

Ephesians - Commentaries by George Vicesimus Wigram

Food for the Flock: Volume 2, Stand Therefore

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

PH 6:10{The contrast between the opening and the close of this epistle is striking. It is to my mind like one of those brilliant suns, which, on a dark lowering day, suddenly pours forth its brightness, and the eye follows the broad beam of glory it casts, until it lights at last on some field, of which it brings out all the coloring in bright relief. Thus to me does the glory of the beginning of Ephesians shine down upon the place of conflict in which the church militant is seen in the last chapter. In grace, not in nature, we see that there is a necessary connection between the light above and the church below. How very little any of us apprehend what the church is. The generality of Christians merge, in their thoughts of the church, all God's dealings with men; but God has given us, now present, to see that there are different classes of blessing amongst the saved. God displays His attributes in dealing with an earthly people, and His character as preparing a heavenly people for Christ; but many, who have even fresh and happy knowledge of what the church is, look upon her only as the Bride of Christ.

Would indeed that we had far deeper entrance into this; never will our souls be right unless there be entrance into it—that the church is the one espoused to Christ; still there is only one chapter in the epistle in which it is spoken of as the Bride; it is one of the happiest thoughts to our hearts that this should be, but we should greatly rob ourselves were we to limit our thoughts to it.

Eve, it is true, was one of Adam's ribs; she was built into a woman, and brought by God to Adam, who found in her that which made her a helpmeet, one in whom he could delight. But we must not see Eve only as under Adam; we must also see her under God—the Elohim of Gen. 2. Here we get her in a three-fold light. She is not only the one fitted to meet Adam's heart, but she is set with him as the center of a threefold circle. First there is the bright blaze of creatorial beauty; then there is the garden in which the Lord God had gathered all that was fitted for him who was to be the center; and, lastly, there Adam takes his bride—this is the innermost circle.

So will it be with the church. The redemption glory will be over all the universe; but there will be one place more glad than the rest; God will have His Paradise, as Adam had his. The new Jerusalem is the Paradise of God; here are the Bride and the Lamb.

This was the secret hidden in the bosom of God. God displayed his attributes, His glorious power, and wisdom, and goodness in Adam's creation; but these attributes were known before not so all that is to be known of God in redemption.

There are two systems. In the first creation, link joins link in unbroken succession till we rise to man; but here we stop. An infinite gap 'comes in between man and his Creator. The first Adam was the center of this system. In the second—redemption—this gap is filled up. And God sets as the center of this system—of which the first was a mere type—His own Son, the second Adam, who will take all the perfect glory of it as man—Son of man. But here in redemption He goes back into Deity—into the eternity of God; we are "chosen in him before the foundation of the world." And not only this, but God as the Son: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself." There is much more in this than may at first meet the mind; He might call angels sons, or Israel; but the church has sonship as chosen in the Son. And then he gives the sweep of the circle which should belong to the Son. He will "gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth." All—all is to be headed in Christ—all centering round him—all stable as He is stable.

Here then is the church in a new position; not only is she one suited to meet the heart of Christ as His Bride, but her glory will be displayed where He is displayed as the center on which all hangs before God. The love wherewith the church is loved is one thing; the glory she is to have is another.

The first chapter of Ephesians brings out the name of God; the third that of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This name never came out until Israel rejected Christ. In the last three chapters of Revelation there is a display of glory; in John 13 there is "the Father's house." Though enjoyed by the same persons, these are not identically the same. The church is the beloved object of Him who has the key of the Father's house; she has a certain play of His affections as Son of man, to which she responds this is the light which shines down now. Adam failed, but God will not give up these "children." He must have them, and He—brings them in through redemption, and says: If they belong to my Son, I must have them with me.

I Well, this broad beam of celestial glory—this light from heaven—narrows down to the field where is seen the church militant in combat 1, here below. And it is this which is not enough shining forth on His church, in His glory, placing the children in His house, and bringing noticed—that this epistle begins with God shining forth on His church, in His glory, placing the children on His house, and bring them there now into vital union with His Son. There is a bright background for me, which began to glimmer "before the foundation of the world!"

But we are down here in conflict. There are two things: pilgrimage, and conflict. Israel was a captive in Egypt; God pledged Himself to bring him out of it. Little by little this goes on, bringing out our nothingness before Him; lie ends by subduing the hostile powers of Egypt; and then, by the passage of the Red Sea, they, are forever shut up to God. They needed but eleven days to get into the land, but they wandered forty years in the wilderness; and, when they did get into the land, they had conflict there, in order to take possession of it.

I believe that many saints do not distinguish between being in the wilderness and having crossed the Jordan. We have been brought out of Egypt, and we know the wilderness, but the wilderness ought not to be, as it is with some saints, the dominant thought. We are in it, say they, and we must go on thinking about it.

Israel certainly were not in Canaan and the wilderness at the same time; but the wilderness and the land do come together with us. Israel again had to fight their way in; but, as to ourselves, God is now teaching us what Christ is, and not what we are; where Christ is, and not where we are. We are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." Truly, as to my feet, they are sinking step after step in the thick parched sand of the wilderness; and, when I look above my head, I find I have to wrestle "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places." As to all around me, I have done with it. I shall know well my steps are in the wilderness; I shall feel the fiery dart; the sharp flint will not lose its edge, nor the sand its burning. But, am I shut out from communion? No. Heaven is opened to me; and Christ has taken possession for me. He sits above the principalities and powers. Not only is there the land over there, where we shall rest; but God is saying: Lift up your heads now, and rejoice, and see if there be not more power in "Christ for you to lift you up above all, than there the is in wilderness and Satan to weigh you down.

In all these things we may be more than conquerors through Christ. Satan is allowed to hold his place in the heavenlies, but Christ knows all down here; He saw all He passed through all, up to the right hand of God. Satan is now allowed to hold this place against us, because he is allowed to hold it against Christ; but directly He rises up, Satan will be chased out, like the dried leaves before the whirlwind. Satan holds now the very place where the new Jerusalem will be.

Up above there, is the One with whom I have vital communion, and who is my strength. "One spirit with the Lord." And this is not having to fight my way in; neither is it the wilderness. No, it is what we have in this tenth verse; being strong in the Lord; standing fast. It is holding fast a defensive position; but it is up there.

Before entering into detail there are two things I would notice: the difference that there is between the wilderness, and trying to get into the land.

First. What is the best preparation for treading the wilderness? The cross on the shoulder the denying self at every step, so as to bring in Christ, 'and thus having Christ's thought about everything here.

Second. What is taking possession of the land? -It is not cheering myself with the thoughts of coming glory. No; it is pushing forward now, into what is in Christ.

Now there may be the standing fast as here, in what God has given us; or there may be the striving to get possession ourselves. In this latter case there will be an immense stirring of soul—a putting forth of energies—but it is really a false position and effort. I have not got to take possession; Christ has done it for me. It is the very worst thing I can do to put forth my energies in this. If it were a question of actual possession, why Satan will hold the heavenly places till Christ rises up from the throne of God.

Oh! if there be one thing in which I should wish to give a death-blow to the minds of saints—if there be one thing as to which it would be happy if we were all knocked down before God—it is this, as to our non-understanding of what the church has in Christ.

Speak Lord, and show us the power of the things in which we are planted!—there, where the springs are in God. Down here suffering, is emphatically the position of the church. Even in our blessed Lord, what He did was not like what He suffered. Thus with Paul too; the mind of His "Lord, was upon the great things he should" suffer for his name's sake. Many have little to do the many have much to suffer. Sufferings we shall, and ought to, have; thick as hailstones they will come down upon us. We are set in the position of suffering now for Christ's name, and we are called to stand fast in it, not in the sense of being unbending, but in the sense of that glory being ours which is displayed in Eph. 1.

I labored lately, long and in vain, to get the idea into a Christian's mind that he had died, and was buried in Christ. But it was still with him only "I, I, my feelings," and so on. Ah, if Christ were disparaged—if His honor were touched we might well be troubled, but we must come to an end of this self.

Never can we take this position much less keep in it, unless we see where Christ has set us. This sixth of Ephesians is not a call to fight our way in, but a call to the Church militant to "stand" in the fixed position Christ has set her in in order vividly to give the thought on my mind I refer to another Scripture—the sixth of Revelation. John was caught up into heaven, above all, where the Lamb was. What would be his experience there? Why, whatever turn up from powers of darkness in heavenly places, or whatever there be in judgment on earth, still the Lamb has the full place and title; "He is worthy" come what may; and I am, and will act as, a member of that Lamb. What could be against John if that were his position? There might be the accusations of Satan; the failure of the best thing—the church; there might be the sealed book; but still all was safe to him: he had Christ. If you seek to act here consistently with this

your real position before God you will find it a desperate conflict. Do you, I ask, act consistently with it? It is true that, if you do not, yet you will not—you cannot—lose this position; but still ask yourself, has nothing this day, for instance, in you been unworthy of a member of that body of Christ in which the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is to be displayed? If you have forgotten your failures, there are two parties who will secure not the least one of them being forgotten. Satan numbers them all, because he hates you; God numbers them all because He loves you. Blessed that it is so, for sorrowfully should we often come into His presence, with soiled garments, were we left to our own-recollection; but God marks them, and cleanses, us from all things, because He loves His Christ. Looking down on us he says to His Son: Behold—here—there—is a member of thyself!—If we say our, Amen to this—if we resolve to walk in the power of it we shall find conflict. But, if so, our God will be still saying to us: I am weaning thee for myself. Be not cast down: "If the springs be not bubbling? Still I am weaning thee for myself. If the wilderness be under your feet? well! I am weaning thee for myself. If Satan be still above? I am weaning thee for myself.—No, God will never rest till he has so weaned us, that our hearts are as much filled with Christ as His is.

What are the things that are against you? I ask each present: Is it solitariness?—God says: I can rest in my love for you.—God sees me as hidden in Christ, even as Eve was hidden in Adam, and He takes all delight in us; God is rejoicing over you. He is thinking shine in the glory.

Whether as to position, armor, or personal detail, in all cases the exhortation to us is to "stand" in the position in which Christ has set us.

(G. V. W.)

Food for the Flock: Volume 2, Conflict, The

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

PH 6:10-12{There are two things which, when considered, bring out into light, in a simple way, the position in which the Christians at Ephesus were standing when the apostle addressed them.

First, we find the intimation of better things to come connected with the scene in the garden of Eden: " The seed of the woman."

Second, that particular development of the truth in which we stand; that that very " Seed of the woman," having had His heel bruised, is up in heaven, the Head of a body, which body is on earth filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ.

I should like to rest a little in detail on these two points. They seem to bring out the needs-be of suffering for a redeemed people.

When Eve had been beguiled-when she had got under the power of the adversary-there was One spoken of by God as " the seed " to come, and, in what He was to do, there was a ray of light for the man and the woman; there was a hope introduced; but a hope which brought with it the certainty of suffering for those who were the possessors of it. If I look at it-this intimation thus come forth from God -it is plain that the setting up of a power in opposition to what they had sold themselves to, must be at some cost to themselves.

There is great joy in seeing God's Son put in the place of power-Lord of all-all put under the sway of this " Seed of the woman." Test your thoughts of the gospel by this; not merely its meeting the need of your lost soul, but my God, setting up His own power in the hand of His own Son the Lord Jesus Christ.

But how could it come to me, devil possessed as I am by nature, without suffering? How can this light come in contact with darkness? It will find that in me which is ever ready to lend itself to Satan, even " the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." Can this new thing meet all the evil in me without there being conflict from beginning to end? Our position must be one of endurance-of suffering -of wrestling " against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits in heavenly places." God is going to establish His power, and that will overthrow all the natural thoughts of my heart.

Observe the exquisite grace of the Lord Jesus Christ in connection with redemption as displayed to us. Are you saved sinners? That enables you to say: " Not a, cloud above; not a spot within." Is it something you have done? No; this something God has done for you; and every step of the way afterward too it is the same; all is God. God will not let the people come out of Egypt under His power, and then leave them under their own wills. When they were out of Egypt He left the way apparently open for them, to prove whether they had a God or not. If they would go back He would stop them; He would not head their retreat. He would break them down; He would have a "willing " people-would make them take His will for their will; His position for their position; He will make us take His God for our God, as Ruth said to Naomi; He will form us in heart to be willing to have the portion of our Lord here below.

What was the difference between Paul and the Hebrews? It was that Paul was not satisfied just to begin; he would hold fast-would be " firm unto the end." They went forth, their hearts failed them, and then they let slip.

But these Ephesians had got fast hold of the truth, and the truth had got fast hold of them; so to them Paul writes, led by the Spirit, to strengthen them for conflict. He would have them above the fear of the power of darkness; if these were high, God was higher still. They need not be daunted; He would have them raising their heads; would have them know that there was a living Head for them in heaven, as well as a head in heavenly places to their enemies.

" Be strong in the Lord."-How could they stand in such a position-living members of a living Head-how could they stand down here where He had been, occupying a place between Him and the enemy, and not be suffering? Impossible!-He, when in this world, was the " man of sorrows." In His grace He had left them down here, that it might be truly brought out that there was such a thing as a heavenly Christ. And all who are partakers of the heavenly portion are born to suffering-dare not expect exemption from it; far from that, they must be willing and ready to endure it.

I found it one thing, when God, with mighty power, let His light into my conscience as a prisoner in the world, having the joy of salvation, and getting out of the house of bondage; and quite another, the being there alone in the wilderness with the God who has brought me out. It is one thing for God' to have brought me out of Egypt; it is another thing for me to be on the other side of the Red Sea. And when He says: How do you like walking with me alone in the wilderness? there comes in the thought of the leeks, and the onions, and the cucumbers; not, as before the deliverance, the pinch of the prison, the oppression of the task-master, the escaping from the spears of the Egyptians under shelter of the blood; but being in the wilderness, having to learn what is in our hearts.

God- challenges our hearts as to how far we prefer wilderness fare with the living God, to Egypt's fare without Him Do not be discouraged if you find yourselves on the other side of the sea beginning to count the value of a leek or a melon. You will think of them, just because you are poor wretched things. God counts on what you are; He counts not to find a single amen to one single bit of grace that He has given you. Do not be discouraged, but take care not to fall as Israel fell. They fell, not because they found their hearts did not tally with God's heart, but because of their determination to have their own will-to have ways and resources that were not God's, and the not seeking in brokenness of heart to know His; this was why they failed.

Take care it is not so with you. He can give you hearts not to know a leek or a melon. There is nothing He cannot do. If I know my God, it is not with me: Oh, the sorrows of the way! but: I am in the place where God would have me. I am with Christ, and it is far better to be without a

leek than to be without such a Christ. I can bear the yoke with Christ.

And God can form this in our hearts for us. He does not want to learn that there are no springs in us, but He wants us to look in and see that there are none. We must learn it by failure, or in His presence in communion with Himself.

Just notice the peculiar position of those who came in from the time God gave the first word about the "Seed of the woman," till the time when God shall be all in all. When He set up a kingdom in man's hand, He was obliged to make good certain things against the powers of darkness. When it was an earthly testimony, the Jew found that obedience did not bring him into poverty, but into wealth. But it was not so with the Lord Jesus, and we are heirs with Him. He was poor; yet He did not want-never, wanted. God would take care to feed His Son. And there is a monstrosity comes into our minds when we think with anxious care about our wants, or think that, because we follow One who had not where to lay His head, we are to want. Did not God take care for that Son of His? You would not think of temporal need, and fear it, if you were in the light of the Lord Jesus. It is quite a different thing for Him to hide from you the channels through which He will care for you, and forgetting you. This winding up of the epistle is most important. Paul's heart was enlarged; how should he stop short of God's thought about them? He had blessed them with "all spiritual blessings;" how could the apostle help reminding them that these were given to them that they might use them, and that, too, at the present moment for God's glory. We go to the Lord with a burdened heart, and bring it away with us, because we have the cross still, and do not understand His way. But when we know Him, better, we are content the cross should be there, because He cannot take it off until it has done its work upon us, and so His Father be glorified. We say: The cross is too "heavy. He says: No my Father put it there, and, if I take it off, the flesh will break out; the cross must remain until the will bends to it.

You will often find yourself in a Pi-hahiroth; sit still and watch. Moses' sister was in a very blessed position; the little ark had gone out among the bulrushes, she sits down and watches. It was a blessed place for faith to watch, and see what was done. If you cannot sit still and wait for God, you are not in the right position.

Do you say: But we have given all up; now what will the end be? How will the Lord show Himself?-Sit down before God, and say: Thy ways are too great for me; what wilt thou do?

There is a largeness about His ways that beggars our understanding. It goes beyond His people's requests. Many of the restrictions the people of God suffer come from themselves, because there is not simplicity to say: What wilt thou do? Abraham's intercession stopped at ten; but God goes farther, and takes up the desire of his heart. If I leave God to act He will act much more munificently than if I say: Do this, or do that.-"He that spared not his own Son, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" "The wiles of the devil" are methods-methodical actings; it does not mean "fiery darts" merely. Leighton observes: "It is not the half-laden caravans he cares to attack." He may retire when the heart is not keeping watch; and elsewhere just come in, and cause the heart full of joy to get a fall.

Christians want more quietness. There is often too much haste in accrediting what we fall amongst. Much truth may be believed-many high truths assented to-such as union with Christ, and the like; and yet it may come out after all, that the heart has never known the taste of grace, not knowing itself the chief of sinners. What then is the good of all that knowledge? There has been much of the wiles of Satan in it. You get no good from truth unless it bring your heart into communion with Christ. God putting home the points of truth and making them home-stores, that is really good. There may be quantities filling the imagination, and much talked of, and written about, but the question is: Do I know this Son of God who became Son of man for me? He who came down into all my need as a Savior.

"We wrestle." We must not only be prepared for active service-for going forward; but we must be ready to stand against the immense array of opposing power. And this is much the more difficult of the two-to hold fast for your own soul what God holds fast for the church in Christ. I do not think the thought of "flesh" and "world" is excluded here, but it is not these only, but their "rulers." It is not only the world, it is the master of the world; not only the flesh, but the master of the flesh that we have to contend with. It is not a question whether you can break this or that bad habit in yourself, but there is that great power of darkness above you, who only found his match in One.. When the Lord was here he tried Him, but could not overcome Him in anything; and the way He acted is ours. The more power Satan put forth the more Christ left Himself in the hands of God.

And none can be a match for Satan now but He who baffled him entirely and set him aside. Christ did not either exhaust His power in doing it; He carried a perfect righteousness all through. And now I can overcome, because the blood is what Satan can never stand against, and God has said He will destroy Satan under our feet shortly. Trial you will have; you will be tried to the very bottom. Would to God you might be always "more than conquerors;" but depend upon it, whenever you are, you will have nothing to boast-in but Christ.

Another thing of importance is faithfulness to others and to one-self. I see two souls, one, perhaps, carrying a burden a thousand times heavier than others; and he walks quietly, just having as much as he can bear, and no more. I see another, with a very little burden, who breaks down. None but God can judge about these two; God and Christ can. Remember you have not come to the end yet. To one who has a trial which seems to him past all bearing, I, would say: Cannot you identify yourself with God's counsels? and say "I will glory in my' infirmities."-In judging, you must consider not merely the weight of the trial, but the character of the vessel, and the nature of the strength given. The weakest vessel cast into the hottest furnace, if the Son of God be there, will come out unhurt; while the strongest will be burnt up if the Son of God be not there. Is my girdle broken? Shall I say He has laid too heavy a burden on me?

It is a very important thing to see what my walk has been, and what the state of my heart is. Perhaps He will say to me: Your eye is not single enough; you are truly looking to me, and desiring my glory, but you do not see yet how I am sure to meet you. God says: I do count my Christ worthy. Do you ask me to fill you up? Well, I count Him worthy, and therefore I can fill such a vessel as you! It is not a question of whether I will give it to you, but whether I will give it to my Christ. It is often the case, in trial and conflict, that we give ourselves credit for something more than we have; then he has to make us open our hand to let it go. I must take the place of having nothing, and act simply on what God is, and on what Christ is, and not be vindicating myself as Job did. When God comes in to vindicate, how graciously He does it!

There must be patience. God will try you; He will make you know that the springs are not in yourself; He would have you sure that you have none in yourself, just by your being filled up with those springs that are above, that others may see it too.

Ephesians. 6:13,14.

PH 6:13-14{One remark I would make as to the quiet way in which the apostle assumes it is all right in the hearts of these Ephesians.

He had drawn a striking picture of how God, to please Himself, spontaneously from His own heart, had come in and taken up a people out of a state of devil-possession, had revealed Himself, and made them Members of Christ, His Son at His right hand, the Head in heaven. Last time I was looking at the position taken by God down here, Jesus of Nazareth being up there at His right hand, as the Head in heaven. He has the answer down here in a people who know His name, and who have to make good a certain position according to it, in spite of all Satan can do.

Think, dear friends, what grace! God in heaven making good in you a position by the Holy Ghost, answering to that of His Son in heaven. Grace, for height and depth beyond the creature, reaching to the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Grace, which comes down to us under all our ruin, even when we were "dead in trespasses and sins," rolled about by Satan as the withered leaf is tossed by the wind in autumn—those whom he had in his possession.

Who are you, that in you God should make good this answer? Yet to us He says: You are the proof to Satan, and to the world, that my Son is sitting on high as the Head; and this is the position in which you have got to stand.

How quietly the apostle assumes, as I was saying, that the tone of their hearts was right, as well as that they were ready to live to Him who "died and rose." There is no stirring them up—no pleading with them to take the position he was putting before them; they are in it. How different the people of God are now! we see them having a thousand objects but the one the Holy Ghost would cause to thrill in us. How ashamed we should be when we see what is around us, and then look closer home, and find our houses unpurged, our heart unjudged, and He still having to say to us as members of that living Head!

He speaks here not of motives but of position. He supposes the soul to have a character suited to that of sons of such a Father—of vessels sealed by the Spirit, and filled with the Spirit. How different the church of God was to what it is! They had a single eye—one object-seeking in everything Christ's glory—light bearers in the world. And what decrepitude in us! how it shames us!

With regard to this armor for the church militant, whose soldiers are you?—God's?—And what for? Pleasure? or conflict? And how far are your hearts interested in the conflict? Are you only taking it because "no cross, no crown?" or has it taken hold of your hearts as the spring of your Souls?

"Her seed shall bruise thy head."—How far are you counting that all connected with Satan is shortly to be bruised? But nothing connected with the Son of God shall be bruised; He will not let you be, because you are connected with His fortune. How far does that tell on your hearts?

Then with regard to this conflict, is it forever? No! there is a time when rest will come: "They shall learn war no more." There will be a happy end to it all, but now we are learning to endure. And, as to the service whilst we are in it, what provision has Christ made for us?—This brings us to the armor.

"Stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth."—Do you know the value of a girdle in regulating and increasing strength? As Christians we cannot do without the girdle; it tells home upon us, and speaks much of the grace we have to do with. Truth is the girdle it comes searchingly home, it surrounds us. Have you a clear idea of what it is? Can you put it into other words so as to satisfy yourself? There are certain things true to God's mind, and certain things which are not true. His word tells us this. If you have his word close round about you, you will find it uncommonly searching.

The eye of Christ was always on God's word. When Satan came to Him, He could say: That is not truth. I am bound to what is truth.—Satan tried to misapply truth, and what is misapplied is not truth. It was not that Satan could not quote Scripture; he did; but he applied it to Christ, not as One going down, down, down—as the Servant come to do His Father's will—but as thinking of Himself and not God. Truth was the girdle to Him, and He had power to endure. What a contrast in Peter: "Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee." He was not a Nazarite—his heart filled with a single desire; with him it was not always the thought: Where is my God in this thing? So there was weakness.

I believe if this were entered into more in our own souls, it would explain much as to our failure in walk. There is such a thing as the truth of God—God's thoughts about you—coming down into your very circumstances, which, if applied to you where you are, will be the strength of the Nazarite to you, and, while faithful to Him who has separate you, none shall be able to bind you. It will be ever with you: Lo, I come to do thy will."

The thought I have about the girdle is not that it is merely truth in contrast with error—God's truth about Christ, and the like; but it is truth coming down to me here, and encircling me right round where I am in my Circumstances. "People are often astonished at what happens to them—borne down where they expected to stand.

When I look back, I see that I have not had the experience of Paul "in all things more than conquerors," if I have not had the girdle on. I should avow it. Perhaps I was a soldier for myself, and not for Christ. Perhaps I have had a girdle on or not the girdle of truth.

How far I ask you is your eye single? The single eye is that which sees God as He is. None but Christ did that perfectly. Many saints who have heard about the grace of God, and can confess that they are the chief of sinners, yet, when you get to their hearts, you do not find mercy and grace there, and the knowledge of God and His Son Jesus Christ, as you should expect to find it. It is a very solemn thing to see how imagination may dress up and play with truth; the mind filled with fantasies, instead of the heart being in the dust before God, bowed down in His presence, and tasting, as individuals, mercy and grace.

Do you know God for yourself? As you familiarized with God in Christ—that Christ who is the model God looks at Himself, and has given to you? Has God looked into your heart in power show you Christ, in whom is all His delight, as the One into whose likeness He would have you molded? He has seen loathsome, creeping things in there, and He has made you to see what you had no idea of. Christ is to be there, instead of everything else, in the end; but you will see at first how mercy alone suits you. If you do not see what a horrid black thing you are in

contrast with Christ, you have no true thought about God's mercy, and should not take the place of a soldier, but 'go and look for " the girdle of truth." You must have it quickening and taking hold of your heart, or you will not be able to take the place of one fighting the good fight of faith.

" And having on the breastplate of righteousness."-I know not how better to take this up than by contradicting two errors. The Protestant error, in connection with justification by faith, has been to make the righteousness of Christ applied to a person who has been previously occupied with Christ-imputed righteousness. This is untrue. The Romanist says there is no such a thing as imputed righteousness. The Protestant would establish some ground for Christ's favor by his own happy feelings and so on; and, when these are gone, the whole process has to be gone through again of getting his soul into that state once more. He only sees imputed righteousness, and not imparted; and this error has arisen in answer to the Roman Catholic notion of imparted righteousness only, with no imputed righteousness. These say, when you have overcome all the evil in you, God will give you the benefit of imparted righteousness.

But the breastplate is not according to either of these views. It is something covering the front of the person all over, and protecting it. Is it that a certain power has come inside me, and will in the end cast out all evil?. No, it is more than this. The Christ that spake to Saul, took him up, and made him one with Himself; Christ's life throbbed now in Saul. The members here are in vital union with Christ the Head, and this union links them up in one life.

Where do I begin when I talk of righteousness? With God. I say: It was righteous of God to raise Christ from the dead, and thus to vindicate Him as worthy of all glory; it was righteous of God to show out what the world was, to show out the impotency of Satan, and to show out what He Himself was too, by raising Christ from the dead and putting Him there on the throne of God, everything put into His hands by right and title. " Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Here is the perfectness of righteousness.

" If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us' our sins;" there is value in the blood to put them away. But there is more than that. He has stores of righteousness in that One up there, which He could throw over the sinner. But He does more than that. He makes the pardoned sinner one with that Christ-with that righteous One. God looks at us not in ourselves, but in Christ; and thus the righteousness I have is perfect; it is " the righteousness of God."

The tempest tossed conscience, knowing its feelings about sin, but not seeing the full measuring out of its guilt on Christ, needs to see the question of sin forever settled-needs to see it as connected with the great plan of God. The foundation is Christ. The separate stones do not give the value to the building; it is the temple as a whole, and the foundation on which it stands. The righteousness of God, who "when we were dead in sins, quickened us together with Christ." Different this, to the thought of a white robe thrown over me.

It is not my mind at work on God's truth it is God's truth at work on my mind. If you have the unction from the Holy One, you need to look to God to have His truth so brought home to you. A person may be holding truth himself, instead of having it as a girdle round him. There is all the difference possible in our grasping at truth, and truth holding us.

The righteousness we have is not only imputed, which gives the idea of something thrown down to me from a distance, but it is mine by the power of a life communicated. Life is there; the seal of the Spirit is there. To be without any power but my own would be agony; for then all the purposes of my heart, must be found, like Peter's, to be insufficient. God must keep all, as well as lay the foundation. The Spirit of God teaches me, that it is the righteousness in life of a Christ who has died and is risen. Christians want quietness, but it must be quietness of life of resurrection life. I would rather be a poor, dark, uninstructed one living on Christ, than have all the blaze of truth without Him. The one who has intercourse with the living Christ has the power of life.

There is no power of living Christ, and quitting ourselves like men, but by living out here the life He has communicated to us. Of course it is no question now of guilt upon the conscience: there would be no living Christ to us unless He had been a dead Christ. But I would rather see any one in bondage, not knowing what to make of the contrast between himself and the Christ who has given him forgiveness and' divine righteousness, than to see much liberty, in the sense and knowledge of grace, and no self: loathing at the contrast. Doubtless I am to have liberty, but God would have me see myself, and learn that I shall be a blessed person when I awake in His likeness. Oh, beloved friends! one thing is pressed much on my heart for you-for many whom I see, individually, and for all collectively. It is that you may feel the importance of living practical holiness before God. Having life-having righteousness -to which nothing can be added, and from which nothing can be taken away, as the living members of Christ before the throne, you should individually most earnestly seek to walk before God.

Ephesians 6:15, 16; Luke 2:34,35.

No sooner does Mary know the sweetness of having this Babe, than it is told her, while she might well count herself blessed, " a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." No sooner was He born into the world, than nothing but slaughter of babes is heard of. And so, in our hearts, no sooner is Christ there than Satan, who does not like to give up his power, brings in conflict. Some old suppressed habit will, perhaps, break out with new power. Do not be surprised if Christ has displaced Satan in you, that Satan should try to regain the mastery. We cannot stand without knowing this.

The first thought with a newly-saved soul often is: Now I have God; I have Christ for my peace; and now all will go on quietly. Instead of which we find that we have to do with a God who brings in death and resurrection on all that is in us, that we may know that the excellency of the power is of God and not of us. We are connected with the triumphant party-with the One who has conquered; so there is peace, in spite of all that Satan can do, made good by God in the very field where Satan seemed to have triumphed.

" Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."-The shoe-sandal, not for strength, but for comfort. The heart uninstructed in God's ways is often tripped up, where, if it knew the ways of God-if it understood His thoughts, it would find cause for thanksgiving.

God does not come off His own ground in dealing with us; He expects us to come on to His ground. Often when 'Christians get a quiet standing before the Lord, and look back on their past history, they see how their restlessness arose from want of understanding God's way. They thought to get something for themselves; God's thought was to get something for Himself. God does indeed hold forth something good

for us, but his thought is to train us to know that-He has taken us up for Himself. He does not always care for us according to our own thoughts for ourselves, and then we are astonished. He told us before that it would be a desert-a conflict-but we have not taken in what He told us. You know the position God has claimed for Himself. You know how He took up at Pentecost a people connected with the Lord Jesus Christ, and subject to the guidance of the Holy Ghost. You must not then make yourselves the center of your system, but you must take in this God with whom you have to do.

"Taking the shield of faith "-That by which all the counter movements of Satan are met. You have a wicked one to contend with. I, individually, have to compete with an enemy who has been well nigh six thousand years skilled and versed in the heart of man; an enemy who has tripped up every individual but One, because he has found in ever other in the world something of which he could say: There is a tender spot in you, in which I can put a ring, and lead you captive. He has given servant of God after servant of God heavy falls, and has found but One who could bruise his head, and who will shortly bring it down bruised under our feet.

If you go into the battle thinking it is a fine scene, you will soon find out the solemn truth that Satan is against you, and will give you no quarter. He thoroughly hates Him who puts you forward in the battle; he abominates from the bottom of his soul the object God is making good through such poor worms as you and I are—that he should have, though us, a witness for Himself on earth.

Ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one."-It is important to judge whence evil is. It is all in one sense from Satan; but, when in the presence of God, judging yourselves, you cannot always quietly put things off on Satan, for Christians often tempt Satan, instead of his tempting them; they often put themselves where they know there is temptation, even if Satan were out of the way. They lay the train, and invite Satan to put the spark to the tinder. They then bear the moral guilt of it before God.

We cannot calculate about fiery darts hurled by Satan. God will put up an object before a young Christian, and Satan will hang up another. You may set off thinking of God's object, and, on the way, Satan may get you off to another; and God will teach you by it. You did not know it; but perhaps you loved money-a little bit of power-something of that sort; and you have perhaps learned that you did by a fall. Or again: there may be some service God is going to launch a man in, and He may allow Satan to come in and try him with fiery darts, so that he may be humbled right down before Him at the first, and then may go into the work softly.. There need be no setting on fire, for the shield of faith is ours. And which is best? for God to teach us the evil of our hearts by fiery darts, or by falls which dishonor His name? Mark, I do not say it is necessary to learn your hearts in either of these ways, but you must learn them in some way. Peter learned something of his by his falls. Luther learned his, to an immense extent, by fiery darts from the enemy. The proper way is to learn them by that which comes from communion with God, and using the shield of faith. Satan stands plying his fiery darts, and the man of God stops, holds up the shield of faith, and shuts them out. The child of God in communion with his Father can say: I know what you are about. The Christian taught of God finds in God's presence what Christ is, and how Satan could not get one bit of dross out of Him, for there was none there.

Satan's ways with us are three fold. " The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." The temptation will take the form of the mind, and of the position of the person addressed. Where is the answer to each? Is it the lust of the eye? and is my answer to be: Oh, I am to please my eye? I am to admire what is beautiful?-When I get to the scene God tells me to admire,-I will admire it the lust of the flesh?-I am no debtor to the flesh to minister to it, for it is because I have this bad flesh, that will lust, that Christ died.

If you cannot get to see that your portion is not here-that you are passing through a world that crucified Christ-I do. Something for myself, is it? and my Lord not glorified? Oh, the power of knowing that God has taken you up for Himself! Oh, the power of a single eye enabling you to meet all that Satan can do against you What would trouble you in your troubles if you had this thought; God has set me here, and He would have me here-exactly here.

A cross on one shoulder, and a cross on the other, and is there not peace? " The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" God says: Take that weak body. And can you not take it from Him? Fiery darts coming in thicker than hailstones, and can you not say: I will bear them all for the sake of

Him who has called me to be a soldier? Would they disturb your peace, if the sense of God's_ having gut you there were fresh in your mind?

One thing to notice is, that Satan does not make a stand with a passing shot; he will keep to it. But God does not like to be constantly troubling the quiet walk; so He will come times let things accumulate, and then take the soul apart to learn it all at once. So the enemy may be allowed to ply his fiery darts a long time before God will come in about it. Evil suggestions-a sort of whispering in the ear-sometimes it is a heresy Satan-inspired, which none but God could meet. You cannot account for many things without seeing that they come direct from Satan into the minds and mouths of persons.

Ephesians. 6:17,18.

Before entering on the helmet and the sword, I desire to recall what has been said on former occasions, as to the way in which the Spirit of God shows us in the context a certain position taken up on earth by the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that He has a people whom He has placed in that position, which they have to make good against the power of the _adversary.

The minds of people have often been confused about this passage, by their not seeing that it is not a question of aggressive warfare, such as the work of an evangelist; but that it is the saints of God standing fast in the camp-holding the position in which He has set them.

" The helmet of salvation " is the next thing connected with the panoply. It is important to bear the principle I have spoken of in mind in connection with this, because, in another place, the fifth of the first of Thessalonians, we find the helmet spoken of in another way. There it is: " Putting on for an helmet, the hope of salvation." A soldier may have a helmet of one kind for one position, and another for a different kind of warfare; just as the different shields that are spoken of; if standing under the wall of a besieged town, he would need the large shield to cover him completely; while in active warfare the light small one would be used.

People want to reconcile the two expressions, but they do not need to be reconciled., If you do, you rub out the distinction. It would spoil the whole, if it were said here "the hope of salvation;" because God says: I have put you to stand in a certain position; if you do not stand in it, you will be driven back from off it. Therefore it is not " The hope of salvation," but " salvation " itself which is the helmet.

What is our helmet? Just as, in connection with the feet being shod, it is the gospel of peace, so now it is the helmet consisting of salvation. The head-the vital part-is protected by it. It is a finished salvation; you take your position as a saved man.

But there is more than this. Just as the breastplate is not only righteousness imputed individually-a true view but defective-but

God's righteousness in Christ; so here it is the salvation that becomes the Savior-God; it takes in God's work, and not only meets the contingencies of my walk here. The Savior-God has done the work. I must look up there, and see Him the center of a new system,, in which my salvation is comparatively but a small part. My head is here encircled by a glory connected with all that God is. My salvation flows from this, that He is the Savior-God.

I have no claim or title. God says; I reckon you perfectly guiltless, because I did reckon the guiltless One guilty for your sake. I can look down on you through Him, and cannot separate the feeblest member of His body from Himself. I look down on you as those on whom descends all that He has, all that He is, and all my delight is in Him.

Most blessed, but even this is not all. God did not set Himself in movement because of what we were-for our individual salvation. He delights. Himself in salvation; and He bids us look up, and see in Him the measure of this salvation-a salvation for eternity—for the earth-for the heavens—showing out the riches of His grace, according to His eternal character as the Savior-God.

So the apostle speaks here of the helmet of salvation, as what I know as the answer to Satan -the answer to the world-the answer to my own soul, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ on the throne of God as my Savior-God.

"And the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."-Here again we find the importance of

attending to the context. The sword is mentioned in different ways in the word. In Heb. 4:12-15, we have the Lord Jesus as One who has passed through the heavens," and is on the throne to sympathize. His sympathy is with God first; and next He sympathizes with what is of the Spirit in us, not with what is of the flesh. He will not strengthen the flesh, but the spirit. What do you want? Do you say God's glory in you? Then He may have to put you through discipline. There are many things in your heart that He may see have to be removed, for He will ever sever between the heart and the cherished idol, and the word will be like a lancet in the hand of a surgeon to us.

Mark that in the fourth of Hebrews there is no question of the adversary as there is in Ephesians. It is Christ dealing with His people for the glory of God, looking after the people He loves, and, therefore, judging hearts.

In the second of Revelation we find "the sharp sword with two edges." He comes out of His place to judge, on the one hand; He will go right down to discern the " thoughts and intents of the heart." On the other hand, He will not be deceived by false testimony. In Revelation it comes in, when failure was amongst the candlesticks, to see what light they were giving, He being One whom smoke would not deceive; but, at the same time, so used to handle the sword, as to be able to give deliverance by it to any in the evil having " ears to hear."

Here, in Revelation, Christ outside; in Hebrews, it is Christ within the veil, judging His people; in Ephesians, it is the saint standing in testimony-that is, in a position he has to make good. What is the use of the sword there? Much. There is the adversary against you, and you have to withstand him.

In the fourth of Mathew, in our Lord's temptation, we have the brilliant illustration of this use of the sword of the Spirit. Mark, it is before the Lord begins His aggressive work that He goes through the fiery ordeal. What grace was there in this to us! In grace Christ stood in the Wilderness to measure Satan, and well he could stand in that position against the enemy. There are three things connected with it. But first, always in connection with the right use of the sword, is the single eye. Christ being led up by the Spirit to be tempted, takes His stand as a servant to defend Himself with the sword; answering always from Deuteronomy, He takes the place of the humbled One.

First, it is the lust of the flesh: " Command that these stones be made bread." Does God like His people to hunger? Thou knowest His delight in thee, put forth thy power. Mark the answer. Ah! if it is blessedly true that there is such a thing as Jehovah's loving to feed His people, there is something more blessed still than being fed; there is the being by God-Without-It. Man does not live by bread alone; man may be without bread, but not without the word of God. Thus Satan was foiled by Christ's taking the place of perfect dependence.

Next it is "the lust of the eye," and such a promise brought to back it as that " angels shall bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." But Satan garbles it, as he did to Eve. He presses home on the Lord something that the eye can see. He had got Israel down in that way: they wanted a sign. Does he never get you down thus? Do you not want something to look at, or to feel, instead of the simple word of God? If Satan come to you, and ask you to give him some visible token of God's care for you, answer him with: "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Why ask for signs-for feelings-when God Himself is close at hand? The emphasis of "Thou shalt not tempt" is, thou shalt not challenge God for signs. Why do I want a sign? Because I cherish lust. He says: No; thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.

Then Satan makes another attempt with what belongs to him. There is no sense in asking whether Satan had the power to do this, for there is no use in asking if a liar can speak the truth; it might, or it might not, be; but assuredly Satan can do nothing but as God allows it. As with Balaam, he could not curse Israel.

Satan has, no power over a saint of God unless he yield it to him could he ever succeed with a child of God who is using the sword? Never! If he succeed, it is because you have betrayed yourself into his hands. It was thus with Eve; it was thus with Israel before the calf; it is thus with the church, unfaithful likewise; and the saint unfaithful to God puts himself into the enemy's hands.

The third thing I would notice here is the "Get thee hence, Satan." He had not said this before. It is remarkably connected with the use of the sword of the Spirit. If you put yourself into a place of temptation, you have no right to say "get thee hence, Satan." If God lead you into it, as Christ was led of the Spirit, you have to bear it.

It was not when Satan was merely tempting Him that Christ uses this language, but also when God's honor was touched. When Peter took upon himself what belonged to God alone, it was: "Get thee behind me, Satan." And when Satan does this with me, then I am justified in saying the like. Satan will sometimes so turn things round, that he will go beyond himself; and then there is rescue for you; while before, you have had only to stand in the temptation-to endure-whilest having no power to put an end to it, at last a question comes up which does not in the least tempt your heart, that before may have been tempted; something that seeks openly to set aside God.; and then without difficulty you can turn round and say: I will have nothing to do with that; "get thee behind me, Satan." All this teaches us forcibly the meaning of taking the sword of the Spirit. It is to be used in the active energy of service, but it is to be, used also, if only standing on some corner rampart, utterly -unable to go forward in anything. Even if a bed-ridden saint, you will not be able to make good your position, and Satan will betray you to yield, if you are not skilful in using the sword of the Spirit.

The temptation of our Lord gives, us an immense amount of experience; it shows up the ways of Satan; he would throw us into a dilemma if he could. The Lord met him in the spirit of a servant-as meaning to be a servant. Then Satan puts Him between the two horns of the dilemma; he tempts both as a servant and as God. Christ passes through and maintains both.

We are in a position to be tempted all day long to give up; and where he succeeds with us so often is through our not having a single eye— so contrary to Christ's: "Lo, I come to do thy will."

Then again, there is with us the want of understanding God. Some lust begins to move in our heart; we think of what we like, or of what we do not like, instead of delighting in God; and immediately we are in danger. Never so with Christ. Closely connected with the armor is the spirit of the believer—the spirit of dependence it must be, for with the soldier there must be prayer—hanging upon God. Not only getting this feeding supply hourly from God to meet his need individually, and to meet that of all the church militant, but also that all his springs are in God. "Praying always. God often puts His people into new paths—paths unsought and unthought of by you. Why are you there?-God would see whether you have the spirit of prayer there or not. The Red Sea is before you; the enemy behind you; then a waste howling wilderness beyond, but it is no waste howling wilderness to God. He can go through it. We learn in these new scenes how little we know of these feeding-springs in Him for us, and He would have us learn them. The question is, not as to the springs being there, but as to whether we know how to draw water from them. Sometimes, when the saint has learned the lesson, he is taken home. God says: Why should I leave him there any longer? he may go home.

"Supplication for all saints."-The spirit of the camp is to be the spirit of dependence; each saint looking for—drawing for—all the rest, the consciousness of God's supplies being all full for every heart.

Ah, beloved friends! you cannot do without the camp. And whatever your outside position, remember you must have the spirit of dependence. You had far better be a living saint, walking in dependence on the living God though very ignorant, than one who knows a great deal about position, and so on, but who is meanwhile double-minded and lukewarm, knowing little or nothing of this "praying always"-of the springs that are in God.

Oh, that our souls may know them to His glory!

Ephesians 6:18-24.

The closing portion of this chapter divides itself into three parts. Prayer; interest in the details of the work in prayer; and the benediction. The great subject in which the Ephesians ought to have been interested was the glory of God: and their prayers would have flowed forth about it, in the intelligence of renewed hearts that know what to pray for.

There is such a thing as drawing near to God, conscious that there is something He has got to give. I cannot tell what, but He that searcheth the hearts knoweth.

If I am a soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is a happy thing to see the special need of the work, so as to be able to present it definitely. As to prayer, much is often passed heedlessly by; whilst in others, there is often more correctness in the heart than in the understanding.

There was no such thing as prayer in Eden; prayer is the expression of want. Directly I find a person praying, I am sure there must have been sin connected either with himself, or with the place he is in. The blessed Lord, when He prayed, was in the place where sin was. Paul prayed when he found out there was a God in heaven whom he knew nothing about.

The opening of the subject of prayer in Scripture is in the case of Cain. There was in him no dependence whatever upon God but when God had pronounced his judgment, then he says: "My punishment is greater than I can bear;" he makes an appeal to God; and God takes care that nothing of what he dreaded should take place. What does Cain do with the gift he gets in answer to his appeal? He settles down quietly to make himself as happy as possible without God's presence on earth. A solemn thing this in connection with prayer; the fallen

heart may appeal to God, and God give an answer, and, as the result, the heart, being unrenewed, only makes itself as happy as possible out of God's way.

Persons constantly say: I am safe, because I pray. Take care. If God says of you: "Behold he prayeth," it is well, but not otherwise. It is not a question whether God gives you gifts, but what you do with them. Is it for yourself that you use them, or for the glory of God?

Our blessed Lord took the place of one who had put in abeyance all His power—who held Himself in abeyance! He took the place of a servant. His being able to do this proved who He was. Man cannot hold himself in abeyance, for his character is too strong for him. Sin is in, and sin will come out. Look at the Lord's prayer in Gethsemane-the only instance of the kind, and replete with instruction for us. He goes into

Gethsemane, to pass through, in solitude with God, all that was upon the threshold -all that was coming upon Him. And what is it? " Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me! nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." The Lord, holding the place of the perfect Son of man, could not forget what rested on His bearing that name-even the question of guilt. But how was it possible, if He were perfect, for Him to think it an unimportant thing for God to hide His face from Him? He would not have been perfect if He had not shrunk from only this one thing. He did not shrink from the temptation in the wilderness; God led Him into it. But there was in this what was anguish to His soul in the very measure in which He was perfect.

Human nature, in all its perfection, may present desires before God which will not be received. On the other hand, there is such a thing as man entering into God's counsels. This comes out in Paul, where he says: " Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me." Now, ' as a good man, could he do otherwise than abhor Satan's messenger? God says: I will not take it away. I give you my light to show you my reason, and leave it there to throw you upon Me. Better rudely to strand your vessel on the shore, if it make my strength perfect in your weakness; you will then pour out your heart before Me.

There never was a case like that of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul did not stand in the light of the divine counsels; that was why he did not like the thorn in the flesh. But Christ stood in the full light of the thoughts of God, and, therefore, He could not but hate that cup.

There is the flowing-out of grace through human hearts down here. It may be felt that some Christian is so walking with God as to have the ear of God. And this is a blessed-thing, but there is something above it, and that is a person so walking with God that you can go to him to know -what God's mind is. It is a blessed thing to have the ear of God; but how much better to feel that the sympathies of Christ are flowing through my heart, and that I can know what He is going to do.

There is none with whom the power of prayer is more remarkable than with the weakest, members. A babe will get an immediate answer, whilst a father may have to wait, because he has, or ought to have, learned to trust.

If it be not on our hearts in the present day that there is a testimony to go out for God, we shall sink down into some little local interest. The apostle wanted them to care for the work going on then, not merely out of love and friendship for him, but that he wanted their souls to bear part in the work by bearing it on their hearts before God. There is an immense burden on us before the Lord, connected with this want of sympathy with what God is doing.

God in dealing with the souls of His people, traces in His word the path for their feet, and marks out the proper subject for prayer. There may be in prayer a great deal of affection and thoughtfulness, and yet it may be all human. Persons might think God would say: Go; you pray for a wrong thing. But no; He often gives the answer, and then lets us learn by bitter experience how, if we had left it a little more to Him He would have done far better for us.

Often one is plaiting a scourge for one's own back, before one learns to place oneself as a child, and say; Take thou the lead, and I will, follow. There will be pressing desires before God, and He will grant them, and let us see how we have been planning—not for God—but planning difficulties for ourselves. You cannot dictate to God. The blessed Lord only once said: " I will; " and then it was His Father's will.

Do you feel that there is this war going on between God and Satan, and that you are connected with it? And that your heart is out and abroad in connection with it? If it be so, it is surely a special time for prayer. There are countries" all the world over that need a testimony which none but God can render, but which we, if we are like men that wait for their Lord, may have laid on our hearts to pray for for them.

(G. V. W.)

Do you always take pleasure and rejoice greatly when trials and distresses are in the distance before you? How strange it is that heavy trials are often greater blessings than little ones! How is this? It is that little trials often vex saints, just because self is there to be vexed, whereas a heavy blow crushes self, and then there is none of it left to be vexed:

If self were always kept under the extinguisher, God would not have to send us heavy trials to crush it, or little ones to let us find out its unjudged presence, but only " a thorn in the flesh " to keep that, which has been extinguished on the cross, out of our own sight as well as that of other people. H. H. M.

Memorials of the Ministry of G.V. Wigram 1: Volume 1, Lecture 5 on the Epistle to the Ephesians

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5. Eph. 6:10-24

There are three parts in the redemption of Israel out of Egypt. There was, first of all, the making a way through the Red Sea; getting them on the road with God on the other side. Then, there was a certain school-time, when God had them in the wilderness, where He had them in training; and they were to take possession of the land and dwell in it. There is a remarkable connection between the Ephesians and the people when they got into the land, laying hold of the things given them; for they were to take possession of all the things in the land. Really, without their knowing it, God had given the land to the Son of His love. When we follow Israel into the land, we find they would not and did not take possession of it. Why? Because they had not faith. All the teaching they had in the wilderness alone with God, did it teach them to have done with themselves? No, it did not. Now in this scripture God teaches us that there is a certain armor a saint must have, if he intends to get into the spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. God giving the land to Israel was one thing, and Israel knowing how to conduct themselves so as to get possession of it is another thing. Now we shall see in Scripture that while every blessing is secured in Christ, I may yet turn to the people of God down here and say, Have you got them in possession? If I have not, I ought to challenge my heart.

If I turn to various scriptures, I see how far Paul recognizes that such people as the Galatians Ephesians and Colossians had these spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. He shows that he does not think they had, and he is obliged to set to work to show them what was in Christ, and that these spiritual blessings were not enjoyed by them. In 2 Cor. 1:20, we find that "all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen;" and when I turn back to the first epistle, I find that these Corinthians had received certain blessings and powers from God, but they were walking entirely unlike the apostle-not walking like persons separated practically because knowing Christ at God's right hand in resurrection glory. They had got hold of the doctrine of having been crucified together with Christ; but had they the practice of it? No; they were going to law one with another. There was something clearly very wrong. There were all sorts of works of the flesh as if they were not dead at all; and in chapter 15, many of them were even calling in question the resurrection, through the deceitful influences of evil doctrine upon them. The great mark of the apostle Paul was the brightness of his walk as a man raised from the dead. Paul beautifully depicts the way God had made good the doctrine to him; but the way He made good the doctrine to him was by always rolling him into the valley of death down here. If I were walking with a friend as a man raised from the dead, the thorns and briars in the path could not stop me; they may stop my friend if he is not walking in the same character.

Now look at Colossians: it goes on the same ground somewhat as Ephesians yet lie speaks of some of them as not holding the Head-the Head holding them was one thing, and their holding the Head was another. Abraham was a strong contrast to Lot. Whenever Abraham was at his wife's end, there was God ready to help him, and go through it all with him Then the Galatians Satan is very subtle and crafty; he got them to add on a little insignificant nothing. They consented to add on the circumcision, and so to compromise the gospel. Christ being crucified, the world was crucified to them, and they to the world. The way God acted was to put man at the other side of the cross. Now God has given us all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. If I meet a child of God in an omnibus, and see faith in that man's soul, I should know that everything that God saw to be in Christ belongs to him. When he is getting settled in Christ he has no idea that everything in Christ belongs to him. But it does according to God's purpose. He has, however, to grow up into that; he must know Christ as the Head of the body lie must know how to stand there, and not only how to stand there, but to follow on in communion with God that these spiritual blessings may become known to himself, that he may know the whole grace of God as one sifted of God. The thought here is, that we are to stand fast in the heavenly places; and to stand fast we must lay hold of these spiritual blessings that are ours in Christ.

Verse 10. It is not a piece of armor, but the character the child of God wears who has learned God in the wilderness. If Israel had learned God in the wilderness, they would have known how to stand fast in the land. If you and I have learned what it is to know God, we should understand how to use that word, "Rejoice in tribulation." We should know how to count upon God, as God said through Haggai "Be strong, O Zerubbabel; be strong, O Joshua; do not suppose you have to do anything; it is My time to bless; be strong, recognize where and what I am." Here it is, "Be strong in the Lord." If He has given Christ to be Head of the body, if He has given Him all possession of all in heaven and earth, we may well be strong in Him; and if we are not strong in the Lord all the armor in the world is of no use. "The power of His might." The same power that raised Christ works in the believer. It is just the same power which took a Saul of Tarsus, and enabled him to say, "I am a member of Christ in heaven." But you say, "I want to know about the armor." If a person does not know what it is to be quickened together with Christ, raised together, seated together in Him, he does not know what it is to stand fast in the Lord. If I look at Paul's life, he looks uncommonly like a man quickened together with Christ. He was just the man that to my mind lived by and with Christ. If we are really standing fast in Him, the effect of that life is that it displays our weakness, but it is a bright light by which people take notice of us.

Verse 11. "The wiles of the devil." I should myself press that name given to him here devil." In two scriptures Satan takes the particular form of accuser; in Numbers where he accuses Israel, he brings up a number of things, many of them true. God had taken up Israel on the ground of what was in Himself, and He did not behold iniquity in Jacob. But the people did not know that. In Revelation the accuser of the brethren is cast down. He accuses still: the weakest and the strongest will find it out. It is one of his great ways to take the eye off Christ and His work, to bring up our inconsistencies, and then we are confounded. God's answer is in Num. 6 Ceasing from the life in the flesh is the answer. If Christ be risen, then I am accepted. But then it comes to our mind, "I am living as I did before; I do reckon myself dead, but, alas! Satan is too strong for me." Nevertheless I say, "Take a knife; let the Lord Jesus cut what He will. Christ has come into the world to destroy the works of the devil, and He will destroy them in me. I have got this old man, a horrible old man, but I will reckon it dead, because God says it is dead."

Now let me ask you, Do all Christians see this? Do you take the death of Christ as the answer to all that? There is forgiveness of sins through His blood, and I rejoice in it. My flesh could not go into the glory-it is utterly bad God says, "Do not trouble, I will take care of all that." If God were to say to me, "I will take you into heaven just as you are," I would say, "Oh, I beseech thee, do not, there is sin in me!" When He changes me, every one of these things I struggle against now will be gone; I shall have a glorified body like that of Christ.

Now let me put this question, Do believers see these two things? They do not. We have to learn them, and then we have got to stand fast in it, and know the one who conies against us. Satan has no wisdom if you look at him in the presence of God; but he knows man; he has had nearly six thousand years' experience. He knows those that love money; give that man a little bit of money. And that man is fond of a bit of good character-well, just put a bit of good character into his hand, and that will occupy him. Satan is very wily. It is a hard strong word to use of a man, but it is not at all unsuitable to Satan.

Verse 12. I do not think that believers calmly recognize that the powers of darkness go into heaven. If I set myself to pray for some spiritual blessing, just when I am thinking of it, I find some other thought comes in. That is the adversary, God's adversary as well as ours. If we think of our morning prayers, our mid-day or our evening prayers, we see the way we are turned from being instant in them. Then comes darkness. God means us to know that we cannot keep the heart's thoughts pointing steadily to any one particular thing. God can put the mind just there, and keep it steadily fixed. If you break down, the very consciousness of your breaking down only draws you nearer to God. The wandering Arabs do not care to attack an empty caravan; and the devil does not care much about attacking you if you are empty. But if you have had communion, if you are happy, and have got some fresh enjoyment, the devil will spoil it if he possibly can.

Verse 14. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Truth, and when I say He is the truth, I do not mean He is the truth of forgiveness, or acceptance merely, but that He is the One by whom God measures everything. What sort of Person is God? He sent His Son to bear our sins that He might give us eternal life. What sort of person is man? Man crucified Christ-Jew and Gentile. If they had only known what they were doing, they would not have clone it, Satan would not have done it, for it was then that man got his measure. Christ, in what He was, had the right and title to be a provision for sin, and for sin in the flesh? Oh, do not talk to me of my flesh It is not such a nature as Christ had, "holy,

harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." Depend upon it, if it is I, I, I, in myself or my neighbor, it is flesh; if it is finding fault with my neighbor for not being spiritual, it is I, I, I. Now just see how Satan got his match in the Lord Jesus (Heb. 2:14,15), "that through death He might destroy Min, that is, the devil; and deliver," &c.

Verse 14. If my loins are girt about with truth, it is the truth about everything, and it is this that gives strength to a person; and the weakness of another is because he has not got into the presence of God about things. If I have got it about my loins, it is part of my strength. If a man brings anything into God's presence, he has to learn God's mind about it. Christ is there, the touchstone of all and everything. Say I am a great money-maker; well, when I get into God's presence I find the strongest thought in His mind about money is the thirty pieces, little bits of it given for Christ, the Lord of hosts. When the Lord came to purchase the flock, He gave His own blood.

" Having on the breastplate of righteousness." Christ has walked through the world and left the marks of His feet, and we are to walk as He walked, to like what He liked, and to dislike what He disliked. If I do this it will be a perfect covering for me. Verse 15. I should connect that as much with " having done," and " standing," as with walking. Both "the peace of God," connected with your emptying your heart out before God, and the " God of peace " from your walking with God (Phil. 4:6-9), both enter in here as giving rest and quietness to the soul. Verse 16. Do not suppose this is the shield of the faith. He says, " I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." Well, an arrow comes whistling close by me. What did you do when the arrow came? Did you say, "Oh, there is God!?" and did you look at the trouble and glory in it? I raise my song just where other people sit down and say, " Oh dear, I never counted upon this at all!" God has marked the road for us, and the heart turns to Him, and says, " He said it should be so. Ah! He said I should have trouble, and here is trouble. He said, ' You cannot get on a day without Me,' and I cannot indeed get on half a day without Him." And then the heart is kept.

Verse 17. I should take the " helmet of salvation " to mean not merely that Christ is the Head up there in heaven, but something I have put on. The Savior appears in the wilderness as a Savior for my course all through. When Paul is speaking in Philippians of how he had to run counter to everything as he traveled on, if it were a bright shining way, it was yet a very rough way, but salvation is at the end of it. If I am floating down the stream I shall not talk much of the helmet of salvation, nor the want of it. If I am filling up the sufferings of Christ as Paul was, I shall have his experience daily, and I shall want the helmet of salvation. " The sword of the Spirit." It is not only that we have the Spirit, but it is rather using the word by His power. Christ used it ably in that conflict with Satan, turning aside the sword of the adversary.

Verse 20. If you take the apostle, as he describes himself in this epistle, you see a wonderful instance of a man standing fast with Christ up there. He knew he had to put on all the armor, and be skilful in the use of it all. It was his service as ambassador that gave him the opportunity of using it to teach these Ephesians. Such portions as Numbers and Job those parts of Scripture which describe the passing of a people from the time of redemption on to their rest in glory, are not adequately understood by us. I think we want stirring up as to the peculiar power of the life of Christ, and as to the understanding and present enjoyment of these things that are true of us in Christ. In order to this there must be a daily refusal of those things that are natural to us, and a daily occupation with those things that will enable us to meet the adversary in our course.

Memorials of the Ministry of G.V. Wigram 1: Volume 1, Lecture 4 on the Epistle to the Ephesians

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

4. Eph. 4

Down to the 10th verse of the ii. chapter, the apostle is looking at the counsels of God to be made good in a people on the earth through that mighty power by which Christ was raised from the dead. From the 2 chapter, 11th verse, to the end of chapter 3, we get him looking at the change that had taken place upon earth, from the time that Christ went up rejected by Israel, and the rejection of Israel confirmed by the wickedness of the Gentiles. In the Church Jew and Gentile were not recognized as such, but both together are looked at here as the habitation of God through the Spirit. Then in chapter 3, he takes up the mystery God had revealed; and in the end of chapter 3, we get that blessed prayer that brings us to this-that Christ may be in our hearts the center and pivot of everything, as He is the center and pivot of all God's thoughts; that we may not only rest in Christ, but that He may really have that place in our hearts, as he says, "Filled unto all the fullness of God;" so that everything connected with us, everything that flows forth from us, may flow forth through Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith. This Christ, who in this way is revealed to us, is the center of all God's plans and counsels. In chapter 4:1-16, he shows the provision God had made for the development of this blessed truth down to the end of time in apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers-persons able to carry on the work to the end, not in the power of human nature, but in the power of Christ, that there might always be a testimony in this scene, something sure to be displayed because it was secured in Christ. Verse 17 gives not only what is secure for us in Christ (and this fountain open and unsealed is sure to pour forth its waters, and the people sure to receive it), but he takes up the portion of those that are to receive it in detail. I have no doubt there is a connection between 2:8-10, and the beginning of this 17th verse. He is speaking of something that in man down here he can call and calls God's workmanship. It is not that each believer has his path marked out for him here-that we get elsewhere.

In chapters 4:17, 5:21, we have what these works were, which as connected with us make us to be connected with God-make us to be the workmanship of God. It turns out then they are truth, love, and light-three things which evidently are not of the first, but of the last Adam, and could not be understood by man cast out of the garden. You are called as created in truth, and this creation is inseparable from love and light.

4:18. It is a remarkable expression as connected with the state of man in nature, " alienated from the life of God "- " come short of the glory of God;" but this is stronger still, because it says " alienated from the life of God." " You do not mean to say I am to walk down here as having the life of God?" Yes; " God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." They were called from that time not to walk as good men, but, as having the life of God, we are to walk as sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. We cannot be connected with that Son by the Spirit without having the life of God. There are two portions of Scripture which are very similar-Eph. 4:22-29, and Col. 3:9. This is the peculiar

position in which the child of God stands now-I have put off the livery of Satan, and have put on the livery of Christ.

Verse 20, he expresses surprise at them. Verse 21, "as the truth is in Jesus." This is not the truth of the gospel that presents the mercy and compassion of God to the poor sinner afar off. This is the extent of grace given to us who have come in. "I do not see you apart from Christ. I do not see you as part of the world; how can you live as part of the world?" Now this is a grand thought. As to our display of truth, I have got to run as a man that has been taken out of the hand of Satan, and become a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. What is to be the character of my walk, having put off the old man and put on the new? I am to walk as a man delivered from the power of darkness, and so connected with Him who is the truth, that without His body, of which through grace I am a member, the very glory that was prepared for Him could not be His. What would be the bearing of it upon Christ, if all power was put into His hand up there for His body the Church? If there was no such thing as the body, there could not be the glory of the Head; it would be a dishonor to Him that had been put at God's right hand. Well, God wanted to honor Him, and therefore the power of God came forth, and called such a man as Saul of Tarsus, and gave him certain light, and then to others; and that light has come to us, and what has been the effect of it upon us? When the Lord Jesus Christ came one night, and looked into my heart, that eternal life which is His came forth to my soul, and I got a new position from that time, having Himself before me. This new position was one clean outside of the world-entirely a new position. Christ up there in heaven, Head of the body, and believers down here on earth, members of that body; that truth was revealed to my soul. God looking into a soul quickens it. God does not turn the rebel into a pit of despair to learn what He has done. No, He never does that; they never could learn it there.

Well, that is the first great thing connected with these works. It has got the standard of everything in Christ. I have got to do with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is this Lord Jesus Christ making the throne of God a mercy-seat. All that Satan could do could not prevent the Lord Jesus taking up such a man as Saul of Tarsus. He takes His place not only as the Giver of life, but as the life of those who believe on Him. In Scripture there is no redemption apart from the Lamb. When it comes to the question of redemption, the Lamb is on the throne before it could be unfolded to man. It must be true in Him, before it is true for us. The thing was true in Him. He had gone into the presence of God, and sat down there before He woke us up. He was at the right hand of God. God saw us wandering about seeing what we could do, and then He not only let the light shine down upon us, but gave it force to enter the soul and quicken us. It was all wholly grace.

Verse 26, &c. There was a number of things that were practically inconsistent with the truth, and the man of God was to watch against them, and seek God's strength to avoid them.

Chap. 5:1, 2. How is it possible for me, as a mere man, to look upon man on the earth with anything like love? What can lay hold of the heart and draw forth love? You cannot have it in the heart and it not go forth to man. (John 3:16.) It is part of the truth connected with the new creation; it is not in nature-that is cold; it grows out of the love God has had for us. Is there a believer, a child of God, that does not know that Christ gave Himself a ransom for us? that does not know the Father's love to the children. The faith given to the child identifies him with the Father. Did He wait till I loved Him? Have I a single word I could say to Him about my love except, "I love Him because He first loved me?" What is my position as a believer? I have the Father, and He has an only begotten Son, and the Spirit has taken possession of my heart, and possession of a great number of hearts down here. Love begets love, and a person cannot find himself truly loved by God without a heart of peculiar interest in those in the same position. And he has to vindicate the love of God to poor sinners; there are many on the wide common of the world still. The new creation-the bringing into vital union with Him, and the display of that life that was brought out when He cleansed their sins, and brought them into perfect liberty and peace in the presence of God. Our being children of light flows out of our being of the divine nature. Who can hold that truth as the expression of God's feelings towards us, and not find himself brought into the light, and find at the same time everything for him? He who is without any veil over His face, is able to rend the veils of the hearts of poor sinners that all the light of God may shine down into their hearts, that everything in them and around them may be brought out to their own knowledge.

Verse 3. Who that is in the light of this fellowship does not see that the body is for the Lord? I am like a bound man. His love constrains His own that they should not "henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." Hence they cannot make their bodies their end, live for themselves down here, but unto Him. Though He is sitting at God's right hand, He wants us to live for Him. The poorest as well as the richest can do this.

Verse 8. "Light in the Lord;" is not that light? Ah! light of the purest kind. Verse 17. A man that has got sight does not feel his way as one often sees a blind man groping about the street. One naturally inclines to turn and see in such a case if he is near a crossing or any danger. But if one sees a person walking in that way, if the eye is clear one supposes intoxication, and gets out of his way as fast as possible. This is the place you are put into-the truth, love, and light; and the works are truth, light, and love displayed in Christ, Head of the body in heaven. Verses 18-21. There may be fictitious strength, but it cannot last. Then he goes on to the effect of light.

It produces joy in the heart. If you and I were abiding in the light, how natural that word in Philippians "Rejoice in the Lord," would be to us. Abiding in the light of the glory. It is there for us. We have got the principles connecting us with Him, but if we were abiding in that light flowing out to us, that blessed joy of Christ flowing into the heart, there would be the way of expressing it, making melody in our hearts to the Lord.

Verse 20. Now there will be that giving of thanks for all things, &c.-that is the effect. A great many believers say, "Oh, yes; but I find the wilderness a very inconvenient place. I get very weary; I find it very irritating mixing with a company of believers, and their flesh and my flesh do not get on well together." What led Paul in everything to give thanks? He was abiding in the light; he saw all the untoward things but as occasions for the love of God to display itself. One is obliged to go through this bit of the wilderness, suppressing what is naughty in oneself. But, ah! we do not think that God formed that wilderness for Himself God wanted the opportunity, as One who is the eternal Lover of His people, of being alone with Israel. He knew their difficulties; God was with His people. "They have no water-they are thirsty; I shall have the pleasure of opening the rock for them. Have they learned their lesson? Do they call upon Me? I brought them out, that in my dealing with them they may learn that I am God. I must make more difficulties for them. I did not take them across the Red Sea to drop them. I am present with them, as watching over them, that I may see I have the first place in their hearts." God was jealous over His first-born son. (Ex. 4:22.) May not a Father have a thought that he would like to have the affection of His child? He took them into the wilderness that He might have the opportunity of teaching them that. Ah I beloved, I am not throwing a stone at anybody in this. If any feel it, I hope they take it home to themselves. It is a very great thing to give thanks for all things at all times. There is something disappointing all my thought. Well,

God is behind it; I must find Him there; it has not brought God to His wits' end. The more I am in the light, the more I see there is my heaven up there, and everything connected with that glorious Person is watched over even in me, the feeblest member here; for I can give thanks. You must be in the light to give thanks always. I do not

say, I do it. That we do not is because there is independence, and we do not see God in our circumstances. We are at school; but there will be nothing of the kind when we get home to our Father's house. If you were in subjection to God, you would see it is an easy thing in everything to give thanks. Every day brings out things which seem untoward to us; but they are not untoward to God, but are opportunities for God to display His love to us. There is nothing more sweet then, than to say, when everything is contrary to nature, "Not my will, but Thine be done." I will take up Thy will in these things, satisfied to let my own will go.

Bible Treasury: Volume 13, Prayer of a Saint, The

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

The tenor and subjects of our prayers will ever be in accordance with our knowledge and apprehension of God, and of the relation in which we recognize Him as standing toward us and us to Him. Thus, if we regard God as having given us only the hope of the attainment of salvation by Jesus Christ, our constant desire before God will be for the brightening and strengthening of that hope, as that which we feel to be needful for our comfort and peace of mind. But as to any farther revelation which God may have given of His mind and purpose, we can feel but little interest, whilst there remains a doubt as to our being personally concerned and having a portion therein.

But if we are enabled, in the undoubting simplicity of faith, to take our stand upon the sure foundation which God has laid for every sinner, in the incarnation, death, and resurrection of His beloved Son, our desires will naturally go forth after the knowledge of more of what is the purpose of God, in connection with the manifestation of the glory of Him in "whom we have obtained an inheritance." Now, one great design of God in the gift of His Son was the manifestation of His love. His power, His unspotted holiness, must be exhibited; His justice, as the Supreme Governor, must take its course. But in Jesus all can be displayed and exercised in love. God is love. And in Jesus "dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." What Jesus expressed of God was love, as set forth in that short summary in His own blessed words: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." (John 3:16.) Thus the first step of a sinner's knowledge of God is, that He so loved him.

But it is in the farther increasing knowledge and apprehension of the love of Christ that we are led on to the fullness of God. Now this is the prayer of the Spirit of God, Him who makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God; asking, of course, only for that which it is our blessing to receive and know, and God's glory to bestow and communicate. We are too apt, judging of God by the narrowness of our own hearts, to remain satisfied in the attainment of a clearness of hope as to a future and final deliverance, looking upon the glory to be revealed as no portion of our present knowledge. But this is surely wrong, it is all the portion of faith now. "We have the mind of Christ," and the Holy Ghost abiding with us and in us; and although "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," yet "God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (1 Cor. 2)

It is true that in present circumstances, as being yet in the body, and in the region of sin, we "see through a glass darkly," but yet it is "all things," and thus our power and capacity of understanding are now in kind, though not in degree, the same as they will ever be. But we are not sufficiently careful to distinguish between the perceptions of the natural mind and the perceptions of the spiritual mind by faith. "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3.) "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned; but he that is spiritual judgeth [discerneth, marg.] all things." (1 Cor. 2:14, 15.)

Being born again, and having spiritual life and perception, we are capable of receiving the things of the Spirit of God; and it is in the exercise of our spiritual powers, in the diligent study and meditation of what God has revealed, that we grow up "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." (Eph. 4:13.) To be satisfied with any measure of attainment in divine things is fleshly, natural; so it is to be satisfied with less than God has seen fit and necessary to give—"the fullness"—all things. But the true secret of our willing ignorance, is, that every step of attainment in the knowledge of God involves painful self-denial and crucifixion of the flesh. It is the prevalence of the "carnal mind," which is "enmity against God," over the "spiritual mind," which receives and delights in the things of God, as being of Him. Thus there is so much of death in our life, for the "carnal mind is death"—the spiritual mind is life and peace."

Oh, how much of present joy and peace in believing should we experience, if, at once discarding from our hearts all fellowship with the "weak and beggarly elements of the world," we took our stand practically and constantly on the "sure foundation" of Jesus Christ and Him crucified, yea, risen and ascended to God; "growing up into him in all things, which is the Head." Hence, indeed, would the deep vistas of eternity open to our view, stretching out in peaceful calm and light—the King in His beauty—with all around subject in the holy and blissful harmony of love. The fellowship of all this would give joy and repose to the soul, in the trying scenes around us, and the conflict within us.

The testimony of the Spirit in the scriptures is characterized as being to Christ—"the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." (1 Peter 1:11.) "And beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in ALL the scriptures the things concerning himself." (Luke 24:27.)

Christ is the mystery of piety. God "created all things by Jesus Christ." (Eph. 3:9.) "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made." (John 1:3.) "All things were created by him and for him, and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." (Col. 1:16.) "I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." (Rev. 22:13.) The mystery of Christ is "the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 5:32); the man and the woman, in the great purpose of God—"This is a [the] great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (Eph. 5:32.) "And he is the head of the body, the church, who is

the beginning, the first.; born from the dead.” (Col. 1:18.)

In Genesis we read that “God created the heavens and the earth,” and man “in his own image;” and He looked upon all that He had made, and pronounced them “very good.” But we find that both the heavens and the earth became defiled by sin. “The angels kept not their first estate” (Jude 6); and man, listening to the temptation of Satan, likewise fell and sinned in disobeying God. Thus did the design of God seem to be frustrated, and the course of this world, dead in trespasses and sins, has ever since been running on in sin unto death, under the power of him who has the power of death. But God's purpose was not defeated, for it was in Himself He purposed, “according to the good purpose of his will,” “according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” — “before the foundation of the world” —as depending, not at all upon the obedience and rectitude of His creature, but upon Himself. And herein we learn the needful lesson—that, separate from God, there is no endurance for the creature, and that it is only by the grace of His own imparted power that the creature can live. All God's dealings have tended to show us what we are, yea, more, what all creatures put on their responsibility of obedience must be; and what He is—God—the sustainer of all things. Thus man continued to stand, apparently upon his own responsibility, but as a sinner, and incapable for ages, but with obscure intimations, known to faith, of grace. “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17.) And the incarnation of the Son of God contains the whole of the mystery of God (developed to faith by the Spirit), as to creation, redemption, and the sure standing and continuance of the creature by grace IN HIM. “By him all things consist” —him was life.”

Thus, in the Gospel by John, the especial testimony to the Son of God, we are at once led back by the Spirit to that which was before the visible creation existed. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (John 1:1) “And the Word was made flesh.” (Ver. 14.) This, as the sure foundation of the state of things, whereby to be made known and manifested, and as enduring (κατὰ πρόθεσιν), and that wherein shall be shown the TRUTH of that said of man, “in the image of God” —and of all things—“very good.” But redemption required that there should be blood, death, resurrection; and all these intervened before the full declaration of the hidden mystery could commence—and that He should take His place as the Head of all things, in order to the Spirit's testimony going forth as to what was. (John 7:39.) But now is come forth from the Spirit the full announcement of the mystery of “the dispensation of the fullness of times;” and surely to know our place and portion in those arrangements which are to be enduring, and forever built up securely in God, must be a matter of the highest interest and importance; and also, in knowing that we have a portion therein, to be enabled now to enter into the mind of God in the revelation of the mystery He has given, should be a subject of interest. This is our present portion, for we have the Spirit, the earnest of our inheritance. It is in the knowledge of what we are in Christ, as before God, and what God is to us in Christ, that we are capacitated to receive the further communications of the mind of God, as to what Christ is to all things, and this in order to our being “filled into all the fullness of God.”

It should be the subject of our prayers, the object of our unwearied diligence, to be filled with God, and to have His mind in all things. It is the power, ever so regarded in scripture, of our deliverance from this present evil world, into the world of faith—God's world—into that state of things which shall endure with the permanency of God, under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ. And this, as God's object and purpose, should be our object and desire, in attaining true knowledge and understanding therein. It is, moreover, the true secret of power and facility in the discharge of those duties which more especially belong to our present position and circumstances as being in the world, as the children of God here, in a place of testimony and service to Him. We may observe, that this prayer of the Spirit by the apostle (Eph. 3:14) is on behalf of those who had been made partakers of the “riches of his grace,” in redemption through the blood of Jesus, and who had been sealed with that “Holy Spirit of promise, the earnest of the inheritance.... to the praise of his glory.” (Eph. 1:13.) It is now on the ground of glory that the apostle prays “according to the riches of his glory.” It is not only of grace, though all be of grace, but of glory, that we are made partakers, “who by him do believe in God that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.” (1 Peter 1:21)

The character in which God is recognized and addressed here is “the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole [every] family in heaven and earth is named”—His children thus as named of Him, standing in the same relationship to God, and the glory of God, as He Himself does. (Eph. 1:3.) And indeed, in any recognition short of this, the whole character and subject of the prayer would be unmeaning and presumptuous. But this is true, and the character and standing of every believer in Jesus, as known to God, and as being one with and in Christ in resurrection life. Thus, in the declaration of the Lord after His resurrection, “I ascend to my Father, and your Father, to my God, and your God.” (John 20:17.) This more fully shown by the Spirit, as sent from Jesus, returned to the bosom of the Father, as showing us “plainly of the Father,” in the abundant testimony of the Spirit in the epistles to the churches. “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.” (Galatians iv. 6.) “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.” (Rom. 8:16.) “Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet [ικανώσαντι ἡμᾶς] to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” (Colossians i. 12, 13.)

Hereupon the apostle prays that we may be “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man,” the “new man” in Christ Jesus; strengthened in that which alone is capable of receiving and understanding farther communications of God—that which is of God, born of God, begotten of God, a new, a spiritual and a holy nature. “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” That all that Christ was and is to us, and all that He has done and will do for us, may be constantly and habitually present (κατ' ἰκλήσασθαι) with us—not drawn away by, objects of sense and present attraction, but having Christ as the one great subject of our meditation: and what a blessed field of thought is here! Bethlehem, Nazareth, Capernaum, Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, Gethsemane, Calvary, the crown of thorns, the cross, the grave, Emmaus, Mount Olivet, heaven, the right hand of God—“a little while, I will come again.” And all this of Him who is the Eternal Son of God, the Word, in the beginning with God, and God—the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, yet Himself truly man. We sometimes hear of the first principles of the truth, but the first principles are all; Christ is the way, the truth, and the life; He is all and in all; the beginning and the end, the first and the last; the beginning of faith, the end of faith; wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption; the power of God, the wisdom of God, the glory of God, the love of God; and, O blessed thought “Ye are complete in him.”

It is thus when strengthened in spirit, Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith, our power and capacity to “comprehend” become enlarged and expanded, and this in proportionate measure, progressive and increasing, “the love of Christ that passeth knowledge.” We come to know that

here is the unfailing stream of love, gushing forth in unabated freshness and fullness, through the ages of a boundless eternity. It is that wherein GOD shall be known to the whole family in heaven and earth, when, every cloud of sin forever removed, the calm and hallowed light of His unveiled glory shall shine forth, to gladden their hearts forever. The love of Christ is that wherein the boundless infinity, the fullness of God, is and shall be manifested.

Its height is hidden in God, coming forth thence, as the counsel of the infinite mind in the beginning, of which all we can know or say is, that "God was."

Its depth is infinite, it has reached below the lowest possible depth of sin and pollution, and distance from God, even beneath that depth where there was no hope.

Its breadth comprises the utmost limits of God's creation, to gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and on earth.

Its length, too, is infinite as God and eternity. When God ceases to be, and eternity comes to an end, then, and not till then, shall we find the limit of the love of Christ.

In a word, it is the fullness of God, into which it is our joy, our blessing, our portion present and future, to be tilled; and this in the increasing comprehension of the love; of Christ. IT IS THE LOVE OF CHRIST, THE Fullness of GOD.

"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen," G. V. W.

Christian Friend: Volume 4, Rich in Mercy

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

"GOD, who is rich in mercy"—rich in mercy. We have in the latter part of chapter 1 and beginning of chapter 2 God's expression of His grace and mercy. The former contains the expression of His grace, and goes on to show, as the result of it, the expression which is in measure in contrast with it. The close of chapter 1 presents to us the person of the Son of Man sitting in heaven—the glorified Man. Wonderful to think there are those who are connected with Him; that there should be a people given to Him! In verse 18, the wealth of God's inheritance in the saints is spoken of; almighty power is displayed in separating a people who believe in Himself in a marvelous way. In verse 20 to end, we have the man Christ Jesus sitting in heaven. He is looked at in chapter 1 as the servant of God, who can say, "my God." The term Christ, or the Anointed, always applied to Him as man. God finds His infinite delight in this perfect servant, and in His service rendered. No other resting place could be found in which God could express His delight; and He brings Him up into His own eternal glory, places Him at His right hand, and draws the comparison between Him and every other, power, marking His superiority. He is the only perfect servant God ever had. He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. God has set Him in a place by Himself. Both there and hereafter, no power is like His. All is put under Him.

God has assigned to Him a place of peculiar dignity and power; has made Him the Head of the church. One thought in my mind has been, that as children of God, as followers of Christ, we are not exercised about Him, occupied with Him, as we should be, about the glories of His person. If we could read each, we should. We have not adequate thoughts of the glories, belonging to the Lord Jesus. I believe the thoughts saints have of Him in this day are very limited. They are not brought up to the mark in the present day. What is wanted is a fuller apprehension of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is truly Man in the midst of all the eternal and divine glory of God; and there is everything in Him proper to the place that is given to Him as the just recompense of the reward for the service He has rendered. When God acted as Creator, and finished the work of creation, He rested, and man was called to rest with Him. Satan came in, death came in, and the counsel of God came forth, "the seed of the woman". God's Champion against Satan took the place of a servant; went thoroughly through the whole work; measured everything; was Himself the test of all. He went to the cross, and gave up the ghost, and God raised Him, and placed Him at His right hand as the object of His delight. God found His rest in Him. He has triumphed gloriously over every enemy. He has won the victory—He who had a right to judge the quick and the dead—by His humiliation and service. We ought to be familiar with that Lord who has thus brought us to and with Himself in divine glory. We have in Him that which holds our souls, and draws our hearts. Amazing subject—Man in divine glory! He who was the object of heaven's worship became the perfect servant, and having accomplished the work, all is put into His hands.

In connection with His being Head of the church we get mercy introduced; we are called to turn from Him in His solitariness, to look from where those who form the assembly are brought; we have to turn from heaven and its brightness to earth and hell's darkness (Chapter 2). You cannot draw a single characteristic of what you were save from these verses (1-3); all the good there is in yourselves as descendants of the first Adam is recorded there: dead in Condition, and the walk according to the road that the world is traveling. The world is a system made up for man to be happy in, out of God's presence. (Gen. 4). Man sought, when sin and death came in, to amuse himself and wile away his time. This system has gone on ever since (world means a system) in different forms and phases. Look at this world, or system; you never find God or Christ in it; it is not for Him. If you put Christ on it, you cannot say it all looks of a piece. Nothing can be built on this earth and not get tainted by the root on which it is built. Do any doubt if this is true of themselves? that each of us is born belonging to a system that has nothing to do with God? I look at the Lord Jesus Christ as in Philippians 2. I see two marks: He was the free Son of God, and He never had a will. If I look at myself, was I free? No; I was the slave of lusts and passions. Was I will-less, like Him? No. What would you think even of a babe without a will? I remember my own babe when only three hours I said to the nurse, "Ah! that child has a will;" and before a week passed she could but own it too; even the movement of its little hand bespoke it. Christ had no will. Can anyone question for a moment whether you have a will? Don't you say, I like and I dislike? Did Christ say so? He said, "As My Father will, or will not." "Lo, I come to do Thy will." Even if it led Him to the cross, to bear the curse, only one will ruled Him—His Father's. Have you got a will that is so thoroughly curbed that you never

have your own will? Are you never hasty with a servant? quick with your child? or impertinent to your father or mother?

Verse 3 takes up the Jews. If anyone wants a good these things I heard a great from verses 1-3; every stone there that looks bright you may take for yourself. Saul of Tarsus had nothing in himself to deserve any blessing. God's thought was to deal with the Son of His love. Will my Son go down and meet Satan, and take the curse upon Him die on the cross? Yes; He is the perfect, obedient one. Thou hast crowned Him with glory and honor. Then in these verses we get the contrast in, man; all the evil of nature, the world, and Satan is brought out. What can God do? He acts in His free grace towards the Son of His love, and mercy comes out, which is a different principle from grace. Grace is free gift. God took notice of the merits of His Son; mercy rather takes notice of demerit. Man deserves what? I can only say of myself, I deserve to be left alone. But there is an antagonistical principle in God to that; He is rich in mercy. He does not look for any good in the creature; He bestows His love freely. The Lord Jesus had watched Saul of Tarsus, and could see not a single good thing in him; but God is rich in mercy. It is very wonderful how slow the heart is to give God the whole glory that He set His love on us. Whenever any creature has to do with God, God must begin. People get occupied with their efforts, striving and doing; all right in its place, but it is only as the result of what God has been doing. How can a dead man begin in life? We must take care not to confound quiet, silent, workings of the conscience with being part of the old nature; it is a part of the new nature. It is not God letting men off, but He makes him who believes, one in life with the Lord Jesus Christ. If I have tasted God's mercy, what then? I am in life with the Lord Jesus Christ, quickened, raised, and seated with Him at God's right hand; I am a member in particular of His body. He has stooped low to where man was, and lifted him up into fellowship of life with the risen, glorified man, Christ Jesus.

It was the subject of mercy I wished to speak of. To my own soul it is very simple, when we see whence it comes from. It is an attribute of God Himself. There are two things about Satan in direct contrast to God. God cannot lie; Satan has been a liar from the beginning. God delights in creating; Satan in pulling everything to pieces: he has pleasure in destroying. If we take the question of mercy, whence came it? Who but God can look in upon the universe, and pick up things He finds in a state that He hates and abhors? What is the measure of His delight? He has raised Him, and set Him at His own right hand, and you in Him—"you," He says, "who have identified yourself with my arch-enemy, Satan; you who have everything about you I hate and abhor." Who could speak thus but He? Could Satan? No. Man? No; none but God Himself, and He only. It is a proposal that is utterly impossible to any but Himself; but He made the Perfect One sin, who knew no sin. Mercy is an attribute of God Himself, part of the character of God which showed out when sin came into the world. In Romans 9:14 we find it clearly and guardedly stated; verse 16 guards it: blessing is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth." Man says, "I will, I run, and so I get blessing." No; that is not the way; mercy is the root, after mercy follows will, then the running, then the doing His commandments.

In Exodus 33 two things are brought out. We get first the occasion on which mercy is shown, and then the root—mercy. God takes Israel out of Egypt, God comes down to deliver them, their troubles increase, and what are they occupied with? Not with God's purpose of delivering, but with the increase of their toil. God brings them out of Egypt, the people turn their back on God while Moses is in the mount. The jewels, the earrings of the women, are put into a furnace, and out comes a calf. Could they more distinctly renounce Jehovah? It was only a few days after they came out of Egypt, and had seen God's delivering power for them. We cannot conceive anything worse than this, to say to God, "We have done with you." (vss. 2-9) "The ground of my dealings with Israel shall be a thorough known ground." I own this word is to me one of the strongest expressions of God's prerogative, to do as He pleases. "They may dance before their calf, and put Me aside; but I am God, who have a right to do as I please. I will." People may call it His sovereignty. Its absoluteness, people say, does not put me on this ground with God. But stop a bit! Do you know God when you say you don't like to be put on His character? If Satan could say will, there is an end to everything—he a liar and a destroyer. What an awful thing to have to depend on the absoluteness of a being who likes destruction! If, instead of a liar and murderer, it is God who says I will, it is enough. Do you know Him? Then you are not afraid to trust Him. The angels themselves thoroughly understand there is no fountain of goodness, mercy, or compassion save in God Himself. Would you like to direct God as to your daily path? to direct Him how to bless you? Would any created intelligence have proposed to God the way whereby He can bless? Would you desire to direct Him as to the ordering the circumstances of your path? or do you doubt the perfection of His goodness? that He is the only one who has a right to say, I will? "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." "Though Israel My people danced before the calf they made, and set Me aside, I will bring them back, because I have a heart for them. I will stoop down to them." The motive was from inside His own bosom. Is God to be the only being who is never to please Himself? He has a right to do as He will.

People often speak as though God had no character. He chooses to take the lead, and it is for us to be dropping into the wake of God's thoughts and plans, and to leave everything with Him, to Him, and to Him alone; this is the path of blessing. Moses got hold of it. It is not only a declaration made to Moses, but a principle laid down on which He acts, and a principle on which Israel, as a nation, will be brought back another day. In chapter 34 we find a yearning, pitifulness, patience in looking at that which He means to accomplish; chapter 33 brings out the condition they were in; chapter 34, the character of God. "In Me is their help." Our character as Christians will not get its proper development unless this character of God, as God of mercy, is before us. What is the proof I am not deceived? I can look right up into the face of the Lord Jesus Christ, and say, "Thou dost not look as if Thou hadst a will to curse me—the Father has put Thee there as the Savior of the lost." I say, "I am ruined in myself. I cannot look at the Lord Jesus Christ on the throne, and let a shadow of question remain on my mind as to my safety." He is my safety, if I am a lost one. The God of mercy and compassion will never reject me; but God cannot allow the soul to rest on anything but God Himself. The Lord Jesus is on the throne, picking up poor sinners. His character is the same today; it is nothing altered! If we knew each other intimately, and had been in company with Paul or these Ephesian Christians, what a contrast should we find between ourselves and them! They were clean out of the world. Christ who had gone up to heaven had carried their hearts away. What a difference between them and Christians now! People will say the world is altered. Is Christ altered? Is the Holy Ghost altered? If faith were simple in the soul that is brought to him, we should be truer Nazarites. There would be a savor of God, of Christ, of heaven, of eternity, as we walked through the world, not talking about it, but as those whose hearts Christ had carried away with Him. If you set me beside those Ephesian Christians you would be constrained to say, "Bound up in the same bundle of life with them; but where is the power, the heavenly-mindedness?" They thought of nothing from morning to night but the Father's pleasure in heaven. Nothing will work it in us like grasping this principle in which God took us up at first. All of our Own washed out, all that is connected with us. When I go to glory I shall leave all my circumstances behind. We want to be Nazarites, as those who know His love. May we each say, "Let us be out and out for Him." If we would be living for God and for Christ, we must let this truth into our souls. God is the only source, the Lord Jesus Christ the only channel, and the Holy Ghost the only power. Let us seek more subjection to this blessed truth, to the joy of our hearts, and the praise of His grace.

2 Eph. 2:4

is in my heart to speak to you a few words upon the mercy of God. One of the great difficulties in connection with such a subject is its exceeding fullness. One hardly knows where to begin. God is rich, in mercy. It is not only the wealth of the mercy of God, but that mercy is part of His character, a part of His very nature of which He cannot divest Himself. The very context illustrates what God's rich mercy is. In chapter 1:20-23, we are shown the Lord Jesus Christ raised up to His own right hand, now sitting there, and in everything God marking all His delight being found in that Man who is with Him on the throne. A mere man could not sit on the throne of God, but this One is such an One that He is placed there on the throne, raised up by God Himself, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Go all through the present age, and you will find nothing to be compared with what that Man has got. There is nothing in this age, or in the age to come, that is not His, and all things must be put under His feet. And not only so, but there is new glory. The earth-rejected One-God has seated Him at His own right hand as Head of the body. And while He sits there, a body is being formed down here which, to the mind of God, will be a body proper to such a Head in the glory.

But if we follow Him, we shall find more glories still put on Him. He created all things. If the character of God is to be shown forth down here, who but that Son could show it, so that all who saw Him, saw the Father? If it were redemption, none could touch it save that Son; if it be the setting up of a kingdom, He is the only one to be King; but not to be a King on earth, but reigning over the earth, surrounded by a heavenly people, after putting on them all His own beauty. Is it a fact that Jesus of Nazareth is at rest on the throne of His Father, all honor, and power, and glory, His, and that He is forming for Himself, whilst there, a people to present to Himself without spot or wrinkle? What brilliancy of light the apostle points us to! And then he puts before us the quarry whence the Lord is picking up those whom He is going to fashion for such glory.

What a contrast to the beginning of the chapter is this -Satan having got the mastery over the mind of man, and no one found in nature not subject to these lusts, and Christ, in all dominion, power, and glory, looking down and forming of these a body fit to be taken up there! And the apostle could say, "He has enabled you Ephesians and me, Paul, the persecutor and blasphemer, to know that we are some of these; not looked on by God according to the pit, the miry clay, the lusts in which we wallowed, but according to this union with the Son up there, as those quickened together with Christ." But I not only think of Paul and these Ephesians but of myself. I know the pit whence I was taken, and I can only account for it by saying, "Ah! it was God, rich in mercy, who picked me up, and made me to be one with Christ."

Do we as individuals know this doctrine? God not only a God of life, but this living God having a certain character of His own, on the ground of which He took up persons dead in sins, raised them up, and made them sit in heavenly places in Christ. If so, it must be all on His part. It is not of him that runneth, nor of him that willeth, but of Him that showeth mercy. There is no dealing of God before the day of Pentecost, in which mercy is put out in so marked a way, as from that time to the day when Christ will come to take His people up. It is mercy, rich mercy, from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ-mercy to Jews, and to these poor unclean heathen, mercy not only taking poor sinners out of everything they were in, connected with lusts and death, but mercy coming to take them up out of it all to a place inside heaven, fitting them for a place in God's house.

"God rich in mercy for His great love wherewith He loved us," &c. This expressing God's wealth of mercy is here in contrast to grace. By grace we are saved through faith; but mercy is connected with giving those who are dead in sins life; and grace again with holiness, through faith (God's gift) in the atonement. One of the most vivid places in which mercy is referred to is in Ex. 33. Paul, when arguing with Israel in Romans states that all are included as guilty that God may have mercy on all, not on the ground of their obedience, but on that of His mercy. (See chap. 9:15, 16.) "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy," &c. It does not come forth from him that runneth or willeth, but from God. It is something rising from God, and flowing from Him. Turning to Ex. 32, we find that Moses had been called up into the mount for the ordering of the tabernacle. No sooner is Moses there than the people show that they are tired of being God's people. They cry out, "Make us gods which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him;" and all their trumpery ornaments, nose-rings, &c., are given to make a god. They turn their back on the living God, saying, "Now we have got a god of our own making, and we do not want to know Him." What a thing, to turn the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made with hands! Moses pleads for them; he knows the value of an appeal in God's mind. The Lord hears it, and spares. Moses then says, "Show me thy glory." The Lord answers, "I will make all My goodness pass before thee." "Israel shall not escape; they think they can make a calf of gold, and despise me. They do not know Me; I shall have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Mercy is the prerogative of God. Though there has been the denial of everything, and the setting up of a false god, yet mercy can flow out to meet it; but the sole and only One it can flow from is this God, and none but this God.

Who can say to God, "What doest Thou?" Did you ever call upon God to reckon with you? Is God the only Being who is not to have a will of His own? He laughs and mocks at those who would bring Him down to their level. What He says, He will do; "He will have mercy on whom He will have mercy." Am I to say that mercy will not do for me? God came out there in His fullest character as the God rich in mercy, the only Being who could, and who can, have the right to have mercy on whom He will. How could I look at any of you, and say that you are like Christ? Christ will have you apart from all that you are. God sees you the very opposite of what He is; but He says, "I am determined to have them; I will have My own way; I can use that wealth of mercy which I rest in up here, for the chiefest of rebels that can be found down there." Why did He look on me when I was dead in trespasses? Because He had a right to pick me up, and give me life. Power is one thing, and the character of Him that uses it another. Satan has power, and he uses it by lies which lead souls to destruction. Ah I but God has a character of His own. I rest on the individuality of God. God always acts without consulting any other individual. Whom did He consult when He created the world? Whom, when He proposed that His only Son should conic down to die? Whom when, after seven thousand years of man's rebellion on

this little globe, He purposes to make new heavens and a new earth? Nobody. And when He said, " Ah! you did not look to or own Me as God; you were dead in sins, and I quickened you "-did He consult anybody? No; and now He is bringing one bit of truth after another into my soul; and when He takes up souls He consults nobody, and if any come into collision with Him they must be swept away. There is that entire individuality about God, and a character of His own, that regulates all His acts. And this is so sweet in Ex. 33, where He says to Moses, " My glory is too great a sight for you to look into; you must be put in the cleft of the rock, covered with My hand whilst My glory passes by; but all My goodness shall pass before you, and I will proclaim My name, the name of the Lord before you." " I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy to whom I will show mercy."

How beautifully God's character shines out in that authoritative, "I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." Israel shall know this mercy (and in the end Israel shall know it). All its springs are in Him. Has He a character of His own? And are you because of that like one at rest in heaven where the Lord Jesus Christ is, blest according to His merit, with all blessings in heavenly places? If I come to what is in self, I find nothing but what is of the first creation; but if I come to the new creation, I meet what God has created in Christ Jesus. I see Him set up there as the slain Lamb, my accepted sacrifice; all blessings due to Him, and the curse due to me, but it was borne by Him. What right have I to go where the glory of God is? Moses had to be hidden in the rock, because he could not see it; but I can go, just as I am, into the full blaze of it. Ah! but only in Him, who is seated at that right hand-not in my own name, but in His. If in my own, I could not come, but I dare not show any hesitancy; I have perfect acceptance there, not on the ground of what I am, but on that of being one with Him who is the perfect expression of God's love. I can go in there with His acceptancy. Is there one affection of your heart that does not find a perfect response? Not one! Is that the ground you are on, that the rock out of which the water of life has flowed to you? the ground out of which you are daily drawing strength? God says, "Having given this perfect Son of My love to die for poor sinners, tells out what My thoughts are towards those on earth who have eternal life in Him."

Ah! the human heart is deceitful, and desperately wicked. People say they believe all this, and the next moment say, " But, oh! I am such a failing pitiful creature." So you are; but you should spread out all your failure and evil before God, and the confession of it would just prove what the God is with whom you have to do. " Ah but the heart is so deceitful "-still turning back to what self is. When one has taken up Scripture, and He has shown me there my utter ruin, and that the Son of His love is the One on whom alone my soul rests, then I know that it is not me, but God; not my thoughts, but God's. Are you on that ground? Does the contrast between God and yourself turn you from every thought of self in His presence? Man cannot be separated from self, save as knowing himself to be in Christ. That links the heart to Him, but it makes me abhor self, because He is so perfectly unlike myself-self thinking of every vanity, and of pleasing the flesh, and God showing the contrast in that Son of His love. There is the beauty of His using that Son to carry out His plan of mercy. God has got something to woo me, but it makes one say, " What a vile creature one is;" it makes one loathe one's self. What a God! hiding sinners in the person of that Son seated at His own right hand-His hands and His feet being witness for them that their sins are washed in His blood. Ah, poor sinner, no other tidings for you, nothing else will do for you; there is no hope save through this mercy of God, quickening your soul, and bringing you nigh to Himself by the blood of Christ. It is a finished work to which you can add nothing. Do you begin with self or with God? God began with Himself, and He ends with Himself; and you must begin with Him, and end with Him. He alone can say, " I have a right to do as I will; and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy."

Christian Friend: Volume 4, God's Inheritance in the Saints, Etc.

Article from <https://bibletruthpublishers.com/bible-truth-study-bible/btsb>

ALL the blessings are revealed. (vss. 3-14) The apostle is saying, "All this future is before you. I want you know to know the basis on which it all hangs." He then takes them up (vs. 15) on their faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints. Whether in this epistle, where he is speaking of the heavenly status, or whether in the epistle to the Romans, where he is speaking of the old man, taken up as a creature down here, the point where they come together is in faith. and love, Where you see the heart really trusting in God through Christ, and caring for His saints, there you can accredit as one of God's people. (vs. 16) Thanksgiving for them. (vs. 17) The special form in which the blessings that were revealed were summed up before God as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory. In the next prayer it is the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." We get things in the first persons.

Knowledge of certain blessings in chapter 1, and communion by faith chapter 3. You never get to the end of chapter 3. In chapter 1 he brings out blessing in connection with the Son of man sitting at the right hand of God. Life comes down to you, and then flows out. It is not philanthropy. We get the Lord Jesus Christ, or Son of the Father, the Father's delight resting on Him. There are children by adoption, and the same love that centers on the only-begotten flows out through Him to the children. "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou halt loved me may be in them, and I in them:" (John 17:26) It is an immensely strong thing practically. I find the children in trial, in darkness. I say, "Never mind; the Father loves the Son, and hath given all things into His hand. The Son is before me. I cannot ask too great things. I will ask Him to bring all that really say, Abba, Father." The same with the difficulties we have to meet; we find a power in proportion as we bring in the love of the Father to the Son.

Mark another thing about, faith. It is faith and hope in God. It comes through the knowledge of the work of the Lord Jesus Christ; but when you come to God you will be able to say, "He is for me TO-DAY." You will not need to put any prayer between you and the blessing to-morrow. God is for me TO-DAY. The difference in prayer, when you 'are praying up to a certain point, and when you are praying from it, is immense. There is a great want of that repose in the Father's love in saints, counting on His being what He is for us. Because of all that He is, we take our place of seeking the things that are wanted for the people for whom He is; but if you seek the blessing because He is for you personally, you bring the law in underhandedly. If you got that, it would be testimony that He is for you? No; you must believe that He is for you, because of what He has done. He recognizes every groaning, every breathing after Himself; but that is not properly Christian prayer. There may be the groaning and the grasping for something, you do not know what, as in Rom. 8; but, for a Christian, it is in the full confidence that He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit; for He maketh intercession for the saints according to God.

Several of these subjects of petition I feel are too much forgotten; for instance, that He might give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. I suppose. it is not the Holy Ghost. As a believer, I cannot pray to receive the Spirit, because I am in the place where the Spirit is; but if I am there, and know I am there, I must seek the spirit of wisdom from God.

“ For the acknowledgment of Him.” It is not proclaiming, but recognizing Him. It is remarkable in many places where he speaks of God, and when he speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, the “Him” is common to both.

“What is the hope of His calling?” You get two things—the place where Christ is, and the character connected with Him. The Father’s house will be the place; but there is the having a character fit for Himself, and being irreproachable. It is that I, as an individual, am to be brought to Him so completely, that He can rest in perfect satisfaction on me.

“ Holy and without blame before Him in love.” In Christ we are it now; but when I get into communion with Him at the present time, I am perfectly conscious that being in the Beloved is one thing, and my soul being free in it is quite another. There are a quantity of elements which, while under restraint, are not brought out.

The Father’s house is connected with His coming to fetch us; but, when there, He will have subjected all that in any way produces a jar. If you get into close communion, you find in your communion how unfit you are for it. You cannot have the power of enjoyment that you will have when you are brought home. When we see Him we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. The external glory is one thing, and the glory of character is another. “His servants shall serve Him; and His name shall be in their foreheads;” two very different things from walking the golden streets. In Revelation you get external glory—manifestation; in the Father’s house you get the thought of repose. Then, besides its being the Father’s house (which by right and title belongs to the only-begotten Son), and my being brought there, I find that when with this one there I shall be thoroughly fit for His presence; I, individually.

He divides it into terms: “That ye may know what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ,” &c. (vss. 18, 19) This last is more connected with circumstances, circumstances which can only be occupied with blessing by a people of a certain character. “His inheritance in the saints” (vs. 18), not “the Lord’s portion is His people.” That is earth, not heaven. He meant to have a heavenly people with His Son, and there were two things in His mind—for God the Son to become a man, and He in heaven, then, according to God, to bring sons into adoption. God inherited the land through Israel. His glory will have to be in the house at Jerusalem.; but He would have heavenly people become the medium through which Christ is seen down here on earth—all the Father revealed in the Son, all the glory shining out through the New Jerusalem; so that, wonderful as the earthly glory is, men shall have to say, “What things there are in heaven.” The One rejected eighteen hundred years. His glory shines out there, to them. It will be the inheritance in heaven. The saints will not be the inheritance. It will be heaven according to God—God upon His throne, His Son in the majesty that He has won: saints with Him there. He comes out to associate His heavenly Bride with Himself. A relationship is so different from a question of property. A wife is not accounted property. It is not association merely, but relationship. When all the pageantry of the kingdom comes out, when it becomes the manifested thing, God will have the very humiliation of the Lamb in view. God manifest in flesh as the Lamb that had been slain. He was crucified through weakness. Power could not step in there. He liveth by the power of God. I shall worship the Lamb.

God claimed Palestine as His land, and He took possession of, or He put His people into it. He claims me not for a millennial city, but a city in the heavenly places. He will bring in the children by adoption. The heavenly places form the character of the children. It is love taking possession of life. When you get the glory you get the manifestation.’ It is heaven, not earth, here. It is all that is connected with a certain man there who had been buffeted down here. He is shown there sitting quietly in the divine glory. Never a man on earth had had that place. “That man,” God is saying, He “took the place of being my servant. He is my Son. As the Father of the glory, I will show you what my thoughts about Him are. Look up! See where He is! I have given Him glory surpassing everything. For you, saints, called through this rejected One.”

In the New Jerusalem there will be manifestation. “In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.” Everything that is in the Father will be manifested, so that the people there will be able to say, “Well, there is no difference at all.” The Father reveals Himself in the Son, the Son reveals Himself in the adopted children. God will shine out into this people, and will shine through them now. As far as I understand “the inheritance in the saints,” it is God taking possession of heaven in His people. In Him the lot is fallen to us. It is not, as people have sometimes said, our inheriting Christ. The thought of inheriting Christ is not in Scripture. In Him we have a certain thing just as it is. A man of very large property marrying a person very poor—she may speak of obtaining an inheritance in him; I should understand she had acquired estates. I could not understand a man talking of his wife as an “inheritance.”

The heavenly places are not taken possession of yet. The saints shall take possession of these places. Satan shall be cast out, and Christ come in. The title “heir” is dropped when a person comes into the inheritance. He is then possessor. Remark that Ephesians is in measure like Deuteronomy, strongly in contrast too. We get Israel brought into the land, and the church having it in glory. There is no sin at all in heaven; all evil is put out. If I bought a house, that would not be my “inheritance.” I inherit from my father. If I had property entailed upon me, I should be heir until I came into possession. The power that wrought in Christ works towards us. (vs. 19) “If children, then heirs.” I am a minor now. When you see me in possession, clothed upon with the glory, you will not think me a fool.

I have certain expectancies. Until I have seen the Lord, and been taken up by Him, I am not in actual possession. It is the difference between the earnest of the inheritance and the redemption of the purchased possession. All that glory of the millennial city. I shall be in it. The Holy Ghost will form it all, and He has taken up His abode in me, that I may know it all. If God has given me the spirit of the glory, it is no great thing for Him to give me the glory afterward. The Spirit will form the glory. He is the earnest now. You say to laborers working in the field, I will pay you so much in advance. It is understood that the compact is made. They have received part of the money; the master is pledged to fulfill the rest of the compact.

In this case He does not give me part of the glory, but He gives me the earnest of the glory, the Holy Ghost. The time will be when He will come and appropriate to Himself the purchased possession— “the thing treated about,” περιποιήσις. It is a very peculiar expression. The earnest is the first-fruit of the inheritance, until the redemption of the thing treated about to the praise of His glory. I should not think it here

more than the place. I should define our inheritance "riches of the glory," distinctive to the mystery. The other might be quite true; but when I get Eve looked upon as the help-meet to Adam, it is a peculiar light in which it is shown. Other things might be true, but she is the confidante. "This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church."

We lose a great deal in Scripture, if we want to make parallelisms. There are no "parallel passages." There is something that illumines each passage, and brings out peculiarities of mind. Losing that, we lose the thread; we lose that in the passage which brings out the finer touches. "When He raised Him from the dead." (vs. 20) The Lord waited in the grave; He was raised to His place at God's right hand.. The same power that accomplished that resurrection works in us who believe. He unfolds it more in the next chapter. One power' it is that carries us through this scene, and that binds us up with Christ in heaven. One power. Do you believe that literally in God's mind you are inseparable from Christ at His right hand? nit one in a thousand says, "God says I am." The same power that wrought in Him works now in us. A person needs to know that for his own establishment. Old Bishop Hall and Goodwin say distinctly—that unquestionably a man that is a believer in Christ ought to know himself inseparable in life from the Man. at God's right hand. If there, they Must know the Man who is there. It is the Man who in Phil. 2 was down here, and did not care what He did, if God had His way with Him. The great peculiarity of the Lord Jesus Christ here is this: He brought all His Sonship into His servanthip. Every part of His life here was the unqualified force of His Sonship expressing itself in service. If we know Him, The Spirit of God says, "Well, the same power that put Him there, puts you."

Where are you with regard to the world, the flesh, and the devil? If the blessed Son, the only-begotten Son, when He came down here, expressed the whole of the Father—the whole of His Sonship in His servant ship—are you saying, "I am a son of God, and I am going to walk exactly as He did"? If you have everything in Him, are you living as He lived? He never made allowance for the flesh. He knew thoroughly all the weakness of humanity; what it was to be weary, no one to understand Him. The whole thing He was after was to express His Sonship in His servanthip. You must know that in God's mind you are so identified with Him that you walk in the spirit in which He walked.

What is wanted so much is the person brought to God. Eternal life always turns around the Father and the Son. What we have in Him is in assured grace, so that we are perfectly sheltered. Have you eternal life? Are you walking in it? There is exercise always. If it makes the wilderness very rough, it is the brighter for this. We find the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God who raiseth the dead.

It is remarkable the contrast between the terms used. Speaking about us, it is "the exceeding greatness, the surpassingness of the greatness of His power;" "according to the energy of the strength of His might."

I always feel that after all it was no such wonderful thing that He should take Him up, or that He, having left the grave, should go up to God's right hand. When I look at where we were, I say, Well this is a marvelous thing, that He should find me out, and set me in Christ who created it all. It ought to be far more our habit to look at things as connected with Him up there. "Head over all things." (vs. 21) We have the category of what is in Him. Everything will be headed up in Him. All Adam's possessions were for the use of Eve.

It becomes practically so, even where it is not that in which the wife would interfere. "Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who filleth all in all." Plenty of thorns to be driven into you. Satan to buffet you. Everything is in His hand to use for your blessing. Amazing revelation of what is His portion as Man at God's right hand. A portion wonderfully little thought of. You will find very rarely, if you live with people, that they have the thought of there being a Man up there. It changes everything. You delight in God, in all the thought of God Himself. I am down here, and I see moaning, trouble, sorrow. There is one Man in heaven, and the eyes of that Man are always upon me, and the heart of that Man always with me. The river of refreshing flows into one's soul. He is like a cool place on a scorching day. Generally there is a curtain drawn in the mind between what is up there and down here. "That is in heaven," people say. Scripture takes it for granted that you are in heaven now. One Person is there; the Man who down here never would have His own will. There He is, with a heart looking down on us, gathering now to the place where He is; and all the heart I have is with Him and upon, Him there. G. V. W.

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