

The Student of Scripture.

Edited by Percy W. Heward.

"Grace is poured over Thy lips."

"Gird Thy sword upon Thy thigh." Psalm 45. 2, 3.

A Word of Introduction.

THE twofoldness of Scripture is of the deepest importance. The Lord Jesus CAME not to judge the world, but the word that He spoke WILL judge in the last day (John 12. 47, 48). The fact that fills our hearts with joy, that He is "the Lamb of God, Which taketh away the sin of the world," does not mean there will never be "the wrath of the Lamb." It is needful that the children of God should realize this twofoldness, with the fruit in their lives. We should be wrong if we did not urge rejoicing in the Lord (Phil. 4. 4), but who can make mirth when the sword is sharpened (Ezek. 21. 10)? The privilege of knowing the will of God is great, and we should spend time in worship, and prayerful study. But is it not also needful to warn those around, while we tell the gospel of the glory of Christ? It is with a prayerful desire to have spiritual proportion in the will of God, and according to the Scriptures, that these pages are sent forth.

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"If peradventure God may give them Repentance"

2 Timothy 2. 25.

THE word used by the Holy Spirit may ask a question as in Luke 3. 15, and in John 7. 26—"Do the rulers know indeed that this is the very Christ?" If so, we might render here with the underlying thought, "Would God indeed give them repentance?" But the more frequent employment of the word is not an indirect question, it usually signifies, "Lest at any time" (Matt. 4. 6, 5. 25, 7. 6, 13. 15, 29, 15. 32, 25. 9, 27. 64, etc.). Is not this rendering also possible here? "In meekness instructing those who ARE OPPOSING THEMSELVES LEST God should give them repentance into the acknowledging of the

truth?" Be meek toward the most irritating. They may oppose themselves so as to hinder repentance, may attack God's gracious mode of blessing by humiliation, but do not be discouraged. Still show meekness, still look up for God's blessing. I do not say that this translation is proved, as the only one possible, but it seems unlikely that the Holy Spirit omits this suggestion, which is what we should grammatically expect, were it not that the thought is, at FIRST, surprising. But on further reflection it is not so strange. The wandering believer (for such an one is before us as the margin of verse 26, "taken alive" indicates) is partly on the path of Matthew 13, 15. We recollect elsewhere how the unsaved "suffer loss" of THEIR SOUL, but the same word is used as to the wandering child of God, without the added words as to "the soul." It is indeed, an evil and bitter thing to leave the Lord's path. The spirit of opposition always hinders repentance. Repentance is the need as 2 Corinthians 7 shows (8-11), and Hebrews 6 also. They are opposing themselves that they may not receive repentance, and that they may not recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, but the Lord will still work even if there is the bitter experience of which other Scriptures speak (1 Cor. 5. 5, 2 Cor. 2. 7).

Observe that the semi-colon introduced after "themselves" will be left out in this case. And, whatever rendering we accept, we must observe the contrast between "OUT OF the snare of the devil" and "INTO the will of That One" (the same reference to the Lord as in verses 12 and 13, where the word is translated "He": the antithesis with the devil). Thus we might well have a comma and a dash—"That they may recover themselves, OUT OF the snare of the devil, having been taken alive by him—INTO the will of That One." The thought is of being awakened out of a sleep through the intoxication of the false teaching (Eph. 5. 14), and of being brought back to "that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God."

Thus we come to realize that God will revive His people, and that the enemy's attack is against this. Those who opposed Paul were not all "dead in sins": there were many "taken alive." This is the sad unveiling of those who "departed" in the latest epistle he was inspired to write. Our faith and prayer are stimulated, and we become concerned lest we wander. We would consider ourselves, lest we also have been tempted, and we would be rightly exercised to avoid that opposing and argumentative spirit which hinders repentance and thus hinders perception of truth. The Lord's blessing is ever on humility. We cannot be too meek. We come back to words that are never empty, nor can they be emptied. "The meek will He guide in judgment: and the meek will He teach His way" (Ps. 25. 9). Is it not true that attitude and repentance mean much more as to the loving knowledge of the truth than a well-stocked library, or intellectual acumen? How much we need God,—and He dwells with those who are of a contrite spirit.

Some Parables Associated with Houses.

(Concluded)

Observe that we read first about the unclean spirit. The human occupant of the house is unmentioned. He is not one who has become conscious of Satan's domain, and sought deliverance. The spirit has gone out at personal choice, and "he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none." The language used seems intended to show the miserable condition of such spirits. No satisfaction comes into their existence, yet there is no thought of repentance. A foreshadowing of eternal restlessness in hell may well alarm the sinner who, choosing his own way, can only be with the devil and his angels. If any reader is in this sad state, may it not be that God will use these words to cause concern? How blessed to seek the Lord while He may be found, and to know redemption by the precious blood of Christ, poured out for sinful men. Fallen angels have no Redeemer, but a burdened soul among men receives to-day a gracious welcome. "Dry places" would seem to remind us of the fear of the spirits in Luke 8. 31, and of the special place of punishment in 2 Peter 2. 4, together with Revelation 9. 14, and 20. 13, where some beings, distinguished from those who have bodies AND souls (and therefore given up by death AND hades), are brought from the sea (cf. Job 26. 5, which may be rendered, "The Rephaim are agitated from under waters"). No rest is found: the like words are seen in Revelation 14. 11. How blessed is the invitation to the heavy laden sinner in Matthew 11. 28. Grateful indeed should we be, who have fled for refuge to the Lord Jesus Christ, and have found in Him our Resting Place and our All.

"Then he saith, I will return unto my house, from whence I came out; and when he is come he findeth it empty, swept and garnished" (verse 44). No thought of sorrow for sin: this spirit is ever unclean and unholy. His plan is self-made. He asks no permission: he retains, as it were, the key of the house. Yet how many love to have it so, and to remain under slavery in "the authority of the darkness" (Col. 1. 13). The house is different in appearance, but not in reality. It is empty, but he still says "mine," swept, but he still says, "mine," garnished, but he still says "mine." Empty: Christ is not there: the Holy Spirit has not waged the warfare: the heart is at leisure (so the word implies) for the unclean spirit to come back. It is swept: some manifest forms of sin may have been cleared away, but nothing pleasing to God takes their place. One can give up drinking and swearing, without being saved. It is blessed when, as a result of grace, not only these things but smoking, and worldly fashions and amusement and other manifestations of the flesh, are excluded, but THAT is quite different. THAT is "fruit,"—living, beautiful, and precious. The manner and motive are quite distinct. The house here is garnished, or

adorned: there may be the decorations of respectability, yea, of reform, yea, further, of religion itself, but the house remains as it was. The cleansing is not by the precious blood of Christ, and there is nothing of living faith. A man may turn over a new leaf without a new life, and some of his great "changes," produced in movements where the precious blood of Christ is set on one side, are foreshadowed in this searching parable. May we, as Christian workers, not be deceived thereby, but ever emphasize "Jesus Christ and Him crucified."

The unclean spirit seeks company. He goes again but quickly comes, having received to his side, (a word of fellowship, occurring in Matt. 24. 40, 41, John 14. 3 also), seven other spirits, more wicked than himself. Here is the resurrection, as it were—"eight" suggests this—of open evil in the life. We notice that there are differences of wickedness not only among men but among spirits, for "wickedness" is positive and active. The nature of all is bad, but some are more defiant in their rebellion against God. The explanation by the Lord Jesus, "Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation" is full of meaning. We behold Israel, delivered from their first captivity, which was associated with idolatry, no longer seeking such idols, yet not purified before God. Their worship remained "in vain" while they taught "for doctrines the commandments of men." Their religiousness, culminating in the traditions of the Talmud, has only caused a proud iniquity, and the swept and garnished people will largely become the followers of Antichrist. Thanks be to God, He will preserve HIS remnant, who will yet experience Zechariah 12. 10; but "this wicked generation," in the first application about the year 70, and in the fulfilment at the end of the age, continues unchanged, and no fruit is found on THEIR fig tree henceforward for ever (Matt. 21. 19). The blessing is of the remnant, not in nationalism but in Christ. A professedly baptized Paganism, from the days of Constantine, illustrating the whore and her daughter in Revelation 17 has the same saddening history, and will fall under the same spell of the deceiving Antichrist (2 Thess. 2. 7-12). And the individual application is deeply important. Reformation without regeneration may only lead to an evil relapse, and a climax of iniquity. Well may we understand the words of Mark 9. 25, "Dumb and deaf spirit, I charge thee, come out of him, and enter no more into him," and then give thanks unto the Father, Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light, Who hath delivered us FROM THE AUTHORITY OF THE DARKNESS, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col. 1. 12, 13). Salvation is no half-work, but a mighty deliverance through the mighty Holy Spirit, and those who are brought out of darkness into God's marvellous light, are ever encouraged to show forth His praises (1 Pet. 2. 9). How many who read these lines have this inexpressible privilege? "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable Gift" (2 Cor. 9. 15).

Obedience and Disobedience

In 1 Samuel 15.

"Saul . . . hath not performed My commandments" (11).

"I have performed the commandment of the Lord" (13).

"Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord?" (19).

"Yea, I have obeyed the voice of the Lord" (20).

"Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams" (22).

"Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee" (23).

"I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord" (24).

"Thou hast rejected the word of the Lord" (26).

(Note:—"What meaneth then this voice of the sheep . . . and the voice of the oxen," 14, "The voice of the Lord," 19,

"I . . . obeyed their voice," 24).

In Jeremiah 35.

"Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father" (8).

"We . . . have obeyed and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us" (10).

"The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto Me" (14).

"Ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto Me" (15).

"The sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the commandment of their father, which He commanded them" (16).

"Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, . . . therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before Me for ever" (18, 19).

It is a blessed privilege to be a child of God: why should we be ashamed, and fear at the criticisms of our only lasting honour, by those who are without it?

"Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory" (John 17. 24). How similar is Psalm 27. 4: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple." The same TWO thoughts.

"Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4. 23).

Parables of the Lord Jesus. THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

IT is a privilege to pray to our Father, and we might well ponder together the parables that encourage and urge prayer. We have thought of two, that emphasize importunity—the only parables laying such stress on this remarkable attitude—in the “Contrast” Parables. We have seen that God is entirely different from the one in bed with a closed door (Luke 11. 5-8), and likewise with the unjust judge (Luke 18. 1-8). Both passages remind us that those redeemed by the precious blood of Christ are blessedly related to Him. Another help as to prayer is immediately added in Luke 18. 9-14. The whole context shows the meaning and power of real prayer. Hence it is deeply important to realize that there is a counterfeit. Is it not always so? Copper coin is not normally forged. The enemy hates godly prayer (Jas. 4. 7, 8). He has many ways of hindering, and Pharisaic pride is the paralysis of prayer.

Only those “in Christ” can draw near to God as their Father. Israel had, of old, a blessing of privilege, and were, typically, God’s people. Alas, the unfruitful fig tree, the self-esteeming son, and the unrighteous steward show the need for a work within.

“Two men went up into the temple to pray.” How different were the two men of Acts 3. In those days the temple of God was to be His house of prayer (Matt. 21. 13): there was no sin in the going up, but there was no merit or virtue in so doing. Outward worship without the heart was, and is, vain (Isa. 29. 13). May this fact ever impress us, and may all God’s truth speak to our hearts. They went up “TO pray,” but we do not find that they both prayed in the true meaning of that word.

“The one a Pharisee.” The Pharisees emphasized prayer, and made long prayers (Luke 20. 47). We think, and would think sorrowfully, of Matthew 6. 5. It is easy to say words: O that our hearts may pray (2 Sam. 7. 27). “And the other (of another kind, Greek) a publican (taxgatherer).” An entire contrast, in the nation of Israel: the publicans and sinners were classed together. How graciously the Lord chose one of his apostles, writing the first gospel in our New Testament, from this class, whereas the last of the apostles, writing more books than others, was “as touching the law, a Pharisee” (Phil. 3. 5). God’s grace brings together: how great the difference from the unjustified one in Luke 18.

It is solemn to realize that there are still many who say prayers without praying. And what is the ground of this self-made religion? Observe the introduction, it is the testimony of the Holy Spirit “which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others.” Prayer is, in Hebrew, self-judgment. Self-confidence is the opposite of genuine prayer. Prayer ever begins humbly and continues humbly. How real is

the contrast between Isaiah 66. 1 and 2. How blessed was the beginning of the work of grace in the other “Pharisee” of whom we have thought “Behold he prayeth” (Acts 9. 11). Truly he had been brought to the ground spiritually as well as physically. The result was “no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3. 3). And this is no mere negative. The positive words “boast in Jesus Christ” **precede**. So is it ever with acceptable prayer. This message still speaks to our heart every day of our believing life. We never advance beyond lowliness without backsliding. Observe, too, that self-confidence not only sets aside the Lord Jesus, but is wrong toward others: the sad word “despised” is before us. O that we may be kept from this attitude. Such verses as Ephesians 3. 8 and Philippians 2. 3 are beautiful contrasts that are written to teach us the beauty of Christian humility. They do not set forth “mock modesty,” but a consciousness of grace, and of personal unworthiness, comparable with that of John the Baptist, yet never ignoring stewardship and responsibility (1 Cor. 15. 10). The translation might, possibly, be improved, but the English words are sufficient to exercise our hearts aright.

“The Pharisee having stood was praying (continuance, perhaps repetition) these things toward himself.” Standing is often Scripturally helpful (Mark 11. 25), but it is a vanity without a right heart (Matt. 6. 5). We have seen this: do we realize it? Do we pray in our prayer (Jas. 5. 17 margin)? “To, or toward, himself” is a remarkable and unexpected expression. There was no real devotion toward God (contrast Phil. 4. 6). As soon as “self” becomes the centre, or aim, of anything, whether it be salvation, service, prayer, or an assembly, everything is wrong.

“God”: both prayers began alike in word, but the after words clearly show that the TONE must have been quite distinguished. There seems a coldness with the Pharisee. The word “God” alone may easily have this. With the publican there was a sense of God’s majesty, and an intensity of dependence on Him was entwined, but his very concern would hold him back from the word “My” “I thank Thee.” Is it not well to give thanks? Should not this attitude be at the beginning (Col. 1. 3, 1 Tim. 2. 1)? Yes, but this only indicates how easy it is to deceive oneself, whenever there is pride. How contrasted was the prayer of one who had been a Pharisee:—“I thank MY God through Jesus Christ FOR YOU ALL” (Rom. 1. 8), or, if he thanked God with regard to himself, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, Who hath enabled me . . . who was before a blasphemer . . . and the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant” (1 Tim. 1. 12-14). In the sad recorded prayer of Luke 18, we have negatives and positives, but they all centre around self. Not one word of confession of sin, not one hint of God’s saving mercy to the undeserving. “I am not as the rest of men:” Ephesians 2. 3 comes to mind, with 1 Corinthians 4. 7. It is so important to realize GRACE all the while (1 Cor. 15. 10). It is true that a

believer is not now as "the rest" or "left" ones (same word, Rom. 11. 7). But the change of "a new creation" humbles to the dust, and he owns that in his flesh dwelleth no good thing, and that grace makes him loathe himself (Ezek. 36. 31), and yearn for others (Rom. 9. 3).^{*} How easy it is for the flesh to use the language of praise to make a pinnacle for oneself. Another saddening example of misuse of right words is found in 1 Corinthians 1. 12 "And I of Christ." It is vain to say "I thank God," or to exalt the name of Christ, if SELF is large. It is also a sin to misuse prayer to tell of the failures of others, under the guise of praying for them, as if we were better. O for grace to discern the subtle attempts of the enemy to hinder, and counterfeit, spiritual power in spiritual prayer.

(If the Lord will, to be continued)

The Lord's Work and our Activity.

- "The Lord, He it is That doth go BEFORE thee, He will be WITH thee." Deuteronomy 31. 8.
- "Except the Lord BUILD the house, they labour in vain that BUILD it." Psalm 129. 1.
- "He shall BUILD the temple of the Lord . . . and they that are far off shall come and BUILD in the temple of the Lord." Zechariah 6. 13, 15.
- "He shall THRUST OUT the enemy from before thee; and shall say, DESTROY." Deuteronomy 33. 27.
- "Thou shalt BESTIR THYSELF: for then shall the Lord GO OUT before thee to SMITE the host of the Philistines. And David did so, as the Lord had commanded him; and SMOTE the Philistines." 2 Samuel 5. 24, 25.
- "WORK out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God Which WORKETH in you both to will and to do, of His good pleasure." Philippians 2. 12, 13.
- "He . . . sent HIS SERVANT at supper time to say to them that were bidden, come, for all things are now ready."
- "He sent forth HIS SERVANTS to call them that were bidden to the wedding." Luke 14. 17, Matt. 22. 3.

Remorse is concerned with a past "it" and its bitter fruit, repentance is concerned, after humble confession, with a Person, and present grace to avoid a present sin that grieves God's Holy Spirit.

It is easy to do a great thing when men are looking, not only through pride: the motive may be godly, lest we dishonour the Lord. But the thought should be ever with us that we would not grieve Him, when no fellow creature sees at all.

^{*}A leaflet as to the misunderstood first part of this verse gladly sent.

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"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God."

A Word of Introduction.

"ALL Scripture"—we would not set aside any part of the whole that God has graciously given us; and how lovingly He caused it to be written that it might be for the time to come (Isa. 30. 8), and that he that readeth it may run (Hab. 2. 2). We call to mind our beloved Lord's first utterance to the arch-enemy, so contrasted with the saddening reply of Eve. He said, "The Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4. 4), and He quoted SCRIPTURE exactly each time, showing HOW we may receive the words of God, and the need that they should be applied with the fresh and living power of the Holy Spirit to our receptive hearts. May these pages ever have His approval, and be used thus!

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The Whole Heart.

"If thou seek Him with all thy heart . . . He will not forsake thee." Deuteronomy 4. 29, 31, 2 Chronicles 15. 12, 15.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart." Deuteronomy 6. 5, 11. 13, 13. 3, 30. 6, Matthew 22. 37, Mark 12. 30, 33, Luke 10. 27.

"Thou shalt return unto the Lord thy God, and shall obey His voice . . . with all thine heart." Deuteronomy 30. 6, 2 Chronicles 6. 38.

"To serve Him with all your heart." Joshua 22. 5.

"To walk before Me in truth with all their heart." 1 Kings 2. 4, 8. 23.

"But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart." 2 Kings 10. 31.

"Jehoshaphat, who sought the Lord with all his heart." 2 Chronicles 22. 9.

"Hezekiah . . . he did it with all his heart, and prospered." 2 Chronicles 31. 21.

"Like unto him (Josiah) was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his heart." 2 Kings 23. 25.

"I will praise Thee with all my heart." Psalm 86. 12.

"I will praise the Lord with my whole heart." Psalm 111. 1.

"Blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart." Psalm 119. 2.

"With my whole heart have I sought Thee." Psalm 119. 10.

"I entreated Thy favour with my whole heart." Psalm 119. 58.

"I will keep Thy precepts with my whole heart." Psalm 119. 69.

"I cried with my whole heart, hear me." Psalm 119. 145.

"I will praise Thee with my whole heart." Psalm 138. 1.

"Ye shall seek Me and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29. 13.

"Turn ye to Me with all your heart." Joel 2. 12.

Contrasts.

God does not appoint emptiness.

"Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid: sanctify the Lord of hosts Himself; and let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread." Isaiah 8. 12, 13.

"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him Which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." Matthew 10. 28.

"Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind . . . but rather seek ye the kingdom of God." Luke 12. 29, 31.

"Seek ye Me, and ye shall live: but seek not Bethel . . . seek the Lord and ye shall live." Amos 5. 4-6.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth . . . but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." Matthew 6. 19, 20.

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen." 2 Corinthians 4. 18.

"Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year . . . instead of your saying (lit.), If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." James 4. 13, 15.

"Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things" (Matt. 12. 34, 35).

"With the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10. 10).

Are we sufficiently concerned about our heart, and its inner wishes? The Lord Jesus said, "Either make the tree good, and his fruit good: or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt." We cannot have good fruit apart from life within, and we need continued care to have spiritual watering of the tree. Fruit does not come direct, but only through blessing to the root.

Parables of the Lord Jesus. THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

(Continued)

"Extortioners,"—evidently a first hint as to the tax gatherer: and then the attack becomes more open. So we see the peril if once we open our lips in pride. Sin may grow more quickly than the gourd in Jonah 4. "Unjust"—but he himself went down to his house UNJUSTIFIED. "Adulterers"—the Pharisee looked on outward sins alone: his words would link the other with manifest evil.

We need to deplore and confess, the inward sins of our own heart, and to seek grace, and power, and victory. "Or even as this tax-gatherer:" we see the goal of sin; and it includes an entire blindness to grace and to that which brought God joy—"one sinner that repenteth." No longing for a soul to be saved. no thought "How is God working in him?" The callousness of the elder brother in Luke 15 affords a parallel, but have we always a tender heart for souls, and an expectation that He will work in the most "unlikely"? "I fast twice in the week": the prayer changes from the negative to the positive, but it retains its "I." How different are the petitions of the appointed "disciples' prayer" in Matthew 6. 9-13. God is only before us once in Luke 18. 11, 12—and then merely as an introduction. Thus we may deceive ourselves that the words about ourselves are permissible; but it is sinful to "thank God" unless we are humbled, and FEEL that all is by GRACE. How "unfeeling" this "prayer" was. "Every one that exalteth" himself, is our Lord's comment. "Ye fast for strife," says Isaiah 58. 4: the Pharisee gave up outwardly, but indulged his pride inwardly (cf. Col. 2. 23). "Self-denying" may be the opposite of denying self. "I give tithes of all that I possess": again we see the externalism,—just as in the first part. We think too of 1 Corinthians 13. 3: but here the Pharisee emphasized "all" that he had. He retained nine-tenths, and his prayer ENDED with the word "I possess": And both his actions were mathematical: he spoke of "twice" and a tenth. Nothing more, nothing of love, nothing of confession of sin, nothing inward, nothing of devotion and adoration. But how would our prayers appear if the Lord analyzed them, if the Lord translated them, if the Lord recorded them? We observe the absence of petition: he did not once feel his need: the "prayer" was all biography,—and that from a false standpoint! And such prayer never reached beyond himself. Again we hear the words: "prayed thus to himself."

"And the publican." Thanks be to God the parable is not finished. The Pharisee was first: the tax-gatherer did not hurry: his unworthiness may have kept him silent at first, but he did not remain silent. Grace opened his lips (see Rom. 3. 19). His prayer was much shorter: less than a quarter of the words. The

beginning was, "God": but surely the tone was quite different. The tax-gatherer felt his NEED of God: the Pharisee spoke as if God had a need of him.

But before we come to the prayer we must realize the Lord's gracious unveiling of the attitude and manner. And this is far longer than the prayer itself, and intentionally precedes it. Must not the condition of the pray-er affect the whole of the prayer? The tax-gatherer stood even as the Pharisee, but "afar off." It is not good to follow afar off, but at the beginning there must be the consciousness of Isaiah 59. 2. The one who was trusting "on" himself dared to draw near, but he was not made nigh (Ps. 138. 6). HE reminds us of those whose eyes and mouths are lofty (Ps. 73. 7-9, Prov. 30. 13, Isa. 37. 23), but the publican "would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven," feeling indeed that he deserved hell. "He was not willing": he wished to be able to do so, as his prayer indicates, but he was not willing to assume or claim anything in his own name. How different is the unwillingness of John 5. 40. Alas, the Pharisee's disdainful eyes were on the publican, but THAT ONE disdained himself. Both looked down on the sin of THE ONE, but to judge oneself is blessed, to despise another is evil. The publican WAS a sinner: the Pharisee had a ground of fact, but facts are easily misused, even as truth out of proportion is distorted. Do not let us flatter ourselves that because something is true we can use it as we will. Motive may spoil everything. Forgetfulness of another fact may ruin all. Stealing of a position that is not ours may vitiate the whole. The Pharisee was not appointed judge: he, too, was a sinner.

Yet one further description is found:—He "smote (was smiting) upon his breast"; in pained acknowledgment of deserved judgment. Do we ever find so full a portrayal of the accompaniments of prayer from the lips of our beloved Lord? Why the emphasis? "To this man will I LOOK, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word." Yes, the Lord delights to see a deep work within. How vain is much profession of Christ to-day. How few seem to have such an experience as this. A broken and contrite heart God does not despise (Ps. 51. 17). Salvation is no rocky-ground joy. The ploughing has been real where the wheat grows. We notice feet, eyes and breast—the whole man—confessing unworthiness. But grace is for the unworthy. Our hearts learn that attitude in prayer is by no means unimportant. True, a redeemed and believing one is not to come with a sense of doubt, but are we not oft times careless, and irreverent, and unfeeling? It is well to see how the body shows what is within the heart, and how the Lord notices the body and its members. Kneeling and lifting up holy hands were not mere externals to God's servants of old.

"Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief" cried one troubled, and it may be observed that the accepted prayer is introduced with the word "saying," and not as the Pharisee "was pray-

ing." Did this dear, troubled soul feel as if his prayer was "UNprayer," and not worthy of the name? But God treasured it. How was he brought to this condition? We do not know. Never give up a soul, with human reasoning. Who would have expected so real a breaking down as we behold here? It was personal. We read of no mass movement. Look for God's individual work: expect it.

(If the Lord will, to be continued).

God's Purpose, as to the "Land" and the "Place."

IS it not always refreshing to ponder THE FAITHFULNESS OF GOD? He does not always fulfil His promises hastily—from man's standpoint. The "Seed" of Genesis 3. 15 has not yet bruised the serpent's head, but, though a thousand years with God are as yesterday when it is past, and though the vision is for an appointed time, if it tarry we would wait, for it will surely come, it will not be "afterwards" (TWO words are rendered "tarry" in Hab. 2. 3).

We observe that at the outset God marked out "the land" for Abraham (Acts 7. 2, 3), but the enemy sought to hinder. Why? "I called him alone" (Isa. 51. 2), but "Terah TOOK Abram" (Gen. 11. 31), and thus "they went forth . . . TO go into the land of Canaan; AND they came unto Haran, and dwelt there." A half-way position, but "When his father was dead," the Lord again lovingly emphasized His will, and faith triumphed,—"They went forth TO go into the land of Canaan; AND into the land of Canaan they came" (Gen. 12. 5). Then what was Abraham's first recorded act in God's appointed land? "There builded he an altar unto the Lord" (Gen. 12. 7). How beautiful is this stress on salvation by a sacrifice: Christ is ever typified. But the enemy made another attack. "There was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; FOR the famine was grievous in the land" (Gen. 12. 10). The Lord is left out of this paragraph: the "for" was not after enquiring of the Lord, but an inference from "circumstances." Is not this a gracious warning to us every day? How tenderly God watched over His chosen one, "And Abram went up out of Egypt." And in what way is the enemy further defeated? We read "Unto the place of the ALTAR which he had made there at the first" (Gen. 13. 1-4). That was revival. But the enemy aimed another blow. "There was a strife between the herdmen." The difficulty came indirectly in connexion with Lot. The word "take" is before us in Genesis 12. 5 as to Lot, even as in 11. 31. How different is Joshua 24. 3, "I TOOK your father Abraham." How we need God's will simply and throughout. Our hearts are encouraged afterwards to read, "The Lord said unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him, Lift up

now thine eyes . . . ALL THE LAND which thou seest, to thee will I give it" (Gen. 13. 14, 15). God never changed as to the land.

If in Genesis 12 we have "the land," in Deuteronomy 12 we find a further mark, "the place" which the Lord would "choose" (verses 5, 11, 14, 18, 21, 26). Satan still sought to hinder from "the land," 40 years in the wilderness; and then from the place, for the "children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites that inhabited Jerusalem" (Jud. 1. 21). It was not until the far later time of the man after God's own heart, that the vain "saying" of the Jebusites was laid low (2 Sam. 5. 6, 7). Thus God worked at last, and again He emphasized His land and place. The tense in 2 Samuel 7. 10 has been misunderstood. It is the same as in the preceding verse, "I have made thee a great name." God did NOT mean a fresh place. He has NEVER changed the land. "I have appointed a place for My people Israel" is the clear meaning.

Satan has always remained the enemy, and accordingly Jerusalem has been captured possibly more than any other city, and it will yet be the centre of Antichrist's abomination of desolation (Matt. 24. 15), but there is an "until" in Luke 21. 23, 24 where both the land and the city are mentioned, and a time limit in Revelation 11. 2. "Your house is left unto you desolate" is not final (Matt. 23. 38, 39). Satan cannot change God's purpose.

We remember the words of Deuteronomy 11. 12, "A land which the Lord thy God careth for," and thus we are not surprised to read as to the fixed and certain future the grand description, "The land of the Lord" (Isa. 14. 2). "The opposition of all" must be broken. "Surely in the fire of My jealousy have I spoken against the residue of the heathen, and against all Idumea, which have appointed MY LAND into their possession with THE JOY OF ALL THEIR HEART" (Ezek. 36. 5). How we delight to read the entire contrast of all words in Jeremiah 32. 41, "Yea, I will REJOICE over them to do them good, and I will plant them in THIS LAND assuredly with MY WHOLE HEART and with My whole soul." Another equally striking contrast is found in Ezekiel 35. 10 with 48. 35. "Thou hast said, These two nations and these two countries shall be mine, and we will possess it; whereas THE LORD WAS THERE," and "The name of the city from that day shall be, THE LORD IS THERE." We glorify His Name. All our study leads to worship. We have observed that Isaiah 62 refers to (a) the land, (b) the city and (c) the people, "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 delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married," "And they shall call them, The holy people, The redeemed of the Lord: and thou shalt be called, Sought out, A city not forsaken" (verses 4 & 12). It is precious to see in

the same chapter that the Lord's remembrancers are UPON Jerusalem's WALLS (verse 6). But where do THESE exist? In God's promises, and before Him, as it is written, "Behold I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; THY WALLS are continually before Me" (Isa. 49. 16). This is a remarkable unveiling of THE GROUND OF PRAYER; yea, and of ALL our prayers. O that we may rest on God's words more fully.

The assured blessing to the land is seen in Zechariah 2. 12, "The Lord shall inherit Judah His portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again," and "JERUSALEM shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in JERUSALEM" (Zech. 12. 6, cf. Jer. 30. 18), a deeply impressive repetition.* And at that very time Nimrod's city and "beginning" and Satan's plan from the first book (Gen. 10. 10) to the last, shall be utterly waste and "found no more at all" (Rev. 18. 2, 21). O how real is the gospel warning thereby to a soul. Ah, sinner, trifle not with eternity, and choose not Satan's gaudy tinsel; here is the sure end of his way! But the solemn ground of a message to one unsaved is likewise full of refreshment to those who have fled for refuge to Him Who says, "I am the Lord, I change not" (Mal. 3. 6). He will not fail, nor be discouraged. Let us trust in Him. Has He put His precious Name upon us? Then will He not bring unto glory (Heb. 2. 10)? But we dare not, and would not, excuse one sin on this account,—not only because we observe the "bitter and evil thing" of sin's fruit in the land and people, not only because the Lord Jesus has become the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that OBEY Him (Heb. 5. 9), and only such have the proof that they are His sheep (John 10. 27, 28), but also because of true love to Him in our hearts (Rom. 5. 5). Is it not so? Hence these passages encourage us to rejoice with trembling (Ps. 2. 11), and to value the experience of Philipians 2. 12, 13. And further we have the stimulus to prayer for Israel, and for God's work, a prayer that, separating us from the world's politics, leads us to pray (may it be with increasing intensity in the Holy Spirit!) "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22. 20, with 17).

* And the language of Acts 7. 5 reminds us of the bright hope of a glorious resurrection for Abraham and thus for all saints. This we see was definitely in the first books of Scripture in spite of the Saducees. Hebrews 11. 13 emphasizes—yea, the whole chapter. There is no doubt as to this fact, though we praise God that life and incorruption are brought to light through the gospel.

THE HEART.

"My heart shall be knit (be one, margin) unto you."

"They were not of double heart."

"All these . . . came with a perfect heart."

"All the rest . . . were of one heart."

1 Chronicles 12. 17, 33, 38.

"One shall be taken and the other left."

Matthew 24. 40, 41, Luke 17. 34-36.

MANY believers have asked, "Is the taking for blessing or judgment?" and some have given the answer, "For judgment." This leads to certain inferences regarding the context, and affecting the whole subject. It is, therefore, the more important to seek humbly to know the Lord's meaning.

1. In the context we do have one taking away in judgment (Matt. 24. 39), and probably this has led many to their interpretation. But this is only an "English" link: quite a different word is there used, and we may be sure that the Holy Spirit changes the word for a purpose.

2. And what is the word He employs in verses 40 and 41? (a) Its first usages in the gospel (Matt. 1. 20, 24, 2. 13, 14, 20, 21) are all of watchful care. (b) It occurs also in Matthew 17. 1, 20. 17, 26. 37, Mark 5. 40, Luke 9. 10, nor is it ever once used of the Lord's actions in connexion with judgment. (c) Note also Mark 4. 36 and Acts 16. 33. (d) It occurs expressly for the Coming of the Lord for His people to "receive" them unto Himself in John 14. 3, and never as to His coming in wrath. (e) It denotes "taking, or receiving aside."

3. This interpretation fits in with all the context in Matthew 24, where we have Noah preserved, and others left to be taken away in judgment, and with the looking for the Lord's Coming in the following verse (42). There is no thought anywhere of leaving for blessing.

4. Luke 17 confirms, and the further reference to Lot there shows again a receiving aside for blessing (Gen. 19. 16, 2 Pet. 2. 9).

5. The added words of Luke 17. 37, "Where, Lord?"—(with the answer, "Where the body is, there will the eagles be gathered together")—must surely indicate the leaving of a carcass for judgment (Matt. 24. 28). The eagle swoops down to that which is left, with this very object.

Hence it seems that there is no Scriptural ground for any interpretation except "one shall be received aside (in blessing), and the other left," when our beloved Lord comes to receive His own unto Himself, and, when we think of Matthew 25. 1-10, how precious, yet solemnly heart-searching, this is. Again we would observe that probably the same English translation of two quite different words in verses 39 and 40 seems to have been the cause of misunderstanding, although those in the flood were definitely "left," before that contrasted "taking away" could be possible. How grateful we are to God for the general excellency of our version, and how definitely we should still pray for translators, engaged in the many new translations in other languages, which are now being made. Do we remember this theme for prayer as we should?

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The Student of Scripture.

Edited by Percy W. Heward

"Every word of God is pure: He is a Shield unto them that put their trust in Him."
Proverbs 30. 5.

A Word of Introduction.

BY the enabling grace of God we continue (Acts 26. 22), conscious, very conscious, that it is all by grace. We cannot be too thankful for grace, nor can we be too thankful for God's words. They, and they only, are absolutely reliable. Such a declaration as that which we read above suggests that the words of the Lord are accessible, and this is our joy. Such a testimony shows that the one who gave it felt that he, and others, could know God's words. Hence the authority of the Scriptures is implied throughout, and in its very warp and woof. "Every word" is sound wisdom, and fully dependable: we remember the stress of our beloved Lord on "every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4. 4). It is easy for a man of this world to take what suits him, but that is not the true receiving of God's words (1 Thess. 2. 13). O that we may have a godly attitude of welcoming ALL God's truth. We observe also that when His pure gold (no dross) is our riches, we have also Himself as our Shield. God and His words cannot be separated. So the psalmist said, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord: teach me Thy statutes," and now we ever need the living instruction of the Holy Spirit through the once written words. And it is a blessing to perceive that God is not only our Teacher, He is a Shield. He knows our every difficulty. Those who have His words have peculiar dangers (John 17. 14), but He is equal to every need. And what should our attitude be? Simply "trusting" in Him. With such thoughts are these pages sent forth in the Name of the Lord Jesus.

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Reverent Thoughts on the Childhood of The Lord Jesus Christ.

AFTER the time of His miraculous birth, and the wondrous prophecy of Simeon and the testimony of Anna (how solemn that only aged ones are specially brought before us), we read nothing till the visit of the wise men, and God's gracious provision for the flight to Egypt (Matt. 2. 11) which appears to have been between one and two years later (Matt. 2. 16). It is deeply important to realize that even as Christ is exalted as the Saviour in Luke 2. 11, so the wise men "worshipped HIM." Then comes a remarkable silence (following Matt. 2. 19-23), in accord with God's plan, and entirely contrasted with the so-called apocryphal, and untrue, "gospels." One event stands out, when approaching an age specially emphasized among Israel; and the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus was seen in His wisdom among the Jewish teachers. In this connexion we may notice that the more exact translation of Luke 2. 40, 52 would prevent some misunderstandings. We need to realize that although He was really born and had a real childhood, yet He was GOD all the while. We may not understand all. Human words and thoughts fail continually, but it is for us to worship, and not to speculate, nor to intrude.

How beautiful are the Divine descriptions:—"But the child was growing, and was waxing strong, being filled with wisdom, and God's grace was on Him," "And Jesus was advancing, in wisdom and age (or stature), and in grace with (by the side of, and thus before) God and man." The verb here used is found in Romans 13. 12 ("the night advanced"), and sadly in connexion with the going forward of evil (2 Tim. 2. 16, 3. 13). The root suggests "cutting one's way ahead," and may be used of thriving and of proceeding along a road, and thus describes the life of the Lord Jesus, without any thought of previous failure or defect. So "grace" describes His acceptability before God and men—in the background details, for He did no miracles then. In this context we observe the remarkable words "was subject unto them" (Luke 2. 51), a wondrous testimony that subjection is the glory, not dishonour, of the appointed path in the home. How much we too have to learn from this. Not that He was unmindful of His uniqueness, nor of His "Father's business." Far otherwise. This lowly path, in the background, WAS THE WILL OF THE FATHER till the approved time of His manifestation to Israel (John 1. 31), and the "beginning of miracles" (John 2. 11). Our Lord was never before the time, and never late.

THE HEART IN PSALM 10.

- "He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved" (6).
- "He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten" (11).
- "He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it" (13).

Parables of the Lord Jesus. THE PHARISEE AND THE PUBLICAN.

(Concluded)

And now we reach the prayer. After the personal cry to God, the ONE petition contains (in Greek) four words, (1) "Be merciful (2) to me (3) the (4) sinner." The first emphasizes mercy, and propitiation or atonement, for such is its derivation (cf. Prov. 16. 6). And this is the beauty of prayer, it ever acknowledges the work of Christ. The first recorded approaches unto God are before us once more. Cain was like the Pharisee, but Abel as the tax-gatherer: he brought a sacrifice. Solomon's prayer in 2 Chronicles 6 was on a platform the size of the altar of burnt offering (13). This was no accident. How could we pray without the blood of the Lord Jesus? The second word is personal: but it is not the "I" of the Pharisee, it is the "to me" of a humbly dependent one. And thereby he puts aside all looking at others, and their failures. The soul is occupied with God, the suppliant thirsts for God, and His grace. "A," in the translation, should be "the." "The sinner" is full of humility, and yet of confidence. "A sinner" is general: many will acknowledge they are sinners, "so are others," "we are all sinners." But "the sinner" indicates that he did not look at the rest, as the Pharisee. It indicates, moreover, that he claimed the SACRIFICE as for himself, for was not the hour of prayer the hour of the temple burnt offering? How beautiful is this appropriating. And thus the prayer finished. "I possess," said one: "the sinner," said the other. And the "possessor" was without righteousness, whereas the ungodly one was justified (Rom. 4. 5), for the Lord Jesus at once adds, with a solemnizing preface, "I tell you this man went down to his house justified."

We have read the two prayers. There were only two. There is no third "division": there is nothing in between as to salvation. We think of the many parables of the TWO classes, the TWO sons, the TWO ways, the wheat AND the tares, the ten virgins, five and five. Ah, dear reader, to which are you like? Permit loving plainness:—Have you ever prayed the tax-gatherer's prayer? You cannot begin anywhere else. God does not want forms. God does not seek rhetoric. Have you ever prayed broken-heartedly thus?—or are you still UNjustified? Though these pages are primarily for believers, we would fervently bring before any unsaved reader the VITAL NEED. Will it be useless repetition to enumerate the parallels, and then the contrasts? First they both

- (a) went up
- (b) to pray,
- (c) and said, "God."

but the contrasts are far greater:—

The Pharisee—	The Publican—
Prayed toward himself.	Smote upon his breast.
Spoke of self as good.	Said not one good word of self.
Mentioned others disparagingly.	Mentioned no one else.
Ignored atonement.	Pleaded atonement alone.
Made no confession.	Confessed not only sins, but himself as the sinner.
Began each clause with "I".	Only said, "Be Thou merciful."

What is the summing up of the Lord Jesus? He Who knows the heart, and Who has the right to speak as to justification, has given us the searching words, "I TELL YOU, that THIS man went down to his house justified rather than the other (THAT one)". One moment, ere we go further. Do we acknowledge what HE tells us? We remember "BUT I say unto you," and often times "Verily, verily I say unto you." "THIS one": the one near: the Pharisee was THAT one, removing afar off, and outside as the elder son in Luke 15. "This one" is a precious contrast with "this publican." He was TOO CLOSE to the Pharisee, but the Lord rejoiced in the nearness. Two went up, two went down,—but how different. He went down not as one who was just by his own works, but justified, and the tense used implies a fixity. Observe the three occurrences of this root—

- (a) "Trusted in themselves that they were righteous."
- (b) "Unjust" (unrighteous).
- (c) "Justified."

And so is it to-day. There are those who look to their own righteousness, and there are those who rejoice in the righteousness of God upon faith (Phil. 3. 9): and which are you and I?

If the Lord Jesus says "Justified," who can disannul? We read Roman 8. 33, 34 with simple confidence. But the words "rather than THAT ONE" are solemnizing. If there was one justified, there was one unjustified, as with the two thieves, and the added explanation shows that the Pharisee is no isolated example. "For EVERYONE that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Why is the word "everyone" linked with one statement? Does it suggest that such are ever the majority? How much better to be "humble" than to be "humbled." A sad future awaits those who trust in themselves. "Whom He justified, them He also glorified" tells of the contrasted future exaltation, but surely the justification is itself a holy height of blessing. And the Lord's declaration is very definite. The path of humiliation is ever the path of blessing. If we have owned our sins, and ever rest upon the work of the Lord Jesus, there is a certainty of delight, but in no other way can His salvation be experienced. Profession, accuracy, religion and activity are all vain: how great is the need for a holy breaking down. Meetings, excitement and all else, without this, are futile. And is there not the same need for God's dear children afterwards? The whole life of faith must be one

of lowliness, or it will not be a life of prayer, with the fulfilment of God's encouraging words in 1 Peter 5. 6. The Lord Jesus spoke this parable indeed to those of a certain CHARACTER, but His message has been written that we may not become like to such, but that we may constantly receive His loving warning, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Some Thoughts on Knowledge in the Words of Scripture.

"This is life eternal that they might **know** Thee." John 17. 3.

"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." Hebrews 8. 12.

"The man is become as one of (away from) Us—to **know** good and evil." Genesis 3. 22.

"**Knowledge** puffeth up, but love edifieth: and if any man think that he knoweth anything, he **knoweth** nothing yet as he ought to **know**." 1 Corinthians 8. 1, 2.

"Though I . . . understand all mysteries and all **knowledge** . . . and have not love, I am nothing." 1 Corinthians 13. 2.

"Now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I **know** in part; but then shall I **know** even as also I am **known**." 1 Corinthians 13. 12.

"If we sin wilfully after that we have received the **knowledge** of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." Hebrews 10. 26.

"It had been better for them not to have **known** the way of righteousness, than, after they have **known** it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them: but it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." 2 Peter 2. 21, 22.

"Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye **know** these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own **steadfastness**, but **grow** in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." 2 Peter 3. 17, 18.

"To **know** the love of Christ, which passeth **knowledge**, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." Ephesians 3. 19.

"That I may **know** Him, and the power of His resurrection." Philippians 3. 10.

Let us observe the danger of mere knowledge,—even of the Truth. How precious contrasted is the **living knowledge** of a Person. That is the privilege not of washed sows but of His own sheep. "I am the Good Shepherd, and **know** My sheep, and Mine **know** Me" (John 10. 14).

Irritability in the Home.

AND, we may add, in other fellowship where there is intimacy, even among children of God. We would not publish the fact to the world, but, alas, the world already knows it. Why is it so? What is the sad cause? Do we not all need to be humbled that there be much more real love?

We are not surprised at the enemy's tactics. From the first he opposed a home, and he still hates a godly home. And as children of God are "brethren," and thus the natural home is a figure of the still closer relationship of those "in Christ Jesus," we are not surprised at Satan's opposition, and virulent attempt to sow "discord among brethren" (Prov. 6. 19). But shall the enemy have the victory? Have we not faith to claim the Lord's triumph? The Lord liveth.

Why is it that it is so "easy" to be most irritated with those who are most loved? It is a strange fact, but it is a fact, in many cases. Not forgetting the reason above, we may call to mind that we all EXPECT much from those with whom we are most intimate, and whom we love dearly, and that they EXPECT much from us. If a man of the world speaks against us, we are not surprised: the bitterest taunt may only call forth our loving patience. But an unwise word from one whom we particularly value awakens surprise, disappointment, and, thereby, antagonism.

Let us learn from this how much we need to be on our guard, in the enabling of the Holy Spirit, in home and assembly. Let us not be ignorant of Satan's devices. Let us recollect that others rightly expect much from us, and let our only provoking be to love and good works (Heb. 10. 24), "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4. 3).

Saul and Samuel.

"The King whom ye have desired" (1 Sam. 12. 13): observe the word is "asked," and Samuel repeats it in verse 17. "In asking you a King." And the grammatical form there contains the very letters of the word "Saul." His very name crystallizes the thought. God gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul (Ps. 106. 15). It is a blessed thing to ask according to His will (1 John 5. 14), but let us seek grace never to ask otherwise. If we do not know His will let us ever indicate this holy limitation "If it be Thy will." In contrast with Saul, the name SAMUEL having one more letter suggests the name of God, though some of its letters are linked with the word "ask." Hannah's full meaning may not be grasped at first, but it is plain that "Samuel" is not the word "asked." Her thought is that GOD gave: all was in dependence on GOD, and we see in 1 Samuel 1. 11 how she presented her petition with an "if," seeking God's decision throughout. Moreover, the prayer was presented at the place of sacrifice: everything was different from the determined will of the people in chapter 12. 12. O that we may ever pray in subjection to God.

Some Parables of Service.

THE privilege of serving God and of doing His will is very great. Again and again is this brought before us in Holy Scripture. How many parables show us the opportunities His children have received. The one forgiven the debt of 10,000 talents was called to show grace among his fellow servants. The servants in the field of Matthew 13. 24-30 were rightly concerned as to the tares, and rightly told everything to the Householder, for His decision. When the poor man graciously hindered from reaching Jericho was brought to the inn, the words "Take care of him" show the privilege of loving interest in "one another." And so we might well continue, showing that many parables of service have already been our meditation. Those which tell of "fruit" have surely a definite message in this connexion.

But now we would study prayerfully the Parables of the Pounds and the Talents, and also notice Matthew 24. 45-51, and Mark 13. 34-36, concluding with a different aspect in Matthew 20. 1-16.

Matthew 25. 14-30 and Luke 19. 12-27 have much in common. It is deeply interesting to see how, as in connexion with the feasts of Matthew 22 and Luke 14, and the addresses, moreover, of Matthew 5-7 and Luke 6, the Holy Spirit causes the gospels to supplement and explain one another, even by their contrasts. There is but **One** to Whom the servants are responsible. He is viewed in both cases as going away, but going away with the thought of returning. At once we realize our adorable Lord, and see our privilege to live in the light of His Coming. Is it not always so? The porter is ever to watch, the one appointed to give meat in due season (Matt. 24. 45) is never to say "My Lord delayeth His Coming," the one who takes care in Luke 10. 35 has the words ringing in his ears, "When I come again," and the field is with a view to the harvest. Yes, all service is in the light of the near Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We are responsible to Him, and shall soon see Him. The **personal** interest of our Lord, and our responsibility to Him personally, suggest such a striking contrast with impersonal eastern theories, and with the "religion" of unsaved ones among us to-day. He is to be personally served and personally expected, and both parables indicate the possibility of faithfulness that will bring Him joy. He has not set us an impossible task. Yet both indicate the dread contrast of possible unfaithfulness, in language that twice searches us, showing there are those who are but professing servants, yet not expressing this in language that will permit any reader to say, "I am a true believer, **THEREFORE** this does not concern me." Doctrine is ever presented practically (and devotionally) in Scripture, never theoretically, or treatise-fashion. This is of the utmost importance, and gives us a model, and a gracious warning. In both parables, moreover, we have the solemnizing investigation of "that Day." How much this means to us personally!

But now let us further look at each separately, pondering and feeding on the exact words of the Holy Spirit in recording the parable of Christ. There is no need to add the italicized words in Matthew 25. 14. The Lord has expressed Himself otherwise with a purpose. "Watch ye therefore, for ye know not the day, neither the hour, for, as a Man travelling away, He called His Own servants." The two portions are joined. We are not only to be virgins, but responsible stewards of whatsoever is entrusted to us. Absence of watching is not only unreadiness, it involves positive unfaithfulness to our Lord. He has ever emphasized His travelling away. We have observed this in the Good Samaritan, it is implied in John 10. 12, and in John 15 the Root is not seen, but the branches represent Him. Nor can we forget the words "Ye do show the Lord's death till He come." This is by no means against Matthew 28. 20. If we, as children of God, can enter within the veil, and draw nigh, and yet be strangers and pilgrims here, it is surely not amazing that such words are used of our glorious Lord. Hence we are encouraged to go forth UNTO HIM, without the camp, bearing His reproach (Heb. 13. 13). But I grant it is a mystery, known only to faith. The servants are His own, for are we not bought with a price (1 Cor. 6. 19, 20)? No other one has a right to those who bear His image and superscription, and no man can serve two masters (Matt. 6. 24). It is blessed to have heard His call, giving life as to Lazarus (John 5. 24, 25), but let us not forget His further call, entrusting us with His own possessions. Our minds turn to John 17. 8 and 22, nor can we forget Ephesians 4. 8, with 1 Corinthians 4. 7. Let us realize that the Lord Jesus is the great Possessor: we have nothing in our own right. We are simply trustees for Him. He has "given aside" (as the word is), and handed down to us, that which we are to guard (1 Tim. 6. 20) and use, to His glory. It is remarkable that the word is the one used for "traditions" (1 Cor. 11. 23, 2 Thess. 2. 15, 2 Pet. 2. 21, Jude 3 may helpfully illustrate). Not that we would limit to the precious possession of the words of the truth, for, in one sense, that is EQUALLY given to all. Here we have an emphasis on different privileges, as we see in Ephesians 4. 11, 12. Certainly we are not apostles, and most are not teachers, but have we not all received SOMETHING from Him? And everything is precious as the word "talent" implies. How are we using THIS? It is not for us to be careless, nor to employ anything for ourselves, nor to despise what we do possess, because it is not something else, and thus to envy another, but, in simple and devoted love, to occupy with whatsoever our Lord has entrusted to us, however large or small it be, as in His presence, until we see Him face to face. We are each personally responsible to Him.

(If the Lord will, to be continued).

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The Student of Scripture.

Edited by Percy W. Heward

"The Health of my Countenance and my God."

Psalm 42. 11, 43. 5.

A Word of Introduction.

GOD is "All in all" to His people. He has not merely sent them a gift, but has made known Himself. He is not impersonal, and His blessings are not impersonal. Salvation was the work of the Lord Jesus personally, the Father's Gift was His beloved Son; and the Holy Spirit personally quickens and indwells, and both John 14. 23 and 1 John 1-3 are personal. We need, dear fellow believers, to realize this more and more, and it is with such a desire for myself, and for you, and for His glory therein, that these pages go forth; and with the longing that we may show what He is to us, even as 2 Corinthians 4. 6 speaks of the shining in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and as the verse above declares the salvation, and testimony, of our race, by His personal love.

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Some Parables of Service.

(Matthew 25. 14-30, continued.)

Individual cases are here brought before us, though He has many more talents than eight, and servants than three. The silence of Scripture is impressive. Have some less than one? It matters not; a shekel, yea, a bekah, yea, a grain, or gerah, can be used for Him. It is not the size of the trusteeship, but the fact. In like manner, it was not the size of the widow's gift that decided its true value. And, conversely, it is not the size of "a" sin before men that should be our primary concern, but the FACT of the sin before God.

The dispensation is viewed as one, hence the particular apportioning on His going away is mentioned. But the Lord surely has His STEWARDS still. Let us not vainly limit the word, and think only of those who have "money." Whatever we have is as we have seen, and as we would feel, His for Him! One believer may have twice as much as another, but the point is not "What have I in relation to others?" but "What have I from Him, and for Him?" Let this be repeated, and realized, for the message is practical, a message for to-day. The words rendered, "According to his several ability," may have this force. The Lord knows what we are able to bear. But another simple translation is, "According to His (i.e. the Owner's) power." This would suggest a closer parallel with 1 Corinthians 12. 18, and Romans 12. 3 will help us. Thus we find the encouragement, too, to expect grace in the use, since His "power" accompanies.

The special point of "talents" seems to be that they are not "immovable" property, nor are they necessarily used as a whole. A part may be employed in one thing, and another part elsewhere. Moreover, the Holy Spirit suggests "productive" power. "Goods" may be given to be preserved (e.g. furniture, heirlooms, etc.), but "talents" are to be used in business. Why do we not have the figure of "seed"? Probably because the emphasis here is not primarily on God's sovereign work and our dependence, though that is ever important, but on our godly activity. Are we lazy, careless, selfish, or are we conscious of the importance of true earnestness, in the Spirit? Thus the one who received five talents "went" and "worked." There must be a going, there must be a diligence. Spiritual blessings are not to be gained by idly sitting still. True, there must be much time in worship: Ah, when this is present, the life will be proportioned and balanced. The talents ARE productive even as the seed, and they PRODUCE THE LIKE. He who has talents brings nothing but increased talents unto the Lord. He does not invest in something else. May not this give us a gracious warning against new methods, and human rearrangements? Everything should keep to the line of that which God has given. We notice the stress on "gain." Not earthly gain as in Matthew 16. 26, nor the gain of Philippians 3. 7, but something for the Lord, something to bring unto Him. And in all LABOUR, including godly labour, there is profit (Prov. 14. 23). It is worthy of notice that five talents lead to five more, two to two more. There is thus a beautiful harmony with the Lord's gift in the climax of blessing. Another reminder that we are dependent throughout on Him. And, be it observed, there is the SAME proportion in each case, followed by the very same words of encouragement. How refreshing to those who own their slender ability and equipment. Nothing is a hindrance except unbelief, and carelessness and self-pleasing.

The servant who received one talent is a beacon. He did not "journey" and work, but "went away" (the verb is quite different from verse 16) and hid. How different from the wondrous hiding of Matthew 13. 44.* Was it permissible to hide the silver "money"? No, it was the silver of "his lord." This is the first mention of the metal, and may remind us that the GIFT was linked with redemption. But we do not read that the servant was one of the redeemed. Many are the privileges which unsaved ones also have received, in accord with their position and profession, and the very fact that they feel out of harmony ought to break them down, and bring them to seek Him. We do not feel called to say in this connexion if the servant was a believer, or not: the silence of the Lord is meant to search us. What am I doing with my "Lord's money"?—With anything and everything that is His? I have nothing as a personal right: all is a trust.

"But after much time the Lord of those servants cometh." There is no thought of an immediate return. All Scripture harmonizes. But the expression, "My Lord delayeth His Coming" is a sin. He "cometh," not only "will come": the tense calls to a constant readiness. Thus is He often called the Coming One (Heb. 10. 37). "And reckoneth (taketh together account) with them": there will be a reckoning, righteously and holily: nothing is unnoticed. The judgment of works is according to works, though we, in our persons, are saved by grace. "And having come to (Him), he that received the five talents brought to (Him) other five talents, saying, Lord, five talents didst Thou deliver to me: see other five talents I gained" "upon them." He comes with joy, and how bright and loving is the response. "But his Lord said to him, Well, servant good and faithful, over a few things thou wast faithful: over many things will I set thee: enter into the joy of thy Lord." The Lordship of Christ is rightly emphasized. The servant is not an equal, albeit he is brought into the very joy which belongs to his Lord. Is it not refreshing to see Christ's delight in His servant's faithfulness, and then the glad share? The great point is "Faithfulness," not "success." The Lord here mentions it twice. "Results" and "publicity" are not before us as the object: are we faithful? Not only was the act faithful, the person is thus characterized. How much this means. Faithfulness recognizes Him, and His words, and rejects all glorification of self. There can be no "goodness" without faithfulness. We recollect a somewhat similar link in Ephesians 1. 1 and Colossians 1. 2. "A few things!" Verily it is so. How small is our stewardship compared with His glory? What are five talents to Him? But yet they are important, because they are His. "A few things":

*It should be remembered that, in the spiritual meaning, the Divine Owner Himself had hid that treasure with a view to the purchase. There was no attempt to obtain cheaply (far otherwise) that of which another was ignorant.

it is well to remember this now, lest we boast. The reward will be far, far greater: there are parallels in the reward, but the fact of a proportion does not mean an equivalent. Then we shall be fitted to be entrusted with much more, without becoming proud. The kingdom will be a kingdom, and will have appointments. Positions are God's purpose, as we shall learn further in the parable of the Pounds.

Read verses 22 and 23 with 20 and 21. Where have we closer parallels? Even the order of words (it is so in the Original) is the same. Do you not see the beauty of this? The same faithfulness with a yet smaller trusteeship, and exactly the same words of approval. "Well" is not left out, "good" is not omitted: everything is in Divinely beautiful harmony. Few verses are so encouraging to the believer conscious that he does very, very little. Seek after faithfulness! Your Lord will estimate aright: can you not trust Him? The appointment, the many things, and the joy are all there. The Lord delights in a "few things" and in "little things" simply done in love to Himself. How real will the joy be then! No failure, no self-esteem, nor self-dependency. The talents belong to the Lord now, and the joy will belong to Him then, and He is unwilling that His own should not share both. How blessedly will all be brought to us in our line. This parable will soon become history.

"But!" Ah, if only the message could stop before this word! Ah, it does not stop: our Lord has something more for us. How do we begin the study? Is it with the thought, "This is only meant for others"? Let us ever beware of such an attitude. "But the one also having received the one talent having come said, Lord, I knew Thee that Thou art a hard Man, reaping where Thou sowedst not, and gathering where Thou scatteredst not: and having feared, having gone away, I hid Thy talent in the earth: see, Thou hast Thine own!" The rudeness, the callousness, the whole demeanour must surprise. Is it possible? But if actions speak louder than words, what would be our Lord's own summing up even of our present manner toward Him at times? Our love is not always so real as our words in a hymn, or a meeting, might imply. Have we not neglected His will, and even been irritated, and misrepresented Him? It is well to learn too by contrasts what our true attitude should be, even love's recognition that He is tender, and that all is of His sowing. He cannot reap what is not His: the very "sowers" live and have the living seed, because of His life blood poured out. All our service depends altogether on Him, and its fruitfulness also. We can never praise Him too much. Observe that the wicked servant complains of the LORD. Everything begins with failure to trust and praise HIM. If you and I only murmur at "circumstances" we begin to murmur at Him. Let us be warned as to the beginnings of sin.

(If the Lord will, to be continued).

SIMILARITIES IN PSALM BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS.

- "O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy Name in all the earth" (8, first example in the book).
 "Bless the Lord, O my soul" (103, 104 very similar).
 "Praise ye the Lord" (106, 113, 117, 135, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150—the most repeated example; and the most frequent command in Scripture, even as "Fear not" is the oft-mentioned gracious prohibition).
 "O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good: because His mercy endureth for ever" (118, cf. 136).
 The following are full of helpful allusion:—
 "The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble": "Let the King hear us when we call" (20).
 "God is our Refuge and Strength": "The God of Jacob is our Refuge" (46).
 "God, be merciful unto us and bless us": "God shall bless us" (67).
 "O God, to deliver me, make haste, to help me, O Lord": "Make haste unto me, O God . . . O Lord, make no tarrying" (70).
 "Truly God is good to Israel": "It is good for me to draw near to God" (73).
 "God standeth . . . He judgeth among the gods": "Arise, O God, judge the earth" (82).
 "O give thanks unto the Lord": "Praise ye the Lord" (105).
 "Praise ye the Lord, I will praise the Lord with my whole heart": "His praise endureth for ever" (111).
 "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord": "Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good" (122).
 "Behold, bless ye the Lord": "The Lord bless thee out of Zion" (134).
 "O Lord, Thou hast searched me . . . Thou understandest my thought . . . art acquainted with all my ways": "Search me, O God . . . try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me" (139).
 "I will extol Thee, my God, O King; and I will bless Thy Name for ever and ever": "My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh bless His holy Name for ever and ever" (145).
 "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly": "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him," would seem to be a helpful extension of the thought, linking two psalms, with a precious parallel, and contrast,—for the unworthy "put their trust" in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- "Much fine gold" (Ps. 19. 10).
 "Much reward" (Ps. 19. 11).
 "Much transgression" (Ps. 19. 13).

A Remarkable Contrast.

IN comparing Scripture with Scripture, how often we find things to humble and search us, as well as to encourage and refresh. It is a precious privilege to compare spiritual things with spiritual (1 Cor. 2. 13). Thereby the Holy Spirit grants us rich store. In contrasting the "Rich Young Man," of the Gospels, with the Jailor of Acts 16, we find impressive instruction for our hearts.

The striking contrasts may be put before us in this way:—

MARK 10.

A rich young man.
Came to the Lord Jesus when on earth.

Jew (Rom. 10. 21).
Running (enthusiastic).
Kneeling (reverent).

Asked (enquiring).
Good teacher (docility, but he was unaware of Christ's Deity).

What SHALL I do? (Apparently desiring to bargain, but there are no added words about salvation.)

The Answer is on the ground of his question "Keep the commandments" (Matt. 19. 17).

The Result.
Sad, but went away grieved, for he had "great possessions."

Concerning the rich young man we read, "The Lord loved him": may we not infer that afterwards he was brought to see his NEED and saved? There was not a parallel with "tempting Him" in Luke 10. 25, nor with "Willing to justify himself" of verse 29 there. God is sometimes beginning His work within when the evidences seem very slight, and hidden from us.

Concerning the jailor's experience, may not God's servant Paul have thereby been reminded, that he, too, was once a persecutor, and had haled men and women to prison (Acts 8. 3)? If so, how his heart must have been stirred at the realization again of, "Where sin abounded, grace overflowed," and this time to a Gentile. So the Jew must be saved on the same level as the Gentile. How strikingly Romans 9. 16 and 10 3, 4 apply, and how our hearts should glow with loving gratitude for overflowing grace to us also, if so be we have been saved from law's condemnation, through faith into the Lord Jesus Christ.

If the "great possessions" of Israel, as a nation, were misused to keep them from seeing the Deity of the Lord Jesus, and following Him, how grateful should saved Gentiles be, that

ACTS 16.

A jailor.
The apostle caused to come to him (Acts 16. 9) after the resurrection of Christ.

Gentile (Acts 11. 21).
Persecuting (God's people).
Asleep, needing an earthquake to awaken him. (The drawn sword reminds of another, even God's, of which he was in danger.)

Asked trembling, fell down.
Sirs (alarm).

What MUST I do? (At his wit's end he added, "to be saved," seeing his peril, and need, and feeling something must be done.)

The Answer is in accord with the words "be saved," on the ground of mercy. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ."

The Result.
"Set meat before them," having judged himself in baptism, and he rejoiced, with the joy of faith.

through their fall salvation has come to the Gentiles, and if their fall be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them, the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness (Rom. 11. 11, 12)?

M. RUDA.

"GOD" AND SALVATION.

"I have waited for Thy SALVATION, O Lord." Genesis 49. 18.

"See the SALVATION of the Lord." Exodus 14. 13, 2 Chronicles 20. 17, Luke 2. 30.

"He is become my SALVATION." Exodus 15. 2, Psalm 118. 14, Isaiah 12. 2.

"SALVATION belongeth unto the Lord." Psalm 3. 8, Jonah 2. 9.

"Save us, O God of our SALVATION." 1 Chronicles 16. 35, Psalm 65. 5, 85. 4.

"Let the God of my SALVATION be exalted." Psalm 18. 46, 25. 5.

"The Lord is my Light and my SALVATION." Psalm 27. 1.

"Say unto my soul, I am thy SALVATION." Psalm 35. 3.

"Deliver me, O God, thou God of my SALVATION" Psalm 51. 14.

"In God is my SALVATION, and my glory." Psalm 62. 7.

"Blessed be the Lord, Who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our SALVATION. He That is our God is the God of SALVATION; and to God the Lord belong the issues from death." Psalm 68. 19, 20.

"O God the Lord, the strength of my SALVATION." Psalm 140. 7.

"I will wait for the God of my SALVATION." Micah 7. 7.

"I will joy in the God of my SALVATION." Habakkuk 3. 18.

"The SALVATION of God is sent unto the Gentiles." Acts 28. 28.

"The Author of eternal SALVATION." Hebrews 5. 9.

"Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria (and not relied upon the Lord thy God) therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thy hand." Is this a misprint? Was not Asa's conflict with Baasha, king of Israel? How then did Syria's host, which came to help him, escape from "his hand." If he had not said "Break thy league with Baasha," Syria would have joined the other side. Faith would have had TWO enemies instead of one! But the Holy Spirit shows this would have been a positive gain. Why? Are greater trials an advantage? Yes. For thereby Asa would have had a twofold and complete victory. To make friends with one sin against another is a poor "victory," and to have a truce with a Benhadad is only temporary respite: he remains to strike when it suits. Let us look to God for victory over our spiritual "Benhadads." The only path of real peace is the path of faith.

HINDRANCES.

"If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you heavenly things?" John 3. 12.

"How can ye believe (a) which receive honour one of another, and (b) seek not the honour that cometh from God only?" John 5. 44.

"If ye believe not His writings, how shall ye believe My words?" John 5. 44.

"How can ye, being evil, speak good things?" Matthew 12. 34.

But grace comes in! "How can a man be born again when he is old?" is answered by "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3. 4, 6), and unbelief is met by "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 1. 14).

WITNESSES (John 5. 32-39).

1. "Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the Truth."
2. "The works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me."
3. "The Father Himself, Which hath sent Me, hath borne witness of Me" (cf. verse 32).
4. "The Scriptures . . . they are they which testify (bear witness) of Me" (cf. verse 46).

"ONLY A CAPITAL LETTER."

Some time ago I wrote a gospel leaflet, "I spell it with a capital Letter," showing the preciousness of a personal Hope, even the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 1. 1). I did not realize that there would be later a printing error in the magazine (Jan: page 2, line 30), through a **wrong** capital. 2 Timothy 2. 26 solemnly shows, as the margin indicates, believers—living ones—ensnared "taken alive" by the devil in a snare, and encourages to expect gracious deliverance by Him Who ever prays (Luke 22. 31, 32), into the will of the Lord. Hence "him" should be without a capital, and the translation read, "That they may recover themselves (i.e. wake up from the sleep of intoxication, in worldliness or error), OUT OF the snare of the devil, (having been taken alive by him, i.e. the devil),—INTO the will of THAT ONE" (the contrasted Lord to Whom they, as living ones, belong). We trust none were misled by the misprint, and that this further mention will be overruled to impress, on us all, prayer for this mighty (and yet individual) revival, with repentance.

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"I am the Door: by Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." John 10. 9.

A Word of Introduction.

EVERY blessing is IN the Lord Jesus. Is there a Door? He is that Door. Is there a Shepherd? He Himself alone is worthy of the Name. "By Me" is a key message, "No man cometh unto the Father but by Me." After the gift of salvation there is service, hence the going in and out. And observe the second "finding" as in Matthew 11. 29. We cannot find pasture if we neglect His will. Food is associated with obedience: how often we starve ourselves. The Christian life is in dependence on the Shepherd. It is with a humble, yet earnest, wish to help the Lord's redeemed in the partaking of His gift of pasture, that these pages are sent forth. He has given the Scriptures, but they are often neglected. How important that those of us who are His should not only read as a duty, or to find a subject, but to receive needed food and strength.

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"Yet in this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God."

Deuteronomy 1. 32.

HOW could Israel be unbelieving in the wilderness? Their deliverance from Egypt was an evidence of God, of His love and of His truthfulness. Their daily life too was miraculous. There was no reason to doubt God. He had never proved unfaithful.

But unbelief is always illogical. "Doubt" shows that the heart leads us more than the proofs that must satisfy the mind. Affections are deeply resultful, and sway us more than we think.

If we love the Lord, and experience His gracious enabling, and have quiet inner confidence in Himself, how blessed will be the fruit of simple faith! Our life is complex. We may "reason," and yet remain unconvinced, unless the heart is humbled. "With the heart man believeth."

Unbelief was disobedience, and so is it still. It was not only a vacuum, not only an absence of faith, it was a positive of self's assertiveness. Doubt is no mere omission of faith. Unbelief is an attack on God and on His words. Thus this verse may be rendered more literally, "and IN this WORD ye are not believing ones IN the LORD YOUR GOD." How blessed is the contrast "In God will I praise His word," and again, "Thy WORD have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against THEE," and yet again, "I believe GOD, that it shall be even as it was TOLD me." We cannot trust God and doubt His words. We cannot love God and oppose His words. We dare not separate God and His words.

The word "this" is important. "I will yet for this be enquired of." "This do." God delights in definiteness, and loving exactness, in prayer and in obedience. We remember the words to Martha, "Believest thou this?" It is so easy to have a vague and general belief that God can do everything. But true belief looks at a promise, and though circumstances seem to negative, the "No" of everything around is not sufficient to destroy the simple "Yes" of faith. O that OUR LIFE may say "I believe God."

CHRIST'S WONDROUS WORK FOR US.

"He made Him to be Sin (a SINOFFERING) for us Who knew no sin: that we might be made THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD in Him." 2 Corinthians 5. 21.

"That ye through His POVERTY might be RICH." 2 Corinthians 8. 9.

"If one died for all, then all died; and He DIED for all, that they which LIVE should not live unto themselves." 2 Corinthians 5. 14, 15.

"The CHASTISEMENT of our PEACE was upon Him, and with His STRIPE we are HEALED." Isa. 53. 5. 1 Peter 2. 24.

"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a CURSE for us . . . that the BLESSING of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ." Galatians 3. 13, 14.

"Abram . . . went on his journeys . . . unto the place where his tent had been AT THE BEGINNING . . . unto the place of the altar which he had made there AT THE FIRST: and there Abram called on the Name of the Lord." Genesis 13. 3, 4.

The Right Order.

"YE that love the Lord, hate evil." Have you thought what the order of these precious words means? We do not read "Ye that hate evil, love the Lord"; but rather God would here show us that the positive should normally lead, in our experience, to the negative, not the negative to the positive. The new shoots of life drive away any old leaves still clinging. It is not, "Must I give up **this** or **that**?" but the Lord **Himself** is to be emphasized **first**. If you are urged to separate from something without the motive power of the love of Christ, it is irksome. The Holy Spirit has not written, "Let us go forth without the camp," nor even, "Let us go forth without the camp unto Him," but "Let us go forth, therefore, unto Him (first) without the camp" (second). It is NOT the negative to the positive: that means a sense of bare duty and an absence of living power. God shows the positive as the means to the negative: fellowship with the Lord and His standpoint first. This is His gracious will, and is His witness against human methods that often cause friction, and, even when aiming aright, are unspiritual. Our Father does not wish love to be a burden, but to be—LOVE. How important it is for believers to realize this personally, and when seeking to encourage others. Many have been hindered as to the narrow way because they have been confronted with the negative as the abstract first, instead of being drawn to the Lord Jesus and the positive, that they may realize God's order, and the power in Him. The Lord works from within, not only in quickening, but afterwards.

To-Day.

"To-day if ye will hear His voice."

"Exhort one another daily, while it is called

To-day." Hebrews 3. 7, 13.

My heart has been slow to realize a further thought in these words. GOD'S VOICE is heard in the psalm, and in the repetition of its message here, but the added reminder of "To-day," (immediately depending on the psalm, and with the same reference to the danger of becoming hardened), is in connexion with OUR exhorting "one another." Is not this beautiful and heart-searching alike? God is pleased to witness to us THROUGH "one another." True, we are not "prophets," but we should so seek to be guided by the Spirit that in measure, and by our godly manner, we may be a deep, rich blessing FROM HIM to "one another." Is it possible? This is the very matter the Holy Spirit has brought before us throughout the New Testament. Collect, with a Concordance, some references to "one another," and you will soon realize this. Indeed the EXHORTATION to EXHORT here contains on BOTH sides of it the reference to God's voice, and His grace in hindering the

hardening (verses 7, 8, 15). Do we thus seek so to speak "as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4. 11), and "always with grace" (Col. 4. 6), not merely in meetings or just afterwards, but in ordinary conversation at all times? Thus will our Father be glorified.

PRECIOUS COUNTERPARTS.

- "We LOVE because He first LOVED us" (1 John 4. 19).
 "The Lord's PORTION is His people" (Deut. 32. 9).
 "Thou art my PORTION O Lord" (Ps. 119. 57).
 "The Lord DELIGHTETH in thee" (Isa. 62. 4).
 "There is none upon earth that I DESIRE (delight in) beside Thee" (Ps. 73. 25).
 May not Psalm 37. 23 be intentionally read in two ways, "He DELIGHTETH in his way," and "he DELIGHTETH in His way"?
 "The Lord taketh PLEASURE in them that fear Him, in those that hope in His mercy" (Ps. 147. 11).
 "Because I have set MY AFFECTION (my pleasure) to the house of my God" (1 Chron. 29. 3).
 "I will say, It is MY people" (Zech. 13. 9, cf. Isa. 43. 1).
 "And they shall say, The Lord is MY God" (Zech. 13. 9, Phil. 4. 19).
 "As the lily among thorns, so is MY LOVE among the daughters" (Song 2. 2).
 "As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my BELOVED among the sons" (Song 2. 3).
 "Thou art my PRAISE" (Jer. 17. 14).
 "I will make you a name and a PRAISE among all peoples of the earth" (Zeph. 3. 20).
 "Yet will I be to them a little SANCTUARY" (Ezek. 11. 16, Isa. 8. 14).
 "Judah was His SANCTUARY, and Israel His dominion" (Ps. 114. 2).
 "Thy God thy GLORY" (Isa. 60. 19).
 "I will place salvation in Zion for Israel My GLORY" (Isa. 46. 13).

A Threefold "Then" (Isaiah 58. 8, 9, 14).

- "THEN shall thy light break forth as the morning."
 "THEN shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer."
 "THEN shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord."

Read the preceding verses to see the "conditions" of blessings: O that we may learn how often we hinder our experiences, while we cry out for the blessings without willingness (and "will") for the attitude to receive and use them aright. "If thou . . . THEN."

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE VERY WORDS OF THE LORD.

"Destroy **this** temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was **this** temple in building . . . but He spake of the temple of His body . . . His disciples remembered that He had said **this**, and they believed the Scripture, and the **Word** which Jesus had said." John 2. 22.

"Jesus **spake** of his death: but they **thought** that He had spoken of taking of rest in sleep." John 11. 13.

"No man at the table **knew** for what intent He **spake** this . . . for some of them **thought** . . ." John 13. 28, 29.

"Then went **this** saying abroad among the brethren that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus **said not**, he shall not die, but, If I will, that he tarry till I come." John 21. 23.

THE TESTIMONY OF OPPOSERS TO THE EARNEST CONTINUANCE OF GOD'S SERVANTS.

"Ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man's blood upon us" Acts 5. 28.

"These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also." Acts 17. 6.

"Because he kept on preaching (tense) unto them Jesus and the resurrection." Acts 17. 18.

"Not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people." Acts 19. 26.

"Certain questions . . . of One, Jesus . . . Whom Paul kept on affirming to be alive." Acts 25. 19.

A LIGHT IN THE WORLD.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father Which is in heaven." Matthew 5. 16.

"Commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." 2 Corinthians 4. 2.

"Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." 1 Timothy 3. 7.

"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." 1 Peter 2. 12.

"Having a good conscience: that whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ." 1 Peter 3. 16.

"Demetrius hath good report of all men, and of the truth itself: yea, and we also bear record; and ye know that our record is true." 3 John 12.

Some Parables of Service.

(Continued)

The first question is NOT, "Who is this servant, a saved one or an unsaved one?" WHY do I want to know the answer to this? Have we not heard the question, "Is baptism necessary to salvation?"—as if almost to suggest a willingness to do more IF necessary to salvation, than IF necessary to obedience and pleasing God. Surely this is saddening. Our concern must not be "Who is this servant?" but "O that I may be quite unlike him." This practical application of Scripture in the Holy Spirit, I feel is often lacking in my own life: hence I would affectionately urge it upon beloved brethren also. It is sadly clear that WE sometimes have been "slothful," and even the word "wicked" in 1 Corinthians 5. 13 must be read in the light of "that the spirit may be saved in the day of Jesus Christ," and 2 Corinthians 2. 6-8. Only the flesh will misuse such a solemnizing thought. True, we cannot think it possible that in resurrection, when redeemed ones stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, they will defend their sins on earth, and speak thus against the Lord. This man has not one word of love to Him, and brings no fruit, no service. It is evident that all the good ground has fruit, and EVERY believer will, it seems clear, have praise of God. "Ah," someone will say, "You are now asserting what you said should be left out." Rather I sought to show this was not the FIRST point, and I would not wish to deal with it, or, indeed, any point as to eternal salvation, theoretically, or till the FIRST point has been honestly, and humbly weighed—"What warning has my Lord for me in this passage? Am I sinning thus in any degree?" O that there may ever be personal exercise of heart first, yea, and last too. We cannot be too practical, nor too devotional in our meditation on the Scriptures. "I was afraid": the objector does not say of WHOM (see Mark 8. 38). But it is sadly true that the fear of man bringeth a snare (Prov. 29. 25), and the same book emphasizes the sin and danger of slothfulness that casteth into a deep sleep. Spiritual sleepiness is ever a peril, as for the disciples in Gethsemane. It is deeply suggestive that Matthew 25 lays stress on omissions. The unwise virgins had NOT oil, those judged in verse 45 did NOT show love to ones of whom the Lord says, "My brethren," and here the talent was "buried." We do not read it was misused for open evil. Idolatry and false religions are not the only evils. Surely this also speaks to OUR hearts. Again let us remember that the exposition of a passage is not merely "WHO is this?" but "WHAT is this, which my Lord condemns, that I may hate it, and its beginning in my own life?" Unfaithfulness is a terrible sin. The answer of the Lord Jesus is righteous and stern. Have we not noticed the threefold sternness of this chapter (verses 12, 26-30, 41-43)? He Who spake words of grace, with grace poured over His lips, never excuses sin. The Lord's description is penetrating. Not

only "slothful" but "wicked." It is wicked to omit obedience, and wicked to have evil thoughts against Him. The man urged that the Lord grasped for Himself. How different must be our view of His love, and how we desire Him to have all the glory. Then comes the statement, "Thou oughtest therefore to have put My money to the exchangers and then at My coming I should have received Mine own with that which it produced" (that which is "born": "usury" has a technical and quite unholy meaning in modern English, verse 27). God forbade "biting interest" (Lev. 25. 36, 37) of old among Israel, and the words of the Lord Jesus are not encouraging this, nor do they lead us to become financiers, and to be occupied with investments. The perils of which Matthew 21. 12 and John 2. 15, 16 speak still remain, and we are graciously warned not to blend merchandise with the gospel, nor to become those who have "an eye to business," so that we fall into the snare of 1 Timothy 6. 9, 10. But the parable here is definite that we are to use what is entrusted to us unto God's glory, and if we cannot, we should not retain it, but seek to pass it to another, who can use it for our Lord's glory, and that He Himself may receive the fruit when He comes again. This principle applies to everything—time, money, influence, knowledge, ability, spiritual capacity. It is plain that some of these things we cannot hand to another. Then let us remember all those things, and our members, and we ourselves, are not our own (1 Cor. 6. 19). Everything is to be with a view to our Lord's receiving "in that Day." There must be the thought of something for Him, and it must be that which is of the same character as that which He gives, and thus in accord with His own will and with His redemptive work. Silver which is hidden in the earth can produce nothing: how often that which is of earth hinders our heavenly activity and alacrity. May we be more devoted unto Him!

The buried talent is soon taken away. This is not salvation. It is possible to have blessings, and not to be saved. Hebrews 6. 4-6 unveils this, and we recollect Judas, who evidently wrought miracles and preached, even as the others (Mark 6. 7). Such things are no evidence of salvation (Matt. 7. 21-23). Strikingly the talent is given to the one possessing the ten. "Why," we may not be able to say. The servant with five gaining five, the servant with two gaining two, have hitherto been equally commended. But the Lord can in SOVEREIGNTY give extra to whom He pleases. Moreover, faithful service with "more" talents may be commended as peculiarly full of problems, because of the extra tendency to pride. We do not know, we leave the fact, and are willing for our Lord's will. There will be no jealousy in the kingdom. The explanation is sufficient, "For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance." For the second time this faithful servant is said to "have": he is a possessor more fully in the kingdom, though without any wish to boast. The character of that Day is

"abundance": the Lord will grant an overflow in His rewards. But, as in other Scriptures, there remains the other side, "From him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." The other side! Yes, we find two classes, two positions and two goals, throughout Scripture. How often is this forgotten. There are, moreover, two modes of "having," and Luke 8. 18 may also help us, with its reminder of profession. We only really "have" that which we use for the Lord. But privation is not the only result: there is positive judgment. God does not leave with a bare privation: there is no mere vacuum with Him. This is blessed for His redeemed, but how solemnizing for the ungodly. "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness." There was a casting forth from the feast in Matthew 22. 13, and the attendants here are to carry out a similar command. Separation from the Lord will be a fact (2 Thess. 1. 9). Unprofitable and useless! We think of Romans 3. 12. The beautiful personal contrast in Philemon 11 may well be a type of others "in Christ Jesus." Hence, we cannot create, but "the Lord hath need" of His people, and we can become useful in His gracious condescension. The outer darkness is "outer": the light is in His presence. "Without are dogs" (Rev. 22. 15). The Lord speaks of a real PLACE, and the added words impress this. "THERE (in that place) shall be the weeping and gnashing of the teeth." He who began with his own religion, in Genesis, ended with murdering his brother, and with separation from God: and the evil that is first seen in the disregard of responsibility to the Lord has the bitter conclusion of the gnashing teeth. There is no suggestion of unconsciousness, nor of annihilation, and these searching words occur seven times in all, with the Lord's personal emphasis. He alone uses them (Matt. 8. 12, 13. 42, 50, 22. 13, 24. 51, Luke 13. 28). Do not profess to be a Christian unless you are, do not take the position of a servant unless you love Him, and are glad to own He is worthy of all. The holy solemnities of that Day will not convict and bring the sinner to salvation: his utterance is heard against the Lord, and even if words are silenced (Rom. 3. 19) there is the gnashing of the teeth. The last view—the last statement!—O that we might feel its power more.

(If the Lord will, to be continued).

If food is in the wrong place in my body, it may only choke me, or clog the whole system, and, through lack of assimilation, become poisoned and poisonous. Likewise, truth in disproportion, truth not received, applied, assimilated, but only known mentally, may hinder our whole Christian life, and bring us to a more severe spiritual illness than those who know far less.

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The Student of Scripture.

Edited by Percy W. Heward

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."
Psalm 139. 23, 24.

A Word of Introduction.

THE infinite grace of God has abounded toward His children. Undeserving in themselves, yea "children of wrath," they have been brought into His family, with an everlasting nearness. It is in the recognition of such amazing love that these pages are sent forth with the humble desire that the fruit of His work may be seen, more and more, in our obedient lives. The passage of Holy Scripture, from the Psalms, printed above is an earnest plea for God's inner cleansing work, which we must desire. If any think that these pages are only "studies" for mental enjoyment, and to help in the giving of addresses, they make a great mistake. The object is that we may become like our Lord Jesus (2 Cor. 3. 18).

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THE CREATION.

The Holy Spirit's Two Accounts in Genesis 1 and 2.

THE Gracious God Who gave a "double" dream to Pharaoh (Gen. 41. 32), parallel visions in Daniel and Revelation, as well as four records of the earthly life of His Beloved Son, has given two records of His Own creative work in Genesis 1 and 2. The critic who assumes that they are from the pens of two different writers, because of the use of two separate Names of God, misses the whole point, whilst the believer finds in that very fact, and the appropriate use of each Name, a cause for worship, and for admiration of the Divine Wisdom and of Verbal Inspiration of the Scripture.

As regards the Names, that of God (Elohim) is used exclusively in Genesis 1. 1, 2, 3. Thenceforward it is the Name "LORD God," which continues until the opening of chapter 4, when the Name "LORD" is used throughout the chapter. The Name "God" (Elohim) signifies One Who is Mighty, One Who CAN—is ABLE. The Name "LORD" is His Own underived, incommunicable Name, personal to Himself, and is used when His concern and care for His people are particularly manifested. May we not think of this Name as suggesting to us The One Who WILL?

In chapter 1, (in which are also to be included verses 1-3 of chapter 2), there is given a simple account of the fact of God's work, the time that it occupied, the arrangement of each day, without any reference to "processes." Regarding the bringing forth of vegetation and the creation of man, both of which are again mentioned in chapter 2, it is stated that the former were "brought forth," and that man was "made" and "created" in God's image, after God's likeness, but His "method" is not mentioned.

In Genesis 2. 4, the opening words, "These are the generations" remind us of the use of this expression subsequently,—for example, in chapters 5. 1 and 10. 1, where the significance lies in that which "proceeded from" not "led up to." Thus we have a witness against the "science falsely so-called" (1 Tim. 6. 20), of evolution with its "processes" (theoretically) leading up to higher forms of life, and finally "man." Applying this significance of the expression to Genesis 2. 4, are we not constrained to think of what God grants in the "family of nature," so to speak, as in Genesis 1. 11, 20, "Let the earth bring forth"? And, let it be remembered, that nothing of life is brought forth apart from the word, the power and the operation of the Creator.

Observe next the words, "Of the heavens and of the earth when they were created." These take the mind back to Genesis 1. 1, because of the order, "the heavens and the earth." The following words give a **time mark**, "In the day," and link on to Genesis 1. 3, which comes chronologically after the undated catastrophe of Genesis 1. 2, and is further associated with that verse by the reverse order of the words, "the earth and the heavens." Moreover, the introduction of the Name LORD God, suggests, perhaps, the "heavens" as ministering to the earth which God prepared for man.

After the mention of earth, come the "plants," and then their "growing." This, it will be observed, is parallel with Genesis 1. 9-12. First, the earth "appears," then the earth brings forth grass, herbs and trees, and then they grow, for they yield "seed," and "fruit." Thus far, the parallelism seems complete, but what of the words, "before it was in the earth," and, "before it grew"? Surely this indicates something before

the words, "Let the earth bring forth" (Hebrews 7. 10 may partly illustrate. "He was yet in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him"). The plants existed in the plan and purpose of God, but not only so,—they could not **come from** the earth apart from His first placing them there, for all life is from Him. The plants came forth on the third day; man was created on the sixth day. Therefore, may we not infer that "the mist which went up" (2. 6) took place between these days?

Let us remember that God planted the garden in readiness for the man to dress and keep, but this planting was a special act, and definitely distinct from general "growing"; and though it is not mentioned in chapter 1 it must have taken place before Adam's creation on the sixth day. We cannot doubt that the man of chapter 2 is the man of chapter 1, because Adam was the **first man** (1 Cor. 15. 45), and the very word "Adam," rendered "man," occurs in Genesis 1. 26. Chapter 5. 2 also shews that God gave **them** this name "in the day when they were created." But the emphasis on names is reserved for the parallel record in Genesis 2. For here we are introduced to God's Name—The LORD,—to Adam's name, and to his wife's name "Isha." Moreover, it is there that we learn how Adam gave names to every living creature (Gen. 2. 20).

As to the man himself, it is in the second record that we read that God "formed" (or "framed") the man, thus emphasising the work of God's own hands; a word, be it noted, which is not previously used of any other part of the creation, but recurs in chapter 2. 19. This is again a definite witness against evolution. Man is not the result of a process occupying millions of years. He came direct from the hands of the Living God, "Who breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Genesis 1. 27 and 5. 2 can have but one meaning. Male and female were created on the same day. Hence, can we infer any other than that the events of Genesis 2. 18-25 all occurred on the sixth day of that momentous week?

Summarising our thoughts, it may be said that in Genesis 1 we read of God's "acts," whilst in Genesis 2 we rather behold His "ways." Compare the words of Psalm 103. 7, "He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel."

This God is our God for ever and ever. Let us worship and bow down and kneel before the Lord our Maker; Who has, in mercy, made us, in Christ Jesus, a new Creation.

E.K.

The above is part of a Bible School study by our brother Edwin Kirk, who also conducts a correspondence course. We hope the Lord will use this much more and more. The work is yet in its infancy, and its widened usefulness depends partly on the prayer and making known of God's children. Our brother may be addressed at 9, Oakbury Road, Fulham, S.W.6.

"MARAH."

Exodus 15. 23.

WHAT if I come to a Marah in my life? A little before there has been a mighty deliverance, and a new song has become mine. It is often so: "AFTER these things" says 2 Chronicles 32. 1. But shall I then muffle and destroy the song? Shall Marah change the music to misery, and praise to peevishness? Is not God still *my* God? Hath He forgotten to be gracious? Three days of "no water" (verse 22) may make Marah seem more bitter, for the hope has been raised, only, it seems, to dash it to the ground, broken, irretrievably broken. Marah is Marah, I cannot deny it. It was not that they would not drink, they could not. Some problems are too great for us to deal with them. It is vain to say that there are no Marahs in our lives; there are many. You and I cannot make a well of our own there, nor engineer an escape for the insuperable difficulty. We cannot call the bitter sweet (Isa. 5. 20). We are at our wit's end. What shall we do? "The people murmured": but shall we murmur? Ah, we dare not boast, "I will not." But what is our heart's desire? What is God's way out? The people did not murmur without a hidden cause. Where did the backsliding begin? Psalm 106 gives the key.

"Then believed they His words;

They sang His praise:—

They soon forgot His works;

They waited not for His counsel: "

(verses 12, 13). Have I forgotten? He has not forgotten. Have I waited for His counsel, or have I hurried to my own conclusions? What has my Father to teach me by the three days without water? What do I *need*, that only a Marah can bring me to learn? He brings me to Marah to bring me nearer to Himself. It is love that has permitted the closed door, and the heavy disappointment. "If need be, ye are in heaviness," says 1 Peter 1. 6. Have I thanked God for Marah, or have I complained?

Moses did not murmur, but cried unto the Lord. That was the right attitude. But prayer was not enough in itself. Prayer was used to lead him away from confidence in himself, or even in his prayer. A Living Tree was near. The Lord showed him that, and nothing else. In Genesis the Tree of Life typified the Lord Jesus, but Adam knew not its value. The Living Tree here must be cut down. In the *death* of the Lord Jesus is atonement, and by His death are the "Marahs" of our daily life transformed. That which is bitter receives a new meaning. "My tribulations, your glory," says Ephesians 3. 13. Ah, but can my own trials become a privilege to me? Paul rejoiced in his sufferings to be a blessing to other saints (Col. 1. 24). This was no mere bravado, the love of Christ constrained. Was not Matthew 5. 10, 11 written with a purpose? Cannot the Lord

enable? "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Cor. 12. 10). 'Tis not that Marah is sweet in itself, or that I try to make out it is sweet, but that the Lord's presence and grace will alter everything, yea, and He brings out into a wealthy place (Ps. 66. 12, see 1 Cor. 10. 15) at the time of need, and so there is an "afterward" (Heb. 12. 11), and our loving Father often has an Elim near Marah (Ex. 15. 27). Can I trust everything in His hand? Surely He is trustable.

SOME THOUGHTS ON SPIRITUAL PARALLELS AS TO ILLNESSES.

There is a real difference between a sudden accident, and a special illness, and also between the latter and a general "run down" and weak condition. And is it not so spiritually? Have not some children of God one characteristic and some the other? By the grace of God we would desire a contrast with all, and to have a healthy Christian life, in fellowship with Him, and in happy enjoyment of the daily food He has provided. Some believers may be weak hearted, in spiritual things: some seem marked by a deafness; others do not appear to be so keen in seeing; with yet others the voice seems to be almost lost: sometimes the spiritual disease is more inward and causes general loss of power and testimony: sometimes it is more manifest, as with boils and outward troubles of the skin. Again, there are spiritual strains which suggest nerve illnesses, and is there not often an illustration of a cold? Do we not find, moreover, diseases of the digestive system spiritually, and are there not cases where both the spiritual appetite and taste are impaired? Moreover, are we without "complaints" that seem, at first, inexplicable, and yet hinder the Christian growth and usefulness? But we have a wondrous Physician, and a book that diagnoses and provides remedies unerringly as the Holy Spirit applies it. So our hearts would seek an all-round revival, and a growing up into the Lord Jesus Christ in all things, as we seek a robust Christian experience that may glorify Him, and not burden others, but rather help and encourage them more and more. O that it may be so!

PRAYER AND CONTRAST. In 1 John 5. 14, 15 our hearts rejoice to read, "If we ask anything according to *His Will*, He heareth us, and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petition (lit: *the things asked*) that we have asked of Him." In impressive and awful contrast we find *the same words* in Luke 23. 24, 25:—"And Pilate gave sentence that it should be—their petition (*the thing asked*): but he released unto them him that for sedition and murder was cast into prison, when *they were asking*; but he delivered Jesus to *their will*." Blessed be God, our Lord Jesus thereby became also the willing sacrifice to bear judgment for us, that we might be able to ask and receive (John 16. 24).

SALVATION—STRENGTH.

"The Lord is my STRENGTH and my song, and He is become my SALVATION." Exodus 15. 2, Psalm 118. 14.

"Behold God is my SALVATION; I will trust and not be afraid: for the Lord, the Lord is my STRENGTH and my song; He also is become my SALVATION." Isaiah 12. 2.

"Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and STRENGTH OF SALVATION: the fear of the Lord is his treasure." Isaiah 33. 6.

"He will hear him from His holy heaven with the SAVING STRENGTH of His right hand." Psalm 20. 6.

"The Lord is their STRENGTH, and He is the SAVING STRENGTH of His anointed." Psalm 28. 8.

"SAVE me, O God, by Thy Name, and judge me by Thy STRENGTH." Psalm 54. 1.

"Stir up Thy STRENGTH, and come and SAVE us." Psalm 80. 2, see 132. 8, 16.

"The SALVATION of the righteous is of the Lord: He is their STRENGTH in the time of trouble." Psalm 37. 39.

"O God the Lord, the STRENGTH of my SALVATION, Thou hast covered my head in the day of battle." Psalm 140. 7.

"Thou wentest forth for the SALVATION of Thy people . . . the Lord God is my STRENGTH." Habakkuk 3. 13, 19.

"When we were WITHOUT STRENGTH in due time Christ died for the ungodly . . . we shall be SAVED from wrath through Him." Romans 5. 6, 9, contrast Job 26. 2.

"Now is come SALVATION and STRENGTH, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ." Revelation 12. 10.

CONFIDENCE MISPLACED.

"Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us; that when it cometh among us, it may save us." 1 Samuel 4. 3.

"Trust ye not in lying words saying, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these" Jeremiah 7. 4.

"How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us?" Jeremiah 8. 8.

BLOTting OUT.

"Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your SINS may be blotted out" (Acts 3. 19).

"Blotting out the HANDWRITING of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us" (Col. 2. 14).

"God shall blot out ALL TEARS from their eyes" (Rev. 7. 17 same word). But "I will NOT blot out HIS NAME out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels" (Rev. 3. 5). Praise and glory be to God.

Some Parables of Service.

(Continued from Matthew 25. 14-30).

And now we pass to Luke 19. As in Luke 18. 1, 9, there is a special emphasis on the occasion and purpose of the parable: "They thought that the kingdom of God should immediately APPEAR." The revealed fact that it would be in "mystery" was strange to the disciples, and the trend of their thoughts is seen after the resurrection in Acts 1. 6. And we should be looking for "that Blessed Hope." There have been centuries when some of God's dear children have been occupied with the mystery-aspect, and have partly forgotten the coming kingdom. The Lord Jesus did not deny the appearing but its **immediateness**. This emphasizes the certainty of a kingdom when He comes back, with His loving appointments. The present dispensation is associated with the "long time" of Matthew 25. 19, and the occupying here. We have had time given us to serve.

The "Nobleman" here is so described with a stress on birth, "well-born" literally; the absolute contrast occurs in 1 Corinthians 1. 28. We think of the glory of the Son of God. "This is the Heir" was a true statement concerning Him. He must "go" to receive the kingdom. His death was necessary in the eternal purpose, because we were sinners. The "far country" reminds us of the heavenly view in Daniel 7. 13, 14. Observe there is no doubt as to His receiving, nor as to His return. How many parables bring "that Blessed Hope" into prominence, and all service is in view of His approval. The servants are all His: they are in this way contrasted with Him: we recollect Matthew 21. 33-38. The number "ten" seems here intended, as in the Ten Virgins, to suggest a complete company, and fellowship. How blessedly are believers united. Here a very small trusteeship is given: only "a pound," and all are treated alike. There is much to humble us, and that is helpful. It is remarkable that whereas one parable shows equal proportion of fruit with different gifts, here we see different proportions in the result, with the same "capital." Hence the emphasis on personal loving activity with that which is small. Let us realize we cannot be trusted with too much: let us remember how little is our largest act of service before Him: let us never despise the tiniest trusteeship, but earnestly "occupy." The word "pound" only occurs here (seven times) in the New Testament. The Hebrew root would suggest a **portion**—in our Lord's appointment. Thus we do well to remember there are other servants as well. Do we pray for our brethren in this connexion? This is not salvation. We cannot be viewed as "trading" with that and increasing it: but there are associated privileges and responsibilities, and in one sense, all believers are alike—that which they have is His, weighed by Him, and to be used for Him. It is important, at times, to lose sight of the diversities of ability and so forth, and

to rememer "I am His and all I have is His." One message is given to all. There is nothing of self as the trusteeship, nor of human admixture, nor of dual responsibility. The one privilege is to receive from Him and to use for Him. "Occupy." The word implies true activity, and reality. It may suggest, by the Greek middle form, that we are to be busied in the service, our whole being engaged. A word from the same root occurs in 2 Timothy 2. 4: "the affairs of the life." Though we might engage in earthly duties, everything is to be unto the Lord (Col. 3. 24): there is to be no entangling. "Till I come" is a beautiful thought. 1 Corinthians 11. 26 is partly parallel, and John 21. 22, 23 must come to mind. But the expression here seems still stronger, "In the time in which I am coming," while I am coming. How precious is this to our awakened hearts. The Coming of Christ is always His hope as well as ours, His expectation, His object. "Surely I come quickly," "Behold I come quickly": observe how the Holy Spirit gives us the present tense (not, "I will come") with an emphasis on the certainty and the nearness alike. Christ is "the Coming One." Deeply important is the thought that our activity is in view of His return, to test all our service. His eyes are as a flame of fire, and love never excuses sin. And will not our love to Him give us the same standpoint? Let us love Him too much to offer slipshod "service," and disobedient self-will. The same message is given to each servant. None should forget His Coming. How central is it in the epistles. "Watch YE therefore" is to every man in the house (Mark 13. 35): "I say unto all, Watch" (verse 37).

But His citizens hated Him, and sent a message (embassy) after Him, saying, "We WILL not have This One to reign over us." There are citizens as well as servants. They are more distant. The meaning is surely clear. The Lord Jesus will reign at Jerusalem, where He was rejected. Israel ought to have received Him, but they did not, nor did the sign given to that generation (Matt. 16. 4), in His death and resurrection, result in their repentance. They dared to send an embassy after Him: the book of Acts and the attitude of Pharisees, rulers and priests there, will sadly illustrate. The rebelling "will" of John 5. 40 was maintained: how terribly is sin seen in the "will." Blessed be God, the remnant will yet return to the mighty God (Isa. 10. 21). How needful it is to be concerned about our "will," and to realize the grace that still lays hold of sinners, though their will is at first opposed (Rom. 9. 16). Never be discouraged in prayer for souls throughout this present life,—at least till they receive the mark of the beast.

(If the Lord will, to be continued).

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The Student of Scripture.

Edited by Percy W. Heward.

"The Lord God of Israel was their Inheritance, as He said unto them." Joshua 13. 33.

"Thou art my Portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep Thy words." Psalm 119. 57.

A Word of Introduction.

[It is a blessed thing to have a contrast with Ecclesiastes 2. 10, "This was my portion of all my labour." Men of the world have their portion in this life (Ps. 17. 14), but "the Portion of Jacob," said the prophet, "is not like them" (Jer. 10. 16). These pages are sent forth that a privileged people may enjoy their privileges. We all underestimate what we possess "in Christ Jesus." But how empty is all else, in view of death. It was the habit of my beloved father to meditate on one verse of Psalm 119 each day, (and two on the Lord's Day, thus completing a section weekly). Though it was known by heart, he found, as others, the repetition to be the reverse of wearisome. Verse 57 was reached the Lord's Day preceding his departure to be with Christ, and the message led on to verse 58, which was very comforting to his heart. How poor is all of earth: how rich is all of Christ. May we enjoy Him MORE.

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VEGETARIANISM.

GOD gave to the animals the herbs, and to unfallen Adam the herbs and the fruit. We know how sin entered, and in Genesis 3 He lovingly emphasized "bread," for "bread corn is bruised" and tells of the death of the Lord Jesus. Men went further on their "own" way, and the earth was filled with violence, and then, after the flood, God gave for the first time animal food (Gen. 9. 3). The addition was very humbling, but it reminded graciously of the prophesied sacrifice of Christ.

Everything pointed to Him, and the stress on non-partaking of blood (verse 4), so often repeated in Scripture (Deut. 12. etc.), is crystallized in the words that the blood was "given . . . upon the altar to make an atonement" (Lev. 17. 11).^{*} Yes, everything tells of our Lord Jesus.

From that time God graciously gave further lessons in connexion with meat. The passover particularly spoke of the Lord Jesus, and those who placed the blood on the door eat with joy of the lamb within the house. Myriads of sheep and other clean animals were killed as peace offerings: so deeply important was, and is, this instruction. To question the right of killing an animal for man's food is, therefore, to question God's wisdom, and to attack the whole of Scripture. To be a vegetarian "on principle" is to deny what God in wisdom has appointed. We do not mean that a believer should indulge in much meat, and omission for the sake of a brother of certain kinds of meat, or of all, may be temporarily an act of Christian love (Rom. 14. 21). Further, one's physical condition may be helped by another simple diet, though occasional partaking in some form, even gravy, may be a "witness." There must be no "moral" or "religious" grounds for abstinence from rightly killed animal food.[†]

Vegetarianism as a doctrine is sometimes associated with forms of deadly spiritism, and to this 1 Timothy 4. 1-4 alludes. Moreover, how frequently is it linked with claims of "physical regeneration" and other expressions which, intentionally or unintentionally, controvert God's statements as to fallen man, and the present dying body. A believer cannot be too careful in connexion with his language. Nor should he become one who emphasizes the subject of not eating this or that, so that his studies and thoughts become unduly in this line, and the impression of occupation of mind therewith gives almost a "religious aspect" before others. As a disciple of Christ, he should, undoubtedly, seek simple, unwholesome food, and may tenderly speak regarding this at times, but with all humility and godly proportion. It is a privilege to give up for Christ's sake, to give up, to avoid unnecessary expense, to give up that one may not give offence, even to Jews and Gentiles (1 Cor. 10. 32), but the Holy Spirit will ever lead to wisdom and balance, that Christ crucified may ever be central, and that we may never become food-specialists.

The point of vegetarianism may seem to many a small one, but in the light of 1 Timothy 4. and the Holy Spirit's express warning it is surely our true wisdom not to make light of His

^{*} Black pudding therefore, and any tonics containing blood, and any meat killed and preserved to retain the blood, can never be rightly partaken by a believer. This is not merely a matter of Jewish custom: blood was NEVER given as food; God always excepted it.

[†] Rightly killed, i.e. without intention of retaining blood, &c. God's care for beasts would also call for speed.

estimate. By misuse of God's appointment as to food, sin came into the world, and He tests our real obedience by things that seem little to the human mind, that the willingness to obey "because He says so" may be manifest. Moreover, vegetarianism plainly attacks His appointment to Noah, His provision for Israel's priests (Num. 18. 18), and the action of the Lord Jesus Christ when on the earth (Luke 22. 15). Is it not clear that the rejection is Satan's subtle attack on inspiration as much as in Genesis 3. 1-5, and may it not be that there is a special opposition because the use of animal food is linked with a reminder of man's fallen condition, and his need for redemption by the precious blood of Christ? The devil always hates atonement.

(If the Lord will, to be continued).

"An HANDFUL of Meal."

1 Kings 17. 12.

THAT was all. It seemed such a small amount. But there was another hand, and God's hand was not shortened, and so the promise was given that "the barrel of meal" should not waste (verse 14). Yes, it remained "a barrel," just as if it were full. And God's hand is not shortened to-day. He Who fed the five thousand, and more, from five barley loaves, and had twelve baskets full over, is the Same Living Lord to-day. His hands took them: "Bring them hither to ME." We have not the Lord's hand directly mentioned in 1 Kings 17, but the hand of FAITH, uplifted in prayer, is, at the outset, implied, and living faith was sustained as well as Elijah's body. The "handful" was preserved, as the prophet continued simply a man of prayer. His life was often a response to God. His opening "word" (1 Kings 17. 1) was according to the word of the Lord. For he spoke after prayer (Jas. 5. 18), and God's clear guidance,—just as, later on, he heard the "voice" (1 Kings 18. 41) which told of the abundance of rain, before he used HIS voice. So as to the hand: the hand of faith ever receives from God's hand (Ps. 145. 16). In like manner, when we see the rod in Moses' hand and the blessing from the Rock, and then his hand uplifted in prayer (Ex. 17. 11), we are soon reminded of "the hand upon the throne of the Lord" (Ex. 17. 16). The Lord's hand ever decides, and we rejoice in the One Who lives to make intercession for us. Surely this is not fanciful: no believing heart will doubt such realities, faith's realities, and we go forward in Elijah's life. Again we see his prayerfulness (1 Kings 18. 42). We know how the hand is associated with prayer (Ps. 88. 9, 143. 6, 1 Tim. 2. 8), and then at the seventh time, the cloud was the form of a man's hand (1 Kings 18. 44). Was this an accident? Nay. There are no accidents with God, nor are these accidents in the record in Scripture. The man of prayer at Sarepta was still the man of prayer on Carmel, and we little know what our Father would accomplish in us, and through and for us, if only we lived lives of believing prayer.

Psalms 111 and 112.

YOU have noticed the words "Aleph, Beth, Gimel" at the beginning of sections in Psalm 119, but possibly you have not realized that they indicate how, in the Hebrew original, all the first 8 verses begin with the letter Aleph, the second 8 with Beth, and so on. If in section 9 we translate 67 "Till I was afflicted," and 70 "'Tis good for me," all verses in English, too, will commence with T, and will illustrate the "acrostic," for this part is headed Tetli. The Holy Spirit has arranged the first four chapters of Lamentations and various Psalms thus. Some have unexpected variations (as 9 and 10, 34, 37, 145), but 111 and 112 are remarkable for their simplicity and completeness, and they are placed **together** in an impressive way: 112 could not be before 111. We see **first** God's works, and then the "outworking" in our believing life. How important is this in the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

I have been noticing how much easier it is to memorize a psalm thus arranged: we can tell when we have the verses in the right order, for "s" will come after "r." May not this be a reminder to us of the value of learning the Scriptures? Are we not all conscious that we have sometimes neglected this? And yet the thought that the Holy Spirit brings to "remembrance" (John 14. 20) implies that we should be "learners."*

It is interesting to see that all except six of the Hebrew lines, in Psalm 111, have just three words. Everything is very simple and impressive. The meditation and praise seem clearly intended to emphasize the greatness and glory of the Lord, and His wondrous works. We cannot be too praiseful. This, too, is the psalm which reminds us that "Holy and Reverend is His Name." We call to mind "Hallowed be Thy Name," and grieve over the seeking of titles among His children. The Lord Jesus ALONE is "titled"†. How impressive, likewise, is the thought of "redemption sent," and, as in Proverbs 16. 6, the salvation of God leads up to our obedience "A good understanding have all they that do them." Then the climax is praise with similar words to those of verse 3.

The way in which the two Psalms are linked might be helpfully brought out if readers would themselves write out the two in parallel columns, thus:—

Praise ye the Lord.	Praise ye the Lord.
I will praise the Lord with my whole heart.	Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord.
In the assembly of the upright and in the congregation.‡	That delighteth greatly in His commandments.

The prayerful student will then discover that both **begin** with the heading "Praise ye the Lord," and that line 6 is just the same in both—"And His righteousness endureth for ever."

* A booklet on Psalm 119 will be gladly sent.

† Leaflets on "The Use of Titles" available to His glory.

‡ Only three words in Hebrew.

Moreover line 8 has a close connexion—"The Lord is gracious and full of compassion," followed by the effect in one who loves Him, "He is gracious and full of compassion and righteous." Line 15, moreover, begins with the same word "established (maintained and sustained) for ever and ever," and "established is his heart" (verse 8). This is sufficient to show that the connexion is Divinely intended.

May we not also see a helpful association in verse 5? Our Father "gives" all that is needed to His people, and they should show favour to others. The thought of "lending" here does not necessarily imply place others in debt, and so forth. The word "for ever" in the parallel line of verse 9 is not the same, but the thought is similar. I do not know why the last two verses, in English, have each **three** lines: this may obscure the 22 letters of the Hebrew in **pairs**. It is plain that

"Holy reverend is His Name,

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" are meant to go together.

There is an interesting link yet without a contrast at the beginning of verse 9. The Lord sent redemption, we can only give to the needy (2 Cor. 9. 9): salvation is His work alone. How solemn is the closing contrast. Whereas "His praise endureth for ever" (Ps. 111 begins and ends with praise), "the desire of the wicked shall perish." There is much to encourage joy and thanksgiving, but must we not rejoice with trembling, as we see the awful results of sin, and realize what is the future of the ungodly? Happy are they who, by the grace of God, unveiled in Psalm 111, on the ground set forth in Psalm 110, shall have their desire fulfilled and see their adorable Lord. Meanwhile, let the characteristic of such be "Delighting greatly" in His commandments.

PROMISES LINKED WITH OBEDIENCE ("AND").

"Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: AND, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the age" (Matt. 28. 20).

"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" (John 14. 15-17).

"If a man love Me he will keep My words: AND My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him" (John 14. 23).

"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, AND I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish" (John 10. 27, 28).

"The Holy Ghost, Whom God hath given to them that obey Him" (Acts 5. 32).

"Christ . . . the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Heb. 5. 9).

Some Parables of Service.

(Continued)

And it came to pass, that when He was returned, having received the Kingdom, then He commanded these servants to be called unto Him, to whom He had given the money, "that He might know how much every man (what any one) had gained by trading" (15). Let us observe our Lord's remembrance and inflexible righteousness. He has not given us the pounds to use for ourselves, or as we "like." There is a definite "command" for the "servants" to be called. The arrangement is not optional. His love is wonderful, and the welcome will be very real for the bride, but in our capacity as "servants" there is not a "free and easy" overlooking of responsibility. The Lord cannot condone laziness in connexion with a "trust," such sin is theft. Carelessness is unholiness, and His own holiness forbids indifference. He will investigate everything: O that we, dear fellow believers, may realize what this means for us. The examination is of each one, personally. The gain is by trading: grace gives, but there is responsibility within the sphere of grace. How are we using all that we receive (1 Cor. 4. 1-5)?

"Then came the first, saying, Lord, Thy pound hath gained ten pounds" (16). Observe the emphasis on the LORD, and on HIS pound. There is no thought of complaint, no self-seeking, no self-esteem, but unforced joy and delight in bringing all to Him for Whom are all things (Rom. 11. 36). Should not this be our attitude more and more now? Should we not be getting ready for that Day? What have we which we have not received? What can we do "without" our Lord? The glory is His. It is observable that whereas in Matthew 25 where the faithful servants gain in like proportion, there is the humble record of personal obedience, "I have gained," here, where the proportion of each is very different, and the gain viewed as much more, (1,000% or 500%), the servant says nothing at all as to himself. "Lord, Thy pound hath gained ten pounds." Where is the word "I"? It is excluded. How much this unveils. The Lord's answer is joyful. He does not leave out the labourer: He, in entire contrast, does not mention the pound! Note, too, He first uses the word "well," then describes the servants as good, next refers to a becoming "faithful," and then gives a reward. What a full answer. Let us meditate on the words of recompense: "Be thou having authority." "Be" and "have" are rarely together. It is plain that the POSSESSION is not the only thought, but the PERSON ("be thou one having"), and HIS enjoyment of that which is lovingly bestowed. The emphasis on continuance too is helpful ("Having"). Indeed everything shows us how the Lord delights in his people's faithfulness. Does not this stir us up in our zeal and devotedness? And how loving He is, for though rewards may be proportionate ("ACCORDING as his work shall be"), they are immensely beyond the present

services rendered. Here is more than compensation for all the rebuffs, and the losses, and the sufferings here. O that we may keep "that Day," (or shall we not say, "Himself?") in view. "And the second came, saying, Lord, Thy pound hath gained five pounds." There is the same love, the same absence of self-exaltation. Will not all believers be united in this attitude then? Here is not "another servant" but "the second." We think of David's mighty men, and of those who attained not unto the first three. Did none other reach ten pounds, and did the next only obtain one half? True we do not know about seven servants, but they are after "the second," and the Holy Spirit gives us much food for thought. "Some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty." Thank God for "Thirty," BUT would we not see more in all our lives? Shall we not provoke one another to love and good works, in the enabling of the Holy Spirit?

The Lord rejoiced in this service also, and there was a rich reward, nor is one word of reproof found. The recompense, moreover, is proportional. It would not be fitting to give this one ten cities, or even six. He does not receive less nor more than five: the reward is not for that which was given but according to the use. But there is a difference. The opening words are OMITTED, Albeit "Thou ALSO" links very blessedly. And the unexpected language "Be thou having" is exchanged for that which is more expected. The servant might surely have done more. He is not blamed for the "five," but could not he have been more enthusiastic? Will not this Divine silence awaken our loving zeal to-day, to buy up the passing opportunity more, and to pray for grace to please our Lord more? The writer feels how poor has been his own response to such a hint, but he ventures humbly to pass on the word of exhortation, valuing the prayers of other children of God for himself also. It is easier to WRITE than to BE: but He giveth more grace.

Our hearts would rejoice if this were the end of the parable. But there is a heart-searching silence as to seven servants. There is no indication that they were rejected. We think of only "one" among the twelve thus, and of "one" in the parable of the talents. But the Lord's purpose in omission is perfect. What if we are bringing very little to Him after all His love to us? Were the others, after the "second," and all less fruitful in their labour? Do we "occupy" as we should? Do we realize the kingdom as we might? Such thoughts are not speculation, they are for our spiritual exercise, that we may glorify Him more Who loved and loveth us unto the end.

(If the Lord will, to be continued).

"With" in Matthew 25. 1-13.

"They . . . took no oil WITH them(selves)" (3).

"The wise took oil in their vessels WITH their lamps" (4).

"They that were ready went in WITH Him" (10).

2 CHRONICLES 32.

"The Lord our God" (8, 11).

"Your God" (14).

"The Lord God" (16).

"The Lord God of Israel" (17).

"The God of Hezekiah" (17).

"The God of Jerusalem" (19).

Contrast—"the gods of those nations" (14),

"the gods of the people of the earth" (19),

"his god" (21).

"The hand of the king of Assyria" (11).

"Were the gods of the nations of those lands any ways able to deliver their lands out of mine hand?" (13).

"Who was there . . . that could deliver his people out of mine hand, that your God should be able to deliver you out of mine hand?" (14).

"No god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people out of mine hand: how much less shall your God deliver you out of mine hand?" (15).

"As the gods of the nations of other lands have not delivered their people out of mine hand, so shall not the God of Hezekiah deliver His people out of mine hand" (17).

("The works of the hands of man," 19).

"My hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols"

(Isa. 10. 10).

"My hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people" (Isa. 10. 14).

"Shall the axe boast itself against Him That heweth therewith? or shall the saw magnify itself against Him That shaketh it?" (Isa. 10. 15, with verse 5, and Ps. 17. 14).

"IN THE AGE THAT IS NOW."

"Charge them that are rich in this world (the age that is now), that they be not highminded." 1 Timothy 6. 17.

"Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world (the age that is now), and is departed." 2 Timothy 4. 10).

"The grace of God . . . hath appeared . . . teaching us that . . . we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (the age that is now)." Titus 2. 12.

"The exceeding riches of His grace" (Eph. 2. 7), and "The riches of His glory" (Eph. 3. 16): how rich we are (2 Cor. 9. 8): how blessed to enjoy Philipians 4. 19.

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"Ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning." John 15. 27.

A Word of Introduction.

THE Lord Jesus chose disciples that they should be WITH HIM, and that He might send them forth to preach (Mark 3. 14). In the Acts, "they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (4. 13). "Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while He talked with him" (Ex. 34. 29). Is not our need still the same—communion? Unless we are with Him we cannot go from Him, we cannot be sent. Ezekiel was told to hear the word AT GOD'S MOUTH, and then to give warning from Him (Ezek. 33. 7, note Matt. 4. 4, Jer. 23. 22). Albeit we are not prophets we have the same need; in one sense we may add that we realize our need yet more intensely BECAUSE of what we are "not," but the Lord's strength can be made perfect in weakness, and it is with this object, and His glory therein, that these pages go forth.

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"I have given them Thy Word; and the world hath hated them." John 17. 14.

Hereby we see the opposition of the world, not to religion, but to Christ's WORD. And no wonder, for the whole world lieth in the wicked one (1 John 5. 19), and Satan's antipathy is ever to the words of God. We see this in the garden, "Hath God said?" We realize it by Christ's threefold answer in the wilderness, each time in the words of Scripture. The parable of the Sower makes us further conscious of this mode of attack.

"When anyone heareth the word of the Kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart" (Matt. 13. 19*). In like manner the devil is seen in 2 Corinthians 4. 4, blinding the minds to hinder the gospel of the glory of Christ, and that is associated with the allusion of verse 6 to God's first spoken words in Scripture (Gen. 1. 3), which are remarkably associated with the first example of faith (Heb. 11. 3 rightly translated). So we find the enemy's subtlety to cause us to forget the words of Christ, or to lead to their alteration, in order that commands, as baptism and the Lord's Supper, may be unconsciously disobeyed. May our hearts be subject to our Lord, and thus, in the gracious leading of the Spirit, on guard against these perils.

Hearing.

HOW impressive is the Lord's repetition of this word in Matthew 13. 13-23. Only one verse is without it. Alas, many may still be described thus:—"Hearing they hear **not**" (13), as it is written "by hearing ye shall hear, and shall **not** understand" (14), for "their ears are dull of hearing" (15); but there is a blessed contrast. Can it be said of those who now read these lines, "Blessed are . . . your ears, for they hear" (16) "that which many have desired to hear, and have not heard" (17)? If so, the invitation still applies, "Hear ye therefore" (18). How sadly possible it is to hear outwardly "the word of the kingdom" and **not** to understand (19), or to be as the one of whom we are told "he . . . heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it, yet hath he **NOT ROOT** in himself" (20, 21). Sad, though sinful in another way, is the condition of the one "that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, **choke** the word, and he becometh unfruitful" (22). But blessed again is the contrast, for there are always those like the one "that received seed into the good ground." The Lord Jesus describes him thus, "He that heareth the word, and understandeth it: which also beareth **fruit**, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty" (23). May we be such. "Fruit" is to God's glory. How much depends on hearing. Adam "heard aside" as the word in Romans 5. 19 indicates, the Lord Jesus was the One Who said, "Ears didst Thou prepare for Me" (Ps. 40. 6), and we should ever remember that Israel's priests and the cleansed leper were alike anointed first on their right ear. May we take heed **what** we hear (Mark 4. 24), and **how** we hear (Luke 8. 18), that God may be glorified in our lives.

*It is deeply impressive to see the **similar** attitude of the dragon in Revelation 12 foiled, and "the child was caught away (the same word as in Matthew 13) to God" (verse 5).

The Opening of the Book of Revelation.

HOW much could be written on this precious conclusion of Scripture, with our adorable Lord mentioned in its first verse and last, in a way that brings to mind "the **Grace** that is to be brought unto you at the **Revelation** of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1. 13). How much **HAS** been written on this book, and not always explaining aright. True, the first point is the attitude, so that believers lovingly may "serve" as sons should and would (Rev. 1. 1, with Mal. 3. 17); and our hearts long to say more fervently—yea, to **PRAY** more fervently, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." But there is much that is for us to understand even now, in order that we may be separated from the whole standpoint of the world. Study without worship will be vain, and as companions in "the kingdom and patience of Jesus" (Rev. 1. 9), do we not desire to "live soberly, righteously, godly, looking for that Blessed Hope," "as strangers and pilgrims," whose "citizenship is in heaven"?

I was impressed by the Holy Spirit's "threefold" arrangements in the opening portion. In verse 3 we have reading, hearing, keeping. In verse 4, "From Him Which is, and Which was, and Which is to come": also this wondrous description with "from the seven Spirits* and from Jesus Christ" gives another trio. Next we read that Jesus Christ is the Faithful Witness, the First Begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth:—His life and death, His resurrection, and His glory are before us. Again, He **loveth**, and **loosed** us (washed) and **made** us a kingdom, priests to our God and Father. So in verse 7, every eye, they also which pierced, and all tribes of the land (or earth),—three descriptions to encourage our holy awe. Verse 8, however, seems to have a **sevenfold** description—and thereafter we find many sevens in this book; not only those thus named but, for example,—head and hairs, eyes, feet, voice, right hand, mouth, countenance, in 1. 14-16, a sevenfold description of 5. 13, and "Blessed" seven times—wondrous beatitudes.

May it be ours to enjoy the Scriptures, to learn and love the words, and to use everything, applied by the Holy Spirit Himself, to cause growth in praise and devotedness. It is observable that this book is **not** "the Revelation of 'Saint' John the 'Divine,'" but "of Jesus Christ"; and, as in chapters 4 and 5, we have the glory of the throne before the seals are seen opened upon the earth, so here we behold Christ first and His glory. May it ever be so in our experience.

*Is there not a wondrous meaning as to the operation of the Holy Spirit in the seven assemblies hereby brought before us?

Acting First.

"I came to pass when they were come, that he looked on Eliab, and said, Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him. But the Lord said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature." Afterwards David was "brought in . . . and the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he," 1 Samuel 16. 6, 7, 12. (Did not the words spoken without waiting for God's counsel increase the bitterness Eliab afterwards showed? O that we may be careful what we say!)

"Then Nathan said unto David, Go, do all that is in thine heart; for God is with thee. And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying, Go and tell David, My servant, Thus saith the Lord, Thou shalt not build Me an house to dwell in." 1 Chronicles 17. 2-4.

How important it is to **wait** for God's counsel (Ps. 106. 13). We remember Saul in 1 Samuel 13. 12, and a similar hastiness when he said "withdraw thine hand," and commanded the abstinence from food in 1 Samuel 14. 19, 24. It is noteworthy that whenever David sought the Lord first there was blessing (2 Sam. 5. 19, 23). How different when he omitted this in 1 Chronicles 21. 1. We notice too, in 1 Chronicles 13. 12 "If it seem good unto **you**, and that it be of **the Lord our God**." Does not the wrong order lead up to the "new cart" and death of Uzzah, even though there was loving unity, without a wish to choose for oneself? We can understand Saul saying "Go, and the Lord be with thee," but we rejoice that David having started in this wrong order "put off" the unproved armour. If only he had sought the Lord on EVERY occasion, how blessed it would have been. We are all inclined to say, "If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so" (Ex. 18. 23), that is, to make our own suggestion and then to ask the Lord's blessing, even as the disciples, not tarrying ("sitting," Luke 24. 49) in Acts 1, limited God, "Shew whether (which) of **these two** Thou hast chosen." We arrange so much of our Christian service, and then ask God to use it. We are making a mistake, it may be an unconscious one, but a real mistake. Our wishes are to please the Lord, but He should have full control. If only 2 Chronicles 32. 8 had been before verses 1-7, how blessed it would have been. If only the attitude of 2 Kings 19. 1-4 and 14-19 had preceded chapter 18. 14-16, probably (and more than probably) those verses would not have been necessary, for they tell of a surrender of GOD'S gold and silver which only very temporarily held back proud Sennacherib. O that we may learn the blessedness of coming to God first about everything, even as Genesis 32. 28 shows the striking contrast with the planning of verses 6-8 **before** verse 9. "Power with God and with men" is the true order: do we need to halt on our thigh before we learn it? Nehemiah had been in continued prayer first, and then

in emergency he could put God first, "I prayed to the God of heaven, and I said unto the king" (2. 4, 5). How important is Jeremiah 23. 22, "If they had stood in My counsel, and had caused My people to hear My words," and again "Hear the word at My mouth, and warn them from Me" (Ezek. 33. 7, cf. Isa. 6. 8, 9).

JUDAH FIRST.

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,
Nor a lawgiver, from between his feet perpetually,
For Shiloh will come, (He Whose it is),
And unto Him shall the expectation of the peoples be."
Genesis 49. 10.

"All that were numbered in the camp of Judah . . . These shall **FIRST** set forth." Numbers 2. 9.

"He that offered his offering the **FIRST** day was Nahshon, the son of Amminadab, of the tribe of Judah." Numbers 7. 12.

"In the **FIRST** place went the standard of the camp of the children of Judah." Numbers 10. 14.

"This then was the lot of the tribe of the children of Judah by their families." Joshua 15. 1.

"Who shall go up for us against the Canaanites **FIRST**? . . . The Lord said, Judah shall go up." Judges 1. 1, 2.

"In Hebron he (David) reigned over Judah seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years over all Israel and Judah." 2 Samuel 5. 5.

"Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler." 1 Chronicles 5. 2.

"Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised." Ezra 1. 5.

"It is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah." Hebrews 7. 14.

"The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David hath prevailed to open the book." Revelation 5. 5.

Have we not another illustration that "all Scripture" is with a view to the Lord Jesus Christ, and His glory? May He be glorified in our lives.

Heard, Isaiah 37.

"King Hezekiah heard it" (1).

"It may be the Lord thy God will hear" (4).

"Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard" (6).

"He shall hear a rumour" (7, 9).

"Thou hast heard what the Kings of Assyria have done"

"Incline Thine ear, O Lord, and hear" (17). (11).

"Hast thou not heard long ago how I have done it?" (26, cf. 40. 28).

Note also 38. 5 "I have heard."

Christ's words in the Garden (John 20), contrasted with Genesis 3.

THE devil came first to Eve in Eden, the Lord Jesus, in wondrous contrast, appeared first to a woman, Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons (Mark 16. 9). In the first garden, the words had sounded "Dying, thou shalt die," and death came: but the second garden was linked with resurrection because of the Last Adam, telling of a blessed victory over death. To the writer it seems from Genesis 3. 8 (with Psalm 49. 12) that the serpent's appearance and sin were on the first sabbath: the Saviour's appearance was on the new "first day" of the week. Adam was away: Peter and John had gone away. The first words of Satan were a question, "Hath God said?" How different Christ's question: "Woman, why weepest thou?" Mary had already owned her LORD (verse 13), whereas Eve acted independently throughout. To the first woman the tree of knowledge of good and evil was the "midst" (Gen. 3. 3), but the Lord Jesus was Mary's Centre, and her first thought. How different therefore was her answer, even when she did not know to Whom she spoke (verse 15). The second time Satan spoke, he definitely contradicted God, Christ's second word began with a name (Isa. 43. 1), and then continued, exalting the Father, and the precious words "My" and "your" reveal a blessed relationship. NOT "as God, knowing good and evil," BUT believers are united to the Son of God Himself! "My Father and your Father" must speak of a new birth into His family (contrast John 8. 44), a contrast with Adam's death.

There are many other thoughts which might well be noticed: for example, the linen clothes, which were beheld, contrasted with the vain and worthless "aprons of fig leaves." Again, the word "touch" is found in Genesis 3. 3, and John 20. 17. The weeping eyes of Mary are entirely opposed to the eyes of Genesis 3. 6. Eve went to Adam, but Mary was sent with a message, graciously given her, to the disciples. These were gathered the same day, not hiding themselves when they heard the voice of the Lord (though they were within closed doors for fear, but it was fear of the Jews). He came and stood in the midst, and His voice said "Peace," in blessed antithesis with Genesis 3. And this is still His word to us to-day, for He has made peace by the blood of His Cross (Col. 1. 20), and now "grace and peace" are multiplied (1 Pet. 1. 2).

How thankful we should be for our glorious Lord. How wondrous it is instead of being driven out (Gen. 3. 24) to have Him in the midst, and, believing, to have LIFE in His Name (John 20. 31).

Some Parables of Service.

(Continued from Matthew 25. 14-30.)

And then "the other" comes, of another kind, as the word implies. Alas, that it is possible to know much of the Lord, and to receive much from Him, and yet to render nothing to Him. Let it be observed that, as in John 15, there is no hint that a branch once united and bearing fruit becomes fruitless, and likewise no indication in Matthew 13 that GOOD ground becomes rocky and thorny, and no suggestion that the "foolish" virgins at first had some oil which was used up, so here we find no indication of service first, and then the hiding afterwards. While recognising this, our hearts would never draw the sinful inference that past faithfulness guarantees the present. A parable only gives a PART of God's truth. It calls us to godly concern, and to repentance. Never can I excuse what I AM because of what I WAS, or think I was, but my present life, by the grace of God, is all-important (1 Cor. 15. 10). Backsliding is a heinous sin, even though, by the intercession of our beloved Lord, our faith fails not (Luke 22. 32). Let us beware of any action or thought that may tend toward the slothfulness or unholy language of this wicked servant. His attitude is exactly that of the one warningly portrayed in Matthew 25. The Lord Jesus has a reason for this repeated emphasis. It is doubled that we may never forget. Here the hiding is in a napkin: the word is derived from a root denoting "sweat": we think of Genesis 3 and the toil of true service, till we reach the glory. Luke 22. 44 shows the One Who never failed, and one who followed Christ more closely than most was indeed "spent" (2 Cor. 12. 15). Moreover, it has been said that of old many business transactions were made and ratified taking hold of a "sudar," or napkin, the word used here. This would bring out the thought of NOT "occupying." And what was the root of the sin? It was self's opposition to the Person of the Lord, and to His sovereignty and right. Matthew 20. 11 comes to mind. The Holy Spirit deals sternly with this attitude in Romans 9. 20. As soon as we blame God's unsearchable "ways" we are on the same evil ground. What if we cannot understand all? Can we not trust? The exercise of faith in God and His perfect ways is deeply important. This distinguishes the spiritual man from the natural. Never let us criticize God. Let us go into the sanctuary (Ps. 73. 17). Again there is the reference to the table of the bank. If one cannot, or will not, use, should there not be a giving to another? This shows that nothing is a personal possession. Again, there is the transfer, "Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds." Not only will the cities be given, but the fruits of service be retained, "And they said unto Him, Lord, he hath ten pounds,"

* The word "the" may support the suggestion that only one was thus opposed.

as if to suggest there was no need. The possession therefore is not a matter of need, but in accord with Luke 16. 11, and 2 Corinthians 4. 18. Then comes the Divine principle prefixed with "I say unto you." These words are viewed as uttered in that Day: this intensifies the meaning of such language used by Christ again and again in the days He walked this earth. The two classes are "every one which hath," and "that hath not." There is much wrapped up in such words. In which class are we found? At first we wonder at the added expression "that which he hath not," but all Scripture illustrates this, "They seeing see not; and hearing they hear not" (Matt. 13. 13). It is possible to come without coming (John 6. 24, 37, with 5. 40), to be in the vine without a vital and abiding union (John 15. 2). Observe Luke 8. 18, "that which he seemeth to have." A son, a virgin, a branch by profession, but not so before God. Judas was chosen for apostleship (John 6. 70)*, but can we find him among those to bring forth "fruit" in John 15. 16? And, further, the principle applies to us all, in its measure. How much is there that we "seem to have," yet have not inwardly. Let us be humbled.

The problem may again be raised—Is this the Judgment Seat of Christ? I hesitate to write with a light dogmatism, knowing how small is all our knowledge. Some have thought that there will be a raising of certain unbelievers for "shame" WHEN our Lord appears. Daniel 12. 2 does not seem to me to assert this, but may rather signify "these,"—and "those" who are not raised! If, however, there were this special shame for some, then the stress in Revelation 20. 6 would apparently be on the word "part," or "portion," the inheritance of the redeemed, and "the rest" would literally be the "left ones" in verse 5. I almost feel this would be forced. Rather, it seems to me, our beloved Lord would exercise our hearts more by drawing no line here between the Judgment Seat of Christ, and the further holy fulfilment of Revelation 22. 12. We do well to remember that in Genesis 3. 15 the two bruising are mentioned together, though the latter is not yet fulfilled, and so is it with many prophecies of the two Comings of Christ, and with Acts 2. 18 and 19, at the BEGINNING and END of this dispensation. 2 Peter 3. 10 illustrates as to "the day of the Lord," its introduction and its close. Nor is this strange from God's standpoint (Ps. 90. 4). And the added immediate reference to the enemies in Luke 19, and the fact that there are no time marks, and that, as in Matthew 25, the wicked servant is last, and that no other servants who are believers are brought before us after, would seem to confirm this.

(If the Lord will, to be continued.)

* Contrast "grace and apostleship" in Romans 1. 5, so 2 Peter 3. 18 "grace and knowledge" distinct from 2 Peter 2. 20-22.

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The Student of Scripture.

Edited by Percy W. Heward.

"God, Who is rich in mercy." Ephesians 2. 4.
"The Father of mercies." 2 Corinthians 1. 3.
"He delighteth in mercy." Micah 7. 19.

A Word of Introduction.

It is a great privilege, an unspeakable privilege, to know God (John 17. 3). The character of God is not by any means fully revealed in nature. But when we come to Scripture, and behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 4. 6), and can say,—yea, CRY, "Abba, Father," everything is changed. These pages are not issued in the interests of a society, or to propagate a "religion," or some peculiar "views," but that writer and reader alike may be brought to a blessed, and ever deeper, experience of the grace of God, through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is precious to be able to say, "The Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort," is my God and Father: 'the God of all grace' has made all grace to abound to me." Believing reader, I want more of this personal note in my life, more communion with God. Do you? Do you wish to please Him? If so, I think you will welcome these pages: and let us seek for reviving that will bring God's dear children nearer together, in brotherly love and consistent obedience to their Father's will. Why should we not expect this?

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GLORIFYING GOD (In Luke).

- "The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God" (2. 20).
- "He departed to his own house glorifying God, and they were all amazed, and they glorified God" (5. 25, 26).
- "And there came a fear on all; and they glorified God" (7. 16).
- "And immediately she was made straight, and glorified God" (13. 13).

- " And one of them when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God " (17. 15).
 " Immediately he received his sight and followed Him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God " (18. 43).
 " When the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, certainly This was a Righteous Man " (23. 47).

Jottings.

If I learn patience as a theory, it will be a poor learning. Our Father sometimes keeps us in a sphere from which we would naturally escape, to become well acquainted with this part of our education. We do not always get much music out of it at first, the exercise seems hard and heavy, but He tenderly renews His teaching until our normally ruffled heart becomes quieter, and we realize that this lesson is among the most important, and by no means the easiest. But if it is learnt to His glory, and if we never become out of practice, how blessed it is. Thanks be unto God, He does not let His beloved pupils choose their own classes, or their own subjects for examination. If He graciously appoints an all-round education, and we aim at one or two subjects, we grieve His Holy Spirit. We can never learn patience without—"patience."

I am asked as to prayer, why one often seems to receive the answer when praying for another than when praying for oneself. We must not overstate this, for "Lead me," "Teach me," etc., are precious supplications. But as to temporal things it may often seem so, and the Holy Spirit's stress on "one another" is very marked in the prayers of the New Testament. Three reasons are specially before me:—

- (a) To keep us humble, that we may not seem to **ask and receive for ourselves** as personally privileged to have more influence than others.
- (b) To make us unselfish in our seasons of prayer.
- (c) To remind us that believers are members of one another.

How important are all these thoughts.

"We beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father, FULL of grace and truth" (John 1. 14).

"The prince of this world cometh, and hath NOTHING in Me" (John 14. 30).

"In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Romans 7. 18).

"Out of His fulness have all we received, and grace for grace" (John 1. 16).

Moses' Request and The Lord's Answer.

HOW many believers have been stimulated by the wondrous talking with God of Exodus 33, reminding them of Genesis 18. We see a deep reverence, and withal a holy confidence. Enoch walked with God, Abraham "was called the friend of God," and the Lord spake unto Moses, "as a man speaketh unto his friend" (Ex. 33. 11). It is all so wonderful, for these were men of like feelings with us, what possibilities there are for lowly obedience to-day! The desire of this man of God was comparable with that of David (Ps. 27. 4), and Paul (Phil. 3. 10). No "natural man" has such a wish: Adam said, "I heard Thy voice . . . and I was afraid . . . and I hid myself" (Gen. 3. 10). The request, "Shew me now Thy Way" is followed by "Shew me Thy glory." How did God answer this? He condescended to make all His goodness pass before Moses, and to proclaim His Name, with its wondrous blending of grace and atonement (Ex. 34. 6, 7 "bearing iniquity," Isa. 53. 11), and yet caused His servant to know that the knowledge **must** be limited. The eyes could not have sustained the full display of the glory: we recall the blinding of Saul of Tarsus awhile. The physical frame could not have lived in the full unveiling of the majesty of God. The hand that covered was love's protection.

But where was Moses to be while he received the privileged unveiling in measure? The Lord Himself describes this in three, or, we might say, four ways, and each one is impressive, and suggestive of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Nor is this strange. As John 12. 41 makes clear that in Isaiah 6 the prophet "saw His glory and spake of Him," so the already-noticed words "bearing iniquity and transgression and sin" indicate that here we have one of the "goings forth" (Mic. 5. 2) of Him Whose delights were with the sons of men. The Lord Jesus, the Son, was the One bearing iniquity, without any doubt. The Father spared Him not, and this meant so much to Him also, but the actual "bearing" must indicate that we behold the Lord Jesus here. His Godhead is thus, as ever, emphasized.

We pass to the description, introduced by the word "Behold":—

- (a) "There is a place by Me" (with Me)—nearness.
- (b) "And thou shalt stand upon a Rock" (literally "the Rock")—foundation.
- (c) "I will put thee in a cleft of the Rock" (the Rock must be wounded, yea, wounded so that there can be a position **within**)—shelter.
- (d) "I will cover thee with My hand" (My bent hand upon thee)—covering (completing the protection **all around** with the cleft Rock. In a related way, we are in the Lord's hand, John 10. 28).

Is it not altogether wonderful? A place! There is no other place. He Who went to prepare a place for us, in glory, is the only One Who can give to us a safe place. "No place" is found apart from His work (see Luke 14. 22, 23, "yet there is a place," Rev. 20. 11 "no place"). O that our eyes may be opened to "Behold," and that our hearts may realize the nearness, whereas we were far off ("Immanuel," "Jesus"—"God with us," Eph. 2. 13), the position upon the Rock (Matt. 16. 18, Ps. 40. 2) and within the Rock, the protection of His Own hand that His Own glory may not destroy us! Who can but praise? Who can but worship, when redeemed with the precious blood of Christ? The types are full of the Lord Jesus: surely no one can meditate on them and be indifferent to His claims. No one can realize them, and set aside the full inspiration of Scripture. We would adore Him, and rest in peace upon His finished work, yea, upon Himself, that we, too, may behold, by living faith, THE GLORY OF THE LORD.

THE HEART AND THE WAY.

"He went on frowardly in the way of his heart." Isaiah 57. 17.

"Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord: blessed are they that keep His testimonies, and that seek Him with the whole heart." Psalm 119. 1, 2.

"Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee; in whose heart are the ways." Psalm 84. 5.

"Trust in the Lord with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding: in all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3. 5, 6.

How changeable is the human mind. In Acts 14 the people of Lystra, with the priest of Jupiter at their head, would have done sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas, saying, "The gods are come down unto us in the likeness of men." But soon the Jews from Antioch arrived and persuaded them, and they stoned Paul and drew him out of the city, "supposing he had been dead" (Acts 14. 11, 19). In striking contrast in Acts 28 the inhabitants of Malta, when they saw the viper on the apostle's hand, said, "No doubt this man is a murderer," and expected that he "should have swollen and fallen dead suddenly." But when no harm came to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a GOD" (6). Such is man! How needful is grace: how blessed is salvation in contrast with fickle feeling and false inferences. How we should praise for redemption by the precious blood of Christ.

Some Thoughts on the Cherubim.*

IT is a privilege ever to behold more and more of the fulness of God's truth (Ps. 119. 18). I have long felt that cherubim, compared with the "living creatures" of Ezekiel (ch. 1 and 10. 20), and of Revelation, set forth the Lord's redeemed, indicating that wondrous nearness, and the privilege of worship and service unto Him.

The contrast between Genesis 3. 24 and Exodus 25 I have long found helpful. In the former, and first view in Scripture, they were awaiting the entrance, which was so richly and fully granted in the Tabernacle. Increasingly one sees that the thought of "angels" and protecting the way is never stated in Scripture. It is theory. Angels are never pictured with wings, and never described as cherubim. But, of late, I have come to see yet more in Genesis 3, and increasingly find the "seed" of God's truth outlined marvellously in the first three or four chapters. A carefully praiseful, prayerful study will deepen the consciousness of complete inspiration.†

Adam and Eve (two) were driven out, but before we reach the next pair with the solemn teaching of 1 John 3. 12, and the division of those "outside" into believers redeemed by the death of Another, and those who remain in their sins, we find the cherubim. Exodus 25 may imply a pair in Genesis 3 also.‡ They are, in themselves, "outside," and cannot come in, yea, are in the vicinity of the sword, yet protected as God's elect, until, in the appointed time, the sword meets the Shepherd (Zech. 13. 9) whom Abel also, in one typical view, brings before us, and the flame of judgment and the sword are alike entirely absent from "the Holiest of All," where the blood is found instead, showing that the work has been fully done. The sacrifice brings not only to the court, nor even to the first room, but into God's own dwelling place, and therein not only to the ground, but to the throne itself. So complete is the work of redemption. Yet this is not strange, for God's love is so vast. And, moreover, when THE Sacrifice has engaged to represent sinners the glorious welcome accorded to the risen Sacrifice cannot be withheld from those who are graciously accepted "in Him." The "east" of the garden reminds of the tabernacle, which was entered from the east, that worship might be contrasted with that of the sun, honoured in heathendom.

* Please read with a leaflet entitled, "Do the Cherubim represent the Lord's people?" Gladly sent.

† e.g. The first "sign" portrays "Christ and the church" (Gen. 1. 15) in heavenly places, in the day when the world is in the night. Likewise the first marriage, beyond all others (Gen. 2. 22 marg. 23 "out of").

‡ "Placed," moreover, is "caused to tabernacle."

God's plan is ever wondrous. We were "chosen" in Christ before we were brought within. But grace must reign through righteousness (Rom. 5. 21), and the cherubim cannot enter till the sword is righteously removed. And there is, as we have seen, no half-removal. No blood is found in Genesis 3. 24, no sword in Exodus 25. 17-22. We think of Romans 3. 25, where "propitiation" is "mercy seat," and the faith is in Christ's blood, and likewise of Ephesians 2. 6, "made to sit together." The cherubim have what the priests of Israel had not (Heb. 10. 11), and are at rest where the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek "sits" (Ps. 110. 2), His acceptance is theirs, for He is Priest, Altar, Sacrifice, and Mercy Seat combined.

The "way of the tree of life" is so clearly linked with access to the Father in John 14. 6 and Hebrews 10. 19, 20, that we cannot but feel the stress on God's type given at once for His people, even the immediate promise of the Lord Jesus coming in the flesh (Gen. 3. 15). And as we think of "Eden" and "pleasure," Genesis 3. 24 seems bound with Psalm 16. 11. The plural "cherubim" must remind us of salvation from Jew and Gentile: remarkably the very letters in Hebrew can signify "As the many" (cf. Isa. 53. 11, Matt. 20. 28, 26. 28) as well as "grasped" (Deut. 33. 3, John 10. 28). The immediate association of the "cherubim" with "He drove out the Adam (man)" emphasizes the setting aside of the first, that we may be accepted in the Second, even the Last Adam. The driving out was real, but God would not allow universal condemnation. He will have a redeemed people, but all is on the ground of wrath satisfied in a perfectly acceptable atonement. The sword might have been turned on Adam: that would have meant the salvation of none. But there was, and is, longsuffering to Adam and his race, that in the days of longsuffering there might be grace, within God's way of salvation (cf. 1 Pet. 3. 20).* And the cherubim are so arranged that they CANNOT be the side of the mercy seat that looks toward law, but only on that which tells of atonement. Of "one piece" with the mercy seat, they CANNOT be transferred. The side facing the law has no blood: the mercy seat is ever between the redeemed and the unbroken law. In Genesis we see no foundation, no living union, but the PURPOSE of God alone. Yet there is no doubt as to its accomplishment. Much more might be said as to Exodus 25, but let the redeemed of the Lord live in the light thereof, and have the eyes of their heart (Eph. 1. 18) ever toward the mercy seat and "one another," and in His light will they see light (Ps. 36. 9), entering increasingly into the adoration of Romans 11. 33-36, with its practical outflow in Romans 12. 1, 2.

* Isaiah 66. 16 with its "fire and sword" is plainly a contrast, and verse 17 is reminiscent of Eden with a fearful contrast, linked with their works. WE have Another "in the midst," opposed to verse 17, and His Coming (15) is our "Hope."

THE EMPHATIC "I."

In Luke 22. 24-32 the Lord Jesus uses the emphatic pronoun concerning Himself three times. In each case there is a deeply helpful contrast. Shall we prayerfully ponder them?

"YE (emphatic) shall not be so . . . I am among you as He That serveth" (26, 27).

"YE (emphatic again) are they which have continued with Me in My temptations; and I appoint (covenant) unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed (covenanted) unto Me" (28, 29).

"SATAN hath desired you (lit. asked you OUT for himself, see John 10. 28, 29), but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not" (cf. Heb. 7. 25). The first emphasizes His humility and example, the second His glory, and the gracious arrangements for His own, the third His intercession, and the preservation of those who are His. What a grateful people we should, and would, be.

BELIEVE . . . HAVE.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever BELIEVETH in Him should not perish, but HAVE everlasting life." John 3. 16.

"He that BELIEVETH on the Son HATH everlasting life." John 3. 36.

"He that heareth My Word, and BELIEVETH on Him That sent Me, HATH everlasting life." John 5. 24.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that BELIEVETH on Me HATH everlasting life." John 6. 47.

"That BELIEVING ye might HAVE life in His Name." John 20. 31.

"He that BELIEVETH on the Son of God HATH the witness in himself." 1 John 5. 10.

SEEING—WITHOUT SHARING.

"Behold thou shalt see with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof." 2 Kings 7. 2, 19, 20.

"Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off: thine heart shall meditate terror." Isaiah 33. 17, 18.

"He . . . seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." Luke 16. 23.

"Ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out." Luke 13. 28.

In measure, a sorrowful parallel: "Behold with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan." Deuteronomy 3. 27. (But in resurrection Moses will surely share with other believing ones of the old dispensation, and the transfiguration seems to afford a precious foretaste).

A blessed contrast:—"It shall not come nigh thee: only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked." Psalm 91. 8.

Some Parables of Service.

(Continued from Matthew 25. 14-30.)

The practical, spiritual and heart-searching value of such seeming indefiniteness is real. We are held back from misapplying truth, and from a merely mental view of salvation. And the perfection with which the Divine language refuses to let us settle down, and yet states nothing against the revealed plan, and the order of events elsewhere in Scripture, becomes an additional manifestation of its perfect inspiration.

The enemies remain enemies. It is solemnizing to see "His citizens," and yet His enemies. We remember John 1. 11, and call to mind 1 Thessalonians 2. 15, 16. Psalm 110. 1 contains a deeply important unveiling of truth: how blessed is the contrast that grace records, "When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son" (Rom. 5. 10). The human "will" is again before us in the words, "they would not that I should reign over them" (see Rom. 9. 16, lest we should boast of ourselves). "Bring hither" sounds forth as a full opposite to Luke 9. 41, and 15. 23. Our beloved Lord was led as a lamb to the slaughter (Acts 8. 32), and His blood was poured out, but then His enemies will be led, and we think of the unholy blood of His foes in Isaiah 63. 1-4, and the fulfilment of 2 Thessalonians 1. 8, 9. Of no nation do we read so definitely concerning blessing as Israel (Rom. 11. 26), yet the judgment on Judas, and this holy wrath on "His citizens" must make clear there is NO universalism. Only the remnant returns (Isa. 10. 21), and only those who are reserved are pardoned (Jer. 50. 20). "Slay them before Me" is not without its parallel in Revelation 14. 10. Our hearts are caused to realize the righteousness of retribution, and that Matthew 25. 41 is the utterance of One Who CAME not to judge the world (John 3. 17, 12. 47), but Whose word will judge, with inescapable holiness, at the last day (John 12. 48). Surely these thoughts must cause us to marvel that we are saved, and yet that we are so ungrateful, and call us to fuller concern and zeal that we may preach Christ and Him crucified, by lip and life, and warn sinners to flee from the wrath to come.

At once the parable closes "And when He had thus spoken, He went before." The suddenness is impressive and meant to be impressive. Fuller details are not given, but the events, associated with His Coming back, were before Him, and are brought together without dates, or indication of intervals, but in their right order, that we may realize their moral import. There is no suggestion of the world becoming better, or of the age being gradually christianized. The future is associated with glory and blessing, yet also with wrath.

Reader, unless we receive these messages in their spiritual power, as a word of the Lord to our hearts, our study of the parables is in vain.

(If the Lord will, to be continued)

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The Student of Scripture.

Edited by Percy W. Heward.

"We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak." 2 Corinthians 4. 13.

A Word of Introduction.

THE experiences of the apostle were varied and trying, but he knew the blessedness of simple faith. Had he not been brought to give up his own righteousness, and count it as refuse and to "believe," and why should this faith be left, or diminished, or become hesitating afterwards? The wondrous fact of redemption gives a "believer" a ground for implicit confidence in his Lord. Has not the greatest thing been done? Why should the smaller things of everyday life be lacking? It is plain the power of God fails not, nor His wisdom. Then let a believer believe! "How can I do this? How can I escape that? What will happen?"—Nay, "I believe God" (Acts 27. 25). Why not? Faith is the evidence of things not seen, when we know God. Why should it be counted foolishness to believe One Who has never proved untrue, and never can, for His essential nature is truth? Faith does not argue nor worry, it speaks and acts with quiet confidence; and it is with a view to God's glory in this restful attitude, in THE ORDINARY DAILY LIFE, that these pages go forth.

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A Letter to one who has an "incurable disease."

Dear Friend,

Is not the very first question for us all, that which concerns Christ, and His eternal salvation? Nothing else can compare with this. If our sins have been taken away, and we have eternal Life, and He is our precious Lord and Saviour, we are rich even when poor, and may well rejoice whatever be our earthly cir-

cumstances and bodily trials. If THE "incurable disease" of sin has been dealt with, and we are "a new creation" in Christ Jesus, though the earthly house of this tabernacle seems very near to dissolution, have we not a building of God, and a hope that maketh not ashamed, and a spiritual life which will never die? If this is **not** our confidence and our conscious experience, if we cannot say we have passed "from death unto life" (John 5. 24), the best physical health and other advantages are but for a moment, and everything is "vanity of vanities" under the sun. The only abiding blessedness is by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Can you say, He is your Saviour? If not, your very physical trials will prove a true blessing if they cause a concern to have at once that which is "in Christ" for time and eternity. If your illness has taken away natural joy, O that it may lead you to the joy which is in God's presence, and that your sorrowfully felt uncertainty of life may be used, in God's grace, to awaken a heart-longing to know that you have eternal life (1 John 5. 11), by the death of the Lord Jesus.

Possibly, however, you can answer, "Thanks be unto God that was settled years ago, I came to Him, as a guilty sinner, in brokenness of heart, and repentance, with simple faith in the One Who died for sinners, I took Him at His word, and found peace with God." And since? Ah, without boasting, you gratefully add that He has proved true, and you have been kept by the power of God, through faith (1 Pet. 1. 5), so that the "settled" fact to which you look back was not merely a settlement then, but one with a living experience and fruit, for grace goes on, and His prayer for His own is constant (Heb. 7. 25), and the eternal life is a present possession, to be manifested in loving obedience (Heb. 5. 9), for the sheep hear the Shepherd's voice (John 10. 27) and "follow" Him, yes, even when lying on a sick bed. But the question may come into the mind, when pain and weariness seem so constant, "Why am I thus laid low?" A long strain affected that faithful servant John the Baptist (Matt. 11. 3), and the Lord knoweth our frame. He does more than sympathize, He enables. Do not be discouraged, God has not forgotten: there is a "needs be." And the encouragement comes that the fire will not destroy the gold, only remove the dross. What if the Lord has more joy in your child-like faith and patience than in an easier activity, busy here and there? Are you not willing for His will? And there may be a testimony to others thereby, "longsuffering and joyfulness" (Col. 1. 11). Is it so? Or is there a suppressed murmuring? "In everything give thanks" did not shut you out, or part of your life. Mark the added words, "For this is the will of God in Christ Jesus **concerning you.**" You are not forgotten, or left out.

And some laid aside have found service for Him that, albeit a strain, has become more fruitful than their previous labours.

Love is more than ingenious, it realizes the Lord's hints as to service. Ask your Father what you can do for Him. From many "shut in" there have been flowing **out** rivers of living water (John 7. 38). "To every man his work" (Mark 13. 34) does not say "to every one except you." The Lord has something for you to do, if you are His. And, let it be tenderly asked, "Who said, Incurable"? Men do not know all. The Lord is not weak. Scripture tells us much about healing. The Lord **CAN** cure. This too brightens every day; for, if He withholds, it is not in weakness, but in **love**. Yes, even though we can not see "Why." "In love": can you not trust Him? And, moreover, it is not for eternity. This mortal shall put on immortality. There will be no "illness" in the body like unto His body of glory. "That Blessed Hope" is near. The very trial makes you value the joyous prospects more. Trust Him in the dark, for He is not in the dark. If you wait a little, He will not be late. How graciously He causes our hearts to say "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," by the very trials which show how empty all of earth is. "He That shall come will come, and will not tarry."

Thus there is so much to encourage. The Lord is not kept out of the sick room. He gives you some parts of service, that others in employment by an earthly master (though unto the Lord) cannot undertake. The very burden may be a means of growth in grace, and the development of parts of Christian character that will please Him. And victory over disabilities may (if one is kept lowly) stimulate others who have fewer disabilities, to trust Him more. And the precious promises, and the glorious hope are yours if He is yours. What can we desire more? Truly "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." May this be your thankful experience as you press forward, conscious that each day is a day nearer beholding Him.

We shall be glad to hear from you.

Yours in the Lord Jesus Christ,

One redeemed by His precious blood.

If God, Who foresees all, knew I should go away from Him, and, as some say, lose the precious salvation He has given, then His beloved Son did not bear the iniquity of **that** sin, it was never upon Him. Then all my sins were not upon Him; one, at least, was definitely excepted. How can I, in the light of His love, and of Holy Scripture, acknowledge such a thought? Christ's complete atonement for me is a comfort to me in humble prayer and praise; but, if I am cold or wandering, I dare not misuse it, or one promise, to comfort my heart that I shall be brought back. Rather, the tenderness of His love which the flesh slights, and the natural man misapplies, awakens, in my quickened and heavenly life, a keen shame so to treat Him, and I loathe myself.

"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." Deuteronomy 22. 4.

"If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden and wouldest forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him." Exodus 23. 5.

THESE verses are very impressive. The translation should be more literal. The thought in Exodus is not only general assistance, but "unloosing" the fallen beast. This does not alter, rather it intensifies, the link of the passages, and it emphasizes the privilege of love. Let us observe that these commands are in the law, even as "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat" is first in the Old Testament (Prov. 25. 21). The contrast of dispensation has been sadly misunderstood. The law emphasized "love" very definitely, but it also showed God's execution of His righteous judgment through chosen instruments. It gave no room for personal revenge. This causes us to see clearly that the Address on the Mount does not merely prohibit taking the law into one's own hand, but shows how God's children now are not to be His executors of His judgment, nor to take a part in the activities of "the powers that be," who have the responsibility (whether used rightly or wrongly) of the sword (Rom. 13. 4).

Notice, moreover, that we do not read "whom thou hatest." Such a personal attitude was forbidden: the appointed hatred was against sin, and against the Lord's enemies, as such. How definitely has the Holy Spirit witnessed against selfishness at all times. O that we may be concerned as to the manifestation of love, we who, in this dispensation, have an especial reminder of the love of God shed abroad in our hearts.

The principle here goes far further than the lifting up of an animal. It is so easy to try and avoid responsibilities even for a brother. It is, moreover, "natural" to say regarding one who is opposed to us, "That only serves him right"—or, at least, to think along this line. But we are called to see how God would have us make manifest far more of His character, for "He maketh His sun to shine on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matt 5. 45). The words of Exodus urge active helping. Matthew 5 shows that the hidden spring and outward work must neither be lacking, and thus lays stress on the LOVING CAUSE of such helping. This is ever the attitude of the new covenant, to search our hearts in order that we may search our ways, and walk more as Christ walked.

"I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy FIRST love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the FIRST works." Revelation 2. 4, 5.

Two Brief Parables concerning Plants.

MARK 4. 26-29 is brief, but the passage contains much. It is almost unique, in that Mark alone records. The link is with the Sower,—between that parable and the mustard seed, even as the wheat and tares in Matthew 13,—all referring to the vegetable "kingdom." But how contrasted is the sleeping here! Yet the "man" is not said to be the owner, as in Matthew 13. 24: as he does not "know," we do not behold the Lord Jesus here. It is not necessarily strange to read of believers engaged in harvest service (Matt. 9. 37, 38, John 4. 37, 38), though in the ending of the age the reapers are the angels (Matt. 13. 39). Do we not notice the Lord's emphasis on our dependence (Jas. 5. 7)? It is a privilege to sow, but we cannot give the increase (1 Cor. 3. 6). Indeed it is appointed unto us to be restful, even as the husbandman sleeps, with holy consciousness that God works, and there shall be fruit. But we must not omit to sow—"in the morning" (Eccl. 11. 6) and "beside all waters" (Isa. 32. 20), knowing that our "labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15. 58). Nor must our restfulness mean that we "leave" all *after* the sowing. We would "rise" regularly, though we cannot give life to the seed, nor always be examining it. We must look after the field, and follow up the Lord's service entrusted to us with the good seed. The earth, or ground, bringeth forth fruit, AND the seed brings fruit: the two aspects are important. In our experience there must be (a) the *message* mixed with (b) *faith*, which is in the "ground" of our heart (Heb. 4. 2). Thus we have the gospel bringing forth fruit, *and* the persons, in Colossians 1. 6, 10. The gradual increase—"spring and grow up"—is helpful. There should be *steady* progress in our lives, and we should expect it in others.

This is God's gracious work, when there is no worm, or other hindrance. The seed is living, and there will be "fruit." The word "of itself" only occurs elsewhere in Acts 12. 10: "automatic" is derived therefrom. None can manufacture fruit, nor "work it up" with human enthusiasm. How many methods to-day are used, as substitutes for God's plan in nature, and to "force" growth. (This very word is in use.) May our hearts be concerned to avoid this spiritually, though we use appointed means (Luke 13. 8, 1 Cor. 3. 6). "God is Faithful." "First the blade," that is, the grass. It is beautiful, but there is no fruit. Our hearts want something more. Thanks be to God, His work, (through the precious seed), does not cease with the grass, any more than with the leaves of the tree. *Next* "the ear," and then "the full corn in the ear," the word "corn" in harmony with that which was originally sown, even as we are to be like our Lord (John 12. 24). The Lord delights in the "*full* corn." We call to mind the contrast in Genesis 41. 6, 7. O that we may have a fulness, because we have received, and still receive, out of Christ's fulness (John 1.

16). There is no emptiness in Him, nor in our corn when we depend on Him. "The harvest has set in." There is an object. The ripe corn is held less tightly in the earth (contrast the trees, which, in the Feast of Tabernacles, speak rather of Israel's earthly calling), it is willing for the burning of persecution, and thus its golden glory, and true usefulness are increased. How helpfully this speaks to us of the Lord's Coming and of the *reviving* soon, which is on our hearts.

"He knoweth not how." Who can understand all the gracious work of God? But we can trust Him. It is blessed to be conscious of our limitations, and to be confident He will not fail. Day by day His work goes forward. It is the Spirit That quickeneth, and the secret, constant growth which is "the increase belonging to God" (cf. in another sphere, Col. 2. 19) is our joy. O that it may be our personal experience, to His glory in that Day, yea, in some measure, to-day also.

Matthew 24. 32 is well known. We might have studied it with Luke 13. 6-9 and 21. 19.* Would not the fig tree solemnly suggest Israel when, as here, *no fruit is mentioned*? This is the more remarkable because encouragement seems here promised: the branch is "tender," an attractive word. The leaves should lead on to fruit, but suddenly the silence comes. Is the nation's awakening here before us,—when did it take place, or is it to come? Observe in verse 33 the Kingdom of God is not mentioned: the subject of the verb is not given. Is there not a reason for this? A careful study of Matthew 24 will show that, when "the end of the age" is before us, the words "that" and "those" are used. "This" and "these" refers to the beginning (Matt. 24. 8 with verse 3). "*These* things" are mentioned in verse 33, and "that day" with an emphatic "but," in 36. Verse 32, too, begins, after 31, with "but," so it is not strange to go back again to the beginning,† and have we not the literal generation (forty years as in Psalm 95) up to the destruction of Jerusalem? Thus Christ's prophecy was exactly fulfilled: "My words shall not pass away."

The nation had leaves, and there seemed much enthusiasm, and awhile possibly a willingness to co-operate with professing Christians, (in accord with the many thousands who believed, Acts 21. 20). But was this nationalism *fruitful*? No, there was no repentance, there was no recognition of the Deity and the atoning death of the Lord Jesus, and thus the nation took up arms and was laid low in the revolt, followed by the dispersion and captivity, more than twenty-five times longer than that linked with the worship of idols. What was the awful cause? Did it "begin" in the year 70? Surely the Jewish tradition that the scarlet wool failed to turn white on the day of atonement *forty years previously* preserves a reminder of

* In Booklet 3 on The Parables.

† Cf. "parallel" chapters in Daniel and Revelation.

God's longsuffering, and a witness against themselves, a witness that God waited "a generation." Hence the rejection of the Lord Jesus was the real cause of the long captivity. O that some of Israel might have their eyes opened to see this amazing evidence, and to seek the Lord while He may be found (Isa. 55. 6).

The special point before us just now is that the "nationalism," seen in the united revolt, had no "fruit," and could not reverse the solemn sentence of Matthew 21. 19. Only the remnant according to the election of grace, in the Olive Tree of Romans 11, and thus in living union with Christ, has fruit. The warning had been given in Matthew 24 yet the majority heeded it not, and judgment fell.

Luke 21. 29-33 contains many similar words, but, as the parable of the marriage breakfast in Matthew 21 and the supper in Luke 14 are distinguished, so is there further instruction here. We have often noticed a twofoldness, e.g. "in the day that thou eatest" in Genesis 3 spoke of a literal day, and 1000 years as to the body. Is not "this generation" here used morally (as in Phil. 2. 15, the same word), and not for a period of years? Is not the *addition* of "the Kingdom of God" in Luke clear evidence? The same evil generation remains, the world is not improved, nor improving. God is saving and calling people *out of it*.

Israel's national awakening is seen in Zionism, in the use of Hebrew, and in Palestinian events, a sign of the times. May we not see an illustration of Jeremiah 16. 16 in European affairs? Everything encourages *us* to say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." But is there "fruit" among Israel as a nation? Many have spoken well of "Jesus of Nazareth," but have such sought Him as their Lord and Saviour? Thanks be to God for individuals, but with most the general loosening of ghetto bonds, awakening of interest and willingness to hear the gospel, and to read the New Testament, are not linked with the *gracious* mourning yet to be seen in the remnant (Zech. 12. 10).

But why "all the trees"? These words are not in Matthew: they were not fulfilled in the year 70. Have we not Christ's remarkable prophecy of the "nationalism" found everywhere *to-day*, and seen in "tariffs," and financial arrangements, and in the prohibition of employment to those of other lands, and yet more manifest in dictatorships and the exaltation and deification of the *state*? In *this*, fascism and communism are alike. "All the trees" have *some* shooting forth: there is "nationalism," but there is no fruit, there is nothing *for God*. And it behoves us, if we are children of God, with a heavenly calling, to stand aloof from all politics, and worldliness, and to be concerned to bring forth fruit, that we may live in the light of "the kingdom of God." The nations are not Christian, and they will not become "the Kingdom of God," but *the* King of kings will be exalted. Meanwhile let us, His redeemed ones,

His pilgrims, the members of the holy nation of Matthew 21. 4 and 1 Peter 2. 7 ask for grace, that, in the Holy Spirit, we may ever seek God's kingdom first (Matt. 6. 33) and have more fruit to present to our Lord, the Greater than Solomon (Song 8. 12) as we look to see Him face to face (Phil. 3. 20, 21).

"SOME PARABLES OF SERVICE," if the Lord Will,
to be continued next month.

God's Faithfulness in His Promise to David.

THE Truthfulness of God ever shines out in Scripture. When a prophecy is not fulfilled quickly, God ever watches over it (Hab. 2. 3). And thus the Lord Jesus came in the appointed time, "of the seed of David, according to the flesh," and will yet sit upon the throne of David.

In the plan of God it was appointed that the kings of Judah, till the captivity, should be of David's line (cf. 1 Kings 11. 32). And we must be impressed with the fulfilment of this when we see that at least seven times it appeared so "unlikely."

1. When Jehu killed Ahab's family, Ahaziah also was slain, and his brethren (2 Kings 10. 13); but Jehu never advanced to take the southern kingdom.

2. The condition of affairs at Jerusalem was the more remarkable because Athaliah then usurped the kingdom, but she could not introduce a fresh line of succession. Her aim to destroy all "the seed of the kingdom" (2 Kings 11. 1) was frustrated, and God caused one exception to the "all" in His preservation of little Joash (verse 2).

3. The attitude of Amaziah brought Jehoash, king of Israel, to Jerusalem, and he not only "took" the king, but broke down 400 cubits of the wall, yet was not allowed to attempt subjugation, or any uniting of the kingdoms (2 Kings 14. 13).

4. The plans of Rezin and Pekah against Judah and Jerusalem, in the days of Ahaz, had considerable success (2 Chron. 28. 6-8), BUT the wish "Let us . . . set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal," could not "stand" Isa. 7. 6, 7).

5, 6, 7. The powers of Assyria, Egypt and Babylon, were all successful awhile against Judah, and Jerusalem's "king" was dethroned, but none could substitute a king outside the line of David:—

- (a) Manasseh was restored by Assyria (2 Chron. 33. 11-14).
- (b) Eliakim (Jehoiakim) the son of Josiah was appointed by Egypt (2 Chron. 36. 4).
- (c) Nebuchadnezzar made Zedekiah, of Josiah's family, king in place of Jehoiachin (2 Chron. 36. 10).

All this is the more remarkable because, in the shorter continuance of the northern kingdom, 9 families were represented. God keeps His Word: we may ever trust Him.

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The Student of Scripture.

Edited by Percy W. Heward

"All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children." Isaiah 54. 13.

A Word of Introduction.

WE remember the question of Job 36. 22, "Who teacheth like Him?" and the grace-enabled prayer of Psalm 119. 12 and other verses, "Teach me Thy statutes." The emphasis on God's own teaching is impressive, whether in John 6. 45 (quoting from Isaiah 54) or in Psalm 25. 4, 7, 9. Our heart's desire is that we may experience this, together with our readers. The object of this magazine is likeness to Christ. This, and this only, can be to the glory of God. If we learn of men instead of from Him (note Isa. 29. 13, and Matt. 11. 29) there can only be failure. If God graciously uses instruments (and He does), our dependence must ever be on Him, and our thankfulness to Him. Every one who is used by Him, and who is humbly seeking this privilege, desires that this thought may be ever before our hearts. Observe in Isaiah 54 the resulting "peace." The same helpful encouragement is found in Philip-
pians 4. 6, 7 in connexion with prayer. May it be the joy of each believing reader, amid earth's unrest.

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Encouragement.

"I DID not encourage him: I meant to do so: but . . ." Have you never felt thus? I have. The little things mean so much to "one another." Words that minister grace to the hearers are so precious (Eph. 4. 29), and do not take any more time, **when spoken**. They do take time earlier, in love's communion of heart with the Lord, that there may be a right condition more fully. The apostle said, "These only are fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God, which have been a **comfort** to me" (Col 4. 11). It is possible to be a burden instead of a comfort,

without meaning to be so: to say a word at the wrong time that needs so much time for another—to help the wounded soul. But silence and omission can hinder as well, in spiritual things, because we do not “abide” (John 15. 4, 5). A word can accomplish much, one way or the other, as James 4 indicates (cf. Prov. 18. 21). “There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword: but the tongue of the wise is health” (Prov. 12. 18). Again, “Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad” (Prov. 12. 25). “A soft answer turneth away wrath” (Prov. 15. 1). “A word spoken in due season, how good it is” (Prov. 15. 23). “A word fitly spoken is like **oranges** of gold in pictures of silver” (Prov. 25. 11). How many “possibilities” are given us, and how many we let pass. I have sometimes felt how easy it is to “take everything for granted,” if any fellow believers are consistent in their love and faithfulness, and never to encourage **them**, whereas those who are less regular, and sometimes “touchy,” and fretful, receive words of cheer, to win and sustain them. Doubtless the consistent ones are glad to do what they do for the Lord, and they **will** have His “well done,” but I am conscious that often I, and it may be you also, may have omitted **our** privilege of a word of refreshment. And they **would** have valued it. Possibly we felt they did not **need** this, because they were so patiently faithful, but does our Father keep us, physically or spiritually, on the minimum ration of bare supply of need? Surely not. Have we not sadly realized that we get into a rut, in the “machinery” instead of simplicity, of home life, and of the Lord’s work, and the tender “human” touches, so beautiful to see in Scripture, and in our beloved Lord’s life, are absent? We are accurate, but there is a felt lack, and we never “waste” any words of encouragement. But they would frequently be used, and not wasted, and our forgetfulness and our silence may be unconscious selfishness. O for grace to discern ourselves, and learn to say just the right word, at the right time, and to refresh fellow pilgrims. Their love is not shown to us to gain our gratitude, but is it not His will to show we are grateful? Have we, too, not been helped at times by “just a word” of encouragement (it need not be a long speech),—only a word, yet enough to make the burden lighter? It was merely thoughtlessness that left it out, but thoughtlessness is not love, nor is it in the “Spirit.” I think that we are sometimes unfair to those we see most frequently. How readily we encourage a “visitor,” one unusually met, but those who are with us at all times, and need our encouragement all the more, hardly ever receive this loving support? Is it not failure in these little things that acts on the whole Christian life (in the assembly also), and hinders the joy of obeying Ephesians 4. 1-3? ’Tis the absence of **the** oil. Are these lines an article in a magazine, or a message to our hearts, a message that will be lovingly put into practice at once?

“The prince of this world cometh, and hath **NOTHING** in Me.”
John 14. 30.

“Without Me ye can do **NOTHING**.” John 15. 5.

THESE two verses are very near. Only a human chapter break separates them: the Holy Spirit has put the words in an immediate context. There was One Who was holy, harmless and undefiled, and Who could say that Satan had **NOTHING** in Him. But what about ourselves? Thanks be unto God, we are no longer in the authority of the darkness, we are no longer members of the world that lieth in the wicked one. Ephesians 2, 2 shows a striking change, and we hear with gratitude the words of promise, “That wicked one toucheth him not” (1 John 5. 18). Our hearts rejoice in the salvation of God, and in the power of our risen Lord. Nor would we excuse one sin. But we cannot boast, we are very conscious that we personally come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3. 23), and that our acceptance is in the Beloved. We realize that the shield of faith is needed, intensely needed, for if any of the fiery darts of the wicked get through, they find in us combustible material. Alas, the prince of this world then hath “something” in us, and so we long ever to walk by faith, and to live by the faith of the Son of God, so that we do not sleep, nor take off the armour of light. The Lord Jesus does not leave us. His “**NOTHING**” speaks of perfection: He did no sin, yea, had no sin, for in Him is no sin. Our “**NOTHING**” tells of weakness and worthlessness, so that we can accomplish nothing from ourselves. But is the remedy to be found in sinking under this consciousness? By no means. Though the words, “Without Me ye can do **NOTHING**” remind us of our failure, because of **OTHER** Scriptures, that is not the **PRIMARY** meaning of them. Far otherwise. The words do not necessarily allude to sin, but to the importance of dependence, and the need of **ABIDING**. It is one of the most startling discoveries in word-parallels, when we find that the closest with John 15. 5 is 5. 19, where the same language is employed of our adorable Lord Jesus. The thought of failure in Him is out of the question, and the context of the verses specially emphasizes His glory. The great emphasis is on dependence. He, as the Perfect Servant, would do nothing independently. He would not bring His Divine powers into exercise, but would ever remain in absolute harmony with, and dependence on, the Father. Now we see the force of Satan’s first temptation, “If Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread,” i.e., act independently. The answer emphasizes Christ’s perfect humanity. As “the Man” He was living upon **EVERY** word of “God.” Thus we see that the message of John 15. 5 is meant to encourage us to represent our Lord Jesus, and to show us the great and glorious “possibilities” if we set aside all thought of self-choosing, and “abide.” The previous life was marked by turning—every one

—to his own way (Isa. 53. 6). This is now entirely changed. Abiding is simple dependence on our Lord, and involves a blessed receptiveness for His will. So those who are “nothing” may become able for “all things” through Christ Which strengtheneth them (Phil. 4. 13).

PSALM 36. 1.

God's Gracious Help to me on a Difficulty.

The first verse has often given me concern. I could not understand the pronouns “my” and “his.” But He is gracious, and in His love as I looked at the psalm one day, I saw that the expression “The transgression of the wicked saith” reminds of the heading and beginning of Psalm 110, in solemn contrast: “Saith (or the oracle of) transgression, belonging to the wicked one” (cf. a Psalm “belonging to David”). Then the sad saying is given:—“In the midst of my heart there is not the fear of God, before His (i.e. God's) eyes.” i.e., as Lamech, in Genesis 4, the wicked one here defies God, and speaks of His eyes, as if to oppose God's holy record is such verses as 2 Chronicles 14. 2, 28. 1, Romans 3. 18. Then the psalmist speaks by inspiration regarding the wicked one, and his eyes in contrast: “For he flattereth himself, in his own eyes.” How terrible is the attitude of the sinner: may our hearts be humbled before God, and be deeply grateful for salvation by the blood of Christ.

LINKED VERSES.

“Who shall declare His generation?”—(Isa. 13. 8, Acts 8. 33). But “A SEED shall serve Him, it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation: they shall come, and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done” (Ps. 22. 30, 31), and “This is the GENERATION of them that seek Him,—that seek Thy face, O Jacob” (Ps. 24. 6, with Gen. 3. 15, cf. “the last Adam,” and “Israel” in Isa. 49. 3), for “He shall see a seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand” (Isa. 53. 10*), to the eternal joy of those who are “born again not of corruptible seed but of incorruptible (SEED), by the word of God which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Pet. 1. 23). “Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, Thou God of my salvation: and my tongue shall sing aloud of Thy righteousness” (Ps. 51. 14). “I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of Thine only” (Ps. 70. 16), “only in the Lord have I righteousness and strength” (Isa. 45. 24).

* Cf. John 10. 28.

Some Parables of Service.

(Continued from Matthew 25. 14-30).

Matthew 24. 45-51 sets forth principles of deep importance, and is also (may we not say?) a prophecy of conditions just before our beloved Lord comes again? Like chapter 25. 1-13, (with which the word “then” links it), this passage solemnly reminds of TWO attitudes toward the Lord. May we not notice a similar twofoldness throughout the parables? The wheat AND the tares, the fruitful AND fruitless branches in John 15 come to mind. And is not this contrast manifest in all Scripture, from the days of Cain and Abel, where we see man's religion and God's salvation? Thanks be to God, there will be servants “found” doing their Lord's will when He comes (verse 46). This is our joy, our expectation, and our refreshment, and (may we not add?) our personal desire. The singular, “That servant,” is important: there should be an individual obedience to the Lord. And “so doing” is simple, but impressive. Love loves to be simple, and to “do” just what He has “said.” “Find” suggests 1 Corinthians 4. 2, and 2 Peter 3. 14, which are equally associated with our Lord's Coming. May not the word “find” indicate His seeking, and also the Judgment Seat of Christ? Even to this day men speak of the “findings” of a court. How will our service appear before His holy eyes? The word “blessed” is, (as in Matthew 5. 1-11), rather “Happy,” and denotes experienced blessedness, and the entering into the joy of the Lord which has often been impressed upon us. But O that we may be concerned about His joy even now, for the Holy Spirit ever leads to devotion and attachment to Christ Himself.

This prophecy contains a parable. Verse 45 presents a “faithful and wise servant” in his stewardship. It is put in question form as in Luke 12. 42 to awaken a humble searching of our “ways”—“Am I faithful?” The question of Peter (Luke 12. 41) and the context would seem to indicate that, as with the parable of the leaven, and so many of our Lord's words, there was a repetition for emphasis. How much we all need this. “Faithful” is the first word (again reminding of 1 Cor. 4. 2, and Eph. 1. 1, 6. 21), showing a responsiveness to the Lord's words and will. Faith always leads to faithfulness. And then the description “wise,” or prudent, indicates, even as chapter 25. 2, a right attitude of the mind. How unwise is our own way, as well as sinful. The servant has much scope for personal love and activity, but he is ever a “servant,” he is responsible to the Lord, and gladly subject. He has been “set” or “made to stand over,” as the word rendered “ruler” indicates. May we not question the appropriateness of the English word “ruler” in the light of Luke 22. 25? Not that all are “equal” in the service of an assembly: there are diversities of gifts and of positions, even as we find in the members of our “body.” Yea, there is godly “rule,” but the word “rul-ER” seems to imply

more than this. The loving care of **stewardship** is before us: the "household" is to be fed and guided aright: everything belongs to the Lord: He is the Owner. The emphasis on a "house" in Scripture is remarkable, whether we think of 1 Timothy 3. 15, or a church "according to a house." Unity and simplicity are graciously appointed. The special object is "**meat** in due season," and this word denotes "nourishment," as in Luke 12. 23, Hebrews 5. 14, etc. The food must be of the right **kind** as well as at the right **time**. Are we sufficiently concerned that everything should be not only eatable, but sustaining, unmixed, without adulteration, pure, wholesome, nourishing food because "as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4. 11, Matt. 4. 4)? The doctrines of men cannot be thus described. But as the laver, in the tabernacle court, representing the assembly, was made to contain the water (of the Word, Eph. 5. 26) alone, so the ministry pleasing to God is that which He Himself has provided. We must "sit" at our Lord's feet, as Mary, if we would "stand" in approved service. This passage, being prophetic as well as parabolic, would encourage our faith as to the reviving that is associated with the near Coming of our Lord Jesus. We recollect that, after the "foundation of apostles and prophets" (Eph. 2. 20), we find in Ephesians 4 "evangelists . . . pastors (shepherds) and teachers . . . till we all come into the oneness of the faith" (verses 11-14). It does not seem a forcing of the words to link up thus; and will not shepherds "feed" the flock? Even though the plenitude of "gifts" in the early church may not be so manifested to-day, may we not expect and pray for the gracious provision of some brother in each gathering the Lord will enable (as in Revelation 2 and 3)? Thus the last view of assemblies in the past and this view of the "future" would seem to coincide; but there is nothing of a one-man clerisy, nor of human organization. The responsibility is to the Lord Jesus, and the supply of food is in view of His Coming. Are we seeking earnestly for gatherings after this pattern? Or should we be surprised if God granted them? Further, if we have not a special responsibility of ministry in meetings, let us remember the lips of the righteous feed many (Prov. 10. 21, 22. 11), and every believer is to feed others by conversation in harmony with the Lord (Eph. 4. 29, Col. 4. 6). We dare not put aside the principles of His truth, and say we are "waiting" for revival. As in other Scriptures, and particularly the parables of the Talents and Pounds, which we have pondered, the service unto the Lord's people is unto the Lord (cf. Luke 10. 35), and He will remember "in that Day." The impressive words, "Verily I say unto you," precede the setting "over all His goods." Faithfulness in that which is least is all-important. How are we all acting as to HIS OWN WORDS, and the needful food of His beloved people thereby? No other form of activity dare be substituted. "Success" in all else will bring no joy to Him, no reward unto

His praise when He comes again. "So doing" is limited to the supply of His food. How needful is daily nourishment. Ah, dear "isolated" believer, this **principle** has a message to you as well. How are you and I personally dealing with the precious gift of the words of God? Do we feed thereon, as the Holy Spirit applies? The first parable (The Sower) views everything in connexion with the "Word." Each kind of ground is characterized in connection therewith. Nothing, **nothing**, **NOTHING** can take the place of "the Word of the Lord" (1 Pet. 1. 25).

Even as there was one who misused a talent, and at least one who hid the pound, so we find the searching contrast here. True, there is not a definite statement. But "if" is sufficient to speak to our hearts, in the power of the Holy Spirit. And the word "bad" is before us, as "wicked" in Matthew 25. 26. How "bad" it is to prove untrue to our privileges, and trusteeship of whatever may be granted to us. The sin begins in the heart: likewise in Matthew 15. 19. Yea, even among believers this is the peril (Heb. 3. 12): hence the exhortation to keep our heart with all diligence (Prov. 4. 23), and the striking change of words in Job 2. 10 from 1. 22, followed, alas, by 3. 1. All forgetfulness of the nearness of the Lord's Coming is perilous. Strangely the mistaken belief that the Day of the Lord had set in produced a similar "selfishness" in Thessalonica (2nd Epistle ch. 2). But is it strange? "Self" is ever the enemy. It is the "Lordship" of Christ which is here forgotten, although the words "My Lord" may be used. The **love** of this present age takes the place of **loving** His Appearing (2 Tim. 4. 8, 10), and with the failure to love Him, the failure to love His redeemed is linked (2 Chron. 16. 10, see Matt. 22. 38, 39). "Smiting" among believers, or professing believers, with the tongue (Jer. 18. 18) has been sadly prevalent in history. Hence the holy words "no striker" in 1 Timothy 3. 3. Whether our special temptation be openly in this way, or another, let us be humbled, remembering that sarcasm and cold unkindness can "smite." O for the love of the Lord's loved ones (John 13. 35). The brother placed "over" any to supply nourishment is not the master: other believers are his "**fellow**-servants": "all ye are brethren" (Matt. 23. 8). The peril of Matthew 18. 28 is ever impressed upon us by the gracious ministry of the Holy Spirit. Sin is ever entwined with sin. He who should feed others with truth is seen here feeding himself, and upon that which is the **reverse** of "nourishment" inasmuch as it causes "drunkenness,"—another of the passages whereby the Lord Jesus sets aside any "alcoholic" parallel with (or type of) Himself or His words.* And the bearing of this on our attitude is deeply important. The spirit of self-indulgence here reminds us of our own constant danger, and that the scattering of the sheep came

* So the "new wine" unchanged in Luke 5. 37-39 **alone** can tell of Him. (Booklet free.)

in at the outset, through the spirit of the "hireling" (John 10. 12).† The hireling wants **something for himself**: is thus, in measure, like to the **thieves and robbers** of the same saddening passage. All are entirely contrasted with the Good Shepherd Who "giveth." But true under-shepherds must follow Him (John 21. 15-19). There will be no room for a hireling ministry in revival: a hireling ministry, in the past, has produced Christendom and a "professionalism." How searching is every word of the Lord Jesus. Sad indeed is the fellowship which the bad servant seeks and finds. He leaves the smitten saints for the companions who are drunken (cf. Jas. 4. 4, in connexion with verse 11), even as the "elder brother" of Luke 15 has his "friends." In drunkenness there is no discernment, and do we not see this in the past history of Christendom also? But though the Lord does not come at once, He will come. And He will come unexpectedly (contrast Heb. 9. 28 and Matt. 25. 10). The "day" and "hour" are deeply important: everything is planned: a godly continuance of readiness should characterize the Lord's redeemed. The awful "portion" here is contrasted with the inheritance of His faithful ones. The one who has chosen to be **with** the drunken shall be inevitably **with** the hypocrites. How striking is verse 51 in contrast with 47. It is a fearful thing to profess to be a servant of Christ without the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8. 9). The exact wording does not "say" if he IS throughout a hypocrite, or doomed, after all, to be set aside with such. Why is this? May it not be lest we should misuse the message, and say, "I am not a hypocrite: I do believe," and so forth? The Lord has in various verses, graciously used indefiniteness in a holy warning, thereby to make it **more definite**, and searching, yea, in the experience of His own also, and to protect them **by the very warning**, from going on, until the solemn threatening therein expressed would need to be fulfilled upon them. His wisdom is thus seen in all these "servant-parables." Grace never leads to laxity. There **are** hypocrites, and the Lord hates hypocrisy. He delights in holy simplicity and frankness of love. And thus the oft-repeated words "There shall be (the) weeping and (the) gnashing of (the) teeth" set forth the unchanged attitude of those who fall under His judgment. Six times in the gospel (8. 12, 13, 42, 50, 22. 13, 25, 30) and once in Luke (13. 28) is this message found, and usually as a climax, after one of our Lord's searching and practical parables. May we have ears to hear, and take heed how we hear.

(If the Lord will, to be continued)

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The Student of Scripture.

Edited by Percy W. Heward.

"The sheep follow Him."

"They follow Me."

"Follow thou Me."

John 10. 4, 27; 21. 22.

A Word of Introduction.

A PERSONAL Lord and Saviour is ever before us. And He has bought not a part of our life, but ourselves. The characteristic of His own is that they "follow" Him. A wolf is never a sheep, though in sheep's clothing; even as a sow is never a sheep though washed (2 Pet. 2. 22 contrasted with 1 Pet. 2. 25). The mark of the Lord's own should be more manifest. A sheep can alas, wander but this is not the usual condition. Nor is the sheep happy in its wandering. It is precious to notice that, in the last chapter of John, one who was privileged to feed the sheep was himself instructed to "follow" as a sheep. Only as we obey the Lord ourselves can we be a blessing to others. Only as we follow are we in the dependent and humble and trustful attitude. To seek to lead is sin. "Follow" is a precious word, and reminds us of a loving Shepherd, and reminds us of a living Leader. May He use these pages to "increase" the holy characteristic in writer and reader alike. The precious blood of Christ is a call to each saved one to follow Him, and the Holy Spirit never leads in any other direction. This magazine is not "propaganda," but a signpost to exalt and direct to the Lord Jesus. All else would be sin and failure. May He be glorified!

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The Believer and Insurance.

A Few Loving Notes on a Question and an Article.

Beloved for Christ's Sake,

Rejoicing in all desire to glorify God in daily life, and in all witness against both carelessness and "carefulness," may I pass on a few further thoughts regarding, "Should Christians insure their lives?"

I readily acknowledge that **much** insurance to-day is a business transaction, not "Brotherhood" with the world: but **some** benefit societies have this character even as all "co-operative" societies. I also agree that there are several marked contrasts with what is known as "gambling," e.g., there is **no craving** to obtain anything at the expense of others, no wish for **anything now**, and a faithful believer would rejoice if the Lord should come in his lifetime, and render the policy void. But there are **some** part-parallels, e.g., there is the purchasing of a contingency or an investment in connexion with what men call "chance." **We**, by grace, call it "God's providence," and this is a call to trust Him primarily, and fully, in connexion with it. There is no "chance" with Him. Again, money is "pooled" to pay out to the ones who need it,—not, however, as in gambling, but to all in turn. However, the great point is, "What is the revealed will of God?" Personally I cannot quite see that Matthew 25. 21 approves seeking earthly investments, (often worldly partnerships); there is nothing "**spent**" or "**given away**" in that parable (but we should do **both**): this would shew the danger of making a parallel. Moreover, spiritual likenesses do not always suggest a share in the earthly picture, (but sometimes even a contrast), else 1 Corinthians 9. 26, might be sadly misused. A "spare" tyre (mentioned in question), if a believer has a motor, to God's glory, in his business, hardly seems the same as "Buying" an uncertainty ("life insurance").

But the fundamental question is, What is God's revealed will?

Has Scripture anything parallel in His loving arrangements for the early church? I have not found it. Acts 4. 34-37 hardly supports the principle. Matthew 6. 19-21, 33 would seem to warn against a possible danger, likewise 1 Timothy 6. 8. 1 Timothy 5. 8 has been mentioned, and it is usually brought before us: but does it not refer to the meeting of a **present** need? I can see no reference to the future and to investment.

One would thankfully acknowledge that many believers of God who seek insurance are more devoted, and pilgrimlike, than some who omit it. I rejoice that the "object" may be good, and that I neither see nor judge the motives of beloved children of God. Nor do I urge that one should omit insurance, and then use the "premiums" for something of "self." To omit and be careless, or to get into debt if death comes, is quite wrong. Faith should not be at another's expense. Only when there is simple faith as to the **whole** life, can one rightly emphasize trusting the Lord in **this**. "In **all** thy ways," says Proverbs 3. 6, which words the enemy cut out (from Psalm 91. 11) in Luke 4. 10, 11. May I add, that the present standard of living encouraged among believers seems different from that which our Lord brought before us, and therefore a funeral and its accompaniments, are often "expensive." I am convinced that the Lord would provide for the "simple" life and death: but if we wish

a more elaborate funeral, and a different way from that of His pilgrims, for ourselves, and as to the widow and fatherless, (for whom He has often promised to provide "needs"), and if we aim at getting on in the world, the rebuke of 2 Chronicles 25. 8 (so Luke 22. 36, a leaflet can be sent) would suggest, "Then insure in the usual way."

Need I add that very many who at present feel they should insure are far removed from this standpoint. They "fear" to cause a burden to **others**, and honestly desire to leave everything in order. They would recognize, too, that death cannot take till the Lord permits (Phil. 1. 25), and that He **will** not forget afterwards the work and labour of love of those who are devoted to Him (Heb. 6. 10), and that He **has** undertaken for "His own" in the "simpler" past. But the point for us all is—Are we willing, and able by grace to find and carry out the Lord's principles more simply and fully? If so, one may be less "English," less "American," less like the world, whether in London or elsewhere, and more like Christ. I would not urge any to "impulsive" action, or partial obedience, but desire for others, and for myself, mere prayer in the Holy Spirit, more humility, and more faith. Yes, the act must be one of personal faith (Rom. 14. 23, cf. verse 5 last clause). As we seek after this we shall know His faithfulness more. Is it not even so as to the body and "illness"? The Holy Spirit always draws us to Christ as our Loving Lord and Saviour. "Hurried" action would be wrong: I only desire that this prayerful study may lead us all to meditate a little more on gracious principles, and to see that "Jesus Christ is the Same yesterday, and **to-day**," as well as "for ever." Each step of faith is blessed, and the Lord leads on "gently" (Isa. 40. 11). Those who feel the privilege of omitting insurance need much grace to live up to this, and to avoid pressing "it" upon others, or becoming one-sided (with scarcely veiled pride), in a way that quite forgets the Lord's wondrous tenderness in John 16. 12. Till an act is one of **personal faith** it is only one of "presumption," but the Lord will cause faith to grow; and I too **need** this, and value your prayer for myself.

Wishing you all blessing in the Lord Jesus, because of His precious blood, and that we may alike value our heavenly investment more (2 Tim. 1. 12).

Yours in Him, all by Grace,

PERCY W. HEWARD.

The same word, emphasized by the Holy Spirit.

"LO, I COME unto thee in a thick cloud." Exodus 19. 9.

"LO, I COME: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God." Psalm 40. 7, 8.

"BEHOLD, I COME quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Revelation 3. 11.

Prophet, Priest, and King, in Harmony.

REMEMBERING that God Himself called Abraham a prophet, we see this unity in the striking incident of Genesis 14, Melchisedec was king and priest, and a most remarkable type of the Lord Jesus, as Hebrews 7 indicates. Need it be added that our beloved Lord is revealed as the Perfect Prophet, Priest and King? How many fail to see His fulness. In John 6. 14, 15 we have the standpoint of the people. They were willing for the Prophet and King. They realized not their need for His sacrificial work.

Gad (1 Sam. 22. 5) and Abiathar (1 Sam. 22. 23) were with David, God's anointed king, in the place of rejection. And David himself was a prophet (Acts 2. 30): but, with the Divinely appointed limitation which Uzziah refused to own, he could not be the priest. Only Christ can unite all.

1 Kings 1. 38 is important, with its suggestion of the glory of One greater than Solomon: "So Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet . . . caused Solomon to ride upon king David's mule, and brought him to Gihon."

In Hezekiah's reign we have Isaiah the prophet and Azariah the priest in fellowship with the king: notice also 2 Chronicles 29. 25, 26: 2 Chronicles 34. 20-22 also illustrates this subject.

2 Chronicles 24. 20 affords a sad contrast, and we remember that Jeremiah and Ezekiel were alike priests and prophets, and the saddening attitude of Judah's kings toward them is recorded.

Zerubbabel was not the king, but his relation to the royal family makes Ezra 5. 1, 2 and Haggai 1. 13, 14 deeply suggestive, and in Zechariah 6. 9-15 we have a prophecy of the Lord Jesus.

"LOVE . . . REJOICETH NOT IN INIQUITY."

1 Corinthians 13. 6.

A sad contrast:—

"When thou doest evil, then thou rejoicest" Jeremiah 11. 15.

"And the priest's heart was glad, and he took the ephod." Judges 18. 20.

"Who rejoice to do evil." Proverbs 2. 14.

"In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping . . . and behold joy and gladness." Isaiah 21. 12, 13.

"They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies." Hosea 6. 3.

"Ye which rejoice in a thing of nought, which say, Have we not taken to us horns by our own strength?" Amos 6. 13.

"And they were glad and covenanted to give him money." Luke 22. 5.

"They that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry." Revelation 11. 10.

"Were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee."

2 Kings 3, 14.

IT seems remarkable that Elisha was near just at that time: we behold God's providence. The prophet gave witness and warning to Jehoshaphat, and to us also thereby. This passage is evidently written to show the peril of a believer in a wrong place, even when he retains his personal emphasis on the Lord, and may testify regarding this. Twice had Jehoshaphat said "As thou art" (1 Kings 22. 4, 2 Kings 2. 7). But God's people should not be like others (1 Sam. 8. 5, Eph. 4. 17). The god-fearing king should have said "No," as in 1 Kings 22. 49. Yet when he had sinned, God's mercy watched over him. Mercy never excuses sin, nor is this recorded that we may excuse it: rather that we may admire God's mercy, and hate, and avoid, sin. The departure from God's will did not bring trouble at once: let us ever observe this. Nor does Scripture at once mention it as departure: we are caused to **compare** Scripture with Scripture. O to realize God's patience, and His tenderness, when we too have gone astray.

It is important to see that Elisha "regarded" Jehoshaphat, and he was blest. Do we not learn that blessing of itself does not prove we are in the right place (cf. 2 Chron. 18. 31)? There was a miracle; and we may have a signal victory and yet not be in the right place, although a means of blessing to others, in God's overruling. How needful that we should be guided by God's written words, and not by circumstances. It is true that God sometimes works otherwise: when Jonah was in the wrong place, he was the reverse of blessing. God's purposes are holy, and that which would bring Him glory on one occasion would not do so on another. "His way is perfect": we would leave all in His wisdom and in His hands.

Moreover, we see here that Jehoram and the king of Edom might easily have misused this deliverance, and so sought to have believers with them, without being humbled to think of their own sin. Sometimes when there is a right nearness, (in business without fellowship), the unsaved learn by experience the blessing of having a Christian in their employ (Gen. 39. 3, cf. 30. 27). This may hold back the opposition otherwise manifest (John 3. 19, 20). But we must not fail to let our light shine. The underlying principle is deeply precious, and God may restrain judgment upon a land or city while His children are there (Gen. 18. 32). Thus the narrative is more than history, it unveils something of God's "ways," and becomes a very definite call to each believing heart to walk circumspectly, and in wisdom, toward them that are without, seeking that all may, at all times, glorify God (Matt. 5. 16).

Some Parables of Service.

(Matthew 25. 14-30, continued.)

And Mark 13. 34-36 is another gracious call to service, and again in connexion with the Coming of Christ. We are becoming used to this precious association. The house is His, the servants too are His, and the appointment is His. He knows what He has fitted each one to do. We cannot all do the same service. Nor should we seek this: 1 Corinthians 12. 15-17 is instructive. There is no room for jealousy or rivalry. What has our loving Lord marked out for us? No one is without work: no one should be idle. And just as all possess **one common** life, so there is a further definite privilege at once mentioned here which is expressed in a plural exhortation. We might at first think that "He commanded **the porter** to watch" singled out for this service, even as Israel's temple had a definite company of Levitical porters (1 Chron. 26 1-19, Ezra 2. 42). But we at once hear the call, "Watch YE therefore." And just as the apostle was inspired to repeat "Rejoice," in Philippians 4. 4, so the Lord is pleased to repeat in verse 37, "And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch." Could anything be more emphatic or more comprehensive? The words "ye" and "you" are not viewed as sufficient. Our beloved Lord would graciously indicate that there must be no limitation to the apostles, nor to the first Christians. It is thus the same aspect that all service is in view of our Lord's Coming, and with a holy wakefulness. Spiritual sleep is our danger: may our hearts be on the alert, for "we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (1 Thess. 5. 5).

What effect shall our quiet meditation have on our daily walk? The question of the disciples in Mark 13 was concerning times and events, but the Lord Jesus both began and ended with a gracious command, a command affecting the whole attitude, and the daily life. And as we desire that this series of notes should ever direct and attract to the Scriptures, so our heart's longing is that there may be the living fruit in the experience of each exercised believer, whether writing or reading them. Thus will there be glory unto Him Whose Name we bear. And should we not pray for one another, with this object? Do we pray enough for one another?

And now we come to Matthew 20. 1-16. How many times has the writer looked at, and into, these verses. I would acknowledge that as to all the ministry of the Lord Jesus there is a fulness which my heart longs to learn and apply increasingly, and any precious thoughts, impressed on a reader's heart, will, indeed, be welcome. It is not my desire to set forth that which I think, but that which stands the test of "all Scripture," and never to speculate, nor to become one-sided, nor to adulterate His food with any poison. It is so sad to mislead any children of God, and I value prayer that my pen may be kept from this. There may be much truth, but if it is mixed with some error, the effect

of the latter may, alas, be more resultful. The holy principle of 1 Peter 4. 11 shines forth: a steward should only give the provided nourishment. It is better to be silent, and to wait, than to hurry and make conclusions, teaching that which is not according to God's will. How much more grace we all need to "wait." The parable before us seems to me the most difficult of all. But even this fact may lead to more prayer, humility and blessing. Nothing is hid from our Father.

Thanks be unto God, there are precious general principles in Matthew 20 which are at once strikingly clear, helpful and impressive. So is it with the Book of Revelation. It is not for me to neglect the use of that book till I understand all "the order of events." Should not my first concern be to prove a "servant," with cleansed and kept garments, waiting for my Lord, and praying, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." It is far more important than we realize to have the practical fruit of Bible study. Referring to Revelation again, if a child of God hesitates as to explaining ch. 13. 18, but seeks to have no "mark" of fellowship with iniquity, and realizes the goal of this present evil age, and is concerned in heart to sigh and cry over abominations, and to warn sinners to flee from the wrath to come, has he not learnt more from Revelation than one who may offer varied personal applications of the solemn number 666? I do not suggest forgetfulness of "wisdom" or of "understanding" in counting: this is graciously appointed: but much more is written as to the practical application of truth to ourselves, and not all that is written, by way of commentary, shows "understanding" from above.

The parable of the labourers contains deeply important and evident principles, to search **our** ways at once:—

- (1) Reading on from ch. 19, we see the dread peril of **confidence** in "our own" giving up for the Lord, and in "our" faithfulness, with the despising of others (ch. 20. 12). The attitude of Ephesians 3. 8 is in holy contrast. Pride, pride, pride—ruins all.
- (2) The danger of forgetting **privileges** is set before us. In verse 7 we read, "Because no man hath hired us." To whom much is given, from him will more be required. May we not overlook the fact that others have not had the call, and the opportunities for service, we have received? Dispensational privileges, geographical and historical privileges in a land where the language is committed to **writing**, providential privileges in the loving gift of the Scriptures in our native tongue, etc., home privileges in the possession of beloved parents who have put no hindrance in the way of knowing the words of the Lord, but have, it may be, encouraged us remarkably, from babyhood:—how many blessings we have received! Many in Asia and Africa might use the words of verse 6 relative to our neglect of Christ's missionary command. Again we see we have nothing to boast.

- (3) The Lord's desire that we should have implicit confidence in His "will" and "goodness" (20. 15) is a message to us. Heaven has no room for murmurers: two "wills" are impossible there. The elder brother criticized the Father's freeness of undeserved love. A **Pharisee** always condemns free grace. Are we joyful in our Lord's joy (Luke 15. 6)? Those whom He calls His "friends" should take His standpoint.
- (4) The spirit of the **hireling** produced scattering and confusion at the outset (John 10. 12): and we see here how the Lord condemns it. As soon as we wish to "get" something, we are on wrong lines. If our service is with this object: yea, if we look for the Judgment Seat of Christ with this aim, we are quite out of harmony with our Lord. Find one word of love to the Lord or to others, in the utterance of "the first." You cannot. Energy and "accuracy" may be attainable without love. 1 Corinthians 13. 1-3 speaks to our hearts.

It is fairly clear, then, that this parable, as the one of Matthew 18. 23-35, was a Divine answer to the attitude which Peter had expressed (see 18. 21, and 19. 27): the Lord has thereby a definite message for **His own**, and this is our first need. Many parables were to the multitude (Matt. 13. 13), and the use of this mode of instruction here to the twelve may suggest they had taken the standpoint of those "without" (Mark 4. 11, note John 13. 33). Any attitude of self-confidence hinders the blessedness of the eyesight of Matthew 13. 16. Yes, it was to **disciples** that this parable was spoken, and it contains some of the very problems found in the parable of the unmerciful servant in Matthew 18.

(If the Lord will, to be continued).

Often a trial comes on the line of something very ordinary, but it is a trial. We should prefer the suffering to be directly "for righteousness' sake," but our Father sees that we might then become unconsciously proud of that, so He graciously uses a very ordinary thing. But just as He makes the details of life quite different, that we may eat and drink to His glory, so the strain of little and ordinary difficulties may be caused to have a sanctifying power. The value is not in the circumstances, but in our being exercised thereby, is it not? Sometimes the trial may come on the line of our past or present failure: it is still more humbling then: but it may be sanctified, without excusing the failure at all. We call it "chastisement," and its nature may thus keep us from speaking much about it, and thus preserve us from our danger of pride which our Father sees more fully than we.

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