

Ephesians - Commentaries by Hugh Henry Snell

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 2 (1854), Intercession. (6:18-20)

Eph. 6:18, 19, 20.

It has been well said, "If thou prayest for thyself alone, thou prayest for thyself alone:" that is, if we are always looking on our own things, and unmindful of the things of others, we are in the end great losers. We gradually fail of the perfect grace of God in which we are set, and become incapable of receiving or communicating the blessings God would, through such exercises of heart before Himself, cause us to partake of and enjoy. The Word shows, by many examples, how God the Almighty governs the world; it having in it His witnesses, remembrancers, and servants, through whose prayers He puts forth His glorious power according to His own will. I will only refer to Joshua, Elijah, Hezekiah, and Samuel of old, as examples of this; and if Paul so earnestly desired the prayers of "all saints," he no less lovingly and perseveringly presented supplications on their behalf. If, indeed, my heart knows brotherly love and charity, which is the bond of perfectness, it must turn, without effort, and naturally as it were, to such holy and blessed exercises. I can conceive nothing more acceptable to God in the way of service, who has so wrought to bring it about., than the mingling together, and coming up before Him through Christ, of this most sweet incense, mutual intercessions in the love of the Spirit.

The apostle James says, "The inwrought,¹ fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." This expression, "inwrought," brings before us the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, the Spirit of grace and of supplications, dwelling in us, within the deepest depths of our spirit, the power which worketh in us to will and to do of God's good pleasure, lifting up our poor hearts into fellowship with the Father and the Son, and thus making intercession for the saints according to the will of God. What a wonderful disclosure this is of the ways of God in the Church and in the world! The beginning of those ways by means of which He is linking together, in oneness and under one Head—Christ—those things and those beings which sin had disunited from Himself and from one another. Prayer and intercession does indeed greatly glorify God; because, in attending to it and answering it, He puts forth His glorious power and wisdom. He, by such manifestations, comes forth from that light which no man can approach, and descends in tempered majesty, grace, and blessing, upon the creatures or works of His hand. To know that the desires of my heart can enter into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth, and that He will act in accordance with them, is an overwhelming thought. I feel sure—nay, it is sure, because it is written (Dan. 9) —that those saints who dwell most in the secret place of the most High abound most in intercessions. We are not heard for our much speaking. It does not require bodily exercise, which profiteth little, to accomplish this service. The heart which loves all saints in the bowels of Christ Jesus can in very few words make request with joy for all: can, through only an emotion of holy love and desire, present all before God and our Father in the name of the Lord Jesus: — "Father, do good unto all saints, according to thine own perfect love towards all, for Christ's sake. Amen. Amen." By this sweet lifting up and pouring out of heart, all are at once remembered, and none overlooked by us, and we and they together bound up afresh in the love of the Father and of the Son, by the Holy Ghost.

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 4 (1856), "One Hope of Your Calling." (4:4)

Eph. 4:4.

HUMAN hopes are proverbially fallacious, often never realized; or, if realized, often ending in disappointment. But "the hope of our calling" is most certain, and can never be disappointed. It is, moreover, both definite and precise, so that in the midst of trial we can "rejoice in hope." The hope of our calling is one, and the same to all who are called of God. Connected with, and flowing from this one hope, there are many things most legitimately "hoped for;" but these very things are themselves best realized, when "the one hope of our calling" is kept vividly before the soul.

This hope is immediately linked with our calling, and our calling immediately linked with the purpose of God. Hence the certainty of hope.

The apostle prays (Eph. 1:18,) that we "may know what is the hope of His calling;" that is, what God has called us unto, as well as called us from. It is a hope worthy of God, and which the highest thoughts of man never could have conceived. (1 Cor. 2:9.) Human thoughts must necessarily be grounded on what is possible with man; but what heart could conceive the thought, that God should have called any man "unto His kingdom and glory:" yet such is the hope of our calling. (1 Thess. 2:12.) But it is well to see how every step unto this blessed consummation is so linked together by God, as to preclude all doubt and uncertainty; and to give to the one hope of our calling such a fixedness as to render it secure from all contingencies. "For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the First-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom He did predestinate, them He also called; and whom He called, them He also justified; and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

This, then, is the one hope of our calling, when we regard ourselves. Every one now called of God into the knowledge of His Son Jesus Christ, shall be made like Him in glory. It is the purpose of God to bring many sons to glory; and in order to this, there was "a needs-be" to make Jesus, the Captain of their salvation, perfect through sufferings. "The Son" could have challenged admission through the everlasting gates, (Psa. 24) in His own indefeasible title as the King of glory. But since it was settled in the eternal counsels of the Godhead to bring many eons to glory, it became Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, to bring the Captain of their salvation to glory through sufferings, in order that His sufferings might be to them a pathway to glory. Jesus went the way of suffering—even suffering the death of the cross—unto the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, that He might be the way, the open living way, for the many sons to reach the same place

which their Captain has reached, to be with Him and to be like Him. This is perfection. This is our hope. And this our hope is thus linked with the sufferings of Christ. It is only as we realize what Christ suffered for us, and the divine suitability that He should so suffer, that the one hope of our calling is maintained without wavering. "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24:26.) The hope of being among the "many sons" brought to glory, among the "many brethren," of whom Jesus now at the right hand of God is the First-born, has its strong warrant, not only that such is the purpose of God with respect to those whom He has called, but that Jesus is now where He is, because He has "by Himself purged our sins." (Heb. 1:3.) Look at the perfection of Jesus in this aspect. Perfect in Himself, even the delight of His Father; the One in whom the Father could rest with perfect complacency. Jesus has another perfection. He was made perfect through sufferings, and has reached a summit of glory in this way, which He is enabled to open as an object of hope to others. "Continuing in the grace of God," calmly reposing on that once finished purgation of sin by the blood of Jesus, the Lamb of God; the "one hope of our calling" of being with Jesus, being like Him, and beholding His glory, fits in most suitably with such a standing. But if we go a step further, and look at Jesus where He is now, inside the veil, how greatly does this view of Jesus confirm our hope. He is there as "the Forerunner." He is called up to the right hand of God, because He has finished the work of purging our sins, and there He takes the place of the Forerunner. With the eye steadily fixed on Jesus in this character, our hope becomes as "an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast." He is there for us, and He is there to be followed by us; for to be with Him there is the one hope of our calling. The holiest of all is now our place of worship, because God has called us with the hope of being with Him there forever. We draw near now on the certain warrant, that our hope of being there will never be disappointed. Hence the connection (Heb. 10:22, 23.) between drawing near with a true heart, and holding fast the profession of our hope (see Greek) without wavering; for He is faithful that promised.

But the Lord Jesus Himself most touchingly and distinctively teaches us what the one hope of our calling is. He speaks from His own heart to ours; making, so to speak, the hope to be mutual, even His as well as ours. "I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." The earnest of this hope in the presence of the Holy Ghost the Comforter we have now for our comfort; for ere we are in the mansions prepared for us, we have this sustaining promise. "If a man love Me, he will keep My words, and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make our abode [mansion] with him." That which gives such distinctiveness to the one hope of our calling, is that it is personal, not circumstantial. It is the hope that a Person deeply interested in us, will not have the full joy of His heart till we are with Him where He is. It is the hope, therefore, of being forever with a Person who abidingly loves us, and whom we love in return; in whose presence there is fullness of joy. We can understand, at least negatively, what rest, cessation from conflict, and absence of all care about this "earthly tabernacle house" must be. We can understand, by contrast, the immense difference between living in a world where confession of Jesus necessitates the cross, and being in a sphere where His name is universally acknowledged. The thought of being in glory, or of reigning with Christ, is more vague and indefinite; but to be with Jesus because He desires to have us with Him, is a hope that must touch the heart of every one who has tasted that the Lord is gracious. The Lord touches on the same topic in John 16, "Ye now, therefore, have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." Of this, again, we have the earnest in the presence of the Holy Ghost. Jesus knows what He Himself is. He was waited for by a feeble remnant, before His incarnation, as "the consolation of Israel;" and in the days of His flesh, He Himself was everything to His disciples. When they are toiling in rowing, He comes to them, their toil ceases, and immediately they are at the desired haven. (John 6:20, 21.) "I will see you again"—that is all, nothing else was needed. The blessing did not consist so much in what He would do for them, as in what He Himself was to them. Their life, their light, their joy, their sun, their shield, their exceeding great reward would be with them when they saw Him again, and that joy never should be taken from them. Again, how conspicuous is the personal element in the wonderful intercourse of the Lord with His Father. (John 17) It is not enough for Him to say, "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them (John 17:22); but He adds," Father, I desire that they also, whom thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world. "The blessedness of such a request can alone be known to the heart that delights in the honor of Jesus. The human thought of blessedness is rather brought out in the request of the mother of Zebedee's children." And He said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto Him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left, in Thy kingdom." (Matt. 20:21.) Our own personal glory is a legitimate object of hope—it is that to which we are predestinated. But to "behold the King is His beauty," to see Jesus "as He is," to see everything in Him to which we have so feebly and failingly confessed most illustriously displayed—to find that His delight is to exhibit to others the glory He Himself has given to us, whilst our joy is to behold the glory which the Father has given Him—what hope can be more blessed or more glorious? And to know that His given glory is in consequence of His having loved us and given Himself for us, sad washed us from our sins in His own blood, makes it a hope in which we can rejoice. The hope of our calling thus becomes very distinct, and formative¹ of our character. "So shall we ever be with the Lord." Can our hearts desire anything higher or better?

"We are saved by hope," (Rom. 8:24) but there is no uncertainty in it, it is only that that which is already ours is not manifested, it is only that God's purpose is not publicly displayed. To meet the legal tendencies of the Galatians, the Apostle writes, "We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." We do not hope for righteousness—that is already ours, even the righteousness of God by faith in Christ Jesus,—but we wait for the hope to which such a righteousness is entitled; and who can tell the amount of its blessedness? The Thessalonians are set by the Apostle in the posture of "waiting for God's Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus which delivered us from the wrath to come." It is no Jewish hope of a Messiah that do something for their deliverance, but the hope of the presence of One whom God hath raised from the dead, because He hath finished that work by which we are delivered from the wrath to come. Even the appearing of the Lord Jesus as the Righteous Judge is held out to us as an appearing we can love. (2 Tim. 4:8.) Will not everything in that day be adjudicated in reference to Himself? and will it not be the joy of our hearts when His appearing shall vindicate our confession of His name? The saving grace of God now made known to us is directly linked with our hope, "looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us." (Tit. 2.)

The apostle Peter exhorts us to "hope to the end for the grace to be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:18.) Yes, the grace we already know in pardoning love, in the gift of righteousness, in prevailing intercession, and in shepherdly care, we shall then know in glory, glory to us will be grace, for grace reigneth through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord. How shall we then, in the highest sense, "behold His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth!"

In the same line of thought the apostle Jude writes to us. "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life." To have obtained mercy is now to be a saint, and a vessel already prepared unto glory. (Rom. 9:23.) Is it not a sweet thought to us that glory shall come to us in the shape of mercy, and whilst we are in it as our element, still the mercy that has brought us

there shall be our theme. God is rich in mercy, and He has riches of glory, and these riches of glory shall make known how rich He is in mercy. "Bless the Lord, O my soul!"

The beloved disciple connects the manner of love already bestowed upon us, with the one hope of our calling. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be (or what we shall be hath not yet been manifested): but we know that when HE shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every one that hath this hope in Him, [i.e. in Christ,] purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

With such a hope, if He says, "Surely I come quickly," shall not our hearts respond— "Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus?"

Brief Notes on Keeping the Unity of the Spirit, Brief Notes on Keeping the Unity of the Spirit (4:3-4)

Ephesians 4:3, 4

We are enjoined to be "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," or "to be giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace." Now what are we to understand by keeping this unity? What is it? Before, however, we look at what it is, it may be well to Consider what it is not.

1. Keeping the Spirit's unity is not merely a congregational union. There may be considerable oneness of mind and judgment with Christians who compose a particular Congregation, which, after all, may be only independency; or, one congregation choosing to act independently of all other congregations of Christians. The Holy Spirit dwells in, and acts in, the church,¹ all over the world. There is really nothing between independency and keeping the Spirit's unity.
2. It is not a sectarian union, or acting together on a sectarian principle, even if all the saints in the world were on such ground.
3. It is not a union of sects, however many of the sects, as sects, were congregated together and acting together.
4. It is not always proved by unanimity, however much it is desired; for the Corinthians seem to have been unanimous in keeping in their midst one defiled with flagrant evil; and were evidently not unanimous in putting away from among themselves the "wicked person". (See 2 Corinthians 12:20, 21.) It is not a question of majority, of minority, or of unanimity, but What is the Lord's mind? What is the path marked out by the "One Spirit"?
5. It is not merely union, even of the best kind; for are not all saints, however erring, forever in living union with each other and with the Lord?
6. It is not anything short of unity — a unity which can be kept only by those who are members of "one body" of which Christ in heaven is the Head. When we read in Malachi 3:16 of those who "feared the Lord"... "and they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels," the prophet is speaking of a God-fearing remnant of Jews, not of the members of "one body" — the assembly, Neither are "fellows" the same as members of one body. Again, "brethren" dwelling "together in unity" will have its fulfillment in millennial times of Israel's blessing on earth — a unity of brothers — not the membership of one body, God's present order of blessing. This the nation of Israel never will be. There is one body. The idea of "twelve tribes" is very different from that of "one body". (See Psalms 133; Hebrews 1:9; Ephesians 5:30.)

Now let us consider what keeping the Spirit's unity is:

1. Saints only can keep it. Such are exhorted to walk worthy of the calling wherewith we are called endeavoring to keep it.
2. This unity is to be kept, not made. Those who attempt to make it show that they do not keep the Spirit's unity which has been made.
3. It is not merely union, but unity — "One new man", formed of members on earth united to Christ the Head in heaven. So one, that Jesus, the glorified Man, could say to a hater of His members on earth, "Why persecutest thou ME?" Observe, not "mine" merely, but 'his'; and the Holy Spirit speaks of such now as "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." Again the unity is formed and energized, and all the members taught, led, and acted on, by "one Spirit". The "one bread", or loaf, on the Lord's Table, shows it to be the Lord's mind that this unity should be expressed "till he come". (See 1 Corinthians 10:17.) It is blessed to know this!
4. It is of such a spiritual nature that it can only be kept "with all lowliness and meekness, and long-suffering, forbearing one another in love." There is no room for carnal weapons. When this unity is truly kept, it will be in the uniting bond of peace. What a precious bond! Those who are walking proudly and in self-will cannot therefore be keeping this unity.
5. It is a holy unity, for the Spirit is "holy". Nothing therefore unsuited to Him, who is "the holy and the true", can be consistent with keeping the Spirit's unity. Separation from evil is therefore imperative. "Let him that nameth the name of the Lord depart from inequity" (2 Tim. 2:19).
6. It is according to the truth, for "the Spirit is truth", and He guides into all the truth. Keeping the Spirit's unity therefore excludes everything contrary to "the truth".
7. It is a unity which comprehends nothing less than every member of the "one body". Practically it considers every saint in Christ Jesus, and is associated with all who are endeavoring to keep this unity. It cannot, therefore, be sectarian, however it may appear to be so. Such love all saints, pray for all saints, and would walk with all saints, if they could do so according to the truth.

8. It is the Spirit's unity because the path and power of keeping it is by one Spirit all over the world, wherever saints are. "He that hath an ear" is therefore enjoined to "hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches", or assemblies. In keeping this holy unity then the action of "one Spirit" is recognized, and practically owned, wherever two or three are gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus own His presence and the Holy Ghost sent down. Wherever in this way a case has been judged it is not judged elsewhere, but the judgment of those who have thus judged it is accepted as owning "one Spirit".

It is important to distinguish between purging out and purging from. In the normal state of the church when all who believed were together, and all outside were unbelievers, it was said "purge out"; for for a time of ruin — a great house — when all kinds of evil have been associated with the name of our precious Lord Jesus, the faithful are also told to "purge from". (1 Cor. 5:7; 2 Tim. 2:19-21.)

9. The path in thus "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" must, therefore, be connected with practical separation from those who are acting contrary to the truth, and holiness, and ways of the Spirit's unity. We may cross the street to greet one whom we believe to be a member of the "one body", and so far be endeavoring to keep the Spirit's unity, even though his sectarian ways forbid us going with him further.

Communion with the Lord through His truth will guide us as to these things, and every other act, for the glory of God.

Those, therefore, who are intelligently keeping the Spirit's unity recognize that the same Holy Spirit as a divine person dwells in every child of God all over the world, that all have access unto the Father through the Lord Jesus by one Spirit, and that God dwells through the Spirit all over the earth where the Lord's name is professed — the house. They gladly own all true believers on earth united by one Spirit to Christ in heaven, as members of one body, "one new man"; and, while doing so, wait "for God's Son from heaven" — the "one hope" of our calling. It is impossible, therefore, to own two or more companies of saints in any place who are not in fellowship as according to the truth, for there is "One body"; or to own different ways of dealing with the same matters in discipline, for there is "One Spirit"; or to hold diverse hopes, for there is "One hope". A lowly mind, and waiting on the Lord in meekness are needed to enable any to receive, hold, and act out these things. "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way" (Psa. 25:9).

H. H. S.

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 3 (1855), Purpose of God, the Salvation of God, and the Glory of God, The (3:11-12)

"According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him."-Eph. 3:11,12.

Is not the Lord Jesus Christ to be admired and adored for what He is in Himself? How emphatically He is the "Wonderful"—the great "Mystery of Godliness!" The "seed of Abraham," and yet "the Mighty God:" "the fruit of David's loins," and yet Jehovah's "Fellow:" "made of a woman," and yet the Maker of "all things:" "like unto His brethren," yet "separate from sinners:" the "Child born," and yet the "Son given:" "found in fashion as a Man," yet "the Image of the invisible God,"— "the brightness of His glory:" "in the likeness of sinful flesh," yet "without sin." How glorious, infinitely glorious, He is! How exactly fitted for the work of eternal redemption! What a mighty Days-man to lay His hand both on God and us! How wise! How truly able to sympathize with us! for assuredly, as we sometimes sing,

And what a sacrifice that was, when He "offered Himself without spot to God!" What forgiveness, as well as consecration, the blood of that Lamb speaks to our consciences—the Offerer, One in whom the Father was well-pleased, the Fellow of the Lord of Hosts; the Offering that in which Jehovah could find both satisfaction and delight—sin was borne, judged, condemned, and put away, justice satisfied, and the holy Lord God glorified. How blessed also it is to consider that "all the promises of God"—all His rich purposes of grace—are in Christ "yea, and in Him, Amen, unto the glory of God, by us;" so that our Lord could say, "I am glorified in them." Surely we must add, "How precious are Thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them!"

But let us dive still deeper into these unsearchable realities, and we shall soon perceive,

eternal, unchangeable, redeeming, faithful love. Mercy "from everlasting," according to the eternal counsel and purpose of Him, who gave us to Christ, chose us in Christ, and redeemed us by Christ; so that the divine declaration is, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." God loved us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. How sweet it is thus to look back into the deep and eternal counsels of God, and see how the salvation which He wrought in Christ, exactly corresponds both with His own decree and our deep necessity. The eternal purpose of God being the glory of Christ in our salvation, redemption must therefore be "in Him." As guilty sinners could only be brought into God's presence without blame by a Saviour, one who, moreover, was capable of satisfying the stern requirements of divine justice, our Lord Jesus Christ undertook, and did, at the cost of His own guiltless life, obtain our entrance into that holy presence—He proved Himself capable of, and all-sufficient for, this stupendous work. Thus "we, who sometime were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." By virtue of the infinite perfections of the Offerer and the Offering, God's eternal purpose of salvation by grace is most blessedly effected, and an everlastingly-efficacious redemption accomplished for us; so that the decree of Jehovah, the security of the believer, and the glory of God, have all been met once and for ever in that "one offering," which Christ "once offered." How gracious was the utterance of the loving heart of Jesus, when He said, "My goodness extendeth....to the saints which are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is ALL MY DELIGHT." (Ps. 41)

But do we not further see in the "finished" work of the Son of God, that the perfection of love displayed in the perfect work of this spotless One, makes us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light?" Surely it was as our "Surety" that He died upon the cross; and there we see not only the Son "forsaken" and "spared not," but also an offering brought to God in which He is infinitely glorified, in which He takes ineffable delight, and in which He finds, too, "a savor of rest." And was it not for us? Most assuredly, "He gave Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savor." Thus we are "righteous," by His "obedience"— "accepted in the Beloved" — "complete in

Him;" not only ransomed from hell by His blood, but fitted for His presence, by "the righteousness of God which is into all and upon all them that believe." How precious it is to be occupied with God's estimate of the worth and work of His beloved Son, and thus find, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, that His glory is great in our salvation, and that it is a salvation worthy of Him who doeth great things and unsearchable! And does not the contemplation of these glorious realities make Christ Himself more precious to our souls? and necessarily, therefore, more constantly and unfeignedly the Object of our affections and worship? Do we not thus realize the blessed liberty of His yoke? and are we not constrained to yield to Him our willing and obedient service? Surely, these things are so; and when the Holy Ghost thus reveals to us the wondrous mystery of Emmanuel's cross, how worthless and insignificant the world appears! How transient! How rapidly it "passeth away" to make room for that full power of redemption that will be connected with the Lord's return! To the spiritual eye the world now appears a dark spot which God has consigned to judgment, but men are spending all their time and energy in seeking happiness in it apart from God and Christ.

But there is another thought in connection with the perfect work of Jesus, and it is this:—If we are "justified from all things," and "perfected for ever," through His being "made of God unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," necessarily our hope and prospect must be correspondingly perfect, and pregnant with glory and bliss. And, blessed be God, they are; and that, too, in strict keeping with God's eternal purpose "in Christ;" for, "the mystery of His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself" being "to gather together in one all things IN CHRIST," we are taught by the Holy Ghost, in the word, to "look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body;" and to rest in the assurance, that HE will come again and receive us unto HIMSELF—that "when HE shall appear we shall be like HIM, for we shall see HIM as HE is;" and "he for ever with the Lord." It is Christ Himself, "in whom we have obtained an inheritance," who is our hope, and He says, "Behold, I come quickly!"

How precious it is, beloved, to learn from the oracles of God, that all this wondrous and everlasting blessing comes to us through Him who "offered HIMSELF," "gave HIMSELF" for us, "put away sin by the sacrifice of HIMSELF;" that it is Christ HIMSELF who now appears in the presence of God for us; and that it is "the Lord HIMSELF" we wait for, and expect to see, and to be with, and like for ever!

How happy to see the blessed harmony of the purpose of God, the grace of God, and the glory of God, and to trace therein not only the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," but also in the glory that is to be revealed, that "the Lamb is the light thereof;" and those only are there "which are written in the LAMB'S book of life." Surely it is the Lamb who is the Alpha and the Omega, the center of, and way to all this glory. None was found worthy to open the book, or look thereon, but "the Lamb as it had been slain;" and it is the worthiness of the Lamb that fills heaven with unceasing praise and glory. From the throne of God and the LAMB the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal," proceeds; and it is the Lamb that feeds, and that leads the blood-washed multitude to fountains of living waters. It is because the throne of God and the LAMB is there, that there will be no more curse. By grace Christ is our LAMB as well as the LAMB of God; yea, rather, because He is God's LAMB He is our LAMB. We have come to God by Him, we have access to the Father through Him, our sins were laid upon Him, we trust in Him, we have peace with God through Him, we are complete in Him, and we wait for Him: we find in Him full salvation, suitable salvation, everlasting salvation; yea, God's salvation, and, therefore, all our salvation. Hence we joyfully lift up our heart, and sing, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Well we may add,

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THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD.—Oh, to be led, drawn, and sent by Him continually! and made to lie down, too! None but Christ Himself can so fill our souls with the sweetness of His green pastures, as to make us lie down therein; yet how can there be growth unless we chew the cud there. The world is rapidly hastening on its course—drawing near its terrible end: but we are sheep, and our heavenly blessing is to be led and fed by the Lamb. What fullness there is in Jesus! He is the LAMB of God and the SON of God; yea, all fullness dwells in Him.

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THE LORD WAS WITH HIM.—This was said of David in his early day. This is at the root of his humility, and wisdom, and skill; it enabled him to hide himself and his greatness behind his harp-strings. The anointed of the Lord a harp-player to the rejected king! The man of war content to return to feed the sheep—his father's sheep—to be his father's and his brother's servant! "The Lord was with him:" this was enough. With Saul, with the sheep, with his trembling and offending brethren, with Goliath—it matters not where; it matters not what to do—the Lord was with him. The Lord was for him, also. He can conquer Lion, Bear, SELF, Goliath, Saul. His brethren think and make nothing of him. Be it so. He can bear it. The Lord was with him.

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OTTE SUFFICIENCY.—Let us never forget the all-sufficiency of the grace of God—"My grace is sufficient for thee;" the all-sufficiency of the word of God - "All Scripture is given....that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works;" the all-sufficiency of the Spirit of God— "He shall guide you into all truth," "bring all things to your remembrance," &c. "The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

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THAT is the happy knowledge of Christ which reflects back the rays of resurrection-glory, and not only keeps our eyes open as to the evil that surrounds our path down here, but so lights up the future as to make us desire to depart and to be with HIM—to be associated in all that glory.

Streams of Refreshing From the Fountain of Life, Now Made Nigh; or, What the Christian Was, and What He Is (2:13)

But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13).

In reading the word of God, it is always important to see to whom each particular portion is addressed. For instance, this epistle was not addressed to the inhabitants of Ephesus generally, but to the saints and faithful brethren — those who had known and believed the love that God hath to us; those among the Ephesians who had, through faith in the Lord Jesus, been brought nigh to God — had passed from death unto life. The apostle was inspired by the Holy Ghost to address them in the remembrance of what they had been, as well as to instruct them as to the character of their present standing and blessing as redeemed and accepted in the Beloved.

We do not become Christians by being born of Christian parents, or because our lot has been cast in what is called a Christian country, or because we have been religiously educated, or by attending to any outward ordinances, or by being associated with any who are truly saints of God. No; we only become Christians by having to do with Christ and His atoning blood. Whatever may have been our previous history or character, we are far from God, and enemies to God, till we are reconciled to God by the death His Son. If I were asked to give, in a few words of Scripture, the true definition of what a Christian is, I do not think I could give a better reply than we find in the latter part of this verse, viz., one who was

far off

but is now in Christ

made nigh (Eph. 2:13)

to God by His blood.

We find in this verse reference made to what the state of these persons was before they received the gospel, their present standing and blessing, and also the ground of their being so. Let us look a little at each of these points.

1. WHAT THEY WERE —

far off.

As fallen creatures in Adam, men are naturally found in a place of distance from God. After sin entered, Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And we see also in Cain their son, that he went out from the presence of the Lord, and sought to gratify himself by building a city, &c. And so it is now; man's birth-condition, his habits and educational pursuits, are all at a distance from God; he still tries to hide himself from God's presence, and to be happy, if he can,

afar off (Eph. 2:17).

These Ephesians, however, though belonging to a highly-polished city, were Gentiles, not having any of the privileges, or even the measure of knowledge, that the Jews had; they were heathens, idolaters, taken up only with this present evil world — the fashions of the world, the honors of the world, its wealth, patronage, and advancement, filled their hearts. From the rude lusts of the flesh, to the more refined desires of the mind, they were shaping their course according to the dictates of Satan, the prince of this world. They knew of nothing higher than pleasing themselves, gratifying their own wills and inclinations; in a word, to eat, drink, and sleep, as if there were no God. They might have ranked among the most civilized, polished, and benevolent of the age; they might have been outwardly more moral and orderly than their neighbours; still they were without God, and having no hope in the world. They were in the world, and of the world, which lieth in the wicked one, and therefore far off from God.

Such was the character of the world in the days of the apostle, and such is the world now. Such was the state of the Ephesians then, and such is the state of many now. Nothing can be more distinct than the spirit of the world, and the spirit of true Christianity. The moving principle of the world is the endeavour to be happy, apart from God and the Savior — far off; the spirit of true Christianity leads us to be happy only in God's presence, and that which honors Him. The principles of the world, whether their tendencies are moral or immoral, are always outside God's presence. Those who are of the world weigh not their motives and actions before God; they know not His love; therefore they live not for His glory. The advancement of man's interest, the cultivation of human intellect, and the exaltation of natural abilities, with the vain endeavour to find rest and satisfaction far from God and Christ, is what the world is mostly made up of. Is it not so? Turn where we may, do we not find men busily seeking satisfaction apart from God? some in pleasure, others in science, fame, the accumulation of wealth, or other forms of self-indulgence. Such, I say, is the world; and I dwell upon it, because few appear to see that the world, whether in its rude or polished phase, is equally that which is far from God.

Moreover, with all the outward glitter, such have within them a secret dread of God's presence; like Adam, they may truthfully say,

I was afraid, . . . and I hid myself (Gen. 3:10).

That which keeps men

far off

is the dread of being near to God. Such is the wicked character of sin, that the carnal mind is not only at enmity and rebellion against God, but it leads men to shrink away from the light of His presence: hence they fear death, not because of the painful moment of separation between soul and body, but because of the dread of appearing before the Majesty of heaven. They fear judgment, because they fear being banished into outer darkness. They have no peace, because they know not the virtue of that precious blood which cleanses from all sin; and they try to banish these thoughts from their minds, by seeking a sphere for their energies and amusements outside the presence of God. It was here the Ephesians were when the gospel reached them; they were dead in trespasses and sins, afar off, having no hope, and without God in the world; and such is the state of many now.

2. Let us now consider what they were when the apostle addressed this epistle to them. He tells them that they are now

in Christ Jesus,

and

made nigh (Eph. 2:13). In Christ Jesus;

that is, no longer regarded by God in a state of death as connected with Adam, but as having passed from death unto life. As Noah formerly entered into the ark, as the only place of safety from the coming judgments, so they had taken refuge in Christ Jesus; and as Noah was shut into the ark by God, so such are preserved in Christ Jesus. They had life and righteousness in Christ, and union with Christ, having been quickened together, raised up together, and made to sit together in the heavenlies in Christ Jesus. This was their present portion —

now in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:13).

Under no condemnation, because they were in Christ Jesus; having eternal life, because in Christ Jesus; united to Him by the Holy Ghost, who is on the other side of death; risen with Christ, and seated in Him in the heavenlies. Such is the standing and security that the God of grace has given us in Christ Jesus. They were thus made nigh in Christ, as well as through His blood. How vast the change! Such no longer dread God's presence, but love it supremely. They do not fear death, but know, through Christ, victory over it. They do not tremble at the thought of judgment, because they know that Christ endured the judgment and penalty their sins had merited. God Himself is their spring of life and peace; they are only truly happy when near Him.

Their former enmity against God has been subdued by His redeeming love. The hardness of their hearts has been melted by the contemplation of Immanuel's cross, and their self-will and self-love have been overcome by the exceeding riches of the grace of God in Christ. They know that they are made nigh to God.

Their nearness to God is one of the most perfect friendship. It is thus their privilege to seek His counsel in every difficulty, to trust in Him at all times, to reckon upon His help in every adversity, and to bring them through every danger. This nearness to God is one of the dearest and tenderest relationships — that of children.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God (1 John 3:2).

So that we may come before God as our Father, and count upon His care over us, His providential kindness, His paternal sympathy, His watchful eye, His almighty arm. It is our privilege to appeal to His fatherly heart for all we require, under all circumstances, whether temporal or spiritual; for

as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. For He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust (Psa. 103:13, 14).

We are a heavenly people of the

household of God (Eph. 2:19),

and are called to serve and honor Him in all the filial nearness and devotedness of sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty.

But more than this, we are made nigh to God as worshipers. We are not now afraid to come near the presence of the Almighty, but have liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; there to present our spiritual sacrifices as a royal and holy priesthood, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

And all this our God has done for us in Christ. What love! Is Christ near to God? so am I, for I am in Him, Is Christ living for evermore? so am I. Is Christ righteous? so am I; for in Him, and through His blood, I am made nigh to God. What matchless grace! Oh for a believing heart fully to welcome all these ways of our God toward us, that instead of brooding over ourselves with gloom and sorrow, we may find our hearts lifted high, and more and more expanded by the heights and depths of God's free and abundant love to us in Christ Jesus.

3. THE GROUND OF ALL THIS BLESSING is the blood of Christ —

made nigh by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13).

Not our efforts, our devotedness, our attainments, but the blood of Christ. It is something already done — we may not know it, may fail in the true apprehension of it, may not enjoy it, nevertheless it is done —

ARE made nigh by the blood of Christ.

Without the death of the Son of God, we must for ever have remained far off from Him, still in our sins and guilt, for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul; and Jesus taught the absolute necessity of His death, for He said,

Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit (John 12:24).

It is not, then, the incarnation of Christ, the life of Christ, or the example of Christ, but the death of Christ, the cross of Christ, the blood of Christ, that cleanses our guilty consciences, and makes us feel happy in God's presence. It is Christ crucified that is the only peaceful meeting-place between God and the sinner. There God shows sinners how much He loves them. There God brings salvation to the lost. There God opened an all-cleansing fountain for sin and uncleanness. There God magnified His own holiness and justice, and manifested the exceeding riches of His grace to unholy men; and now in Christ Jesus, by His blood, God has made all that believe to stand in everlasting nearness to Himself.

We have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins, because God made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us. Our sins were laid upon Him, and He was made a curse for us. In this way He suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. The wrath of God was thus poured out upon Him instead of us, so that

He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed (Isa. 53:5).

Hence, on the ground of strictest justice and holiness, God can speak of us as a redeemed people, washed from our sins in the blood of Jesus, and that our sins and iniquities He will remember no more. The alone ground, therefore, of forgiveness of sins is not our works, our experience, our frames, or our feelings, but the blood of Christ; for without the shedding of blood is no remission; and the blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin. Nothing therefore relieves man's guilt and fears, or removes the burden from the conscience, or speaks peace to a sin-convicted soul, but

THE BLOOD OF CHRIST.

We are also justified by the blood —

being now justified by His blood (Rom. 5:9).

The cross of Christ not only speaks to us of sins being judged and put away, but it also shows us One who was perfectly obedient, who surrendered His whole self to the will of God, wholly consecrated Himself to Him, was

obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phil. 2:8).

Thus the work of Christ Jesus was infinitely meritorious in God's sight; for there a whole burnt-offering was presented to God, by which we could stand accepted and righteous in all the perfectness of the offering for ever. Jesus was thus accepted for us, and we are made accepted in Him. It is by the death of Christ that we are reconciled to God, and in Him we are

made the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21).

For while that blood by which Jesus entered into heaven itself speaks to us of sins for ever put away, it also tells us of an everlasting worthiness, or righteousness, in which His people stand accepted and complete, even in Him who is risen from the dead, and the Head of all principality and power.

We are also sanctified by the blood — consecrated, or set apart for God.

Jesus, . . . that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate (Heb. 13:12).

As sprinkled with that blood, we are able to serve God as not our own but His, and are thus taught that we are set apart for His service, not in order to be saved, but because we are saved; not in order to be His, but because we are His. The priests of old, after the offering of the sin-offering and burnt-offering, were sprinkled with the blood of the ram of consecration, and anointed with oil, to qualify them for priestly service. The tip of their right ear, and the thumb of their right hand, and the great toe of their right foot, were all marked with blood, to teach us that, because we are redeemed by the blood of Jesus, we are to listen to God's voice, to walk in His ways, and minister in His holy service; that, as an accepted, consecrated, blood-sprinkled, and anointed priesthood, we are set apart to serve God, to worship God, to glorify Him in our bodies and in our spirits, because we are not our own, but His.

It is, then, the precious blood of Christ, as sprinkled on the mercy-seat by our great High Priest, that is our simple way of approaching God at all times: we enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. When we experience a difficulty in entering into God's presence, it is because we have forgotten the blood, unless there be sin on the conscience unconfessed. But drawing near to God through the blood of His beloved Son, believing God's testimony to the value of that blood, and what it has done for us, we can then, in the bright light and glory of His infinitely holy presence, pour out our hearts before Him, praise and magnify the unsearchable riches of Divine love, seek all we need at His hand, and not hesitate to search our hearts, and try our ways before Him, because He witnesses to us there that the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Well, then, might the apostle say to the believers at Ephesus,

Now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ (Eph. 2:13).

Once they were in the world, and of the world; but now they are not of the world, even as Jesus was not of the world. Once enemies to God, now friends. Once children of disobedience, now children of God. Once afar off, but now in Christ made nigh by His blood.

Oh that God's dear children did know their nearness to God, their standing and completeness in Christ, their privileges, their present blessings, their deliverance from the guilt and power of sin, their rescue from this present evil world, its ways and maxims, by THE BLOOD OF CHRIST!

My reader, where are you at this moment? Are you still living and walking according to the course of this world? Do its pleasures, honors, fashions, and its so-called progress, or its falsely-called science, absorb your heart and mind? We cannot serve two masters. It must be either God or mammon, Christ or the world; which is it with you? Sure I am that believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was crucified for sinners, will give you peace, and bring you nigh to God. It is vain to look elsewhere; for the God of truth declares that there is salvation in no other: for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ.

Things New and Old: Volume 25, Our Standing and State (1:7)

It is most precious to the Christian to remember that, whatever else may change, his standing in Christ, through the exceeding riches of the grace of God, remains always the same. Founded as it is on the everlasting efficacy of the work of the cross, and effected by the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, nothing can possibly shake his nearness and acceptance in Him. The believer's experience may be pleasant or painful; his circumstances may be prosperous or adverse; he may be at one time in the sweetest, happiest enjoyment of fellowship with the Lord, and at another time distressed and humbled under the buffetings of a messenger of Satan; but all through, his standing in Christ is unmoved—he is unchangeably accepted in the Beloved. With other believers he is entitled to say, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Eph. 1:7.)

Such is the unalterable character of the standing of the believer. He is a new creation in Christ Jesus. But his state of soul is another thing, and it is well to distinguish between them. A christian servant-girl once said to the writer. "I am sorry to say, sir, that my state does not agree with my standing." In this remark she was only expressing the minds of many more. In one sense, if our state were as perfect as our standing, we should be practically perfect; but, in another aspect of the subject, we judge it cannot but be very displeasing to the Lord when our state of soul is very contrary to the mind of Him who is our life and righteousness—the Holy and the True—in whom we are always seen by God as He is. To hold high truth, and to go on contentedly with a low walk, cannot but grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption. And yet it cannot be controverted that this is a striking feature among Christians in our day. Now what is to be done? We cannot certainly give up the most blessed truth of our standing, and oh, the endearing relationships with the Father and the Son, into which divine grace has brought us, and made known to us by the Holy Ghost; but should we not consider how far these relationships and our present standing are so apprehended by us as to produce that state of soul which such marvelous grace must necessarily effect in us? How true it is that we love Him because He first loved us! H. H. S.

Crumbs for the Lord's Little Ones: Volume 2 (1854), Thought on Election and Grace., A (1:4)

Eph. 1:4.

THERE is great comfort in the doctrine of election. It tells me that my history is a very old one. It did not begin when I believed. My faith in Christ was an event or fact far down in the course of my history. The story itself, written (wondrous to tell it!) by a divine hand, began ere worlds were framed, and covenant counsels concerning me constituted the first great fact. My foundation is there, be my faith weak or strong. Others brightly outshine me, and rapidly outrun me. I will rejoice in that, and neither envy their fruitfulness, nor be alarmed because of my comparative leanness. My origin is as divine, and venerable, and holy as theirs, and my foundation as immovable. Much more luxuriant branches may spread themselves at my side, but we have all one root. My pedigree is as high as theirs, only they are more distinguished in the family history.

There is nothing more opposed to the mind of God, than making little of His grace in Christ. The Galatians were not giving up Christ. They were only dividing their confidence between Him and other things. They were only partly surrendering Him. But how does the apostle deal with this? "Behold I, Paul, say unto you, if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing." And happy for us is this jealousy of the Holy Ghost, watching and surrounding, as with a wall of fire, that truth which makes the sinner happy—the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

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