

1 John - Commentaries by Alexander Hume Rule

Selected Ministry of A. H. Rule Volume 1, God Is Light (1:5)

The Apostle John had seen Jesus, and had beheld in Him the manifestation of "that eternal life, which was with the Father" (1 John 1:2), and what he had "seen and heard" he declared unto the saints to whom he wrote, that they might have fellowship with him — a fellowship which was "with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." Nothing could be more blessed than this wondrous association and fellowship into which the saints are brought, and so the Apostle had written them these things that their joy might "be full." All this is the expression of God's infinite grace to poor sinners, whom He has been pleased to lift out of the depths of ruin, and to deliver from the power of sin and Satan, giving them divine, eternal life, and bringing them into His own presence, and establishing them there in a known and eternal relationship with Himself. This is pure, unmingled grace, the fruit of infinite, eternal love, and it is most blessed indeed.

But the human heart in its wretched perversity and wickedness is ever ready to abuse grace, yes, even to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, if it can; and so we find the truth of God guarded on every side. If God in infinite grace takes up vile sinners and brings them into His own presence and into fellowship with Himself, it is cause for profoundest joy and gratitude; but in doing this, God never does, and never can, set aside His own character. His unsullied holiness, His absolute purity, as well as His love and grace, must shine out in all that He does. If "God is love," "God is light" as well. "Light" and "love" are the very essence of what He is in His nature. And if we are made partakers of the divine nature, recipients of that life — that eternal life — which was manifested in Jesus the Son of God here upon earth, we must remember it is the nature of One who is light, absolute purity, necessarily detecting and excluding all evil. Hence the Apostle says, "This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5).

No language could be used to describe more forcibly God's intrinsic and absolute purity. It is a purity that admits of no degree of evil. Not only is God "light," but no "darkness" can mingle with that light. Darkness is necessarily excluded by what He is as light. And if we have been brought to God, we are not "in darkness," but "in the light." It is the place and condition into which we have been brought. We were once darkness, but now light in the Lord (Eph. 5:8).

In our natural state we were "darkness"; now, as redeemed and brought to God, and made partakers of the divine nature, we are "light in the Lord." What a change, both of place and condition! Once afar off, but now in God's presence in Christ, brought nigh through His blood! Once enemies, now reconciled, and in cloudless light, able to look up into God's face and say, Abba, Father! Once incapable of having a common thought, or feeling, or desire with God, now possessed of the divine nature, and able to have fellowship with Him, and with His Son Jesus Christ! Do we then say we have been brought to God, and have fellowship with Him, and while claiming these things, walk in darkness? Then it is all a "lie," and we "do not the truth." If we have been brought to God we are in the light, for God is light; and we have been made partakers of the divine nature. God has been revealed in Jesus, and through this revelation we have, been brought to Him, receiving the life which was manifested in Jesus. And thus we are brought into fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. Only as possessing this life can we have fellowship with God.

And if we possess this life, and are in this fellowship, we are necessarily in the light. The light is what God is in the purity and holiness of His nature, and we participate in this nature, and thus are in the light. But if we say we participate in this nature, and in it have fellowship with God, while we walk in darkness, we connect darkness with Him who is light. It is to say darkness belongs to that pure and holy nature, that divine life, which was manifested in Jesus. And this is a lie, and we do not know the truth. We are still in the moral darkness of nature, and know not God.

"God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). It is a solemn statement which shows the necessary exclusion of evil from His presence. The cross is the measure of this. There we see His awful abhorrence of sin when He abandons His own Son, and commands the sword to awake against Him as made sin for us. Abandoned of God on that cross, the suffering Victim was overwhelmed in darkness, in unfathomable sorrow, left to drink the cup of God's wrath against sin. That bitter cry of anguish, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46) shows the utter impossibility of the darkness mingling with the light, or of sin having a place in the presence of God.

All this is unspeakably solemn if we look at the flesh or the old nature and what flows from it; and yet it is unspeakably blessed when we realize that we are in the Son, and that our life is in Him. We are brought to God in Christ. "As He is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). We are in the light, but it is as partakers of the divine nature, and thus in our nature morally, like God Himself, and this is most blessed indeed. But it searches the heart, and tests our practical state. Are we habitually walking in the fear of God, and judging the flesh with its lusts, so that nothing is seen in our walk or ways but what is Christlike? Do we carry in our souls, daily and hourly, the sense that we are in God's presence? And do we realize the manner of life that becomes that place? We are in the light; we are in God's presence.

We are not there today and some place else tomorrow. It is the place we are in as Christians. May the power of this truth possess our souls, giving us that holy sobriety of soul, and abhorrence of sin, suited to the place we are in, and the nature and character God has given us as His own children.

Selected Ministry of A. H. Rule Volume 1, As He Is in the Light (1:7)

"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

Of old, God said "He would dwell in the thick darkness" (1 Kings 8:12). When He gave the law from Sinai, the mountain "burned with fire" (Ex. 3:2), and God was surrounded with "blackness, and darkness, and tempest." In the tabernacle and temple He dwelt between the cherubim, behind a veil, in unapproachable majesty. God was unrevealed and could not be approached.

Now, blessed be His name, it is no longer thus. That solemn question has been divinely settled in the sacrifice of Christ. All God's claims have been fully met. His majesty has been maintained — all His nature fully glorified in the death of Jesus, so that when Jesus died the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom. Indeed, the veil was Jesus' flesh (Heb. 10:20), in the rending of which God was revealed, coming down to meet man's need in that wondrous sacrifice, revealed in light, and known as a Savior God. In mercy to man He remained hidden until He could manifest Himself in the light, on the ground of that perfect sacrifice in which His righteousness and holiness were declared, as well as His unspeakable love to man. In that wondrous act in which man's sin was atoned for on the cross, God stood revealed in light, at once displaying His majesty and inflexible holiness in the judgment of sin, and His immeasurable love to man in providing for him the sacrifice that has put away his sin.

God has rent the veil and revealed Himself in grace, in cloudless light, to bring man to Himself in that light. It is in the sacrifice of Jesus, His beloved Son. On the ground of that sacrifice, God and man meet together in light which has no element of darkness in it, all guilt and sin gone forever, so that man can be in His presence in abiding and eternal relationship founded on this immovable basis: "THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST HIS SON CLEANSETH US FROM ALL SIN" (1 John 1:7).

Wondrous statement! We meet God in the light. The blood of Jesus is there. It has answered every question, met every claim, it "cleanseth us from all sin." The cloudless light and glory of God's presence can discover no spot, where that blood has been applied. If the light could be brighter still, it would manifest but the more clearly that there is not a spot upon us, that all is gone, and that we are in the presence of God in the infinite, eternal, and unchangeable value of the blood of Jesus. Oh! what a revelation is this! What infinite grace! What unspeakable love! And oh! what rest and peace for our once weary hearts and guilty consciences! Consciously brought into such a scene, well may we bow our heads in adoring worship.

But there is yet more than this. The scene into which we are brought is one where there is no element of darkness, no discord, no jarring note. We are in the light, and walk in it. Once we were in darkness and walked in darkness — walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit which now worketh in the children of disobedience. But we are no longer there. We are now in the light and walk there.

And now what is so blessed is that "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." How could it be otherwise? We are brought into fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Here there can be but one mind, one thought — the mind of God, of Christ. It is an abstract statement of what belongs to the light into which we are brought, and where we walk. All is looked at according to the presence and nature of God, where there is no disturbing element to produce jarring or discord. There we walk in the light as He is in the light, and we have fellowship one with another. We are brought to God, are in the light, have eternal life, fellowship with the Father and the Son, and with one another. How immense the blessing! and how blessed the privileges! All is divinely perfect and without any flaw, and proclaims the pure grace and infinite love of God. Such is the truth presented to us in its abstract perfection according to the nature of God and His manifestation in grace; and the heart utters its praise to Him, and takes in the blessed revelation.

The life that has been manifested, and which is given to us, is perfect. The cleansing power of the blood of Jesus which enables us to subsist in the presence of God is perfect. Perfect and cloudless the light into which we are brought. And perfect the fellowship we have with God, and with one another, in the light, according to the relationship in which God has set us as His own children.

Now there is one more question before we close. How far are we living and walking in the power of this truth? This is the practical side for everyone who has been brought to God. Thus truth is the standard God has given us. Do we want a lower standard? Do we want something now that we shall not have in the joy and brightness and eternal blessedness of the Father's house? It only shows how little our souls have drunk in the truth. How the truth lays our hearts bare! If we brought our motives, our desires, our ways, our walk, into the presence of God, to measure and weigh all in the light, should we not be on our faces in confession before Him who "is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"? (1 John 1:9) Nor could He fail us, cleansing as well as forgiving; not only giving us a standing in the light in virtue of the blood of Jesus, but cleansing our ways by His purifying Word, according to the place we are in — cleansing from "all unrighteousness" as well as from "all sin." May His Word even now search our hearts and lead us to the judgment of all that will not bear the test of the light.

An Aged Apostle's Message, Aged Apostle's Message, An: Young Men (2:13)

We have already seen that the fathers are characterized by having "known Him that is from the beginning." Here (1 John 2:13) we learn that the young men are characterized by having "overcome the wicked one." In his second address to the young men he mentions the secret of their strength, and warns them against the world. Loving the world and loving the Father are incompatible. All the elements which make the world what it is have their source in the world, not in the Father. Then the world and its lust pass away, while he that does the will of God abides forever.

Let us notice these different points:

The young men have overcome the wicked one. The strength of divine life is in them, and they have been crowned with victory in the conflicts they have sustained with the enemy. It is not that all conflict is ended and all danger past, but they have realized, in conflict, a

power which is superior to that of the enemy. If they have a powerful foe, they know and possess a power greater than his which they can use and put the enemy to flight. They are characterized by the remarkable fact that they "have overcome the wicked one." Satan, who rules the darkness of the world and who is the great enemy of God's people, cannot stand before these young men. This is a wondrous fact that may well fill us with holy boldness and courage in meeting this relentless and untiring foe.

The divine life, directed by the Word of God, is the secret of strength in the young men. "Ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one." In Ephesians 6, where it is a question of conflict with spiritual powers of wickedness, the Apostle says, "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might." This is the source of all strength for conflict. In ourselves we have no strength, but in Him we are strong. Christ is the believer's life, and this is directed in the believer by the Word of God. Against this, Satan has no power. When Satan meets Christ in the believer, he meets One who has already vanquished him, and destroyed his power. In death (expression of utter weakness) Christ destroyed him who had the power of death, so that the weakness of Christ is stronger than the power of Satan. Satan did his worst against Christ at the cross, but Christ rose from the dead in the power of a life that Satan could not touch. Resurrection proclaimed complete, eternal victory for Christ. Satan well knows that he is a vanquished foe and that, at the appointed time, Christ will cast him into the lake of fire. If we meet Satan, therefore, in the power of Christ, he immediately flees. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." James 4:7.

It is not only that Christ has personally gained the victory over Satan, but that He did this for our deliverance. He took part in flesh and blood, "that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them, who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Heb. 2:14, 15. In the death of Christ all that Satan could use to terrify the conscience, as well as all that could bring down the judgment of God, was swept away, and thus the believer is emancipated from the condition of bondage and fear into which he had been plunged by sin and the power of Satan.

But this is not all. The believer is made a partaker of divine life. He possesses the very life in which Christ's victory over Satan was displayed—life in resurrection—life as Christ imparted it to His disciples when He breathed on them after His resurrection—life in the Spirit. Christ was made alive in the Spirit (1 Pet. 3:18); the believer lives in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25); and he has "the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," as a delivering power (Rom. 8:2). It is life in Christ, of which the Holy Ghost is the spring and power, in the believer. Satan cannot touch this life. "He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." 1 John 5:18.

In this divine life lies the secret of the young men's strength. They have the energy of Christ in them, and the Word of God abiding in them. These direct the divine life according to all that He is as an object filling the heart and governing its desires. The Word of God expresses what that life is in all its varied characteristics, and if the Word abides in us, it forms the heart by filling it with Christ as an object, reproducing His life in us. Paul could say, "For to me to live is Christ." And if this is what Satan finds in us, what can he do? He is in the presence of One who has already conquered him, and he can only flee.

How blessed then to "abide in Him," as the Apostle exhorts in verse 28, and to have God's Word abiding in us, as in verse 14, so that we always may be able to overcome the wicked one. The power of Satan has been broken in the cross, but he has many wiles, and these we need to withstand. "We are not ignorant of his devices," as the Apostle said to the Corinthians, and we need to watch lest he "get an advantage" (2 Cor. 2:11). Our safety lies in having God's Word abiding in us. It is this that forms the heart, according to Christ, and directs the movements of the divine life in the soul. It becomes also the sword of the Spirit to the Christian warrior, and enables him to repel every assault of the wicked one. The Word is the Word of God's grace, which is able to build us up, and to give us an inheritance among all them which are sanctified (Acts 20:32), and it is also the sword of the Spirit. May we prize it, both for what it gives us and for that against which it preserves us.

An Aged Apostle's Message, Aged Apostle's Message, An: Christian (2:15)

3. We now have a warning against the world. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." 1 John 2:15. This is indeed a solemn word for any Christian whose heart is set upon anything in this world. Love of the world and love of the Father do not go together. They are opposed to each other in every way. The world has murdered God's Son, and this has revealed its state of utter enmity against God. God has indeed raised Him up from the dead, and crowned Him with glory and honor at His own right hand. The Holy Ghost has come down to witness to the fact of His resurrection and of His exaltation to be a Prince and a Savior and to give repentance and remission of sins. The world, however, still rejects Him. Christ is not of the world. "The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" are of the world, but Christ is of the Father, and the world has hated Him, and cast Him out.

We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that our blessed Lord Jesus is rejected in the world. Go where you will—into the busy throng, society, fashionable circles, even among the mass of professing Christians—and talk of Christ or His things, and there is no relish for it, no response in people's hearts. They turn away, or their mouths are closed. Many a professing Christian is dumb the moment Christ's name is mentioned. And in many instances conversation on the topic will not be tolerated, while the most insignificant bit of neighborhood-gossip will be borne or even relished. Anything and everything but Christ! The very name—the thought of Him even—is distasteful.

And not only is there no heart to receive Christ, but there is positive enmity against Him. By the verdict of this world Jesus was delivered up to die, and was nailed as a malefactor to the cross. People may say now that the Jews and Pilate did that, and may thus seek to clear themselves of all responsibility. But Pilate was the representative of the world power at Jerusalem when he delivered Jesus up to die, and thus involved the world in the guilt of that terrible deed. Has the world ever repented of this awful sin? Let its own course answer. A message from heaven has been calling to repentance, but the world has not repented. For more than nineteen hundred years God has been, as it were, beseeching men to be reconciled, but the world remains still in enmity. Through grace, individuals have repented and have been reconciled to God. The world, though, "like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely," has no ear to hear, and continues in its course, ruled by "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

The world is guilty of the blood of Jesus, and yet goes on amusing itself as if nothing has happened. The hum of business, the cares of life, the sound of the harp and the organ, the theater, the concert, the ball, and the ten thousand varieties of amusement, worldly pleasures, and worldly follies, are used of Satan to ensnare his victims, and drown the cry of guilt in the conscience until death carries them away, or judgment closes over the scene.

Beloved brethren, are we practically outside of all this? Have we found God's Christ in glory an object that so fills and satisfies the heart, that for us the world has lost all its charms? Where are our hearts? Where are our affections? Are they with Christ in glory? or with the world that crucified Him?

But perhaps some reader of these lines is saying to himself, "It is impossible that this world which has rejected and slain my blessed Lord should draw my heart away from Him who loved me and gave Himself for me." But this is the very danger to which the young men are exposed. It is this that they are warned against, and if there had been no danger there would have been no warning. There is that in us which answers to the world, and nothing but the Word of God abiding in us, and keeping us in communion with Christ, can preserve us from its allurements. The Apostle Paul had to record of one who had labored with him, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world." 2 Tim. 4:10. Sorrowful words! "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 1 Cor. 10:12. An apostle's presence was not enough to keep Demas. Our strength is only in Christ. If we abide in Him, and His Word abide in us, we shall be kept securely. Otherwise our hearts will be drawn away, and we shall find our affections entangled in a world that is far from God. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity" is written upon all that is under the sun, and all is estranged from God. The fathers have learned this experimentally, but the young men still have it to learn; and unless they abide in their stronghold, having the sword in readiness, they will surely be overcome by the wiles of the devil.

4. "The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." 1 John 2:17. The judgment of God is coming upon this world, both as a system that has fallen under the power of Satan, and as a physical world that has been ruined by the presence of sin. "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." Luke 17:26-30. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but these words of the Lord Jesus shall not pass away. The world may go on with its business, its pleasures, its follies and its sins, forgetting its guilt in murdering God's Son, but God has not forgotten. Cain went out from the presence of the Lord with a hard heart, guilty of his brother's blood which cried from the ground, and sought to make himself happy in a world far from God. Hundreds of years rolled on, and the descendants of Cain multiplied on the earth. A city was built, the sound of the hammer was heard on brass and iron, and the harp and the organ made mirth for those whose hearts knew not God. Thus the world moved on its course, and perhaps Abel and his blood were quite forgotten, but the flood came and swept them all away.

The blood of Christ indeed speaks better things than the blood of Abel. It cries from the throne and speaks pardon and peace to every repentant sinner. The redeemed in glory, the gathering of Israel, and the blessing of the nations in a future day, all witness that the blood of Christ speaks better things than the blood of Abel. But the rejection of that Savior, and the shedding of that blood, have crowned the world's guilt, and He who once came in grace will come again in judgment. "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power." 2 Thess. 1:7-9. This is terrible indeed to think of, but it will come as surely as the flood came in the days of Noah. It is the state of the world in its enmity against God that will bring down this judgment. O beloved brethren, have we learned the true character of this world? Have we seen it in the light of the cross as the scene of Satan's power, and characterized by relentless enmity against the Son of God? Are our hearts far away from this scene of evil over which God's judgment is about to sweep as a flame of fire? "Remember Lot's wife." She was outside of Sodom, but her heart was in the doomed scene, and she looked back, and became a monument of God's judgment. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

Peter goes further and tells us not only of the judgment of the wicked, but of the dissolution of the heavens and the earth as well. The old world perished by water in the days of Noah. "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.... But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." 2 Pet. 3:7,10.

Thus, reader, we have God's estimate of the world, and His judgment of it. It is morally corrupt and guilty of the blood of God's well-beloved Son, and it is doomed to judgment. However bright its allurements, however attractive its charms, and however great its promises of good, Satan is behind it all with his enchantments, to charm and to seduce his victims and make them slaves to his power. "The whole world lies in the wicked one." 1 John 5:19 (J.N.D. Trans.). May the Lord keep us from listening to the voice of the charmer. May we so cleave to Christ that Satan can have no power against us. This is our only safety. If the heart is full of Christ, and God's Word abides in us, forming the heart and governing all its movements, Satan with all his allurements through the world will be driven back. Thus it was with Christ. Satan found nothing in Him but the Word of God. It was the sword of the Spirit. Three times over he was made to feel the edge of that trusty blade, "It is written," "It is written," "It is written," and his enchantments had no power. Alas! too often he finds something else in us - "the lust of the flesh," "the lust of the eyes," or "the pride of life," and then we fall a prey to his seductions, and have to learn by bitter experience what the world is, and the folly of giving it a place in our hearts and affections.

May we be kept with the Word of God abiding in us - the Word by which we were born again, and by which we do the will of God. "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

The Christian Shepherd: 2003, Communion and Advocacy (2:1)

“If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

The Lord Jesus would have His own linked up with Himself... to have communion with Himself and the Father outside the world, which was the scene of His rejection and death.

But to have part with Him communion with Him according to that heavenly relationship, it was necessary that the individual's walk be kept pure (feet washed).

Thus the Lord Jesus has girded Himself for this lowly service of love to His own in order to keep them in communion with that heavenly scene where He is (see John 13:1-14). He seeks to form our affections according to the revelation of Himself to our hearts as we are being conducted on our way to our portion with Him in glory.

Do we fall into sin? Do our feet become defiled in our walk through this evil world? Well, we have an Advocate with the Father whose plea for us cannot fail—One who also turns to us in blessed grace with towel and basin to wash our feet and bring us back into the communion we have lost.

By application of His Word to us, we are led to self-judgment and a walk of holy separation from evil, and this according to the truth of the cross in which sin in the flesh has been condemned.

If we have sinned and the Lord is seeking to wash our defiled feet, or if our brethren are seeking to do so in the Lord's name, how solemn if we are resisting this action of grace! God is not mocked! He is full of patience, but if we are rebellious, He knows how to chastise and break our stubborn wills.

Selected Ministry of A. H. Rule, Vol. 1 (adapted)

Things New and Old: Volume 29, Advocate With the Father, An (2:1)

Blessed indeed it is to see how rich and full is God's provision for our need. There isn't a single need that can possibly arise in the history of God's people, that He has not foreseen, and made provision for. And it is well if our hearts, have drunk in this blessed fact, for it will help to give us confidence in God, and enable us to go to Him in every time of need.

In John, we have the manifestation of eternal life in the Person of Jesus; and as partakers of this life we are in relationship with God, and have communion with the Father and the Son. But this communion may be broken through sin. The relationship cannot be destroyed, but communion is interrupted. Now the same grace that brought us into this relationship with God, restores communion also when it has been lost through sin. “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father.” This is God's gracious provision for His own children when they have lost communion through falling into sin.

Before we look at this point, let us notice a little the fact, that God's word makes no provision for a believer to sin. John says, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.” He does not say, “that ye may sin,” but “that ye sin not.” In the first chapter he says, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us;” and “If we say that we have not sinned we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” So then, we have sin, and we have sinned. Yet, true as this is, God, has brought us to Himself in grace, where we walk in the light, as He is in the light. But what is the ground of this? How could God, consistently with His own nature and character, give us such a place? The simple, soul-satisfying answer is, “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Blessed and sure foundation for our souls to rest upon! “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” How wonderful is God's grace abounding over all our guilt and shame! And the greater the sin, the brighter shines the grace that abounds over it. But “shall we sin that grace may abound? God forbid.” “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not.” It is all to deliver us from sin, not that we may go on in it. God is not only “faithful and just to forgive us our sins,” but also “to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” In virtue of Jesus' blood we are pardoned once and forever; but we are also morally cleansed through the word applied in the power of the Holy Ghost. A new nature is given, and as this is regulated by the word, we are cleansed from all unrighteousness. May we then lay to heart, that the whole work of grace is to deliver from sin—from its guilt, and from its power and defilement. “These things write I unto you that ye sin not.”

But the soul-humbling fact remains, that the believer, though a child of God, and walking in the light, does fall into sin; as James says, “many things we all offend;” and as John here says, “If any man sin.” We still have the flesh in us, and if allowed in the least degree, it is sin, and communion is broken. God has condemned in the flesh on the cross, and if we are allowing what He has condemned in the sacrifice of His Son, He cannot have communion with us.

Now God has made provision for the restoration of this communion when it has been lost. If any man sin we have an advocate with the Father.” God provided a Savior for us as lost sinners, and He has provided an Advocate for us as failing children. And thus His provision is complete. It covers the whole range of our need from first to last. Jesus died for us to save us, and now He lives for us on high, a High Priest with God, an Advocate with the Father; and He maintains our cause, according to the value of an already accomplished and eternal redemption, founded on the shedding of His own blood.

There is a difference, no doubt, between His intercession as in Hebrews, and His advocacy as in John. But all is founded on the value of His sacrifice for us. In Hebrews His intercession is of our weakness. Here His advocacy is view of sin which has interrupted communion. Both are needed. We are weak, and can no more take a single step in the wilderness journey in our own strength, than we could have saved ourselves when in our sins. It was as much the power of God that conducted Israel across the wilderness, as it was His power that saved them out of Egypt. And so it is with us. It is God's salvation, and God's power from first to last. We are “kept by the power of God, through faith, unto

salvation ready to be revealed in the last time;" and because we have a High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, having been tempted in all points like as we are, except sin, we can "come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (1 Pet. 1-5; Heb. 4:15-16.)

But in John it is not merely a question of weakness. It is if "any man sin." And here "we have an Advocate with the Father." It is with the Father. Mark, though we may have sinned, the relationship is not broken, God is our Father still. The relationship abides, but communion is interrupted, and needs to be restored. And this is brought about through the advocacy of Christ, who has undertaken our whole cause. We have this Advocate. It is God's provision, and nothing can possibly hinder His services for us in this capacity. It is an unconditional service characterized by pure grace. It is no movement on our part that secures it. It is not, if we repent, or if we confess our sins, but "if any man sin, we have an Advocate." It is all grace. The whole movement begins with Him, just as when He saved us in the first place. As surely as sin has interrupted our communion with God our Father, so surely the advocacy of Jesus goes on to bring about its restoration. And this is what makes the restoration certain, sooner or later. If left to ourselves we could never get right. But all begins with Him, and His work cannot fail, blessed be His name! Repentance and confession have their place, but these are the results of His advocacy, not the cause; and the difference is very great. But we will look at this a little more fully, that our souls may get the full benefit of it!

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

Selected Ministry of A. H. Rule Volume 1, Aged Apostle's Message to His Children, An (2:12)

In the first chapter of his first epistle, the Apostle John presents to us the Word of life — the eternal Word — the eternal Son of the Father — in whom eternal life subsisted, and in whom, as a man, it was manifested in time down here in this world; and all this that we might have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Then there is a message declaring God's inflexible holiness — light admitting no degree of darkness — speaking at the same time of the blood that cleanseth from all sin, and gives fitness to be in the light of that holy presence.

In the opening of the next chapter we have, in the Advocate with the Father, the divine provision for failure in the walk of those who have been brought into the light, and the means of restoration to communion when it has been broken by sin. Then follow the great characteristic traits of the divine life in man — obedience and love. These were perfectly displayed in Christ; and Christ having become our life, these are the tests of reality in us.

Having established these fundamental principles, the aged Apostle goes on to address his children, first all together, and then in three classes — "fathers," "young men," and "babes." There is that which was common to all; and then there is that which was peculiar to each of these three classes, all presented in beautiful order.

We will first look at that which was common to all. This was forgiveness of sins. He writes to them all as having been forgiven. In doing so, he calls them "children." The word "little" is not in the original. When he divides them into three classes, "fathers," "young men," and "little children," the last is a different word, which does mean "little children" or "babes." But in the first instance it is simply "children," and the term includes all that the Apostle addresses in the epistle, the same as in verse 1 and in verse 28 of the same chapter. "I write unto you,... children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake." He does not write to them in order that they might receive forgiveness, but because they had already received it. He wrote to them as those whom God had forgiven for the name's sake of His beloved Son.

He had already written that which would test the reality of those who bore the name of Christ, and which would distinguish between the true and the false. But this was not intended in any wise to shake the confidence of any who had really been born into the family of God. Those who, without reality, and in carelessness of heart, had taken a place among the children of God, might well tremble at what the Apostle had written, and which necessarily condemned them, as when he says, "God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (1 John 1:5-6). "He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him." (1 John 2:4). "He that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes" (1 John 2:11).

These were the solemn and heart-searching words before which the careless, or the hypocrite, or the false teachers, might well pause, and consider their bearings, and learn in the truth whether their profession was real, or whether they were blindly drifting on in darkness, soon to be plunged into the dark abyss of eternal woe. But solemn as are the warnings given to such in God's Word, they are never intended to shake, or disturb in any degree, the peace of those who have believed on the Lord Jesus, and who are seeking with purpose of heart to serve and follow Him. On the contrary, this aged Apostle and father seeks to assure his children in the most happy way, by telling them that he writes to them for the very reason that their sins had been forgiven them for Jesus' name's sake. Not a cloud would he throw over the mind of the youngest or the feeblest in all the family of God. He would have all in the full blessed consciousness, and unclouded assurance, that they were in the light, and without a spot upon them — the youngest babe as much as the most aged father, or the most holy apostle, washed and made whiter than snow in "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son," which "cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

And blessed it is to our poor hearts to know that the knowledge of forgiveness is not something to be attained only when the Christian course has been nearly run — perhaps only on a deathbed or, it may be, not till the poor storm-tossed soul stands before the great white throne, overwhelmed with terror, and crushed with dark uncertainty, while it awaits the sentence which is to fix its eternal destiny. No, dear reader, forgiveness of sins meets us at the very threshold of Christianity; and the assurance of it greets our souls the moment we believe the gospel of our salvation. Christ is the meeting point between our souls and God. But it is a Christ who died, who was buried, who was raised again; and the moment we meet God in Him, we find Him a Christ who has borne our sins, having been delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification. Thus all is settled between our souls and God, and "we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Rom. 4:24-25;5:1.)

Christian attainments there surely are, but forgiveness of sins is not one of them; for if I have not forgiveness of sins I am not a Christian at all. My sins are still between my soul and God, and exclude me from His holy presence, leaving me under judgment and exposed to eternal wrath. Forgiveness cannot, therefore, be a Christian attainment at all. I know there may be such a thing as being forgiven, and not knowing it; but this is not a normal condition of soul. It is a result, either of wrong teaching, or of inadequate apprehension of the truth. The very gospel that announces salvation to the lost, and forgiveness to the guilty, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, gives also, in the most assuring terms, the knowledge of forgiveness to all who believe it. "Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man [Christ Jesus] is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: and by Him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses" (Acts 13:38-39).

In such terms as these the blessed gospel of God's grace speaks to the poor sinner, and such assurance it gives to the one who believes it. It speaks unconditional and eternal pardon to him who, falling down before God as helpless and guilty and lost, believes in Jesus; and it assures such a one that his sins are blotted out forever, and his guilt canceled by the atoning blood of the cross, never to be brought to light again. "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more," (Heb. 10:17) is the conscience-purging word of the blessed God who pardons through faith in Jesus' blood. And the words John writes to his children are in happy confirmation of this blessed truth. "I write unto you,... children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake" (1 John 2:12). Happy children! Their sins may have been many, yea, more than the hairs of their heads, and they may be conscious that they are poor, feeble, failing creatures still; and Satan may thunder in their consciences, and seek to accuse and condemn, but the word of Him who cannot lie sustains their souls in unclouded peace. "Your sins are forgiven you."

And it is "for His name's sake." Were it for anything in us, we might well question, and doubt, and fear. But if it is "for His name's sake," who in heaven or earth or hell can challenge our title? God has owned that blessed Savior, and exalted His name above all. He has given Him a name that is above every name. Before that name all thrones and dominions must yield subjection, and every knee — all angels, all men, all demons — must bow. It is THE NAME OF JESUS. It is the name of Him who suffered on the cross, whose blood was shed for the putting away of sin, who by His atoning sacrifice has infinitely glorified God, and who has vanquished forever the adversary of our souls. "For His name's sake." God forgives.

Dear reader, have you believed God's testimony to that wonderful name? Have you believed in the name of Jesus? Then listen to that dear old Apostle that knew Him so well, and the cleansing power of His precious blood, and hear him addressing you among the children to whom he writes these words: "I write unto you,... children, because your sins ARE forgiven you FOR HIS NAME'S SAKE" (1 John 2:12).

Selected Ministry of A. H. Rule Volume 1, Fathers, The (2:13)

"babes," or "little children." The "fathers" are those who have grown old in the truth. The "babes" are those newly born into the family of God. The "young men" are a class between, who have the strength of manhood, being no longer children, tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine; nor yet having reached that experimental knowledge by which they have learned the utter vanity of everything apart from Christ. The "fathers," on the contrary, have had full experience and, like Solomon, have written "vanity" on all that is under the sun. They have learned to know Christ as their only and enduring portion. "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning" (1 John 2:13).

It will be noticed that the Apostle addresses each class separately — the "fathers," then the "young men," then the "babes." In verse 13 all three classes are addressed. Then in verse 14 the "fathers" and "young men" are addressed the second time, and in verse 18, the "babes," the message running on to the close of verse 27.

We will now look more particularly at the message to the "fathers." We have already quoted from verse 13, where they are addressed the first time. When they are addressed the second time, in verse 14, the message is the same; and there is nothing added. It is simply, "I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning." And this is most beautiful, and instructive. There was nothing to warn them against, and there was nothing new or further to set before them — nothing which they did not already have. They had Christ — "Him that is from the beginning" — and that was enough. There was nothing to go back to — nothing to go forward to. To go back would be to return to the world which they had found to be only vanity. There would be no gain in that. And they could not go forward to anything beyond without giving up Christ and Christianity, and there would be no gain in that. Christ was their all. They knew Him as the sum of all their blessing, their enduring, their eternal portion. This is what characterized the fathers in Christ.

I have said there was nothing to warn them against. They were acquainted with the flesh and its ways, with the world and its attractions, and had judged both as worthless and evil. It was not something merely that they had been taught; they had learned it experimentally. In their own experience they had proved what the flesh is in its utter insubordination to God, and had learned that God's judgment of it in the cross and death of Christ was the only remedy for it. It was a judgment which was according to truth and holiness, a judicial ending before God of what was in a state of fixed and eternal enmity against His nature, and incapable of being subject to His holy law (Rom. 8:7). They had learned the truth of this judgment, and had bowed to it experimentally in their own souls. It was not something they needed to learn now, even in experience. They knew it in such a way as not to need any warning against it.

So also it was as to the world which is in enmity against God as well as the flesh, and which also has been morally judged in the cross. To the fathers the world was but the scene in which the flesh flourishes that to which the flesh in its nature and desires fully answers, and which furnishes the food on which the flesh subsists. Moreover, the world had cast out and crucified God's well beloved Son, and thus its whole status and condition was laid bare. The fathers had learned its true character. They knew it as an evil system estranged from God, and governed by Satan's will and power. Whatever might be its pretension, whatever its glitter and show, whatever its allurements and enticing temptations, to the fathers it was all a vain show, a scene of gilded sin and wickedness which could not endure in its midst the presence of the holy and blessed Son of God. And besides, there was nothing in it that could satisfy the soul or give real joy and happiness. To them it was practically a judged scene in which they had neither part nor lot. Through the death and resurrection of Christ, they had been delivered from it; and in their practical life and spiritual mode of existence, they were outside of it, and had no desire to return to it. Happy deliverance!

But all this experience had been gone through in connection with the truth of Christ. Apart from Christ these things could not be learned. And the result of the experience was that Christ was known as the only worthy object of the heart. All else proved to be but vanity. When all else failed, Christ remained the same, the faithful, unchanging One, "the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8), the One who will remain the same throughout eternity, filling and satisfying the soul, when experience has become a thing only of the past, and when flesh and the world are no more.

This blessed Christ the fathers know. They have proved Him as the One in whom they can always trust. In all their varied experiences and trials, they have found Him faithful. In every time of need He has proved the succorer of their souls. He has been their joy in sorrow, their strength in weakness, their stay in adversity, their unfailing resource at all times. And He is the eternal Sun of their souls, the chiefest among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely, their all in all for time and eternity. They have followed Him, they have served Him, they have walked with Him, they have communed with Him, and they know Him, not merely by report, but by intimate and personal acquaintance. Blessed knowledge! It is what we shall have in eternity. Only then it will be in glory, and in a fullness far transcending aught that is known in the poor earthly tabernacle here. But the same thing is known in the soul now that will be known then, though the soul be fettered and held within bounds and limits. Now we see through a glass darkly, then face to face. Now we know in part, then we shall know as we are known. There will be no fetters, no bonds then — nothing to hinder or cloud the glorified vision. Christ will be known then in all the brightness and blessedness it is possible to communicate to His glorified people.

Yet even now, though it be not in the same brightness or fullness, because of the body in which we still groan, through all our varied experiences Christ reveals Himself to our souls in a most blessed way, and we learn to know Him as friends know friends — not merely as the One who has saved us from wrath and judgment, but as the One who is ever with us, bearing us on His heart, sustaining, comforting, blessing, and drawing our hearts and affections out to His own blessed Person. The fullness of His grace meeting all our need by the way is realized; the varied beauties and glories and perfection of His Person and character are discovered; and His unchanging and eternal love fills the heart and satisfies the affections He Himself has awakened. Blessed, glorious Christ! infinite delight of the Father! eternal brightness of God's glory! light and joy and center of courts above! Object worthy of eternal homage and praise! may we learn to know Him more and more. May we so learn to know Him that before the brightness of His presence every other object may fade away, leaving Himself the alone object of our hearts, our all-sufficient, our present and eternal portion.

Selected Ministry of A. H. Rule Volume 1, Babes, The (2:13,18)

The babes know the Father. They may not, like the fathers, have learned the vanity of this world, and that Christ is everything; and they may not, like the young men, have known conflict with the wicked one; but they have known the Father.

We have already seen that the babes, in common with all Christians, have forgiveness of sins. But there is more than this; they are also in the enjoyment of a present and known relationship. They are children of God, and have the spirit of adoption in their hearts, crying, Abba, Father.

This is no matter of attainment. It is not something gained after years of Christian experience. It is the very starting point of Christianity. The youngest babe in Christ has the forgiveness of sins, possesses the Holy Spirit, and knows the Father. Without these no one has entered upon the ground of Christianity. Christianity is characterized by this great fact: redemption has been accomplished through the death and resurrection of Christ, who has gone to the Father, and sent down the Holy Spirit to take His place in and with believers, and to set them consciously in the position and relationship of a glorified Christ on high. These babes are in this position and in these relationships. They are in Christ, and His relationships are theirs, and they have the Holy Spirit as the power of it all, and as the divine source of all spiritual intelligence. In all this there is no difference between a babe and a father. They all have the same position and the same relationships in Christ. And this, surely, is most blessed.

Now we have seen that the great danger to which the young men are exposed is to be found in the allurements of the world. As yet this is not the special danger of the babes. One who has just been delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's Son, cares little for the world. The children of Israel, standing on the shores of the Red Sea which they had just crossed, and where they had seen their enemies engulfed in death under the judgment of Jehovah, would not have been easily persuaded to return to the land of bondage where they had groaned in "anguish of spirit" under the lash of the taskmaster. The rest they now enjoyed was too fresh and sweet for that. But after they had in a measure forgotten the rigors and hardships of that cruel bondage, and grown weary of the wilderness journey, and loathed the bread of heaven, then they lusted after the melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic of Egypt, and were ready to turn back.

So it is now. One who has groaned under Satan's taskmasters, making bricks without straw, when set free from this bondage by the power of God, enjoys the sweetness of liberty too well to return at once to the world. While the heart overflows with praise to God, singing, "The LORD,... hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea. The LORD is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation" (Ex. 15:1-2). the world has no charms. Its cruel bondage is remembered, and the sweetness of freedom is enjoyed, and the heart turns away from the world to find its satisfaction in the deliverer, looking on to a habitation with Him. "He is my God, and I will prepare Him an habitation" (Ex. 15:2.)

But the babes have their special danger as well as the young men. One thing that marks a babe is the readiness with which it receives everything that people say. So with a babe in Christ as to spiritual things. They are simple and artless in their reception of truth, and eager to increase in knowledge; and the enemy lays hold of this very thing as an occasion to seduce them, and lead them away from Christ.

Their great danger lies in their being seduced by false teachers. Satan seduces the young men through the world, and the babes through antichrists.

The Apostle affectionately warns these simple babes of their danger. "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (1 John 2:18).

The antichrist is coming. He will come according to the unbelief of the Jews, denying that Jesus was the Christ, and so will come in his own name, not in the name of the Father, as Jesus said to the Jews: "I am come in My Father's name, and ye receive Me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive" (John 5:43). When he comes, it will not be at the first as denying that there is a Christ, but as claiming to be the Christ Himself, until he has seduced his victims; and then the mask will be thrown off, and he will deny the Father and the Son. This is the true mark of the antichrist. He will be a liar from the first, because he will deny that Jesus is the Christ, as the Apostle says, "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?" (1 John 2:22). Afterward he will deny both the Father and the Son, as the Apostle again says, "He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." This gives his full character when all is unmasked. He will come also with terrible satanic power, by which he will darken men's souls, and lead them into open apostasy and rebellion against God. He will exalt himself above all that is called God or is worshiped, and sit in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God. He will get his power from the dragon, so that his coming will be "after the working of Satan," and this "with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish." He will make fire come down from heaven in the sight of men to deceive them; and he will make an image to the beast (the imperial head of the ten kingdom confederacy and raised up by the power of Satan), and to this image he will give breath so that it should speak, and cause the death of all who refuse to do it homage. Thus he will delude men, and lead them to believe that he is God, with power to create, and work miracles. But the wonders he performs are "lying wonders," by which he will seduce the mass of the Jews and apostate Christendom after the true saints have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Men receive not the love of the truth that they may be saved; and for this reason God will send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie, and that all may be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness (2 Thess. 2; Rev. 13). All this display of satanic power, and malignant hatred and opposition to God, will take place in the closing days of what the Apostle calls "the last time."

Now the little children had heard that antichrist was coming; but the Apostle would have them understand that they were exposed to danger of a similar nature — a seducing power of Satan leading men into apostasy. "Even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (1 John 2:18). The presence of these proved that it was already "the last time." Failure had come into Christianity. Seducing spirits were leading men into apostasy. This would culminate at the end in the great apostasy under the man of sin, which will bring down the judgment of God on apostate Jews and on apostate Christendom. Thus we may recognize the last time. Antichrists had gone out from among Christians. They were not true Christians, and never had been, else they would have remained. Their going out manifested their true character. They were apostates, enemies, and liars, because they denied that Jesus was the Christ. This is the spirit of antichrist, and so the Apostle calls them "antichrists." They might not deny openly the Father, but they denied the Son, and "Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father." They were seducers of the people of God, as all false teachers are.

But the babes in Christ are not without resource in the presence of these false teachers. Their going out from among Christians might tend to shake the faith of the babes, and their subtle arguments might seem difficult to answer, but the babes have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things. They know the truth, and that no lie is of the truth. The anointing which they have received abides in them, and they need not that any man teach them. They have that in them by which they are able to discern the truth, and reject all that is opposed to it. It is not that they do not need teaching, for the Apostle is very carefully teaching them in this very scripture. But they do not need man's teaching. The Holy Spirit teaches them, and fortifies them against false doctrine. God may use an instrument, but the teaching must be divine. There is the action of the Holy Spirit, both in the instrument and in the one who is taught. "The same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie." It is by the Holy Spirit that the teaching is given and received. He is in the babes, and is truth, and is no lie; thus the babes can discern the truth, and detect what is false. Weak though they may be, the Holy Spirit is able to keep them from the seductions of the enemy. But this connects itself with another most important principle; namely, that of cleaving to the truth we have already received — the truth in which the Person of Christ has been revealed to our souls.

"Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father" (1 John 2:24).

We have received Christ the Son of God in receiving the truth, for He is the truth and He is that which was from the beginning. If this abides in us, we abide in the Son and in the Father. There is living and abiding dependence on Christ — cleaving to Him as our life, and as the sum of all truth and of all blessing. The Holy Spirit — the anointing — is the power of all this, connecting Himself with the truth in our souls, and at once challenging every lie that seeks entrance. This then is the security of the babes against false teaching. We are to cleave to Christ, and give heed to the teaching of the Holy Spirit, who connects Himself with the truth in us, and resists all that is not of the truth, who "is truth, and is no lie" (1 John 2:27). By Him we know the truth, and that no lie is of the truth.

The Lord keep us, beloved brethren, in these last and closing days, when error in every form is stalking abroad like a noisome pestilence, before which many fall as victims. May we be content with the truth, and the truth alone. All that is not of the truth is a lie, and of Satan, the enemy of all truth. If we have the truth, we have Christ, the Son, and in Him the Father; and we have the Holy Spirit as the power of it in our souls. What would we have more? Is not this enough until we reach the glory itself? Even there Christ will be all.

Selected Ministry of A. H. Rule Volume 1, Behold, What Manner of Love (3:1)

Beautiful indeed it is to hear these words from one who had known that love so long and so well!

The Apostle had just said, "If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him" (1 John 2:29). "Born of Him," "born of God"! What a thought! It is this that causes the Apostle to exclaim, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons [children] of God" (1 John 3:1). It gives us a character and relationship of which the world knows nothing. He who was the Son of God, the only begotten, and in whom, as Man, the character and relationship were displayed before the eyes of men, was not known. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto

His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:10-11). "Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not" (1 John 3:1).

We have Christ's relationship with the Father, and we have His place as unknown here on earth. We suffer with Him here; we shall be glorified with Him there. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (Rom. 8:16-17). While here it is suffering with Christ in a scene where sin has sway, and where everything has been alienated from God — man at enmity with God and under the dominion of sin, while the creation groans and waits for deliverance — being children of God, we wait for the children's place, our predestined place in glory. Then we shall have the children's portion when the inheritance is given to the First-born, and the creature, delivered from its groaning, shall be brought into the liberty of the glory of the children of God.

As His coheirs we shall then possess the inheritance with Him, and reign with Him, having also been glorified with Him. We can well afford then to be unknown here in a world that knew Him not. It will not always be so. But we need confidence in God, and patience to wait till the Lord comes. "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry" (Heb. 10:35-37). Blessed it is to look forward to His coming, but we must with patience wait for it; and while we wait we must be content to be as unknown in the world.

Now while we wait for Him, and to be in the condition in which He is in glory, we have a present and known relationship with the Father. "Beloved, now are we the sons [children] of God" (1 John 3:2). We do not wait for this. We are born of God now, and we are children and heirs of God now. It is a present relationship which we know by the Word of God, and of which we have the consciousness by His Spirit in us. And what a relationship! How vastly more blessed than anything known to this poor world, with all its boasted wealth and intelligence! It is a great thing in this world to be the child of a king, and greater still to be heir apparent to the throne; but what is this compared to being children of God, heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ, soon to reign as kings with the King of kings and Lord of lords? Yet this, dear reader, is the dignity and glory of the humblest and poorest believer in Christ. How this ought to lift the heart above all the empty glory of this world where Christ was a weary, homeless stranger, not having where to lay His head!

Nor is this all. In the relationship we have with the Father through Christ, we are the objects of His love — love immeasurable, boundless, eternal. He spared not His Son, but gave Him up for us all. And who can measure what was involved in that giving? Let the cross answer. Let its horror of darkness and the unfathomable sorrows of that hour when the Son of God was forsaken, utter their voice, and declare what it cost to redeem us and make us children of God. Oh, it was a wonderful price! But the price has been paid, and we are redeemed and now have the same place in the Father's love as Christ Himself. The day of glory will manifest this even to the world, according to John 17:22-23: "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me." This is an ocean of love into which we are introduced — an eternal fullness into which we drink even now.

And what will it be when the fullness is known in glory? "It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." 1 John 3:2. What a prospect! Now children of God; then not only children, but fashioned into the likeness of the glorified First-born! This "we know," though it is not yet a matter of public manifestation. But we shall see Him as He is. It is a wonderful thought. It is not the glory in which He will be displayed as the coming Messiah. We shall see Him, and shall be with Him in His Messianic glory, as it is said, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory" (Col. 3:4). His glory as Messiah and as Son of man will be publicly displayed before the world, and all shall see it; but this is not what is meant when it is said, "We shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). We shall see Him as He is now in the glory of His Father's presence. This is the expressed desire of the blessed Lord Himself: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24). Here is One loved before the foundation of the world, Object of the Father's unchanging, ineffable delight, who moreover, having glorified God as Man here on earth, has been glorified of God as Man on high, with the glory He had with the Father before the world was. He is now in the highest glory, supreme in the affections of the Father, the light and joy and glory of courts above; and this is the One we shall see as He is. Oh, what a sight will that be! How it will thrill our souls! What rapturous praise our overflowing hearts will utter when we behold that once crucified, but now glorified, Savior.

But how could these mortal eyes behold Him as He is? It could not be. The glory is of too dazzling brightness. But we shall be like Him; we shall be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the last trump (1 Cor. 15), and mortality will be swallowed up of life (2 Cor. 5). Predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son (Rom. 8), "we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Phil. 3:20-21). This body, humbled by sin, will be changed into a body of glory, after the likeness of Christ's body of glory. "We shall be like Him," and this not merely in body, but in spirit as well, so that we shall in every way be suited to the glorious and holy sphere where He dwells. Blessed, glorious prospect!

And now, reader, what is the present effect of this upon those who have this hope in Him? What is its effect upon you and me? "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." Have you believed on Him unto life everlasting? Have you, as a poor lost sinner, turned to Him in your helplessness, and found Him a Savior? And are you now waiting for His return from heaven (1 Thess. 1:10)? Do you expect to be like Him when you see Him as He is? And will this be worth while? Is it something worth looking for and waiting for? Do you now in faith look up and see that blessed One in all the brightness of the Father's glory? And do you say, "I am going to be with Him, and like Him, in that glory, and then I shall be eternally satisfied in His presence?" Well, if it will be worth while to be like Him when He comes and takes us to Himself, it is worth while to be like Him now — like Him in purity of heart, like Him in spirit and in ways, giving forth the sweet fragrance of His life all along the path here.

The Lord grant to the reader and to the writer to have Himself as an all-satisfying Object, filling the soul so that the heart may be formed according to what He is, and thus we shall continue to purify ourselves as He is pure — having this measure and character of purity before us — till He comes and completes it in glory.