

2 Corinthians - Commentaries by Hugh Henry Snell

The Evangelist: Volume 4 (1870), Judgment Seat of Christ, The (5:10)

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."—2 Cor. 5:10.

WE read in the Ecclesiastes that God hath set the world in the hearts of the sons of men, and each day witnesses to the truth thereof. Men live on through their short lives as if there was nothing in eternity worth a thought. One man lives for pleasure, another for ambition, a third to provide for his family; but in every case where grace has not wrought, this short life, with its pleasures and cares, is the boundary of metes hopes and affections, and God is not in all their thoughts.

To arouse men from this fatal indifference to their eternal welfare, the Gospel of Christ addresses itself to the conscience, and brings the light of eternity to bear upon the present moment in words such as these which head this paper: " We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

Paul, who wrote these words under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, knew experimentally their searching power. He remembered well the anguish of his own soul, when, though three days blind, and unable either to eat or drink, he learnt the terror of the Lord, who can destroy both soul and body in hell. He remembered how he had been arrested by God's Son, when madly striving to blot out His name by the destruction of His people; and how he was laid bare as a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious in the light of that divine and heavenly glory, which shone upon him; and as one already manifested to Him, he now would sound in the ears of all careless sinners what had been to his soul of so overwhelming importance, "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."

He was free in his own spirit from all fear of judgment to come, and therefore he was at leisure from himself to feel for perishing souls, whom the revelation of that day would put to eternal shame.

He looked back with adoring gratitude to that moment, when the One who had appeared to him in glory, and had smitten him to the ground as the chief of sinners, sent His servant Ananias with a message of salvation. How sweet to his broken heart must have been those gracious words: "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, who appeared unto thee in the way as thou earnest, hath sent me."

Four days before, he was the mad destroyer of the saints; now Jesus sends Ananias to salute this object of sovereign mercy as "Brother Saul." Saul's guilty conscience might have expected to hear Ananias add, that he was sent to pronounce the doom of the arch enemy of God's Son; but no! Ananias brought a message of grace from the Lord Jesus: "He hath sent me that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." From that moment Saul knew that all his sins were forgiven, and he could look up to the blessed Lord, who had stopped him in his mad career, and say, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me." From that moment his soul yearned after his fellow-sinners; and the sense of the terror of the Lord, which he had so deeply felt in his own soul, made him thus earnest in persuading others "to flee from the wrath to come."

Let us dwell for a few moments on the solemn statement of the Apostle: "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." We may consider what that judgment seat will be. What it will be for each of us to appear individually there? Whom we shall meet there? And, finally, let the reader ask himself if all is settled between his soul and God, so that ha` can say with the Apostle John, that he has "boldness in the day of judgment!" What then will the judgment seat be? It will be the eternal settlement of man's loss in hell, or of the Lord's approval of those who are now justified by His blood for every act of service they have done according to His will. God has made man for Himself, and for His glory, and we must answer to Him for all that we are, and all that we have done. Let not the reader say, this is a future concern, and put away from himself the evil day. The Word of God reveals the future to cast light upon your present condition, that you may now be brought into God's presence about your sins. Your conscience sets its seal to this truth of revelation. The judgment seat is the necessary result of what God is, as a God of holiness and truth. God would deny Himself and outrage His majesty if He should, as men hope He may, pass by sin.

Away then with any vain hope that the judgment seat will display mercy to the guilty. Now indeed God's throne is a throne of grace, where the vilest sinner is received through the mediation of God's Son. None are too vile, too sinful, too lost, to be forgiven and saved, who come as they are to God through Jesus Christ, resting on His infinite atonement. But the judgment seat is a throne of righteousness; and unless you appear before it as one whom God has justified, you will appear before it to be everlasting condemned. The one and greatest proof of God's inflexible righteousness in dealing with sin is exhibited in the cross of Calvary, where God judged the sins of all people in the person of His sinless Son, making lids soul an offering for sin, making Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of god in Him. Did lie thus, deal in judgment with His own Son, and can He pass by sinners, without judging their sins? No, indeed; conscience and revelation declare the righteous character of the judgment seat, where we must all appear. But what will it be for each of us to appear individually before the judgment seat?

It will be far more than each of us being personally there. True we must all appear there, and each will stand there individually; but the word the Apostle uses conveys the truth, the solemn, awful truth, to all that are hiding themselves under vain excuses and false coverings, that we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. Men will come out at that dread tribunal perfectly and exactly as God sees and knows them to be. The hypocrite, the self-deceiver, the formal professor, the self-righteous, will be manifested there. The Christ-rejecter, the infidel, the blasphemer, will be manifested there, in all the hatefulness and wickedness of their state in God's sight.

No scorning of the scorner will dare to lift its voice there. No human reasonings against the truth, so pleasing now to those who love darkness rather than light, will avail there. No human righteousness, however idolized now, will bear the testing of the light that shines there.

Reader, we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. What a word is this to search our hearts with now! Let us take it home to ourselves. Let us ask ourselves the question; what would come out as to my state before God, if I were at this moment Manifested there?

But if a poor Self-condemned and 'broken hearted sinner should read these lines, one who is ready to cry out, as one of old: "Enter not into judgment with Thy servant, O Lord; for in Thy sight shall no flesh living be justified." Let such an one contemplate whom he shall meet there, seated on that judgment seat. This brings us to that part of our subject which fills the breast of the believer with unspeakable comfort. He who sits upon the judgment seat is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Savior. True, He will sit there as Judge; but will He forget His own redeeming blood, and those whose sins He bore on Calvary? Will He condemn those whom God has justified through believing on Him? No, indeed; we shall all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ. The sin-stained robe that has been washed white in the blood of the Lamb will shine unsullied in that day; the feeble faith, though now tried with fire, will be found then to praise, and honor, and glory; the least of all saints will share the likeness and the glory of Him who sits upon the judgment seat. Ah! trembling believer, what hast thou to fear in the presence of thy Savior's love, who regards thee as the travail of His soul? Thou wilt be manifested as His; manifest before Him, who settled thy judgment on the cross, and who left thy sin and condemnation behind Him in His opened grave. He has declared for the comfort of all His believing people, "He that heareth my word, and believeth on Him that sent me, shall not come into judgment." His believing people, shall not come into judgment, for they shall be manifested at His judgment seat as those whom God has justified; they shall appear there glorified bodies, not to have, their acceptance in the beloved called into question, but to receive the approval of the Lord Himself, for every act of faith and love which they have done, while waiting for Him in this evil day.

Oh then, beloved reader, ask yourself, Am I amongst the justified of God, who shall shine forth in the glory of God's righteousness, in that day of manifestation? If all that must come out then has come out now, and you have found yourself consciously manifested to God in your sins, there is the answer to it all in the death of Christ; for God hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.

To meet God now in grace is the sinner's eternal salvation. Can we, then, say "I am reconciled to God." "God was," says the Apostle, "in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them." The four Gospels narrate this wondrous fact. That meek, and gentle, and compassionate Jesus, of whom they speak, was God manifest in the flesh. Reader, has that blessed one won your heart? Does your heart find in Him its needs met, its desires satisfied, its hopes centered? What a blessing, if so, to know that He who has attracted and won your heart is the very God against whom you have sinned, and whose anger you have justly feared. But then He has not only become a man to win your heart by His grace, but He has died on the cross to bear your sins in His own body, that your conscience may be perfect towards God. Are you resting upon Him as your only righteousness before God? Then fear not. God is perfectly, eternally satisfied with that precious sacrifice. He delivered Him for your offences, and has raised Him again for your justification. As He looks out in love upon the glorified Jesus, He sees your justification. All the sins He bore on Calvary are gone forever, and God sees none now, as He looks upon Jesus and looks upon you in Him; therefore the Apostle declares, "He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." But what shall we say of those who are not reconciled to God through our Lord Jesus Christ? You, dear friends, unless God in His mercy give you grace and repentance before it be too late, will be manifested at the judgment seat of Christ, not only in all your sins, but as those who have heard of God's great love in Jesus Christ, and have heeded it not. What will you answer Him when you see Him on the throne with the marks of the nails and of the spear in His blessed body? You will lie dumb before Him, and you will perish as your own destroyers, for having heard and rejected all the dying love of Jesus Christ. Oh, once more would we beseech you to believe in Him now, and be reconciled to God!

Death of the Cross, Death of the Cross: No. 7 (4:11)

Our blessed Lord the Faithful and True Witness, found no rest here, had not where to lay His head, and His path of perfect obedience to the will of God led only to death, even the death of the cross; is it, then, strange that the faithful now so constantly prove this to be a region of disappointment to natural expectations, and that those who are obedient to the word of God should find the path so frequently one of death and resurrection? Has it not been the case all through this sin-stricken time? Did not God promise Abram a son? And did not year after year pass, till all human hope of its fulfillment had gone? But Abram proved the faithfulness of Him who raiseth the dead. Again, when the great apostle of the Gentiles had sure guidance for taking the gospel into Europe, did he find the path smooth and easy, according to human calculation? Far from it. He and Silas soon found the cruel thongs scourging their backs, and the hours of midnight passing while their feet were made fast in the stocks of an inner prison; but, with aching limbs, they prayed and sang praises to God, because they knew that the divinely-ordered path in a world of evil must be one of death and resurrection. We know what abundant streams of blessing afterward accompanied their ministry. Is it, then, to be wondered at that we find the inspired apostle saying, "We which live are alway delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh"? (2 Cor. 4:11.)

The death of the cross is also set before us in scripture to encourage our confidence in God in faith and prayer. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32.) Again, while contemplating Him who trod the path of faith perfectly, and resisted unto blood, striving against sin—the Beginner and Finisher of faith—we are directed to Him who is now on the throne for sustainment, and are assured that His grace is sufficient for us. We may also learn the secret of turning the bitter we find in the wilderness into sweet, by associating it with the death of the cross in all its perfectness and grace; and, compared with His sorrows, we learn to speak of our heaviest trials as a light afflictions."

It is not to be wondered at that efforts have, every now and then, been put forth by our adversaries, to undermine the doctrine of the cross, seeing how infinitely He there glorified God, and that all our blessings are founded on it. This has sometimes been done by going back to principles of Judaism, or by the Galatian error of appending something supplemental to the work of Christ for security; or, at other times, by attacking the personal glory of the Savior, and thereby invalidating the infinite and eternal value of His finished work. Well has it been said

long ago, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?"

With the spiritually-minded, the true doctrine of the cross is never lost sight of, and that, not only because all our blessings are founded on it, but because of the full outflow of divine love to us there manifested, even when we were yet sinners, and the infinite perfections which there so wondrously culminated. In the apostles' writings, we cannot fail to notice how frequently their inspired thoughts recur to the death of the cross, and this sometimes again and again within the compass of a few verses. And, in days of old, when God was speaking by types and shadows, how constantly the many sacrifices remind us of the one sacrifice of the death of Christ; and so in the last writer of holy scripture, when the Apocalyptic visions are brought before us, the Lamb is most conspicuously set forth every here and there.

While nothing is more clearly taught in scripture than the secret of our strength, blessing, and growth in grace being connected with our having personally to do with Christ in glory, in contrast with the mistaken doctrine of being always at the foot of the cross, yet is it possible to be beholding the glory of the Lord with unveiled face, and be thus changed into the same image from glory to glory, without remembering the death of the cross as the way by which He reached the throne of glory?

The death of the cross is therefore never to be forgotten by us, but to be had in constant remembrance till Jesus comes. The Lord's supper tells us this. In it, it is Himself we remember; His death we announce. Not, as we sometimes hear, that in it we "remember his death," but we remember Him. He said, "Do this in remembrance of me." We see Him by faith now crowned with glory and honor, but we remember Him in death for us on the cross. It is Himself we remember, the One who loved us, and gave Himself for us; and this is to be continued "till he come." Oh, the unspeakable wonders and blessedness of "the death of the cross!"

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 3 (1855), On Conformity to Christ (3:18)

2 Cor. 3:18.

NOTHING so pains us as the consciousness of our lack of conformity to Christ. We admit the reasonableness of yielding our bodies a living sacrifice unto Him who hath saved us with an everlasting salvation; and in our happiest moments are constrained to sing,

Still we sorrow that this is so seldom our state of heart—that shame and confusion of face are so often our experience, rather than the joy of walking with God. We do well to lay this matter to heart.

While the Apostle Paul fully admitted that in him, that is in his flesh, dwelt "no good thing," and that it was by the grace of God he was what he was, still we know he was so truly an imitator of the meek and lowly Jesus, that without presumption, he could say, "For me to live is Christ" (Phil. 1:21). While on another occasion he could appeal to the Thessalonian saints, thus, "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameably we behaved ourselves among you that believe" (1 Thess. 2:10): and again to another Church: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1; see also Phil. 4:9).

It is to be feared that with many who sincerely desire to be practically following Jesus, the object is defeated by the way in which it is sought to be attained. One of the first thoughts that often suggests itself to a soul whose desires are afresh kindled for conformity to Christ, is to make a more zealous effort to attend to the outward observances of religion; and a warmer resolution to be more diligent in what may, and with some propriety, be termed Christian duties. But while these things are, in their proper place and season, highly deserving our culture; yet we may rest assured, that if we begin here, it is not beginning in the right direction. The conflict and correction must begin within, rather than in anything around; and our thoughts and position of soul towards the Lord Himself should first be most solemnly considered. The fleshly mind is ever ready to plan and arrange, with reference to things without; but the Spirit of God searches the heart, and ministers to the affections and conscience. The veil of unbelief is securely drawn over every natural heart; it is the noxious weed which the unregenerate soil spontaneously produces; and we sorrowfully know how rapidly this weed springs up, even in those who know the Lord. It is of the utmost consequence that we "keep our heart with all diligence," lest this veil in any measure obtrude, dim our spiritual vision, and hinder our beholding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, with an open and unveiled face. It is only when the eyes of our understanding are thus steadily set upon Jesus, the glorified Redeemer, that we are enabled truly to say, In Thy light we see light.

But it is especially while contemplating Jesus risen, and glorified as the Head of the Church, His body—realizing our personal interest, standing, and security in Him—beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord—that we become changed into the same image. How blessed the thought is! We are in Him that is true—complete in Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (Col. 2:10, 1 Cor. 1:30). As the One who hath gotten Him the victory, the triumphant Redeemer of His people, the Conqueror of all our enemies, the Lord our righteousness, He sits on the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honour. It is with Christ in God that our life is hid. The Lord nourishes and cherishes the Church; "for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." It is HIM we are to contemplate with a full assurance of faith; and our perfection in Him that we should seek to realize with a full assurance of understanding. Soul-comforting considerations! but how deeply important that our spiritual eyes should be anointed with eye-salve, that we may be able to look up into heaven, and rightly estimate our true position and standing in the Lord Jesus; realizing our everlasting and unchangeable relationship to God and the Lamb, by "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord."

There is no bondage in this: it is the happy liberty of the Spirit of God. It presents to us an already-accomplished salvation, for ever fixed, and secure from the reach of every foe. Souls thus exercised will be "glad in the Lord," humbled under a sense of the exceeding riches of sovereign grace, melted with an increased feeling of utter unworthiness, and constrained to live only to Him who died for us, and rose again. A true spirit of worship takes possession of the heart, and a song of gratitude is the instinctive fruit of the lips; the inner man becomes strengthened in the grace of Christ Jesus; the world is only known as a Christ-rejecting territory, lying in the Wicked-one; sin is felt to be exceedingly sinful; the flesh is known as crucified with Christ, and the saints as raised up and seated in heavenly places in Him. The precepts of the word of God also are acknowledged as most suitable, and congenial to heaven-born heaven-bound pilgrims, and the commandments found to be "not grievous." Hence the hidden, crafty, dishonest workings of the flesh, though often detected, are not tolerated, but

denounced; and as the Lord Himself fills the eye and heart, so His divine characteristics shine forth in our walk and conduct, and we become increasingly conformed to His blessed example. We are kept in peace in the presence of God and the Lamb; we cast all our care upon Him who careth for us; we rejoice in Christ Jesus, worship God in the Spirit, and have no confidence in the flesh; we grow in the habit of comparing spiritual things with spiritual, and of weighing things only in the balance of the sanctuary; thus, by manifesting Christ, The Truth, we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. "With open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. 3:18).

How perfect will this transformation be when the Lord returns! "Our vile body" will then be changed, and "fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). For this blessed perfection we wait, knowing that "when He shall appear we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). Meanwhile, beloved, let us seek to be true followers of the holy child Jesus; not in fleshly efforts, but in the life and walk of faith; being daily nourished and strengthened by the soul-sustaining virtues of the blood of the Lamb.

Death of the Cross, Death of the Cross: No. 6 (1:8-10)

"We had the sentence of death in ourselves,"—2 Corinthians 1:9

We are at this moment between the cross and the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. We look back and remember that He died for our sins, we look up and know Him as our life, we look forward and hope for His coming to receive us unto Himself. Christ is therefore our peace, our life, and our hope.

Though all truth must be practical, yet nothing perhaps is more eminently practical than the death of Christ, as revealed in scripture, in its variety of ways, from Genesis to Revelation. It is by the death of the cross that we have the knowledge of remission of sins, the comfort of a purged conscience, and peace with God; and such consciousness of divine favor as enables us to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. It is reconciliation by the death of His Son which removes fear, and inspires us with confidence to live unto God. Being sanctified by the blood of Jesus, we are taught to walk through this scene as those who are set apart by God, and perfected forever by that one offering. It is by the blood of Jesus we have liberty at all times to enter into the holiest, and to abide there, because He has entered into heaven itself by His own blood. It is because our old man is crucified with Christ that we have deliverance from ourselves, and are set free from the dominion of sin, as well as from its guilt and power. This being so, how can it be otherwise (but that we should have the sentence of death in ourselves? How can we put confidence in that which God has judicially set aside? Hence the apostle Paul, when alluding to a special trial connected with his ministerial experiences, speaks of being "pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life. But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who hath delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust he will yet deliver us." (2 Cor. 1:8-10.)

While doubtless the apostle is here referring to a particular trial in connection with his service in the gospel, yet the principle is the same as to every child of God, that, because he has been judicially set aside in the cross of Christ as to his first Adam standing, he cannot now put confidence in that which God has thus judged. Taught also by the Spirit of God that in him, that is in his flesh dwelleth no good thing, and accepting gladly in faith the judgment of God as crucified with Christ, how can he but have the sentence of death in himself? If we have believed God as to the reality of the truth that we have now no standing before Him "in the flesh," but "in Christ Jesus/ who is risen and ascended, how can we but have "the sentence of death in ourselves"? Thus, having died with Christ, and being alive in Him risen, how can we have confidence in that which has thus been judicially set aside by God in the death of the cross?

In this way we are delivered from self-confidence. This form of false reliance was the cause of Peter's denial of Christ. He meant well no doubt, and was sincere, when he said, " I will lay down my life for thy sake;" but he did not know himself, he was trusting in himself, and had painfully to learn the folly of it, and its Christ-dishonoring result. It is perhaps one of the commonest causes of failure with us now. It is evident that some who have accepted the truth of being lost sinners, and have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior, have not accepted a further truth that " they that are in the flesh cannot please God," and therefore that " the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God;" and thus they have not so learned the death of the cross as to have the sentence of death in themselves, and therefore are not delivered from self-dependence and self-confidence. For the things of time and sense, no one questions the value of natural ability; but "the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God." To bring in, therefore, human competency, or self-confidence in divine things, is to deny the setting aside of man in the flesh in the crucifixion of the Son of God, to get away from new creation ground as alive in Christ risen, and as having power by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. Though few believers have been called to pass through such trials as the apostle Paul, yet all children of God are entitled to say we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead.

This lesson then of such deep practical moment, presented to us in the death of the cross, teaches us to have no confidence in the flesh, but to deny self, and confide in Another; and this too not only on great occasions, as we say, but as the constant rule of our lives. This has always been the way of faith, though not known so clearly and fully before the coming of the Holy Spirit consequent upon the accomplished redemption of our Lord Jesus Christ. We read that Abraham "considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief: but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what God had promised he was able also to perform." (Rom. iv. 19-21.) He relied upon the power of God, and not on himself. He judged God faithful who had promised; and therefore he was honored of God. Again, when offering up Isaac, we are told that he reckoned only on God, "accounting that God was able to raise him up from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." Whether then the path of a child of God be rough or smooth, painful or pleasant; whether the matter in hand be great or small, his privilege is to connect God with all according to His word, and act in faith about all for His glory. By the death of the cross then we are taught that we have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead. The death and resurrection of Christ are thus to be constantly before our souls. In His death, we learn not only the divine estimate of our thorough good-for-nothingness as belonging to the first Adam, but we also see the manifestation of divine, perfect love; for even when we were yet sinners Christ died for us. We see the depths of grace meeting us in our worst and lowest estate and loving us perfectly. Jesus said to the

Father, "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it; that the love wherewith thou hast loved me, may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:26.) Thus the love of the Father to the Son is the measure of His love to us. In the resurrection of the Lord Jesus from among the dead we see the greatness of His power which is to usward. The apostle prayed that the Ephesians saints might know what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when " he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." &c. (Eph. 1:19, 20.) Thus the two things to comfort our souls under all circumstances, are, that the Fathers love to us is perfect, that it cannot be more and never will be less, and that the power of God that works for us and in us is the power which raised Christ from among the dead. We cannot therefore be in circumstances beyond the circle of divine love, or where divine power cannot reach us. Having then the sentence of death in ourselves, only casts us upon that which is infinitely higher and better, even to trust in God who raiseth the dead.

It is then when studying the death of the cross, that we learn to have a proper estimate of ourselves and of other matters, according to the mind of God. There we see the history of the first man—man in the flesh—closed. It tells us that when last of all God sent His Son, saying, They will reverence my Son, men proved themselves to be so incorrigibly bad, that they said, " This is the heir, come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard and slew him." But it also tells us of the boundings of divine grace in not only judicially setting aside the old man, and taking away sins, but also in Him risen and ascended giving us eternal life, creating us anew in Him, making us to stand in Him in divine favor, and enabling us by the gift of the Holy Ghost to rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

The practical effect of "the death of the cross" seemed to have had constant power on the apostle. Hence we find him again saying, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." (2 Cor. 4:10.) If the sentence of death within, leading saints not to trust in themselves, but in God which raiseth the dead, characterized their state, their testimony was, that, while in a mortal body, and passing through this sin-stricken scene, they willingly took the place of rejection, by identifying themselves with Him whom the world despised, hated, and cruelly put to death. This they felt to be their true position, and this, not sometimes, but always—"always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus;" never forgetting that He was once here, but is not here now. Every day we have sorrowfully to feel that we are in a world where He was, and is not, and where He is still hated and despised. We may sometimes find a widow who makes us feel the sorrowful and lonely character of her path, without her alluding to it, for her ways and spirit show that her heart constantly thinks of one who was her all, who was here, but is not now. We once heard of a son who could not return to the family mansion of the estate he inherited, because his father had been murdered in it. But these illustrations fail to set forth the experience of those who are bearing about in their body the dying of Jesus. While one part of our testimony is waiting for God's Son from heaven with gilded loins and trimmed lamps, and faithfully occupying the place of service till He come, it certainly must be founded, not only on the knowledge of accomplished redemption, but in the consciousness of being identified with Him whom men cast out and crucified.

This is the place, not for unfaithfully sharing the world's pleasures, but for bearing the dying of Jesus about in our body. In the glory we shall be with Him, and like Him, and be where there is no more sorrow nor death; not so here, where divine judgment is coining because men showed hatred to Jesus for His love. It is this identification with Christ in rejection which is so sweet to Him, and which brings us into suffering, loss, and the place of reproach. Would that we knew it better. It may be a line of truth which is much lost sight of. When really adopted, it must lead us into a path of holy separation with Him. How can the death of Jesus, when known in power in our souls, lead us otherwise than in the path of identification with Him in His rejection? If He suffered "without the gate," how can the way of faith in this evil time be otherwise than going forth "unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach"? May He strengthen us for this!

In Christ and the Flesh in Us, In Christ and the Flesh in Us: Part 2 (12:2)

On, the marvelous depths and heights of divine grace! Its depths in embracing us when in our sins and guilt, exposed to the wrath of God, and its heights in bringing us to God in Christ for everlasting blessing. And so truly does scripture teach the reality of this translation from being in Adam to our present standing in Christ, that we are now spoken of as "not in the flesh," "not of the world," "not under law," but "in the Spirit," and "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." The important question for us is, How far have we received these truths into our hearts? How far have we mixed faith with the truth of God concerning what He has wrought in Christ? The practical point is, Do we habitually take our place when consciously dealing with God as in Christ? Those who have not received this truth may be trying to work themselves into nearness to God and be always disappointed, instead of taking in simple faith the nearness and acceptance in Christ which His own grace has given us. Those who are working and redoubling their efforts to get near, only prove that they have not yet entered upon the place in Christ in which divine grace has set them. Those who by faith take possession of it do rejoice therein, and rest in God's presence. Such are never so happy as when inside the veil, where the Lord Jesus is. They worship God, and in measure enter into the wondrous truth of fellowship with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

But though the believer is not in the flesh, he sorrowfully finds that the flesh is in him. He learns through humbling experiences to say, "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." He does not say, "In me dwells no good," because he has a new life, and the Holy Ghost in him; but he says, "In me, that is in my flesh, dwells no good thing;" for, though delivered from the Adam standing, he still has the Adam nature—the flesh, with its passions and lusts—that evil principle which is ready to serve the law of sin. He has, in fact, two natures: the old nature, "that which is born of the flesh, which is flesh;" and the new life, or new nature, "that which is born of the Spirit, which is spirit." The new nature which is born of the Spirit is strengthened by the Holy Ghost which indwells us; so that, while the flesh lusts against the Spirit, the Spirit is against the flesh in such antagonistic power, that we cannot do the things which we otherwise would. The delivered soul knows that he is the subject of the actings of these two opposing natures, and his conclusion is, "so then with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin." (Rom. 7:25.)

The great trouble of every believer is not so much what he has done as what he is. It is the painful consciousness of having this evil nature—pride, self-will, and lust cropping up within, even if it does not come out. And the more his desire to live for the glory of God, the greater his sorrow at the garment being spotted by the flesh. This is his greatest enemy, his constant opponent, that upon which Satan and

the world can act, and which neither time nor circumstances can improve, so desperately wicked is it, and deceitful above all things. The more we are occupied with it, the weaker we are toward it, because it becomes an object in the stead of Christ. The secret of power over it is to know that it has been crucified with Christ because of its incurable badness—to reckon it dead—to disallow its cravings, and to find all our springs of comfort and strength in Christ glorified—to “reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:6-11.) In the heavenly glory we shall not need so to “reckon,” for we shall be completely and forever delivered from it. But to so reckon now is because “the flesh” is still in us. Yet it is equally our privilege to say with the apostle, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I [that is, not the old nature] but Christ [my new life] liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh [that is, in this mortal body], I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Gal. 2:20.) This is Christian life.

To be occupied with what the flesh is in its various activities and deceitful workings, is not to be reckoning it dead; to be regarding it as an antagonistic force to be overcome, is to reckon it living; but to be holding it dead in the death of Christ, as judicially put to death in Christ our substitute, and to find all our resources in Christ risen and glorified, is to reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin, and to be alive unto God in our Lord Jesus Christ. In this way we have power over ourselves, and can daily bring forth fruit unto God. The way of faith is always to look at things from God's standpoint, to take sides with Him who regards our old man as having been judicially set aside forever in the death of Christ, and who always sees us complete in Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

It is quite true that we are the Objects of the continual care and discipline of the Father of spirits. If we walk after the flesh, instead of after the Spirit, this may call for His loving rebuke and chastening; but that in no way interferes with the precious truth of our continual acceptance and standing in Christ, by whose one offering we have been perfected forever. The fact is that, through grace, we “are not in the flesh, but in Christ,” yet the flesh is in us; but our part is to reckon it as having been, before God and to faith, judicially put to death in Christ crucified, and thus to be so constantly occupied with the triumphant Son of God, as to find all our resources, all our strength, all our springs, in Him.

Nor does age, experience, or change of circumstances improve the flesh. It is wholly unimproveable, though its desires and habits, in youth and old age, in affluence or poverty, may show themselves differently. Its principles of lust and wilfulness remain the same. Paul had been in the third heaven, and heard unutterable things, which it is not possible for mortal man to speak. Was the flesh improved in him by such a wondrous change and experience? We are told that he needed “a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet him,” lest he should be exalted because of the exceeding greatness of the revelations. Now surely, when in the glory, we shall not need such a thorn, neither did he when in the third heaven, but afterward; when among men, there was such tendency to the pride and lust of the flesh being stirred up, that a messenger of Satan was needed to act upon him, as a preventive of fleshly conduct. So deeply distressing and humiliating was this “thorn,” that he three times besought the Lord to take it away; but this could not be done, that the servant might not be exalted above measure. Instead of removing it, the Lord said unto him, “My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” His path, therefore, for the remainder of his earthly pilgrimage was to go forward, having no confidence in the flesh, but boasting in his weakness, that the power of Christ might rest upon him; for, said he, when I am weak, then am I strong. (2 Cor. 12:10.)

How vastly different was the experience of this honored servant of the Lord when in the third heaven, and when buffeted by Satan on earth! But was he not equally secure in Christ, when filled with anguish or irritation through the “thorn in the flesh,” as when hearing the unutterable communications of paradise? Surely his standing before God in Christ was in no way altered by this remarkable change of circumstances and experience. And it is very important to observe this. For have not most believers their bright times and their dark times? Did not Israel taste the bitterness of Marah, and then realize the delightful change of Elim's palm-trees and wells of water? And do not most of God's children know what it is, on some occasions, to be filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory, and at other times to be in heaviness and distress, having, the heart lacerated with the sorrows of the way? But are we not as secure and blessed in Christ, when in the trying path of humiliation and anguish, as when we are so happy in the Lord, so near, that it is only the thinnest film which appears to intercept our vision of Himself, and His own glory seems to shine down upon us? Surely it is always true that “ye are complete in him, who is the Head of all principality and power,” and that no change of circumstance or experience, whether dark or bright, can in any degree shake our security and standing's in Him;” though it is quite true we may lose the enjoyment of this, if we are taken up with experience, or anything else, in the place of Christ. How wise, then, it is for the believer to abide in the Lord Jesus, to be occupied with Him; for then we have always blessing. “We all, with open face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor. 3:18.)

So clearly does scripture recognize “the flesh,” with all its evil capabilities, even in those who are born of God, that they are enjoined to “lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, and as new-born babes to desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.” (1 Peter 1:23; 2:1, 2.) Here we find persons who are born again instructed how they can grow in grace, &c., and charged not to let these dreadful workings of the old man come out. Again, because we are “risen with Christ,” and hope to reign “with him in glory,” we are exhorted thus— “Mortify” (or put to death) “therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry”—the vile workings of the flesh, the things which the ungodly practice, and which bring down the judgment of God upon them. “For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience.” Observe, scripture nowhere says that we are to crucify the flesh, because our old man has been crucified with Christ, and thus we are said to “have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts;” but as risen with Christ, and having a new life in Him (though still having the flesh in us), we are so to reckon ourselves dead as not to suffer these things to live in us, because we have died with Christ. Again, therefore, we are enjoined to “put off anger, wrath, malice, filthy communication out of your mouth, and lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new.” (Col. 3:1-12.)

Now it is clearly impossible that such injunctions should have been given to those who are born of God and risen with Christ, unless they still have “the flesh,” in which is nothing good. Let us turn to another scripture on this point. “If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.” (Rom. 8:13.) This is spoken to those who are said to be “in Christ.” Observe, it is not the body which is to be flagellated, or put to death, but the deeds of the body—those things which the body is capable of doing, which are in opposition to God's mind. Again, notice that the power for this is the Spirit of God; not flesh against flesh, but a new and almighty power given to us, by which we may practically keep in the place of death the workings of “the flesh.” Nothing, then, can be more clearly taught in scripture than that the believer is “in Christ,” who is his life, and one with Christ by the Holy Ghost; and, at the same time, that “the flesh” is in every believer. He is therefore a compound of two natures; with one, “the mind,” he serves God's law; and with the other, “the flesh,” sin's law. The indwelling Spirit

strengthens the new nature, and keeps us occupied with Christ, our righteousness and strength, so that we may reckon ourselves to have died unto sin, and thus practically hold as dead the buddings forth of "the flesh." May the Lord graciously help us more and more in this!

It is important, however, to remember that the knowledge of having "the flesh" in us is of itself no hindrance to "our fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ;" but allowing it to come out practically does hinder it. We have not a bad conscience from its existence in us, because we know that the flesh, or the old man, has been judicially dealt with in the death of Christ. Neither need the believer sin. He is enjoined to sin not, and he has no excuse for sinning. "These things write I unto you that ye sin not." It is, moreover, not correct for a believer to say sin is not in him, for "if we say we have no sin" —not sins, but sin, the corrupt nature, or old man— "we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." If, however, the believer does sin, or commit sins, the fruit of the Adam nature, he finds his conscience troubled, and his communion with the Father and the Son interrupted. It is a question of communion, not of salvation. Provision has graciously been made for it. Christ is our Advocate with the Father concerning it. Self-examination, self-judgment, repentance, and confession are wrought in our souls by the Spirit, and by the application of the word— "the washing of water by the word" —we become restored. The advocacy of Christ is based upon propitiation for our sins having been made, and He who takes up our cause is the perfectly righteous One. Hence it is written, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." (1 John 2:1, 2.)

On confessing, we are cleansed perfectly, forgiven in righteousness, on the ground of the sacrifice once offered; so that we are told, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:8-10.) It is not the believer taking the place of a miserable sinner; but a believer taking the place before God of an offending naughty child, counting on the faithfulness and justice of God to forgive his sins because of the sacrifice of Christ, and to cleanse him, and thus to restore him to happy communion. This is the divine way of restoring an erring child of God. He may be the weakest and most faulty of God's children; still he is a child to whom the Lord does not impute sin, and never can be, strictly speaking, a miserable sinner, even when feeling the dreadful character of his sin, before God in confession.

Happy indeed are those who are occupied with the personal glory and excellencies, finished work, and offices of our Lord Jesus Christ, so as to have always the comfort of their Father's love, and the joy of their security and completeness in Christ, and to be waiting for His coming! H. H. S.

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In Christ and the Flesh in Us, In Christ and the Flesh in Us: Part 1 (12:2)

Such is the Christian. Through infinite grace he is no longer before God in his sins and in the flesh, but in Christ Jesus. He was "without Christ," he is "in Christ," he will be "like Christ." A Christian, then, is not one who hopes to be, but one who is, in Christ. A man may be much reformed, and not in Christ. He may be earnestly taken up with religiousness, yet not in Christ. He may even be convicted, yet not converted. Those who stop short of Christ are still in their sins. To be in Christ is to be the workmanship of God—a new creation. Such have died with Christ, and are alive to God in Christ. It is an entirely new condition and standing. All is of God. The old things have passed away; all things have become new. Whatever, therefore, a man may think of himself, whatever changes may have been wrought in his outward deportment, or however esteemed he may be by others, he has no authority for calling himself a Christian, if he is not "in Christ."

Nor is it correct to say that those who are in Christ were always in Christ, as some have asserted, because they confound purpose and redemption. We are told that "we were all by nature children of wrath, even as others." The apostle seems gladly to acknowledge that he knew some who had been brought into this marvelous character of blessing prior to himself. He says, "Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen... who also were in Christ before me." (Rom. 16:7.) As to the purpose of God, we know that all those who compose the church of God were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. It is also clear that redemption, though accomplished more than eighteen hundred years ago, is only the present blessing of those who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, and believed in the Son of God. Before that we were afar off; "but now, in Christ Jesus, we, who sometime were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." Of such, too, it is truly written, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." ({vi 29214;29218;29220}Eph. 1:7, 11, 13.) No one, then, can be spoken of in a scriptural sense as in Christ Jesus, before he has received Him who "was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification" as his Savior. Before he was made alive (quickened) he was dead in trespasses and in sins—in the flesh; but, through a divinely-wrought faith in the Son of God, he has received eternal life, the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. He is associated with Christ in life, and by the Holy Ghost he is one with Him. This, too, he is entitled to know and to rejoice in, as Jesus said, "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." (John 14:20.)

In the apostles' days persons were accredited as being "in Christ," and they were spoken of, and written to, as such. For instance, Paul's first letter to the Corinthians is addressed "to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus;" and the letter to the Philippians, "to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi," thus showing that saints in those days were ordinarily recognized as "in Christ Jesus."

The truth is that the epistles describe men as either "in the flesh," or as "in Christ Jesus." The natural man, however cultivated or refined, however outwardly religious and benevolent, is nevertheless "in the flesh," as to his state before God. He is in the first Adam, and dead in sins. He needs spiritual life. This is why the gospel presents no thought as to mending or improving men in the flesh; on the contrary, it speaks of redemption, that is, taking out of a state of guilt and condemnation, and bringing into a position of blessing and nearness to God. For, however polished and amiable people appear, we are assured that "the carnal mind is enmity against God" —the will is in opposition to God. Thus man naturally, however refined, and generous, is only "corrupt tree, which cannot bring forth good fruit." Neither law nor terrors, commandments nor judgments, make him fit for God. His whole history shows the opposition of his will to God's will, and exhibits the truth of the divine sentence, "they that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Rom. 8:8.) A verdict sweeping indeed but most just, and unmistakably plain and conclusive. Such is man! He "receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know

them because they are spiritually discerned." (1 Cor. 2:14.)

Under those circumstances, as before observed, God has not proposed to mend the corrupt nature, but, in His infinite grace, has brought in redemption, in Christ, and through His blood. In this way we have deliverance from guilt, condemnation, and the dominion of sin, and are before God on an entirely new standing in life and righteousness.

The sense of guilt has been cleared, in divine grace, by the death and blood-shedding of Jesus once for all; who bore our sins in His own body on the tree, suffered for sins, and died for our sins under the judgment of God. Thus all our need, as to sins and guilt, has been fully met in righteousness, and all who believe are justified by His blood, justified from all things. Instead, then, of guilt we have a purged conscience, for we know that all is now clear between us and God. Our sins and iniquities He will remember no more. Instead of imputing sins, He accounts us righteous, so that we have "no more conscience of sins," are no longer guilty, but justified freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. It is God who justifies. We are also delivered from condemnation, because, when law was unable to produce good in us, on account of the unclean and corrupt qualities of our nature, God, sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a sacrifice for sin, condemned our old evil nature—"sin in the flesh." Thus our old man, with its sinful passions and lusts, has been crucified with Christ; we have died with Him, who, in such wondrous grace, was made sin for us; who became our Substitute, and bore that condemnation which was due to us. The whole condemning power of God on account of sin having been poured upon Jesus, there is no condemnation left for us. Hence we are assured, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus."

But sin is the master of man naturally—it has dominion over him. Sin reigns unto death. He is the slave of sin, and cannot free himself. But God, in His grace, has set the believer free. He has died unto Christ, his Substitute. Neither sin nor law can have anything to say to a dead man. He that is dead is set free, or justified, from sin. You cannot charge a dead man with lust. Being then set free from sin, and become an object of divine favor, it is said of such, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace." We are delivered, and brought to God. We are become servants to God. What an unutterable difference between being a slave of sin and a servant to God! We are alive to God in Christ, that "henceforth we should live, not to ourselves, but to him who died for us, and rose again." His death has brought us deliverance as well as peace. By it we have been forever freed from guilt, condemnation, and the dominion of sin. Blessed indeed it is to grasp these precious realities!

We must not, however, forget that God has not only wrought, in His exceeding grace, to save us from wrath, but has acted agreeably to His own goodness and nature. Nothing less could suit Him than that we should be before Him in love, in conscious nearness and relationship in eternal glory. He is therefore bringing many sons to glory. Jesus once suffered for sins that He might bring us to God. Redemption is God's way of bringing us to Himself; the wisdom, work, and results are all for His glory, as well as for our eternal blessing. It was necessary, therefore, that the whole question of sin should be settled in righteousness, for the glory of God, as well as to meet our need. Atonement was for God; it fully answered the just demands of His throne. In this way God has been glorified, and we have been cleansed, delivered, and brought to God as purged worshippers.

God has also given us life—a risen and eternal life. It is His own gracious gift. Blessed be God! We read, "God hath given tons eternal life, and this life is in his Son." It is life in Him who is risen from among the dead, and given to us as a present possession, to be known in activity and power in our souls. God sent His only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. "He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." ({vi 30636-30637}1 John 5:11, 12.) Christ, then, is our life, and "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death." Christ lives in us, and we are in Him. We are, then, associated with Christ in life—a risen and eternal life. Hence we are addressed as "risen with Christ," and consequently exhorted to "set our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." The believer has passed out of death and into life. This transition scripture fully recognizes. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. We have also received the gift of the Holy Ghost. "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father."

The believer, therefore, is not in the flesh, but in the Spirit—he is in Christ; he has died out of his old Adam standing in the death of Jesus, and has been quickened, raised up, and seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. He has been brought out, and brought in. Hence scripture speaks of us as "accepted in the Beloved," "complete in him," "preserved in Christ Jesus," and "sanctified in Christ Jesus." We are a new creation in Him who is Head of all principality and power, are always before God in Christ, in all His acceptability and nearness, and loved by the Father as He loves the Son. This is where redemption has brought us, where divine perfect love has set us, so that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world. We have died unto sin, died with Christ, and are alive unto God in Him. Having received remission of sins, we are united to Christ by the Holy Ghost, joined to the Lord—one spirit. This is a man in Christ. "We were in the flesh," but having died with Christ, and risen with Him, we have eternal life in Him, and are united to Him by the Spirit.

(To be continued.)

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