

Deuteronomy - Commentaries by Unknown Author

Eastern Manners and Customs Illustrating Various Bible Passages, Eastern Manners and Customs: "Cities Great and Fenced Up to Heaven" (9:1)

" This is a strong, but not unusual hyperbole.... At this early time, as well as now, it was customary to surround towns with very high walls. Few towns of the least consequence in Western Asia are without walls, which, whatever be their character in other respects, are sure to be lofty. As the use of artillery is still but little known, when a town has a wall too high to be easily scaled, and too thick to be easily battered down, the inhabitants look upon the place as impregnable, and fear little except the having their gates forced or betrayed, or being starved into surrender. So little indeed is the art of besieging known in the East, that we read of great Asiatic conquerors being obliged, after every effort, to give up the attempt to obtain possession of walled towns.... It is, therefore no wonder that the, at this time, unwarlike Hebrew shepherds regarded as insurmountable the obstacles which the walls of the Canaanitish cities seemed to offer. Indeed, of all classes of people, there are none in the world so unequal as the nomade dwellers in tents to overcome such an obstacle. However brave and virtuous in the field, all their energy and power seem utterly to fail there before a walled town..

The walls of towns and are generally built with large bricks, dried in the sun, though sometimes of burnt bricks, and are rarely less than thirty feet high. They are seldom strong and thick in proportion to their height, but are sometimes strengthened with round towers or buttresses, placed at equal distances from each other."-Kitto.

Christian Treasury: Volume 8, Teach Them (6:7)

"Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children."

Deuteronomy 6:7

What should you teach them?

To love the Lord God with all their heart (Deut. 6:5).

Who should be taught?

Your children (v. 7), and the responsibility doesn't stop there. We are to teach our grandchildren also (Deut. 4:9). Timothy knew the blessing of learning of "the unfeigned faith" from both his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5).

When should it be taught?

When sitting at home, when walking by the way, when lying down and rising up—continually (Deut. 6:7).

Christian Treasury: Volume 1, Teach Them (6:7)

"Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children." Deut. 6:7.

What should you teach them? To love the Lord God with all their heart. (Deut. 6:5)

Who should be taught? Your children (Deut. 6:7), and the responsibility doesn't stop there. We are to teach our grandchildren also. (Deut. 4:9). Timothy knew the blessing of learning of "the unfeigned faith" from both his mother and grandmother. (2 Tim. 1:5).

When should it be taught? Why, when sitting at home, when walking by the way, when lying down and rising up-continually. (Deut. 6:7).

Christian Truth: Volume 9, Moses, the Servant of the Lord (34:5)

(Read Deut. 34:5; Acts 7:20-36.)

One great principle in all true service is the consciousness of being upheld therein by God.

It was thus with the perfect Servant, the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom God spoke thus: "Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth." Isa. 42:1. The grand feature in His service was that He never acted of Himself. He said, "I can of Mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and My judgment is just; because I seek not Mine own will, but the will of the Father which bath sent Me." "When

ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father hath taught Me, I speak these things. And He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him."
John 5:30; 8:28, 29.

The moment a servant acts independently, he acts from himself, and out of character. There is great danger of mistaking the busy religious activity around us at the present day for true service to God. I believe that God intends to mark very distinctly what man's natural understanding and power can effect, and what the power and wisdom of the Holy Ghost can effect (Rom. 15:19).

Whenever we are living before men instead of before God, there will be restlessness and disquiet. There may be the desire to do many things that are written in the Word, but they will not be done in quiet and peaceful joy. We are never really preserved from hypocrisy unless we are living before God. It is the very best possible cure for the overweening conceit we have, all of us, naturally of ourselves.

But let us seek to gather a little instruction from the history of "Moses, the servant of the LORD."

Moses was an eminent type of the Lord Jesus. And I would just notice in passing, that they are the only two persons mentioned in Scripture whose course we are able to trace from their birth on to the glory.

Moses' parents could not but recognize the remarkableness of their child (Heb. 11:23).

It is worthy of notice that the life of Moses is divided into three distinct periods of forty years.

The first forty, he spent in Egypt as the "son of Pharaoh's daughter."

The next forty, in the wilderness tending the flock of his father-in-law. There, at "the mountain of God," he had a vision of glory, such as would never have been revealed to him in Egypt (Exod. 3:1, 2).

In the third forty, we have the account of the sorrowful and trying course he had run, as the servant of the Lord and of His people Israel, in bearing the burden of that people.

The first portion of his life was spent in Egypt. And Stephen, in the 7th chapter of Acts, speaks of him as being learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and mighty in words and in deeds (Acts 7:22). But this wisdom of Egypt was not anything that God could own. Doubtless, Moses knew that God was about to use him as the "deliverer" of His people; but that which had been acquired in Egypt could not deliver the Lord's people from Egypt.

And Moses himself, "by faith... when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward." Heb. 11:24-26.

"When he was full forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren the children of Israel." Acts 7:23. Whatever ease and comfort Moses might have enjoyed in Pharaoh's house (its luxury and its refinements, "the treasures in Egypt," were all his) his heart yearned over his brethren. "He went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens." Exod. 2:11. "And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended him, and avenged him that was oppressed, and smote the Egyptian." Acts 7:24.

"Mighty in deeds," on behalf, too, of the people of God, but acting in the energy of the flesh, not as sent of God (hence, what followed), Moses was thinking how Moses was to deliver the people. "He supposed his brethren would have understood how that God by his hand would deliver them." v. 25.

But no, "they understood not," and Moses had another lesson to learn. God had to teach him that He would only be served by the power and strength that come from Himself, not by the strength or wisdom of Egypt. There cannot be two things more different than a person acting in the energy of the flesh, and one acting in the power of the Spirit. In the first case, there is always disappointment and surprise at the failure of our efforts.

When Moses had spent forty years in the wilderness, doing, as it were, nothing, we find him answering God's message, "Come now therefore, and I will send thee," thus: "Who am I that / should go unto Pharaoh, and that / should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?" Exod. 3:11.

When he comes to be sent of God, there is the deep sense of the responsibility of it laid upon him, and he shrinks from it. Before, when going forth in the energy of the flesh, he was bitterly disappointed at the failure he met with; now, he has learned his own insignificance, and he says, "Who am I?"

And it is ever thus. When a saint feels that he is sent of God on any mission, there is prostration of spirit. This may be brought about by painful discipline of soul, but the end of God's training is to break down self-confidence so that when at last the person goes forth in service it is with the feeling, "Who am I?"

One great characteristic of the flesh we have acquired by being so long in "Egypt" is the dislike to say, "Who am I?" But God must produce this frame of mind before He uses us. The most cultivated understanding, human wisdom, and research will not stand in any stead in the service of God.

"And the next day he showed himself unto them as they strove, and would have set them at one again, saying, Sirs, ye are brethren; why do ye wrong one to another? But he that did his neighbor wrong thrust him away, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us? Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday?" Acts 7:26-28.

He gets misunderstood by those whom he seeks to serve. When he would be the man of peace, his reward is the taunt, "Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us?"

Mark this, beloved. I am speaking of Moses as one knowing, in a sense, what communion with God was, but who had not learned as yet to throw off Egypt's strength and wisdom. We must fail when we go warring at our own charges. Many a saint runs on for a while (just after his conversion, perhaps) in the eagerness and zeal of the flesh, doing right things, but not in the spirit of dependence on God. By-and-by his energy flags, and he feels as though he were entirely useless, as though God could never again employ him in His service.

Now this is a profitable lesson, though a deeply humbling one. The Lord often trains an individual thus for much future usefulness in the Church. It was so with Moses.

"Then Moses fled at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian." v. 29.

These forty years of Moses' life are passed over very slightly by God. No doubt, had man written the history of them, we should have had given to us a wonderful account of all that Moses did and said in the land of wisdom. The Spirit of God is silent as to it all. And why, beloved? Because the wisdom of "Egypt" is foolishness with God, and the strength of "Egypt" is weakness with God.

During the next forty years Moses is lost to Egypt and to Israel. But then he is alone with God. In solitude the Lord meets him at Horeb, "the mountain of God" (Exod. 3:1). And I doubt not that Horeb (solitude) is thus named because it was a place where Moses had enjoyed communion with God, and where he had learned a lesson which he never could have learned when in Egypt; that is, dependence on God. In secret he was being prepared for all those mighty achievements he was soon to be called on to perform before Pharaoh, and Egypt, and Israel.

It is in solitude that God chiefly teaches His people. The blessed Jesus sought for refreshment on this earth in being alone with God. And this is the place where the saint learns his own weakness and God's strength. He enters into the depths of his own evil, and also into the depths of God's grace. He learns to deny self, to subdue imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God (2 Cor. 10:5). He proves the necessity of the cross.

"And it came to pass in process of time, that the king of Egypt died: and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God had respect unto them." Exod. 2:23-25. "The time of the promise" had at length come, and now we find Moses about to be prepared and sent forth as the "ruler" and "deliverer" of Israel (Acts 7:17, 35).

One preparation had been forty years passed in solitude, in secret training with God in the wilderness, but there was another thing needful; namely, the manifestation of God's glory. "And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush." v. 30.

There had never been anything like this seen in Egypt. Egypt was not the place for

God to show His "great sight" The wonders of nature were exhibited there, in the periodical inundation of the river and the like. The wonders of art were also there. But here was something that Moses' Egyptian wisdom failed in unraveling. "When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight." v. 31. "The bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed." Exod. 3:2.

But unless we have wisdom to understand why the bush was not consumed, we have not the real wisdom of God. It is impossible to see the glory of the living God in Egypt. It is above all human thought or conception. It is something which man has no power to explain. We may tell people of the sight, but they will not believe us; man's wisdom is at fault.

"And as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold." Acts 7:31, 32.

What must Moses' thoughts have been respecting all the glory of Egypt when he turned aside to see "this great sight?" (Exod. 3:3). And what would ours be, beloved, with regard to the world, were the eyes always and steadily fixed on the glory? When Moses was engaged in solitarily feeding the flock in the wilderness, there might have been some longings after the glory of Egypt; but these must have ceased when he had this manifestation made to him of the glory of God, "the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob."

In Moses' needing a spokesman we are taught that neither the wisdom nor the eloquence of "Egypt" will be of any avail in God's service (Exod. 4:10-16).

Very often there may be busy activity in service, but not the quiet sitting at the feet of Jesus, drinking in from His lips our knowledge of truth and grace. We much need to realize that we have to do with God, even when we are serving others.

Mark what follows. "I have seen, I have seen the affliction of My people which is in Egypt, and I have heard their groaning, and am come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send thee into Egypt. This Moses whom they refused, saying, Who made thee a ruler and a judge? the same did God send to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the angel which appeared to him in the bush." vv. 34, 35.

But God must bring Moses out of Egypt first. He could not make such a communication to him there. It was the bane of Abraham to get into Egypt. He had no altar there. And so it is with us. When we get into the world it is the same thing. We cannot have our altar. Communion with God is interrupted.

In the first place God reveals His name: "I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham," etc. v. 32. Second, His grace: "I have seen, I have seen the affliction of My people," etc. v. 34. How blessed to be assured that there is not one sorrow of His people, not one groan, but He

knows it altogether.

Then God gives the formal commission: "And now come, I WILL SEND THEE into Egypt."

"And Moses said unto God, Who am I?" Exod. 3:11. After he had worshiped God as an unshod worshiper, there was a shrinking from that which God laid on him to do, though, forty years before, he had been most eager to enter upon the same sort of service. It is a most solemn thing to have to do with serving the people of God. The responsibility involved is that under which we must sink if left to ourselves.

Moses now knew that he that would serve Israel must have a great deal of shame and reproach to encounter. Hence the need of the training through which he had been put. So with regard to service in the Church. If Paul is "a chosen vessel" to bear Christ's name "before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel," the Lord, in making this known to Ananias, says, "I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake" (Acts 9:15, 16). And what was Paul's after-experience? "I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches," etc. Again, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." 2 Cor. 12:10, 15.

Paul had the flesh crushed at the outset; crushed again after he had been taken up into the third heaven; crushed all the way through. In service, he never went on in the energy of the flesh, but as one who knew that it must be endurance to the very end (2 Tim. 2:10).

The preparation for active service is in secret with God, in learning ourselves in communion with Him. There the battle is really fought. Power for active service is acquired, not in active service, but in intercourse with God in secret.

The place of the servant of God is to hide himself and let God appear. Thus it was with the perfect Servant, our Lord Jesus. The most splendid achievement, without this, is not true service to God.

You may check your answers with those given on page 218.

Who kindled a fire because of cold and rain?

Who said, "There is a sound of abundance of rain"? 3. Who said that it thundered when they did not understand the sounds they heard?

Christian Friend: Volume 4, Everlasting Arms, The: A Word to the Feeble (33:27)

"THE eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." So spake Moses, "the man of God," in the blessing wherewith he, blessed the children of Israel before his death. (Deut. 33:1) There is little need to affirm that the blessing here pronounced—in its truest significance—belongs to the children of God in this dispensation; for "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Eph 1:3) Indeed, there is scarcely a scripture in the Old Testament which has been more abundantly used for consolation. Feeble believers—wary ones on sick-beds—led, we doubt not, by the Spirit of God, have appropriated it in all ages; and they have been both sustained and comforted by the thought—the sweet assurance—that "the everlasting arms" are underneath them, folding them, as it were, in a divine trace.

What, then, are "these everlasting arms"? Have we any indications in the Word of what is signified by the term? For though we may be able to feel what is meant, it will enhance our sense of the blessedness of the assurance, if we are able to arrive at the thought the term was intended to convey. Let us turn then, first to Ex. 28 We read there, in the description of the garments of the high priest, "And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel: six of their names on one stone, and six names of the rest on the other stone, according to their birth. With the work of an engraver in stone, like the engravings of a signet, shalt thou engrave the two stones with the 'names of the children of Israel: thou shalt make them to be set in ouches of gold. And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial." (vss. 9-12) Further on we have, after the direction as to the precious stones composing the breastplate, "And the stones shall be with the names of the children of Israel, twelve, according to their names, like the engravings of a signet; every one with his name shall they be according to the twelve tribes. And Aaron shall bear the names of the children of Israel in the breast-plate of judgment upon his heart, when he goeth in unto the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually." (vss. 21, 29)

We thus see that Aaron, as the high priest, bore the names of the children of Israel, when he went in on their behalf before the Lord, on his shoulders, and on his heart. Now, the meaning of shoulder in Scripture is strength, as may be seen from the following: "The government shall be upon His shoulder" (Isa. 9:6); and again, "And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder." (Isa. 22:22) The heart, in like manner, always signifies love, as there is no need to show. What we have then is, that the high priest upheld the children of Israel before the Lord perpetually with strength and love. An allusion to this may be found in the Song of Solomon. "Set me," cries the bride, "as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame." (8: 6) Here, it will be observed, we have the same combination of strength and love.

Applying this now to the term, "The everlasting arms," there can be little doubt that we have the same thought; viz., the union of strength and love in support of the children of God. That is, the everlasting arms are everlasting strength and everlasting love, wherewith God upholds, sustains, comforts His own, and folds them to His own heart in perfect security and repose; or, if we prefer to carry on the thought of priesthood, it is the everlasting strength and the everlasting love wherewith Christ, as our Priest, upholds us before God. Both aspects are true, and may therefore be blended in our meditations; and surely we may find in either an abundant source of instruction and consolation. We may briefly indicate the channels, in either direction, in which our meditations will necessarily flow.

If, then, we take "the everlasting arms," as explained, in connection with God—and this is in harmony with the context, as the preceding clause is, "The eternal God is thy refuge"—we may discover striking correspondencies in New Testament Scriptures. An example or two may be given. "None is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand." (John 10:29) Here the thought is presented to us of strength—the almighty

power, indeed, with which we are held in the hand of God, so that none is able to pluck us away. Speaking before the Father—indeed bearing us on His heart before the Father—the Lord prays “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.”

(John 17:22,23) Here we have revealed the everlasting love of God—or rather of the Father—calling attention now only to this one feature. Both things are seen in that familiar scripture in Rom. 8 “I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (vss. 38, 39) We are thus entitled to the consolation that we are secured in the embrace of everlasting strength, and everlasting love. And surely when we are borne down by weakness, or tossing to and fro in pain on a sick-bed, or lying wearily through long and wakeful nights, it will calm our hearts, hush every rebellious thought, yea, shed a sweet and soothing peace upon our troubled spirits, to remember that these everlasting arms are underneath us. Our hearts—poor, cold, and sinful as we know them to be—yet, folded to His heart, will be quickened to a larger response, as we feel there the beatings of that heart of divine love, and hear the blissful assurance that nothing—no power in earth, or under the earth—can ever separate us from this divine and everlasting love! “The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”

If we look, moreover, at Christ as our Priest, we shall see the union of the same two things. Indeed, it springs from the character of His person. “Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God,” &c. (Heb. 4:14) He is Jesus—the Man, and He is the Son of God. As Man He was tempted in all points like as we are, apart from sin, and therefore He is one who can sympathize with the feeling of our infirmities; one whose heart can enter into, and feel with us in all our needs, and present us accordingly before God. But He is also the Son of God—He whom God “hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds.” (Heb. 1:2) Well then might it comfort us to remember that He who “upholdeth all things by the word of His power” is the One who is seated—having by Himself purged our sins—as our Priest, on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and that it is He who bears us up there on His shoulders before God. Again and again are we reminded of these two characteristics—His heart and His shoulder (His strength) throughout this epistle. Take one more example. “But this man, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore He is able to save them to the uttermost (all the way through) that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.” (Heb. 7:24,25) He bears us on His heart in intercession, and He is able to save us from beginning to end.

Thus it is clear, also, that the heart and the shoulder of Christ sustain His people; and these are exactly the two things we need as pilgrims passing through the desert. It is true that our place is in the heavenlies; but it is also true that we are in the wilderness; and when we are made to feel that we are there, there is no consolation like that which the heart and shoulder of Christ can give us. His heart sheds brightness upon the gloomiest scene, and His shoulder will sustain us in the extremity of weakness in the presence of the mightiest foes. Thus He also folds us to His heart with the everlasting arms of strength and love. What courage, what endurance will the assurance not give us! And how blessed to give ourselves up to the sweet sense of security and of endearment which the embrace of Christ thus affords!

May the Lord give us to know ever more fully, and more practically, what it is to have underneath us the everlasting arms.—E. D.

Christian Friend: Volume 12, Deuteronomy 33:25 (33:25)

“Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.”—Deuteronomy 33: 25.

There is probably no scripture quoted more frequently than this, and certainly none more commonly used for comfort and encouragement to the feeble and aged; but the question has often been raised as to its application to the saints of this dispensation. More attention to its place and context would soon give the rightful answer. It occurs in the blessing of Asher, and it contains, therefore, for him—i.e., for the tribe—what it could not contain for us. But, like the infinite fullness of the word of God, it contains for us what it could not bestow on Asher. It runs, “Let Asher be blessed with children (i.e., have a fruitful progeny); let him be acceptable to his brethren (be in their favor or esteem), and let him dip his foot in oil”—a desire doubtless for his wealth in the produce of the olive. Then follows the promise at the head of these notes. Now it is precisely in this connection, between the last clause of verse 24 and verse 25, that the truth for Christians is to be found. Oil is a well-known type of the Holy Spirit. Taking it thus all is plain. Let the believer walk (dip his foot) in the power of the Holy Ghost, and then it may be said to him, “Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.” So understood, the promise is exceedingly beautiful. It points out that the only power for walk is the Holy Spirit, and that His strength, however our natural powers may decline, will never fail. As thy days—long or short—so shall thy strength be, if thou dost but dip thy foot in oil.

E. D.

Edification: Volume 9, Lifted Above Circumstances. (33:3)

THERE is much hidden treasure in one verse in the Old Testament — Deuteronomy 33:3. The first words are “Yea, He loved the people,” and whatever you are, you are embraced by the word, “people.”

Let us begin however with that little word, “HE.” This leads us up to the everlasting God who sits on the throne of glory, and it says, “He loved the people.” How wonderful that He should love us, for He Himself is the unchanging One, and therefore nothing will ever alter His love. It will never be exhausted, it will never grow cold. Yes, but some may ask, When did He love us? Ah! when there was nothing about us that was worth loving. When we were in our sins and ruin, away from God without any desire even to know God — dead towards Him. Then He loved us, because He Himself is love.

For proof of this we turn to the Cross of Calvary. There the Lord Jesus was made sin, and bore all God's righteous judgment, in order that God might be gloried in a world where He had been dishonored, and also that guilty sinners might be set at liberty and in joy before His face. He loved us because He Himself is love. If He loved us while we were sinners will He love us any the less now that we are His saints?

Pause here a moment. Have you yielded yourself to Christ who died for you? Being a sinner His offered salvation is for you. Accept Him now, and then you will be able to say, "He loves even me now." Blessed, present portion in this world of sadness. What will His presence be but fullness of joy?

Next it says, "All His saints are in Thy hand."

This spells safety. But do I hear some simple, trusting soul say. "I don't feel I am one of His saints"? It is not what you feel, it's what God says that matters. If you turn to 1 Corinthians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2; you will find that Christians are called saints. We are saints by a heavenly calling. I may not feel like a saint but God calls me one, and that is enough. Well, where are His saints? All God's saints are in Christ's hand.

How comforting is the word, "All." That includes you, if you are sheltered by the blood of His cross, even the weakest child of God. Yes, and even the wayward, backsliding one for His love has not altered towards you. But where are all His saints? In His hand. Not near His hand, or simply under His hand, but in His hand. Yes, but whose hand? There is one, "Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand" (Isa. 40:12). God has put everything into Christ's hand, just as Pharaoh once put all into Joseph's hand; so He can say, "I give unto my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand."

You remember the table of shewbread in the Tabernacle in the wilderness, with its twelve loaves, representative of the twelve tribes of Israel. God could look at Israel in two ways. He could see them as they were, a stiffnecked people; or He could view them typically as fragrant with frankincense on this golden table.

If you look carefully at Exodus 25:24, 25, you will see there were two crowns and between these crowns there was a border of an hand breadth. There was no fear of the loaves falling off that Table, and where is the foe powerful enough to take one loaf off? The enemy we know is mighty but the One who has charged Himself to bring us home to the glory of God is almighty. The enemy would have to break through that hand in order to touch the believer in Christ and this he can never do. The glory of God's throne and Christ's work would have to be broken, were the weakest saint to be touched by the enemy. Oh! what a word of comfort is this, "All His saints are in Thy hand." "In His hand." I see not only that my spiritual welfare is secure, but in the circumstances of this life. I am protected in the home life; in the business world too He preserves me from dangers and snares of which we have no idea. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them" (Psa. 34:7).

But these lines may reach someone whose circumstances are most difficult and unpleasant. You may perhaps have to admit that it is all your fault that you are in them.

You may be seeking a way out and looking for better days. Ah! I know something of this, but let me go just one step more.

You may have thought, that to die would be better than to live. To die would be to be with Christ and your soul longs for Him to call you home. Oh! let me try and help you where I have been helped. I would like to give you a new view point, from which to see these unpleasant circumstances.

If you will turn to Lamentations 3:7, you find Jeremiah complaining that he is hedged about and he "cannot get out." I wonder if this is what you are saying, and adding, "but then it is all my own fault, I would have my own way and all this is the result. Things would have been so different if I had heeded His voice, but alas! my life has been a sad mistake."

But it is "HE" who has hedged me about so that I cannot get out. "HE," that is the word to lay hold of. The One who loves you has allowed that hedge to be placed about you. You may be very disappointed with yourself and your life, but because God knows the end from the beginning He is not disappointed with you. He knew that you and I would turn out like this long before He called us by the Gospel. Oh the wonder of the love that knew all about us — how we should fail, and fall, and blunder out of one mistake into another. His love is unaltered and He wants our company. Blessed be His name!

It is said of the Lord Jesus when here on earth, "He hath done all things well," and He has allowed you to be found just where you are today. He knows every secret of your heart. It may be His will to still allow you to remain in those circumstances. Yet there is one thing the Lord is willing and able to do for you, and that is supply you with enough grace and patience to glorify Him in each detail of your life. Remember there is nothing too hard for the Lord (See Jeremiah 32:17 and 27).

I think I hear the unspoken cry from some burdened heart, "Lord I would like to be put right here and now." Then join the Psalmist in saying, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (139:23, 24).

Open out everything before the Lord. There is no need to fear, for He knows it all, and if you hand over to Him all the keys of your heart, and confess all your waywardness and backslidings to Him, He will restore to you the joy of His salvation. He is Jesus Christ the righteous, the Advocate with the Father, who is able to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Then is fulfilled the word, "They sat down at Thy feet." This is something to be experienced rather than talked about. To sit at His feet is to be occupied with the beauty of the Lord. Here the soul can put off its armor, as the heart goes out to Him. Have you ever sat down to be loved by Him; not to be asking for something in prayer, but just to be filled full with His company? Oh, to taste more and more of this! It is not service, but we shall be more effectual servants if we know this place well. Service is the outcome of the enjoyment of Christ.

Lastly "everyone shall receive of Thy words." Not the words of man so often faulty and empty, but pure words, the words of the Lord. Words of cheer, comfort, grace, strength, wisdom, guidance. The soul that enjoys sitting at His feet will say, "I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12).

The Lord Jesus could say to the Father, "have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me (John 17:8).

His words are full of blessing, so that we may be satisfied with God's favor. "Godliness with contentment is great gain."

T. R. Jameson.

Bible Witness and Review: Volume 1, God's Earthly Center (32:8)

Deut. 32:8.-The truth taught is plainly confirmed by the rest of the Old Testament, that Israel is God's earthly center, around whom the nations are yet to revolve, when the Messiah takes His kingdom here below; for the Jews (not the church, which has higher hopes) are the objects of God's counsels, as regards the earth and the nations.

Christian Truth: Volume 28, As an Eagle, So the Lord (32:11-12)

Deut. 32:11, 12

A mountain climber wrote of seeing an eagle's nest on a ledge of rock, cut off from all exit except the steep vast precipice below. He watched with intense emotion the parent eagles break up the nest, shaking the little eaglets out. The father eagle kept flying just outside the ledge of rock as one by one were shaken into space. All but the last one at once began to fly, but it seemed afraid and clung to the nest. At last the mother, as if impatient, pushed the little one over to what seemed certain destruction. But the father eagle, waiting, swooped down and caught the little eaglet in his wing!

The mother eagle wrecks the nest

To make her fledglings fly,

But watches each with wings outstretched And fierce maternal eye,

And swoops if any fail to soar

And lands them on the crag once more.

God at times breaks up our nest

Lest ruled by fear or ease.

Our soul's wings molt and lose the zest For battle with the breeze;

But waits with arms of love and skill

To bear our souls above all ill.

Christian Truth: Volume 16, Publish the Name of the Lord (32:1-14)

"Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He. They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of His children: they are a perverse and crooked generation. Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not He thy father that hath bought thee? hath He not made thee, and established thee?

"Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee. When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD'S portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him. He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and He made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock; butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape." Deut. 32:1-14.

It is a great comfort to our hearts, beloved brethren, when evil comes out, that all the evil and the sin (and each one that proves what is in his own heart, and finds there what perhaps he never suspected, and that Satan has used it for the casting down of confidence in the soul) has already been taken into account by God; and while it might surprise us, God, I may say with reverence, is not taken by surprise. When it was needful for the testing of the creature that the question of good and evil should be raised under the law (and we all have to learn it practically in one way or another), yet God is always beforehand. We get that in the beautiful Psalm (105:16, 17): "Moreover He called for a famine upon the land"; it was not by chance—He called for it—but then, "He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant." God had provided before the want came.

It is beautiful here that when the Lord takes up a people, the first thing He does is to proclaim His name to them. When Moses is sent to the children of Israel, and gets his commission, he asks the Lord by what name He would make Himself known to them. There is a great deal wrapped up in that for us, as for them—the way in which God reveals Himself to us. Immediately God proclaims His name to Moses: "I AM THAT I AM." "Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is My name forever, and this is My memorial unto all generations." Exod. 3:14, 15. So before they start upon their journey, before it is a question whether they will ever reach Canaan, or of what they are as proved in the journey, God comes in first with what He is, what is in His name for the people He has taken up. Surely there is our strength—in what God is.

In the passage from Deut. 32, Moses summons the heavens and the earth as witnesses on God's side; because on the people's part there could be nothing but breakdown, and hence cursing. In the previous chapter this utter breakdown is foreseen; yet in chapter 30, He speaks of the word of faith: "It is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?... But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it—that was not the word of law. Under law there was nothing but a curse; this was the 'word of faith. The Apostle so explains it in Rom. 10:8—in reality there was a new thing. When they had come into all the judgments which Jehovah had prophesied, and were brought to their wits' end, it would be a question not of law, but of faith—the word "in thy mouth" and "in thy heart."

Moses was commanded to write chapter 32 as a prophetic song to be laid up for a testimony. He begins this in verse 2 after summoning heaven and earth to witness. In Psalm 50 they are summoned as witnesses too. But that is not what I want to call your attention to. Up to this point he could not have said, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew." In all he had been saying, as putting Israel upon their responsibility in the land, he could not use such words as these: "As the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." But now he can, for he is taking up another point—what God is. He will have to foretell all the breakdown of the people; that will have to come out; they will go through all that is said in the after part of the chapter till they come to their wits' end; then they will find out what God was for them. But before that, here is the doctrine that drops as the rain, and distills as the dew.

O fellow-Christian, is not that what suits our hearts? God knows how to come in. Is it not necessary for Him to teach us the lesson of good and evil? That may be necessary, but the doctrine which drops as the rain is before that.

What was the great capital sin that Moses speaks of here? It was idolatry, the giving up of God in that name in which He had revealed Himself. If the heart turns to the Lord, when the Lord is really before us, there is always recovery. It is when the heart departs from the Lord (see Heb. 3:12) that there is no recovery. What then is to recover me? A person may say, "I have been doing wrong; I will set to work and do better." There is no recovery in that. "If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the LORD, return unto Me." Jer. 4:1. That is recovery. The grand sin of Israel was leaving the Lord. Quite true, they fell into all kinds of evil and sin and pride, but here was the great sin; and if the heart departs from the Lord, there is no center to recover to. As another has said, "A groan to God, however feeble it may be, however little we may have the sense that we are heard, yet if it is to God there is no consequence of sin which is beyond the reach of this groaning. The charge to Israel was, "They have not cried unto Me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds." Hos. 7:14. There was no turning of heart to God. Take the prodigal son: the recovery was really when he said, "I will arise and go to my father"—the turning of heart to the Lord.

Israel's great sin was idolatry. The sin of Christendom will be consummated really in giving up Christ. Then all is gone. But here Moses says, "I will publish the name of the LORD." What was treasured up for Israel in that! "Ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He." Of course I do not say that the revelation of God here comes up to what we have now. I am only speaking of the principles we get as Moses brings out this simple lesson that he learned at the bush when the Lord made known His name. Not "I was" or "I will be," but "I AM"—an ever-present God forever. That was their strength. God our strength—"He is the Rock."

Now let us turn for a moment and look on our side, at the revelation made in those words, "I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." John 20:17. And look at Phil. 2:6-11: the Lord Jesus Christ empties Himself, comes down and takes the place of a servant here, obedient to death, even the death of the cross. Now God has "given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." Jesus—What a name we have now! The Father and the Son. The Father, the source of all blessing, revealed, unfolded to us by the Son. The Son unfolding the Father here on earth, and then taking His place in heaven as having fully unfolded what God was, walked as a man upon the earth glorifying God. Now a name has been given Him above every name, "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." But do we know the power of that name? We sometimes sing:

What that name is, as known to us by the power of the Holy Ghost, what there is there, what there is in that Rock, I do not pretend to say much about; but I just quote Phil. 2 because there is a reference to Deut. 32:5 in that very chapter. "They have corrupted themselves"—that is what they have done—"their spot is not the spot of His children: they are a perverse and crooked generation." Now in Phil. 2 we are exhorted to let the same mind be in us that was in Christ Jesus. There is to be the simple subjection of heart to that name of Jesus; that name having all its power upon our souls; that name, not only as Savior but as Lord, is to sway our hearts.

That is one great point, I think, in that chapter—the name of Jesus having its full power and sway in our hearts. Thus we get the result a little lower down. As the Apostle to the Gentiles, he is absent, and contemplates his passing away from them; but then there is what God does: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling: for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.... That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke." Now we get the contrast of this in Deut. 32:5. There was what God was, but Israel never knew the power of that name. Until the last day, when really they see the Lord Jesus and find He is their Jehovah, they will

never know it. They did not know the power of that name Jehovah, but in Philippians 2 we do; we know the power of the name of Jesus, not only as salvation, but as commanding our hearts, having its sway in the secret of our souls. Well, then, what is the effect of it? Exactly the contrary of what we get here in Deuteronomy (the very words are referred to in Phil. 2:15)—we are to be sons, blameless and harmless, luminaries, shedding a heavenly light on the scene down here, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, the Lord Jesus having His sway over us.

How the Lord pleads with Israel in that passage in Isa. 45, which is quoted in Phil. 2 "I am the LORD, and there is none else." Again, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. I have sworn by Myself,... that unto Me every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall swear." Now is brought out the connection of the names of the Father and the Son; for if Jesus is confessed as Lord, it will be to the glory of God the Father.

0 that there may be a place in our hearts where that name is owned, and that that name may really sway our affections! Then it would come out—"That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." Moses had to say of Israel, "Their spot is not the spot of His children." It is a question now of other people seeing the power this name has upon us.

When the name of Jesus sways our hearts, we have before us the salvation spoken of in this epistle; that is, the final triumph of Jesus over all the power of the enemy. That is referred to in the word salvation. Paul was in prison when he wrote the epistle to the Philippians, and this triumph was in his mind when he said, "I know that this shall turn to my salvation." In chapter 3:21, our bodies of humiliation become the subjects of the Savior's power. All will be subjected to Him; even things infernal will have to bow to His name. Our hearts have bowed to that name now. If that name is hidden in our hearts, then we shall answer to what is said, "the sons of God, without rebuke [it is really what the blessed Lord Himself was], in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation." He was shedding forth heavenly light in the scene down here.

Only one word more. Just this: "The LORD'S portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." vv. 912. There could be no failure on God's side. If He brought them into the wilderness, well, "His way is perfect"; what was it but to find God there? If Paul speaks of infirmities, he can say, I take pleasure in them, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. God has led His people into the wilderness; there He led them and instructed them, but He kept them as the apple of His eye. He brought them out of Egypt to be their God, and then "there was no strange god with him." "Little children," John says, "keep yourselves from idols." If the blessed Lord Jesus Christ has His name really sovereign in our hearts, if it is treasured up there and has power and sway over our souls, there will be no "strange god"—"the LORD alone did lead him."

Then we get all the blessings they received from Him (vv. 13, 14). Then, alas! (v. 15) "Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked:... he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation." It was the turning away of heart.

O may the Lord keep us in the secret of that doctrine that drops as the rain and distills as the dew—what God is to us and for us—our hearts knowing it and entering into it. We know how it is when there is failure; we are legal often and try to alter and put it right ourselves. That is not the doctrine that drops as the rain; that does not make the tender grass grow. What can really be the revival of our souls but this "doctrine that drops as the rain"?—this name of the Lord Jesus Christ getting fresh power in our souls, swaying our hearts, so that we not only know Him as Savior, but as Lord?

People and Land of Israel, Israel, People and Land of: Deuteronomy 32:8 (32:8)

We are expressly told in Deut. 32:8, that when the Most High divided unto the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel. God made Israel the center of his earthly government. The profane history of nations, in fact, centers round it. Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, all contend for it, are known in connection with it, or actually get their full imperial possession and character at the time they acquired possession of it (i do not say, by gaining possession of it, but at the epoch at which they did). Clouds of dark traditions, scarce pierced by modern researches, hang over all the rest, and obscure their history, while they reveal their existence

In the neighborhood of Israel all is light. Prejudiced, ignorant, barbarous as they might have been, they possess and shed the light of their history on all the nations around them. It is preserved almost with modern accuracy, when a few fragments scarce rescue from entire oblivion other ancient histories. We must disentomb the remains of the Thebes and the Ninevehs to get at the history of their ancient monarchs, to know their dynasties, and say even if there were two Assyrian empires or one, while, by God's providence, that which gives some historic data to the glories of Mizraim and Asshur, confirms in its detail that of which we have already the minutest particulars in Israel's authentic history. We find in pictures yet fresh on the lore-covered walls of the country of the Pharaohs, the very kinds of overseers over the Jews making their bricks, of which Moses speaks in the book of Exodus. Modern research alone has given the place and importance to these countries which the scriptures had already assigned them.

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Christian Treasury: Volume 6, God's Care and Discipline (32:11-12)

"As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him." Deut. 32:11, 12.

These well-known, glorious verses from the song of Moses, which picture the untiring care of God for His earthly people, the Jews of old, re-echo an object lesson for us in the ways of a mother eagle towards her young.

An eye-witness reports the following incident of the remarkable actions of this bird:

"The old eagle was soaring around the site of the nest, seeking to encourage the young eagle to leave it. At last the young bird followed its mother's coaxing, raising itself with great effort, fluttering on the outer edge of the rocky crown of the mountain peak. For a little while it looked from its new position down to the world below with thoughtful meditation, then it fluttered back to its nest, remaining deaf to the further entreaties of its mother.

"Suddenly the old bird rose upward as though tired of coaxing. I held my breath, for I knew what was to follow. The little fellow was sitting at the edge of the nest, looking downward into the abyss, into which it dared not descend. All at once a piercing cry sounded through the air, and in the next moment the mother bird shot toward the nest, catching both the young bird and the entire nest with its large claws, throwing them right out into space.

"Now the young eagle had to fly whether it wanted to or not, and it did flutter for dear life. At one time above, and then again below, or beside it was the mother bird, encouraging the same by tender calls, seeking to make it understand that she was at hand. But terror seemed to rob the young bird of its sense. Its fluttering became more unsteady and agitated, and it sank faster and faster. Then losing its balance and consciousness it went headlong downward with the wings drawn close to its body into the depths below, where it must inevitably smash on the ground.

"But just then the mother eagle shot like lightning under its baby bird thus exposed to danger. The feet of the little one just touched the broad back of the mother, and it balanced itself. Then resting itself for a moment, seemed to regain its consciousness. Shortly after this the old one again darted away from the young one, leaving it afresh to the strength of its wings. Finally I lost sight of them, and when by means of my field glasses I had found them, the little eagle was sitting in the top of a tall pine tree, being fed by its mother.

"As I still looked at the actions of the birds, suddenly it became plain to me what the prophet meant by the words at the beginning of this article. God carries His own upon the strong wings of His love through the greatest dangers and hardships. He stirs up our nest so that we may not settle down in this doomed world as though this were our home. The many trials and difficulties that come upon us are sent by Him in great love to exercise and strengthen us that we may know Him better as the One who sustains us and carries us through the difficult places. Surely we can say, 'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.'

"Yet how often we flutter and go down like the young eagle, only to find that, after all, 'underneath are the everlasting arms' to hold us up. Oh, for grace to trust Him more." The Young Christian

Young Christian: Volume 6, 1916, God's Care and Discipline (32:11-12)

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may not settle down in this doomed world as though this was our home. The many trials and difficulties that come upon us, are sent by Him in great love, to exercise and strengthen us, and that we may know Him better as the One who sustains us and carries us through the difficult places. Surely we can say, 'We KNOW that ALL THINGS work together for good to them that love God.' "Yet, alas! how often we flutter and go down like the young eagle, only to find that after all, 'Underneath are the Everlasting Arms' to hold us up. O, for grace to trust Him more!"

Do these words in Deuteronomy 32:11-12 mean anything to you, my dear young Christian reader? If you know God as your Father through the Lord Jesus Christ, then they are for you, as well as once for Israel, His earthly people. If you are a child of God, you may and ought to fully trust Him, in every circumstance.

Christian Treasury: Volume 3, Public Assembly and Hearing God's Word (31:9-13)

It does not matter in the least what difficulties or dangers may lie before us; our God is amply sufficient for all, if only we have the sense of the Lord's presence with us, and the authority of His Word for the work in which we are engaged, we may move on with joyful confidence, in spite of ten thousand difficulties and hostile influences.

Moses wrote this law, and delivered it unto the priests the sons of Levi, which bare the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord, and unto all the elders of Israel. And Moses commanded them, saying, At the end of every seven years, in the solemnity of the year of release, in the feast of tabernacles, when all Israel is come to appear before the Lord thy God in the place which He shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: and that their children, which have not known anything, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it. Deut. 31:9-13.

Two things in the foregoing passage claim our special attention. First, there is the fact that the Lord attached the most solemn importance to the public assembly of His people for the purpose of hearing His Word. All Israel—men, women, children and the stranger who had cast in his lot among them, were commanded to assemble themselves together to hear the reading of the book of the law of God, that all might learn His holy will and their duty. Each member of the assembly, from the eldest to the youngest, was to be brought into direct personal contact with the revealed will of the Lord, that each one might know his solemn responsibility.

Oratory Music

Secondly we have to weigh the fact that the children were to be gathered before the Lord to hearken to His Word. Both of these facts are full of weighty instruction for all the members of the Church of God— instruction urgently called for on all sides. There is a most deplorable amount of failure as to these two points. We sadly neglect the assembling of ourselves together for the simple reading of the Holy Scriptures. There does not seem to be sufficient attraction in the Word of God itself to bring us together. There is an unhealthy craving for other things. Human oratory, music, religious excitement of some kind or other seems needful to bring people together—anything and everything but the precious Word of God.

It will perhaps be said that people have the Word of God in their homes, and that it is quite different now from what it was with Israel; everyone can read the Scriptures at home, and there is not the same necessity for the public reading. Such a plea will not stand the test of truth for a moment. We may rest assured, if the Word of God were loved and prized and studied in private and in the family, it would be loved and prized and studied in public. We should delight to gather together around the fountain of Holy Scripture, to drink in happy fellowship of the living water for our common refreshment and blessing.

Imposing Ceremonies

But it is not always so. The Word of God is not loved and studied in many homes, either privately or publicly. Trashy literature is often devoured in private, and music, ritualistic services, and imposing ceremonies are eagerly sought after in public. Thousands will flock to hear music, and pay for admission, but how few care for a meeting to read the Scriptures! There is a growing thirst for religious excitement, and a growing distaste for the calm study of Scripture and the spiritual exercises of the Christian assembly. It is perfectly useless to deny it nor can we shut our eyes to it. The evidence of it meets us on every hand. Thank God there are a few here and there who really love the Word of God and delight to meet in holy fellowship for the study of its precious truths. May the Lord increase the number of such and bless them abundantly. May our lot be cast with them "till traveling days are done." They are but an obscure and feeble remnant everywhere, but they love Christ and cleave to His Word. Their richest enjoyment is to get together and think and speak and sing of Him. God bless them and keep them. May He deepen His precious work in their souls, and bind them more closely to Himself and one another and thus prepare them, in the state of their affections, for the appearing of "the Bright and Morning Star."

C.H. Mackintosh

Food for the Flock: Volume 1, Possession (26:1-15)

EU 26:1-15{

Now this purpose, beloved friends, we cannot keep it too simply before our hearts. I find that He has a purpose about' me, and that it is this: to bring me out of one place into another place.-The prodigal's place is in the Father's house though, as to himself, he may not have come upstairs yet; and that is the case with many saints. I may not have reached it yet, but I know the desire in my Father's heart about me.

Saints make their necessity the measure of God's action for them. It is true that my necessity is met; but it is never the measure of God's action for me. If we make our necessity the measure, we never get beyond it. God never gives us anything that we do not value. Everyone in this room has what he values. He may think that he has not; he may think that he values more than he has; but the fact that he does not is shown by his not possessing it. God says you do not value more, therefore I do not give you more. He does not cast His pearls before swine; it is according to the amount of interest that you take in it that you have it; according to your appreciation of the truth is the measure of it that you have; "unto him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly."

Nothing is more manifest than that God's purpose is to have me in this spot. Your Father in heaven has a spot for you; a spot that it is His desire you should occupy; and your occupying it will alone satisfy His heart. Your Father wishes you to be there: the love of the parent wants the child to be brought into the sphere where he himself is. You may occupy it or not, but, if you do not, you have never fulfilled His purpose.

The idea is beyond all human conception! My Father desires that I should occupy this place of nearness to Him. That such a thing as this should be made known to a poor heart like mine, is to me the climax of everything! it is irresistible! I may be below the mark, I may lose the idea, but that is what is in His heart;- it is His ideal; and I wonder at myself, that I am so little moved by it. My Father has a spot for me, and the only question is whether I will occupy it.

Well, beloved, there is only One who ever could occupy the place of standing between God and me. Only One knew what the extent of my offense was, and only One knew what the love of the Father's heart was to me a poor prodigal. Only One knew the extent of my offense against God, for I must be equal to a person to know how he feels about a thing; and none knows the love of the Father to me but that One; and He says, I bear the one, I declare the other; from sin and Satan I bear them' every one, and I declare thy name unto my brethren. He encounters everything in the twenty-second Psalm, and comes in after it all like the sun shining in his glory upon the scene.

It is not only that there, is a purpose in my Father's heart about me, but His only beloved Son has accomplished that purpose for me. He has come forth to do all God's will, and, having done it, He has returned" up there, and is set down at God's right hand, far 'above all principality, and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, and has been made Head over all things to the church. It is not, as people often put it, a ladder that goes up to heaven, but a ladder that comes down from heaven; therefore the moment I put my foot upon it I am connected with heaven. The One who measures my distance is the One who is the measure of my nearness.

Yes, says the Lord Jesus, I have prepared it for you; there is a spot in the Father's house that is yours; you have title-indefeasible title to it; and, if you do not occupy it, nobody will; it will be unoccupied, that is all.

You are not true to your life if you are not in the place where your life is. The "great supper," is not salvation, as the Commentators say. Ask any-child what a supper is. and he will tell you it is an entertainment. But no one knows anything about entertainment; they have no sense of anything of the kind. People talk of deliverance, but that is not riches. John's gospel comes in to supply that. There He talks about "the gift." He says, I will tell your poor heart what will satisfy you. He brings in the fourth chapter as a contrast to the second, and the saint who is not in the fourth has gone back to the second-to earthly joys, and earthly religion. In the second the wine is out, but in the fourth the Spirit is in. In the third, He died because of me that I might have life because of Him; and in the fourth there is a sufficiency of everything; you will never thirst, the Spirit is in you; you need never go outside yourself, for the Spirit of God in you springs up into everlasting life, and leads the heart practically into the knowledge of a scene where there is perfectness of- blessing outside of everything here.

I have spoken of the purpose of God, and I will just recall for a moment what I have said. God has a place, a spot- for me. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." It is vague, says Isaiah. Now that is the idea of many souls. I have often appealed to souls, and said, Have you any idea of what heaven will be? They have perhaps had some vague thoughts about it, and I have said, You have not got beyond Isaiah. In Corinthians we get the contrast to this: " God hath revealed them to us by his Spirit;" there is the accomplishment of the purpose. One has done it, and He says, I bring you into a new condition which entirely eclipses the old one. In the fourth chapter you are superior to the man who could not get on without wine; ' and you have yet another thing: you have not only that which is superior to the man, but in the seventh chapter, that which is superior to the earth; rivers of living water flow from you; you minister to the earth instead of its ministering to you. How am I made superior to all" here? By the Holy Ghost.

All that I am stating now is in order to show that there is a spot in God's own mind for us; that He has a purpose that He has accomplished for us. In Isaiah we get that purpose, and in Corinthians the Spirit of God shows us that it is secured to us. So that first there is the purpose; second the accomplishment; and third what remains for us but to enjoy it? He says: " The Son of man must be lifted up; and faith is simple when I turn away from my ruin, and when my eye is occupied with Himself. I want to give you the connection of the Spirit of God. If, as a: believer, you are not walking in that new condition which the Spirit of God has opened up to you, you are going back to man and earth. What we have to learn „is, that we have to do with a Man in heaven, and that we have to-do with the place where Hi is. For, though We are united by the Spirit to that Man that is in; heaven, yet you have to go to heaven to enjoy the Man that is in heaven,. I say that because I see practically how it works.

It is the purpose of God first that He has that place for me, chosen by His love. I cannot tell how it draws me, that love! The Lord says: " I have meat to eat that ye know not of. My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work." I used to read it, " finish her work," but it was His work. He says I have answered to the heart of the living God in what I have communicated to that poor woman. I heard a benefactor say once: " It is a nice thing to make anyone happy by giving them twopence!" Now that is a benefactor and nothing more. Christ was happy because He had done God's work.

The third thing is the enjoyment of this purpose, which can only be by the Spirit of God.-Now I notice that people practice all sorts of deceptions upon themselves., I will just mention one of them. I hear a person say: " I have such sweet communion with Jesus;" and I am quite astonished when I come to talk with him, and inquire a little closer into what this sweet communion is, I find it is his sense of the compassion. and interest that the Lord has shown to him in the trial he has been passing through. In fact it is Jesus sympathizing with him-coming down in grace into his circumstances-it is sympathy, not communion. I do not know anything more injurious than calling low things by high names. For instance, people call prayer meetings worship meetings. A person coming to a meeting and getting his feet washed at it, will say, oh what a

blessed season we have had! Well, it is a blessed season when you have the Lord dealing with you, but, if you have really met Himself, you will scarcely speak of it in that way. We use too many figurative expressions about our experiences, and lose an immense deal by not allowing the truth to come out in its reality to us.

Though united to Christ in heaven, there as your Head, yet you must also know what it is to be in the place where He is. What many want is to get the Lord down into their own circumstances; but you must find the Lord in the place where He is. Many want Him down here; and he does minister to my wants; He came down here purposely to meet death in a double way, therefore all the sympathy that I "need I meet with from Him in my circumstances here. But besides that He says: "I go to prepare a place for you." The only thing that will satisfy my heart is being in company with the One who has won my heart; in order to enjoy a person you must be in the place where that person is. Now that is what this chapter in Deuteronomy is. You are cote into the place, you are dwelling in it, and then you find out what a wonderful thing it is to be occupied with the Person who dwells there.

Now let me turn for a moment to the epistle to the Ephesians. In this epistle the whole thing turns upon the fact, that Christ Himself has gone up; therefore the first chapter opens at what I will call the oracle. Everything is accomplished, we are. in unqualified possession. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." The apostle is not expecting anything; he is expressing what comes out in this chapter in Deuteronomy: worship-the out-flow of a heart that is fully satisfied with the portion it has got. What is worship? Why a heart that you can not put any more in. A person in a certain sense is ecstatic when he is in worship, though he may have only just been converted; worship comes out; he is occupied with the One from whom he has received the blessing; he says: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;" that is worship. Worship is not occupation with the gift, it is occupation with the Giver. Worship is the heart detained by the object that controls it. A heart looking for blessing is not really worshipping.

So here you get, as I say, the oracle. Now in olden times if you had gone to consult an oracle, as people were in the habit of doing, you would have had nothing to say, you would have only had to listen. Thus here it goes into our portion, telling us seven blessed things that God has given us in Christ; our calling comes out. But, at the seventeenth verse, there is a change; the oracle turns round and takes part with the listeners; the apostle turns round and begins to pray. This servant, who has been so wonderfully used of God to open up to us our calling, turns to pray joins, as it were, us who were the listeners, and says: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him, the eyes of your heart being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." The moment I get the prayer, I get the divine energy; and I must have this divine energy, to carry me into the thing that is already mine I feel as I read this prayer that I must say Amen to it; and, according as I say Amen, so is my heart rising up in intelligence as to the fact of the place that is already mine. Really, I am there 'through grace; I am quickened together with Christ that is my possession in life. But, mind you, I have another thing; now comes my possession in practice. I am rising up to what, as I say Amen? I am rising up to the place where God has put me in Christ, and God has set Him at His own right hand in heavenly places. It is just as much the grace of God to put me into heaven as to take me out of hell.

People think that because they have this place in gift that they therefore have it in practice; but many a man has a property who does not know how to use it; it is not the fact of having possession of it that ensures your enjoyment of it. Scripture warns us against this; "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting." Oh, but he has it! say you; and has he not had a great deal of trouble in hunting it? -Yes, but he has not used it; he has not turned it to account. Everybody knows an artisan of first rate energy and ability by the way in which he finishes his work; he shows his want of energy when he cannot give a thing the right finish. The finishing is most important; and, I say it with grief in my heart, that where I find a great deal of intelligence about the truth brought out in the Ephesians, there is often very little heart about it.

I have sometimes said to people: Did you ever lose a night's rest trying to get hold of your 'heavenly place? -There' is nothing to in more sad than the way in which people will allow that they have not got it; and yet the little earnestness they show in seeking to get it. The saying of a Man who had traveled all over the world often comes to my mind; he said: "The people who, care least about their religion, and are least interested in it, are the Christians." I am sure we ought to lie upon the ground and ask our God to do with us what He will, so that only we may be in the spot our Father has chosen for us. Can you not say: Oh, I know what I am! but take that thing out of me that hinders me from rising up to that only spot that will ever satisfy my heart.

I often wonder whether I am ever in an agony about those I know. Here, the apostle is for those he had never seen.' He does not mind losing an hour's rest that he may pray for them that they may • reach that spot. Yet that poor creature there will, not stir a finger, would not lose an hour's rest 'himself, that he might get it. The apostle was in "all agony about people whose faces he had never seen in the flesh.-What for? That they-might live correct lives? No, but that their hearts might be comforted by being brought into the consciousness of their being united to a heavenly Christ. I am united. O Christ. You are brought into association with Him in the spot where He is, and then you are made acquainted with the fullness that is in Him. If you do not know that sphere where He is, you cannot come down and be connected with what is of Him here.

Now just another point to show you how it is " that things begin to decline among us.- It is, the way in which people hold the truth of the unity of the body. I will tell you how this truth was revived; it was in this way. A brother well known among us awoke up one morning with the thought: I have a Head in heaven, and, if so, there are many others on earth who have got a Head in heaven; and therefore we are members of one another.-You are united to Christ as Head over His body, and you are brought into association with each other because of your union to Himself. It is a question of holding the Head. I must have to do, with the One who is the source of it all. I have to do with Him. I have to do with the Head, and not with the members.

In one moment we may be introduced into a region of unspeakable delights, as the apostle Paul was when he was caught up into the third heavens, but it takes a long time before we are fit to live that out down here-before we are fit to be instruments of the truth we have learned. I am sure I was fourteen years after I knew what the heavenly calling was before I was able to match it in my life. We have to be put in circumstances to test us. Instead of Paul finding that he was going to be something wonderfully great when he came down from being in such a region, he found that he had a thorn in the flesh to buffet him. If I get up higher in heaven I am only all the lower on earth; higher in the new order, but lower in the old. But I am content to be nothing if only the power of Christ may rest upon me. It was a terrible thing that Satan

could thus take hold of Paul and make a lodgment in the man. But so it was; and Paul found himself a crippled thing-not able to turn his talents to any use at all. I am made conscious of my own cripplement, so that it may be a new power altogether that is working in me. I have to do with that blessed One where He is; and I believe, when you are a few minutes there, you cannot but get a sense of what a contrast this place is to everything else.

But have I to come down into this rude world again?—Yes, like an exotic from the equator in a northern clime, by some unseen power I am maintained here in a scene that is contrary to me—I am sustained here by the divine energy of the Spirit of God. Christ's body is here, and it is as we draw upon the Head, we find what it is to represent Him here. Angels look on at the wonderful fact, that the Man the world refused is now represented by His people on the earth. As we draw from the Head we become useful members. It is not that Christ's body is only forming now, but that it is here to represent Him; and we drop, into Christ's first interest here in the measure in which we come from Him in heaven. My first interest here becomes His body.

An evangelist perhaps will say: My business is to go out to preach the gospel to the world.—Yes, so it is; but your business is to go out from the church to gather sinners, and to bring them in as a recruiting sergeant brings his men to the doctor to pass; otherwise you are a detached persona. The Lord always keeps up the complement of the body; you have to recruit the ranks, and, if you do not go out from the body, you do not know your business at all. Every member is necessary, but every member is not acting. The evangelist says: There are empty places in the heart of Christ, and I am going from the heart of Christ to bring those in who will fill them.

Well, to go on with our chapter. As I have been saying, I make this distinction between possession in life and possession in practice. In the first chapter of Ephesians I am in possession of life of the place; and the apostle's first prayer is that I may practically get hold of that place, where, he winds up with telling me, Christ is seated as Head over the body. And now I go on to the second prayer which is the fulfillment of the twenty-sixth of Deut. I am in possession, and what is going to occupy my heart? Why the Person who brought me there. When I reach heaven what will occupy my heart but the Christ who has brought me there? As one has said, the apostle, having got his first prayer answered makes the second—that your heart may be a basket for Christ. Christ, is to dwell in your hearts by faith—for what purpose? It is that you "may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and depth, and length, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." You have come now to ecstasy.

I will seek to explain what I mean by ecstasy. The apostle uses the word, and I cannot find a better he says that to God. he is beside himself. It is the fullness of Him that filleth all in all, and you cannot take it in; it is like trying to put an ostrich egg into a small egg cup; it cannot get in. You are ecstatic, and the result is you Worship. You cannot but say, "unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end." You are entranced—in the glory will be the climax of it—but even now you are entranced with the blessedness like the Queen of Sheba.

People think it will make them so melancholy; they talk of the things they will have to give up. Why do they talk of being melancholy? It is because they have not taken in what is the "great supper"—that wonderful entertainment—that wonderful scene of divine festivity—"the riches of his glory." And the heart gets the full blessing of it by looking at the thing?—No, but by looking at the accomplisher of it.

And now it is: "That Christ may dwell in my heart by faith." I grow in the knowledge, in the certainty of it all. "That you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." It is the cube—the whole area. I feel one is feeble in speaking of it, and I know why; in one way I am thankful of it—for one cannot take a person farther than one has been oneself.

Christ wins my heart. in humiliation; He satisfies it in glory. My heart is first won; second, united; third, I am in ecstasy; fourth, I worship; fifth, I am made suitable; sixth, I go out in service. It is the heart that has been made suitable to Himself of which alone it can be said: "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her." Service comes in after the rest; the tithing comes in after the worship. I lay my basket down before the Lord, and then I go out in service for Him.

But how can I be the servant of a heavenly Christ if I have not been in company with a heavenly Christ? It is in glory that He satisfies my heart. He has won my heart by the way in which He has extricated me from the things in which I had involved myself down here, but it is up there that He satisfies it. Often in your service you have allowed things here to dictate to you. One's friends 'often study themselves, not you, when they wish to minister to you. That is not real manners. Most heavenly people have learned their manners from books. Now "book manners" never count for anything; it is only company that teaches manners. You must be in company with a heavenly Christ if you want to learn heavenly manners.

Tell me what your difficulty in service is. My difficulty is to know what I ought to say. Sometimes in going to a place to speak, I have such difficulty to know what the Lord would have me say. It would be easy enough to choose a chapter and to speak on it, but the question is, is it the one the Lord would have? I really do not know sometimes what I am to say; that is my difficulty; it is not what the people would like, it is what the Lord would like. All I can do is to look to the Lord and rest in His selection.

Well, I must end where I began. It is a thing that should stir your heart, the knowledge that there is a spot that your Father in heaven has assigned for you. You cannot say: Well, now I am filled with all the fullness of God by being in Christ; there is nothing farther than that. You cannot bring your basket and lay it down before the Lord until you are practically in all the blessing and glory of that place—that wonderful place that throws everything else into the shade.

There were things that I thought I never could give up. Sometimes even now I almost wish I could take interest in some of them. When I sit in a corner of a railway carriage and hear people talking about politics, and know that I could talk as well as any of them, and sit by silent; or when they offer me a newspaper and I refuse it—a fool for Christ's sake. I have got more than communion about these things; I have got taste—divine taste. One look at that wonderful light has made me give them all up; I have got taste. And what now? I feel this scene irksome.

I cannot understand how people who do not take a heavenly place ever can get on here. I wonder people do not break their hearts at the oppression that goes on all around them, at the cruelty to animals that they see. I am sure would if I did not know what it was to belong to

another scene. If I did not know what it was to belong to heaven I could never go past a man beating a horse, or see any injustice done; I should have broken my heart, and spent my life in trying to set things to rights, if I did not know that I do not belong to this scene at all.

Well, may the Lord lead your hearts into that bright scene. Let it be the place that you seek for—seek as hid treasure. May it be a real thing both to your hearts and mine Will you not be ashamed that a little thing here should so occupy your heart, when you have such wonder, full portion up there? My heart must get into it! I do not put your own benefit before you, because that is not the thing; but I say, nothing should satisfy your heart, because nothing will satisfy your Father's heart, but your being able to come in before the Lord as in this twenty-sixth of Deuteronomy, and saying: I am come into the land which the Lord my God has given me; the Lord Jesus Christ is the One who has brought me in; I delight in the One who has brought me in; I lay my basket down before Him, and worship the Lord my God.

Girdle of Truth: Volume 5, Basket of First-Fruits, The (26:1-11)

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

In this offering of the basket of first-fruits the individual Israelite is presented in the special aspect of a worshipper before the Lord, whose goodness had redeemed His people out of Egypt and planted them in the land of Canaan. It is a constitution which the Israelite was to observe when he had come unto the land which the Lord his God had given him for a possession; and where, in the full enjoyment of the blessing, he could, in act and confession, bear witness to the delivering mercy and faithfulness of the God before whom he was to stand and worship.

He is here the joyful witness of this goodness, and in the full effect of the faithfulness of Jehovah in the accomplishment of all His promises; promises, it may be observed, which, with regard to Israel, related to their establishment by the Lord, in Canaan, as their earthly inheritance.

The basket of first-fruits is a special constitution amidst the ordinances of Israel. Its character and import are distinct. The feasts of the Lord, which presented Israel in their nationality, unfolded, in type, at least, the means of redemption and the grounds of that relationship into which the people were thus brought to Jehovah; while the offerings and priesthood presented the grounds of approach to a God of holiness, in consonance with the character He bears. But it is not redemption that the basket of first-fruits presents; it is inheritance. And the worship connected with it is individual, and not corporate. The worshipper stands here in the full and unequivocal enjoyment of all that the faithfulness of God had promised; and the offering which he brings, the confession he makes, and the joy of heart by which it is accompanied, all bear the special impress of accomplished blessing. It is an offering of thanksgiving—a sacrifice of praise.

Misery and helplessness are owned, and mercy and redemption are acknowledged; but these are only steps in the pathway to the possession of the inheritance of the Lord. They were necessary steps, indeed; but they were only steps by which the faithfulness of Jehovah had brought His people to the inheritance of the "land that flowed with milk and honey."

The worshipper is here in possession of that inheritance; and he comes with his basket to the place where Jehovah had set His name. "Thou shalt go (says the ordinance) unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place His name there." "And thou shalt set it (the basket) before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God."

What elements of worship are here brought together! How simple and yet how perfect! It is only, in truth, the appropriate owning of God in the actings of His goodness, in the results of which the worshipper has been placed. He comes not as an alien in the land, but as its possessor, planted in it by the Lord, whose gift it was. His own hand had gathered these first-fruits—the proof of the fruitfulness of His inheritance—and had stored them in the basket to present them as a witness before the Lord. They are the first-fruits of the land which the Lord His God had given him, and which he possessed and dwelt in. They are brought to the place which God has chosen to place His name there: to the appointed meeting place of the worshipper and the Lord, as He had said, "In all places where I record My name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee." The priest, too, the necessary medium of approach, is there, and has his appropriate part. "The priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the Lord thy God," the place where atonement has been made. Thus, then, we have the inheritance, the worshipper, the offering, the priest, the altar, and the assured presence of God. Now comes the confession. "Thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous: and the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage: and when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labor, and our oppression: and the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders: and he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey."

The helplessness and miserable condition of the people whom God had redeemed is fully owned. Egypt is recalled to view as the place of their bondage, with the pity of the Lord in answer to their cry of anguish and oppression. Redemption is acknowledged in all its characteristic power as the work of the Lord. And, lastly, the land, as the inheritance which the Lord had given to His people, is characterized according to the terms in which it was described, when it was yet but the land of promise, "a land that floweth with milk and honey."

At this point, there is a touching and instructive change of address. It is no longer the blessed rehearsal of the acts of the Lord; but the worshipper speaks directly to the Lord. And how simply! But this is always so, when the consciousness of His presence possesses the heart. "And now, behold, I have brought the first-fruits of the land which thou, O Lord, hast given me!"

Then comes the final element of joy, which is the appropriate expression and fruit of the heart, arising from the conscious enjoyment of all that God had thus accomplished for him, and had given him to possess, and of the relationship in which God stood toward him. For there is the constantly-recurring expression, "the Lord THY God." And here "the Levite and the stranger" are brought in, as those who had a claim to participate in the joy which was flowing from the source of the grace and goodness of the Lord.

If this offering be looked at simply, it is the presentation of the first-fruits of his land by the Israelite to the Lord. God is first acknowledged and enjoyed in the blessings and in the inheritance His goodness has bestowed. It is not the blessing apart from God, but God owned and enjoyed in the blessing. So all the blessings of God's hand should bring us to God Himself; and should bring us to God first, with the first-fruits of thanksgiving to Him. Otherwise, His blessing may lead the heart away from Himself, and God may be forgotten in the very enjoyment which His goodness has bestowed.

This is true, not of temporal blessings only, but it is often true of the blessings of redemption and grace also. How many hearts are dwelling more on their security in Christ than on Christ Himself—resting in the effect of redemption as relating to their own happiness and hopes, instead of being brought by it into the eternal blessedness of communion with God. And how many, who have gone a step further, rest, practically, in the knowledge of their position in Christ, instead of using it to enjoy and to know God, the source of all their blessing, and to whom in thanksgiving and praise it should all return. " Jesus suffered for sins once, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." The first-fruits of the inheritance which God has given us in Christ should be brought in the fullness of our hearts to God. In the enjoyment of every blessing, God should be the first in our thoughts. It is by His actings in grace that He makes Himself known to His people; and hence the character of the Giver, and the affections of His heart, become the prime element in their blessing. " God is love;" and love, to be known, must be enjoyed. And here it is infinite enjoyment.

God makes Himself known to His people by His own actings; and by these alone is He adequately revealed, whether in regard to the redemption of an earthly people, or in that redemption and grace and eternal inheritance which are the fruit of this love, through the death and resurrection and ascension and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is God acting in the supremacy of His love; and thus making His very nature to be known by our hearts. And these actings of our God are the only suited moldings of His people's thoughts, and are designed to inspire and guide the worship they present. But how far, how very far, from this, is the mere wordy recapitulation of known truths before the Lord; in which memory, and not the heart, too often, takes the lead.

The basket of first-fruits, on the part of the Israelite, was the real witness, in the presence of God, of the portion which He had given His people; however suited might be the character of the confession by which the offering was accompanied. Alas I if we have nothing in our hearts, gathered, by faith, from our inheritance in Christ—if we have nothing when we come, as worshippers, before the Lord, but the confession of our lost estate, however true; or the acknowledgment of redemption, however certain—if there be no joyous affections kindled in our hearts by their having " tasted that the Lord is gracious;"—fruits of His love stored up in our souls, to be presented in praises and thanksgiving -we are like the Israelite coming without his basket, or with his basket empty—an insult instead of an honor to the Lord. The basket of first-fruits must be brought; for it is written, " Thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God." If he had not been dwelling in the inheritance, lie could

not have brought of its fruits. " Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who also hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts." May we dwell where we are thus stablished by God, and gather constant fruit from our inheritance, so that we may say, " And now, behold, I have brought the first-fruits of the land which thou, O Lord, hast given me."

Young Christian: Volume 35, 1945, I Am Come (26:3)

The worship of God is founded upon the knowledge of the heavenly position we are in, being called out of the world into fellowship with Himself. We have not a single thing in common with the world. We can sit and sing of redemption, just as if we were now in heaven. Our relationships with God will not be in the least changed when we get home; they will be just the same then as they are now; and there is no ground upon which we shall be there, that we are not upon now. He has set us in Christ, and we can say, as in Deuteronomy 26:3,

"I profess this day unto the Lord my God that I am come unto the country" not shall come.

Present Testimony: Volume 5, 1853, Amalek to Be Destroyed (25:17-19)

EU 25:17-25:19{The Apostle Peter closes his First Epistle with the following:- "But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." "Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all" (Psa. 34:10). " But God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able" (1 Cor. 10:13). There is something wonderfully endearing in the appellation of "the God of all grace."

That which we daily need He as bountifully supplies. He fills all things; in Him we live and move, and have our being. So in His character as the God of all grace, He meets our every necessity; but not only so, He anticipates our wants: and further, under trials permitted in His sovereign wisdom to fall upon His saints, He considers every aggravation of them circumstantially and providentially; and whilst the heart is bowed down with the fetters of affliction and iron, yet, as the God of all grace, He sympathizes with our sorrows, bears with our weakness under them, would find excuses for our halting in the difficulties of the way. His bowels yearn to His saints. His anger is kindled against their enemy. " And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. 16:20). He who had the heart to find a Shepherd in Ezek. 34, had first His sympathies awakened by the need of His flock (ver. 21): " Therefore thus saith the Lord God, because you have thrust with side and with shoulder, and pushed all the diseased with your horns, till ye have scattered them abroad; therefore will I save my flock, and they shall be no more a prey." "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance," and most blessed that it is so. He knew what His people were when He gave them over to Jesus; and He gave them to Jesus because He knew what they were. All things were before Him. The past, present, and future, are as one with God. The womb of time gives birth to nothing but God foresaw it. That which is thus brought forth, gives rise to nothing but God foreknew it. O blessed resting place, the consciousness of the omniscience of God. To us revealed the God of all grace. Sin put away in the Person of Christ. Wrath fell upon him to the uttermost; grace abounds unto us. We are launched into His presence

by virtue of His work and worth; with the knowledge, too, of our need of it all. Yet assured by the Holy Ghost which is given to us, that His grace has met all our need. We are there by virtue of His blood, and in virtue of our necessity. We are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, and are passing through the wilderness to our place in the heavenlies; with the pillar of cloud by day, and the pillar of fire by night. We have recorded in scripture the trials of His people Israel in their journey from Egypt; and though in many instances they provoked God to chastisement, yet it must never be forgotten, that they excited His sympathy. Yes, blessed be God, the God of all grace, our trials have His sympathy.

But our unbelieving hearts are slow to appreciate the touching tenderness of God's love. Not only the kindness, but the manner of displaying it, as a gift, is doubly precious when graciously bestowed. Our sins provoke God's anger oftentimes; and in judgment our enemy is permitted to assail us, and to gain advantage over us; yet, when conscience is awakened and sin put away, how soon is the kindness of God manifested. A father may be angry with his child, and deservedly so; the child, in its folly, may peril its safety; yet, when awakened to penitence, the suffering of the child kindles afresh the love of the father. There will be tears on the part of the child, but the parent's hand is wiping them away. There will be upbraidings of conscience, but unfeigned parental affection softens their poignancy. The folly of the prodigal son served to reveal the heart of a loving father. We have light into the character of the one by that which was dark in the character of the other. We read in the second chapter of Exodus, "The children of Israel sighed by reason of bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of their bondage. And God heard their groaning, and remembered His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." And again, in the third chapter, in His interview with Moses, God is pleased to announce, "I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey." And God kept His word, and that by signs and wonders and mighty deeds. Pharaoh and his host were drowned in the Red Sea! For forty years he has borne with their manners in the wilderness, and now they are about to "go over Jordan and possess the land." Faith is the substance of things hoped for. Faith accredits God's power to accomplish His purpose. God ever in scripture acts in the consciousness of that power. The book of Deuteronomy is a code of laws for their guidance in the land to which God would bring them. He had revealed His purpose, and His purpose and its accomplishment are one. He would place His people in blessing yet. He would also remember their past sufferings. He had made their cause His own, and He entered into their trials as one that shared them. And He dealt with their enemies as His own, too. Indeed, because He had called forth His people whom He had redeemed, therefore Amalek hated them, and sought their injury. And their call of God, and because He had called them, exposed them to trial. Even as it is at this day. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution." And what is godly living, but seeking after God revealed in His word and by His ordinances. And trials that arise from this are only laurel wreaths-family marks, as one has before designated them, by which His people may be recognized. But they call forth God's sympathy, and are the occasion of it. They secure His protection. Our object is good, when we seek to follow after holiness and walk worthy of Him who has called us. Our pursuit of this object may be more or less earnest, our watchfulness more or less vigilant. Supineness may occasion us trial. Rash energy, also. But, whether from sloth or impetuosity we are brought into it, God in His mercy remembers we are in it, and undertakes on our behalf. "The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance." Moreover, forgetfulness of God will bring into trial; and easily, also, we can forget the occasion of it. But the love of our God to His people is from everlasting to everlasting; and His remembrance of those who have thwarted the object of that love, is everlasting also. He not only has to remind of those we should love, but also of those we should avoid. "My soul, come not thou into their secrets. Unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united." And these principles are developed in the portion of His word under notice-"Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt. How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of them, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary: and he feared not God." Could anything be more beautiful than that which is here displayed of the watchful eye of God over His people? Could motives for sympathy be more happily condensed, or ground for protection be more ably advanced? Was ever the unfortunate victim of undeserved calumny more skillfully defended? Did eloquence ever plead as God here pleads on behalf of His people? Whatever in weakness might provoke to pity is brought to the surface. Whatever increased the odium of insolent audacity is displayed to the advantage of the feeble. May His people not say, in holy exultation, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" Could power be more maliciously exercised than in attacking the hindmost, even those who through very feebleness could not keep pace with the van, faint and weary as well; dropping one by one into the jaws of Leviathan, forgotten by their comrades in the hurry of self-preservation, yet remembered by God; and their enemy ere long to be visited with just retribution? He oppressed God's people, and he feared not their God!

"Therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it." And is it not written (1 Cor. 10:11), "Now all these things happened unto them for types [margin], and are written for our admonition." Surely the God of all grace is our God and Father in Jesus. Alas! how little progress we make in the understanding of His grace, thus testified to us in the records of His dealings with His people of old, and still more fully in the light of His only-begotten Son. "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.)

Edification: Volume 9, Unequal Yoke Prohibited., The (22:10)

"Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together" (Deut. 22:10).

THIS was one of God's statutes for Israel. The New Testament command is. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (2 Cor. 6:14), and it answers to the Old Testament type. The clean and the unclean were not to be yoked together, the believer with the unbeliever, in any way. This applies to business which ought to be conducted so as to please God.

The distinction commonly drawn between secular and sacred things is certainly not found in the Word of God. We are told "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17); and again, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31). Now it is perfectly clear from this that a believer's secular calling is to be conducted in the Name of the Lord Jesus and to the glory of God.

When he enters the workshop, the mine, the quarry, the factory, or the office on Monday morning he ought to do so in the Name of the Lord Jesus, as truly as he entered the place where the disciples gathered in that Name on the Lord's day. He ought to buy and sell to the glory of

God and as under His holy eye, just as he worshipped and served beneath it on the first day of the week. It is by looking at business from this standpoint that we see the true character of the unequal yoke. Two men enter into a business. The one is a child of God, the other a man of the world and his desire is to make as much money as possible in the shortest possible time. They are committed to the actions of each other. It is clear they cannot really pull together. What the unbeliever sees no harm in the believer's conscience will not allow. If the child of God yields he compromises the truth, defiling his conscience and vexing his righteous soul from day to day; and often it ends very badly for the child of God. Prospects may be good for a time. It may appear as if prosperity and success attended them; but the Word of the Lord is firm and sure. The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil; "which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:10).

Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, a child of God, entered into partnership with Ahaziah king of Israel, a child of the devil, in a shipping business. They were to sail a fleet of ships to Tarshish and God in His mercy wrecked the whole fleet before they had made their first trip (see 2 Chron. 20:35-37). So that ended the joint business of Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah: and thus has ended many a partnership, bringing ruin and loss to all the saints of God in connection with it. Oh, let the Lord's people ponder this and take heed to their spirits and way and listen to what our blessed Lord has to say to us, through His holy Word.

T. Gray.

Sound Words - 1873, Answers to Correspondents: JOH 1:11-12; Satan Tempting Christ; Reconciling Passages in Deuteronomy (21:10-15)

Q.-What is the teaching of John 1:11,12, "He came unto His own, &c."

A.-We have here the rejection of Christ by the Jews, who in a special sense were His own. The world was made by Him, but men, held in moral darkness by the power of Satan, did not know God when present in their midst in love. With the Jews it was more than this, they would not have their own Jehovah come as their Messiah. Still there were some that did receive Him, and to those who did receive Him, He gave authority to become sons of God. There was no moral capability in the Jews to receive Christ any more than in the Gentiles. The very will of man, whether in men generally, or in the Jews specially, would not have God "come in the flesh." By any on the footing of nature Christ is simply rejected, and if any do receive Him, and thus become children of God, it is because a work of grace has already gone on in their souls. This is what is stated in the succeeding verse, very clearly, "They were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God," and therefore they received Him. It is so still. Christ being believed on by any proves the existence of a sovereign work of God already in the soul. Receiving Christ, persons consciously enter upon the knowledge of their relation to God as children. They have the authority from Christ to take and enjoy that place.

Q.-Under what form did Satan present himself when tempting Christ? Some say it was only conscience in Christ Himself?

A.-We are told nothing as to the form under which Satan presented himself when tempting the Lord. Satan is a spirit, and Christ felt and recognized his personal presence as a spirit. Distinctly recognized him as a person outside himself. He heard what he had to say, and answered him by word of mouth with scripture, "It is written," thrice over. We are not called upon to say how Satan, as a spirit, could communicate with Christ as man. All we know is, that he did. To make it conscience in Christ is blasphemy, and gives Christ a bad nature, making the temptation to be from within, from Himself through lust. We are tempted in this way, according to James 1:14, because we have a bad nature. Christ never was tempted "in this way. His temptations were always from Satan as a person outside Himself. Of course Christians are tempted in this way too, and in this kind of temptation they have the sympathy of Christ as taught us in Heb. 4:15.

Q.-" How do you reconcile Deut. 21:10- 15, with 7:3 and 4. They seem to be in direct opposition to each other?"

A.-The prohibition as to marriage between Israelites and other nations in Deut. 7, confines itself to the seven nations occupying the land of Canaan proper. The permission to marry a captive woman from a conquered nation given in Deut. 21, refers to nations other than those specially named in Deut. 7. The former were "far off" from the land, and did not occupy the country given to Israel for an inheritance. The different way in which the inhabitants of the one were to be treated, in contrast with those of the other, is clearly stated in Deut. 20:10-18. A little attention to the context of seemingly opposed passages in God's word, would save much misunderstanding.

Young Christian: Volume 5, 1915, Learning, Ever Learning (1:2)

"There are eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir unto Kadesh-barnea." (Deut. 1:2.)

"Eleven days," and yet it took them forty years? Alas! we need not travel far for the answer. It is too much like ourselves. How slowly we get over the ground! What windings and turnings! How often we have to go back, and travel over the same ground again and again. We are slow travelers, because we are slow learners. Our God is a faithful and wise, as well as a patient Teacher. He will not permit us to pass over our lessons hastily.

Sometimes, perhaps, we think we have mastered a lesson, and we attempt to move on to another, but our wise Teacher knows better, and He sees the need of deeper plowing. He will not have us mere theorists or smatterers; He will keep us, if need be, year after year at our scales until we learn to sing.

Christian Treasury: Volume 4, Barnabas: a Levite (18:6-8)

In Deuteronomy 18:6-8, the Lord anticipatively makes provision for a Levite who would come from the gates of Israel, with all the desire of his mind, unto the place which the Lord would choose. Then, when there, he would minister in the name of the Lord his God. as all his brethren do which stand before the Lord. But further, when he sold his patrimony and had given the money for distribution to the common need, he would cat like portions of the communal meal with his brethren.

There is not an idle word in all Scripture. The Lord brought all this to pass in Acts 4:32: "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.... Neither was there any among them that lacked... and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need."

Then we meet a Levite of Deut. 18! In verses 36 and 37 of Acts 4 we read, "And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles' feet." He came to the place where the Lord had placed His name and where He was working in grace. He ministered in the name of the Lord his God. Having land, he sold it, and distributed all to the common need. As a result he ate of the common meal with his brethren.

Acts 5:1 begins with "but" and the Holy Spirit makes a comparison of the action of Ananias and Sapphira with that of Barnabas.

Barnabas is seen again in Acts 11:22-26, where he is glad at the grace of God, even though the work was through others, "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord." One can hardly miss seeing that the Lord Himself was the perfect Levite in all His devoted service. Were not all of these things true of Him in their perfection?

W. Bothwell

The Remembrancer: 1903, "Thou Shalt Surely Rejoice" (16:1-17)

(DEUTERONOMY 16:1-17.)

These three great feasts of which we read here were the feasts of gathering " in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place His name in." All the males were to go up there; all the people were to be gathered up round the Lord. There was the Passover, the Feast of Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles, these three; and connected with the Passover, though not exactly the same thing, was the Feast of unleavened bread.

In Acts 2, we read: " When the day of Pentecost was fully come;" and then follows the fulfillment-that of which this feast was a type; but of the Feast of Tabernacles there is no present accomplishment. It is after the harvest and after the vintage; it is the millennial time of rest after the discriminating judgment of God has taken place, and after the treading of the wine-press, His complete vengeance on the adversaries. Then this feast comes in; it is the rest remaining for God's people. They dwelt in booths as a sign that they had been strangers and pilgrims-that the Lord had brought them out of Egypt. I just say this that we may see the bearing of these feasts. With the first of them we are all familiar the Passover, the death of Christ. And the unleavened bread we get the apostle himself applying in Corinthians: " Let us keep the feast; not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." One other point I would notice as to the Feast of Pentecost, that we may apprehend it better, and that is, that it was connected with " the morrow after the sabbath." It is outside the old creation and all that has to do with it; it has to do with Adam innocent no more than with Adam guilty; Satan's power. and sin, and death, and judgment, all that is past and gone; man, in the person of Christ, has got beyond it-it is identified with Him before God in the new creation. That is Pentecost.

" Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction." Sometimes, I do not say always, we are apt to remain in this feast of unleavened bread, and not get on sufficiently to the others. It is all right, of course, that we should have to do with it; we must have holiness: " Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." " Thou earnest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste;" Pharaoh, that is, the devil, was behind them, and they were just escaping from the judgment. It is just deliver-Ace. You get out of Egypt in haste; you are obliged to put the dough on your shoulder as fast as you can, that you may not be caught by the judgment; and so you have the seven days of unleavened bread. It is deliverance, but it is occupation with the state in which you were when you were delivered, so it is " the bread of affliction." There must be holiness, or we cannot have to say to God; but we do not get fullness of communion and blessing in it, and therefore we read that as soon as they had eaten the Passover, they were to turn in the morning and go to their tents.

But when you come to the day of Pentecost you get this: " Thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the Lord thy God with a tribute of a free-will offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee." There is not a bit of that in the Feast of unleavened bread. There they had to escape, and that was all; but here I get the heart satisfied with the Holy Ghost. They had the fruits of the land now; they had that which they were brought into, and not only that which they were brought out of. Of course, that which they were brought out of is not forgotten; we shall not forget it in heaven; it is the Lamb slain that is the foundation of everything; but I have more than that here: I have the free-will offering of thanksgiving and praise. But even that is according to the measure in which the Lord our God has blessed us; and in that "thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God." And then we find the fullness of grace: it is " with thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you." So I get here, these two things with joy: the free-will offering to God, and thanksgiving and praise; and having these things in our hearts, we have everything except the glory. We have life, we have righteousness, we have Christ Himself; we have all that the Father's love-and the Son's love can give us by the Holy Ghost. I do not say we enjoy it all, but everything in that sense we have got into—we have actual possession of it all in heaven " The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us."

So the strangers, and the widows, and everything can rejoice.

And then " thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and thou shalt observe and do these statutes." That is, there, must be present obedience, and the remembrance that we were bondmen, and then the heart free for the things that are God's there is the enjoyment through the Holy Ghost of the things that are freely given to us of God: " Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit;" and where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." God's righteousness is settled, the conscience is perfect, and we are in that place in spirit where we can be occupied with God Himself, and not merely with what He has given us.

After this comes the Feast of Tabernacles, " after thou shalt have gathered in thy corn and thy wine" after the judgment, as we have seen. That is the reason that, where it is spoken of in John 7, the Lord says He could not go up to that feast; it will be the millennial glory, and He would not go to that. But afterward He goes up, " as it were in secret," and on the eighth day, " that great day of the feast," He cries, " If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." He lets us into the new week of heavenly glory, and in the Holy Ghost we do realize it, though we are not in it yet.

Another characteristic is that it is not " according as" now, as it was in the Feast of Pentecost, but it is " because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all, etc., therefore thou shalt surely rejoice." It was all right to come out and eat the Passover, and go to your tents in the morning, saying, what poor wretched sinners you were; it is all right to remember that all the days of your life—we shall remember the Lamb slain in the glory. I have the sense that holiness must be, and I go with a personal, individual sense of it, and sit in my tent to keep the feast of unleavened bread, and bless God for having delivered me from that in which I was. And besides this I find that I have got into an entirely new place—a place in which God has made a habitation for Himself. I am risen; I am in the new creation; it is a new thing altogether, and the old thing is all done with; and so I come with a free-will offering, and worship as I realize the coming down from God of all the blessings that He has given us in the Holy Ghost. Thus, in Pentecost, it is according to my spirituality that I rejoice. It is not merely that I have been delivered, but that God's heart is to give me, and God sees flowing out from me praise and thanksgiving according to the spiritual state of my soul.

But in heavenly places I go a little farther and discover what I have in Christ; in Him I find that " all things" are mine, both " things present " and " things to come," and there I can rejoice always—there I can " surely rejoice." How could a person, if he had not spiritual power, think of eternal praise? Now it is according to the measure of our spirituality, but then it will be because He hath blessed us in all these things. God's heart satisfied with seeing us in the full blessing of all He has brought us into; Christ's heart satisfied with seeing of the travail of His soul; the saint's heart satisfied with being fully like Him and with Him, and He fully glorified.

This is where God has set us; and how far, beloved friends, do your hearts go with it? It will be surely the Lamb that was slain there; but in what measure does my soul get hold of the second feast, and say, " According as the Lord my God has blessed me?": And then how far can my soul, even new, enter into all the blessing which God has prepared for them that love Him, having no present but what is future. We are strangers and pilgrims here, but if we are right, our conversation will be up there " where Christ sitteth." God grant that it may be so in our hearts.

Food for the Flock: Volume 4, Thou Shalt Surely Rejoice (16:1-15)

THESE three great feasts of which we read here were the feasts of gathering "in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to place his name in." All the males were to go up there; all the people were to be gathered up round the Lord. There was the Passover, the Feast of Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles, these three; and connected with the Passover, though not exactly the same thing, was the Feast of unleavened bread. In Acts 2 we read: " When the day of Pentecost was fully come;" and then follows the fulfillment—that of which this feast was the type; but of the Feast of Tabernacles there is no present accomplishment. It is after the harvest and after the vintage; it is the millennial time of rest after the discriminating judgment of God has taken place, and after the treading of the wine-press, His complete vengeance on the adversaries. Then this feast comes in; it is the rest remaining for God's people. They dwelt in booths as a sign that they had been strangers and pilgrims—that the Lord had brought them out of Egypt. I just say this that we may see the bearing of these feasts. With the first of them we are all familiar—the Passover, the death of Christ. And the unleavened bread we get the apostle applying himself in Corinthians: " Let us keep the feast; not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." One other point I would notice as to the Feast of Pentecost, that we may apprehend it better, and that is, that it was connected with " the morrow after the, sabbath." It is outside the old creation and all that has to do with it; it has to do with Adam innocent no more than with Adam guilty; Satan's power, and sin, and death, and judgment, all that is past and gone; man, in the person of Christ, has got beyond it—is identified with Him before God in the new creation.. That is Pentecost.

" Seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread, even the bread of affliction." Sometimes, I do not say always, we are apt to remain in this feast of unleavened bread, and not get on sufficiently to the others. It is all right, of course, that we should have to do with it; we must have holiness: " Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." " Thou earnest forth from the land of Egypt in haste; " Pharaoh, that is the devil, was behind them, and they were just escaping from the judgment. It is just deliverance. You get out of Egypt in haste; you are obliged to put the dough on your shoulder as fast as you can, that you may not be caught by the judgment; and so you have the seven days of unleavened bread. It is deliverance, but it is occupation with the state in which you were when you were delivered, so it is " the bread of affliction." There must be holiness, or we cannot have to say to God; but we do not get fullness of communion and blessing in it, and therefore we read that as soon as they had eaten the Passover they were to turn in the morning and go to their tents.

But when you come to the day of Pentecost you get this: " Thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the Lord thy God, with a tribute of freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give according as the Lord thy God hath blessed thee." There is not a bit of that in the Feast of unleavened bread. There they had to escape, and that was all; but here I get the heart 'satisfied with the Holy Ghost. They had the fruits of the land now; they had that which they were brought into, and not only that which they were brought out of. Of course, that which they were brought out of is not to be forgotten; we shall not forget it in heaven; it is the Lamb slain that is the foundation of everything; but I have more

than that here: I have the free-will offering of thanksgiving and praise. But even that is according to the measure in which the Lord our God has blessed us; and in that "thou shalt rejoice before the 'Lord thy God." And then we find the fullness of grace: it is " with thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow that are among you." So I get here these two things with joy: the freewill offering to God, and thanksgiving and praise; and, having these things in our hearts, we have everything except the glory. We have life, we have righteousness, we have Christ Himself; we have all that the Father's love and the Son's love can give us by the Holy Ghost. I do not say we enjoy it all, but everything in that sense we have got into—we have actual possession of it all in heaven: " The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us." So the strangers, and the widows, and everything can rejoice.

And then " thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and thou shalt observe and do these statutes." That is, there must be present obedience, and the remembrance that we were bondmen, and then the heart free for the things that are God's; there is the enjoyment through the Holy Ghost of the things that are freely given us of God: "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.—But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit"; and " where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty." God's righteousness is settled, the conscience is perfect,' and we are in that place in spirit where we can be occupied with God Himself, and not merely with what He has given us.

After' this comes the Feast of Tabernacles, " after thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine "-after the judgment, as we have seen. That is the reason that, where it is spoken of in John 7, the Lord says He could not go up to that feast; it will be the millennial glory, and He would not go to that. But afterward He goes up, "as it were in secret," and on the eighth day, " that great day of the feast," He cries, " If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." He lets us into the new week of heavenly glory, and in the Holy Ghost we do realize it, though we are not in it yet.

Another characteristic is that it is not "according as" now, as it was in the Feast of Pentecost, but it is " because the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice." It was all right to come out and eat the Passover, and go to your tents in the morning, saying what poor wretched sinners you were; it is all right to remember that all the they only presented the opportunity for showing the love that was there—"perfect love." When that Son of God was put upon the cross for me, God poured out upon me such an expression of His love as can never be shown again.

I could lie down to-night and die saying one word, and that word, " Amen." Amen to all that I am—to all my ruin, my misery, my degradation—nothing too bad for me; but not stopping there: there is no comfort in that; but amen, too, to all that Christ is; amen to all the perfect love that God is to me in Him. If you think there is a single thought about you in the heart of God that you would sooner not have there, then you are not resting in " perfect love;" and you never can know the joy that God would have you know until you pillow your heart upon His love—His perfect love to you.

Can you let Him roll perfect love in upon your heart? If you can, it ejects fear as it comes in: " Perfect love casteth out fear." A resting-place for a poor soul in this world is only found in " perfect love." And God would have that love that is perfect towards you made perfect in you.

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This is where God has set us; and how far, beloved friends., do your hearts go with it? It will be surely the Lamb that was slain there; but in what measure does my soul get hold of the second feast, and say, " According as the Lord my God has blessed me"? And then how far can my soul, even now, enter into all the blessing which God has prepared for them that love Him, having no present but what is future. We are strangers and pilgrims here, but if we are right our conversation will be up there " where Christ sitteth." God grant that it may be so in our hearts. (J. N. D.)

DEUTERONOMY 16:1-17.

This chapter connects the people with the throne of the Lord in Jerusalem, by solemnities in which he surrounds himself with his people, blessed and happy in the deliverance which he has granted them under his reign. It gives us three solemn feasts—the Passover, Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles. The spirit of each of these feasts suggests a few remarks. The Passover recalled deliverance—deliverance from bondage in Egypt, under either sin or Satan. The unleavened bread was here the bread of affliction; the knowledge of Christ, or the application of Christ to the heart, though coupled with deliverance and salvation when it takes the form of repentance, (and this is the case when the question is of remembering one's deliverance,) has always something bitter in it. Joy is not the point here. One has gone out in haste, by the mighty arm of God, and if happy, it is only as having escaped, feeling that it is through the power of God alone, and conscious of the state which required it all: They ate it during the night, and every one returned in the morning to his tent. They went home with the sense of the goodness of God, with the sense that it was a deliverance from the evil under which they had been by their own fault, and to their own ruin. Holiness is presented in repentance and deliverance from the power of evil; under the form of conscience and judgment of sin it is an obligation; one dares not remain any longer in evil; they were cut off if leaven was found in the house; whereas this holiness is in itself the joy of the redeemed. They were bound to keep the feast wherever God should put his name. God gathered the people around his dwelling-place, and linked them with his name and with himself. Their nationality and all their recollections were connected with the worship of the Lord. It was another safeguard against idolatry. (Ver. 5-7.)

Seven weeks having elapsed, the people were again to gather around the Lord. They numbered seven weeks from the time they began to put the sickle to the corn, from the day they began to reap the fruit of the land of promise. They waited for the perfect time of the work of God. That which first of all characterized this feast was, that everyone offered a free-will offering, according to the blessing wherewith the Lord his God had blessed him. It is the Holy Spirit, and the blessing flowing from him, which this type presents to us. It is not only redemption, but the power of the things which are the result of it; not in full, however, —they were only first-fruits offered to God. The presentation of these first-fruits to God is the effect of the power of the Holy Ghost. They are the remnant of Israel historically in the beginning, on the principle of 'redemption and of the new covenant; but, in fact; the Church itself becomes the first-fruits of the creation of God. But the effect produced by the Holy Spirit, the effect of his presence in general, is that which characterizes this feast. There was no mention of free-will offerings at the Passover; they ate in haste and returned home. But the Holy Spirit has made the renewed heart willing; and according to the enjoyment of the fruits of the promise, according to the measure of the blessing of the Spirit of God, it can and will render to God the first-fruits of the heart, of all that he has given us. Therefore; (and it is what always accompanies this free-will—fruit of the Holy Spirit,) they: were to rejoice in the presence of the Lord their God. The fruits of grace and of the Spirit manifest themselves in joy and in grace. Blessing manifests itself in the spirit of blessing, in the joy and goodwill of grace. Blessed and precious results! Joy, and the desire for the joy of others, always flows from grace, known according to the power of the Spirit of God. Thus, the worshipper, his son, and his daughter, his man-servant, his maid-servant, the Levite within his gates, the stranger, the orphan, and the widow, were to rejoice together in the place where the Lord had set his name. God surrounded himself with joy, the fruit of grace and of his blessing. The remembrance of having been themselves bondmen was to touch the heart and influence the conduct of Israel; and, comprehending the grace which had delivered them when they were that condition, they were to, holed to act in grace towards those who were bond men to them. They are admonished, at the same time, to observe the statutes of the Lord; for the presence of the Holy Spirit, whilst ministering joy, leads to watchfulness and obedience. We enjoy the earnest and the first-fruits before God, but still it is down here where this watchfulness and restraint are needful.

When the ingathering of the harvest and vintage were ended, (that is, God having gathered in his own, hidden them in his garner, and trodden his enemies in the winepress,) then came the feast of Tabernacles; a feast, the antitype of which we have not, it is certain, yet seen. Although all the effects of the Passover and Pentecost are not yet accomplished, yet they have been fulfilled as to the event marked by them; but there has been no fulfillment, as yet, of the feast of Tabernacles. This will take place when Israel, restored to their land after the end of this dispensation, will fully enjoy the effect of the promise of God. Consequently, joy is put in the foreground; whilst in that which prefigured the presence of the Holy Ghost upon earth, the free-will offering came first. This feast was to be kept during seven consecutive days. It is joy, full and complete joy; not according to the measure of the blessing, but because God, had blessed them in all the works of their hands; therefore, they certainly ought to rejoice. The spirit of that day belongs to us, although the fulfillment of it has not yet taken place. There is a joy that manifests itself in us, in connection with the measure of the present effect of the presence of the Holy Spirit—a joy which requires watchfulness and to walk in the narrow way, and in which the remembrance of our former condition strengthens in its the Spirit of grace towards others, and the presence of the Lord is specially marked. There is a joy known to the heart, although the things which cause it have not yet had their accomplishment—a joy connected with the, time of test, when labor will be ended, and when there will no longer be any need of vigilance, for of the remembrance of our misery, to urge us to share our blessings with others. The feast itself will suffice for the joy of all Thou shalt rejoice in thy feast.

Faithful Words for Old and Young: Volume 15, Narratives from the Gospels in the Light of Jewish Customs. (16:13)

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

“THE FEAST!” There was no lack of festivals — festivals Mosaic and post Mosaic — in the Jewish Calendar, but at the mention of “ha-Chag” (the Feast), the mind of a Jew would pass by the Feasts of Pentecost, of Passover, of Trumpets, of the Dedication, and of Purim, and would rest upon one in particular — the Feast of Tabernacles. It was emphatically the Feast, sometimes even so designated in the Holy Scriptures, and commonly referred to by an Israelite under that name. By Josephus it is called “the holiest and greatest feast.” It was an occasion when the Jew gave himself up unreservedly to joy, tempered though that joy was by strong religious feeling. Indeed, it passed almost into a proverb, that “he who has failed to participate in the keeping of the Tabernacle festival at Jerusalem, has failed to taste real enjoyment in this life.”

“Succoth” (i.e., “Booths”),² as the festival was shortly called, came in the month Tishri³— an important month in the Jewish Calendar. On the first and second days the New Year’s Feast was celebrated; on the loth came the solemn Day of Atonement; then from the 15th to the list, fitly following the repentance, confession, and atonement of “the Day,” came the joy of “the Feast.” On the 22nd was a solemn convocation, reckoned as a separate festival. There was a two-fold source of rejoicing. On the one hand, it was a harvest-thanksgiving — “a harvest home,” as we may say — when the corn and wine, the ordinary tokens of abundance and joy, being gathered in, 4th the presence of Jehovah was sought in the place where He had set His Name. Every male must go up thither, and none might go empty-handed. Of the abundance which God had given, they were to give to Him. But more than this, it was a remembrance-feast. “Forget not all His benefits” was a sentiment woven into the law of the festival. It spoke of the release from the “house of bondage” to the liberty bond the Red Sea. It spoke of the providential care in the wilderness. It was a reminder to all generations that Jehovah had made Israel to dwell in booths when He brought them out of the land of Egypt. So, with hearts made glad by the remembrance of the past, and by the bounty and plenty of the present, the happy people would troop up to Jerusalem, from far and near, not only from the parts round about Jerusalem, but away from the most distant districts of the Holy Land, and even from the countries of the Dispersion.

The Gospel of St. John is the only one which refers to the feast by name. We read that as the feast drew nigh, the Lord Jesus was in Galilee. 5In Judæa, the Jews were persistently seeking to kill Him. He came to His own, and His own received Him not. Nay, even among His brethren the same unbelief prevailed. “Depart hence and go into Judæa.... If Thou do these things, show Thyself to the world.” But that was not the path of the Lord. Truly, if He had wished to win the popular applause, no time could be more favorable: Jerusalem thronged with eager, impulsive people, many of whom had heard of Him, and would fain see Him. But His time was not yet come. “Go ye up unto this feast,” is His answer; “I go not up yet unto this feast.” So He tarried, and His brethren, having no controversy with the world, left Galilee, doubtless with many other pilgrims, a happy company. They must reach Jerusalem by the 14th Tishri, to begin the feast on the morrow.

So they went, and in time the Lord followed, as it were in secret. Reaching Jerusalem, what a strange sight would greet unfamiliar eyes The streets and courts filled with leafy booths! With branches of olive, pine, myrtle, and palm, and branches of thick [leafy] trees booths were constructed upon the roofs, in the house-courts, in the Temple-courts, in Water Gate Street, and in the Street of the Gate of Ephraim, as in Nehemiah’s time. 6They must (according to the traditional law) be constructed from living trees; they must not wholly exclude the sunshine, nor might they be too open. They were the chief dwellings of the week, and in them eating, sleeping, prayer, and study must be carried on.

But more, the law said, “Ye shall take you on the first day the fruit 7of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of thick [leafy] trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord seven days.” These were not used to construct the booths, but were carried in the hands. The fruit of the goodly trees (said by the Rabbis to be the citron) was held in the left hand; the branches, tied together in a defined order, and termed the lulav, were held in the right. The palm ran down the center; on the one side the willow; on the other the myrtle, which (again according to the Rabbis) was the “thick” or leafy tree referred to. All persons, even children able to shake it, were bidden to carry the lulav.

The Temple services were, as always, very striking. Hundreds of white-robed priests and Levites took part in the services. At intervals the blast of silver trumpets or the chant of the Hallel filled the air. All day long the smoke of sacrifices ascended to heaven. No less than seventy bullocks, fourteen rams, and ninety-eight lambs were offered during the feast. 8It may have been that on the occasion referred to in the gospel there was that public reading of the Law, which the Law itself enjoined on every seventh year. 9

But there was another ceremony of so great importance that it gave to the feast the distinctive name of “The Feast of the Drawing of Water.” At the time of the preparation of the morning sacrifices two processions were formed — the one going to the Kedron Valley, from whence they brought willow branches, to adorn the altar of burnt offering, forming a leafy canopy over it, the trumpets of the priests meanwhile sounding a joyous blast; the other procession went down with strains of music to the pool of Siloam. The most important person in this company was a priest carrying a golden ewer. This having been filled with water from the pool, they returned through a gate, which hence received the name of Water Gate, greeted there by a three-fold trumpet blast. They timed their return so as to reach the Great Altar just as the officiating priests were laying the sacrifice upon it. At the left side of the altar were two silver apertures — the one into which the wine of the drink offering was poured; the other receiving the water from Siloam. This pouring out of water was so important, that, according to Josephus, the people on one occasion pelted the high priest with their citron fruit, because, to show his contempt for the Pharisees, he had poured the water upon the ground instead of into its receptacle.¹⁰ It may be asked, “Is there any Scripture warrant for this rite?” None at all, but the Rabbis ever make Scripture support their doctrines and customs. Hence the Talmud says (and the words are of the deepest interest in connection with the words of Jesus and the comment of the evangelist), “Why is the name of it called ‘The drawing out of water’? Because of the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, according to what is said, ‘With joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation.’”

Then came the solemn chanting of Psa. 113-118. (commonly called the Hallel) to the accompaniment of flutes. As the choir gave out the words, “O give thanks unto the Lord!”¹¹ and later: “Save now, I beseech Thee, O Jehovah!” [Hosanna]¹²; and again: “O give thanks unto the Lord”¹³ shook their lulavs towards the altar, thus giving praise “with heart, and mouth, and hands.” The public service closed with a procession of priests round the altar, while again they chanted their Hosanna.

So day after day went on, a thousand voices from Temple, sacrifices, and services speaking of the Christ who was to come. He came. In the midst of that feast Jesus went up to the Temple and taught, and though some were moved by His words, the solemn tale is one of rejection and refusal. “Thou hast a devil!” “We know this man whence He is.” Did they know? They might have done so had they heeded His words; their own ceremonies might have spoken to them of Him. We cannot help wondering if the name “Siloam (which is by interpretation, Sent,”¹⁴ did not, even in their dull minds, connect itself with the reiterated utterance of the Lord, when speaking of “Him that sent”¹⁵ Him. But, with all their assurance, they knew nothing.

Yet the compassion of Christ could not be limited; His love could not be hemmed in, and on “the last day, the great day,” He again presented Himself to the people, and gave what we may call articulate words to the voices which spake of Him. It was the seventh day, called by the Rabbis “the day of the Great Hosanna,” for upon it the procession of priests went round the altar seven times, chanting the Hosanna — “Save now I” of the Hallel. On that day, too, as the people left the Temple, they saluted the altar with thanks, shook off the willow branches from it, and beat their lulavs to pieces. On that afternoon the booths were taken down, and the feast closed. On this last day the unwelcomed

Messiah would once more speak, if any would but hear. With all that outward joy, were there no weary hearts, no thirsty souls? Nay, did not their very Hosanna express a want? "Send now salvation, Jehovah, I beseech Thee!" And there He stood, who alone could satisfy such weary hearts, who alone could pour floods upon him that is thirsty. And He alone was "Jehovah-Salvation."¹⁶ And so, doubtless when the water from Siloam was poured out, and when the prayer had again been chanted, His voice broke out with the cry: "If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." He gave, again we say, a voice to all that was going on around Him. As it has been well said: "He interrupted not the services, for they had for the moment ceased: He interpreted and He fulfilled them." And the evangelist, as though alluding to the meaning attached by the Jews to the outpouring, adds: "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive."

Very briefly is the result told. Some said: "Of a truth this is the prophet"; others: "This is the Christ"; while others "refused" that "Stone" of which the very Psalm just sung, had spoken.¹⁷

Nearly nineteen centuries have passed, and with the centuries have passed the glories of the Tabernacle Feast. No longer can we hear the chant of the priests. The solemn music of the silver trumpets no longer rings through the Temple courts. No longer is Jerusalem thronged with happy worshippers.¹⁸ The sacrifices have ceased; the glorious Temple is razed to the ground. But there still remain thirsty ones, such as then trod those courts, and, blessed be His Name, the voice of Jesus still resounds with its tidings of blessing. "If any man thirst, let Him come unto Me and drink." Are you, dear reader, thirsty? Still are those living waters to be had, if you do but "come" and drink. Nor is the blessing merely for your own refreshment and joy; the rivers of living water (no longer a pool, like Siloam) will carry blessing to others, fulfilling that word of old: "For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert."¹⁹

Bible Herald: 1877, Redemption, Liberty, and Glory (16:1-18)

Read Deut. 16:1-18.

The great purpose of God is to gather a people around Himself for blessing.

These feasts are the witness of this. They had all to go up to a certain place three times in the year, but the object was that, as God's people, they might be around Himself for blessing. God is, so to speak, sufficient for Himself. He needs nothing else to make Him happy but he wishes to make others taste of His happiness and blessedness. At the tabernacle or temple this was the thing declared.

By turning to Exod. 19:45, 46, we see the reason why He made them set up the tabernacle— "That I may dwell among them." They were saved when the Egyptians were slain; they were emancipated from Egypt when Pharaoh and his army perished. But what consummated their happiness was, that they had God to dwell amongst them, and be their God. This the Church will fully enjoy in the coming glory. Now we know it in spirit and by faith. God's children are redeemed that they may gather around Him, and that He may make them happy in connection with Himself.

These three feasts here mentioned have each a different character which applies to the varied experience of our souls. They mark the three great paths in our journey.

They are, 1st, The Passover; 2dly, The Feast of first-fruits; and 3rdly, Tabernacles.

The feast of tabernacles has never yet had any anti-type. The other two have. Christ slain on the cross for us answers to the passover. The resurrection of Christ, the first of first-fruits, and day of Pentecost answer to the feast of first-fruits. Israel was to keep the feast of tabernacles in the land, but to find their rest it will have its great celebration in the coming age. The Church will keep it in glory, and the Holy Ghost now gives our souls the savor and joy of that day of Sabbatic rest and eternal glory. In all these feasts the one great circumstance was, they had to go to God; and so is it now with us, for whether it be the redemption of Christ, or the Holy Ghost, or glory, all must take our souls to God. We now turn to look at the specific character of each feast.

1st, THE PASSOVER. —The first thought is what we are brought from, not what we are brought to. So long as we look at Christ's death as merely saving us from destruction, it will be only like Lot escaping for his life. It is no doubt a great thing to see ourselves snatched from hell and destruction, and in the sense of this, though with awakened confidence in God's love, we must first come, but this is not the great end of God in saving us. We are to pass on to know His love, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and this leads the soul into communion. We can never lose sight of the value of the blood. This is impossible; but I may look at the blood either with the eyes of God, as it were, or with the eyes of man. When it is the latter, I view it with the sense of mere need; then this need being satisfied, I may just rest in what I have got, without much communion with God about its value. Mere need was the first thing with the Jew in Egypt. In the darkness and dead of night the angel was doing his awful work of destruction, and the sprinkled blood pleaded for him.

In this state he was led out of Egypt. "The Lord brought thee out by night." The light of day had not yet broken upon him, but still he was safe. Man's need being the character of this feast, it is not characterized by communion, the Jew who kept the passover turned in the morning and went to his tent.

But this feast was also to be kept "with unleavened bread and bitter herbs." As cleansed by the blood, they were to put away all uncleanness from their dwellings. To be holy, we must mortify the flesh and deny its cravings, and holiness has the character of an obligation, a necessity; and so it is. As a mere necessity it is not pleasant.

Another thing in this feast is that they knew God only in the character of a Judge. Of course His own love had directed them to the blood, but still the character in which He is seen is that of a Judge. The blood then stands between them and God. They are sheltered by it; He passes over them.

So is it when we first look at the cross. We see God as a Judge executing the sentence on the head of Christ. This surely teaches us that we are not to be destroyed. This is a great thing, but it is not the full joy of the Christian. To keep God out is not our full blessing. The first thing that brings the soul to Christ is its need. We may know very little about Him, but we know none but Christ can save us. At first we cannot look at Him as a precious object to discover and delight in its properties, but as a starving man would look at food which his hunger forces him to eat.

2. FIRST-FRUITS FEAST. —This feast is the consequence of the former. The resurrection of Jesus follows on, and in one sense results from, His death on the Cross. By this the soul gets into its true place—it gets into liberty, This is intimately connected with the presence of the Holy Ghost. By this the soul is set at liberty (see 2 Cor. 3:17; Gal. 4:1-7; Eph. 1:13,14).

Here, too, for we enjoy this by the Holy Ghost, the soul is led out into thanksgiving and praise, and beyond its own wants to think of and minister to the wants of those around. The soul now walks in a large place; they are here in the presence of God. No question now about sin. They are out from Pharaoh and in with God.

They keep the feast with a tribute of a free-will offering. Love constrains: the fatherless, the widow, and all have their portion here. They were all made happy by the outgoings of this full joy, which God had diffused around Himself and His people.

This has its antitype in the Church, and is displayed in Acts 2:42-47: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them daily such as should be saved." Along with "gladness and singleness of heart, praising God," the tribute of a freewill offering, "they had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all as every man had need." "The love of Christ constraineth us," is the great motive for Christian liberality and devotedness. This is based upon redemption, but effected by the Holy Ghost. But in the height of all this joy they would never forget that they had been in Egypt (see ver. 12.) If we can minister to others we must do it in the remembrance that we had been in Egypt, and that God has brought us out of it.

The next thing is watchfulness. Joy in the saint often leads to weakness—it should always lead to worship. But diligent obedience is the fruit of 4 the presence and operation of the Holy Ghost, as well as praise, and love to others. Here joy was according as they were blessed.

3rd. THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES. —This takes us on beyond the Holy Ghost's presence—in the Church to the day of glory. Then there is no watchfulness, no doing—God has blessed them in all the works of their hands; therefore, they were to rejoice in this feast; this is the moment the Church looks for, it cannot rest short of this It has joy and peace as its present portion, but it looks for more, and all its expectations shall be satisfied, for at last we shall find ourselves in glory. God will reap his harvest, and when He gathers in all His corn and wine, then there will be full and eternal joy. But we know the things that are freely granted us of God now. We may note these three things:

1st, The soul is redeemed; 2nd, It has full liberty; 3rd, It looks out for that full rest in glory that is coming.

The more I know of God, the more joy I'll find in Him, and the less I'll be able to find in the world. We see this in our blessed Master, and we will be like Him. God will bring in a rest and a glory worthy of the blesser. It is Himself He has to satisfy, and in the end everything will fully answer to His own boundless desires. In conclusion, I would ask, beloved friends, where are our hearts now? Can I say not only that I am brought out of Egypt, but have also passed into the joy of the feast of firstfruits, and in what measure; and, besides, that I am now daily looking out for all that glory that is fast approaching!

What God looks forward to is to have us around Himself, not merely saved, but in His own house; just like the prodigal's father—he makes a feast, and says, "Let us be merry," when he gets his poor lost son home. There is an hour coming when there will be nothing but festal joy in our Father's house. May we all long more for it. Then will be the true feast of tabernacles for us while the world itself will have rest in that day.

—M.S. Notes of a Lecture.

Christian Treasury: Volume 4, Are You Happy? (12:7,12,18)

God's thought at creation was that man should be happy. Not only was he upright, but he was made in the image of God. With the rest of creation, he was pronounced to be "very good."

He was distinguished, however, from other creatures in a way most remarkable, for "The Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Thus He, who only has immortality, gave to man an immortal soul. Besides all this, God blessed him. Male and female created He them, and God blessed them, and set them in dominion over other creatures. Man in the beginning was happy and honored. He was set by his Creator in the position of superiority and enjoyment.

But man soon sinned, and then death came, and judgment too, for God "drove out the man." Then man, when driven out, only proved himself to be evil and that continually, after God's repeated interference in judgment. Instead of turning toward God with repentance, he made gods of his own, and honored and served the creature more than the Creator.

In this state of things God called out one man, Abram, for Himself saying, "I will bless thee," and when he believed, God counted his faith for righteousness. He promised him that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. Thus we see that God's mind was that man who had to do with Him should be happy.

In process of time, Abram's seed, the children of Israel, were brought out of Egypt in virtue of the blood of the lamb, and by the mighty power of God. Thus delivered from misery and bondage, although a people in the flesh, they were brought into a relationship of nearness to Jehovah. Again, God showed that it was His mind that man should be happy, for not only did He bless them in a marvelous way, but again and again called upon them to rejoice. "Thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto." (See Deut. 12:7, 12, 18; Lev. 23:40.)

And so now, in a higher and an eternal sense, it is clearly the Lord's mind that those who are His children should be happy. Not only has He given us remission of sins and created us in Christ Jesus, but He has shed abroad His love in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us, and "has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 5:5; Eph. 1:3, 7.) Being thus brought into nearness and relationship to God, and having the Holy Spirit in us, we are brought into fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. Thus our minds, in our measure, can run in the current of God's thoughts and our hearts can dwell in the circle of His love.

The Lord Himself now becomes the proper object of our affections, and the source of all our blessings. Our eternal life and prospects are all bound up with Him. His personal glory, His infinite worth, His excellence and perfection, His accomplished work on the cross with the various official glories He sustains, and His coming again now engage and cheer our souls. We are therefore enjoined to "rejoice evermore," to "rejoice in the Lord always," yea, to "joy [or boast] in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the [reconciliation]."

Our Lord instructs us as to the joy there is in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. When the shepherd found his lost sheep, he took it home upon his shoulders, rejoicing, and called his friends and neighbors to rejoice with him. The father rejoiced because he had received his lost son, safe and sound. Thus we are informed that the Father and the Son in heaven rejoice when a sinner is really brought to God. After this, our Lord so instructed His own disciples who were clean through the word which He had spoken to them that He added, "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." John 15:11.

We clearly see from this that it is the Lord's mind that believers should be happy. Early Christians knew well the precious reality of it. Jesus, after His resurrection, presented Himself in the midst of His sorrowing disciples who were shut in for fear of the Jews, and showed them His hands and His side saying, "Peace be unto you." Next we are told, "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord." At the close of Luke's gospel, when Jesus was parted from them and carried up into heaven, He left them so happy that "they were continually in the temple praising and blessing God." Happy people because wholly taken up with their crucified and ascended Savior!

Again at Pentecost we find believers in such a happy state that we read they "did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart praising God." After this, in a solitary corner of the earth, no sooner was the Ethiopian eunuch brought to a true knowledge of his eternal salvation by Christ alone than he went on his way rejoicing. The Philippian jailor rejoiced too, when only a little before amid the distressing circumstances of his position, he would have rashly put an end to his existence. This man cast himself on Christ alone for salvation according to the word of His faithful servants, and rejoiced, believing God with all his house.

Elsewhere we are taught in the Word of God that "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." We certainly do well to lay this scripture solemnly to heart, for we read of disciples in a former time who were filled with joy and with the Holy Ghost. (Rom. 14:17; Acts 13:52.)

Paul prayed that saints might be filled with all joy and peace in believing. John says in his first epistle, "These things write we unto you, that your joy might be full." Peter speaks of others whose joy in the Lord was so abundant that they "rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory." How sweet and comforting it is to know that it is the will of God that believers should even now be unspeakably happy!

Perhaps someone will say, "You would not speak so confidently of the Christian's happiness if you knew what I have to contend with in myself." But who ever heard of self being the source of true happiness? On the contrary, "In me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." Besides, are we not assured by the unerring word of the living God that our old man is crucified with Christ?

So we are enjoined to "reckon ourselves to have died indeed unto sin," which means not to reckon ourselves to be living, but dead, done with at the cross. There we are seen in Christ our Substitute under the judgment of God, dead upon the cross.

Thus are we freed, judicially freed from our old man—our Adam standing—and are enjoined to think of ourselves as alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Happy are those who reckon as God would have them, and always know they are seen by God as in Christ Jesus in heavenly places! Such only have done with self.

But others may be ready to say, "If my circumstances were altered, I should indeed be happy." Or they might say, "If I were only delivered from this pressing trial, I should then rejoice." But this is not so. If your present joy is dependent on your circumstances, it is precisely what much of the worldling's joy consists of, and needs neither grace nor faith. That we should look carefully into all our matters in order that we may honor God in them, is true enough, but circumstances, however prosperous, should never be the spring of a Christian's joy, however much they may be the occasion of present thanksgiving to God.

On the contrary, it is often in the deepest waters of affliction that the Christian knows the greatest joy in the Lord. It was so with the saints in 1 Peter 1:8. They were in great trial and heaviness: houseless, homeless, in a foreign region, with all the sufferings connected with a persecuted and scattered but harmless people. But how full of joy they were! Is there anything in Scripture that exceeds it? And so it was with Paul and Silas. Was it not when their backs were smarting from the lacerating scourge and their feet made fast in the dungeon's stocks that they were so truly happy that they sang praises to God? Let us lay these things to heart, and ask ourselves why we are not more characterized as a happy, praising people.

There are three points of instruction on this subject brought before us in the verse already quoted. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." 1 Peter 1:8. We have here, first, the spring of the Christian's happiness, secondly, the secret of its realization, and thirdly, its measure.

1. The spring of our happiness is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself—"in whom, though now ye see Him not... ye rejoice." It is the man Christ Jesus in the glory whom we now see by faith. All our resources are in Him and it is vain to look elsewhere, for all other streams are dry. He is the Rock which was smitten, and we have only now to speak to the Rock, and He will give forth His waters. He only is the fountain of life. He is before the face of God in glory for us and we are complete in Him, in whom all fullness dwells, who is the Head of all principality and power. Let it then be a settled fact with our souls that Christ Himself, not friends, nor self, nor circumstances, but He Himself is the only source of our happiness.

2. It is by the activity of faith in Him that we have present happiness. A person may be a true believer and yet not be exercising faith in Him, not having his thoughts and heart running in the channel of divine truth concerning Him. It is the soul's having to do with Him now, whom we have not seen, but who is revealed in the Word, that we have present joy, not thinking of Him according to our poor thoughts, but as God has revealed Him to us in His Word. Hence we read, "In whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice." Let us not expect to be happy if we are brooding over our bodies, feelings, circumstances or attainments. Occupation with Him alone enables us to rise above these things. We can exultingly sing:

3. As to the measure of our joy, our Lord said, "That your joy might be full." John, as we have noticed, so writes that our "joy might be full," and here it is recorded of Christians of olden times, that they "rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory." To dwell on the infinite fullness and perfections of the person, work, and offices of the Lord Jesus Christ is to dive into a boundless ocean of divine love. Then our thoughts are launched, as it were, into glory. We enter upon the boundlessness of the eternal and unchanging love and glory of God. The rich, free, and unmerited love of God has "called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus"! Though now by faith we rejoice in Him, the next moment our Lord may come and take us there. Then faith will be changed to sight, for we shall see His face, be with Him, and be like Him forever.

C. H. Mackintosh

Food for the Flock: Volume 5, Dependence and Obedience (11:1-17)

EU 13:1-18{EU 11:1-17{

We all admit the fact that God has a place for us hereafter, but Canaan is not a future place; it is heaven on earth at the present time. We belong to another place altogether; we are on earth in a place that we do not belong to. I belong to heaven, but I am on earth, and that is Canaan. I am out of Egypt, and I have to learn the wilderness, and the man who is mostly in Canaan is the man who best understands what it is to be in the wilderness, for the higher you go the better you understand what it is to be dependent.

In the history of Israel they needed the wilderness to get into Canaan, and then they left it. It is not so with us; you often get contrasts in this way in Scripture. It is not that we leave the wilderness for Canaan, but that we are in the wilderness as belonging to Canaan. A person may say, You are not in heaven; and I answer, That is true, but I am united to One who is, and I am nearer to that One than to any other. I am on the earth, but I am united to One who is in heaven; and the more I know that, the more I am in Canaan. Besides this, I get no support whatever from this earth that I am on; so it is the wilderness to me. And the more you advance in the knowledge that you are a heavenly man the more novel, the more distressing, the more severe, the more extraordinary, the more unaccountable, will be the trials that you are subjected to in order that you may be dependent, lest being puffed up you should lose your high position through independence or wilfulness.

There are many people who are converted who are not sure that they are saved; and there are many who are saved who do not know that they are heavenly. But all these stand or fall together. As we read, "The land the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance; " it is a gift. I am as much a heavenly man as a saved man. I may be a very useless British subject, but I am one all the same. It is a great thing to get hold of the calling: "Walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye are called." I lay it down as a settled thing for your soul, that you must say, I am as much a heavenly man as I am a saved man. He has already united me to Himself there, and, when He comes, it is that He may take me to the place where He is. I have not got to heaven yet, but I belong to the One who is there.

Man naturally never rises to this even when he is converted. Take, for example, the thief on the cross. He says, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." No, says the Lord; to-day in paradise. He was to have, not the kingdom, but heaven. Take another case, that of Stephen. He looked up and saw "Jesus standing on the right hand of God," and he turns to his murderers and says, You are going to send me out of this place, but it is only to send me to heaven. Take a still farther case in Paul. He says, "I knew a man in Christ, whether in the body I cannot tell, or whether out of the body, I cannot tell; " I have lost all sense of things here. Every person does not get so high as Paul did, but every one is entitled to be where Stephen was.

It is a great thing to be able to walk about and say, I do not belong to this place at all; it is nothing but wickedness. Take an amiable man in nature. As he suffers in seeing all the disorder, misrule, cruelty, that is around him, what a relief to him to be able to say, My citizenship is not here; I am not responsible for it. My citizenship is in heaven. I say it is an immense thing. God says to me it is not my place. When He began with Abram, He called him out and said, This is not to be your country; come out of it to a land that I will show you. And so now God says, I do not give my people a place where my Son is rejected, but a place where He is received. I am a heavenly man, not by attainment, but by the gift of God. I am as much a heavenly man as I am a British subject, whether I am acting well or not.

Some seek to escape the edge of this truth by refusing to be called heavenly; but you are a heavenly man by calling. Heaven is your place: it is the first thing that is brought before you as a saved person.

I turn to these two Scriptures to show that no height to which grace elevates us at the present moment ever takes us out of dependence here. Nay, if we lose dependence, as some have done, we bring reproach on the truth we are brought into. What keeps us in the high position is dependence. A man who learns obedience without dependence is legal. What was the great lesson of the wilderness? Not simply to "humble thee," but "to make thee know that man Both not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord

cloth man live." That is, that you are to be dependent on the word of God; and then you are obedient. Obedience when you are looking for a rule is legal. Dependence is what I learn in the wilderness, and obedience is what keeps me in Canaan: but it is obedience as the consequence of being a dependent man.

Look at the Lord: the most heavenly Man; "the Son of man who is in heaven." And what is He down here? The most obedient one. He says, I have not got a word from God, so I cannot turn the stone into bread. I have learned to be a dependent man, and because I am a dependent man therefore I am an obedient man. I "live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." That is the place of a heavenly man upon earth.

It is then in proportion as you enjoy the land that there will be trials in the wilderness. So much so, that even Peter, who does not get out of the wilderness at all, says: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you." I am passing through the wilderness; and the only thing I have to keep my eye on here, as Peter says, is the enemy of God. Peter, as we have seen, never puts you out of the wilderness. John is the first who puts you out of it; and he does not put you in heaven-only gives you a heavenly life on earth. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour." I have different enemies—three great ones, at any rate. There is Pharaoh; that is the clutch, the grasp, of the world. There is Amalek; that is the power of Satan to hinder. And there is Balaam; that is the snare of socialism. And these you do not get in Canaan at all.

The warning of these two chapters in Deuteronomy is, that, if you do not obey, you will lose all. He shows you all the abundance of things, the contrast that there is between Canaan and Egypt; but will all this go on? Are you sure of it? Not if you are not obedient. If you are not happy there, you are worse off than in Egypt. There was water there, any how when you worked for it with your foot; but here there is none unless it come down from heaven. We get on to heavenly ground, and we rejoice in the fact; but we keep it only by obedience. All we have in the wilderness is the terrific opposition of the enemy of God. We are attacked by the way; but we do not become aggressors ourselves until we get into the land. And what is the result of aggression? It is getting place for Christ. Those who fought the holy wars were seeking material space for Christ; they had not intelligence as to His mind. What we want is to get moral space for Christ.

In 2 Cor. 12, we get the brightest example of the heavenly man. A man caught up into Paradise, who heard unspeakable words which it was not possible for a man to utter. He was caught up into the place without going there bodily. He is sensibly in the enjoyment of it; so sensibly that, for the moment, he has lost his link with the earth. I do not say that souls do not get a taste of it now-a-days; but, as they do, they get a deeper sense of the wilderness. Paul did: there was given to him "a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet him." For this he cried to the Lord three times; and He said: "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." I gave it you lest you should be puffed up—lest you should get out of the place of dependence. And then see how Paul comes round, how beautifully he accepts it; he says: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities." Whilst not out of the wilderness, I have entered on the enjoyment of heaven, and I can go back to it; but I am made sensible that I am to be more of a dependent man than I ever was before. What tried Paul was, that he lost the ability to expound this very thing that he had received. Never mind, through the grace of Christ he will be a better wilderness man.

There is not time to go into chap. 11, but it opens with showing at what an immense cost they were brought into the land. I believe the great hindrance to every soul getting on is, not that it does not know the glory—every soul has that—but that it does not know the cross. The cross has taken everything away, and left only Christ. It is not the glory that takes things away. Paul says: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." It is the cross that takes all away. Paul is a bright specimen of a heavenly man.

Now I will show you one who lost the heavenly thing, as many do, by not being dependent. In Gen. 33 Jacob has come back to the land. There have been real power and grace shown in restoring him; but like many a one he thinks to rest in what he has attained. He builds a house, buys a field, and erects an altar, calling it El-Elohe-Israel. He does not give up truth, but he makes truth the thing that is before him, instead of God, who has brought him to Himself. He ought to have gone to Bethel. When at last he does get there, he finds quite another order of things. At Shechem he is a heavenly man; but he wants to rest in things here, and not to be dependent. What is the consequence? He is brought into the most humiliating state. He says: "I shall be destroyed, I and my house." He has to be subjected to all this in order to make him true to his calling.

The Lord make us see what a wonderful place we are called to. I do not believe a soul ever has really known the presence of Christ if it have not at some time or other, known what it is to have everything lost to it for the moment. But, when after such a moment, you return to this scene, do not be surprised if some new form of trial come upon you, because you cannot be let rest in the happiness you have reached, instead of in the grace that brought you into it. Many a one can trace failure and defeat to the moment that followed some happy time. God grant that we may seek to enjoy His Son in the unclouded light of His own presence. When I come down from it, I am all the more prepared to meet the contrariety, the opposition to God, of the scene in which I am. Thus, while I delight in the One I have learned to know up there, I possess the sweetest thing the heart can know—dependence on God. Down here I have the most consolatory sense that I am dependent upon the One I am delighting in and so am competent to come down and take my place for Christ, to seek space for Him in this world, whilst I myself do not seek to be sustained by anything in it but by Him who is my life.

[J. B. S.]

Bible Herald: 1877, Comparisons and Contrasts (11:10-12)

Deuteronomy 8:7-9; 11:10-12.

I was musing a little on the beautiful description given to Israel of the land (before they entered it) by Moses, in Deut. 8:7-9; 11:10-12. He exhibits it to them in its positive and comparative excellencies—as it was in itself, and in contrast with Egypt. In itself it was to be full of all

manner of good things—wheat, wine, and oil; (8:8;) of which good things another scripture says, “Wine that maketh glad the heart of man and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man’s heart” (Psa. 104:15).

And not only was the soil or land itself to be thus the storehouse of these most needed and best things, but their hills and stones were to be warehouses of brass and iron, wanted in the common traffic and use of life in their place as well as the other (8:9).

But in contrast with Egypt, the character of the promised land is very blessedly described. Egypt was watered by the foot, i.e., the common industry of her people drawing off the water of the Nile upon their fields and gardens (11:10). Their river was everything to them—and all they wanted was to be busy round its banks, and they could supply themselves out of it.

But Canaan was to be tilled by the Lord. He would water it from heaven Himself—His heart would care for it, and His eyes would rest on it from one end of the year to the other (11:11, 12). As another scripture says, “Thy land shall be married” (Isa. 62). A strong figure. The Lord was Himself the husband or the husbandman (kindred words, no doubt,) of the land of His people.

But, beside, Canaan was to be a land “of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills” (8:7). And this is still blessed, I believe, containing deep intimations of the peculiar glory and joy of Canaan. Egypt had a mighty river that was everything to it, but the source of that river was unknown. Canaan, on the contrary, had no mighty river. A “brook,” as it were, was its largest stream—even Jordan compared with the Nile was but as a streamlet of a river. But it had “fountains” springing up in all its hills and valleys. Its currents and channels may have been small, but it was full of the source and springs of those currents. This was just the opposite of Egypt. There the current was mighty, but the source unknown; here, the channels were small and unimportant, but the sources were all known and enjoyed, together with their waters and streams.

And, as we know, beloved, that these two lands were mysteries: the land of Egypt representing the world, or the place of nature, out of which the redeemed are called, and Canaan, the scene of communion with God into which the redeemed are brought—so we may learn that these features of the two lands have meaning also. For the world can go on, supplying itself from the great current of daily providential mercies, and leave the source or parent of it altogether a secret; while the believer or the Church has to do with the great Source or Parent in all things and in every place; a fountain is to be known in every hill and every valley, and if the little tiny brooks be tasted, it is well known where they rise and from what recess in glen or mountain they broke forth. Has not this a voice in it? The Nile itself commanded the notice of the world, while its birthplace was a mystery. No river in Canaan was worth the geographer’s notice, at least in the scale of rivers—but every hill and valley there had its fresh and sweet springs. And we may ask ourselves, in which land are we more at home? Do we like to walk in a place that is full of the presence of God, like Canaan; or would we choose a place like Egypt, —where we may get all providential supplies, while keeping the great Source of them at an unknown distance?

The character of heaven, too, is signified by this Canaan. It will be a rest surely so, it will be deliverance from a dreary wasted wilderness, but it is to be a rest full of the presence of God, and of the incessant and abiding witnesses of that presence. The fountain, is to be everywhere (Rev. 7:17). May we the more welcome it, because of this! and the more we can dwell in the presence of the fountain now, may we be the better pleased, if we go up to a hill or down to a valley, may the fountain meet our gladdened eye!

Obedience and Submission: June 2016, Path of Loving Obedience, The (10:12-13)

“And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the LORD, and His statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?” (Deut. 10:12-13).

It was all for their real good and full blessing to walk in the way of the divine commandments. The path of wholehearted obedience is the only path of true happiness; and, blessed be God, this path can always be trodden by those who love the Lord.

This is an unspeakable comfort at all times. God has given us His precious Word, the perfect revelation of His mind; and He has given us what Israel did not have, even His Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts, whereby we can understand and appreciate His Word. Hence our obligations are vastly higher than were Israel’s. We are bound to a life of obedience by every argument that could be brought to bear on the heart and understanding.

And surely it is for our good to be obedient. There is indeed “great reward” in keeping the commandments of our loving Father. Every thought of Him and of His gracious ways, every reference to His marvelous dealings with us should bind our hearts in affectionate devotion to Him in loving obedience. Wherever we turn our eyes, we are met by the most powerful evidences of His claim upon our heart’s affections, and upon all the energies of our ransomed being. And, blessed be His name, the more fully we are enabled by His grace to respond to His most precious claims, the brighter and happier our path must be. There is nothing in all the world more deeply blessed than the path and portion of an obedient soul. “Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Psa. 119:165). The disciple who finds his meat and his drink in doing the will of his beloved Lord and Master, possesses a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. True, he may be misunderstood and misinterpreted; he may be dubbed narrow and bigoted, and suchlike; but none of these things move him. One approving smile from his Lord is more than ample recompense for all the reproach that men can heap upon him. He knows how to estimate properly the thoughts of men; they are to him as the chaff which the wind drives away. The deep utterance of his heart, as he moves steadily along the sacred path of obedience, is:

“Let me my feebleness recline
On that eternal love of Thine,
And human thoughts forget;
Childlike attend what Thou wilt say,
Go forth and serve Thee,
while ‘tis day,
Nor leave Thy sweet retreat.”

In the closing verses of Deuteronomy 10, the lawgiver seems to rise higher and higher in his presentation of moral motives for obedience, and to come closer and closer to the hearts of the people. "Behold," he says, "the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and He chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day." What a marvelous privilege to be chosen and loved by the possessor of heaven and earth! What an honor to be called to serve and obey Him! Surely nothing in all this world could be higher or better; to be identified and associated with the Most High God, to have His name called upon them, to be His peculiar people, the people of His choice, to be set apart from all the nations of the earth to be the servants of Jehovah and His witnesses. Nothing could exceed this, except that to which the church of God is called.

Assuredly, our privileges are higher, inasmuch as we know God in a nearer, more intimate manner than the nation of Israel ever did. We know Him as the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as our God and Father. We have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, shedding abroad the love of God in our hearts, and leading us to cry, Abba, Father. All this is far beyond anything that God's earthly people ever knew or could know; and, inasmuch as our privileges are higher, His claims upon our hearty and unreserved obedience are also higher. Every appeal to the heart of Israel should come home with augmented force to our hearts, beloved Christian, every exhortation addressed to them should speak far more powerfully to us. We occupy the very highest ground on which any creature could stand. Neither the seed of Abraham on earth, nor the angels of God in heaven could say what we can say, or know what we know. We are linked and eternally associated with the risen and glorified Son of God. We can adopt as our own the wonderful language of 1 John 4:17, and say, "As He is, so are we in this world." What can exceed this, as to privilege and dignity! Surely nothing save to be, in body, soul, and spirit, conformed to His adorable image, as we shall be, before long, through the abounding grace of God.

Well then let us ever bear in mind—yea, let us have it deep down in our hearts—that according to our privileges are our obligations. Let us not refuse the wholesome word obligation as though it had a legal ring about it. Far from it; it would be utterly impossible to conceive anything further removed from all thought of legality than the obligations which flow out of the Christian's position. It is a very serious mistake to be continually raising the cry of legality whenever the holy responsibilities of our position are pressed upon us. We believe that every truly pious Christian will delight in all the appeals and exhortations which the Holy Spirit addresses to us as to our obligations, seeing they are all grounded upon privileges conferred upon us by the sovereign grace of God, through the precious blood of Christ, and made good to us by the mighty ministry of the Holy Spirit.

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