman says to him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet.

Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus says to her, woman, believe me, the hour comes, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what; we know what we worship; for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour comes, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeks such to worship him. God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (Vers. 19-24.)

This passage entirely sets aside the thought of any special place of worship now. There really is no such thing. "The Most High dwells not in temples made with hands; as says the prophet, Heaven is my throne, and earth is my footstool: what house will ye build me? says the Lord; or what is the place of my rest? Has not my hand made all these things?" (Acts 7.48-50.) And again, "God that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwells not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with man's hands, as though he needed anything, seeing he gives to all life, and breath, and all things." (Acts 17:24-25.)

The teaching of the New Testament, from beginning to end, is clear and decided as to the subject of worship; and the Christian reader is solemnly bound to give heed to that teaching, and to seek to understand and submit his whole moral being to its authority. There has ever been, from the very earliest ages of the church's history, a strong and fatal tendency to return to Judaism, not only on the subject of righteousness, but also on that of worship. Christians have not only been put under the law for life and righteousness, but also under the Levitical ritual for the order and character of their worship. We have dealt with the former of these in chapters 4 and 5 of these "Notes;" but the latter is hardly less serious in its effect upon the whole tone and character of Christian life and conduct.

We have to bear in mind that Satan's great object is to cast the church of God down from her excellency, in reference to her standing, her walk and her worship. No sooner was the church set up on the day of Pentecost than he commenced his corrupting and undermining process, and for eighteen long centuries he has carried it on with diabolical persistency. In the face of these plain passages quoted above, in reference to the character of worship which the Father is now seeking, and as to the fact

that, God does not dwell in temples made with hands, we have seen, in all ages, the strong tendency to return to the condition of things under the Mosaic economy. Hence the desire for great buildings, imposing rituals, sacerdotal orders, choral services, all of which are in direct opposition to the mind of Christ and to the plainest teachings of the New Testament. The professing church has entirely departed from the spirit and authority of the Lord in all these things; and yet, strange and sad to say, these very things are continually appealed to as proofs of the wonderful progress of Christianity. We are told by some of our public teachers and guides that the blessed Apostle Paul had little idea of the grandeur to which the church was to attain; but if he could only see one of our venerable cathedrals, with its lofty aisles and painted windows, and listen to the peals of the organ and the voices of the choristers, he would see what an advance had been made upon the upper room at Jerusalem!

Ah! reader, be assured it is all a most thorough delusion. It is true, indeed, the church has made progress, but it is in the wrong direction; it is not upward but downward. It is away from Christ, away from the Father, away from the Spirit, away from the word.

We should like to ask the reader this one question, If the Apostle Paul were to come to London for next Lord's day where could he find what he found in Troas, eighteen hundred years ago, as recorded in Acts 20:7? Where could he find a company of disciples gathered simply by the Holy Ghost, to the Name of Jesus, to break bread in remembrance of Him, and to show forth His death till He come? Such was the divine order then, and such must be the divine order now. We cannot for a moment, believe that the apostle would accept anything else. He would look for the divine thing; he would have that or nothing. Now, where could He find it? Where could he go and find the table of his Lord as appointed by Himself, the same night in which He was betrayed?

Mark, reader, we are bound to believe that the apostle Paul would insist upon having the table and the supper of his Lord, as he had received them direct from Himself in the glory, and given them by the Spirit, in the tenth and eleventh chapter of his epistle to the Corinthians — an epistle addressed to "all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours." We cannot believe that he would teach God's order, in the first century and accept man's disorder in the nine-

teenth. Man has no right to tamper with a divine institution. He has no more authority to alter a single jot or tittle connected with the Lord's supper than Israel had to interfere with the order of the Passover.

Now, we repeat the question — and earnestly entreat the reader to ponder and answer it in the divine presence, and in the light of scripture — Where could the apostle find this in London, or anywhere else in Christendom on next Lord's day? Where could he go and take his seat at the table of his Lord, in the midst of a company of disciples gathered simply on the ground of the one body, to the one centre, the Name of Jesus, by the power of the Holy Ghost, and on the authority of the word of God? Where could he find a sphere in which he could exercise his gifts without human authority, appointment, or ordination? We ask these questions in order to exercise the heart and conscience of the reader. We are fully convinced that there are places, here and there, where Paul could find these things carried out, though in weakness and failure; and we believe the Christian reader is solemnly responsible to find them out. Alas! alas! they are few and far between, compared with the mass of Christians meeting otherwise.

We may perhaps be told that if people knew that it was the apostle Paul, they would willingly allow him to minister. But then he would neither seek nor accept their permission, inasmuch as he tells us plainly, in the first chapter of Galatians, that his ministry was "not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead."

And not only so, but we may rest assured that the blessed apostle would insist upon having the Lord's table spread upon the divine ground of the one body; and he could only consent to eat the Lord's Supper according to its divine order as laid down in the New Testament. He could not accept, for a moment, anything but the divine reality. He would say, "Either that or nothing." He could not admit any human interference with a divine institution; neither could He accept any new ground of gathering, or any new principle of organisation. He would repeat his own inspired statements, "There is one body and one Spirit;" and "We being many, are one bread, one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." These words apply to "all that in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord; and they hold good in all ages of the church's existence on earth.

The reader must be very clear and distinct as to this. God's principle of gathering and unity must, on no account, be surrendered. The moment men begin to organise, to form societies, churches or associations, they act in direct opposition to the word of God, the mind of Christ, and the present action of the Holy Ghost. Man might as well set about to form a world as to form a church. It is entirely a divine work. The Holy Ghost came down, on the day of Pentecost, to form the church of God, the body of Christ; and this is the only church, the only body that scripture recognises; all else is contrary to God, even though it may be sanctioned and defended by thousands of true Christians.

Let not the reader misunderstand us. We are not speaking of salvation, of eternal life, or of divine righteousness, but of the true ground of gathering, the divine principle on which the Lord's table should be spread, and the Lord's supper celebrated. Thousands of the Lord's beloved people have lived and died in the communion of the church of Rome; but the church of Rome is not the church of God, but a horrible apostasy; and the sacrifice of the mass is not the Lord's supper, but a marred, mutilated and miserable invention of the devil. If the question in the

mind of the reader be merely what amount of error he can sanction without forfeiting his soul's salvation, it is useless to proceed with the grand and important subject before us.

But where is the heart that loves Christ that could be content to take such miserably low ground as this? What would have been thought of an Israelite of old who could content himself with being a child of Abraham, and could enjoy his vine and his fig-tree, his flocks and his herds, but never think of going to worship at the place where Jehovah had recorded His Name? Where was the faithful Jew who did not love that sacred spot? "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thine house, and the place where thine honour dwells."

And when, by reason of Israel's sin, the national polity was broken up, and the people were in captivity, we hear the true-hearted exiles amongst them pouring forth their lament in the following touching and eloquent strain, "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down; yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we

sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem," — God's centre for His earthly people — "let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy." (Ps. 137.)

And again, in Daniel 6, we find that beloved exile opening his window, three times a day, and praying toward Jerusalem, although he knew that the lions' den was the penalty. But why insist upon praying toward Jerusalem? Was it a piece of Jewish superstition? Nay; it was a magnificent display of divine principle; it was an unfurling of the divine standard amid the depressing and humiliating consequences of Israel's folly and sin. True, Jerusalem was in ruins; but God's thoughts respecting Jerusalem were not in ruins. It was His centre for His earthly people. "Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together, whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, to the testimony of Israel, to give thanks to the name of Lord. For there are set thrones of judgement, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace

be within thee. Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good." (Ps. 122)

Jerusalem was the centre for Israel's twelve tribes, in days gone by, and it will be so in the future. To apply the above and similar passages to the church of God here or hereafter, on earth or in heaven, is simply turning things upside down, confounding things essentially different, and thus doing an incalculable amount of damage both to scripture and the souls of men. We must not allow ourselves to take such unwarrantable liberties with the word of God.

Jerusalem was and will be God's earthly centre; but, now, the church of God should own no centre but the glorious and infinitely precious Name of Jesus. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Precious centre! To this alone the New Testament points, to this alone the Holy Ghost gathers. It matters not where we are gathered, in Jerusalem or Rome, London, Paris or Canton. It is not where but how.

But be it remembered, it must be a divinely real thing. It is of no possible use to profess to be gathered in or to the blessed

Name of Jesus, if we are not really so. The apostle's word as to faith may apply with equal force to the question of our centre of gathering. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say" he is gathered to the Name of Jesus? God deals in moral realities; and while it is perfectly clear that a man who desires to be true to Christ cannot possibly consent to own any other centre or any other ground of gathering but His Name, yet it is quite possible — alas! alas! how very possible — for people to profess to be on that blessed and holy ground, while their spirit and conduct, their habits and ways, their whole course and character go to prove that they are not in the power of their profession.

The apostle said to the Corinthians that he would "know not the speech but the power." A weighty word, most surely, and much needed at all times, but specially needed in reference to the important subject now before us. We would lovingly, yet most solemnly press upon the conscience of the Christian reader his responsibility to consider this matter in the holy retirement of the Lord's presence, and in the light of the New Testament. Let him not set it aside on the plea of its not being essential. It is, in the very highest degree, essential, inasmuch as it concerns the

Lord's glory, and the maintenance of His truth. This is the only standard by which to decide what is essential and what is not. Was it essential for Israel to gather at the divinely appointed centre? Was it left an open question? Might every man choose a centre for himself? Let the answer be weighed in the light of Deuteronomy 14. It was absolutely essential that the Israel of God should assemble round the centre of the God of Israel. This is unquestionable. Woe be to the man who presumed to turn his back on the place where Jehovah had set His Name. He would, very speedily, have been taught his mistake. And if this was true for God's earthly people, is it not equally true for the church, and the individual Christian? Assuredly it is. We are bound, by the very highest and most sacred obligations, to refuse every ground of gathering but the one body; every centre of gathering but the Name of Jesus; every power of gathering but the Holy Ghost; every authority of gathering but the word of God. May all the Lord's beloved people, everywhere, be led to consider those things in the fear and love of His holy Name!

We shall now close this section by quoting the last paragraph of our chapter, in which we shall find some most valuable practical teaching.

"At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates; and the Levite, (because he has no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat, and be satisfied; that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest."

Here we have a lovely home-scene, a most touching display of the divine character, a beautiful outshining of the grace and kindness of the God of Israel. It does the heart good to breath the fragrant air of such a passage as this. It stands in vivid and striking contrast with the cold selfishness of the scene around us. God would teach His people to think of, and care for, all who were in need. The tithe belonged to Him, but He would give them the rare and exquisite privilege of devoting it to the blessed object of making hearts glad.

There is peculiar sweetness in the words, "shall come" — "shall eat" — "and be satisfied." So like our own ever Gracious God! He delights to meet the need of all. He opens His hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing. And not only so, but it is His joy to make His people the channel through which

the grace, the kindness and the sympathy of His heart may flow forth to all. How precious is this! What a privilege to be God's almoners, the dispensers of His bounty, the exponents of His goodness! Would that we entered more fully into the deep blessedness of all this! May we breathe more the atmosphere of the divine presence, and then we shall more faithfully reflect the divine character!

As the deeply interesting and practical subject presented in verses 28 and 29 will come before us in another connection, in our study of chapter 26, we shall not dwell further upon it here.

## **Chapter 15**

"At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release. And this is the manner of the release. Every creditor that lends ought to his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the Lord's release. Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it again; but that which is thine with thy brother thine hand shall release. Save when there shall be no poor among you; for the Lord shall greatly bless thee in the land which the Lord thy God gives thee for an inheritance to possess it; only if thou carefully

hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all these commandments which I command thee this day. For the Lord thy God blesses thee, as he promised thee; and thou shalt lend to many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you." (Vers. 1-6.)

It is truly edifying to mark the way in which the God of Israel was ever seeking to draw the hearts of His people to Himself by means of the various sacrifices, solemnities and institutions of the Levitical ceremonial. There was the morning and evening lamb, every day; there was the holy sabbath, every week; there was the new moon, every month; there was the Passover, every year; there was the tithing, every three years; there was the release, every seven years; and there was the jubilee, every fifty years.

All this is full of deepest interest. It tells its own sweet tale, and teaches its own precious lesson to the heart. The morning and evening lamb, as we know, pointed ever to "the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world." The sabbath was the lovely type of the rest that remains to the people of God. The new moon beautifully pre-figured the time when restored Israel

shall reflect back the beams of the Sun of righteousness upon the nations. The Passover was the standing memorial of the nation's deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The year of tithing set forth the fact of Jehovah's proprietorship of the land, as also the lovely way in which His rents were to be expended in meeting the need of His workmen and of His poor. The sabbatic year gave promise of a bright time when all debts would be cancelled, all loans disposed of, all burdens removed. And, finally, the jubilee was the magnificent type of the times of the restitution of all things, when the captive shall be set free, when the exile shall return to his long lost home and inheritance; and when the land of Israel and the whole earth shall rejoice beneath the beneficent, government of the Son of David.

Now, in all these lovely institutions we notice two prominent characteristic features, namely, glory to God, and blessing to man. These two things are linked together by a divine and everlasting bond. God has so ordained that His full glory and the creature's full blessing should be indissolubly bound up together. This is deep joy to the heart, and it helps us to understand, more fully, the force and beauty of that familiar sentence: "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." When that

glory shines forth in its full lustre, then, assuredly, human blessedness, rest and felicity shall reach their full and eternal consummation.

We see a lovely pledge and foreshadowing of all this in the seventh year. It was "The Lord's release," and therefore its blessed influence was to be felt by every poor debtor from Dan to Beersheba. Jehovah would grant to His people the high and holy privilege of having fellowship with Him in causing the debtor's heart to sing for joy. He would teach them, if they would only learn, the deep blessedness of frankly forgiving all. This is what He Himself delights in, blessed for ever be His great and glorious Name!

But alas! the poor human heart is not up to this lovely mark. It is not fully prepared to tread this heavenly road. It is sadly cramped and hindered, by a low and miserable selfishness, in grasping and carrying out the divine principle of grace. It is not quite at home in this heavenly atmosphere. It is but ill-prepared for being the vessel and channel of that royal grace which shines so brightly in all the ways of God. This will only too fully account for the cautionary clauses of the following passage. "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren

within any of thy gates, in thy land, which the Lord thy God gives thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother; but thou shalt open thine hand wide to him, and surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wants. Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand: and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry to the Lord against thee, and it be sin to thee. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest to him; because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand to. For the poor shall never cease out of thy land; therefore I command thee, saying, thou shalt open thine hand wide to thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land." (verses. 7-11.)

Here the deep springs of the poor selfish heart are discovered and judged. There is nothing like grace for making manifest the hidden roots of evil in human nature. Man must be renewed in the very deepest springs of his moral being ere he can be the vehicle of divine love; and even those who are thus through grace renewed, have to watch continually against the hideous

forms of selfishness in which our fallen nature clothes itself. Nothing but grace can keep the heart open wide to every form of human need. We must abide hard by the fountain of heavenly love if we would be channels of blessing in the midst of a scene of misery and desolation like that in which our lot is cast.

How lovely are those words, "Thou shalt open thine hand wide!" They breathe the very air of heaven. An open heart and a wide hand are like God. "The Lord loves a cheerful giver," because that is precisely what He is Himself. "He gives to all liberally, and upbraids not." And He would grant to us the rare and most exquisite privilege of being imitators of Him. Marvelous grace! The very thought of it fills the heart with wonder, love and praise. We are not only saved by grace, but we stand in grace, live under the blessed reign of grace, breathe the very atmosphere of grace, and are called to be the living exponents of grace, not only to our brethren but to the whole human family. "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to them which are of the household of faith."

Christian reader, let us diligently apply our hearts to all this divine instruction. It is most precious; but its real preciousness can only be tasted in the practical carrying out of it. We are sur-

rounded by ten thousand forms of human misery, human sorrow, human need. There are broken hearts, crushed spirits, desolate homes, around us, on every side. The widow, the orphan and the stranger meet us, daily, in our walks. How do we carry ourselves in reference to all these? Are we hardening our hearts and closing our hands against them? Or are we seeking to act in the lovely spirit of "the Lord's release"? We must bear in mind that we are called to be reflectors of the divine nature and character, to be direct channels of communication between our Father's loving heart and every form of human need. We are not to live for ourselves; to do so is a most miserable denial of every feature and principle of that morally glorious Christianity which we profess. It is our high and holy privilege, yea, it is our special mission, to shed around us the blessed light of that heaven to which we belong. Wherever we are, in the family, in the field, in the mart or the manufactory, in the shop or in the counting house, all who come in contact with us should see the grace of Jesus shining out in our ways, our words, our very looks. And then if any object of need come before us, if we can do nothing more, we should drop a soothing word into the ear, or shed a tear or heave a sigh of genuine heartfelt sympathy.

Reader, is it thus with us? Are we so living near the fountain of divine love, and so breathing the very air of heaven that the blessed fragrance of these things shall be diffused around us? Or are we displaying the odious selfishness of nature, the unholy temper and dispositions of our fallen and corrupt humanity? What an unsightly object is a selfish Christian. He is a standing contradiction, a living, moving lie. The Christianity which he professes throws out into dark and terrible relief the unholy selfishness which governs his heart and comes out in his life.

The Lord grant that all who profess and call themselves Christians may so carry themselves, in daily life, as to be an unblotted epistle of Christ, known and read of all men! In this way, infidelity will, at least, be deprived of one of its weightiest arguments, its gravest objections. Nothing affords a stronger plea to the infidel than the inconsistent lives of professing Christians.

Not that such a plea will stand for a moment, or even be urged before the judgement-seat of Christ, inasmuch as each one who has within his reach a copy of the holy scriptures will be judged by the light of those scriptures, even though there were

not a single consistent Christian on the face of the earth. Nevertheless, Christians are solemnly responsible to let their light so shine before men that they may see their good works and glorify our Father in heaven. We are solemnly bound to exhibit and illustrate in daily life the heavenly principles unfolded in the word of God. We should leave the infidel without a shred of a plea or an argument; we are responsible so to do.

May we lay these things to heart, and then we shall have occasion to bless God for our meditation on the delightful institution of "The Lord's release."

We shall now quote for the reader the touching and beautiful institution in reference to the Hebrew servant. We increasingly feel the importance of giving the veritable language of the Holy Ghost; for albeit it may be said that the reader has his Bible to refer to, yet we know, as a fact, that when passages of scripture are referred to, there is, in many cases, a reluctance to lay down the volume which we hold in our hand in order to read the reference. And beside, there is nothing like the word of God; and as to any remarks which we may offer, their object is simply to help the beloved Christian reader to understand and appreciate the scriptures which we quote.

"If thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold to thee, and serve thee six years, then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty; thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress; of that wherewith the Lord thy God has blessed thee thou shalt give to him."

How perfectly beautiful, how like our own ever gracious God is all this! He would not have the brother go away empty. Liberty and poverty would not be in moral harmony. The brother was to be sent on his way free and full, emancipated and endowed, not only with his liberty but with a liberal fortune to start with.

Truly, this is divine. We do not want to be told the school where such exquisite ethics are taught. They have the very ring of heaven about them; they emit the fragrant odour of the very paradise of God. Is it not in this way that our God has dealt with us? All praise to His glorious Name! He has not only given us life and liberty, but He has furnished us liberally with all we can possibly want for time and eternity. He has opened the exhaustless treasury of heaven for us; yea, He has given the

Son of His bosom for us, and to us — for us, to save; to us, to satisfy. He has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness; all that pertains to the life that now is, and to that which is to come, is fully and perfectly secured by our Father's liberal hand.

And is it not deeply affecting to mark how the heart of God expresses itself in the style in which the Hebrew servant was to be treated? "Thou shalt furnish him liberally." Not grudgingly or of necessity. It was to be done in a manner worthy of God. The actings of His people are to be the reflection of Himself. We are called to the high and holy dignity of being His moral representatives. It is marvellous; but thus it is, through His infinite grace. He has not only delivered us from the flames of an everlasting hell, but He calls us to act for Him, and to be like Him in the midst of a world that crucified His Son. And not only has He conferred this lofty dignity upon us, but He has endowed us with a princely fortune to support it. The inexhaustible resources of heaven are at our disposal. "All things are ours," through His infinite grace. Oh! that we may more fully realise our privileges, and thus more faithfully discharge our holy responsibilities!

At verse 15 of our chapter, we have a very touching motive presented to the heart of the people, one eminently calculated to stir their affections and sympathies. "And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee; therefore I command thee this thing today. The remembrance of Jehovah's grace in redeeming them out of Egypt was to be the ever-abiding and all-powerful motive-spring of their actings towards the poor brother. This is a never failing principle; and nothing lower than this will ever stand. If we look for our motive-springs anywhere but in God Himself, and in His dealings with us, we shall soon break down in our practical career. It is only as we keep before our hearts the marvellous grace of God displayed toward us, in the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, that we shall be able to pursue a course of true, active benevolence, whether toward our brethren or those outside. Mere kindly feelings bubbling up in our own hearts, or drawn out by the sorrows and distresses and necessities of others, will prove evanescent. It is only in the living God Himself we can find perennial springs.

At verse 16, a case is contemplated in which a servant might prefer remaining with his master. "And it shall be, if he say to

thee, I will not go away from thee, because he loves thee and thine house, because he is well with thee, then thou shalt take an awl, and thrust it through his ear to the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever"

In comparing this passage with Exodus 21:1-6, we observe a marked difference arising, as we might expect, from the distinctive character of each book. In Exodus, the typical feature is prominent; in Deuteronomy, the moral. Hence, in the latter, the inspired writer omits all about the wife and the children, as foreign to his purpose here, though so essential to the beauty and perfectness of the type in Exodus 21. We merely notice this as one of the many striking proofs that Deuteronomy is very far indeed from being a barren repetition of its predecessors. There is neither repetition, on the one hand, nor contradiction, on the other but lovely variety in perfect accordance with the divine object and scope of each book. So much for the contemptible shallowness and ignorance of those infidels who have had the impious temerity to level their shafts at this magnificent portion of the oracles of God.

In our chapter, then, we have the moral aspect of this interesting institution. The servant loved his master and was happy

with him. He preferred perpetual slavery and the mark thereof, with a master whom he loved, to liberty and a liberal portion away from him. This, of course, would argue well for both parties. It is ever a good sign for both master and servant when the connection is of long standing. Perpetual changing may, as a general rule, be taken as a proof of moral wrong somewhere. No doubt, there are exceptions; and not only so, but in the relation of master and servant, as in everything else, there are two sides to be considered. For instance, we have to consider whether the master is perpetually changing his servants, or the servant perpetually changing his masters. In the former case, appearances would tell against the master; in the latter, against the servant.

The fact is, we have all to judge ourselves in this matter. Those of us who are masters have to consider how far we really seek the comfort, happiness and solid profit of our servants. We should bear in mind that we have very much more to think of, in reference to our servants, than the amount of work we can get out of them. Even upon the low-level principle of "live and let live," we are bound to seek in every possible way, to make our servants happy and comfortable; to make them feel that

they have a home under our roof; that we are not content with the labour of their hands, but that we want the love of their hearts. We remember once asking the head of a very large establishment, "How many hearts do you employ?" He shook his head, and owned with real sorrow how little heart there is in the relation of master and servant. Hence, the common heartless phrase of "employing hands."

But the Christian master is called to stand upon a higher level altogether; he is privileged to be an imitator of his Master, Christ. The remembrance of this will regulate all his actions towards the servant; it will lead him to study, with ever-deepening interest and solid profit, his divine model, in order to reproduce Him, in all the practical details of daily life.

So also, in reference to the Christian servant, in his position and line of action. He, as well as the master, has to study the great example set before him in the path and ministry of the only true Servant that ever trod this earth. He is called to walk in His blessed footsteps, to drink into His spirit, to study His word. It is not a little remarkable that the Holy Ghost has devoted more attention to the instruction of servants than to all the other relationships put together. This the reader can see at a

glance, in the Epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Titus. The Christian servant can adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, by not purloining and not answering again. He can serve the Lord Christ, in the most common-place duties of domestic life, just as effectually as the man who is called to address thousands on the grand realities of eternity.

Thus when both master and servant are mutually governed by heavenly principles, both seeking to serve and glorify the one Lord, they will get on happily together. The master will not be severe, arbitrary and exacting; and the servant will not be self-seeking, heady and high-minded; each will contribute, by the faithful discharge of their relative duties, to the comfort and happiness of the other, and to the peace and happiness of the whole domestic circle. Would that it were more after this heavenly fashion, in every Christian household on the face of the earth! Then indeed would the truth of God be vindicated, His word honoured, and His Name glorified in our domestic relations and practical ways.

In verse 18, we have an admonitory word which reveals to us, very faithfully, but with great delicacy, a moral root in the poor human heart. "It shall not seem hard to thee, when thou sendest

him away free from thee; for he has been worth a double hired servant to thee, in serving thee six years; and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all that thou doest."

This is very affecting. Only think of the most High God condescending to stand before the human heart — the heart of a master, to plead the cause of a poor servant, and set forth his claims! It is as if He were asking a favour for Himself. He leaves nothing unsaid in order to strengthen the case. He reminds the master of the value of six years' service, and encourages him by the promise of enlarged blessing as a reward for his generous acting. It is perfectly beautiful. The Lord would not only have the generous thing done, but done in such a way as to gladden the heart of the one to whom it was done; He thinks not only of the substance of an action, but also of the style. We may, at times, brace ourselves up to the business of doing a kindness; we do it as a matter of duty; and, all the while, it may "seem hard" that we should have to do it; thus the act will be robbed of all its charms. It is the generous heart that adorns the generous act. We should so do a kindness as to assure the recipient that our own heart is made glad by the act. This is the divine way: "When they had nothing to pay, he

frankly forgave them both." "It is meet that we should make merry, and be glad." "There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repente" Oh! to be a brighter reflection of the precious grace of our Father's heart!

Ere closing our remarks on this deeply interesting chapter, we shall quote for the reader its last paragraph. "All the firstling males that come of thy herd and of thy flock thou shalt sanctify to the Lord thy God; thou shalt do no work with the firstling of thy bullock, nor shear the firstling of thy sheep; thou shalt eat it before the Lord thy God year by year, in the place which the Lord shall choose, thou and thy household. And if there be any blemish therein, as if it be lame, or blind, or have any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it to the Lord thy God. Thou shalt eat it within thy gates, the unclean and the clean person shall eat it alike, as the roebuck, as the hart. Only thou shalt not eat the blood thereof. Thou shalt pour it upon the ground as water." (Vers 19-23)

Only that which was perfect was to be offered to God. The first-born, unblemished male, the apt figure of the spotless Lamb of God, offered upon the cross for us, the imperishable foundation of our peace, and the precious food of our souls, in

the presence of God. This was the divine thing; the assembly gathered together, around the divine centre, feasting in the presence of God, on that which was the appointed type of Christ, who is, at once, our sacrifice, our centre, and our feast. Eternal and universal homage to His most precious and glorious Name!

## **Chapter 16.**

We now approach one of the most profound and comprehensive sections of the Book of Deuteronomy, in which the inspired writer presents to our view what we may call the three great cardinal feasts of the Jewish year, namely, the Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles; or redemption, the Holy Ghost, and the glory. We have here a more condensed view of lovely institutions than that given in Leviticus 23 where we have, if we count the sabbath, eight feasts; but if we view the sabbath as distinct, and having its own special place as the type of God's own eternal rest, then there are seven feasts, namely, the Passover; the feast of unleavened bread; the feast of first-fruits; Pentecost; trumpets; the day of atonement; and tabernacles.

Such is the order of feasts in the Book of Leviticus which, as we have ventured to remark in our studies on that most marvellous book, may be called "The priest's guide book." But in Deuteronomy, which is pre-eminently the people's book, we have less of ceremonial detail, and the lawgiver confines himself to those great moral and national landmarks which, in the very simplest manner, as adapted to the people, present the past, the present, and the future.

"Observe the month of Abib, and keep the Passover to the Lord thy God; for in the month of Abib the Lord thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night. Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the Passover to the Lord thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the Lord shall choose to place his name there. Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste; that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life. And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coasts seven days; neither shall there anything of the flesh, which thou sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the morning. Thou

mayest not sacrifice the Passover within any of thy gates which the Lord thy God gives thee" — as if it were a matter of no importance where, provided the feast were kept — "but at the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name in, there" — and nowhere else — "thou shalt sacrifice the Passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt. And thou shalt roast and eat it in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose; and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go to thy tents. Six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread; and on the seventh day shall be a solemn assembly to the Lord thy God; thou shalt do no work therein" (vers. 1-8.)

Having, in our "Notes on Exodus," gone, somewhat fully, into the great leading principles of this foundation feast, we must refer the reader to that volume, if he desires to study the subject. But there are certain features peculiar to Deuteronomy to which we feel it our duty to call his special attention. And, in the first place, we have to notice the remarkable emphasis laid upon "the place" where the feast was to be kept. This is full of interest and practical moment. The people were not to choose for themselves. It might, according to human thinking, appear a

very small matter how or where the feast was kept provided it was kept at all. But — be it carefully noted and deeply pondered by the reader — human thinking had nothing whatever to do in the matter; it was divine thinking and divine authority altogether. God had a right to prescribe and definitively settle where He would meet His people; and this He does in the most distinct and emphatic manner, in the above passage, where, three times over, He inserts the weighty clause, "In the place which the Lord thy God shall choose."

Is this vain repetition? Let no one dare to think, much less to assert it. It is most necessary emphasis; Why most necessary? Because of our ignorance, our indifference, and our wilfulness. God, in His infinite goodness, takes special pains to impress upon the heart, the conscience and the understanding of His people, that He would have one place, in particular, where the memorable and most significant feast of the Passover was to be kept.

And be it remarked that it is only in Deuteronomy that the place of celebration is insisted upon. We have nothing about it in Exodus, because there it was kept in Egypt. We have nothing about it in Numbers, because there it was kept in the wilder-

ness. But, in Deuteronomy, it is authoritatively and definitively settled, because there we have the instructions for the land. Another striking proof that Deuteronomy is very far indeed from being a barren repetition of its predecessors.

The all-important point, in reference to "the place" so prominently and so peremptorily insisted upon in all the three great solemnities recorded in our chapter, is this, God would gather His beloved people around Himself, that they might feast together in His presence; that He might rejoice in them, and they in Him and in one another. All this could only be in the one special place of divine appointment. All who desired to meet Jehovah and to meet His people, all who desired worship and communion according to God, would thankfully betake themselves to the divinely appointed centre. Self-will might say, "Can we not keep the feast in the bosom of our families? What need is there of a long journey? Surely if heart is right, it cannot matter very much as to place." To all this we reply that the clearest, and best proof of the heart being right would be found in the simple, earnest desire to do the will of God. It was quite sufficient for every one who loved and feared God that He had appointed a place where He would meet His people; there they

would be found and nowhere else. His presence it was that could alone impart joy, comfort, strength and blessing to all their great national reunions. It was not the mere fact of a large number of people gathering together, three times a year, to feast and rejoice together; this might minister to human pride, self complacency and excitement. But to flock together to meet Jehovah, to assemble in His blessed presence, to own the place where He had recorded His Name, this would be the deep joy of every truly loyal heart throughout the twelve tribes of Israel. For any one, wilfully, to abide at home, or to go anywhere else than to the one divinely appointed place, would not only be to neglect and insult Jehovah, but actually to rebel against His supreme authority.

And now, having briefly spoken of the place, we may, for a moment, glance at the mode of celebration This, too, is, as we might expect, quite characteristic of our book. The leading feature here is "the unleavened bread." But the reader will specially note the interesting fact that this bread is "the bread of affliction." Now what is the meaning this? We all understand that unleavened bread is the type of that holiness of heart and life so absolutely essential to the enjoyment of true communion with

God. We are not saved by personal holiness but, thank God, we are saved to it. It is not the ground of our salvation; but it is an essential element in our communion. Allowed leaven is the death-blow to communion and worship.

We must never, for one moment, lose sight of this great cardinal principle in that life of personal holiness and practical godliness which, as redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, we are called, bound and privileged to live from day to day, in the midst of the scenes and circumstances through which we are journeying home to our eternal rest in the heavens. To speak of communion and worship while living in known sin is the melancholy proof that we know nothing of either the one or the other. In order to enjoy communion with God or the communion of saints, and in order to worship God in spirit and in truth, we must be living a life of personal holiness, a life of separation from all known evil. To take our place in the assembly of God's people, and appear to take part in the holy fellowship and worship pertaining thereto, while living in secret sin, or allowing evil in others, is to defile the assembly, grieve the Holy Ghost, sin against Christ, and bring down upon us the judgement of God, who is now judging His house and chasten-

ing His children in order that they may not ultimately be condemned with the world.

All this is most solemn, and calls for the earnest attention of all who really desire to walk with God, and serve Him with reverence and godly fear. It is one thing to have the doctrine of the type in the region of our understanding, and another thing altogether to have its great, moral lesson engraved on heart and worked out in the life. May all who profess to have the blood of the Lamb sprinkled on their conscience seek to keep the feast of unleavened bread. "Know ye not that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us; therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Cor. 5:6-8.)

But what are we to understand by "the bread of affliction"? Should we not rather look for joy, praise and triumph, in connection with a feast in memory of deliverance from Egyptian bondage and misery? No doubt, there is very deep and real joy, thankfulness and praise in realising the blessed truth of our full

deliverance from our former condition, with all its accompaniments and all its consequences. But it is very plain that these were not the prominent features of the paschal feast; indeed, they are not even named. We have "the bread of affliction," but not a word about joy, praise or triumph.

Now, why is this? What great moral lesson is conveyed to our hearts by the bread of affliction? We believe it sets before us those deep exercises of heart which the Holy Ghost produces by bringing powerfully before us what it cost our adorable Lord and Saviour to deliver us from our sins and from the judgement which those sins deserved. Those exercises are also typified by the "bitter herbs" of Exodus 12, and they are illustrated, again and again, in the history of God's people of old who were led, under the powerful action of the word and Spirit of God to chasten themselves and "afflict their souls" in the divine presence.

And be it remembered that there is not a tinge of the legal element, or of unbelief in these holy exercises; far from it. When an Israelite partook of the bread of affliction with the roasted flesh of the Passover, did it express a doubt or a fear as to his full deliverance? Impossible! How could it? He was in the

land; he was gathered to God's own centre, His own very presence. How could he then doubt his full and final deliverance from the land of Egypt? The thought is simply absurd.

But although he had no doubts or fears as to his deliverance, yet had he to eat the bread of affliction; it was an essential element in his paschal feast, "For thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste, that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life."

This was very deep and real work. They were never to forget their Exodus out of Egypt; but to keep up the remembrance of it, in the promised land throughout all generations. They were to commemorate their deliverance by a feast emblematic of those holy exercises which ever characterise true, practical Christian piety.

We would, very earnestly, commend to the serious attention of the Christian reader the whole line of truth indicated by "that bread of affliction." We believe it is much needed by those who profess great familiarity with what are called the doctrines of grace. There is very great danger, especially to young profess-

ors, while seeking to avoid legality and bondage, of running into the opposite extreme of levity — a most terrible snare. Aged and experienced Christians are not so liable to fall into this sad evil; it is the young amongst us who so need to be most solemnly warned against it. They hear, it may be, a great deal about salvation by grace, justification by faith, deliverance from the law, and all the peculiar privileges of the Christian position.

Now, we need hardly say that all these are of cardinal importance; and it would be utterly impossible for any one to hear too much about them. Would they were more spoken about, written about, and preached about. Thousands of the Lord's beloved people spend all their days in darkness, doubt and legal bondage, through ignorance of those great foundation truths.

But, while all this is perfectly true, there are, on the other hand, many — alas! too many who have a merely intellectual familiarity with the principles of grace but — if we are to judge from their habits and manners, their style and deportment — the only way we have of judging — who know but little of the sanctifying power of those great principles — their power in the heart and in the life.

Now, to speak according to the teaching of the paschal feast, it would not have been according to the mind of God for any one to attempt to keep that feast without the unleavened bread, even the bread of affliction. Such a thing would not have been tolerated in Israel of old. It was an absolutely essential ingredient. And so, we may rest assured, it is an integral part of that feast which we, as Christians, are exhorted to keep, to cultivate personal holiness and that condition of soul which is so aptly expressed by the "bitter herbs" of Exodus 12 or the Deuteronomic ingredient, "the bread of affliction," which latter would seem to be the permanent figure for the land.

In a word, then, we believe there is a deep and urgent need amongst us of those spiritual feelings and affections, those profound exercises of soul which the Holy Ghost would produce by unfolding to our hearts the sufferings of Christ — what it cost Him to put our sins away — what He endured for us when passing under the billows and waves of God's righteous wrath against our sins. We are sadly lacking — if one may be permitted to speak for others — in that deep contrition of heart which flows from spiritual occupation with the sufferings and death of our precious Saviour. It is one thing to have the blood of Christ

sprinkled on the conscience, and another thing to have the death of Christ brought home, in a spiritual way, to the heart, and the cross of Christ applied, in a practical way, to our whole course and character.

How is it that we can so lightly commit sin, in thought, word and deed? How is it that there is so much levity, so much unsubduedness, so much self-indulgence, so much carnal ease, so much that is merely frothy and superficial? Is it not because that ingredient typified by "the bread of affliction" is lacking in our feast? We cannot doubt it. We fear there is a very deplorable lack of depth and seriousness in our Christianity. There is too much flippant discussion of the profound mysteries of the Christian faith, too much head knowledge without the inward power.

All this demands the serious attention of the reader. We cannot shake off the impression that not a little of this melancholy condition of things is but too justly traceable to a certain style of preaching the gospel, adopted, no doubt, with the very best intentions, but none the less pernicious in its moral effect. It is all right to preach a simple Gospel. It cannot, by any possibil-

ity, be put more simply than God the Holy Ghost has given it to us in scripture.

All this is fully admitted; but, at the same time we are persuaded there is a very serious defect in the preaching of which we speak. There is a want of spiritual depth, a lack of holy seriousness. In the effort to counteract legality, there is that which tends to levity. Now, while legality is a great evil, levity is much greater. We must guard against both. We believe grace is the remedy for the former, truth for the latter; but spiritual wisdom is needed to enable us rightly to adjust and apply these two. If we find a soul, deeply exercised, under the powerful action of truth, thoroughly ploughed up by the mighty ministry of the Holy Ghost, we should pour in the deep consolation of the pure and precious grace of God, as set forth in the divinely efficacious sacrifice of Christ. This is the divine remedy for a broken heart, a contrite spirit, a convicted conscience. When the deep furrow has been made by the spiritual ploughshare, we have only to cast in the incorruptible seed of the gospel of God, in the assurance that it will take root, and bring forth fruit in due season.

But, on the other hand, if we find a person going on in a light, airy, unbroken condition, using very high-flown language about grace, talking loudly against legality, and seeking, in a merely human way to set forth an easy way of being saved, we consider this to be a case calling for a very solemn application of truth to the heart and conscience.

Now, we greatly fear there is a vast amount of this last named element abroad in the professing church. To speak according to the language of our type, there is a tendency to separate the Passover from the feast of unleavened bread — to rest in the fact of being delivered from judgement and forget the roasted lamb, the bread of holiness, and the bread of affliction. In reality, they never can be separated, inasmuch as God has bound them together; and, hence, we do not believe that any soul can be really in the enjoyment of the precious truth that "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us," who is not seeking to "keep the feast." When the Holy Spirit unfolds to our hearts something of the deep blessedness, preciousness, and efficacy of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, He leads us to meditate upon the soul-subduing mystery of His sufferings, to ponder in our hearts all that He passed through for us, all that it cost Him to save us

from the eternal consequences of that which we, alas! so often lightly commit.

Now this is very deep and holy work, and leads the soul into those exercises which correspond with "the bread of affliction" in the feast of unleavened bread. There is a wide difference between the feelings produced by dwelling upon our sins and those which flow from dwelling upon the sufferings of Christ to put those sins away.

True, we can never forget our sins, never forget, the hole of the pit from whence we were digged. But it is one thing to dwell upon the pit, and another and a deeper thing altogether to dwell upon the grace that digged us out of it, and what it cost our precious Saviour to do it. It is this latter we so much need to keep continually in the remembrance of the thoughts of our hearts. We are so terribly volatile, so ready to forget.

We need to look, very earnestly, to God to enable us to enter more deeply and practically into the sufferings of Christ, and into the application of the cross to all that in us which is contrary to Him. This will impart depth of tone, tenderness of spirit, an intense breathing after holiness of heart and life, prac-

tical separation from the world, in its every phase, a holy subduedness, jealous watchfulness over ourselves, our thoughts, our words, our ways, our whole deportment in daily life. In a word, it would lead to a totally different type of Christianity from what we see around us, and what, alas! we exhibit in our own personal history. May the Spirit of God graciously unfold to our hearts, by His own direct and powerful ministry, more and more of what is meant by "the roasted lamb," the "unleavened bread," and "the bread of affliction"!\*

- \* For further remarks on the Passover and the feast of unleavened bread, the reader is referred to Exodus 12, and Numbers 9. Specially, in the latter, the connection between the Passover and the Lord's supper. This is a point of deepest interest, and immense practical importance. The Passover looked forward to the death of Christ; the Lord's supper looks back to it. What the former was to a faithful Israelite, the latter is to the church. If this were more fully seen it would greatly tend to meet the prevailing laxity, indifference and error as to the table and supper of the Lord. To any one who lives habitually in the holy atmosphere of scripture, it must seem strange indeed to mark the confusion of thought and the diversity of practice in reference to a subject so very important, and one so simply and clearly presented in the word of God.

It can hardly be called in question by any one who bows to scripture, that the apostles and the early church assembled on the first day of the week to break bread. There is not a shadow of warrant, in the New Testament, for confining that most precious ordinance to once a month, once a quarter, or once in six months. This can only be viewed as a human interference with a divine institution. We are aware that much is sought to be made of the words, "as oft as ye do it;" but we do not see how any argument based on this clause can stand, for a moment, in the face of apostolic precedent, in Acts 20:7. The first day of the week is, unquestionably, the day for the church to celebrate the Lord's supper.

Does the Christian reader admit this? If so, does he act upon it? It is a perilous thing to neglect a special ordinance of Christ, and one appointed by Him the same night in which He was betrayed, under circumstances so deeply affecting. Surely all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity would desire to remember Him in this special way, according to His own word, "This do in remembrance of me." Can we understand any true lover of Christ living in the habitual neglect of this precious memorial? If an Israelite of old neglected the Passover, he would have been "cut off." But this was law, and we are under grace. True; but is that a reason for neglecting our Lord's commandment?

We would commend this subject to the reader's careful attention. There is much more involved in it than most of us are aware. We believe the entire history of the Lord's supper, for the last eighteen centuries, is full of interest and instruction. We may see in the way in which the Lord's table has been treated, a striking moral index of the church's real condition. In proportion as the church departed from Christ and His word, did she neglect and pervert the precious institution of the Lord's supper. And, on the other hand, just as the Spirit of God wrought, at any time, with special power in the church, the Lord's supper has found its true place in the hearts of His people.

But we cannot pursue this subject further in a footnote; we have ventured to suggest it to the reader, and we trust he may be led to follow it up for himself. We believe he will find it a most profitable and suggestive study.

We shall now briefly consider the feast of Pentecost which stands next in order to the Passover. "Seven weeks shalt thou number to thee; begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn. And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks to the Lord thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give to the Lord thy God, according as the Lord thy God has blessed thee; and thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God, thou, and thy

son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which the Lord thy God has chosen to place his name there. And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt; and thou shalt observe and do these statutes." (Vers. 9-12.)

Here we have the well-known and beautiful type of the day of Pentecost. The Passover sets forth the death of Christ. The sheaf of first-fruits is the striking figure of a risen Christ. And, in the feast of weeks, we have prefigured before us the descent of the Holy Ghost, fifty days after the resurrection.

We speak, of course, of what these feasts convey to us, according to the mind of God, irrespective altogether of the question of Israel's apprehension of their meaning. It is our privilege to look at all these typical institutions in the light of the New Testament; and when we so view them we are filled with wonder and delight at the divine perfectness, beauty and order of all those marvellous types.

And not only so, but — what is of immense value to us — we see how the scriptures of the New Testament dovetail, as it were, into those of the Old; we see the lovely unity of the divine Volume, and how manifestly it is one Spirit that breathes through the whole, from beginning to end. In this way we are inwardly strengthened in our apprehension of the precious truth of the divine inspiration of the holy scriptures, and our hearts are fortified against all the blasphemous attacks of infidel writers. Our souls are conducted to the top of the mountain where the moral glories of the Volume shine upon us in all their heavenly lustre, and from whence we can look down and see the clouds and chilling mists of infidel thought rolling beneath us. These clouds and mists cannot affect us, inasmuch as they are far away below the level on which, through infinite grace, we stand. Infidel writers know absolutely nothing of the moral glories of scripture; but one thing is awfully certain, namely, that one moment in eternity will completely revolutionise the thoughts of all the infidels and atheists that have ever raved or written against the Bible and its Author.

Now, in looking at the deeply interesting feast of weeks or Pentecost, we are at once struck with the difference between it

and the feast of unleavened bread. In the first place, we read of "a freewill offering." Here we have a figure of the church, formed by the Holy Ghost and presented to God as "a kind of first-fruits of his creatures."

We have dwelt upon this feature of the type in the "Notes on Leviticus," chapter 23, and shall not therefore enter upon it here, but confine ourselves to what is purely Deuteronomic. The people were to present a tribute of a freewill offering of their hand, according as the Lord their God had blessed them. There was nothing like this at the Passover, because that sets forth Christ offering Himself for us, as a sacrifice, and not our offering anything. We remember our deliverance from sin and Satan, and what that deliverance cost. We meditate upon the deep and varied sufferings of our precious Saviour as pre-figured by the roasted lamb. We remember that it was our sins that were laid upon Him. He was bruised for our iniquities, judged in our stead, and this leads to deep and hearty contrition, or, what we may call, true Christian repentance. For we must never forget that repentance is not a mere transient emotion of a sinner when his eyes are first opened, but an abiding moral condition of the Christian, in view of the cross and pas-

sion of our Lord Jesus Christ. If this were better understood, and more fully entered into, it would impart a depth and solidity to the Christian life and character in which the great majority of us are lamentably deficient.

But, in the feast of Pentecost, we have before us the power of the Holy Ghost, and the varied effects of His blessed presence in us and with us. He enables us to present our bodies and all that we have as a freewill offering to our God, according as He has blessed us. This, we need hardly say, can only be done by the power of the Holy Ghost; and hence the striking type of it is presented, not in the Passover which prefigures the death of Christ; not in the feast of unleavened bread, which sets forth the moral effect of that death upon us, in repentance, self-judgment and practical holiness; but in Pentecost, which is the acknowledged type of the precious gift of the Holy Ghost.

Now, it is the Spirit who enables us to enter into the claims of God upon us — claims which are to be measured only by the extent of the divine blessing. He gives us to see and understand that all we are and all we have belong to God. He gives us to delight in consecrating ourselves, spirit, soul and body, to God. It is truly "a freewill offering." It is not of constraint, but will-

ingly. There is not an atom of bondage, for "where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty."

In short we have here the lovely spirit and moral character of the entire Christian life and service. A soul under law cannot understand the force and beauty of this. Souls under the law never received the Spirit. The two things are wholly incompatible. Thus the apostle says to the poor misguided assemblies of Galatia, "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by works of law, or by the hearing of faith? ... He therefore that ministers to you the Spirit, and works miracles among you, does he it by works of law, or by the hearing of faith?" The precious gift of the Spirit is consequent upon the death, resurrection, ascension, and glorification of our adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and consequently can have nothing whatever to do with "works of law" in any shape or form. The presence of the Holy Ghost on earth, His dwelling with and in all true believers is a grand characteristic truth of Christianity. It was not, and could not be known in Old Testament times. It was not even known by the disciples in our Lord's life time. He Himself said to them, on the eve of His departure, "Nevertheless, I tell you the truth; it is expedient [or profitable —

sumpherei] for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send him to you." (John 16:7.)

This proves, in the most conclusive manner, that even the very men who enjoyed the high and precious privilege of personal companionship with the Lord Himself, were to be put in an advanced position by His going away, and the coming of the Comforter. Again, we read, "If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him; but ye know him; for he dwells with you and shall be in you."

We cannot, however, attempt to go elaborately into this immense subject here. Our space does not admit of it, much as we should delight in it. We must just confine ourselves to one or two points suggested by the feast of weeks, as presented in our chapter.

We have referred to the very interesting fact that the Spirit of God is the living spring and power of the life of personal de-

votedness and consecration beautifully prefigured by "the tribute of a freewill offering." The sacrifice of Christ is the ground, the presence of the Holy Ghost, is the power of the Christian's dedication of himself, spirit, soul and body, to God. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans 12:1.)

But there is another point of deepest interest presented in verse 11 of our chapter, "And thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God." We have no such word in the paschal feast, or in the feast of unleavened bread. It would not be in moral keeping with either of these solemnities. True it is, the Passover lies at the very foundation of all the joy we can or ever shall realise here or hereafter; but, we must ever think of the death of Christ, His sufferings, His sorrows — all that He passed through, when the waves and billows of God's righteous wrath passed His soul. It is upon these profound mysteries that our hearts are, or ought to be mainly fixed, when we surround the Lord's table and keep that feast by which we show the Lord's death until He come.

Now, it is plain to the spiritual and thoughtful reader that the feelings proper to such a holy and solemn institution are not of a jubilant character. We certainly can and do rejoice that the sorrows and sufferings of our blessed Lord are over, and over for ever; that those terrible hours are passed never to return. But what we recall in the feast is not simply their being over, but their being gone through — and that for us. "Ye do show the Lord's death," and we know that, whatever may accrue to us from that precious death, yet when we are called to meditate upon it, our joy is chastened by those profound exercises of soul which the Holy Spirit produces by unfolding to us the sorrows, the sufferings, the cross and passion of our blessed Saviour. Our Lord's words are, "This do in remembrance of me;" but what we especially remember in the Supper is Christ suffering and dying for us; what we show is His death; and with these solemn realities before our souls, in the power of the Holy Ghost, there will — there must be holy subduedness and seriousness.

We speak, of course, of what becomes the immediate occasion of the celebration of the Supper — the suited feelings and affections of such a moment. But these must be produced by the

powerful ministry of the Holy Ghost. It can be of no possible use to seek, by any pious efforts of our own, to work ourselves up to a suitable state of mind. This would be ascending by steps to the altar, a thing most offensive to God. It is only by the Holy Spirit's ministry that we can worthily celebrate the holy Supper of the Lord. He alone can enable us to put away all levity, all formality, all mere routine, all wandering thoughts, and to discern the body and blood of the Lord in those memorials which, by His own appointment, are laid on His table.

But, in the feast of Pentecost, rejoicing was a prominent feature. We hear nothing of "bitter herbs" or "bread of affliction," on this occasion, because it is the type of the coming of the other Comforter, the descent of the Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father, and sent down by the risen, ascended and glorified Head in the heavens, to fill the hearts of His people with praise, thanksgiving and triumphant joy, yea to lead them into full and blessed fellowship with their glorified Head, in His triumph over sin, death, hell, Satan and all the powers of darkness. The Spirit's presence is connected with liberty, light, power and joy. Thus we read, "The disciples were filled with

joy, and with the Holy Ghost." Doubts, fears, and legal bondage flee away before the precious ministry of the Holy Ghost.

But we must distinguish between His work and indwelling — His quickening and His sealing. The very first dawn of conviction in the soul is the fruit of the Spirit's work. It is His blessed operation that leads to all true repentance, and this is not joyful work; it is very good, very needful, absolutely essential; but it is not joy, nay, it is deep sorrow. But when, through grace, we are enabled to believe in a risen and glorified Saviour, then the Holy Ghost comes and takes up His abode in us, as the seal of our acceptance and the earnest of our inheritance.

Now this fills us with joy unspeakable and full of glory; and being thus filled ourselves, we become channels of blessing to others. "He that believes on me, as the scripture has said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." The Spirit is the spring of power and joy in the heart of the believer. He fits, fills and uses us as His vessels in ministering to poor thirsty, needy souls around us. He links us with the Man in the glory, maintains us in living communion with

Him, and enables us to be, in our feeble measure, the expression of what He is. Every movement of the Christian should be redolent with the fragrance of Christ. For one who professes to be a Christian to exhibit unholy tempers, selfish ways, a grasping, covetous, worldly spirit, envy and jealousy, pride and ambition, is to belie his profession, dishonour the holy Name of Christ, and bring reproach upon that glorious Christianity which he professes, and of which we have the lovely type in the feast of weeks — a feast pre-eminently characterised by a joy which had its source in the goodness of God, and which flowed out far and wide, and embraced in its hallowed circle every object of need: "Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God, thou and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you."

How lovely! How perfectly beautiful! Oh! that its antitype were more faithfully exhibited amongst us! Where are those streams of refreshing which ought to flow from the church of God? Where those unblotted epistles of Christ known and read of all men? Where can we see a practical exhibition of Christ in

the ways of His people — something to which we could point and say, "There is true Christianity"? Oh! may the Spirit of God stir up our hearts to a more intense desire after conformity to the image of Christ, in all things. May He clothe with His own mighty power the word of God which we have in our hands and in our homes; that it may speak to our hearts and consciences, and lead us to judge ourselves, our ways, and our associations by its heavenly light, so that there may be a thoroughly devoted band of witnesses gathered out to His Name, to wait for His appearing! Will the reader join us in asking for this?

We shall now turn for a moment to the lovely institution of the feast of tabernacles which gives such remarkable completeness to the range of truth presented in our chapter.

"Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine; and thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates. Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast to the Lord thy God in the place which the Lord shall choose; because the Lord thy

God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice. Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles; and they shall not appear before the Lord empty; every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he has given thee." (Vers. 13-17.)

Here, then we have the striking and beautiful type of Israel's future. The feast of tabernacles has not yet had its antitype. The Passover and Pentecost have had their fulfilment in the precious death of Christ, and the descent of the Holy Ghost; but the third great solemnity points forward to the times of the restitution of all things which God has spoken of by the mouth of all His holy prophets which have been since the world began.

And let the reader note particularly the time of the celebration of this feast. It was to be "after thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine;" in other words, it was after the harvest and the vintage. Now there is a very marked distinction between these two things. The one speaks of grace, the other of judgement. At

the end of the age, God will gather His wheat into His garner, and then will come the treading of the winepress, in awful judgement.

We have in Revelation 14 a very solemn passage bearing upon the subject now before us. "And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like to the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap; for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped."

Here we have the harvest; and then, "Another came out of the temple which is in heaven, he having a sharp sickle. And another angel came from the altar, which had power over fire" — the emblem of judgement — "and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trodden

without the city, and blood came out of the winepress, even to the horse bridles by the space of a thousand and six hundred furlongs." Equal to the whole length of the land of Palestine!

Now these apocalyptic figures set before us in a characteristic way, scenes which must be enacted previous to the celebration of the feast of tabernacles. Christ will gather His wheat into His heavenly garner, and after that He will come in crushing judgement upon Christendom. Thus, every section of the Volume of inspiration, Moses, the Psalms, the Prophets, the Gospels — or the acts of Christ — the Acts of the Holy Ghost, the Epistles, and Apocalypse — all go to establish unanswerably the fact that the world will not be converted by the gospel, that things are not improving and will not improve, but grow worse and worse. That glorious time prefigured by the feast of tabernacles must be preceded by the vintage, the treading of the winepress of the wrath of Almighty God.

Why, then, we may well ask, in the face of such an overwhelming body of divine evidence, furnished by every section of the inspired canon, will men persist in cherishing the delusive hope of a world converted by the gospel? What mean "gathered

wheat and a trodden winepress"? Assuredly, they do not and cannot mean a converted world.

We shall perhaps be told that we cannot build anything upon Mosaic types and Apocalyptic symbols. Perhaps not, if we had but types and symbols. But when the accumulated rays of inspiration's heavenly lamp converge upon these types and symbols and unfold their deep meaning to our souls, find them in perfect harmony with the voices of prophets and apostles, and the living teachings our Lord Himself. In a word, all speak the same language, all teach the same lesson, all bear the unequivocal testimony to the solemn truth that, the end of this age, instead of a converted world, prepared for a spiritual millennium, there will be a vine covered and borne down with terrible clusters fully ripe for the winepress of the wrath of Almighty God.

Oh! may the men and women of Christendom, and the teachers thereof apply their hearts to these solemn realities! May these things sink down into their ears, and into the very depths of their souls, so that they may fling to the winds their fondly cherished delusion, and accept instead the plainly revealed and clearly established truth of God!

But we must draw this section to a close; and ere doing so, we would remind the Christian reader, that we are called to exhibit in our daily life the blessed influence of all those great truths presented to us in the three interesting types on which we have been meditating. Christianity is characterised by those three great formative facts, redemption, the presence of the Holy Ghost, and the hope of glory. The Christian is redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, sealed by the Holy Ghost, and he is looking for the Saviour.

Yes, beloved reader, these are solid facts, divine realities, great formative truths. They are not mere principles or opinions, but they are designed to be a power in our souls, and to shine in our lives. See how thoroughly practical were these solemnities on which we have been dwelling; mark what a tide of praise and thanksgiving and joy and blessing and active benevolence flowed from the assembly of Israel when gathered round Jehovah in the place which He had chosen. Praise and thanksgiving ascended to God; and the blessed streams of a large-hearted benevolence flowed forth to every object of need. "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God ... And they shall not appear before the Lord empty; every man

shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he has, given thee."

Lovely words! They were not to come empty into the Lord's presence; they were to come with the heart full of praise, and the hands full of the fruits of divine goodness to gladden the hearts of the Lord's workmen, and the Lord's poor. All this was perfectly beautiful. Jehovah would gather His people round Himself, to fill them to overflowing with joy and praise, and to make them His channels of blessing to others. They were not to remain under their vine and under their fig tree, and there congratulate themselves upon the rich and varied mercies which surrounded them. This might be all right and good in its place; but it would not have fully met the mind and heart of God. No; three times in the year they had to arise and betake themselves to the divinely appointed meeting place, and there raise their hallelujahs to the Lord their God, and there too, to minister liberally of that which He had bestowed upon them to every form of human need. God would confer upon His people the rich privilege of rejoicing the heart of the Levite, the stranger, widow and the fatherless. This is the work in which He Himself delights, blessed for ever be His Name, and He would

share His delight With His people. He would have it to be known, seen and felt, that the place where He met His people was a sphere of joy and praise, and a centre from whence streams of blessing were to flow forth in all directions.

Has not all this a voice and a lesson for the church of God? Does it not speak home to the writer and the reader of these lines? Assuredly it does. May we listen to it! May it tell upon our hearts! May the marvellous grace of God so act upon us that our hearts may be full of praise to Him and our hands full of good works. If the mere types and shadows of our blessings were connected with so much thanksgiving and active benevolence, how much more powerful should be the effect of the blessings themselves!

But ah! the question is, Are we realising the blessings? Are we making our own of them? Are we grasping them in the power of an artless faith? Here lies the secret of the whole matter. Where do we find professing Christians in the full and settled enjoyment of what the Passover prefigured, namely, full deliverance from judgement and this present evil world? Where do we find them in the full and settled enjoyment of their Pentecost, even the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, the seal, the earn-

est, the unction and the witness? Ask the vast majority of professors the plain question, "Have you received the Holy Ghost?" and see what answer you will get. What answer can the reader give? Can he say, "Yes, thank God, I know I am washed in the precious blood of Christ, and sealed with the Holy Ghost"? It is greatly to be feared that comparatively few of the vast multitudes of professors around us know anything of those precious things, which nevertheless are the chartered privileges of the very simplest member of the body of Christ.

So also as to the feast of tabernacles, how few understand its meaning! True, it has not yet been fulfilled; but the Christian is called to live in the present power of that which it set forth. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Our life is to be governed and our character formed by the combined influence of the "grace" in which we stand, and the "glory" for which we wait.

But if souls are not established in grace, if they do not even know that their sins are forgiven; if they are taught that it is presumption to be sure of salvation, and that it is humility and piety to live in perpetual doubt and fear; and that no one can be sure of their salvation until they stand before the judgement-

seat of Christ, how can they possibly take Christian ground, manifest the fruits of Christian life, or cherish proper Christian hope? If an Israelite of old was in doubt as to whether he was a child of Abraham, a member of the congregation of the Lord, and in the land, how could he keep the feast of unleavened bread, Pentecost or tabernacles? There would have been no sense, meaning or value in such a thing; indeed, we may safely affirm that no Israelite would have thought, for a moment, of anything so utterly absurd.

How is it then that professing Christians, many of them, we cannot doubt, real children of God, never seem to be able to enter upon proper Christian ground? They spend their days in doubt and fear, darkness and uncertainty. Their religious exercises and services, instead of being the outcome of life possessed and enjoyed, are entered upon and gone through more as a matter of legal duty, and as a moral preparation for the life to come. Many truly pious souls are kept in this state all their days; and as to "the blessed hope" which grace has set before us, to cheer our hearts and detach us from present things, they do not enter into it or understand it. It is looked upon as a mere speculation indulged in by a few visionary enthusiasts here and

there. They are looking forward to the day of judgement, instead of looking out for "the bright and morning star." They are praying for the forgiveness of their sins and asking God to give them His Holy Spirit, when they ought to be rejoicing in the assured possession of eternal life, divine righteousness, and the Spirit of adoption.

All this is directly opposed to the simplest and clearest teaching of the New Testament; it is utterly foreign to the very genius of Christianity, subversive of the Christian's peace and liberty, and destructive of all true and intelligent Christian worship, service and testimony. It is plainly impossible that people can appear before the Lord with their hearts full of praise for privileges which they do not enjoy, or their hands full of the blessing which they have never realised.

We call the earnest attention of all the Lord's people, throughout the length and breadth of the professing church, to this weighty subject. We entreat them to search the scriptures and see if they afford any warrant for keeping souls in darkness, doubt and bondage all their days. That there are solemn warnings, searching appeals, weighty admonitions, is most true, and we bless God for them; we need them, and should diligently

apply our hearts to them. But let the reader distinctly understand that it is the sweet privilege of the very babes in Christ to know that their sins are all forgiven, that they are accepted in a risen Christ, sealed by the Holy Ghost and heirs of eternal glory. Such, through infinite and sovereign grace, are their clearly established and assured blessings — blessings to which the love of God makes them welcome, for which the blood of Christ makes them fit, and as to which the testimony of the Holy Ghost makes them sure.

May the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls lead all His beloved people, the lambs and sheep of His blood-bought flock, to know, by the teaching of His holy Spirit, the things that are freely given to them of God! And may those who do know them, in measure, know them more fully, and exhibit the precious fruits of them in a life of genuine devotedness to Christ and His service!

It is greatly to be feared that many of us who profess to be acquainted with the very highest truths of the Christian faith are not answering to our profession; we are not acting up to the principle set forth in verse 17 of our beautiful chapter, "Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the

Lord thy God which he has given thee." We seem to forget that, although we have nothing to do and nothing to give for salvation, we have much that we can do for the Saviour, and much that we can give to His workmen and to His poor. There is very great danger of pushing the do-nothing and give-nothing principle too far. If, in the days of our ignorance and legal bondage, we worked and gave upon a false principle, and with a false object, we surely ought not to do less and give less now that we profess to know that we are not only saved but blessed with all spiritual blessings, in a risen and glorified Christ. We have need to take care that we are not resting in the mere intellectual perception and verbal profession of these great and glorious truths, while the heart and conscience have never felt their sacred action, nor the conduct and character been brought under their powerful and holy influence.

We venture, in all tenderness and love, just to offer these practical suggestions to the reader for his prayerful consideration. We would not wound, offend, or discourage the very feeblest lamb in all the flock of Christ. And, further, we can assure the reader, that we are not casting a stone at any one, but simply writing, as in the immediate presence of God, and sounding in

the ears of the church a note of warning as to that which we deeply feel to be our common danger. We believe there is an urgent call, on all sides, to consider our ways, to humble ourselves before the Lord, on account of our manifold failures, shortcomings and inconsistencies, and to seek grace from Him to be more real, more thoroughly devoted, more pronounced in our testimony for Him, in this dark and evil day.

## **Chapter 17.**

We must remember that the division of scripture into chapters and verses is entirely a human arrangement, often very convenient, no doubt, for reference; but not infrequently it is quite unwarrantable, and interferes with the connection. Thus we can see, at a glance, that the closing verses of chapter 16 are much more connected with what follows than with what goes before.

"Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the Lord thy God gives thee, throughout thy tribes; and they shall judge the people with just judgement. Thou shalt not wrest judgement; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift; for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous. That which is altogether just shalt thou

follow, that thou mayest live and inherit the land which the Lord thy God gives thee."

These words teach us a twofold lesson; in the first place, they set forth the even-handed justice and perfect truth which ever characterise the government of God. Every case is dealt with according to its own merits and on the ground of its own facts. The judgement is so plain that there is not a shadow of ground for a question; all dissension is absolutely closed, and if any murmur is raised, the murmurer is at once silenced by, "Friend, I do thee no wrong." This holds good everywhere and at all times, in the holy government of God, and it makes us long for the time when that government shall be established from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth.

But, on the other hand, we learn, from the lines just quoted, what man's judgement is worth, if left to himself. It cannot be trusted, for a moment. Man is capable of "wresting judgement," of "respecting persons," of "taking a gift," of attaching importance to a person because of his position and wealth. That he is capable of all this is evident from the fact of his being told not to do it. We must ever remember this. If God commands man not to steal, it is plain that man has theft in his nature.

Hence, therefore, human judgement and human government are liable to the grossest corruption. Judges and governors if left to themselves, if not under the direct sway of divine principle, are capable of perverting justice for filthy lucre's sake, of favouring a wicked man because he is rich, and of condemning a righteous man because he is poor; of giving a judgement in flagrant opposition to the plainest facts because of some advantage to be gained, whether in the shape of money, or influence, or popularity, or power.

To prove this it is not necessary to point to such men as Pilate and Herod, and Felix and Festus; we have no need to go beyond the passage just quoted, in order to see what man is, even when clothed in the robes of official dignity, seated on the throne of government, or on the bench of justice.

Some, as they read these lines, may feel disposed to say, in the language of Hazaël, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" But let such reflect, for a moment, on the fact that the human heart is the seed plot of every sin, and of every vile and abominable and contemptible wickedness that ever was committed in this world; and the unanswerable proof of this is

found in the enactments, commandments, and prohibitions which appear on the sacred page of inspiration.

And herein we have an uncommonly fine reply to the oft-repeated question, "What have we to do with many of the laws and institutions set forth in the Mosaic economy? Why are such things set down in the Bible? Can they possibly be inspired?" Yes; they are inspired, and they appear on the page of inspiration in order that we may see, as reflected in a divinely perfect mirror, the moral material of which we ourselves are made, the thoughts we are capable of thinking, the words we are capable of speaking, and the deeds we are capable of doing.

Is not this something? Is it not good and wholesome to find, for example, in some of the passages of this most profound and beautiful book of Deuteronomy, that human nature is capable, and hence we are capable of doing things that put us morally below the level of a beast? Assuredly it is, and well would it be for many a one who walks in Pharisaic pride and self-complacency, puffed up with false notions of his own dignity and high-toned morality, to learn this deeply humbling lesson.

But how morally lovely, how pure, how refined and elevated were the divine enactments for Israel! They were not to wrest judgement, but allow it to flow in its own straight and even channel, irrespective altogether of persons. The poor man in vile raiment was to have the same impartial justice, as the man with a gold ring and gay clothing. The decision of the judgement-seat was not to be warped by partiality or prejudice, or the robe of justice to be defiled by the stain of bribery.

Oh! what will it be for this oppressed and groaning earth to be governed by the admirable laws which are recorded in the inspired pages of the Pentateuch, when a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall decree justice! "Give the king thy judgements, O God, and thy righteousness to the king's son. He shall judge thy people with righteousness, and thy poor with judgment" — no wresting, no bribery, no partial judgements then — "The mountains [or higher dignities] shall bring peace to the people, and the little hills [or lesser dignities], by righteousness. He shall judge [or defend] the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy, and shall break in pieces the oppressor. They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure, throughout all generations. He shall come down like

rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth. In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace so long as the moon endures. He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth ... He shall deliver the needy when he cries; the poor also, and him that has no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit and violence; and precious shall their blood be in his sight." (Ps. 72)

Well may the heart long for the time — the bright and blessed time when all this shall be made good, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea; when the Lord Jesus shall take to Himself His great power and reign; when the church in the heavens shall reflect the beams of His glory upon the earth; when Israel's twelve tribes shall repose beneath the vine and fig tree in their own promised land, and all the nations of the earth shall rejoice beneath the peaceful and beneficent rule of the Son of David. Thanks and praise be to our God, thus it shall be, ere long, as sure as His throne is in the heavens. A little while and all shall be made good, according to the eternal counsels and immutable promise of God.

Till then, beloved Christian reader, be it ours to live in the constant, earnest, believing anticipation of this bright and blessed time, and to pass through this ungodly scene as thorough strangers and pilgrims, having no place or portion down here, but ever breathing forth the prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

In the closing lines of chapter 16 Israel is warned against the most distant approach to the religious customs of the nations around. "Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near to the altar of the Lord thy God, which thou shalt make thee. Neither shalt thou set thee up any image which the Lord thy God hates." They were carefully to avoid everything which might lead them in the direction of the dark and abominable idolatries of the heathen nations around. The altar of God was to stand out in distinct and unmistakable separation from those groves and shady places where false gods were worshipped, and things were done which are not to be named.\* In a word, everything was to be most carefully avoided which might, in any way, draw the heart away from the one living and true God.

\* It may interest the reader to know that the Holy Ghost, in speaking of the altar of God, in the New Testament, does not apply to it the word used to express a heathen altar, but has a comparat-

ively new word — a word unknown in the world's classics. The heathen altar is *bomon*. (Acts 17:23.) The altar of God is thus *asterion*. The former occurs but once; the latter twenty-three times. So jealously is the worship of the only true God guarded and preserved from the defiling touch of heathen idolatry. Men may feel disposed to inquire why this should be? or how could the altar of God be affected by a name? We reply, the Holy Ghost is wiser than we are; and although the heathen word was before Him — a short and convenient word, too — He refuses to apply it to the altar of the one true and living God. See Trench's "Synonyms of the New Testament".

Nor this only; it was not enough to maintain a correct outward form; images and groves might be abolished, and the nation might profess the dogma of the unity of the Godhead, and, all the while, there might be an utter want of heart and genuine devotedness in the worship rendered. Hence we read, "Thou shalt not sacrifice to the Lord thy God any bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish, or any evil-favouredness; for that is an abomination to the Lord."

That which was absolutely perfect could alone suit the altar and answer to the heart of God. To offer a blemished thing to Him was simply to prove the absence of all true sense of what be-

came Him, and of all real heart for Him. To attempt to offer an imperfect sacrifice was tantamount to the horrible blasphemy of saying that anything was good enough for Him.

Let us hearken to the indignant pleadings of the Spirit of God, by the mouth of the prophet Malachi. "Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now to thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? says the Lord of hosts. And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious to us; this has been by your means; will he regard your persons? says the Lord of hosts. Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand. For from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, says the Lord of hosts. But ye have profaned it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord is

polluted; and the fruit thereof, even his meat is contemptible. Ye said also Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, says the Lord of hosts: and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame and the sick; thus ye brought an offering; should I accept this of your hand? says the Lord. But cursed be the deceiver, which has in his flock a male, and vows, and sacrifices to the Lord a corrupt thing; for I am a great King, says the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among the heathen." (Mal. 1:7-14.)

Has all this no voice for the professing church? Has it no voice for the writer and the reader of these lines? Assuredly it has. Is there not, in our private and public worship a deplorable lack of heart, of real devotedness, deep-toned earnestness, holy energy, and integrity of purpose? Is there not much that answers to the offering of the lame and the sick, the blemished and the evil-favoured? Is there not a deplorable amount of cold formality and dead routine in our seasons of worship both in the closet and in the assembly? Have we not to judge ourselves for barrenness, distraction and wandering even at the very table of our Lord? How often are our bodies at the table, while our vagrant hearts and volatile minds are at the ends of the earth! How often do

our lips utter words which are not the true expression of our whole moral being! We express far more than we feel. We sing beyond our experience.

And then, when we are favoured with the blessed opportunity of dropping our offerings into our Lord's treasury what heartless formality! What an absence of loving, earnest, hearty devotedness! What little reference to the apostolic rule, "as God has prospered us!" What detestable niggardliness! How little of the whole-heartedness of the poor widow who, having but two mites in the world, and having the option of at least keeping one for her living, willingly cast in both — cast in her all! Pounds may be spent on ourselves, perhaps on superfluities during the week, but when the claims of the Lord's work, His poor, and His cause in general, are brought before us, how meagre is the response!

Christian reader, let us consider these things. Let us look at the whole subject of worship and devotedness in the divine presence, and in the presence of the grace that has saved us from everlasting burnings. Let us calmly reflect upon the precious and powerful claims of Christ upon us. We are not our own; we are bought with a price. It is not merely our best, but our all we

owe to that blessed One who gave Himself for us. Do we not fully own it? Do not our hearts own it? Then may our lives express it! May we more distinctly declare whose we are and whom we serve! May the heart, the head, the hands, the feet, the whole man be dedicated, in unreserved devotedness, to Him, in the power of the Holy Ghost, and according to the direct teaching of holy scripture. God grant it may be so, with us and with all His beloved people!

A very weighty and practical subject now claims our attention. We feel it right to adhere, as much as possible, to the custom of quoting, at full length, the passages for the reader; we believe it to be profitable to give the very word of God itself; and, moreover, it is convenient to the great majority of readers to be saved the trouble of laying aside the volume and turning to the Bible in order to find the passages for themselves.

"If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the Lord thy God gives thee, man or woman, that has wrought wickedness in the sight of the Lord thy God, in transgressing his covenant, and has gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded; and it be told thee, and

thou hast heard of it, and inquired diligently, behold, it be true and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in Israel;" — something affecting the whole nation — "Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, to thy gates, even that man or woman, and shalt stone them with stones till they die. At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you" (Ver. 2-7.)

We have already had occasion to refer to the great principle laid down in the foregoing passage. It is one of immense importance, namely, the absolute necessity of having competent testimony ere forming a judgement in any case. It meets us constantly in scripture, indeed it is the invariable rule, in the divine government, and therefore it claims our attention. We may be sure it is a safe and wholesome rule, the neglect of which must always lead us astray. We should never allow ourselves to form, much less to express and act upon a judgement without

the testimony of two or three witnesses. However trustworthy and morally reliable any one witness may be, it is not a sufficient basis for a conclusion. We may feel convinced in our minds that the thing is true because affirmed by one in whom we have confidence; but God is wiser than we. It may be that the one witness is thoroughly upright and truthful, that he would not, for worlds, tell an untruth or bear false witness against any one; all this may be true, but we must adhere to the divine rule, "In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established."

Would that this were more diligently attended to in the church of God! Its value in all cases of discipline, and in all cases affecting the character or reputation of any one is simply incalculable. Ere ever an assembly reaches a conclusion or acts on a judgement, in any given case, it should insist on adequate evidence. If this be not forthcoming, let all wait on God, wait patiently and confidingly, and He will surely supply what is needed.

For instance, if there be moral evil or doctrinal error in an assembly of Christians, but it is only known to one; that one is perfectly certain, and thoroughly convinced of the fact. What is

to be done? Wait on God for further witness. To act without this, is to infringe a divine principle laid down with all possible clearness, again and again, in the word of God. Is the one witness to feel aggrieved or insulted because his testimony is not acted upon? Assuredly not; indeed he ought not to expect such a thing, yea he ought not to come forward as a witness until he can corroborate his testimony by the evidence of one or two more. Is the assembly to be deemed indifferent or supine because it refuses to act on the testimony of a solitary witness? Nay, it would be flying in the face of a divine command were it to do so.

And be it remembered, that this great practical principle is not confined in its application to cases of discipline, or questions connected with an assembly of the Lord's people; it is of universal application. We should never allow ourselves to form a judgement or come to a conclusion without the divinely appointed measure of evidence; if that be not forthcoming, it is our plain duty to wait, and if it be needful for us judge in the case, God will, in due time, furnish needed evidence. We have known a case in which a man was falsely accused because the accuser based his charge upon the evidence of one of his

senses; had he taken the trouble of getting the evidence of one or two more of his senses, he would not have made the charge.

Thus the entire subject of evidence claims the attention of the reader, let his position be what it may. We are all prone to rush to hasty conclusions, to take up impressions, to give place to baseless surmisings, and allow our minds to be warped and carried away by prejudice. All these have to be most carefully guarded against. We need more calmness, seriousness and cool deliberation in forming and expressing our judgement about men and things. But specially about men, inasmuch as we may inflict a grievous wrong upon a friend, a brother, or a neighbour, by giving utterance to a false impression or a baseless charge. We may allow ourselves to be the vehicle of an utterly groundless accusation, whereby the character of another may be seriously damaged. This is very sinful in the sight of God, and should be most jealously watched against in ourselves, and sternly rebuked in others, whenever it comes before us. Whenever any one brings a charge against another behind his back, we should insist upon his proving or withdrawing his statement. Were this plan adopted, we should be delivered from

a vast amount of evil speaking which is not only most unprofitable, but positively wicked, and not to be tolerated.

Before turning from the subject of evidence, we may just remark that inspired history supplies us with more than one instance in which a man has been condemned with an appearance of attention to Deuteronomy 17:6-7. Witness the case of Naboth in 1 Kings 21; and the case of Stephen in Acts 6 and 7; and, above all, the case of the only perfect Man that ever trod this earth. Alas! men can, at times, put on the appearance of wonderful attention to the letter of scripture when it suits their own ungodly ends; they can quote its sacred words in defence of the most flagrant unrighteousness and shocking immorality. Two witnesses accused Naboth of blaspheming God and the king, and that faithful Israelite was deprived of his inheritance and of his life on the testimony of two liars hired by the direction of a godless cruel woman. Stephen, a man full of the Holy Ghost, was stoned to death for blasphemy, on the testimony of false witnesses received and acted upon by the great religious leaders of the day who could, doubtless, quote Deuteronomy 17 as their authority.

But all this, while it so sadly and forcibly illustrates what man is, and what mere human religiousness without conscience is, leaves wholly untouched the moral rule laid down for our guidance, in the opening lines of our chapter. Religion, without conscience or the fear of God, is the most degrading, demoralising, hardening thing beneath the canopy of heaven; and one of its most terrible features is seen in this, that men under its influence are not ashamed or afraid to make use of the letter of holy scripture as a cloak wherewith to cover the most horrible wickedness.

But, thanks and praise to our God, His word stands forth before the vision of our souls, in all its heavenly purity, divine virtue, and holy morality, and flings back in the face of the enemy his every attempt to draw from its sacred pages a plea for ought that is not true, venerable, just, pure, lovely and of good report.

We shall now proceed to quote for the reader the second paragraph of our chapter in which we shall find instruction of great moral value, and much needed in this day of self-will and independence.

"If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgement, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates; then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the Lord thy God shall choose; and thou shalt come to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge that shall be in those days, and inquire; and they shall show thee the sentence of judgement. And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the Lord shall choose shall show thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee; according to the sentence of the law which they teach thee, and according to the judgement they shall tell thee, thou shalt do; thou shalt decline from the sentence which they shall show thee, to the right hand, nor to the left. And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken to the priest that stands to minister there before the Lord thy God, or to the judge, even that man shall die; and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear and fear, and do no more presumptuously." (Vers. 8-13)

Here we have divine provision made for the perfect settlement of all questions which might arise throughout the congregation

of Israel. They were to be settled in the divine presence, at the divinely appointed centre, by the divinely appointed authority, Thus self-will and presumption were effectually guarded against. All matters of controversy were to be definitively settled by the judgement of God as expressed by the priest or the judge appointed by God for the purpose.

In a word, it was absolutely and entirely a matter of divine authority. It was not for one man to set himself up in self-will and presumption against another. This would never do in the assembly of God. Each one had to submit his cause to a divine tribunal, and bow implicitly to its decision. There was to be no appeal, inasmuch as there was no higher court. The divinely appointed priest or judge spoke as the oracle of God, and both plaintiff and defendant had to bow, without a demur, to the decision.

Now, it must be very evident to the reader that no member of the congregation of Israel would ever have thought of bringing his case before a Gentile tribunal for judgement. This, we may feel assured, would have been utterly foreign to the thoughts and feelings of every true Israelite. It would have involved a positive insult to Jehovah Himself who was in their midst to

give judgement in every case which might arise. Surely He was sufficient. He knew the ins and outs, the pros and cons, the roots and issues of every controversy however involved or difficult. All were to look to Him, and to bring their causes to the place which He had chosen, and nowhere else. The idea of two members of the assembly of God appearing before a tribunal of the uncircumcised for judgement would not have been tolerated for a moment. It would be as much as to say that there was a defect in the divine arrangement for the congregation.

Has this any voice for us? How are Christians to have their questions and their controversies settled? Are they to betake themselves to the world for judgement? Is there no provision in the assembly of God for the proper settlement of cases which may arise? Hear what the inspired apostle says on the point, to the assembly at Corinth, and "to all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours," and therefore to all true Christians, now.

"Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?"

Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgements of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goes to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather be defrauded? Nay ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren. Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived." (1 Cor. 6:1-9)

Here, then, we have the divine instruction for the church of God, in all ages. We must never, for a moment, lose sight of the fact that the Bible is the Book for every stage of the church's earthly career. True it is, alas! the church is not as it was when the above lines were penned by the inspired apostle; a vast change has taken place in the church's practical condition. There was no difficulty, in early days, in distinguishing between the church and the world, between "the saints" and "unbelievers;" between "those within" and "those without." The

line of demarcation was broad, distinct, and unmistakable, in those days. Any one who looked at the face of society, in a religious point of view, would see three things, namely, Paganism, Judaism and Christianity — the Gentile, the Jew and the church of God — the temple, the synagogue, and the assembly of God. There was no confounding these things. The Christian assembly stood out in vivid contrast with all beside. Christianity was strongly and clearly pronounced in those primitive times. It was neither a national, provincial nor parochial affair, but a personal, practical, living reality. It was not a mere nominal, national, professional creed, but a divinely wrought faith, a living power in the heart flowing out in the life.

But now things are totally changed. The church and the world are so mixed up, that the vast majority of professors could hardly understand the real force and proper application of the passage which we have just quoted. Were we to speak to them about "the saints" going to law "before the unbelievers," it would seem like a foreign tongue. Indeed the term "saint" is hardly heard in the professing church save when used with a sneer, or as applied to such as have been canonised by a superstitious reverence.

But has any change come over the word of God, or over the grand truths which that word unfolds to our souls? Has any change come over the thoughts of God in reference to what His church is, or what the world is, or as to the proper relation of the one to the other? Does He not know who are "saints" and who are "unbelievers"? Has it ceased to be "a fault" for "brother to go to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers"? In a word, has holy scripture lost its power, its point, its divine application? Is it no longer our guide, our authority, our one perfect rule and unerring standard? Has the marked change that has come over the church's moral condition deprived the word of God of all power of application to us — "to all that in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"? Has our Father's most precious Revelation become, in any one particular, a dead letter — a piece of obsolete writing — a document pertaining to days long gone by? Has our altered condition robbed the word of God of a single one of its moral glories?

Reader, what answer does your heart return to these questions? Let us, most earnestly, entreat you to weigh them honestly, humbly and prayerfully in the presence of your Lord. We be-

lieve your answer will be a wonderfully correct index of your real position and moral state. Do you not clearly see and fully admit that scripture can never lose its power? Can the principles of 1 Cor. 6 ever cease to be binding on the church of God. It is fully admitted — for who can deny that things are sadly changed? — but "scripture cannot be broken" and therefore what was "a fault" in the first century cannot be right in the nineteenth; there may be more difficulty in carrying out divine principles, but we must never consent to surrender them, or to act on any lower ground. If once we admit the idea that because the whole professing church has gone wrong, it is impossible for us to do right, the whole principle of Christian obedience is surrendered. It is as wrong for "brother to go to law with brother, before the unbelievers" today, as it was when the apostle wrote his epistle to the assembly at Corinth\* True, the church's visible unity is gone; she is shorn of many gifts, she has departed from her normal condition; but the principles of the word of God can no more lose their power than the blood of Christ can lose its virtue, or His Priesthood lose its efficacy.

\* It is well for us to bear in mind that wherever there are "two or three" gathered to the Name of the Lord Jesus, in ever such

weakness, there will be found, if only they are truly humble and dependent, spiritual ability to judge in any case that may arise between brethren. They can count on divine wisdom being supplied for the settlement of any question, plea or controversy, so that there need not be any reference to a worldly tribunal.

No doubt, worldly men would smile at such an idea; but we must adhere, with holy decision, to the guidance of scripture. Brother must not go to law with brother before the unbelievers. This is distinct and emphatic. There are resources available for the assembly in Christ the Head and Lord, for the settlement of every possible question.

Let the Lord's people seriously apply their hearts to the consideration of this subject. Let them see that they are gathered on the true ground of the church of God; and then, though ever conscious that things are not as they once were, in the church, though sensible of the greatest weakness, failure and shortcoming, they will, nevertheless, find the grace of Christ ever sufficient for them, and the word of God full of all needed instruction and authority, so that they need never betake themselves to the world for help, counsel or judgement. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

This surely is enough for every exigency. Is there any question that our Lord Christ cannot settle? Do we want natural clev-

erness, worldly wisdom, longheadedness, great learning, keen sagacity, if we have Him? Surely not; indeed all such things can only prove like Saul's armour to David. All we want is simply to use the resources which we have in Christ. We shall assuredly find, "in the place where his name is recorded," priestly wisdom to judge in every case which may arise between brethren.

And, farther, let the Lord's dear people remember, in all cases of local difficulty which might arise, that there is no need whatever for them to look for extraneous aid, to write to other places to get some wise men to come and help them. No doubt, if the Lord sends any of His beloved servants, at the moment, their sympathy, fellowship, counsel and help will be highly prized. We are not encouraging independence one of another, but absolute and complete dependence upon Christ our Head and Lord.

And, further, we must bear in mind that there are resources of wisdom, grace, power and spiritual gift treasured up for the church in Christ her Head, ever available for those who have faith to use them. We are not straitened in our blessed and adorable Head. We need never expect to see the body restored to its normal condition on the earth; but, for all that, it is our privilege to see what the true ground of the body is, and it is our duty to occupy that ground and no other.

Now, it is perfectly wonderful the change that takes place in our whole condition, in our view of things, in our thoughts of ourselves and our surroundings, the moment we plant our foot on the true ground of the church of God. Everything seems changed. The Bible seems a new book. We see everything in a new light. Portions of scripture which we have been reading for years without interest or profit now sparkle with divine light, and fill us with wonder, love and praise. We see every thing from a new stand-point; our whole range of vision is changed; we have made our escape from the murky atmosphere which enwraps the whole professing church, and can now look round and see things clearly in the heavenly light of scripture. In fact, it seems like a new conversion; and we find we can now read scripture intelligently, because we have the divine key. We see Christ to be the centre and object of all the thoughts, purposes and counsels of God from everlasting to everlasting, and hence we are conducted into that marvellous sphere of grace and glory which the Holy Ghost delights to unfold in the precious word of God.

May the reader be led into the thorough understanding of all this, by the direct and powerful ministry of the Holy Spirit!

May he be enabled to give himself to the study of scripture, and to surrender himself, unreservedly to its teaching and authority! Let him not confer with flesh and blood, but cast himself, like a little child, on the Lord, and seek to be led on, in spiritual intelligence and practical conformity to the mind of Christ.

We must now look for a moment at the closing verses of our chapter in which we have a remarkable onlook into Israel's future, anticipating the moment in which they should seek to set a king over them.

"When thou art come to the land which the Lord thy God gives thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee whom the Lord thy God shall choose; one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee; thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses; forasmuch as the Lord has said to you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way. Neither

shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away; neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold."

How very remarkable that the three things which the king was not to do, were just the very things which were done — and extensively done by the greatest and wisest of Israel's monarchs. "King Solomon made a navy of ships in Ezion-geber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon. And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents [over two millions], and brought it to king Solomon." "And Hiram sent to the king six-score talents of gold." "And the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred three-score and six talents of gold. [Nearly three-and a-half millions.] Beside that he had of the merchantmen, and of the traffic of the spice merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country." Again, we read, "And the king made silver to be in Jerusalem as stones ... And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt ... But king Solomon loved many strange women ... And he had seven hun-

dred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart." (1 Kings 10, 11.)

What a tale this tells! What a commentary it furnishes upon man in his very best and highest estate! Here was a man endowed with wisdom beyond all others, surrounded by unexampled blessings, dignities, honours and privileges; his earthly cup was full to the brim; there was nothing lacking which this world could supply to minister to human happiness. And not only so, but his remarkable prayer at the dedication of the temple might well lead us to cherish the brightest hopes respecting him, both personally and officially.

But, sad to say, he broke down, most deplorably, in every one of the particulars as to which the law of his God had spoken so definitely and so clearly. He was told not to multiply silver and gold, and yet he multiplied them. He was told not to return to Egypt to multiply horses, and yet to Egypt he went for horses. He was told not to multiply wives, and yet he had a thousand of them, and they turned away his heart! Such is man! Oh! how little is he to be counted upon! "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers and the

flower thereof falls away." "Cease ye from man whose breath is in his nostrils, for wherein is he to be accounted of?"

But we may ask, how are we to account for Solomon's signal, sorrowful and humiliating failure? What was the real secret of it? To answer this, we must quote for the reader the closing verses of our chapter.

"And it shall be, when he sits upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests the Levites; and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of His life; that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them; that his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, to the right hand or to the left; to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children, in the midst of Israel." (Vers. 18-20.)

Had Solomon attended to these most precious and weighty words, his historian would have had a very different task to perform. But he did not. We hear nothing of his having made a copy of the law; and, most assuredly, if he did make a copy of

it, he did not attend to it; yea, he turned his back upon it, and did the very things which he was told not to do. In a word, the cause of all the wreck and ruin that so rapidly followed the splendour of Solomon's reign, was neglect of the plain word of God.

It is this which makes it all so solemn for us, in this our own day, and which leads us to call the earnest attention of the reader to it. We deeply feel the need of seeking to rouse the attention of the whole church of God to this great subject. Neglect of the word of God is the source of all the failure, all the sin, all the error, all the mischief and confusion, the heresies, sects and schisms that have ever been or are now in this world. And we may add, with equal confidence, that the only real sovereign remedy for our present lamentable condition will be found in returning, every one for himself and herself, to the simple but sadly neglected authority of the word of God. Let each one see his own departure, and that of the whole professing body, from the plain and positive teaching of the New Testament — the commandments of our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of our God, because of our common sin, and let us turn to Him in

true self-judgment, and He will graciously restore, and heal, and bless us, and lead us in that most blessed path of obedience which lies open before every truly humble soul.

May God the Holy Ghost, in His own resistless power, bring home to the heart and conscience of every member of the body of Christ, on the face of the earth, the urgent need of an immediate and unreserved surrender to the authority of the word of God!

## **Chapter 18.**

The opening paragraph of this chapter suggests a deeply interesting and practical line of truth.

"The priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel; they shall eat the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and his inheritance. Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the Lord is their inheritance, as he has said to them. And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep; and they shall give to the priest, the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw. The firstfruit also of thy

corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him. For the Lord thy God has chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of the Lord, him and his sons for ever. And if a Levite come from any of thy gates out of all Israel, where he sojourned, and come with all the desire of his mind to the place which the Lord shall choose; then he shall minister in the name of the Lord his God, as all his brethren the Levites do, which stand there before the Lord. They shall have like portions to eat, beside that which comes out of the sale of his patrimony." (Vers. 1-8.)

Here, as in every part of the book of Deuteronomy, the Priests are classed with the Levites, in a very marked way. We have called the reader's attention to this, as a special characteristic feature of our book, and shall not dwell upon it now, but merely, in passing, remind the reader of it, as something claiming his attention. Let him weigh the opening words of our chapter, "The priests the Levites," and compare them with the way in which the priests, the sons of Aaron, are spoken of in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers; and if he should be disposed to ask the reason of this distinction, we believe it to be this, that

in Deuteronomy the divine object is to bring the whole assembly of Israel more into prominence, and hence it is that the priests, in their official capacity, come rarely before us. The grand Deuteronomic idea is, Israel in immediate relationship with Jehovah.

Now, in the passage just quoted, we have the priests and the Levites linked together, and presented as the Lord's servants, wholly dependent upon Him, and intimately identified with His altar and His service. This is full of interest, and opens up a very important field of practical truth to which the Church of God would do well to attend.

In looking through the history of Israel, we observe that when things were in anything like a healthful condition, the altar of God was well attended to, and, as a consequence, the priests and Levites were well supplied. If Jehovah had His portion, His servants were sure to have theirs. If He was neglected, so were they. They were bound up together. The people were to bring their offerings to God, and He shared them with His servants. The priests the Levites were not to exact or demand of the people, but the people were privileged to bring their gifts to the

altar of God, and He permitted His servants to feed upon the fruit of His people's devotedness to Him.

Such was the true, the divine idea as to the Lord's servants of old. They were to live upon the voluntary offerings presented to God by the whole congregation. True it is that, in the dark and evil days of the sons of Eli, we find something sadly different from this lovely moral order. Then "the priest's custom with the people was, that, when any one offered sacrifice, the priest's servant came, while the flesh was in seething, with a fleshhook of three teeth in his hand; and he struck it into the pan, or kettle, or caldron, or pot; all that the flesh hook brought up the priest took for himself. So they did in Shiloh to all the Israelites that came thither. Also before they burnt the fat" — God's special portion — "the priest's servant came, and said to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest; for he will not have sodden flesh of thee, but raw. And if any man said to him, Let them not fail to burn the fat presently, and then take as much as thy soul desires; then he would answer him, Nay; but thou shalt give it me now; and if not, I will take it by force. Wherefore the sin of the young men was very great before the

Lord; for men abhorred the offering of the Lord." (1 Sam. 2:13-17.)

All this was truly deplorable, and ended in the solemn judgment of God upon the house of Eli. It could not be otherwise. If those who ministered at the altar could be guilty of such terrible iniquity and impiety, judgement must take its course.

But the normal condition of things, as presented in our chapter, was in vivid contrast with all this frightful iniquity. Jehovah would surround Himself with the willing offerings of His people, and, from these offerings He would feed His servants who ministered at His altar. Hence, therefore, when the altar of God was diligently, fervently and devotedly attended to, the priests the Levites had a rich portion, an abundant supply; and, on the other hand, when Jehovah and His altar were treated with cold neglect, or merely waited upon in a barren routine or heartless formalism, the Lord's servants were correspondingly neglected. In a word, they stood intimately identified with the worship and service of the God of Israel.

Thus, for example, in the bright days of the good king Hezekiah, when things were fresh and hearts happy and true,

we read, "And Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests and the Levites after their courses, every man according to his service, the priests and Levites for burnt offerings, and for peace offerings, to minister, and to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the tents of the Lord. He appointed also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt offerings, to wit, for the morning and evening burnt offerings, and the burnt offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as it is written in the law of the Lord. Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord. And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the first-fruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly. And concerning the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated to the Lord their God, and laid them by heaps. In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished them in the seventh month. And when Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed the Lord, and

his people Israel. Then Hezekiah questioned with the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps. And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok answered him, and said, Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of Lord, we have had enough, to eat, and have left plenty, for the Lord has blessed his people; and that which is left is this great store." (2 Chr. 31:2-10)

How truly refreshing is all this! And how encouraging! The deep, full, silvery tide of devotedness flowed around the altar of God bearing upon its bosom an ample supply to meet all the need of the Lord's servants, and "heaps" beside. This, we feel assured, was grateful to the heart of the God of Israel, as it was to the hearts of those who had given themselves, at His call and by His appointment, to the service of His altar and His sanctuary.

And let the reader specially note those precious words, "As it is written in the law of the Lord." Here was Hezekiah's authority, the solid basis of his whole line of conduct, from first to last. True, the nation's visible unity was gone; the condition of things, when he began his blessed work, was most discouraging; but the word of the Lord was as true, as real, and as dir-

ect in its application in Hezekiah's day as it was in the days of David or Joshua. Hezekiah rightly felt that Deuteronomy 18:1-8 applied to his day and to his conscience, and that he and the people were responsible to act upon it, according to their ability. Were the priests and the Levites to starve because Israel's national unity was gone? Surely not. They were to stand or fall with the word, the worship, and the work of God. Circumstances might vary, and the Israelite might find himself in a position in which it would be impossible to carry out in detail all the ordinances of the Levitical ceremonial, but he never could find himself in circumstances in which it was not his high privilege to give full expression to his heart's devotedness to the service, the altar, and the law of Jehovah.

Thus, then, we see, throughout the entire history of Israel, that when things were at all bright and healthy, the Lord's worship, His work, and His workmen were blessedly attended to. But, on the other hand, when things were low, when hearts were cold, when self and its interests had the uppermost place, then all these great objects were treated with heartless neglect. Look for example, at Nehemiah 13. When that beloved and faithful servant returned to Jerusalem, after an absence of certain days,

he found, to his deep sorrow, that, even in that short time, various things had gone sadly astray; amongst the rest, the poor Levites had been left without anything to eat. "And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them; for the Levites and the singers that did the work were fled every one to his field." There were no "heaps" of firstfruits in those dismal days, and surely it was hard for men to work and sing when they had nothing to eat. This was not according to the law of Jehovah, nor according to His loving heart. It was a sad reproach upon the people that the Lord's servants were obliged, through their gross neglect, to abandon His worship and His work, in order to keep themselves from starving.

This, truly, was a deplorable condition of things. Nehemiah felt it keenly, as we read, "Then contended I with the rulers, and said, why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place. Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn, and the new wine, and the oil, to the treasuries. And I made treasurers over the treasuries ... for they were counted faithful;" — they were entitled to the confidence of their brethren — "and their office was to distribute to their brethren." It needed a number of tried and faithful men to oc-

occupy the high position of distributing to their brethren the precious fruit of the people's devotedness; they could take counsel together, and see that the Lord's treasury was faithfully managed, according to His word, and the need of His true and bona fide workmen fully met, without prejudice or partiality.

Such was the lovely order of the God of Israel — an order to which every true Israelite such as Nehemiah and Hezekiah, would delight to attend. The rich tide of blessing flowed forth from Jehovah to His people, and back from His people to Him, and from that flowing tide His servants were to draw a full supply for all their need. It was a dishonour to Him to have the Levites obliged to return to their fields; it proved that His house was forsaken, and that there was no sustenance for His servants.

Now, the question may here be asked, What has all this to say to us? What has the church of God to learn from Deuteronomy 18:1-8? In order to answer this question, we must turn to 1 Corinthians 9 where the inspired apostle deals with the very important subject of the support of the Christian ministry — a subject so little understood by the great mass of professing Christians. As to the law of the case, it is as distinct as possible.

"Who goes a warfare any time at his own charges? who plants a vineyard, and eats not of the fruit thereof? or who feeds a flock, and eats not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or says not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? or says he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written; that he that plows should plow in hope; and that he that threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown to you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless" — here grace shines out, in all its heavenly lustre — "we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know, that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so has the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. But" — here, again, grace asserts its holy dignity — "I have used none of these things; neither have I written these things, that it should be so done to me; for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. For though I

preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is to me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed to me. What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel." (1 Cor. 9:7-18)

Here we have this interesting and weighty subject presented in all its bearings. The inspired apostle lays down, with all possible decision and clearness the divine law on the point. There is no mistaking it. "The Lord has ordained that they that preach the gospel should live of the gospel;" that, just as the priests and the Levites, of old, lived on offerings presented by the people, so, now, those who are really called of God, gifted by Christ, and fitted by the Holy Ghost, to preach the gospel, and who are giving themselves constantly and diligently, to that glorious work, are morally entitled to temporal support. It is not that they should look to those to whom they preach for a certain stipulated sum. There is no such idea as this in the New Testament. The workman must look to his Master, and to Him alone for support. Woe be to him if he looks to the church, or to

men in any way. The priests and Levites had their portion in and from Jehovah. He was the lot of their inheritance. True, He expected the people to minister to Him in the persons of His servants. He told them what to give, and blessed them in giving; it was their high privilege as well as their bounden duty to give; had they refused or neglected, it would have brought drought and barrenness upon their fields and vineyards. (Haggai 1:5-11)

But the priests the Levites had to look only to Jehovah. If the people failed in their offerings, the Levites had to fly to their fields and work for their living. They could not go to law with any one for tithes and offerings; their only appeal was to the God of Israel who had ordained them to the work, given them the work to do.

So also with the Lord's workmen, now; they must look only to Him. They must be well assured that He has fitted them for the work and called them to it ere they attempt to push out — if we may so express it — from the shore of circumstances, and give themselves wholly to the work of preaching. They must take their eyes completely off from men, from all creature streams and human props, and lean exclusively upon the living God.

We have seen the most disastrous consequences resulting from acting under a mistaken impulse in this most solemn matter; men not called of God, or fitted for the work, giving up their occupations, and coming forth, as they said, to live by faith and give themselves to the work. Deplorable shipwreck was the result in every instance. Some, when they began to look the stern realities of the path straight in the face, became so alarmed, that they actually lost their mental balance, lost their reason for a time; some lost their peace; and some went right back into the world again.

In short, it is our deep and thorough conviction, after forty years' observation, that the cases are few and far between in which it is morally safe and good for one to abandon his bread-winning calling in order to preach the gospel. It must be so distinct and unquestionable to the man himself, that he has only to say, with Luther, at the Diet of Worms, "Here I am; I can do no otherwise: God help me! Amen." Then he may be perfectly sure that God will sustain him in the work to which He has called him, and meet all his need, "according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." And as to men, and their thoughts respecting him and his course, he has simply to refer them to his

Master. He is not responsible to them nor has he ever asked them for anything. If they were compelled to support him, reason would they might complain or raise questions; but, as they are not, they must just leave him, remembering that to his own Master he stands or falls.

But when we look at the splendid passage just quoted from 1 Corinthians 9, we find that the blessed apostle, after having established, beyond all question, his right to be supported, relinquishes it completely. "Nevertheless, I have used none of these things." He worked with his hands; he wrought with labour and travail night and day, in order not to be chargeable or burdensome to any. "These hands," he says, "have ministered to my necessities, and those that were with me." He coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. He travelled, he preached, he visited from house to house, he was the laborious apostle, the earnest evangelist, the diligent pastor, he had the care of all the churches. Was not he entitled to support? Assuredly he was. It ought to have been the joy of the church of God to minister to his every need. But he never enforced his claim; nay, he surrendered it. He supported himself and his companions by the labour of his hands; and all this as an example, as he says to the

elders of Ephesus, "I have showed you all things how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Now, it is perfectly wonderful to think of this beloved and revered servant of Christ, with his extensive travels, from Jerusalem and round about to Illyricum, his gigantic labours as an evangelist, a pastor and a teacher, and yet finding time to support himself and others by the work of his hands. Truly he occupied high moral ground. His case is a standing testimony against hirelingism, in every shape and form. The infidel's sneering reference to well-paid ministers could have no application whatever to him. He certainly did not preach for hire.

And yet he thankfully received help from those who knew how to give it. Again and again, the beloved assembly at Philippi ministered to the necessities of their revered and beloved father in Christ. How well for them that they did so! It will never be forgotten. Millions have read the sweet record of their devotedness, and been refreshed by the odour of their sacrifice; it is recorded in heaven where nothing of the kind is ever forgotten, yea, it is engraved on the very tablets of the heart of Christ.

Hear how the blessed apostle pours out his grateful heart to his much loved children. "I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me has flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want;" — blessed, self-denying servant — "for I have learned in whatsoever state I am, to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere, and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me. Notwithstanding, ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction. Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again to my necessity. Not because I desire a gift, but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all and abound; I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:10-19.)

What a rare privilege to be allowed to comfort the heart of such an honoured servant of Christ, at the close of his career, and in the solitude of his prison at Rome! How seasonable, how right, how lovely was their ministry! What joy to receive the apostle's acknowledgments! And then how precious the assurance that their service had gone up, as an odour of sweet smell, to the very throne and heart of God! Who would not rather be a Philippian ministering to the apostle's need, than a Corinthian calling his ministry in question, or a Galatian breaking his heart? How vast the difference! The apostle could not take anything from the assembly at Corinth. Their state did not admit of it. Individuals in that assembly did minister to him, and their service is recorded on the page of inspiration, remembered above, and it will be abundantly rewarded in the kingdom by-and-by. "I am glad of the coming of Stephanus and Fortunatus and Achaicus: for that which was lacking on your part they have supplied. For they have refreshed my spirit and yours: therefore acknowledge ye them that are such." (1 Cor. 16:17-18.)

Thus, then, from all that has passed before us, we learn, most distinctly, that both under the law and under the gospel, it is according to the revealed will, and according to the heart of God

that those who are really called of Him to the work, and who devote themselves, earnestly, diligently and faithfully to it, should have the hearty sympathy and practical help of His people. All who love Christ will count it their deepest joy to minister to Him in the persons of His servants. When He Himself was here upon earth, He graciously accepted help from the hands of those who loved Him, and had reaped the fruit His most precious ministry — "certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered to Him of their substance." (Luke 8:2-3.)

Happy, highly privileged women! What joy to be allowed to minister to the Lord of glory, in the days of His human need and humiliation! There stand their honoured names, on the divine page written down by God the Holy Ghost, to be read by untold millions, to be borne along the stream of time right onward into eternity. How well it was for those women that they did not waste their substance in self-indulgence, or hoard it up to be rust on their souls, or a positive curse, as money must ever be if not used for God!

But, on the other hand, we learn the urgent need on the part of all who take the place of workers, whether in or out of the assembly, of keeping themselves perfectly free from all human influence, all looking to men, in any shape or form. They must have to do with God in the secret of their own souls, or they will, assuredly, break down, sooner or later. They must look to Him alone for the supply of their need. If the church neglect them, the church will be the serious loser here and hereafter. If they can support themselves by the labour of their hands, without curtailing their direct service to Christ, so much the better; it is unquestionably the more excellent way. We are as persuaded of this as of the truth of any proposition that could be submitted to us. There is nothing more spiritually and morally noble than a truly gifted servant of Christ supporting himself and his family, by the sweat of his brow or the sweat of his brain, and, at the same time, giving himself diligently to the Lord's work, whether as an evangelist, a pastor or a teacher. The moral antipodes of this is presented to our view in the person of a man who, without gift, or grace, or spiritual life, enters what is called the ministry, as a mere profession or means of living. The position of such a man is morally dangerous and miserable in the extreme. We shall not dwell upon it, inasmuch

as it does not come within the range of the subject which has been engaging our attention, and we are only too thankful to leave it, and proceed with our chapter.

"When thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God gives thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations. There shall not be found among you any one that makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that uses divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all that do these things are an abomination to Lord; and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee. Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God. For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened to observers of times, and to diviners; but as for thee, the Lord thy God has not suffered thee so to do." (Vers. 9-14.)

Now, it may be that, on reading the foregoing quotation, the reader feels disposed to ask what possible application it can have to professing Christians? We ask, in reply, Are there any Christians who are in the habit of going to the performances of wizards, magicians and necromancers? Are there any who take

part in table-turning, spirit-rapping, mesmerism, or clairvoyance?\*

If so, the passage which we have just quoted bears, very pointedly and solemnly, upon all such. We most surely believe that all these things which we have named are of the devil. This may sound harsh and severe; but we cannot help that. We are thoroughly persuaded that when people lend themselves to the awful business of bringing up, in any way, the spirits of the departed, they are simply putting themselves into the hands of the devil to be deceived and deluded by his lies. What, we may ask, do those who hold in their hands a perfect revelation from God, want of table-turning and spirit-rapping? Surely nothing. And, if not content with that precious word, they turn to the spirits of departed friends or others, what can they expect but that God will judicially give them over to be blinded and deceived by wicked spirits who come up and personate the departed, and tell all manner of lies?

\* Some of our readers may object to our classing mesmerism with spirit-rapping and table-turning. It may be they would regard it in the same light, and use it in the same way, as ether or chloroform, in medical practice. We do not attempt to dogmatise on the point. We can only say that we could have nothing whatever to do with it. We consider it a solemn thing for any one to allow himself to be placed by another in a state of utter unconscious-

ness [mesmerism, Compiler.], for any purpose whatsoever. And as to the idea of listening to, or being guided by the ravings of a person in that state, we can only regard it as absolutely absurd, if not positively sinful.

We cannot attempt go fully into this subject here. We have no time, for anything of the sort. We merely felt it to be our solemn duty to warn the reader about having anything whatever to do with consulting departed spirits. We believe it to be most dangerous work. We do not enter upon the question as to whether souls can come back to this world; no doubt, God could permit them to come if He saw fit; but this we leave. The great point for us to keep ever before our hearts is the perfect sufficiency of divine revelation, what do we want of departed spirits? The rich man imagined that if Lazarus were to go back to earth and speak to his five brethren, it would have a great effect. "I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify to them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham says to him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham; but if one went to them from the dead, they will repent. And he said to him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they

be persuaded, though one rose from the dead." (Luke 16:27-31.)

Here we have a thorough settlement of this question. If people will not hear the word of God, if they will not believe its clear and solemn statements as to themselves, their present condition, their future destiny, neither will they be persuaded though a thousand departed souls were to come back and tell them what they saw, and heard, and felt in heaven above or in hell beneath; it would produce no saving or permanent effect upon them. It might cause great excitement, great sensation, furnish great material for talk, and fill the newspapers far and wide; but there it would end. People would go on all the same, with their traffic and gain, their folly and vanity, their pleasure-hunting and self-indulgence. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets," — and we may add, Christ and His holy apostles — "neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. The heart that will not bow to scripture will be not convinced by anything; and as to the true believer, he has in scripture all he can possibly want, and therefore he has no need to have recourse to table-turning, spirit-rapping or magic. "And when they shall say to you, Seek to them that have familiar spirits,

and to wizards that peep, and that mutter; should not a people seek to their God for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." (Isaiah 8:19-20.)

Here is the divine resource of the Lord's people, at all times and in all places; and to this it is that Moses refers the congregation in the splendid paragraph which closes our chapter. He shows them, very distinctly, that they had no need to apply to familiar spirits, enchanters, wizards, or witches, which all were an abomination to the Lord. "The Lord thy God," he says, "will raise up to thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like to me to him ye shall hearken; according to all that thou desiredst of the Lord thy God in Horeb, in day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear the voice of the Lord my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the Lord said to me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like to thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak to them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken to my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of

him. But the prophet which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken? When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken, but the prophet has spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him." (Vers. 15-22.)

We can be at no loss to know who this Prophet is, namely, our adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In the third chapter of Acts, Peter so applies the words of Moses. "He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached to you; whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said to the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up to you of your brethren, like to me; him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say to you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." (Vers. 20-23.)

How precious the privilege of hearing the voice of such a Prophet! It is the voice of God speaking through the lips of the Man Christ Jesus — speaking, not in thunder, not with flaming fire, nor the lightning's flash, but in that still small voice of love and mercy which falls in soothing power, on the broken heart and contrite spirit, which distills like the gentle dew of heaven upon the thirsty ground. This voice we have in the holy scriptures, that precious revelation which comes so constantly and so powerfully before us, in our studies on this blessed book of Deuteronomy. We must never forget this. The voice of scripture is the voice of Christ, and the voice of Christ is the voice of God.

We want no more. If any one presumes to come with a fresh revelation, with some new truth not contained in the divine Volume, we must judge him and his communication by the standard of scripture and reject them utterly. "Thou shalt not be afraid of him." False prophets come with great pretensions, high-sounding words and sanctimonious bearing. Moreover they seek to surround themselves with a sort of dignity, weight and impressiveness which are apt to impose on the ignorant. But they cannot stand the searching power of the word of God.

Some simple clause of holy scripture will strip them of all their imposing surroundings, and cut up by the roots their wonderful revelations. Those who know the voice of the true Prophet will not listen to any other; those who have heard the voice of the good Shepherd will not listen to the voice of a stranger.

Reader, see that you listen only to the voice of Jesus.

## **Chapter 19.**

"When the Lord thy God has cut off the nations, whose land the Lord thy God gives thee, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their cities, and in their houses; thou shalt separate three cities for thee in the midst of thy land, which the Lord thy God gives thee to possess it. Thou shalt prepare thee a way, and divide the coasts of thy land, which the Lord thy God gives thee to inherit, into three parts, that every slayer may flee thither." (Vers. 1-3.)

What a very striking combination of "goodness and severity" we observe in these few lines! We have the "cutting off" of the nations of Canaan, because of their consummated wickedness which had become positively unbearable. And, on the other

hand, we have a most touching display of divine goodness in the provision made for the poor manslayer, in the day of his deep distress, when flying for his life, from the avenger of blood. The government and the goodness of God are, we need hardly say, both divinely perfect. There are cases in which goodness would be nothing but a toleration of sheer wickedness and open rebellion which is utterly impossible under the government of God. If men imagine that, because God is good, they may go on and sin with a high hand, they will, sooner or later, find out their woeful mistake.

"Behold," says the inspired apostle, "the goodness and severity of God!"\* God will, most assuredly, cut off evil doers who despise His goodness and long-suffering mercy. He is slow to anger, blessed be His Holy Name! and of great kindness. For hundreds of years He bore with the seven nations of Canaan, until their wickedness rose up to the very heavens, and the land itself could bear them no longer. He bore with the enormous wickedness of the guilty cities of the plain; and if He had found even ten righteous people in Sodom, He would have spared it for their sakes. But the day of terrible vengeance came, and they were "cut off."

- \* The word rendered "severity" is *apotomia*, which literally means "cutting off."

And so will it be, ere long, with guilty Christendom. "Thou also shalt be cut off." The reckoning time will come, and oh! what a reckoning time it will be! The heart trembles at the thought of it, while the eye scans and the pen traces the soul subduing words.

But mark how divine "goodness" shines out in the opening lines of our chapter. See the gracious painstaking of our God to make the city of refuge as available as possible for the slayer. The three cities were to be "in the midst of thy land." It would not do to have them in remote corners, or in places difficult of access. And not only so, but "thou shalt prepare thee a way." And again, "thou shalt divide the coasts of thy land ... into three parts." Everything was to be done to facilitate the slayer's escape. The gracious Lord thought of the feelings of the distressed one "flying for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before him." The city of refuge was to be "brought near, just as "the righteousness of God" is brought near to the poor broken-hearted helpless sinner — so near, that it is "to him that works not, but believes on him that justifies the ungodly."

There is peculiar sweetness in the expression, "Thou shalt prepare thee a way." How like our own ever gracious God — "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!" And yet it was the same God that cut off the nations of Canaan in righteous judgment, who thus made such gracious provision for the manslayer. "Behold, the goodness and severity of God."

"And this is the case of the slayer which shall flee thither, that he may live; whoso kills his neighbour ignorantly, whom he hated not in time past; as when a man goes into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetches a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slips from the helve, and lights upon his neighbour, that he die; he shall flee to one of those cities and live; lest the avenger of the blood pursue the slayer, while his heart is hot, and overtake him, because the way is long" — most touching and exquisite grace! — "and slay him; whereas he was not worthy of death, inasmuch as he hated him not in time past. Wherefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt separate three cities for thee." (Vers. 4-7.)

Here we have a most minute description of the man for whom the city of refuge was provided. If he did not answer to this, the city was not for him; but if he did, he might feel the most per-

fect assurance that a gracious God had thought of him, and found a refuge for him where he might be as safe as the hand of God could make him. Once the slayer found himself within the precincts of the city of refuge, he might breathe freely, and enjoy calm and sweet repose. No avenging sword could reach him there, not a hair of his head could be touched there.

He was safe; yes, perfectly safe; and not only perfectly safe, but perfectly certain. He was not hoping to be saved, he was sure of it. He was in the city, and that was enough. Before he got in, he might have many a struggle deep down in his poor terrified heart, many doubts and fears and painful exercises. He was flying for his life, and this was a serious and an all-absorbing matter for him — a matter that would make all beside seem light and trifling. We could not imagine the flying slayer stopping to gather flowers by the roadside. Flowers, he would say, "What have I to do with flowers just now? My life is at stake. I am flying for my life. What if the avenger should come and find me gathering flowers? No, the city is my one grand all-engrossing object; nothing else has the smallest interest or charm for me. I want to be saved; that is my exclusive business now.

But the moment he found himself within the gates, he was safe, and he knew it. How did he know it? By his feelings? By his evidences? By experiences? Nay; but simply by the word of God. No doubt, he had the feeling, the evidence and the experience, and most precious they would be to him after his tremendous struggle and conflict to get in. But these things were, by no means, the ground of his certainty or the basis of his peace. He knew he was safe because God told him so. The grace of God had made him safe, and the word of God made him sure.

We cannot conceive a manslayer, within the walls of the city of refuge, expressing himself as many of the Lord's dear people do, in reference to the question of safety and certainty. He would not deem it presumption to be sure he was safe. If any one had asked him, "Are you sure you are safe?" "Sure!" he would say, "How can I be otherwise than sure? Was I not a slayer? Have I not fled to this city of refuge? Has not Jehovah, our covenant God, pledged His word for it? Has He not said that, 'fleeing thither he may live'? Yes, thank God, I am perfectly sure. I had a terrible run for it — a fearful struggle. At times, I felt as if the avenger had me in his dreaded grasp. I

gave myself up for lost; but then, God, in infinite mercy, made the way so plain, and made the city so easy of access to me, that, spite of all doubts and fears, here I am, safe and certain. The struggle is all over, the conflict past and gone. I can breathe freely now, and walk up and down in the perfect security of this blessed place, praising our gracious covenant God, for His great goodness in having provided such a sweet retreat for a poor slayer like me."

Can the reader speak thus as to his safety in Christ? Is he saved, and does he know it? If not, may the Spirit of God apply to his heart the simple illustration of the manslayer within the walls of the city of refuge! May he know that "strong consolation" which is the sure, because divinely appointed portion of all those who have "fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them." (Heb. 6:18.)

We must now proceed with our chapter; and, in so doing, we shall find that there was more to be thought of in the cities of refuge than the question of the slayer's safety. That was provided for perfectly, as we have seen; but the glory of God, the purity of His land, and the integrity of His government had to be duly maintained. If these things were touched, there could

be no safety for any one. This great principle shines on every page of the history of God's ways with man. Man's true blessing and God's glory are indissolubly bound together, and both the one and the other rest on the same imperishable foundation, namely, Christ and His precious work.

"And if the Lord thy God enlarge thy coast, as he has sworn to thy fathers, and give thee all the land which he promised to give to thy fathers; if thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to love the Lord thy God, and to walk ever in his ways; then shalt thou add three cities more for thee, beside these three; that innocent blood be not shed in thy land, which the Lord thy God gives thee for an inheritance, and so blood be upon thee. But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die, and flees into one of these cities; then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. Thine eye shall not pity him, but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee." (Vers. 8-13.)

Thus, whether it was grace for the slayer, or judgement for the murderer, the glory of God, and the claims of His government had to be duly maintained. The unwitting manslayer was met by the provision of mercy; the guilty murderer fell beneath the stern sentence of inflexible justice. We must never forget the solemn reality of divine government. It meets us everywhere; and if it were more fully recognised, it would effectually deliver us from one-sided views of the divine character. Take such words as these, "Thine eye shall not pity him." Who uttered them? Jehovah. Who penned them? God the Holy Ghost. What do they mean? Solemn judgement upon wickedness. Let men beware how they trifle with these weighty matters. Let the Lord's people beware how they give place to foolish reasonings in reference to things wholly beyond their range. Let them remember that a false sentimentality may constantly be found in league with an audacious infidelity in calling in question the solemn enactments of divine government. This is a very serious consideration. Evil doers must look out for the sure judgement of a sin-hating God. If a wilful murderer presumed to avail himself of God's provision for the ignorant manslayer, the hand of justice laid hold of him and put him to death, without mercy. Such was the government of God in Is-

rael of old; and such will it be in a day that is rapidly approaching. Just now, God is dealing in long-suffering mercy with the world; this is the day of salvation, the acceptable time. The day of vengeance is at hand. Oh! that man, instead of reasoning about the justice of God's dealings with evil doers, would flee for refuge to that precious Saviour who died on the cross to save us from the flames of an everlasting hell!\*

\* For other points presented in the cities of refuge we must refer the reader to "Notes on the Book of Numbers," chapter 35.

Before quoting for the reader the closing paragraph of our chapter, we would just call his attention to verse 14, in which we have a very beautiful proof of God's tender care for His people, and His most gracious interest in everything which, directly or indirectly concerned them. "Thou shalt not remove thy neighbour's landmark, which they of old time have set in thine inheritance, which thou shalt inherit in the land that the Lord thy God gives thee to possess it."

This passage, taken in its plain import and primary application is full of sweetness, as presenting the loving heart of our God, and showing us how marvellously He entered into all the circumstances of His beloved people. The landmarks were not to

be meddled with. Each one's portion was to be left intact according to the boundary lines set up by those of old time. Jehovah had given the land to Israel; and, not only so, but He had assigned to each tribe and to each family their proper portion, marked off with perfect precision, and indicated by landmarks so plain that there could be no confusion, no clashing of interests, no interference one with another, no ground for lawsuit or controversy about property. There stood the ancient landmarks marking off each one's portion in such a manner as to remove all possible ground of dispute. Each one held as a tenant under the God of Israel, who knew all about his little holding, as we say; and every tenant had the comfort of knowing that the eye of the gracious and Almighty Landlord was upon his bit of land, and His hand over it to protect it from every intruder. Thus he could abide in peace under his vine and under his fig-tree, enjoying the portion assigned by the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Thus much as to the obvious sense of this beautiful clause of our chapter. But surely it has a deep spiritual meaning also. Are there not spiritual landmarks for the church of God, and for each individual member thereof, marking off, with divine ac-

curacy, the boundaries of our heavenly inheritance — those landmarks which they of old time, even the apostles of our Lord and Saviour Jesus have set up? Assuredly there are, and God has His eye upon them, and He will not permit them to be removed with impunity. Woe be to the man that attempts to touch them; he will have to give account to God for so doing. It is a serious thing for any one to interfere, in any way, with the place, portion, and prospect of the church of God; and it is to be feared that many are doing it without being aware of it.

We do not attempt to go into the question of what these landmarks are; we have sought to do this in our first volume of "Notes on Deuteronomy," as well as in the other four volumes of the series; but we feel it to be our duty to warn, in the most solemn manner, all whom it may concern, against doing that which, in the church of God, answers to the removal of the landmarks in Israel. If any one had come forward in the land of Israel to suggest some new arrangement in the inheritance of the tribes, to adjust the property of each upon some new principle, to set up some new boundary lines, what would have been the reply of the faithful Israelite? A very simple one, we may be sure. He would have replied in the language of Deuter-

onomy 19:14. He would have said "We want no novelties here; we are perfectly content with those sacred and time-honoured landmarks which they of old time have set in our inheritance. We are determined, by the grace of God, to keep to them, and to resist, with firm purpose, any modern innovation."

Such, we believe, would have been the prompt reply of every true member of the congregation of Israel; and surely the Christian ought not to be less prompt or less decided in his answer to all those who, under the plea of progress and development, remove the landmarks of the church of God, and instead of the precious teaching of Christ and His apostles, offer us the so-called light of science, and the resources of philosophy. Thank God, we want them not. We have Christ and His word; what can be added to these? What do we want of human progress or development, when we have "that which was from the beginning"? What can science or philosophy do for those who possess "all truth"? No doubt, we want, yea, long to make progress in the knowledge of Christ; long for a fuller, clearer development of the life of Christ in our daily history; but science and philosophy cannot help us in these; nay, they could only prove a most serious hindrance.

Christian reader, let us seek to keep close to Christ, close to His word. This is our only security, in this dark and evil day. Apart from Him, we are nothing, have nothing, can do nothing. In Him we have all. He is the portion of our cup and the lot of our inheritance. May we know what it is not only to be safe in Him, but separated to Him, and satisfied with Him, till that bright day when we shall see Him as He is, and be like Him and with Him for ever.

We shall now do little more than quote the remaining verses of our chapter. They need no exposition. They set forth wholesome truth to which professing Christians, with all their light and knowledge, may well give attention.

"One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sins; at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established." (Ver. 15.)

This subject has already come before us. It cannot be too strongly insisted upon. We may judge of its importance from the fact that, not only does Moses, again and again, press it upon Israel's attention, but our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and

the Holy Ghost in the apostle Paul, in two of his epistles, insists upon the principle of "two or three witnesses," in every case. One witness, be he ever so trustworthy, is not sufficient to decide a case. If this plain fact were more carefully weighed and duly attended to, it would put an end to a vast amount of strife and contention. We in our fancied wisdom, might imagine that one thoroughly reliable witness ought to be sufficient to settle any question. Let us remember that God is wiser than we are, and that it is ever our truest wisdom as well as our greatest moral security to hold fast by His unerring word.

"If a false witness rise up against any man, to testify against him that which is wrong; then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges which shall be in those days; and the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and have testified falsely against his brother; then shall ye do to him as he had thought to have done to his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. And those which remain shall hear and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. And thine eye shall

not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot." (Vers. 16-21.)

We may here see how God hates false witness; and further, we have to bear in mind that, though we are not under law but under grace, false witness is not less hateful to God; and surely the more fully we enter into the grace in which we stand, the more intensely we shall abhor false witness, slander, and evil speaking, in every shape and form. The good Lord preserve us from all such!

## **Chapter 20**

"When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them for the Lord thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And it shall be when ye are come nigh to the battle that the priest shall approach, and speak to the people, and shall say, to them, Hear, O Israel; ye approach this day to battle against your enemies; let not your hearts faint; fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; for the Lord your God is he that goes with you to fight for you against your enemies, to save you." (Vers. 1-4.)

How wonderful to think of the Lord as a Man of war! Think of His fighting against people! Some find it very hard to take in the idea — to understand how a benevolent Being could act in such a character. But the difficulty arises mainly from not distinguishing between the different dispensations. It was just as consistent with the character of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to fight against His enemies, as it is with the character of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ to forgive them. And inasmuch as it is the revealed character of God that furnishes the model on which His people are to be found — the standard by which they are to act, it was quite as consistent for Israel to cut their enemies in pieces, as it is for us to love them, pray for them, and do them good.

If this very simple principle were borne in mind, it would remove a quantity of misunderstanding, and save a vast amount of unintelligent discussion. No doubt it is thoroughly wrong for the church of God to go to war. No one can read the New Testament, with a mind free from bias, and not see this. We are positively commanded to love our enemies, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that spitefully use us. "Put up again thy sword into his place; for all they that take the

sword, shall perish with the sword." And again, in another gospel, "Then said Jesus to Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father has given me, shall I not drink it?" Again, our Lord says to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight" — it would be perfectly consistent for them so to do — ... "But now is my kingdom not from hence" — and therefore it would be wholly out of character utterly inconsistent, thoroughly wrong for them to fight.

Ah this is so plain that we need only say, "How readest thou?" Our blessed Lord did not fight; He meekly and patiently submitted to all manner of abuse and ill-treatment, and in so doing He left us an example that we should follow His steps. If we only honestly ask ourselves the question, "What would Jesus do?" it would close all discussion on this point as well as on a thousand other points besides. There is really no use in reasoning, no need of it. If the words and ways of our blessed Lord, and the distinct teaching of His Spirit, by His holy apostles, be not sufficient for our guidance, all discussion is utterly vain.

And, if we be asked, What does the Holy Ghost teach on this great practical point? Hear His precious clear and pointed

words. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves; but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay says the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12.)

These are the lovely ethics of the church of God: the principles of that heavenly kingdom to which all true Christians belong. Would they have suited Israel of old? Certainly not. Only conceive Joshua acting toward the Canaanites on the principles of Romans 12! It would have been as flagrant an inconsistency as for us to act on the principle of Deuteronomy 20. How is this? Simply because, in Joshua's day, God was executing judgement in righteousness; whereas, now, He is dealing in unqualified grace. This makes all the difference. The principle of divine action is the grand moral regulator for God's people in all ages. If this be seen, all difficulty is removed, all discussion definitively closed.

But then if any feel disposed to ask, "What about the world? How could it get on upon the principle of grace? Could it act on the doctrine of Romans 12:20?" Not for a moment. The idea

is simply absurd. To attempt to amalgamate the principles of grace with the law of nations, or to infuse the spirit of the New Testament into the framework of political economy would instantly plunge civilized society into hopeless confusion. And here is just where many most excellent and well-meaning people are astray. They want to press the nations of the world into the adoption of a principle which would be destructive of their national existence. The time is not come yet for nations to beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and learn war no more. That blessed time will come, thank God, when this groaning earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. But to seek to get nations, now, to act upon peace principles is simply to ask them to cease to be; in a word, it is thoroughly hopeless, unintelligent labour. It cannot be. We are not called upon to regulate the world, but to pass through it, as pilgrims and strangers. Jesus did not come to set the world right. He came to seek and to save that which was lost; and as to the world, He testified of it that its deeds were evil. He will, ere long, come to set things right. He will take to Himself His great power and reign. The kingdoms of this world shall, most assuredly, become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ. He will

gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity. All this is most blessedly true: but we must wait His time. It can be of no possible use for us, by our ignorant efforts, to seek to bring about a condition of things which all scripture goes to prove can only be introduced by the personal presence and rule of our beloved and adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

But we must proceed with our chapter.

Israel were called to fight the Lord's battles. The moment they put their foot upon the land of it was war to the knife with the doomed inhabitants. "Of the cities of these people which the Lord God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breathes." This was distinct and emphatic. The seed of Abraham were not only to possess the land of Canaan, but they were to be God's instruments in executing His just judgement upon the guilty inhabitants, whose sins had risen up to heaven, and become absolutely intolerable.

Does any one feel called upon to apologise for the divine actings towards the seven nations of Canaan. If so, let him be well assured of this that his labour is perfectly gratuitous, entirely

uncalled for. What folly for any poor worm of the earth to think of entering upon such work! And what folly, too, for any one to require an apology or an explanation. It was a high honour put upon Israel to exterminate those guilty nations — an honour of which they proved themselves utterly unworthy, inasmuch as they failed to do as they were commanded. They left alive many of those who ought to have been utterly destroyed; they spared them to be the wretched instruments of their own ultimate ruin, by leading them into the self-same sins which had so loudly called for divine judgement.

But let us look, for a moment, at the qualifications which were necessary for those who would fight the Lord's battles. We shall find the opening paragraph of our chapter full of most precious instruction for ourselves in the spiritual warfare which we are called to wage.

The reader will observe that the people, on approaching to the battle, were to be addressed, first, by the priest, and secondly, by the officers. This order is very beautiful. The priest came forward to unfold to the people their high privileges; the officers came to remind them of their holy responsibilities. Such is the divine order here. Privilege comes first, and then re-

sponsibility. "The priest shall approach, and speak to the people, and shall say to them, Hear O Israel; ye approach this day to battle against your enemies; let not your hearts faint, fear not and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; for the Lord your God is he that goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you".

What blessed words are these! How full of comfort and encouragement! How eminently calculated to banish all fear and depression, and to infuse courage and confidence into the most sinking fainting heart! The priest was the very expression of the grace of God; his ministry a stream of most precious consolation flowing from the loving heart of the God of Israel to each individual warrior. His loving words were designed and fitted to gird up the loins of the mind, and nerve the feeblest arm for fight. He assures them of the divine presence with them. There is no question, no condition, no "if," no "but." It is an unqualified statement. Jehovah Elohim was with them. This surely was enough. It mattered not, in the smallest degree how many, how powerful, or how formidable were their enemies; they would all prove to be as chaff before the whirlwind, in the presence of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel.

But then the officer had to be heard as well as the priest. "And the officers shall speak to the people, saying, What man is there that has built a new house, and has not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it. And what man is he that has planted a vineyard, and has not yet eaten of it? let him also go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it. And what man is there that has betrothed a wife, and has not taken her? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her. And the officers shall speak further to the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return to his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart. And it shall be that when the officers have made an end of speaking to the people, that they shall make captains of the armies to lead the people." (vers. 5-9.)

Thus we learn that there were two things absolutely essential to all who would fight the Lord's battles, namely, a heart thoroughly disentangled from the things of nature and of earth; and a bold unclouded confidence in God. "No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please

him who has chosen him to be a soldier." There is a very material difference between being engaged in the affairs of this life, and being entangled by them. A man might have had a house, a vineyard, and a wife, and yet have been fit for the battle. These things were not, in themselves, a hindrance; but it was having them under such conditions as rendered them an entanglement that unfitted a man for the conflict.

It is well to bear this in mind. We, as Christians, are called to carry on a constant spiritual warfare. We have to fight for every inch of heavenly ground. What the Canaanites were to Israel, the wicked spirits in the heavenlies are to us. We are not called to fight for eternal life; we have gotten that as God's free gift, before we begin. We are not called to fight for salvation; we are saved before we enter upon the conflict. It is most needful to know what it is that we have to fight for, and whom we are to fight with. The object for which we fight is make good, maintain, and carry out, practically, our heavenly position and character, in the midst of scenes and circumstances of ordinary human life, from day to day. And then as to our spiritual foes they are wicked spirits who, during this present time, are permitted to occupy the heavenlies. "We wrestle not against flesh and

blood" — as Israel had to do in Canaan — "but against principalities, against powers, against the world-rulers [kosmokratoras] of this darkness, against wicked spirits in the heavenlies."

Now, the question is, what do we want in carrying on such a conflict as this? Must we abandon our lawful earthly callings? Must we detach ourselves from those relationships founded on nature and sanctioned of God? Is it needful to become an ascetic, a mystic or a monk, in order to carry on the spiritual warfare to which we are called? By no means; indeed for a Christian to do any one of these things would, in itself, be a proof that he had completely mistaken his calling, or that he had, at the very outset, fallen in the battle. We are imperatively called upon to work with our hands the thing which is good, that we may have to give to him that needs. And not only so, but we have the ample guidance, in the pages of the New Testament as to how we are to carry ourselves in the varied natural relationships which God Himself has established, and to which He has affixed the seal of His approval. Hence it is perfectly plain that earthly callings and natural relationships are, in themselves no hindrance to our waging a successful spiritual warfare.

What then is needed by the Christian warrior? A heart thoroughly disentangled from things earthly and natural; and an unclouded confidence in God. But how are these things to be maintained? Hear the divine reply. "Wherefore take to you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day," — that is the whole time from the cross to the coming of Christ — "and, having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace! above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints." (Eph 6.)

Reader, mark the qualification of a Christian warrior as here set forth: by the Holy Ghost. It is not the question of a house, a vineyard or a wife, but of having the inward man governed by "truth;" the outward conduct characterised by real practical "righteousness;" the moral habits and ways marked by the sweet "peace" of the gospel; the whole man covered by the im-

penetrable shield of "faith;" the seat of the understanding guarded by the full assurance of "salvation;" and the heart continually sustained and strengthened by persevering prayer and supplication; and led forth in earnest intercession for all saints, and specially for the Lord's beloved workmen and their blessed work. This is the way in which the spiritual Israel of God are to be furnished for the warfare which they are called to wage with wicked spirits in the heavenlies. May the Lord, in His infinite goodness, make all these things very real in our souls' experience, and in our practical career, from day to day!

The close of our chapter contains the principles which were to govern Israel in their warfare. They were most carefully to discriminate between the cities which were very far off from them, and those that pertained to the seven judged nations. To the former they were, in the first place, to make overtures of peace. With the latter, on the contrary, they were to make no terms whatever. "When thou comest nigh to a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace to it" — a marvellous method of fighting! — "And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open to thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries to thee, and they shall serve

thee. And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it; and when the Lord thy God has delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof" — as expressing the positive energy of evil — "with the edge of the sword. But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof" — all that was capable of being turned to account, in the service of God, and of His people — "thou shalt take to thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the Lord thy God has given thee. Thus shalt thou do to all the cities which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations."

Indiscriminate slaughter and wholesale destruction formed no part of Israel's business. If any cities were disposed to accept the proffered terms of peace, they were to have the privilege of becoming tributaries to the people of God; and, in reference to those cities which would make no peace, all within their walls which could be made use of was to be reserved.

There are things in nature and things of earth which are capable of being used for God, they are sanctified by the word of God and prayer. We are told to make to ourselves friends of the

mammon of unrighteousness, that when we fail, they may receive us into everlasting habitations; which simply means that if this world's riches come into the Christian's hands, he should diligently and faithfully use them in the service of Christ; he should freely distribute them to the poor, and to all the Lord's needy workmen; in short, he should make them available, in every right and prudent way, for the furtherance of the Lord's work in every department. In this way, the very riches which else might crumble into dust in their hands, or prove to be as rust on their souls, shall produce precious fruit that shall serve to minister an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Many seem to find considerable difficulty in Luke 16:9; but its teaching is as clear and forcible as it is practically important. We find very similar instruction in 1 Timothy 6 "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."\* There is not a

fraction which we spend, directly and simply, for Christ which will not be before us by and-by. The thought of this, though it should not, by any means, be a motive spring, may well encourage us to devote all we have, and all we are, to the service of our blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

- \* It may interest the reader to know that the four leading authorities agree in reading *ontos* instead of *aioniou*, in 1 Timothy 6:19. Thus the passage would be, "That they may lay hold on life in earnest" or in reality. The only real life is to live for Christ; to live in the light of eternity; to use all we possess for the promotion of God's glory, and with an eye to the everlasting mansions. This, and only this, is life in earnest.

Such is the plain teaching of Luke 16 and 1 Timothy 6; let us see that we understand it. The expression, "That they may receive you into everlasting habitations" simply means that what is spent for Christ will be rewarded in the day that is coming. Even a cup of cold water given in His precious Name shall have its sure reward in His everlasting kingdom. Oh! to spend and be spent for Him!

But we must close this section by quoting the few last lines of our chapter, in which we have a very beautiful illustration of

the way in which our God looks after the smallest matters, and His gracious care that nothing should be lost or injured. "When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them; for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's life) to employ them in the siege; only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down; and thou shalt build bulwarks against the city that makes war with thee, until it be subdued." (Vers. 19, 20.)

"Let nothing be lost," is the Master's own word to us — a word which should ever be kept in remembrance. "Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused." We should carefully guard against all reckless waste of ought that can be made available for human use. Those who occupy the place of domestic servants should give their special attention to this matter. It is painful, at times, to witness the sinful waste of human food. Many a thing is flung out as offal which might supply a welcome meal for a needy family. If a Christian servant should read these lines, we would earnestly entreat him or her to weigh this subject in the divine presence, and never to practise

or sanction the waste of the smallest atom that is capable of being turned to account for human use. We may depend upon it that to waste any creature of God is displeasing in His sight. Let us remember that His eye is upon us; and may it be our earnest desire to be agreeable to Him in all our ways.

## **Chapter 21.**

"If one be found slain in the land which the Lord thy God gives thee to possess it, lying in the field, and it be not known who has slain him; then thy elders and thy judges" — the guardians of the claims of truth and righteousness — " shall come forth, and they shall measure to the cities that are round about him that is slain; and it shall be, that the city which is next to the slain man, even the elders of that city shall take an heifer, which has not been wrought with, and which has not drawn in the yoke; and the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer to a rough valley which is neither eared nor sown and shall strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley. And the priests the sons of Levi — exponents of grace and mercy — "shall come near; for them the Lord thy God has chosen to minister to him, and to bless in the name of the Lord, and by their word

shall every controversy and every stroke be tried" — blessed, comforting fact! — "And all the elders of that city, that are next to the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley; and they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. Be merciful, O Lord, to thy people Israel whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood to thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them. So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the Lord." (Vers. 1-9.)

A very interesting and suggestive passage of holy scripture now lies open before us, and claims our attention. A sin is committed, a man is found slain in the land; but no one knows ought about it, no one can tell whether it is murder or manslaughter, or who committed the deed. It lies entirely beyond the range of human knowledge. And yet, there it is, an undeniable fact. Sin has been committed, and it lies as a stain on the Lord's land, and man is wholly incompetent to deal with it.

What then is to be done? The glory of God and the purity of His land must be maintained. He knows all about it, and He

alone can deal with it; and truly His mode of dealing with it is full of most precious teaching.

First of all, the elders and judges appear on the scene. The claims of truth and righteousness must be duly attended to; justice and judgement must be perfectly maintained. This is a great cardinal truth running all through the word of God. Sin must be judged, ere sins can be forgiven, or the sinner justified. Ere mercy's heavenly voice can be heard, justice must be perfectly satisfied, the throne of God vindicated, and His Name glorified. Grace must reign through righteousness. Blessed be God that it is so! What a glorious truth for all who have taken their true place as sinners! God has been glorified as to the question of sin, and therefore He can, in perfect righteousness, pardon and justify the sinner.

But we must confine ourselves simply to the interpretation of the passage before us; and, in so doing, we shall find in it a very wonderful onlook into Israel's future. True, the great foundation truth of atonement is presented; but it is with special reference to Israel. The death of Christ is here seen in its two grand aspects, namely, as the expression of Man's guilt, and the display of God's grace, the former we have in the man

found slain in the field; the latter in the heifer slain in the rough valley. The elders and the judges find out the city nearest to the slain man; and nothing can avail for that city save the blood of a spotless victim — the blood of the One who was slain at the guilty city of Jerusalem.

The reader will note, with much interest, that the moment the claims of justice were met by the death of the victim, a new element is introduced into the scene. "The priests the sons of Levi shall come near." This is grace acting on the blessed ground of righteousness. The priests are the channels of grace, as the judges are the guardians of righteousness. How perfect, how beautiful is scripture, in every page, every paragraph, every sentence! It was not until the blood was shed that the ministers of grace could present themselves. The heifer beheaded in the valley changed the aspect of things completely. "The priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the Lord thy God has chosen to minister to him, and to bless in the name of the Lord; and by their word" — blessed fact for Israel! blessed fact for every true believer! — "shall every controversy and every stroke be tried." All is to be settled on the glorious and eternal principle of grace reigning through righteousness.

Thus it is that God will deal with Israel by-and-by. We must not attempt to interfere with the primary application of all those striking institutions which come under our notice in this profound and marvellous book of Deuteronomy. No doubt, there are lessons for us — precious lessons; but we may rest perfectly assured that the true way in which to understand and appreciate those lessons is to see their true and proper bearing. For instance, how precious, how full of consolation, the fact that it is by the word of the minister of grace that every controversy and every stroke is to be tried, for repentant Israel by-and-by, and for every repentant soul now! Do we lose ought of the deep blessedness of this by seeing and owning the proper application of the scripture? Assuredly not; so far from this, the true secret of profiting by any special passage of the word of God is to understand its true scope and bearing.

"And all the elders of that city that are next to the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley."\* "I will wash my hands in innocency; and so will I compass thine altar." The true place to wash the hands is where the blood of atonement has for ever expiated our guilt. "And they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood,

neither have our eyes seen it. Be merciful, O Lord, to thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood to thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them."

\* How full of suggestive power is the figure of "the rough valley!" How aptly it sets forth what this world at large, and the land of Israel in particular, was to our blessed Lord and Saviour! Truly it was a rough place to Him, a place of humiliation, a dry and thirsty land, a place that had never been eared or sown. But, all homage to His Name! by His death in this rough valley, He has procured for this earth and for the land of Israel a rich harvest of blessing which shall be reaped throughout the millennial age to the full praise of redeeming love. And even now, He from the throne of heaven's majesty, and we, in spirit with Him, can look back to that rough valley as the place where the blessed work was done which forms the imperishable foundation of God's glory, the church's blessing, Israel's full restoration, the joy of countless nations, and the glorious deliverance of this groaning creation.

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." "Unto you, first, God having raised up his Son Jesus sent him to bless you, by turning away every one of you from his iniquities." Thus all Israel shall be saved and blessed by-and-by, according

to the eternal counsels of God, and in pursuance of His promise and oath to Abraham, ratified and eternally established by the precious blood of Christ, to whom be all homage and praise, world without end!

Verses 10-17 bear, in a very special way, upon Israel's relationship to Jehovah. We shall not dwell upon it here. The reader will find numerous references to this subject, throughout the pages of the prophets, in which the Holy Ghost makes the most touching appeals to the conscience of the nation — appeals grounded on the marvellous fact of the relationship into which He had brought them to Himself, but in which they had so signally and grievously failed. Israel has proved an unfaithful wife, and, in consequence thereof, has been set aside. But the time will come when this long rejected but never forgotten people shall not only be reinstated but brought into a condition of blessedness, privilege and glory beyond anything ever known in the past.

This must never, for a moment, be lost sight of or interfered with. It runs like a brilliant golden line through the prophetic scriptures from Isaiah to Malachi; and the lovely theme is resumed and carried on in the New Testament. Take the follow-

ing glowing passage, which is only one of a hundred. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burns. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hephzibah [My delight is in her], and thy land Beulah [married]; for the Lord delights in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee: and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee. I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night; ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth. The Lord has sworn by his right hand, and by the arm of his strength" — let men beware how they meddle with this! — "Surely I will no more give thy corn to be meat for thine enemies; and the sons of the stranger shall not drink thy wine, for

the which thou hast laboured; but they that have gathered it shall eat it, and praise the Lord; and they that have brought it together shall drink it in the court of my holiness ... Behold, the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the world, Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord; and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken." (Isa. 62.)

To attempt to alienate this sublime and glorious passage from its proper object, and apply it to the Christian church, either on earth or in heaven, is to do positive violence to the word of God, and introduce a system of interpretation utterly destructive of the integrity of holy scripture. The passage which we have just transcribed with intense spiritual delight, applies only to the literal Zion, the literal Jerusalem, the literal land of Israel. Let the reader see that he thoroughly seizes and faithfully holds fast this fact.

As to the church, her position on earth is that of an espoused virgin, not of a married wife. Her marriage will take place in heaven. (Rev. 19:7-8.) To apply to her such passages as the above is to falsify her position entirely, and deny the plainest

statements of scripture as to her calling, her portion, and her hope, which are purely heavenly.

Verses 18-21 of our chapter record the case of "a stubborn and rebellious son." Here again we have Israel viewed from another standpoint. It is the apostate generation for which there is no forgiveness. "If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken to them; then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out to the elders of his city, and to the gate of his place; and they shall say to the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die; so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear and fear."

The reader may, with much interest, contrast the solemn action of law and government, in the case of the rebellious son, with the lovely and familiar parable of the prodigal son, in Luke 15. Our space does not admit of our dwelling upon it here, much as we should delight to do so. It is marvellous to think that it is the same God who speaks and acts in Deuteronomy 21 and in

Luke 15. But oh! how different the action! how different the style! Under the law, the father is called upon to lay hold of his son, and bring him forth to be stoned. Under grace, the father runs to meet the returning son; falls on his neck and kisses him; clothes him in the best robe, puts a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; has the fatted calf killed for him; seats him at the table with himself, and makes the house ring with the joy that fills his own heart at getting back the poor wandering spend-thrift.

Striking contrast! In Deuteronomy we see the hand of God, in righteous government, executing judgement upon the rebellious. In Luke 15 we see the heart of God pouring itself out, in soul-subduing tenderness, upon the poor repentant one, giving him the sweet assurance that it is His own deep joy to get back His lost one. The persistent rebel meets the stone of judgement; the returning penitent meets the kiss of love.

But we must close this section by calling the reader's attention to the last verse of our chapter. It is referred to in a very remarkable way by the inspired apostle, in Galatians 3. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse

for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree."

This reference is full of interest and value, not only because it presents to us the precious grace of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, in making Himself a curse for us, in order that the blessing of Abraham might come on us poor sinners of the Gentiles; but also because it furnishes a very striking illustration of the way in which the Holy Spirit puts His seal upon the writings of Moses, in general, and upon Deuteronomy in particular. All scripture hangs together so perfectly that if one part be touched you mar the integrity of the whole. The same Spirit breathes in the writings of Moses, in the pages of the prophets, in the four evangelists, in the Acts, in the apostolic epistles general and particular, and in that most profound and precious section which closes the divine Volume. We deem it our sacred duty (as it is, most assuredly, our high privilege) to press this weighty fact upon all with whom we come in contact; and we would, very earnestly, entreat the reader to give it his earnest attention, to hold it fast and bear a steady testimony to it, in this day of carnal laxity, cold indifference and positive hostility.

## **Chapters 22-25.**

The portion of our book on which we now enter, though not calling for elaborate exposition, yet teaches us two very important practical lessons. In the first place, many of the institutions and ordinances here set forth prove and illustrate, in a most striking way, the terrible depravity of the human heart. They show us, with unmistakable distinctness, what man is capable of doing, if left to himself. We must ever remember, as we read some of the paragraphs of this section of Deuteronomy, that God the Holy Ghost has indicted them. We, in our fancied wisdom, may feel disposed to ask why such passages were ever penned? Can it be possible that they are actually inspired by the Holy Ghost? and of what possible value can they be to us? If they were written for our learning, then what are we to learn from them?

Our reply to all these questions is, at once, simple and direct; and it is this, the very passages which we might least expect to find and on the page of inspiration teach us, in their own peculiar way, the moral material of which we are made, and the moral depths into which we are capable of plunging. And is not this of great moment? Is it not well to have a faithful mirror

held up before our eyes in which we may see every moral trait, feature and lineament perfectly reflected? Unquestionably. We hear a great deal about the dignity of human nature, and very many find it exceedingly hard to admit that they are really capable of committing some of the sins prohibited in the section before us, and in other portions of the divine Volume. But we may rest assured that when God commands us not to commit this or that particular sin, we are verily capable of committing it. This is beyond all question. Divine wisdom would never erect a dam if there was not a current to be resisted. There would be no necessity to tell an angel not to steal; but man has theft in his nature, and hence the command applies to him. And just so in reference to every other prohibited thing; the prohibition proves the tendency — proves it beyond all question. We must either admit this or imply the positive blasphemy that God has spoken in vain.

But then it may be said; and is said by many, that while some very terrible samples of fallen humanity are capable of committing some of the abominable sins prohibited in scripture, yet all are not so. This is a most thorough mistake. Hear what the Holy Ghost says, in the seventeenth chapter of the prophet

Jeremiah. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked." Whose heart is he speaking of? Is it the heart of some atrocious criminal, or of some untutored savage? Nay; it is the human heart, the heart of the writer and of the reader of these lines.

Hear also what our Lord Jesus Christ says on this subject. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." Out of what heart? Is it the heart of some hideously depraved and abominable wretch wholly unfit to appear in decent society? Nay; it is out of the human heart the heart of the writer and of the reader of these lines.

Let us never forget this; it is a wholesome truth for every one of us. We all need to bear in mind that if God were to withdraw His sustaining grace, for one moment, there is no depth of iniquity into which we are not capable of plunging; indeed, we may add — and we do it with deep thankfulness it is His own gracious hand that preserves us, each moment, from becoming a complete wreck, in every way, physically, mentally, morally, spiritually, and in our circumstances. May we keep this ever in the remembrance of the thoughts of our hearts, so that we may

walk humbly and watchfully, and lean upon that arm which alone can sustain and preserve us!

But, we have said, there is another valuable lesson furnished by this section of our book which now lies open before us. It teaches us, in a manner peculiar to itself, the marvellous way in which God provided for everything connected with His people. Nothing escaped His gracious notice; nothing was too trivial for His tender care. No mother could be more careful of the habits and manners of her little child than the Almighty Creator and moral Governor of the universe was of the most minute details connected with the daily history of His people. By day and by night, waking and sleeping at home and abroad, He looked after them. Their clothing, their food, their manners and ways toward one another, how they were to build their houses, how they were to plough and sow their ground, how they were to carry themselves in the deepest privacy of their personal life — all was attended to and provided for in a manner that fills us with wonder, love and praise. We may here see, in a most striking way, that there is nothing too small for our God to take notice of when His people are concerned. He takes a loving, tender, fatherly interest in their most minute concerns. We are

amazed to find the Most High God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, the Sustainer of the vast universe, condescending to legislate about the matter of a bird's nest; and yet why should we be amazed when we know that it is just the same to Him to provide for a sparrow as to feed a thousand millions of people daily?

But there was one grand fact which was ever to be kept prominently before each member of the congregation of Israel, namely, the divine presence in their midst. This fact was to govern their most private habits, and give character to all their ways. "The Lord thy God walks in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy; that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee." (Deut. 23:14.)

What a precious privilege to have Jehovah walking in their midst! What a motive for purity of conduct, and refined delicacy in their persons and domestic habits! If He was in their midst to secure victory over their enemies, He was also there to demand holiness of life. They were never, for one moment, to forget the august Person who walked up and down in their midst. Would the thought of this be irksome to any? Only to

such as did not love holiness, purity and moral order. Every true Israelite would delight in the thought of having One dwelling in their midst who could not endure ought that was unholy, unseemly or impure.

The Christian reader will be at no loss to seize the moral force and application of this holy principle. It is our privilege to have God the Spirit dwelling in us, individually and collectively. Thus we read, in 1 Corinthians 6:19, "What! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" This is individual. Each believer is a temple of the Holy Ghost, and this most glorious and precious truth is the ground of the exhortation given in Ephesians 4:30, "Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption."

How very important to keep this ever in the remembrance of the thoughts of our hearts! What a mighty moral motive for the diligent cultivation of purity of heart, and holiness of life! When tempted to indulge in any wrong current of thought or feeling, any unworthy manner of speech, any unseemly line of conduct, what a powerful corrective would be found in the realisation of the blessed fact that the Holy Spirit dwells in our

body as in His temple! If only we could keep this ever before us it would preserve us from many a wandering thought, many an unguarded and foolish utterance, many an unbecoming act.

But, not only does the Holy Spirit dwell in each individual believer, He also dwells in the church collectively. "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?" (1 Cor. 3:16.) It is upon this fact that the apostle grounds his exhortation in 1 Thess 5:19 "Quench not the Spirit." How divinely perfect is scripture! How blessedly it hangs together! The Holy Ghost dwells in us individually; hence we are not to grieve Him. He dwells in the assembly, hence we are not to quench Him, but give Him His right place, and allow full scope for His blessed operations. May these great practical truths find a deep place in our hearts, and exerts more powerful influence over our ways both in private life and in the public assembly!

We shall now proceed to quote a few passages from the section of our book which now lies open before us strikingly illustrative of the wisdom, goodness, tenderness, holiness and righteousness which marked all the dealings of God with His people of old. Take, for example, the very opening paragraph. "Thou

shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them; thou shalt in any case bring them again to thy brother. And if thy brother be not nigh to thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it to thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again. In like manner shalt thou do with his ass; and so shalt thou do with his raiment; and with all lost thing of thy brother's, which he has lost, and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise; thou mayest not hide thyself. Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them; thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again" (Deut. 22:1-4.)

Here the two lessons of which we have spoken are, very distinctly, presented. What a deeply humbling picture of the human heart have we in that one sentence, "Thou mayest not hide thyself!" We are capable of the base and detestable selfishness of hiding ourselves from our brother's claims upon our sympathy and succour — of shirking the holy duty of looking after his interests — of pretending not to see his real need of our aid. Such is man! Such is the writer!

But oh! how blessedly the character of our God shines out in this passage! The brother's ox, or his sheep, or his ass was not — to use a modern phrase — to be thrust into pound, for trespass; it was to be brought home, cared for, and restored, safe and sound, to the owner without charge for damage. And so with the raiment. How lovely is all this! How it breathes upon us the very air of the divine presence, the fragrant atmosphere of divine goodness, tenderness and thoughtful love! What a high and holy privilege for any people to have their conduct governed and their character formed by such exquisite statutes and judgements!

Again, take the following passage so beautifully illustrative of divine thoughtfulness: "When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence." The Lord would have His people thoughtful and considerate of others; and hence, in building their houses, they were not merely to think of themselves, and their convenience, but also of others and their safety.

Cannot Christians learn something from this? How prone we are to think only of ourselves, our own interests, our own com-

fort and convenience! How rarely it happens that, in the building or furnishing of our houses, we bestow a thought upon other people! We build and furnish for ourselves; alas! self is too much our object and motive spring in all our undertakings; nor can it be otherwise unless the heart be kept under the governing power of those motives and objects which belong to Christianity. We must live in the pure and heavenly atmosphere of the new creation, in order to get above and beyond the base selfishness which characterizes fallen humanity. Every unconverted man woman and child on the face of the earth is governed simply by self, in some shape or another. Self is the centre, the object, the motive-spring of every action.

True, some are more amiable, more affectionate, more benevolent, more unselfish, more disinterested, more agreeable than others; but it is utterly impossible that "the natural man" can be governed by spiritual motives, or an earthly man be animated by heavenly objects. Alas! We have to confess, with shame and sorrow, that we who profess to be heavenly and spiritual are so prone to live for ourselves, to seek our own things, to maintain our own interests, to consult our own ease and convenience.

We are all alive and on the alert when self, in any shape or form, is concerned.

All this is most sad and deeply humbling. It really ought not to be, and it would not be if we were looking more simply and earnestly to Christ as our great Exemplar and model in all things. Earnest and constant occupation of heart with Christ is the true secret of all practical Christianity. It is not rules and regulations that will ever make us Christ-like in our spirit, manner and ways. We must drink into His spirit, walk in His footsteps, dwell more profoundly upon His moral glories, and then we shall, of blessed necessity, be conformed to His image. "We all with open face beholding as in a glass [or mirror katoptrizomenoi] the glory, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3.)

We must now ask the reader to turn, for a moment, to the following very important practical instructions — full of suggestive power for all Christian workers. "Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds, lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard be defiled." (Deut. 22:9.)

What a weighty principle is here! Do we really understand it? Do we see its true spiritual application? It is to be feared there is a terrible amount of "mingled seed" used in the so-called spiritual husbandry of the present day. How much of "philosophy and vain deceit," how much of "science falsely so called," how much of "the rudiments of the world" do we find mixed up in the teaching and preaching throughout the length and breadth of the professing church! How little of the pure, unadulterated seed of the word of God, the "incorruptible seed" of the precious gospel of Christ, is scattered broadcast over the field of Christendom, in this our day! How few, comparatively, are content to confine themselves within the covers of the Bible for the material of their ministry! Those who are, by the grace of God faithful enough to do so, are looked upon as men of one idea, men of the old school, narrow and behind the times.

Well, we can only say, with a full and glowing heart, God bless the men of one idea, men of the precious old school of apostolic preaching! Most heartily do we congratulate them on their blessed narrowness, and their being behind these dark and infidel times. We are fully aware of what we expose ourselves to in thus writing; but this does not move us. We are persuaded

that every true servant of Christ must be a man of one idea, and that idea is Christ; he must belong to the very oldest school, the school of Christ; he must be as narrow as the truth of God; and he must, with stern decision, refuse to move one hair's breadth in the direction of this infidel age. We cannot shake off the conviction that the effort on the part of the preachers and teachers of Christendom to keep abreast of the literature of the day must, to a very large extent, account for the rapid advance of rationalism and infidelity. They have got away from the holy scriptures, and sought to adorn their ministry by the resources of philosophy, science and literature. They have catered more for the intellect than for the heart and conscience. The pure and precious doctrines of holy scripture, the sincere milk of the word, the gospel of the grace of God and of the glory of Christ, were found insufficient to attract and keep together large congregations. As Israel of old despised the manna, got tired of it, and pronounced it light food, so the professing church grew weary of the pure doctrines of that glorious Christianity unfolded in the pages of the New Testament, and sighed for something to gratify the intellect, and feed the imagination. The doctrines of the cross, in which the blessed apostle gloried, have lost their charm for the professing church, and any who would

be faithful enough to adhere and confine themselves in their ministry to those doctrines might abandon all thought of popularity.

But let all the true and faithful ministers of Christ, all true workers in His vineyard apply their hearts to the spiritual principle set forth in Deuteronomy 22:9; let them, with unflinching decision, refuse to make use of "divers seeds" in their spiritual husbandry; let them confine themselves in their ministry to "the form of sound words," and ever seek "rightly to divide the word of truth," that so: they may not be ashamed of their work, but receive a full reward in that day when every man's work shall be tried of what sort it is. We may depend upon it, the word of God — the pure seed — is the only proper material for the spiritual workman to use. We do not despise learning; far from it, we consider it most valuable in its right place. The facts of science, too, and the resources of sound philosophy may all be turned to profitable account in unfolding and illustrating the truth of holy scripture. We find the blessed Master Himself and His inspired apostles making use of the facts of history and of nature in their public teaching; and who in his sober senses, would think of calling in question the value and

importance of a competent knowledge of the original languages of Hebrew and Greek, in the private study and public exposition of the word of God?

But admitting all this, as we most fully do, it leaves wholly untouched the great practical principle before us — a principle to which all the Lord's people and His servants are bound to adhere, namely, that the Holy Ghost is the only power, and holy scripture the only material for all true ministry in the gospel and the church of God. If this were more fully understood and faithfully acted upon, we should witness a very different condition of things throughout the length and breadth of the vineyard of Christ.

Here, however, we must close this section. We have elsewhere sought to handle the subject of "The Unequal Yoke," and shall not therefore dwell upon it here.\* The Israelite was not to plow with an ox and an ass together; neither was he to wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen. The spiritual application of both these things is as simple as it is important. The Christian is not to link himself with an unbeliever, for any object whatsoever, be it domestic, religious, philanthropic, or commercial, neither must he allow himself to be governed by

mixed principles. His character must be formed and his conduct ruled by the pure and lofty principles of the word of God. Thus may it be with all who profess and call themselves Christians.

\* See a pamphlet entitled, "The Unequal Yoke."

## **Chapter 26.**

"And it shall be, when thou shalt come in to the land which the Lord thy God gives thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein; that thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the Lord thy God gives thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go to the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name there" — not to a place of their own or others' choosing — "And thou shalt go to the priest that shall be in those days, and say to him, I profess this day to the Lord thy God, that I am come to the country which the Lord sware to our fathers for to give us. And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand and set it down before the altar of the Lord thy God." (Vers. 1-4.)

The chapter on which we now enter contains the lovely ordinance of the basket of firstfruits in which we shall find some principles of the deepest interest, and practical importance. It was when the hand of Jehovah had conducted His people into the land of promise, that the fruits of that land could be presented. It was, obviously, necessary to be in Canaan, ere Canaan's fruits could be offered in worship. The worshipper was able to say, "I profess this day to the Lord thy God, that I am come to the country which the Lord sware to our fathers for to give us."

Here lay the root of the matter. "I am come." He does not say, "I am coming, hoping to come, or longing to come." No; but, "I am come." Thus it must ever be. We must know ourselves saved, ere we can offer the fruits of a known salvation. We may be most sincere in our desires after salvation, most earnest in our efforts to obtain it. But then we cannot but see that efforts to be saved, and the fruits of a known and enjoyed salvation are wholly different. The Israelite did not offer the basket of firstfruits in order to get into the land, but because he was actually in it. "I profess this day, that I am come." "There is no mistake about it, no question, no doubt, not even a hope. I am actually in the land, and here is the fruit of it."

"And thou shalt speak, and say before the Lord thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father; and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. And when we cried to the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression. And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs and with wonders; and he has brought us into this place, and has given us this land, even a land that flows with milk and honey. And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O Lord, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God. And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God has given to thee, and to thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you."

This is a very beautiful illustration of worship. "A Syrian ready to perish." Such was the origin. There is nothing to boast of, so far as nature is concerned. And as to the condition in which

grace had found them; what of it? Hard bondage in the land of Egypt. Toiling amid the brick kilns, beneath the cruel lash of Pharaoh's taskmasters. But then, "We cried to Jehovah." Here was their sure and blessed resource. It was all they could do; but it was enough. That cry of helplessness went directly up to the throne and to the heart of God, and brought Him down into the very midst of the brick kilns of Egypt. Hear Jehovah's gracious words to Moses, "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry, by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good land, and a large, to a land flowing with milk and honey ... Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel is come to me; and I have also seen the oppression wherewith the Egyptians oppress them." (Ex. 3:7-9.)

Such was the immediate response of Jehovah to the cry of His people. "I am come down to deliver them." Yes; blessed be His Name, He came down, in the exercise of His own free and sovereign grace, to deliver His people; and no power of men or devils, earth or hell, could hold them for one moment beyond

the appointed time. Hence, in our chapter, we have the grand result as set forth in the language of the worshipper, and in the contents of his basket. "I am come to the country which the Lord sware to our fathers for to give us ... And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land which thou, O Lord, hast given me." The Lord had accomplished all, according to the love of His heart, and the faithfulness of His word. Not one jot or tittle had failed. "I am come." And "I have brought the fruit." The fruit of what? Of Egypt? Nay; but "of the land which thou, O Lord, hast given me." The worshipper's lips proclaimed the completeness of Jehovah's work. The worshipper's basket contained the fruit of Jehovah's land. Nothing could be simpler, nothing more real. There was no room for a doubt, no ground for a question. He had simply to declare Jehovah's work and show the fruit. It was all of God from first to last. He had brought them out of Egypt, and He had brought them into Canaan. He had filled their baskets with the mellow fruits of His land, and their hearts with His praise.

And now, beloved reader, let us just ask you, do you think it was presumption on the part of the Israelite to speak as he did? Was it right, was it modest, was it humble of him to say "I am

come"? Would it have been more becoming in him merely to give expression to the faint hope that, at some future period, he might come? Would doubt and hesitation, as to his position and his portion, have been more honouring and gratifying to the God of Israel? What say you? It may be that, anticipating our argument, you are ready to say, "There is no analogy." Why not? If an Israelite could say, "I am come to the country which the Lord sware to our fathers for to give us," why cannot the believer now say, "I am come to Jesus"? True, in the one case, it was sight; in the other, it is faith. But is the latter less real than the former? Does not the inspired apostle say to the Hebrews, "Ye are come to mount Zion"? And again, "We receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God with reverence and godly fear." If we are in doubt as to whether we have "come" or not, and as to whether we have "received the kingdom" or not, it is impossible to worship in truth, or serve with acceptance. It is when we are in intelligent and peaceful possession of the place and portion in Christ, that true worship can ascend to the throne above, and effective service be rendered in the vineyard below.

For what, let us ask, is true worship? It is simply telling out, in the presence of God, what He is, and what He has done. It is the heart occupied with, and delighting in God and in all His marvellous actings and ways. Now, if we have no knowledge of God, and no faith in what He has done, how can we worship Him? "He that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." But, then, to know God is life eternal. I cannot worship God if I do not know Him; and I cannot know Him without having eternal life. The Athenians had erected an altar "to the unknown God," and Paul told them that they were worshipping in ignorance, and proceeded to declare to them the true God as revealed in the Person and work of the Man Christ Jesus.

It is deeply important to be clear as to this. I must know God ere I can worship Him. I may "feel after him, if haply I may find him;" but feeling after One whom I have not found, and worshipping and delighting in One whom I have found, are two totally different things. God has revealed Himself, blessed be His Name! He has given us the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. He has come near to us in the Person of that blessed One, so that we may know Him, love

Him, trust in Him, delight in Him, and use Him, in all our weakness and in all our need. We have no longer to grope for Him amid the darkness of nature, nor yet among the clouds and mists of spurious religion, in its ten thousand forms. No; our God has made Himself known by a revelation so plain that the wayfaring man, though a fool in all beside, may not err therein. The Christian can say, "I know whom I have believed." This is the basis of all true worship. There may be a vast amount of fleshly pietism, mechanical religion, and ceremonial routine, without a single atom of true spiritual worship. This latter can only flow from the knowledge of God.

But our object is not to write a treatise on worship, but simply to unfold to our readers the instructive and beautiful ordinance of the basket of firstfruits. And having shown that worship was the first thing with an Israelite who found himself in possession of the land — and, further, that we, now, must know our place and privilege in Christ before we can truthfully and intelligently worship the Father — we shall proceed to point out another very important practical result illustrated in our chapter, namely, active benevolence.

"When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; then thou shalt say before the Lord thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them to the Levite, and to the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments, which thou hast commanded me; I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them." (Vers. 12, 13.)

Nothing can be more beautiful than the moral order of these things. It is precisely similar to what we have in Hebrews 13. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." Here is the worship. "But to do good and communicate, forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." Here is the active benevolence. Putting both together, we have what we may call the upper and the nether side of the Christian's character — praising God and doing good to men. Precious characteristics! May we exhibit them more faithfully! One thing is certain, they will always go together. Show us a man

whose heart is full of praise to God, and we will show you one whose heart is open to every form of human need. He may not be rich in this world's goods. He may be obliged to say, like one of old who was not ashamed to say it, "Silver and gold have I none;" but he will have the tear of sympathy, the kindly look, the soothing word, and these things tell far more powerfully upon a sensitive heart than the opening of the purse-strings, and the jingling of silver and gold. Our adorable Lord and Master, our Great Exemplar, "went about doing good;" but we never read of His giving money to any one; indeed, we are warranted in believing that the Blessed One never possessed a penny. When He wanted to answer the Herodians on the subject of paying tribute to Caesar, He had to ask them to show Him a penny; and when asked to pay tribute, He sent Peter to the sea to get it. He never carried money; and, most assuredly, money is not named in the category of gifts bestowed by Him upon His servants. Still He went about doing good, and we are to do the same, in our little measure; it is, at once, our high privilege and our bounden duty to do so.

And let the reader mark the divine order laid down in Hebrews 13 and illustrated in Deuteronomy 26. Worship gets the first,

the highest place. Let us never forget this. We, in our wisdom or our sentimentality, might imagine that doing good to men, usefulness, philanthropy is the highest thing. But it is not so. "Whoso offers praise glorifies me." God inhabits the praises of His people. He delights to surround Himself with hearts filled to overflowing with a sense of His goodness, His greatness and His glory. Hence, we are to offer the sacrifice of praise to God "continually." So also the Psalmist says, "I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth." It is not merely now and then, or when all is bright and cheery around us, when everything goes on smoothly and prosperously; no, but "at all times" — "continually." The stream of thanksgiving is to flow uninterruptedly. There is no interval for murmuring or complaining, fretfulness or dissatisfaction, gloom or despondency. Praise and thanksgiving are to be our continual occupation. We are ever to cultivate the spirit of worship. Every breath, as it were, ought to be a hallelujah. Thus it shall be, by-and-by. Praise will be our happy and holy service while eternity rolls along its course of golden ages. When we shall have no further call to "communicate," no demand on our resources or our sympathies, when we shall have bid an eternal adieu to this scene of sorrow and need, death and desolation,

then shall we praise our God, for evermore, without let or interruption, in the sanctuary of His own blessed presence above.

"But to do good and to communicate, forget not." There is singular interest attaching to the mode in which this is put. He does not say, "But to offer the sacrifice of praise, forget not." No; but lest, in the full and happy enjoyment of our own place and portion in Christ, we should "forget" that we are passing through a scene of want and misery, trial and pressure, the apostle adds the salutary and much needed admonition as to doing good and communicating. The spiritual Israelite is not only to rejoice in every good thing which the Lord his God has bestowed upon him, but he is also to remember the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow — that is, the one who has no earthly portion and is thoroughly devoted to the Lord's work; and the one who has no home, the one who has no natural protector, and the one who has no earthly stay. It must ever be thus. The rich tide of grace rolls down from the bosom of God, fills our hearts to overflowing, and, in its overflow, refreshes and gladdens our whole sphere of action. If we were only living in the enjoyment of what is ours in God, our every movement, our every act, our every word, yea, our every look

would do good. The Christian, according to the divine idea, is one who stands, with one hand lifted up to God, in the presentation of the sacrifice of praise, and the other hand filled with the fragrant fruits of genuine benevolence to meet every form of human need.

O beloved reader, let us deeply ponder these things. Let us really apply our whole hearts to the earnest consideration of them. Let us seek a fuller realisation and a truer expression of these two great branches of practical Christianity, and not be satisfied with anything less.

We shall now briefly glance at the third point in the precious chapter before us. We shall do little more than quote the passage for the reader. The Israelite, having presented his basket, and distributed his tithes, was further instructed to say, "I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away ought thereof for any unclean use, nor given ought thereof for the dead; but I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord my God, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me. Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest to our fathers, a land that flows with milk and

honey. This day the Lord thy God has commanded thee to do these statutes and judgements; thou shalt therefore keep and do them, with all thine heart and with all thy soul. Thou hast avouched the Lord this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgements, and to hearken to his voice. And the Lord has avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people" — that is a people of His own special possession — "as he has promised thee, and that thou shouldst keep all his commandments; and to make thee high above all nations which he has made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people to the Lord thy God, as he has spoken." (Vers. 14-19.)

Here we have personal holiness, practical sanctification, entire separation from everything inconsistent with the holy place and relationship into which they had been introduced, in the sovereign grace and mercy of God. There must be no mourning, no uncleanness, no dead works. We have no room, no time for any such things as these; they do not belong to that blessed sphere in which we are privileged to live and move and have our being. We have just three things to do; we look up to God, and of-

fer the sacrifice of praise. We look around at a needy world, and do good. We look in upon the circle of our own being — our inner life, and seek, by grace, to keep ourselves unspotted. "Pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world." (James. 1:27)

Thus, whether we hearken to Moses, in Deuteronomy 26, or to Paul in Hebrews 13, or to James in his most wholesome, needed, practical epistle, it is the same Spirit that speaks to us, and the same grand lessons that are impressed upon us — lessons of unspeakable value and moral importance — lessons loudly called for, in this day of easygoing profession, in the which the doctrines of grace are taken up and held in a merely intellectual way, and connected with all sorts of worldliness and self-indulgence.

Truly there is an urgent need of a more powerful, practical ministry amongst us. There is a deplorable lack of the prophetic and pastoral element in our ministrations. By the prophetic element we mean that character of ministry that deals with the conscience and brings it into the immediate presence of God. This is greatly needed. There is a good deal of ministry which

addresses itself to the intelligence; but sadly too little for the heart and the conscience. The teacher speaks to the understanding; the prophet speaks to the conscience;\* the pastor speaks to the heart. We speak, of course, generally. It may so happen that the three elements are found in the ministry of one man; but they are distinct; and we cannot but feel that where the prophetic and pastoral gifts are lacking in any assembly the teachers should very earnestly wait upon the Lord for spiritual power to deal with the hearts and consciences of His beloved people. Blessed be His Name, He has all needed gift, grace and power for His servants. All we need is to wait on Him, in real earnestness and sincerity of heart, and He will, most assuredly, supply us with all suited grace and moral fitness for whatever service we may be called to render in His church.

\* Very many seem to entertain the idea that a prophet is one who foretells future events; but it would be a mistake thus to confine the term. 1 Cor 14:28-32 lets us into the meaning of the words "prophet" and "prophesying." The teacher and the prophet are closely and beautifully connected. The teacher unfolds truth from the word of God; the prophet applies it to the conscience; and, we may add, the pastor sees how the ministry of both the one and the other is acting on the heart and in the life.

Oh! that all the Lord's servants may be stirred up to a more deep-toned earnestness, in every department of His blessed work! May we be "instant in season, out of season," and in no wise discouraged by the condition of things around us, but rather find, in the very condition, an urgent reason for more intense devotedness.

## **Chapter 27.**

"And Moses with the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, Keep all the commandments which I command you this day. And it shall be on the day when ye shall pass over Jordan to the land which the Lord thy God gives thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaster them with plaster; and thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law, when thou art passed over, that thou mayest go in to the land which the Lord thy God gives thee, a land that flows with milk and honey; as the Lord God of thy fathers has promised thee. Therefore it shall be, when ye be gone over Jordan, that ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and thou shalt plaster them with plaster. And there shalt thou build an altar to the Lord thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt

not lift up any iron tool upon them. Thou shalt build the altar of the Lord thy God of whole stones; and thou shalt offer burnt offerings thereon to the Lord thy God; and thou shalt offer peace offerings, and shalt eat there, and rejoice before the Lord thy God. And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly. And Moses, and the priests the Levites, spake to all Israel, saying, Take heed, and hearken, O Israel; this day thou art become the people of the Lord thy God. Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the Lord thy God, and do his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day. And Moses charged the people the same day, saying, These shall stand upon mount Gerazim to bless the people, when ye are come over Jordan; Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Joseph, and Benjamin. And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse; Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali." (Vers. 1-13.)

There could not be a more striking contrast than that which is presented in the opening and close of this chapter. In the paragraph which we have just penned, we see Israel entering upon the land of promise — that fair and fruitful land, flowing with milk and honey, and there erecting an altar in mount Ebal, for

burnt offerings and peace offerings. We read nothing about sin offerings or trespass offerings here. The law, in all its fullness, was to be "written very plainly," upon the plastered stones, and the people, in full, recognised, covenant relationship, were to offer on the altar those special offerings of sweet savour, so blessedly expressive of worship and holy communion. The subject here is not the trespasser in act, or the sinner in nature, approaching the brazen altar, with a trespass offering or a sin offering; but rather a people fully delivered, accepted and blessed — a people in the actual enjoyment of their relationship and their inheritance.

True, they were trespassers and sinners; and, as such, needed the precious provision of the brazen altar. This, of course, is obvious, and fully understood and admitted by every one taught of God; but it manifestly is not the subject of Deuteronomy 27:1-13, and the spiritual reader will, at once, perceive the reason. When we see the Israel of God, in full covenant relationship, entering into possession of their inheritance, having the revealed will of their covenant God Jehovah, plainly and fully written before them, and the milk and honey flowing around them, we must conclude that all question as to tres-

passes and sins is definitively settled, and that nothing remains for a people so highly privileged and so richly blessed, but to surround the altar of their covenant God, and present those sweet savour offerings which were acceptable to Him and suited to them.

In short, the whole scene unfolded to our view in the first half of our chapter is perfectly beautiful. Israel having avouched Jehovah to be their God, and Jehovah having avouched Israel to be His peculiar people, to make them high above all nations which He had made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and an holy people to the Lord their God, as He had spoken — Israel thus privileged, blessed and exalted, in full possession of the goodly land, and having all the precious commandments of God before their eyes, what remained, but to present the sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving, in holy worship and happy fellowship?

But, in the latter half of our chapter, we find something quite different. Moses appoints six tribes to stand upon mount Gerazim, to bless the people; and six on mount Ebal to curse; but alas! when we come to the actual history, the positive facts of the case, there is not a single syllable of blessing, nothing

but twelve awful curses each confirmed by a solemn "amen" from the whole congregation.

What a sad change! What a striking contrast! It reminds us of what passed before us in our study of Exodus 19. There could not be a more impressive commentary on the words of the inspired apostle in Galatians 3:10. "For as many as are of the works of the law" — as many as are on that ground — "are under the curse: for it is; written" — and here he quotes Deuteronomy 27 — "cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."

Here we have the real solution of the question. Israel, as to their actual moral condition, were on the ground of law; and hence, although the opening of our chapter presents a lovely picture of God's thoughts respecting Israel, yet the close of it sets forth the sad and humiliating result of Israel's real state before God. There is not a sound from mount Gerazim, not one word of benediction; but, instead thereof, curse upon curse falls on the ears of the people.

Nor could it possibly be otherwise. Let people contend for it as they will, nothing but a curse can come upon "as many as are

of the works of the law. It does not merely say, "as many as fail to keep the law," though that is true; but, as if to set the truth in the very clearest and most forcible manner before us, the Holy Ghost declares that for all, no matter who, Jew, Gentile or nominal Christian — all who are on the ground or principle of works of law, there is, and can be, nothing but a curse.

Thus, then, the reader will be able, intelligently, to account for the profound silence that reigned on mount Gerazim, in the day of Deuteronomy 27. The simple fact is, if one solitary benediction had been heard, it would have been a contradiction to the entire teaching of holy scripture on the question of law.

We have so fully gone into the weighty subject of the law, in the first volume of these Notes, that we do not feel called upon to dwell upon it here. We can only say that the more we study scripture, and the more we ponder the law-question in the light of the New Testament, the more amazed we are at the manner in which some persist in contending for the opinion that Christians are under the law, whether for life, for righteousness, for holiness, or for any object whatsoever. How can such an opinion stand for a moment in the face of that magnificent and con-

clusive statement in Romans 6: "YE ARE NOT UNDER LAW, BUT UNDER GRACE?"

## **Chapter 28.**

In approaching the study of this remarkable section of our book, the reader must bear in mind that it is by no means, to be confounded with chapter 27. Some expositors, in seeking to account for the absence of the blessings in the latter, have sought for them here. But it is a grand mistake — a mistake absolutely fatal to the proper understanding of either chapter. The obvious fact is, the two chapters are wholly distinct, in basis, scope and practical application. Chapter 27 is — to put it as pointedly and briefly as possible — moral and personal. Chapter 28 is dispensational and national. That deals with the great root principle of man's moral condition, as a sinner utterly ruined and wholly incapable of meeting God on the ground of law; this, on the other hand, takes up the question of Israel as a nation, under the government of God. In short, a careful comparison of the two chapters will enable the reader to see their entire distinctness. For instance, what connection can we trace between the six blessings of our chapter and the twelve curses of chapter

27? None whatever. It is not possible to establish the slightest relationship. But a child can see the moral link between the blessings and curses of chapter 28.

Let us quote a passage or two in proof. "And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord thy God" — the grand old Deuteronomic motto, the key note of the book — "to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth; and all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God" — the only safeguard, the true secret of happiness, security, victory and strength — Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out."

Is it not perfectly plain to the reader that these are not the blessings pronounced by the six tribes on mount Gerazim? What is here presented to us is Israel's national dignity, prosperity, and

glory founded upon their diligent attention to all the commandments set before them in this book. It was the eternal purpose of God that Israel should be pre-eminent on the earth, high above all the nations. This purpose shall, assuredly, be made good, although Israel, in the past, have shamefully failed to render that perfect obedience which was to form the basis of their national pre-eminence and glory.

We must never forget or surrender this great truth. Some expositors have adopted a system of interpretation by which the covenant blessings of Israel are spiritualised and made over to the church of God. This is a most fatal mistake. Indeed, it is hardly possible to set forth in language, or even to conceive the pernicious effects of such a method of handling the precious word of God. Nothing is more certain than that it is diametrically opposed to the mind and will of God. He will not and cannot sanction such tampering with His truth, or such an unwarrantable alienation of the blessings and privileges of His people Israel.

True, we read, in Galatians 3 "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive" — what? Blessings in the city and in the field? Bless-

ings in our basket and store? Nay; but "the promise of the Spirit through faith." So also we learn, from the same epistle, in Galatians 4, that restored Israel will be permitted to reckon amongst her children all those who are born of the Spirit, during the Christian period. "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not; for the desolate has many more children than she which has an husband."

All this is blessedly true; but it affords no warrant whatever for transferring the promises made to Israel to New Testament believers. God has pledged Himself, by an oath, to bless the seed of Abraham His friend — to bless them with all earthly blessings, in the land of Canaan. This promise holds good and is absolutely inalienable. Woe be to all who attempt interfere with its literal fulfilment, in God's own time. We have referred to this in our studies on the earlier part of this book, and must now rest content with warning the reader, most solemnly, against every system of interpretation which involves such serious consequences as to the word and ways of God. We must ever remember that Israel's blessings are earthly; the church's

blessings are heavenly. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in the heavenlies in Christ."

Thus, both the nature and the sphere of the church's blessings are wholly different from those of Israel, and must never be confounded. But the system of interpretation above referred to does confound them, to the marring of the integrity of holy scripture, and the serious damage of souls. To attempt to apply the promises made to Israel to the church of God, either now or hereafter, on earth or in heaven, is to turn things completely upside down, and to produce the most hopeless confusion in the exposition and application of scripture. We feel called upon, in simple faithfulness to the word of God, and to the soul of the reader, to press this matter upon his earnest attention. He may rest assured it is, by no means, an unimportant question; so far from this, we are persuaded that it is utterly impossible for any one who confounds Israel and the church, the earthly and the heavenly, to be a sound or accurate interpreter of the word of God.

However, we cannot pursue this subject further here. We only trust that the Spirit of God will arouse the heart of the reader to

feel its interest and importance, and give him to see the necessity of rightly dividing the word of truth. If this be so, our object will be fully gained.

With regard to this twenty-eighth of Deuteronomy, if the reader only seizes the fact of its entire distinctness from its predecessor, he will be able to read it with spiritual intelligence and real profit. There is no need whatever for elaborate exposition. It divides itself naturally and obviously into two parts. In the first, we have a full and most blessed statement of the results of obedience. (See verses 1-15.) In the second, we have a deeply solemn and affecting statement of the awful consequences of disobedience. (See verses 16-68.) And we cannot but be struck with the fact that the section continuing the curses is more than three times the length of the one containing the blessings. That consists of fifteen verses; this of fifty-three. The whole chapter furnishes an impressive commentary on the government of God, and a most forcible illustration of the fact that "our God is a consuming fire." All the nations of the earth may learn from Israel's marvellous history, that God must punish disobedience, and that, too, first of all, in His own. And if He has not spared His own people, what shall be the end of those who know Him

not? "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." It is the very height of extravagant folly for any one to attempt to evade the full force of such passages, or to explain them away. It cannot be done. Let any one read the chapter before us and compare it with the actual history of Israel, and he will see that as sure as there is a God on the throne of the majesty in the heavens, so surely will He punish evildoers, both here and hereafter. It cannot be otherwise. The government that could or would allow evil to go unjudged, uncondemned, unpunished, would not be a perfect government, would not be the government of God. It is vain to found arguments upon one-sided views of the goodness, kindness and mercy of God. Blessed be His Name, He is kind and good and merciful and gracious, long-suffering and full of compassion. But He is holy and just, righteous and true; and "he has appointed a day in the which he will judge the world [the habitable earth, oikoumenen] in righteousness, by that man whom he has ordained; whereof he has given assurance [given proof, pistin] to all, in that he has raised him from the dead." (Acts 17.)

However, we must draw this section to a close; but, ere doing so, we feel it to be our duty to call the reader's attention to a very interesting point in connection with verse 13 of our chapter. "The Lord shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken to the commandments of the Lord thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them." This, no doubt, refers to Israel as a nation. They are destined to be the head of all the nations of the earth. Such is the sure and settled purpose and counsel of God respecting them. Low as they are now sunk, scattered and lost amongst the nations, suffering the terrible consequences of their persistent disobedience, sleeping, as we read in Daniel 12, in the dust of the earth; yet they shall, as a nation, arise and shine in far brighter glory than that of Solomon.

All this is blessedly true, and established, beyond all question, in manifold passages in Moses, the Psalms, the prophets and the New Testament. But, in looking through the history of Israel, we find some very striking instances of individuals who were permitted and enabled, through infinite grace, to make their own of the precious promise contained in verse 13, and

that too in very dark and depressing periods of the national history, when Israel, as a nation, was the tail and not the head. We shall just give the reader an instance or two, not only to illustrate our point, but also to set before him a principle of immense practical importance and universal application.

Let us turn, for a moment, to that charming little book of Esther — a book so little understood or appreciated — a book which, we may truly say, fills a niche and teaches a lesson which no other book does. It belongs to a period when, most assuredly, Israel was not the head, but the tail; but, notwithstanding, it presents to our view the very edifying and encouraging picture of an individual son of Abraham so carrying himself as to reach the very highest position, and gaining a splendid victory over Israel's bitterest foe.

As to Israel's condition, in the days of Esther, it was such that God could not publicly own them. Hence it is that His name is not found in the book, from beginning to end. The Gentile was the head and Israel the tail. The relationship between Jehovah and Israel could no longer be publicly owned; but the heart of Jehovah could never forget His people; and we may add, the heart of a faithful Israelite could never forget Jehovah or His

holy law; and these are just the two facts that specially characterise this most interesting little book. God was acting for Israel behind the scenes, and Mordecai was acting for God before the scenes. It is worthy of remark that neither Israel's best Friend, nor their worst enemy, is once named in the book of Esther; and yet the whole book is full of the actings of both. The finger of God is stamped on every link in the marvellous chain of providence; and, on the other hand, the bitter enmity of Amalek come out in the cruel plot of the haughty Agagite.

All this is intensely interesting. Indeed, in rising from the study of this book, we may well say, "Oh! scenes surpassing fable and yet true." No romance could possibly exceed in interest this simple but most blessed history. But we must not expatiate, much as we should like to do so. Time and space forbid. We merely refer to it now in order to point out to the reader the unspeakable value and importance of individual faithfulness, at a moment when the national glory was faded and gone. Mordecai stood like a rock for the truth of God. He refused with stern decision, to own Amalek. He would save the life of Ahasuerus and bow to his authority as the expression of the power of God; but he would not bow to Haman. His conduct, in this matter,

was governed simply by the word of God. The authority for his course was to be found in this blessed book of Deuteronomy. "Remember what Amalek did to thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God" — here was the true secret of the whole matter — "therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God has given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the Lord thy God gives for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it." (Deut. 25:17-19.)

This was distinct enough for every circumcised ear, every obedient heart, every upright conscience. Equally distinct is the language of Exodus 17. "And the Lord said to Moses, write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua; for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it JEHOVAH-nissi [the Lord my banner]: for he said, Because the Lord has sworn that the Lord will have war with Amalek from generation to generation." (Vers. 14-16.)

Here then was Mordecai's authority for refusing a single nod of his head to the Agagite. How could a faithful member of the house of Israel bow to a member of a house with which Jehovah was at war? Impossible. He could clothe himself in sackcloth, fast and weep for his people, but he could not, he would not, he dare not bow to an Amalekite. He might be charged with presumption, blind obstinacy, stupid bigotry, and contemptible narrow-mindedness; but with that he had nothing whatever to do. It might seem the most unaccountable folly to withhold the common mark of respect from the highest noble in the kingdom; but that noble was an Amalekite, and that was enough for Mordecai. The apparent folly was simple obedience.

It is this which makes the case so interesting and important for us. Nothing can ever do away with our responsibility to obey the word of God. It might be said to Mordecai that the commandment as to Amalek was a bygone thing, having reference to Israel's palmy days. It was quite right for Joshua to fight with Amalek; Saul, too, ought to have obeyed the word of Jehovah instead of sparing Agag; but now all was changed; the

glory was departed from Israel, and it was perfectly useless to attempt to act on Exodus 17 or Deuteronomy 27.

All such arguments, we feel assured, would have no weight whatever with Mordecai. It was enough for him that Jehovah had said, "Remember what Amalek did ... Thou shalt not forget it." How long was this to hold good? "From generation to generation. Jehovah's war with Amalek was never to cease until his very name and remembrance were blotted out from under heaven. And why? Because of his cruel and heartless treatment of Israel. Such was the kindness of God toward His people! How then could a faithful Israelite ever bow to an Amalekite? Impossible. Could Joshua bow to Amalek? Nay. Did Samuel? Nay; "he hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord in Gilgal." How then could Mordecai bow to him? He could not do it, cost what it might. It mattered not to him that the gallows was erected for him. He could be hanged, but he could never do homage to Amalek.

And what was the result? A magnificent triumph! There stood the proud Amalekite near the throne, basking in the sunshine of royal favour, boasting himself in his riches, his greatness, his glory, and about to crush beneath his foot the seed of Abraham.

There, on the other hand, lay poor Mordecai in sackcloth and ashes and tears. What could he do? He could obey. He had neither sword nor spear; but he had the word of God, and by simply obeying that word, he gained a victory over Amalek quite as decisive and splendid in its way, as that gained by Joshua, in Exodus 17 — a victory which Saul failed to gain, though surrounded by a host of warriors selected from the twelve tribes of Israel. Amalek sought to get Mordecai hanged; but instead of that he was obliged to act as his footman, and conduct him in all but regal pomp and splendour through the street of the city. "And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delights to honour, let the royal apparel be brought which the king uses to wear, and the horse that the king rides upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head: and let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delights to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honour. Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sits at the king's gate: let nothing fail of

all that thou hast spoken. Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delights to honour. And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hastened to his house mourning and having his head covered."

Here, assuredly Israel was the head and Amalek the tail — Israel, not nationally but individually. But this was only the beginning of Amalek's defeat and of Israel's glory. Haman was hanged on the very gallows he had erected for Mordecai, "And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad."

Nor was this all. The effect of Mordecai's marvellous victory was felt far and wide over the hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the empire. "In every province, and in every city whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them." And, to crown all, we read that "Mordecai the

Jew was next to king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed."

Now, reader, does not all this prove to us, in the most striking manner, the immense importance of individual faithfulness? Is it not eminently calculated to encourage us to stand for the truth of God, cost what it may? Only see what marvellous results followed from the actings of one man! Many might have condemned Mordecai's conduct. It might have seemed like unaccountable obstinacy to refuse a simple mark of respect to the highest noble in the empire. But it was not so. It was simple obedience. It was decision for God, and it led to a most magnificent victory, the spoils of which were reaped by his brethren at the very ends of the earth.

For further illustration of the subject suggested by Deuteronomy 28:13, we must refer the reader to Daniel 3 and Daniel 6. There he will see what morally glorious results can be reached by individual faithfulness to the true God, at a moment when Israel's national glory was gone; their city and temple in ruins. The three worthies refused to worship the golden image. They dared to face the wrath of the king, to withstand the universal

voice of the empire, yea, to meet the fiery furnace itself, rather than disobey. They could surrender life, but they could not surrender the truth of God.

And what was the result? A splendid victory! They walked through the furnace with the Son of God, and were called forth from the furnace as witnesses and servants of the Most High God. Glorious privilege! Wondrous dignity! And all the simple result of obedience. Had they gone with the crowd, and bowed the head in worship to the national god, in order to escape the dreadful furnace, see what they would have lost! But, blessed be God, they were enabled to stand fast in the confession of the grand foundation truth of the unity of the Godhead — that truth which had been trampled under foot amid the splendours of Solomon's reign; and the record of their faithfulness has been penned for us by the Holy Spirit, in order to encourage us to tread, with firm step, the path of individual devotedness, in the face of a God-hating, Christ-rejecting world, and in the face of a truth-neglecting Christendom. It is impossible to read the narrative and not have our whole renewed being stirred up and drawn out in earnest desire for more deep-toned personal devotedness to Christ and His precious cause.

Similar must be the effect produced by the study of Daniel 6. We cannot allow ourselves to quote or expatiate. We can only commend the soul-stirring record to the attention of the reader. It is uncommonly fine, and it furnishes a splendid lesson for this day of soft, self-indulgent, easy-going profession, in which it costs people nothing to give a nominal assent to the truths of Christianity; but in which, notwithstanding, there is so little desire or readiness to follow, with whole-hearted decision, a rejected Lord, or to yield an unqualified and unhesitating obedience to His commandments.

How refreshing, in the face of so much heartless indifference, to read of the faithfulness of Daniel! He, with unflinching decision, persisted in his holy habit of praying three times a day, with his window open toward Jerusalem, although he knew that the den of lions was the penalty of his act. He might have closed his window and drawn his curtains and retired into the privacy of his chamber to pray, or he might have waited for the midnight hour when no human eye could see, or human ear hear him. But no; this beloved servant of God would not hide his light under a bed or a bushel. There was a great principle at stake. It was not merely that he would pray to the one living

and true God, but he would pray with "his windows open towards Jerusalem." And why "toward Jerusalem"? Because it was God's centre. But it was in ruins. True, for the present and as looked at from a human standpoint. But to faith, and from a divine standpoint, Jerusalem was God's centre for His earthly people. It was and it shall be, beyond all question. And not only so, but its dust is precious to Jehovah; and hence Daniel was in full communion with the mind of God when he opened his windows toward Jerusalem and prayed. He had scripture for what he did, as the reader may see by referring to 2 Chronicles 6. "If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, and pray toward their land, which thou gavest to their fathers, and toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name."

Here was Daniel's warrant. This was what he did, utterly regardless of human opinions; and utterly regardless, too, of pains and penalties. He would rather be thrown into the den of lions than surrender the truth of God. He would rather go to heaven with a good conscience than remain on earth with a bad one.

And what was the result? Another splendid triumph! "Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, BECAUSE HE BELIEVED IN HIS GOD."

Blessed servant! Noble witness! Assuredly he was the head, on this occasion, and his enemies the tail. And how? Simply by obedience to the word of God. This is what we deem to be of such vast moral importance for this our day. It is to illustrate and enforce this that we refer to those brilliant examples of individual faithfulness at a time when Israel's national glory was in the dust, their unity gone and their polity broken up. We cannot but regard it as a fact full of interest, full of encouragement, full of suggestive power, that in the darkest days of Israel's history as a nation we have the brightest and noblest examples of personal faith and devotedness. We earnestly press this upon the attention of the Christian reader. We consider it eminently calculated to strengthen and cheer up our hearts in standing for the truth of God at a moment like the present, when there is so much to discourage us in the general condition of the professing church. It is not that we are to look for such speedy, striking and splendid results as were realised in those cases to which we have referred. This is by no means the question. What we have

to keep before our hearts is the fact that, no matter what may be the condition of the ostensible people of God at any given time, it is the privilege of the individual man of God to tread the narrow path and reap the precious fruits of simple obedience to the word of God and the precious commandments of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This, we feel persuaded, is a truth for the day. May we all feel its holy power! We are in imminent danger of lowering the standard of personal devotedness because of the general condition. This is a fatal mistake; yea, it is the positive suggestion of the enemy of Christ and His cause. If Mordecai, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, and Daniel had acted thus, what would have been the result?

Ah! no; reader, we have ever to bear in mind that our one great business is to obey and leave results with God. It may please Him to permit His servants to see striking results, or He may see fit to allow them to wait for that great day that is coming when there will be no danger of our being puffed up by seeing any little fruit of our testimony. Be this as it may, it is our plain and bounden duty to tread that bright and blessed path indicated for us by the commandments of our precious and adorable

Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. May God enable us, by the grace of His Holy Spirit so to do! May we cleave to the truth of God with purpose of heart, utterly regardless of the opinions of our fellow men who may charge us with narrowness, bigotry, intolerance and such like. We have just to go on with the Lord.

## **Chapter 29.**

This chapter closes the second grand division of our book. In it we have a most solemn appeal to the conscience of the congregation. It is what we may term the summing up and practical application of all that has gone before in this most profound, practical and hortatory section of the five books of Moses.

"These are the words of the covenant, which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which He made with them by Horeb." Allusion has already been made to this passage as one of the many proofs of the entire distinctness of the book of Deuteronomy from the preceding section of the Pentateuch. But it claims the reader's attention on another ground. It speaks of a special covenant made with the children of Israel, in the

land of Moab, in virtue of which they were to be brought into the land. This covenant was as distinct from the covenant made at Sinai, as it was from the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In a word, it was neither pure law, on the one hand; nor pure grace, on the other, but government exercised in sovereign mercy.

It is perfectly clear that Israel could not enter the land on the ground of the Sinai or Horeb covenant, inasmuch as they had completely failed under it, by making a golden calf. They forfeited all right and title to the land, and were only saved from instant destruction by sovereign mercy exercised toward them through the mediation and earnest intercession of Moses. It is equally plain that they did not enter the land on the ground of the Abrahamic covenant of grace, for had they done so, they would not have been turned out of it. Neither the extent nor the duration of their tenure answered to the terms of the covenant made with their fathers. It was by the terms of the Moab covenant that they entered upon the limited and temporary possession of the land of Canaan; and inasmuch as they have as signally failed under the Moab covenant, as under that of Horeb — failed under government as completely as under law, they

are expelled from the land and scattered over the face of the earth, under the governmental dealings of God.

But not for ever. Blessed be the God of all grace, the seed of Abraham His friend shall yet possess the land of Canaan, according to the magnificent terms of the original grant. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Gifts and calling must not be confounded with law and government. Mount Zion can never be classed with Horeb and Moab. The new and everlasting covenant of grace, ratified by the precious blood of the Lamb of God, shall be gloriously fulfilled to the letter, spite of all the powers of earth and hell, men and devils combined. "Behold, the days come, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, says the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people; and they shall not teach every man his neighbour,

and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord; for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he says, A new covenant, he has made the first old. Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away." (Heb. 8:8-13.)

Now the reader must carefully guard against a system of interpretation that would apply this precious and beautiful passage to the church. It involves a threefold wrong: namely, a wrong to the truth of God; a wrong to the church; and a wrong to Israel. We have raised a warning note on this subject, again and again, in the course of our studies on the Pentateuch, because we feel its immense importance. It is our deep and thorough conviction that no one can understand, much less expound the word of God who confounds Israel with the Church. The two things are as distinct as heaven and earth; and hence when God speaks of Israel, Jerusalem and Zion, if we presume to apply those names to the New Testament church, it can only issue in utter confusion. We believe it to be a simple impossibility to set forth the mischievous consequences of such a method of handling the word of God. It puts an end to all accuracy of interpretation

and to all that holy precision and divine certainty which scripture is designed and fitted to impart. It mars the integrity of truth, damages the souls of God's people, and hinders their progress in divine life and spiritual intelligence. In short, we cannot too strongly urge upon every one who reads these lines the absolute necessity of guarding against this fatally false system of handling holy scripture.

We must beware of meddling with the scope of prophecy, or the true application of the promises of God. We have no warrant whatever to interfere with the divinely appointed sphere of the covenants. The inspired apostle tells us distinctly, in the ninth of Romans, that they pertain to Israel; and if we attempt to alienate them from the Old Testament fathers and transfer them to the church of God, the body of Christ, we may depend upon it, we are doing what Jehovah-Elohim will never sanction. The church forms no part of the ways of God with Israel and the earth. Her place, her portion, her privileges, her prospect are all heavenly. She is called into existence in this time of Christ's rejection, to be associated with Him where He is now hidden in the heavens, and to share His glory in the coming day. If the reader fully grasps this grand and glorious truth,

it will go far towards helping him to put things into their right places and leave them there.

We must now turn our attention to the very solemn, practical application of all that has passed before us to the conscience of every member of the congregation.

"And Moses called to all Israel, and said to them, Ye have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land; the great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles; yet the Lord has not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, to this day.

This is peculiarly solemn. The most astounding miracles and signs may pass before us, and leave the heart untouched. These things may produce a transient effect upon the mind and upon the natural feelings; but unless the conscience is brought into the light of the divine presence, and the heart brought under the immediate action of the truth by the power of the Spirit of God, there is no permanent result reached. Nicodemus inferred from the miracles of Christ that he was a teacher come from God; but this was not enough. He had to learn the deep and won-

drous meaning of that mighty sentence, "Ye must be born again." A faith founded on miracles may leave people unsaved, unblest, unconverted — awfully responsible, no doubt, but wholly unconverted. We read, at the close of the second of John's Gospel, of many who professed to believe on Christ when they saw His miracles; but He did not commit Himself to them. There was no divine work, nothing to be trusted. There must be a new life, a new nature; and miracles and signs cannot impart this. We must be born again — born of the word and Spirit of God. The new life is communicated by the incorruptible seed of the Gospel of God, lodged in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost. It is not a head belief founded on miracles, but a heart-belief in the Son of God. It is something which could never be known under law or government. "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." Precious gift! Glorious source! Blessed channel! Universal and everlasting praise to the Eternal Trinity!

"And I have led you forty years in the wilderness; your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot" — wonderful clothes! wonderful shoes! God took care of them and made them last, blessed for ever be His

great and Holy Name! — "Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink; that ye might know that I am the Lord your God." They were fed and clothed by God's own gracious hand. "Man did eat angels' food." They had no need of wine or strong drink, no need of stimulants. "They drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ." That pure stream refreshed them in the dreary desert, and the heavenly manna sustained them day by day. All they wanted was the capacity to enjoy the divine provision.

Here alas! like ourselves, they failed. They got tired of the heavenly food, and lusted for other things. How sad that we should be so like them! How very humbling that we should so fail to appreciate that precious One whom God has given to be our life, our portion, our object, our all in all! How terrible to find our hearts craving the wretched vanities and follies of this poor passing world — its riches, its honours, its distinctions, its pleasures which all perish in the usage, and which even if they were lasting, are not, for a moment, to be compared with "the unsearchable riches of Christ!" May God, in His infinite goodness, "grant us, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that

Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, that we may be filled with all the fullness of God." Oh! that this most blessed prayer may be answered in the deep and abiding experience of the reader and the writer!

"And when ye came to this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan" — formidable and much dreaded foes! — "came out against us to battle, and we smote them." And had they been ten thousand times as great and as formidable, they would have proved to be as chaff before the presence of the God of the armies of Israel. "And we took their land, and gave it for an inheritance to the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to the half tribe of Manasseh." Will any one dare to compare this with what human history records respecting the invasion of South America by the Spaniards? Woe be to those who do so! They will find themselves terribly mistaken. There is this grand and all-important difference, that Israel had the direct authority of God for what they did to Sihon and Og; the Spaniards could show no such authority for what they did to

the poor ignorant savages of South America. This alters the case completely. The introduction of God and His authority is the one perfect answer to every question, the divine solution of every difficulty. May we ever keep this weighty fact in the remembrance of the thoughts of our hearts, as a divine antidote against every infidel suggestion!

"Keep therefore the words of this [the Moab] covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do." Simple obedience to the word of God ever has been, is now, and ever shall be the deep and real secret of all true prosperity. To the Christian, of course, the prosperity is not in earthly or material things, but in heavenly and spiritual; and we must never forget that it is the very height of folly to think of prospering or making progress in the divine life if we are not yielding an implicit obedience to all the commandments of our blessed and adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done to you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's com-

mandments, and abide in his love." Here is true Christian prosperity. May we earnestly long after it, and diligently pursue the proper method of attaining it!

"Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your little ones" — touching and interesting fact! — "your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp" — How exquisite, how deeply affecting the expression "thy stranger!" What a powerful appeal to Israel's heart on behalf of the stranger! — "From the hewer of thy wood to the drawer of thy water; that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into his oath, which the Lord thy God makes with thee this day; that he may establish thee today for a people to himself, and that he may be to thee a God, as he has said to thee, and as he has sworn to thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath; but with him that stands here with us this day before the Lord our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day; — for ye know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt; and how we came through the nations which ye passed by; and ye have seen their abominations [that is, the objects of

their worship, their false gods], and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them." (Vers. 10-17.)

This earnest appeal is not only general, but also intensely individual. This is very important. We are ever prone to generalise, and thus miss the application of truth to our individual conscience. This is a grave mistake, and a most serious loss to our souls. We are, every one of us, responsible to yield an implicit obedience to the precious commandments of our Lord. It is thus we enter into the real enjoyment of our relationship, as Moses says to the people, "that he may establish thee for a people to himself, and that he may be to thee a God."

Nothing can be more precious. And then it is so very simple. There is no vagueness, obscurity or mysticism about it. It is simply having His most precious commandments treasured up in our hearts, acting upon the conscience, and carried out in the life. This is the true secret of habitually realising our relationship with our Father, and with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

For any one to imagine that he can enjoy the blessed sense of intimate relationship, while living in the habitual neglect of our

Lord's commandments is a miserable and mischievous delusion. "If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love." This is the grand point. Let us deeply ponder it. "If ye love me keep my commandments." "Not every one that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven." "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God."

These are seasonable words for this day of easy going, self-indulgent, worldly profession. May they sink down into our ears and into our hearts! May they take full possession of our whole moral being, and bring forth fruit in our individual history. We feel persuaded of the need of this practical side of things. We are in imminent danger, while seeking to keep clear of everything like legality, of running into the opposite evil of carnal laxity. The passages of holy scripture which we have just quoted — and they are but a few of many — supply the divine safeguard against both these pernicious and deadly errors. It is blessedly true that we are brought into the holy relationship of

children by the sovereign grace of God, through the power of His word and Spirit. This one fact cuts up by the roots the noxious weed of legality.

But then surely the relationship has its suited affections, its duties and its responsibilities, the due recognition of which furnishes the true remedy for the terrible evil of carnal laxity so prevalent on all hands. If we are delivered from law-works — as, thank God, we are, if we are true Christians — it is not that we should be good-for-nothing, self-pleasers, but that life-works might be produced in us, to the glory of Him whose Name we bear, whose we are, and whom we are bound, by every argument, to love, obey and serve.

May we, beloved reader, earnestly seek to apply our hearts to this practical line of things. We are imperatively called upon to do so, and we may fully count upon the abundant grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to enable us to respond to the call, spite of the ten thousand difficulties and hindrances that lie in our way. Oh! for a deeper work of grace in our souls, a closer walk with God, a more pronounced discipleship! Let us give ourselves to the earnest pursuit of these things!

We must now proceed with the lawgiver's solemn appeal. He warns the people to take heed, "Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turns away this day from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that bears gall and wormwood."

These searching words are referred to by the inspired apostle in his Epistle to the Hebrews, in a very emphatic manner. "Looking diligently," he says, "lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled."

What weighty words are these! How full of wholesome admonition and warning! They set forth the solemn responsibility of all Christians. We are all called upon to exercise a holy, jealous, godly care over each other, which alas! is but little understood or recognised. We are not all called to be pastors or teachers. The passage just quoted does not refer particularly to such. It refers to all Christians, and we are bound to attend to it. We hear great complaints, on all sides, of the sad lack of pastoral care. No doubt there is a great lack of true pastors in the church of God, as there is of every other gift. This is only what we

might expect. How could it be otherwise? How could we expect a profusion of spiritual gifts in our present miserable condition? The Spirit is grieved and quenched by our lamentable divisions, our worldliness, our gross unfaithfulness. Need we then marvel at our deplorable poverty?

But our blessed Lord is full of deep and tender compassion toward us, in the midst of our ruin and spiritual desolation; and if we only humbled ourselves under His mighty hand, He would graciously lift us up, and enable us, in many ways, to meet the deficiency of pastoral gift amongst us. We might, through His precious grace, look, more diligently and lovingly, after one another, and seek each other's spiritual progress and prosperity in a thousand ways.

Let not the reader imagine, for a moment, that we mean to give the smallest countenance to prying officiousness or unwarrantable espionage on the part of Christians. Far away be the thought! We look upon such things as perfectly insufferable in the church of God. They stand at the very moral antipodes of that loving, holy, tender, diligent pastoral care of which we speak, and for which we long.

But does it not strike the reader that, while giving the widest possible berth to these most contemptible evils to which we have just referred, we might cultivate and exercise a loving prayerful interest in one another, and a holy watchfulness and care which might prevent many a root of bitterness from springing up? We cannot doubt it. It is quite true we are not all called to be pastors; and it is equally true that there is a grievous dearth of pastors in the church of God. We mean, of course, true pastors — pastors given by the Head of the church — men with a pastor's heart, and real pastoral gift and power. All this is undeniable, and for this very reason, it ought to stir the hearts of the Lord's beloved people everywhere to seek of Him grace to enable them to exercise a tender, loving, brotherly care over one another which might go a great way toward supplying the need of pastors amongst us. One thing is clear, that in the passage just quoted from Hebrews 12 there is nothing said about pastors. It is simply a most stirring exhortation to all Christians to exercise mutual care, and to watch against the springing up of any root of bitterness.

And oh! how needful this is! How terrible are those roots! How bitter they are! How widely spread are their pernicious tendrils,

at times! What irreparable mischief they do! How many are defiled by them! How many precious links of friendship are snapped, and how many hearts broken by them! Yes, reader, and how often we have felt persuaded that a little judicious pastoral or even brotherly care, a little loving, godly counsel might have nipped the evil in the bud and thus hindered an incalculable amount of mischief and sorrow. May we all lay these things to heart, and earnestly seek grace to do what we can to prevent roots of bitterness springing up and spreading abroad their defiling influence!

But we must hearken to further weighty and searching words from the beloved and venerable lawgiver. He draws a most solemn picture of the end of the one who caused the root of bitterness to spring up.

"And it come to pass, when he hears the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst." Fatal delusion! Crying peace, peace, when there is no peace, but imminent wrath and judgement. "The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and," — instead of the "peace"

which he vainly promised himself — "all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven." Awful warning to all who act as roots of bitterness in the midst of the people of God, and to all who countenance them!

"And the Lord shall separate him to evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law; so that the generation to come of your children, that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the Lord has laid upon it; and that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor bears, nor any grass grows therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the Lord overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath." Soul-subduing examples of the governmental dealings of the living God which ought to speak with a voice of thunder in the ears of all those who are turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness and denying the Lord that bought them! — "Even all nations shall say, Wherefore has the Lord done thus to this land? What means the heat of this great anger? Then

men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt; for they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom he had not given to them; and the anger of the Lord was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book; and the Lord rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day." (Vers. 19-28.)

Reader, how peculiarly solemn is all this! What a powerful illustration of the apostle's words, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!" And again, "Our God is a consuming fire!" How important that the professing church should give heed to such warning notes! Most assuredly, she is called to learn much from the history of God's dealings with His people Israel; Romans 11 is perfectly clear and conclusive as to this. The apostle, in speaking of the divine judgement upon the unbelieving branches of the olive tree, thus appeals to Christendom, "If some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them par-

takest of the root and fatness of the olive tree; boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off; and thou standest by faith. BE NOT HIGH-MINDED, BUT FEAR; for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God; on them which fell severity; but toward thee goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off."

Alas! the professing church has not continued in the goodness of God. It is utterly impossible to read her history, in the light of scripture, and not see this. She has grievously departed, and there is nothing before her save the unmingled wrath of Almighty God. The beloved members of the body of Christ who, sad to say, are mingled with the terrible mass of corrupt profession, will be gathered out of it and taken to the place prepared in the Father's house in heaven. Then, if not before, they will see how wrong it was to have remained in connection with what was so flagrantly opposed to the mind of Christ as re-

vealed with divine clearness and simplicity in the holy scriptures.

But as to the great thing known as Christendom, it will be "spued out" and "cut off." It will be given over to strong delusion, to believe a lie, "That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

Tremendous words! May they ring in the ears and sink down into the hearts of thousands who are going on from day to day, week to week, and year to year, content with a mere name to live, a form of godliness but denying the power, "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God". What an awfully graphic picture of so-called Christian England! How appalling the condition and the destiny of the pleasure hunting thousands who are rushing blindly, heedlessly and madly down the inclined plane that leads to hopeless and everlasting misery! May God, in His infinite goodness, by the power of His Spirit and by the mighty action of His word, rouse the hearts of His people everywhere to a more profound and influential sense of these things!

We must now, ere closing this section, briefly direct the reader's attention to the last verse of our chapter. It is one of those passages of scripture sadly misunderstood and misapplied. "The secret things belong to the Lord our God; but those things which are revealed belong to us, and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." This verse is constantly used to hinder the progress of souls in the knowledge of "the deep things of God;" but its simple meaning is this; the things "revealed" are what we have had before us in the preceding chapter of this book; the things "secret," on the other hand, refer to those resources of grace which God had in store to be unfolded when the people should have utterly failed to "do all the words of this law." The revealed things are what Israel ought to have done, but did not do; the secret things are what God would do, spite of Israel's sad and shameful failure, and they are most blessedly presented in the following chapters — the counsels of divine grace, the provisions of sovereign mercy to be displayed when Israel shall have thoroughly learnt the lesson of their utter failure under both the Moab and the Horeb covenants.

Thus this passage, when rightly understood, so far from affording any warrant for the use so constantly made of it, encourages the heart to search into these things which, though "secret" to Israel, in the plains of Moab, are fully and clearly "revealed" to us for our profit, comfort and edification.\* The Holy Spirit came down, on the day of Pentecost to lead the disciples into all truth. The canon of scripture is complete; all the purposes and counsels of God are fully revealed. The mystery of the church completes the entire circle of divine truth. The apostle John could say to all God's children, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things."

\* 1 Cor 2:9 is another of the misunderstood and misapplied passages. "But, as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him." Here, people are sure to stop, and hence conclude that we cannot possibly know anything of the precious things which God has in store for us. But the very next verse proves the gross absurdity of any such conclusion. "But God has revealed them to us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knows no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we" — that is, all the Lord's people — "have re-

ceived, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." Thus this passage, like Deuteronomy 19:29, teaches the very opposite of what is so constantly deduced from it. How important to examine and weigh the context of the passages which are quoted!

Thus the entire New Testament abounds with evidence to prove the mistaken use that is so constantly made of Deuteronomy 29:29. We have dwelt upon it because we are aware that the Lord's beloved people are sadly hindered by it, in their progress in divine knowledge. The enemy would ever seek to keep them in the dark, when they ought to be walking in the sunlight of divine revelation — to keep them as babes feeding upon milk, when they ought, as those "of full age," to be feeding upon the "strong meat" so freely provided for the church of God. We have but little idea of how the Spirit of God is grieved, and Christ dishonoured by the low tone of things amongst us. How few really "know the things that are freely given to us of God!" Where are the proper privileges of the Christian understood, believed and realised? How meagre is our apprehension of divine things! How stunted our growth! How feeble our practical

exposition of the truth of God! What a blotted epistle of Christ we present!

Beloved Christian reader, let us seriously ponder these things in the divine presence. Let us honestly search out the root of all this lamentable failure, and have it judged and put away, that so we may, more faithfully and unmistakably, declare whose we are and whom we serve. May it be more thoroughly manifest that Christ is our one absorbing object!

## **Chapter 30.**

This chapter is one of very deep interest and importance. It is prophetic, and presents to us some of "the secret things" referred to at the close of the preceding chapter. It unfolds some of those most precious resources of grace treasured up in the heart of God to be unfolded when Israel, having utterly failed to keep the law, should be scattered to the ends of the earth.

"And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations whither the Lord thy God has driven thee, and shalt return to

the Lord thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God has scattered thee."

How touching, how perfectly beautiful is all this! It is no question of law-keeping, but something far deeper, far more precious; it is the turning of the heart — the whole heart, the whole soul to Jehovah, at a time when a literal obedience to the law is utterly impossible. It is a broken and contrite heart turning to God, and God, in deep and tender compassion, meeting that heart. This is true blessedness, at all times, and in all places. It is something above and beyond all dispensational dealings and arrangements. It is God Himself, in all the fullness and ineffable blessedness of what He is, meeting a repentant soul; and we may truly say that when these two meet, all is divinely and eternally settled.

It must be perfectly clear to the reader that what we have now before us is something as far removed from law-keeping and human righteousness as heaven is above earth. The first verse

of our chapter proves, in the clearest possible manner, that the people are viewed as in a condition in which the carrying out of the ordinances of the law is a simple impossibility. But, blessed be God, there is not a spot on the face of the earth, be it ever so remote, from which the heart cannot turn to God. The hands might not be able to present a victim for the altar; the feet might not be able to travel to the appointed place of worship; but the heart could travel to God. Yes; the poor crushed, broken, contrite heart could go directly to God, and God, in the depth of His compassion and tender mercy, could meet that heart, bind it up and fill it to overflowing with the rich comfort and consolation of His love, and the full joy of His salvation.

But let us hearken yet further to those "secret things" which "belong to God" — things precious beyond all human thought. "If any of thine be driven out to the utmost parts of heaven" as far as they could go — "from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee; and the Lord thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and He will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers."

How precious is all this! But there is something far better still. Not only will He gather them, fetch them, and multiply them, not only will He act in power for them, but He will do a mighty work of grace in them of far more value than any outward prosperity however desirable. "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart" — the very centre of the whole moral being, the source of all those influences which go to form the character — "and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart" — the grand moral regulator of the entire life — "and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. And the Lord thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee" — A solemn word for all those nations who have ever sought to oppress the Jews! — "And thou shalt return, and obey the voice of the Lord, and do all his commandments, which I command thee this day.

Nothing can be more morally lovely than all this. The people gathered, fetched, multiplied, blessed, circumcised in heart, thoroughly devoted to Jehovah, and yielding a whole-hearted, loving obedience to all His precious commandments! What can exceed this in blessedness for a people on the earth?

"And the Lord thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good; for the Lord will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers," "if thou shalt hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn to the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear it, and do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it to us, that we may hear it, and do it? But the word is very nigh to thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." (Vers. 10-14.)

This is a singularly interesting passage. It furnishes a key to "the secret things" already referred to, and sets forth the great principles of divine righteousness, in vivid and beautiful contrast to legal righteousness in every possible aspect. According to the truth here unfolded, it matters not, in the least, where a

soul may be, here, there or anywhere; "The word is nigh thee." It could not possibly be nigher. What could be nigher than "In thy mouth, and in thy heart?" We need not, as we say, move a muscle to get it. If it were above us or beyond us, reason would that we might complain of our utter inability to reach it. But no; there is no need of either hands or feet, in this most blessed and all-important matter. The heart and the mouth are here called into exercise.

There is a very beautiful allusion to the above passage in the tenth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, to which the reader may refer with much interest and profit. Indeed it is so full of evangelic sweetness that we must quote it.

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the day for righteousness to every one that believes" — not to every one who says he believes, as in James 2:14. — "For Moses describes the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which does

those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaks on this wise, Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down") — striking parenthesis! Marvellous instance of the Spirit's use of Old Testament scripture! It bears the distinct stamp of His master hand — "Or, who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what says it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach;" — How perfectly beautiful the addition! Who but the Spirit could have supplied it? — "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God has raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believes to righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made to salvation. For the scripture says, Whosoever believes on him shall not be ashamed."

Mark this beautiful word, "whosoever." It, most assuredly, takes in the Jew. It meets him wherever he may be, a poor exile, at the very ends of the earth, under circumstances where obedience to the law, as such, was simply impossible; but where the rich and precious grace of God, and His most glori-

ous salvation could meet him, in the depth of his need. There, though he could not keep the law, he could confess with his mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in his heart that God had raised Him from the dead; and this is salvation.

But then, if it be "whosoever" it cannot possibly be confined to the Jew; nay, it cannot be confined at all; and hence the apostle goes on to say, "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek." There was the greatest possible difference under the law. There could not be a broader or more distinct line of demarcation than that which the lawgiver had drawn between the Jew and the Greek; but that line is obliterated, for a double reason: first, because "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." (Rom. 3:23.) And, secondly, because "The same Lord over all is rich to all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

How blessedly simple! "Calling" — "believing" — "confessing!" Nothing can exceed the transcendent grace that shines in these words. No doubt, it is assumed that the soul is really in earnest; that the heart is engaged. God deals in moral realities. It is not a nominal, notional, head belief; but divine faith wrought in the heart by the Holy Ghost — a Living faith which

connects the soul, in a divine way and by an everlasting link, to Christ.

And then there is the confessing with the mouth, the Lord Jesus. This is of cardinal importance. A man may say, "I believe in my heart, but I am not one for parading my religious belief. I am not a talker. I keep my religion to myself. It is entirely a matter between my soul and God; I do not believe in that perpetual intruding our religious impressions upon other people. Many who talk loudly and largely about their religion in public, make but a sorry figure in private, and I certainly do not want to be identified with such. I utterly abhor all cant. Deeds, not words for me.

All this sounds very plausible; but it cannot stand for a moment in the light of Romans 10:9. There must be the confession with the mouth. Many would like to be saved by Christ, but they shrink from the reproach of confessing His precious Name. They would like to get to heaven when they die, but they do not want to be identified with a rejected Christ. Now God does not own such. He looks for the full, bold, clear confession of Christ, in the face of a hostile world. Our Lord Christ, too, looks for this confession. He declares that whoso confesses

Him before men, He will confess before the angels of God; but whoso denies Him before men, He will deny before the angels of God. The thief on the cross exhibited the two great branches of true saving faith. He believed with his heart, and confessed with his mouth. Yes, he gave a flat contradiction to the whole world on the most vital question that ever was or ever could be raised, and that question was Christ. He was a thoroughly pronounced disciple of Christ. Oh! that there were more such! There is a terrible amount of indefiniteness and cold half-heartedness in the professing church, grievous to the Holy Ghost, offensive to Christ, hateful to God. We long for bold decision, out-and-out, unmistakable testimony to the Lord Jesus. May God the Holy Spirit stir up all our hearts, and lead us forth, in more thorough consecration of heart, to that blessed One who freely gave His life to save us from everlasting burnings!

We shall close this section by quoting for the reader the last few verses of our chapter in which Moses makes a peculiarly solemn appeal to the hearts and consciences of the people. It is a most powerful word of exhortation.

"See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil." Thus it is ever in the government of God. The two things are inseparably linked together. Let no man dare to snap the link. God "will render to every man according to his deeds; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour and immortality, eternal life. But to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that does evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that works good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. For there is no respect of persons with God." (Rom 2:6-11)

The apostle does not, in this great practical passage, go into the question of power; he simply states the broad fact — a fact applicable at all times, and under all dispensations, government, Law and Christianity; it ever holds good that "God will render to every man according to his deeds." This is of the very last possible importance. May we ever bear it in mind. It may perhaps be said, "Are not Christians under grace?" Yes, thank God; but does this weaken, in the smallest degree, the grand

governmental principle stated above? Nay, it strengthens and confirms it immensely.

But, again, some may feel disposed to say, "Can any unconverted person do good?" We reply, this question is not raised, in the scripture just quoted. Every one taught of God knows, and feels and owns, that not one atom of "good" has ever been done in this world but by the grace of God; that man left to himself will do evil only, evil continually. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights." All this is most blessedly true, and thankfully owned by every pious soul; but it leaves wholly untouched the fact set forth in Deuteronomy 30 and confirmed by Romans 2 that life and good, death and evil are bound together by an inseparable link. May we never forget it! May it ever abide in the remembrance of the thoughts of our hearts!

"See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgements, that thou mayest live and multiply; and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that

thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce to you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live; that thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave to Him;" — the all important, essential thing, for each, for all, the very spring and power of all true religion, in every age, in every place — "for he is thy life, and the length of thy days" — How close! How vital! How real! How very precious! — "that thou mayest dwell in the land which the Lord sware to thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them." (Vers. 15-20.)

Nothing can be more solemn than this closing appeal to the congregation: it is in full keeping with the tone and character of the entire book of Deuteronomy — a book marked throughout by the most powerful exhortations that ever fell on mortal ears. We have no such soul-stirring appeals in any of the preceding sections of the Pentateuch. Each book, we need not say, has its

own specific niche to fill, its own distinct object and character; but the great burden of Deuteronomy, from beginning to end, is exhortation; its thesis, the word of God, its object, obedience — whole-hearted, earnest, loving obedience — grounded on a known relationship, and enjoyed privileges.

## **Chapter 31.**

The heart of Moses still lingers, with deep tenderness and affectionate solicitude, over the congregation. It seems as though he could never weary of pouring into their ears his earnest exhortations. He felt their need; he foresaw their danger; and, like a true and faithful shepherd, he sought, with all the deep and tender affection of His large, loving heart, to prepare them for what was before them. No one can read his closing words without being struck with their peculiarly solemn tone. They remind us of Paul's touching farewell to the elders of Ephesus. Both these beloved and honoured servants realised, in a very vivid manner, the seriousness of their own position, and that of the persons they were addressing. They felt the uncommon gravity of the interests at stake, and the urgent need of the most faithful dealing with the heart and conscience. This will ac-

count for what we may term the awful solemnity of their appeals. All who really enter into the situation and destiny of the people of God, in a world like this, must be serious. The true sense of these things, the apprehension of them in the divine presence must, of necessity, impart a holy gravity to the character and a special pungency and power to the testimony.

"And Moses went, and spake these words to all Israel. And he said to them, I am an hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in; also the Lord has said to me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan." How very touching this allusion to his great age, and this fresh and final reference to the solemn governmental dealing of God with himself personally! The direct and manifest object of both was to give effect to his appeal to the hearts and consciences of the people — to strengthen the moral lever by which this beloved and honoured servant of God sought to move them in the direction of simple obedience. If he points to his gray hairs, or to the holy discipline exercised towards him, it, most assuredly, is not for the purpose of bringing himself, his circumstances, or his feelings before them, but simply to touch the deepest springs of their moral being by every possible means.

"The Lord thy God, he will go over before thee, and he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them; and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the Lord has said. And the Lord shall do to them as he did to Sihon and to Og, kings of the Amorites, and to the land of them whom he destroyed. And the Lord shall give them up before your face, that ye may do to them according to all the commandments which I have commanded you" Not a word of murmuring or repining as to himself; not the faintest tinge of envy or jealousy in his reference to the one who was to take his place; not the most distant approach to anything of the kind; every selfish consideration is swallowed up in the one grand object of encouraging the hearts of the people to tread, with firm step, the pathway of obedience which was then, is now, and ever must be, the path of victory, the path of blessing, the path of peace.

"Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them; for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee." What precious, soul-sustaining words are these, beloved Christian reader! How eminently calculated to lift the heart above every discouraging influence! The blessed consciousness of the Lord's presence with

us, and the remembrance of His gracious ways with us, in days gone by, must ever prove the true secret of strength in moving onward. The same mighty hand which had subdued before them Sihon and Og, could subdue all the kings of Canaan. The Amorites were quite as formidable as the Canaanites; Jehovah was more than a match for all. "We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out."

Only think of God driving out people with His own hand! What an answer to all the arguments and difficulties of a morbid sentimentality! How very shallow and erroneous are the thoughts of some in reference to the governmental ways of God! How miserably one-sided their notions of His character and actings! How perfectly absurd the attempt to measure God by the standard of human judgement and feeling! It is very evident that Moses had not the smallest particle of sympathy with such sentiments, when he addressed to the congregation of Israel the magnificent exhortation quoted above. He knew something of the gravity and solemnity of the government of God, something

too of the blessedness of having Him as a shield in the day of battle, a refuge and a resource in every hour of peril and need.

Let us hearken to his encouraging words addressed to the man who was to succeed him. "And Moses called to Joshua, and said to him in the sight of all Israel, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou must go with this people to the land which the Lord has sworn to their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee; he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee; fear not, neither be dismayed."

Joshua needed a special word for himself, as one called to occupy a prominent and very distinguished place in the congregation. But the word to him embodies the same precious truth as that addressed to the whole assembly. He is assured of the divine presence and power with him. This is enough for each, for all; for Joshua as for the most obscure member of the assembly. Yes, reader, and enough for thee, whoever thou art, or whatever be thy sphere of action. It matters not, in the least, what difficulties or dangers may lie before us, our God is amply sufficient for all. If only we have the sense of the Lord's presence with us, and the authority of His word for the work in which

we are engaged, we may move on with joyful confidence, spite of ten thousand difficulties and hostile influences.

"And Moses wrote this law, and delivered it to the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and to all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law; and that their children, which have not known anything, may hear; and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it." (Vers. 9-35.)

Two things in the forgoing passage claim our special attention; first, the fact that Jehovah attached the most solemn importance to the public assembly of His people for the purpose of hearing His word. "All Israel" — "men, women and children" — with the stranger who had cast in his lot amongst them, were com-

manded to assemble themselves together to hear the reading of the book of the law of God, that all might learn His holy will and their duty. Each member of the assembly, from the eldest to the youngest, was to be brought into direct personal contact with the revealed will of Jehovah, that each one might know his solemn responsibility.

And, secondly, we have to weigh the fact that the children were to be gathered before the Lord to hearken to His word. Both these facts are full of weighty instruction for all the members of the church of God — instruction urgently called for on all sides. There is a most deplorable amount of failure as to these two points. We sadly neglect the assembling of ourselves together for the simple reading of the holy scriptures. There does not seem to be sufficient attraction in the word of God itself to bring us together. There is an unhealthy craving for other things; human oratory, music, religious excitement of some kind or other seems needful to bring people together; anything and everything but the precious word of God.

It will perhaps be said that people have the word of God in their houses; that it is quite different now from what it was with Israel; every one can read the scriptures at home, and there is

not the same necessity for the public reading. Such a plea will not stand the test of truth for a moment. We may rest assured if the word of God were loved and prized and studied in private and in the family, it would be loved and prized and studied in public. We should delight to gather together round the fountain of holy scripture, to drink, in happy fellowship, of the living water for our common refreshment and blessing.

But it is not so. The word of God is not loved and studied, either privately or publicly. Trashy literature is devoured in private; and music, ritualistic services and imposing ceremonies, are eagerly sought after in public. Thousands will flock to hear music and pay for admission; but how few care for a meeting to read the holy scriptures! These are facts, and facts are powerful arguments. We cannot get over them. There is a growing thirst for religious excitement, and a growing distaste for the calm study of holy scripture, and the spiritual exercises of the Christian assembly. It is perfectly useless to deny it. We cannot shut our eyes to it. The evidence of it meets us on every hand.

Thank God, there are a few, here and there, who really love the word of God, and delight to meet, in holy fellowship, for the

study of its precious truths. May the Lord increase the number of such, and bless them abundantly! May our lot be cast with them, "till travelling days are done!" They are but an obscure and feeble remnant everywhere; but they love Christ and cleave to His word; and their richest enjoyment is to get together and think and speak and sing of Him. May God bless them and keep them! May He deepen His precious work in their souls, and bind them more closely to Himself and one another, and thus prepare them, in the state of their affections, for the appearing of "The Bright and Morning Star".

We must now turn, for a few moments, to the closing verses of our chapter, in which Jehovah speaks to His beloved and honoured servant in tones of deep and touching solemnity as to His own death, and as to Israel's dark and gloomy future.

"And the Lord said to Moses, Behold, thy days approach that thou must die: call Joshua, and present yourselves in the tabernacle of the congregation, that I may give him a charge. And Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves in the tabernacle of the congregation. And the Lord appeared in the tabernacle in a pillar of a cloud; and the pillar of the cloud stood over the door of the tabernacle. And the Lord said to Moses,

Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers; and this people will rise up and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be among them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not among us? And I will surely hide my face in that day, for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned to other gods."

"Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god." So says the Spirit of Christ, in Psalm 16. Israel has proved, is proving, and shall yet more fully prove the solemn truth of these words. Their history in the past, their present dispersion and desolation, and, beyond all, the "great tribulation" through which they have yet to pass, at "the time of the end" — all go to confirm and illustrate the truth that the sure and certain way to multiply our sorrows is to turn away from the Lord, and look to any creature resource. This is one of the many and varied practical lessons which we have to gather from the mar-

vellous history of the seed of Abraham. May we learn it effectually! May we learn to cleave to the Lord with purpose of heart, and turn away, with holy decision, from every other object. This, we feel persuaded, is the only path of true happiness and peace. May we ever be found in it!

"Now therefore write ye this song for you, and teach it the children of Israel; put it in their mouths, that this song may be a witness for me against the children of Israel. For when I shall have brought them into the land which I swear to their fathers, that flows with milk and honey; and they shall have eaten and filled themselves, and waxen fat; then will they turn to other gods, and serve them, and provoke me, and break my covenant. And it shall come to pass, when many evils and troubles are befallen them, that this song shall testify against them as a witness; for it shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed: for I know their imagination which they go about, even now, before I have brought them into the land which I swear."

How deeply affecting, how peculiarly solemn is all this! Instead of Israel being a witness for Jehovah, before all nations, the song of Moses was to be a witness for Jehovah against the children of Israel. They were called to be His witnesses; they

were responsible to declare His Name, and to show forth His praise in that land into which, in His faithfulness, and sovereign mercy, He conducted them. But alas! they utterly and shamefully failed; and hence in view of this sad and most humiliating failure a song was to be written which, in the first place, as we shall see, sets forth, in most magnificent strains, the glory of God; and, secondly, records, in accents of inflexible faithfulness, Israel's deplorable failure, in every stage of their history.

"Moses therefore wrote this song the same day, and taught it the children of Israel. And he gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong, and of a good courage, for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swear to them: and I will be with thee." Joshua was not to be discouraged or faint-hearted because of the predicted unfaithfulness of the people. He was, like his great progenitor, to be strong in faith giving glory to God. He was to move forward with joyful confidence, leaning on the arm and confiding in the word of Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel, in nothing terrified by his adversaries, but resting in the precious, soul-sustaining assurance that, however the seed of Abraham might fail to obey, and

as a consequence bring down judgement on themselves, yet the God of Abraham would infallibly maintain and make good His promise, and glorify His Name in the final restoration and everlasting blessing of His chosen people.

All this comes out, with uncommon vividness and power in the song of Moses; and Joshua was called to serve in the faith of it. He was to fix his eye not upon Israel's ways, but upon the eternal stability of the divine covenant with Abraham. He was to conduct Israel across the Jordan and plant them in that fair inheritance designed for them in the purpose of God. Had Joshua occupied his mind with Israel, he must have flung down his sword and given up in despair. But no, he had to encourage himself in the Lord his God, and serve in the energy of a faith that endures as seeing Him who is invisible.

Precious, soul-sustaining, God-honouring faith! May the reader, whatever be his line of life or sphere of action, know, in the profoundest depths of his soul, the moral power of this divine principle! May every beloved child of God and every servant of Christ know it! It is the only thing which will enable us to grapple with the difficulties, hindrances and hostile influ-

ences which surround us in the scene through which we are passing, and to finish our course with joy.

"And it came to pass when Moses had made an end of writing the words of this law in a book, until they were finished that Moses commanded the Levites, which bare the ark of the covenant of the Lord saying, Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee. For I know thy rebellion, and thy stiff neck: behold, while I am yet alive with you this day, ye have been rebellious against the Lord; and how much more after my death? Gather to me all the elders of your tribes, and your officers, that I may speak these words in their ears, and call heaven and earth to record against them. For I know that after my death ye will utterly corrupt yourselves, and turn aside from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days; because ye will do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke him to anger through the work of your hands."

How forcibly we are here reminded of Paul's farewell address to the elders of Ephesus! "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the

flock. Also from among your own selves, shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified." (Acts 20:29-32.)

Man is the same always and everywhere. His history is a blotted one, from beginning to end. But oh! it is such a relief and solace to the heart to know and remember that God is ever the same, and His word abides and is "settled for ever in heaven." It was hid in the side of the ark of the covenant and there preserved intact, spite of all the grievous sin and folly of the people. This gives sweet rest to the heart, at all times, in the face of human failure, and the wreck and ruin of everything committed to man's hand. "The word of our God shall stand for ever:" and while it bears a true and solemn testimony against man and his ways, it also conveys home to the heart the most precious and tranquillising assurance that God is above all man's sin and folly, that His resources are absolutely inexhaust-

ible, and that, ere long, His glory shall shine out and fill the whole scene. The Lord be praised for the deep consolation of all this!

## **Chapter 32.**

"And Moses spake in the ears of all the congregation of Israel the words of this song, until they were ended." It is not too much to say that one of the very grandest and most comprehensive sections in the divine Volume now lies open before us and claims our prayerful attention. It takes in the whole range of God's dealings with Israel from first to last, and presents a most solemn record of their grievous sin and of divine wrath and judgement. But, blessed be God, it begins and ends with Him; and this is full of deepest and richest blessing for the soul. If it were not so, if we had only the melancholy story of man's ways, we should be completely overwhelmed. But in this magnificent song, as indeed in the entire Volume, we begin with God and we end with God. This tranquillises the spirit most blessedly, and enables us, in calm and holy confidence, to pursue the history of man; to see everything going to pieces in his hands, and to mark the actings of the enemy in opposition

to the counsels and purposes of God. We can afford to see the complete failure and ruin of the creature, in every shape and form, because we know and are assured that God will be God, in spite of everything. He will have the upper hand in the end, and then all will be, must be right. God shall be all in all, and there shall be neither enemy nor evil occurrent throughout that vast universe of bliss of which our adorable Lord Christ shall be the central sun for ever.

But we must turn to the song.

"Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth." Heaven and earth are summoned to hearken to this magnificent outpouring. Its range is commensurate with its vast moral importance. "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass; because I will publish the name of the Lord; ascribe ye greatness to our God."

Here lies the solid, the imperishable foundation of everything. Come what may, the Name of our God shall stand for ever. No power of earth or hell can possibly countervail the divine pur-

pose, or hinder the outshining of the divine glory. What sweet rest this gives the heart, in the midst of this dark, sorrowful sin-stricken world, and in the face of the apparently successful schemes of the enemy! Our refuge, our resource, our sweet relief and solace are found in the Name of the Lord our God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Truly the publication of that blessed Name must ever be as the refreshing dew and tender rain falling upon the heart. This is, of a truth, the divine and heavenly doctrine on which the soul can feed, and by which it is sustained, at all times, and under all circumstances.

"He is the Rock" — not merely a rock. There is, there can be no other Rock but Himself. Eternal and universal homage to His glorious Name! — "His work is perfect;" — not a single flaw in anything that comes from His blessed hand, all bears the stamp of absolute perfection. This will be made manifest to all created intelligences by-and-by. It is manifest to faith now, and is a spring of divine consolation to all true believers. The very thought of it distils as the dew upon the thirsty soul. "For all his ways are judgement; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he." Infidels may cavil and sneer; they may, in their fancied wisdom, try to pick holes in the divine

actings; but their folly shall be manifest to all. "Let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged." God must have the upper hand, in the end. Let men beware how they presume to call in question the sayings and doings of the only true, the only wise and the almighty God.

There is something uncommonly fine in the opening notes of this song. It gives the sweetest rest to the heart to know that however man and even the people of God may fail and come to ruin, yet we have to do with One who abides faithful and can not deny Himself, whose ways are absolutely perfect, and who, when the enemy has done his very utmost, and brought all his malignant designs to a head, shall glorify Himself and bring in universal and everlasting blessedness.

True, He has to execute judgement upon man's ways. He is constrained to take down the rod of discipline and use it, at times, with terrible severity upon His own people. He is perfectly intolerant of evil in those who bear His holy Name. All this comes out, with special solemnity in the song before us. Israel's ways are exposed and dealt with unsparingly; nothing is allowed to pass; all is set forth with holy precision and faithful-

ness. Thus we read, "They have corrupted themselves; their spot is not the spot of his children; they are a perverse and crooked generation. Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that has bought thee? has he not made thee, and established thee?"

Here we have the first note of reproof, in this song; but no sooner has it fallen on the ear than it is followed by a most precious outpouring of testimony to the goodness, loving kindness, faithfulness, and tender mercy of Jehovah, the Elohim of Israel, and the Most High, or Elion of all the earth. "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee; when the Most High [God's millennial title] divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel."

What a glorious fact is here unfolded to our view! A fact but little understood or taken account of by the nations of the earth. How little do men consider that, in the original settlement of the great national boundaries, the Most High had direct reference to "the children of Israel"! That thus it was, and the reader

should seek to grasp this grand and intensely interesting fact. When we look at Geography and History from a divine standpoint, we find that Canaan and the seed of Jacob are God's centre. Yes; Canaan, a little strip of land, lying along the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, with an area of eleven thousand square miles, about a third of the extent of Ireland is the centre of God's geography; and the twelve tribes of Israel are the central object of God's history. How little have geographers and historians thought of this! They have described countries, and written the history of nations which in geographical extent and political importance far outstrip Palestine and its people, according to human thinking, but which, in God's account, are as nothing compared with that little strip of land which He deigns to call His own, and which it is His fixed purpose to inherit through the seed of Abraham His friend.\*

\* How true it is that God's thoughts are not man's thoughts, or His ways as man's ways? Man attaches importance to extensive territories, material strength, pecuniary resources, well-disciplined armies, powerful fleets. God, on the contrary, takes no account of such things, they are to Him as the small dust of the balance. "Have ye not known? have ye not heard? has it not been told you from the beginning? have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth? It is he that sits upon the circle of the

earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretches out the heavens as a curtain, and spreads them out as a tent to dwell in; that brings the princes to nothing; he makes the judges of the earth as vanity. Hence we may see the moral reason why, in selecting a country to be the centre of His earthly plans and counsels, Jehovah did not select one of vast extent, but a very small and insignificant strip of land of little account in the thoughts of men. But oh! what importance attaches to that little spot! What principles have been unfolded there! What events have taken place there! What deeds have been done there! What plans and purposes are yet to be wrought out there! There is not a spot on the face of the earth so interesting to the heart of God as the land of Canaan and the city of Jerusalem. Scripture teems with evidence as to this. We could fill a small volume with proofs. The time is rapidly approaching when living acts will do what the fullest and clearest testimony of scripture fails to do, namely, convince men that the land of Israel was, is, and ever shall be God's earthly centre. All other nations owe their importance, their interest, their place in the pages of inspiration simply to the fact of their being, in some way or other, connected with the land and people of Israel. How little do historians know or think of this! But surely every one who loves God ought to know it and ponder it.

We cannot attempt to dwell upon this most important and suggestive fact, but we would ask the reader to give it his serious consideration. He will find it fully developed and strikingly illustrated in the prophetic scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. "The Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye" — the most sensitive, delicate part of the human body — "As an eagle stirs up her nest, flutters over her young, spreads abroad her wings, takes them, bears them upon her wings;" — to teach them to fly and keep them from falling "so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape."

Need we say that the primary application of all this is to Israel? No doubt, the church may learn from it, and profit by it; but to

apply it to the church would involve a double mistake, a mistake of the most serious nature; it would involve nothing less than the reducing of the church from a heavenly to an earthly level; and the most unwarrantable interference with Israel's divinely appointed place and portion. What, we may lawfully inquire, has the church of God, the body of Christ to do with the settlement of the nations of the earth? Nothing whatever. The church, according to the mind of God, is a stranger on the earth. Her portion, her hope, her home, her inheritance, her all is heavenly. It would make no difference in the current of this world's history if the church had never been heard of. Her calling, her walk, her destiny, her whole character and course, her principles and morals, are, or ought to be heavenly. The church has nothing to do with the politics of this world. Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence she looks for the Saviour: She proves false to her Lord, false to her calling, false to her principles in so far as she meddles with the affairs of nations. It is her high and holy privilege to be linked and morally identified with a rejected, crucified, risen and glorified Christ. She has no more to do with the present system of things, or with the current of this world's history, than her glorified Head in the heav-

ens. "They," says our Lord Christ, speaking of His people, "are not of the world, even as I am not of the world."

This is conclusive. It fixes our position and our path in the most precise and definite way possible. "As he is so are we in this world." This involves a double truth, namely, our perfect acceptance with God, and our complete separation from the world. We are in the world, but not of it. We have to pass through it as pilgrims and strangers looking out for the coming of our Lord, the appearing of the bright and morning star. It is no part of our business to interfere with municipal or political matters. We are called and exhorted to obey the powers that be, to pray for all in authority, to pay tribute, and owe no man anything; to be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation" among whom we are to "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life."

From all this we may gather something of the immense practical importance of "rightly dividing the word of truth." We have but little idea of the injury done both to the truth of God and to the souls of His people by confounding Israel with the church, the earthly and the heavenly. It hinders all progress in

the knowledge of scripture, and mars the integrity of Christian walk and testimony. This may seem a strong statement; but we have seen the truth of it painfully illustrated, times without number; and we feel that we cannot too urgently call the attention of the reader to the subject. We have, more than once, referred to it in the progress of our studies on the Pentateuch, and therefore we shall not further pursue it here, but proceed with our chapter.

At verse 15, we reach a very different note in the song of Moses. Up to this point, we have had before us God and His actings, His purposes, His counsels, His thoughts, His loving interest in His people Israel, His tender gracious dealings with them. All this is full of deepest, richest blessing. There is — there can be no drawback here. When we have God and His ways before us, there is no hindrance to the heart's enjoyment. All is perfection — absolute, divine perfection, and as we dwell upon it, we are filled with wonder, love and praise.

But there is the human side; and here alas! all is failure and disappointment. Thus at the fifteenth verse of our chapter we read, "But Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked" — what a very full and suggestive statement! How vividly it presents, in its brief com-

pass, the moral history of Israel! — "thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation. They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger. They sacrificed to devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not. Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee."

There is a solemn voice in all this for the writer and the reader. We are, each of us, in danger of treading the moral path indicated by the words just quoted. Surrounded, on all hands, by the rich and varied mercies of God, we are apt to make use of them to nourish a spirit of self-complacency. We make use of the gifts to shut out the Giver. In a word, we, too, like Israel, wax fat and kick. We forget God. We lose the sweet and precious sense of His presence, and of His perfect sufficiency, and turn to other objects as Israel did to false gods. How often do we forget the Rock that begat us, the God that formed us, the Lord that redeemed us! And all this is so much the more inexcusable in us, inasmuch as our privileges are so much higher than

theirs. We are brought into a relationship and a position of which Israel knew absolutely nothing; our privileges and blessings are of the very highest order; it is our privilege to have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ; we are the objects of that perfect love which stopped not short of introducing us into a position in which it can be said of us, "As he [Christ] is, so are we in this world." Nothing could exceed the blessedness of this; even divine love itself could go no further than this. It is not merely that the love of God has been manifested to us in the gift and the death of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son, and in giving us His Spirit; but it has been made perfect with us by placing us in the very same position as that blessed One on the throne of God.

All this is perfectly marvellous. It passes knowledge. And yet how prone we are to forget the blessed One who has so loved us, and wrought for us, and blessed us! How often we slip away from Him in the spirit of our minds and the affections of our hearts! It is not merely a question of what the professing church, as a whole, has done, but the very much deeper, closer, more pointed question of what our own wretched hearts are

constantly prone to do. We are apt to forget God, and to turn to other objects, to our serious loss and His dishonour.

Would we know how the heart of God feels as to all this? Would we form anything like a correct idea of how He resents it? Let us hearken to the burning words addressed to His erring people Israel, the overwhelming strains of the song of Moses. May we have grace to hear them aright, and deeply profit by them!

"And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of His sons and of His daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be;" — alas! alas! a truly deplorable end — "for they are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith. They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities; and I will move them to jealousy with those which are not a people; I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation. For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and shall set on fire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap mischiefs upon them; I will spend mine arrows upon them. They shall be burnt with

hunger, and devoured with burning heat, and with bitter destruction; I will also send the teeth of beasts upon them, with the poison of serpents of the dust. The sword without, and terror within, shall destroy both the young man and the virgin, the suckling also with the man of gray hairs." (Vers. 19-26.)

Here we have a most solemn record of God's governmental dealings with His people — a record eminently calculated to set forth the awful truth of Hebrews 10:31, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." The history of Israel, in the past; their condition, at present; and what they are yet to pass through, in the future, all goes to prove in the most impressive manner that "our God is a consuming fire." No nation on the face of the earth has ever been called to pass through such severe discipline as the nation of Israel. As the Lord reminds them in those deeply solemn words, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities." No other nation was ever called to occupy the highly privileged place of actual relationship with Jehovah. This dignity was reserved for one nation; but the very dignity was the basis of a most solemn responsibility. If they were called to be His people, they were responsible to conduct

themselves in a way worthy of such a wondrous position, or else have to undergo the heaviest chastenings ever endured by any nation under the sun. Men may reason about all this; they may raise all manner of questions as to the moral consistency of a benevolent Being acting according to the terms set forth in verses 22-25 of our chapter. But all such questions and reasonings must, sooner or later, be discovered to be utter folly. It is perfectly useless for men to argue against the solemn actings of divine government, or the terrible severity of the discipline exercised towards the chosen people of God. How much wiser, and better, and safer to be warned by the facts of Israel's history to flee from the wrath to come, and lay hold upon eternal life, and full salvation revealed in the precious gospel of God!

And then, with regard to the use which Christians should make of the record of His dealings with His earthly people, we are bound to turn it to most profitable account by learning from it the urgent need of walking humbly, watchfully and faithfully in our high and holy position. True, we are the possessors of eternal life, the privileged subjects of that magnificent grace which reigns through righteousness to eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord; we are members of the body of Christ, temples

of the Holy Ghost, and heirs of eternal glory. But does all this afford any warrant for neglecting the warning voice which Israel's history utters in our ears? Are we, because of our incomparably higher privileges, to walk carelessly and despise the wholesome admonitions which Israel's history supplies? God forbid! Nay, we are bound to give earnest heed to the things which the Holy Ghost has written for our learning. The higher our privileges, the richer our blessings, the nearer our relationship, the more does it become us — the more solemnly are we bound to be faithful, and to seek, in all things, to carry ourselves in such a way as to be well-pleasing to Him who has called us into the very highest and most blessed place that even His perfect love could bestow. The Lord, in His great goodness, grant that we may, in true purpose of heart, ponder these things in His holy presence, and earnestly seek to serve Him with reverence and godly fear!

But we must proceed with our chapter.

At verse 26, we have a point of deepest interest in connection with the history of the divine dealings with Israel. "I said, I would scatter them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them to cease from among men." And why did He

not? The answer to this question presents a truth of infinite value and importance to Israel — a truth which lies at the very foundation of all their future blessing. No doubt, so far as they are concerned, they deserved to have their remembrance blotted out from among men. But God has His own thoughts, and counsels, and purposes respecting them; and not only so, but He takes account of the thoughts and the actings of the nations in reference to His people. This comes out with singular force and beauty at verse 27. He condescends to give us His reasons for not obliterating every trace of the sinful and rebellious people — and oh! what a touching reason it is! "were it not what I feared the wrath of the enemy lest their adversaries should behave themselves strangely, and lest they should say, Our hand is high, and the Lord has not done all this."

Can anything be more affecting than the grace that breathes in these words? God will not permit the nations to behave themselves strangely toward His poor erring people. He will use them as His rod of discipline, but the moment they attempt, in the indulgence of their own bitter animosity, to exceed their appointed limit, He will break the rod in pieces, and make it

manifest to all that He Himself is dealing with His beloved, though erring people, for their ultimate blessing and His glory.

This is a truth of unspeakable preciousness. It is the fixed purpose of Jehovah to teach all the nations of the earth that Israel has a special place in His heart, and a destined place of pre-eminence on the earth. This is beyond all question. The pages of the prophets furnish a body of evidence perfectly unanswerable on the point. If nations forget or oppose, so much the worse for them. It is utterly vain for them to attempt to countervail the divine purpose, for they may rest assured that the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will confound every scheme formed against the people of His choice. Men may think, in their pride and folly, that their hand is high, but they will have to learn that God's hand is higher still.

But our space does not admit of our dwelling upon this deeply interesting subject; we must allow the reader to pursue it for himself, in the light of holy scripture. He will find it a most profitable and refreshing study. Most gladly would we accompany him through the precious pages of the prophetic scriptures, but we must just now confine ourselves to the magnificent song which is in itself a remarkable epitome of the entire

teaching on the point — a brief, but comprehensive and impressive history of God's ways with Israel and Israel's ways with God, from first to last — a history strikingly illustrative of the great principles of grace, law, government and glory.

At verse 29, we have a very touching appeal. "O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end! How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their Rock had sold them, and the Lord had shut them up? For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges." — There is, there can be but the one Rock, blessed, throughout all ages be His glorious Name! — "For their vine is of the vine of Sodom, and of the fields of Gomorrah; their grapes are grapes of gall, their clusters are bitter; their wine is the poison of dragons, and the cruel venom of asps."

Terrible picture of a people's moral condition drawn by a master hand! Such is the divine estimate of the real state of all those whose rock was not as the Rock of Israel. But a day of vengeance will come. It is delayed, in long-suffering mercy, but it will come as sure as there is a God on the throne of heaven. A day is coming when those nations which have dealt

proudly with Israel shall have to answer at the bar of the Son of man for their conduct, hear His solemn sentence, and meet His unsparing wrath.

"Is not this laid up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures? To me belongs vengeance, and recompense; their foot shall slide in due time; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and the things that shall come upon them make haste. For the Lord shall judge [vindicate, defend or avenge] his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left." Precious grace for Israel, by-and-by — for each, for all, now, who feel and own their need!

"And he shall say, "Where are their gods, their rock in whom they trusted: which did eat the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offerings? let them rise up and help you and be your protection. See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound and I heal:" — wound in governmental wrath, and heal in pardoning grace; all homage to His great and holy Name, throughout the everlasting ages! — "neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand. For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever."

— Glory be to God in the highest! Let all created intelligences adore His matchless Name! — "If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgement," — as it, most assuredly, will — "I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me" — whoever and wherever they are. Tremendous sentence for all whom it may concern — for all haters of God — all lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God! — "I will make mine arrows drunk with blood, and my sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy."

Here we reach the end of the heavy record of judgement, wrath and vengeance, so briefly presented in this song of Moses, but so largely unfolded throughout the prophetic scriptures. The reader can refer, with much interest and profit, to Ezekiel 38 and 39, where we have the judgement of Gog and Magog, the great northern foe who is to come up, at the end, against the land of Israel and there meet his ignominious fall and utter destruction.

He may also turn to Joel 3 which opens with words of balm and consolation for the Israel of the future. "For behold, in

those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land." Thus he will see how perfectly the voices of the prophets harmonise with the song of Moses; and how fully, how clearly, and how unanswerably, in both the one and the other, does the Holy Ghost set forth and establish the grand truth of Israel's future restoration, supremacy and glory.

And then how truly delightful is the closing note of our song! How magnificently it places the topstone upon the whole superstructure! All the hostile nations are judged, under whatever style or title they appear upon the scene, whether it be Gog and Magog, the Assyrian, or the king of the north — all the foes of Israel shall be confounded and consigned to everlasting perdition, and then this sweet note falls upon the ear, "REJOICE, O YE NATIONS, WITH HIS PEOPLE; FOR HE WILL AVENGE THE BLOOD OF HIS SERVANTS, AND WILL RENDER VENGEANCE TO HIS ADVERSARIES, AND

WILL BE MERCIFUL UNTO HIS LAND AND TO HIS PEOPLE"

Here ends this marvellous song, one of the very finest, fullest and most forcible utterances in the whole Volume of God. It begins and ends with God, and takes in, in its comprehensive range, the history of His earthly people Israel, past, present and future. It shows us the ordering of the nations in direct reference to the divine purpose as to the seed of Abraham. It unfolds the final judgement of all those nations that have acted or shall yet act in opposition to the chosen seed; and then when Israel is fully restored and blessed, according to the covenant made with their fathers, the saved nations are summoned to rejoice with them.

How glorious is all this! What a splendid circle of truths is presented to the vision of our souls in the thirty-second chapter of Deuteronomy! Well may it be said, "God is the Rock, his work is perfect." Here the heart can rest, in holy tranquillity, come what may. Everything may go to pieces in man's hand; all that is merely human may and must issue in hopeless wreck and ruin; but "The Rock" shall stand for ever, and every "work"

of the divine Hand shall shine in everlasting perfection to the glory of God and the perfect blessing of His people.

Such, then, is the song of Moses; such its scope, range and application. The intelligent reader does not need to be told that the church of God, the body of Christ, the mystery of which the blessed apostle Paul was made the minister, finds no place in this song. When Moses wrote this song, the mystery of the church lay hid in the bosom of God. If we do not see this, we are wholly incompetent to interpret or even to understand the holy scriptures. To a simple mind, taught exclusively by scripture, it is as clear as a sunbeam that the song of Moses has for its thesis the government of God, in connection with Israel and the nations; for its sphere, the earth; and for its centre, the land of Canaan.

"And Moses came and spake all the words of this song in the ears of the people, he, and Hoshea the son of Nun. And Moses made an end of speaking all these words to all Israel; and he said to them, Set your hearts to all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law. For it is not a vain thing for you; because it is your life; and through this thing ye

shall prolong your days in the land, whither ye go over Jordan to possess it" (Vers. 44-47.)

Thus, from first to last, through every section of this precious book of Deuteronomy, we find Moses, that beloved and most honoured servant of God, urging upon the people the solemn duty of implicit, unqualified, hearty obedience to the word of God. In this lay the precious secret of life, peace, progress, prosperity, all. They had nothing else to do but obey. Blessed business! Happy holy duty! May it be ours, beloved reader, in this day of conflict and confusion in the which man's will is so fearfully dominant. The world, and the so-called church are rushing on together, with appalling rapidity, along the dark pathway of self-will — a pathway which must end in the blackness of darkness for ever. Let us bear this in mind, and earnestly seek to tread the narrow path of simple obedience to all the precious commandments of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Thus shall our hearts be kept in sweet peace; and although we may seem to the men of this world, and even to professing Christians to be odd and narrow-minded, let us not be moved, the breadth of a hair, from the path indicated by the

word of God. May the word of Christ dwell in us richly, and the peace of Christ rule in our hearts, until the end?

It is very remarkable, and indeed eminently impressive, to find our chapter closing with another reference to Jehovah's governmental dealing with His beloved servant Moses. "And the Lord spake to Moses that self-same day" — the very day in which he uttered his song in the ears of the people — "saying, Get thee up into this mountain Abarim, to mount Nebo, which is in the land of Moab, that is over against Jericho; and behold the land of Canaan, which I give to the children of Israel for a possession; and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered to thy people; as Aaron thy brother died in mount Hor, and was gathered to his people; because ye trespassed against me among the children of Israel at the waters of Meribah-Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, because ye sanctified me not in the midst of the children of Israel. Yet thou shalt see the land before thee; but thou shalt not go thither to the land which I give the children of Israel." (Vers. 48-52)

How solemn and soul-subduing is the government of God! Surely it ought to make the heart tremble at the very thought of disobedience. If such an eminent servant as Moses was judged

for speaking unadvisedly with his lips, what will be the end of those who live from day to day, week to week, month to month, and year to year, in deliberate and habitual neglect of the plainest commandments of God, and positive self-willed rejection of His authority?

Oh! for a lowly mind, a broken and contrite heart! This is what God looks for and delights in; it is with such He can make His blessed abode. "To this man will I look, even to him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word." God in His infinite goodness, grant much of this sweet spirit to each of His beloved children, for Jesus Christ's sake!

## **Chapter 33.**

"And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses, the man of God, blessed the children of Israel before his death"

It is full of interest and comfort to find that the last words of the lawgiver were words of unmingled blessing. We have dwelt upon his various discourses, those solemn, searching and deeply affecting homilies addressed to the congregation of Israel. We have meditated upon that marvellous song with its

mingled notes of grace and government. But we are now called to hearken to words of most precious benediction, words of sweetest comfort and consolation, words flowing from the very heart of the God of Israel and giving His own loving thoughts respecting them, and His onlook into their glorious future.

The reader will, doubtless, notice a marked difference between the last words of Moses as recorded in Deuteronomy 33, and the last words of Jacob as given in Genesis 49. It is needless to say that both are given by the same pen, both divinely inspired; and hence, although they differ, they do not and cannot clash; there is — there can be no discrepancy between two sections of the Volume of God. This is a cardinal truth, a vital and fundamental principle with every devout Christian, every true believer — a truth to be tenaciously grasped and faithfully confessed, in the face of all the ignorant and insolent assaults of infidelity.

We are not, of course, going to enter upon an elaborate comparison of the two chapters; this would be impossible just now, on various grounds. We are obliged to be as concise and brief as possible. But there is one grand point of difference which can be seized at a glance. Jacob gives the history of the actings of

his sons, some of them, alas! most sad and humiliating. Moses, on the contrary, presents the actings of divine grace, whether in them or toward them. This will, at once, account for the difference. The evil actings of Reuben, of Simeon, and of Levi are recorded by Jacob, but entirely omitted by Moses. Is this discrepancy? Nay; but divine harmony. Jacob views his sons in their personal history; Moses views them in their covenant relationship with Jehovah. Jacob gives us human failure, infirmity and sin; Moses gives us divine faithfulness, goodness and loving-kindness. Jacob gives us human actings and judgement thereon; Moses gives us divine counsels and unmingled blessing flowing out of them. Thanks and praise to our God, His counsels and His blessings and His glory are above and beyond all human failure, sin and folly. He will, ultimately, have it all His own way, and that for ever; then Israel and the nations shall be fully blessed, and shall rejoice together in the abundant goodness of God, and celebrate His praise from shore to shore, and from the river to the ends of the earth.

We shall now do little more than quote for the reader the various blessings of the tribes. They are full of most precious instruction, and do not call for much in the way of exposition.

"And he said, The Lord came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir to them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints [holy ones]; from his right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, he loved the people" — precious, un-failing source of all their future blessing! — "All his saints are in thy hand;" — True secret of their perfect security! "And they sat down at thy feet;" — The only safe and proper attitude, for them, for us, for each, for all! — "Every one shall receive of thy words;" — Blessed boon! Precious treasure! Every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord is more precious by far than thousands of gold and silver; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb — "Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob. And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together. Let Reuben live and not die, and let not his men be few."

We have nothing here about Reuben's instability, nothing about his sin. Grace is in the ascendant; blessings are flowing in rich abundance from the loving heart of the One who delights to bless and to surround Himself with hearts filled to overflowing with the sense of His goodness.

"And this is the blessing of Judah; and he said, Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah, and bring him to his people; let his hands be sufficient for him; and be thou an help to him from his enemies." Judah is the royal line. "Our Lord sprang out of Judah," thus illustrating, in a truly marvellous manner, how divine grace rises, in its majesty, above human sin, and triumphs gloriously over circumstances which reveal man's utter weakness. "Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar!" Who but the Holy Spirit could have penned these words? How plainly they declare that God's thoughts are not as our thoughts! What human hand would have introduced Thamar into the genealogical line of our adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Not one. The stamp of divinity is strikingly impressed on Matthew 1:3, as it is upon every clause of the Holy Volume from beginning to end. The Lord be praised that it is so!

"Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise; thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp; from the prey, my son, thou art gone up; he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his

feet, until Shiloh come; and to him shall the gathering of the people be. Binding his foal to the vine, and his ass's colt to the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes; his eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk." (Gen. 49:8-12.)

"And I saw in the right hand of him that sat on the throne a book written within and on the backside; sealed with seven seals. And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, Who is worthy to open the book, and to loose the seals thereof? And no man in heaven, nor in earth, neither under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon. And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders says to me, Weep not; behold, the Lion of tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof. And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb, as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth."

How highly favoured is the tribe of Judah! Surely to be in the genealogical line from which our Lord sprang, is a high honour; and yet we know — for our Lord Himself has told us — that it is far higher, far more blessed to hear the word of God and keep it. To do the will of God, to treasure up in our hearts His precious commandments brings us morally nearer to Christ than even the fact of being of His kindred according to the flesh. (Matt 12:46-50.)

"And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim [lights and perfections] be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah; who said to his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children; for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant. They shall teach Jacob thy judgements, and Israel thy law; they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thy altar. Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands; smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again." (Vers. 8-11.)

The reader will notice the fact that Simeon is left out here, though so intimately associated with Levi in Genesis 49. "Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret: to their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united; for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self-will they digged down a wall. Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel."

Now, when we compare Genesis 49 with Deuteronomy 33, we observe two things, namely, human responsibility, on the one hand; and divine sovereignty, on the other. Moreover, we see nature and its actings; grace and its fruits. Jacob looks at Simeon and Levi linked together in nature, and displaying nature's tempers and ways. So far as they were concerned, they both alike deserved the curse. But in Levi, we see the glorious triumphs of sovereign grace. It was grace which enabled Levi, in the days of the golden calf, to gird on the sword and stand for the glory of the God of Israel. "Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the Lord's side? let him come to me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves to-

gether to him. And he said to them, Thus says the Lord God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses; and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men. For Moses had said, Consecrate yourselves today to the Lord, even every man upon his son, and upon his brother; that he may bestow upon you a blessing this day." (Ex. 32:26-29)

Where was Simeon, on this occasion? He was with Levi in the day of nature's self-will, fierce anger and cruel wrath; why not in the day of bold decision for Jehovah? He was ready to go with his brother to avenge a family insult, why not to vindicate the honour of God, insulted as it was by the idolatrous act of the whole congregation? Will any one say he was not responsible? Let such an one beware how he raises such a question. The call of Moses was addressed to the whole congregation; Levi alone responded; and he got the blessing. He stood for God, in a dark and evil day, and for this he was honoured with the priesthood — the very highest dignity that could be con-

ferred upon him. The call was addressed to Simeon as well as to Levi, but Simeon did not respond. Is there any difficulty here? To a mere theologian there may be; but to a devout Christian, there is none. God is sovereign. He does as He pleases and gives none account of any of His matters. If any one feels disposed to ask, "Why is Simeon omitted in Deuteronomy 33?" The simple and conclusive answer is, "O man, who art thou that repliest against God?" In Simeon, we see nature's actings judged; in Levi, we see the fruits of grace rewarded; in both we see God's truth vindicated and His Name glorified. Thus it ever has been; thus it is, and thus it shall be. Man is responsible; God is sovereign. Are we called upon to reconcile these two propositions? Nay; we are called to believe them; they are reconciled already, inasmuch as they appear side by side on the page of inspiration. This is enough for every pious mind; and as for cavillers, they will get their definitive answer, by-and-by.\*

- \* For further remarks on the tribe of Levi, the reader is referred to "Notes on the book of Exodus," chapter 32. "Notes on the book of Numbers," chapters 3, 4 and 8. Also a small pamphlet, first published in the year 1846, entitled, "The History of the Tribe of Levi Considered."

"And of Benjamin" — "the son of my right hand" — he said, "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him; and the Lord shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders." Blessed place for Benjamin! Blessed place for each beloved child of God! How precious is the thought of dwelling in safety in the divine presence, in conscious nearness to the true and faithful Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, day and night abiding under the covert of his sheltering wings.

*"How blest are they who still abide,  
Close sheltered by Thy watchful side;  
Who life and strength from Thee receive,  
And with Thee move and in Thee live."*

Reader, seek to know, more and more, the reality and blessedness of Benjamin's place and portion. Be not satisfied with anything short of the enjoyed presence of Christ, the abiding sense of relationship and nearness to Him. Be assured of it, it is your happy privilege. Let nothing rob you of it. Keep ever near the Shepherd's side, reposing in His love, lying down in the green pastures and beside the still waters. The Lord grant that the writer and the reader may prove the deep blessedness of this, in

this day of hollow profession and empty talk! May we know the unspeakable preciousness of deep personal intimacy with Himself! This is the special need of the day in which our lot is cast — a day of so much intellectual traffic in truth, but of so little heart knowledge and true appreciation of Christ.

"And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that couches beneath, and for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon, and for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills, and for the precious things of the earth and fullness thereof, and for the goodwill of him that dwelt in the bush; let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren. His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns; with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh."

Joseph is a very remarkable type of Christ. We have dwelt upon his history in our studies on the book of Genesis. The reader

will notice the emphatic way in which Moses speaks of the fact of his having been separated from his brethren. He was rejected and cast into the pit. He passed, in figure, through the deep waters of death, and thus reached the place of dignity and glory. He was raised from the dungeon to be ruler over the land of Egypt, and the preserver and sustainer of his brethren. The iron entered into his soul, and he was made to taste the bitterness of the place of death ere he entered the sphere of glory. Striking type of Him who hung upon the cross, lay in the grave, and is now on the throne of the majesty of heaven.

We cannot but be struck with the fullness of the blessing pronounced upon Joseph, both by Moses, in Deuteronomy 33 and by Jacob, in Genesis 49. Jacob's utterance is uncommonly fine. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well," — Exquisitely beautiful figure! — "whose branches run over the wall. The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him: but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel) even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above,

blessings of the deep that lies under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb: the blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren."

Magnificent range of blessing! And all this flowing from and based upon his sufferings. It is needless to say that all these blessings will be made good in the experience of Israel, by-and-by. The sufferings of the true Joseph will form the imperishable foundation of the future blessedness of His brethren in the land of Canaan; and not only so but the tide of blessing, deep and full, shall flow forth from that highly favoured though now desolate land, in refreshing virtue into all the earth. "And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be." Bright and blessed prospect for Jerusalem, for the land of Israel, and for the whole earth! What a sad mistake to apply such scriptures to the gospel dispensation or to the church of God!

How contrary to the testimony of holy scripture — to the heart of God and to the mind of Christ!

"And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out, and, Issachar, in thy tents. They shall call the people to the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness; for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of the treasures hid in the sand."

Zebulun is to rejoice in his going forth, and Issachar in abiding in his tents. It will be joy at home and abroad; and there will be power to act on others also — calling the people to the mountain to offer the sacrifices of righteousness. All this grounded upon the fact that they themselves shall suck of the abundance of the seas and of hidden treasures. Thus it is always in principle. It is our privilege to rejoice in the Lord, come what may, and to draw from those eternal springs and hidden treasures that are to be found in Himself. Then shall we be in a condition of soul to call others to taste and see that the Lord is good; and, not only so, but to present to God those sacrifices of righteousness so acceptable to Him.

"And of Gad he said, Blessed be he that enlarges Gad: he dwells as a lion, and tears the arm with the crown of the head. And he provided the first part for himself, because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the Lord, and his judgements with Israel. And of Dan he said, Dan is a lion's whelp; he shall leap from Bashan. And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord: possess thou the west and the south. And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days thy strength. There is none like to the God of Jeshurun, who rides upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them. Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew. Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like to thee, O people saved by the Lord, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be

found liars to thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places." (Vers. 20-29.)

Truly we may say human comment is uncalled for here. Nothing can exceed the preciousness of the grace that breathes in the closing lines of our book. The blessings of this chapter, like the song of chapter 33 begin and end with God and His marvellous ways with Israel. It is refreshing and comforting, beyond expression, at the close of all the appeals, all the exhortations, all the solemn warnings, all the faithful declarations, all the prophetic records as to failure and sin, judgement and governmental wrath — after all these, to listen to such accents as those which we have just penned. It is indeed a most magnificent termination to this blessed book of Deuteronomy. Grace and glory shine out with uncommon lustre. God will yet be glorified in Israel, and Israel fully and for ever blessed in God. Nothing can hinder this. The gifts and calling of God are without repentance. He will make good every jot and tittle of His precious word to Israel. The last words of the lawgiver bear the clearest and fullest testimony to all this. Had we nothing but the last four verses of the precious chapter on which we have been dwelling, they would be amply sufficient to prove,

beyond all question, the future restoration, blessing, pre-eminence and glory of the twelve tribes of Israel in their own land.

True it is — blessedly true — that the Lord's people now can draw instruction, comfort and refreshment from the blessings pronounced upon Israel. Blessed be God, we can know what it is to be "satisfied with favour, and full of the blessing of the Lord." We may take comfort from the assurance that "as our days shall be our strength." We too can say, "The eternal God is our refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." We can say all this and much more. We can say what Israel never could and never can say. The church's blessings and privileges are all heavenly and spiritual; but that does not hinder our taking comfort from the promises made to Israel. The grand mistake of professing Christians is in applying to the church exclusively what most manifestly applies to God's earthly people. We must, once more, earnestly entreat the Christian reader to watch against this serious error. He need not be in the least afraid of losing anything of His own special blessing by leaving to the seed of Abraham the place and the portion assigned them by the counsels and promises of God; on the contrary, it is only when these are clearly understood and fully acknowledged that

we can make an intelligent use of the entire canon of Old Testament scripture. We may lay it down as a great root principle that no one can possibly understand or interpret scripture who does not clearly recognise the grand distinction between Israel and the church of God.

## **Chapter 34.**

This brief chapter forms an inspired postscript to the book of Deuteronomy. We are not told who was employed as the instrument in the hand of the inspiring Spirit; but this is a matter of no moment to the devout student of holy scripture. We are fully persuaded that the postscript is as truly inspired as the book, and the book as the Pentateuch; and the Pentateuch as the whole Volume of God.

"And Moses went up from the plains of Moab to the mountain of Nebo, to the top, of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead, to Dan, and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, to the utmost sea, and the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, to Zoar. And the Lord said to him, This is the land which I sware to Abraham, to

Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, I will give it to thy seed; I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knows of his sepulchre to this day."

In our studies on the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy, we have had occasion to dwell upon the very solemn and, we may truly add, soul subduing fact recorded in the above quotation. It will not therefore be needful to add many words in this our closing section. We would merely remind the reader that, if he would have a full understanding of the whole subject, he must look at Moses in a twofold aspect, namely, officially and personally.

Now, looking at this beloved and honoured man in his official capacity, it is very plain that it lay not in his province to conduct the congregation of Israel into the promised land. The wilderness was his sphere of action; it pertained not to him to lead the people across the river of death, into their destined inheritance. His ministry was connected with man's responsibility under law and the government of God, and hence it never could

lead the people into the enjoyment of the promise. It was reserved for his successor to do this. Joshua, a type of the risen Saviour, was God's appointed instrument to lead His people across the Jordan, and plant them in their divinely given inheritance.

All this is plain and deeply interesting; but we must look at Moses personally as well as officially; and here, too, we must view him in a twofold aspect, as the subject of government and the object of grace. We must never lose sight of this most important distinction. It runs all through scripture, and is strikingly illustrated in the history of many of the Lord's beloved people and of His most eminent servants. The subject of grace and government demands the reader's most profound attention. We have dwelt upon it again and again, in the course of our studies; but no words of ours could adequately set forth its moral importance and immense practical value. We consider it one of the weightiest and most seasonable subjects that could possibly engage the attention of the Lord's people, at the present moment.

It was the government of God which, with stern decision, forbade the entrance of Moses into the Promised land, much as he

longed to do so. He spoke unadvisedly with his lips; he failed to glorify God in the eyes of the congregation at the waters of Meribah, and for this he was forbidden to cross the Jordan and plant his foot on the promised land.

Let us deeply ponder this, beloved Christian reader. Let us see that we fully apprehend its moral force and practical application. It is surely with the greatest tenderness and delicacy that we would refer to the failure of one of the most beloved and illustrious of the Lord's servants; but it has been recorded for our learning and solemn admonition, and therefore we are bound to give earnest heed to it. We should ever remember that we, too, though under grace, are also the subjects of divine government. We are here on this earth, in the place of solemn responsibility, under a government which cannot be trifled with. True, we are children of the Father, loved with an infinite and everlasting love — loved even as Jesus is loved. We are members of the body of Christ, loved, cherished and nourished according to all the perfect love of His heart. There is no question of responsibility here, no possibility of failure; all is divinely settled, divinely sure; but we are the subjects of divine government also. Let us never, for one moment, lose sight of this. Let us beware

of one-sided and pernicious notions of grace. The very fact of our being objects of divine favour and love, children of God, members of Christ, should lead us to yield all the more reverent attention to the divine government.

To use an illustration drawn from human affairs, her Majesty's children should, above all others, just because they are her children, respect her government; and were they, in any way, to transgress her laws, the dignity of government would be strikingly illustrated by their being made to pay the penalty. If they, because of being the queen's children, were to be allowed to transgress with impunity the enactments of her Majesty's government, it would be simply exposing the government to public contempt, and affording a warrant to all her subjects to do the same. And if it be thus in the case of a human government, how much more in the government of God! "You only have I known of all the families of the earth, therefore will I punish you for your iniquities." "The time is come that judgement must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the

sinner appear?" Solemn fact! Solemn inquiry! May we ponder them deeply.

But, as we have said, Moses was the subject of grace, as well as of government; and truly that grace shines with special lustre on the top of Pisgah. There the venerable servant of God was permitted to stand in his Master's presence, and, with undimmed eye, survey the land of promise, in all its fair proportions. He was permitted to see it from a divine stand-point — see it, not merely as possessed by Israel, but as given by God.

And what then? He fell asleep and was gathered to his people. He died, not as a withered and feeble old man, but in all the freshness and vigour of matured manhood. "And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated." Striking testimony! Rare fact in the annals of our fallen race! The life of Moses was divided into three important and strongly marked periods of forty years each. He spent forty years in the house of Pharaoh; forty years "at the backside of the desert;" and forty years in the wilderness. Marvellous life! Eventful history! How instructive! How suggestive! How rich in its lessons from first to last! How profoundly interesting the study of such a life! To trace him

from the river's brink where he lay a helpless babe, up to the top of Pisgah where he stood, in company with his Lord, to gaze with undimmed vision upon the fair inheritance of the Israel of God; and to see him again on the mount of Transfiguration in company with his honoured fellow-servant Elias, "talking with Jesus" on the grandest theme that could possibly engage the attention of men or angels. Highly favoured man! Blessed servant! Marvellous vessel!

And then let us hearken to the divine testimony to this most beloved man of God. "And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like to Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face, in all the signs and the wonders which the Lord sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, and in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses showed in the sight of all Israel."

May the Lord, in His infinite goodness, bless our study of the book of Deuteronomy! May its precious lessons be engraved upon the tablets of our hearts with the eternal pen of the Holy Ghost, and produce their proper result in forming our character, governing our conduct and shaping our way through this world! May we earnestly seek to tread with a humble spirit and

firm step, the narrow path of obedience, till travelling days are done!

C. H. M.

