

Ephesians - Commentaries by Frederick George Patterson

The Whole Armor of God, Whole Armor of God, The: Part 5 (6:18)

Ephesians 6:18

We now come to the last mighty weapon in this “whole armor of God,” the breathing of His people’s hearts to God by prayer, when they have been formed by His Word — His breath to us! It is the characteristic feature of Christian life; obedience and dependence mark its activities in this fallen world. It is very striking how frequently we find the Word of God and prayer in close connection in Scripture. When God was dealing with and testing man in the flesh in the nation of Israel, He did not name prayer as part of their relationships with Him. They accepted, in their own strength, the law as the terms of their relationship. Now, prayer expresses the weakness of man. There were two forms of address given them, one expressing blood guiltiness (Deut. 21), and the other the expression of worship in the perfection of obedience (Deut. 26). But man was put on his own strength to do these things and so to live in them. What ruin ensued! Yet, in the midst of such a wreck, no doubt many a faithful heart cried to God, outside all ordered and formal relationships with Him.

In the opening of the first book of Samuel, we find a Hannah — desolate and pining after her heart’s desire, moving her lips as her heart expressed its cry to the Lord. Even Eli the high priest rebuked her, supposing that she was drunken with wine. But her answer seems to have touched a chord in the old priest’s soul, as she replied, “No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD.” Eli answered her, “Go in peace: and the God of Israel [He who had wrestled of old with Jacob in another way] grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him” (1 Sam. 1:9). The child Samuel, whose name signifies “asked of God,” was the answer to this cry.

We find too in the early chapters of this book how complete was the wreck of things in Israel. The priesthood was defiled and corrupted, and at last the ark of God passed into the hands of the Philistines; and “Ichabod” was written on the ruined people whose aged high priest broke his neck in falling backward from his seat by the side of the gate, when he heard that the ark had been taken by the uncircumcised.

All ordered relationships were now gone. The people had no priest to draw nigh to Jehovah; the priest (if he desired it) had no ark, where to consult by “Urim and Thummim” — no mercy seat on which to sprinkle the blood before the Lord. What will now be His resource, who is never frustrated by the evil and failure of man? Samuel, the man who was asked of God, will now be the “prophet of the Lord” by whom God will reveal Himself again by the “word of the Lord” to the consciences of those who had an ear to hear. If God thus maintained His relationship through the consciences of His people by Samuel, the cry of need, the prayer of His people also went up to Him by Samuel (1 Sam. 1:8-9; 12:18-19,23). In this we find the two great principles or characteristics of spiritual life, so frequently found together in Scripture; namely, the Word of God and prayer. Mary at the feet of Jesus, hearing His voice, and the disciples saying to Jesus, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 10 and 11), illustrate this thought. See also Peter in Acts 6: “We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.” “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly”; then, “Continuing instant in prayer” (Col. 3:16; 4:2). Even the very food we eat is sanctified to us by the Word of God and prayer. God’s Word sanctions certain things for the use of the body, as meat and drink for His people; they receive it from Him with prayer, refusing nothing that has thus been set apart by His Word; “For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (1 Tim. 4:4-5).

Prayer is the first expression of the newly born soul to God. They led Saul of Tarsus, blinded by the light of the glory in the face of Jesus Christ, to Damascus; and in the “house of Judas,” in the street called “Straight,” behold this persecutor on his knees. A little time before he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord Jesus; now the earnest cry ascends to and enters His ear; and “Behold he prayeth,” shows how the Lord’s ear and heart were attentive to these strong cryings of this chief of sinners.

Prayer takes very varied characteristics in the Word of God. If we turn to Luke 11 we find the Lord instructing the hearts of His disciples in the earnest prayer of importunity. He says, “Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.” How practical is the scene He here portrays! The deep sense of need, and dependence on One who has discovered Himself to our souls as One who alone can supply the need we feel. The sense of confidence is displayed too in the earnestness which turns not aside from Him to any other source. He knows the heart, and knows well whether there is this unmingled confidingness in Him. Yet it is not His goodness and readiness to hear and answer which are here unfolded, but the importunity, the pertinacity of the heart that clings to and cries to God until the need is supplied — that which abates not in earnestness in asking Him who has said, “Ask, and it shall be given you.”

But this is not the highest character of prayer by any means; still it is needed for His people while they are here. A still more blessed provision — for making known our requests — is found in Philippians 4:6. In this place we do not find that He promises to supply the need we express to Him, but He answers in another and much more blessed way. Ten thousand cares may press upon the heart; what is to be our resource? “Be careful for nothing”! is the reply. “Nothing,” you answer; how can this be? Then He proceeds, “But in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” And how blessed is the answer. Perhaps not one request has been granted, but the answer comes in another manner. “The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”! God puts His peace into the heart which has put its cares on God! How frequently we are disposed to allow our cares to eat away at the heart, and bow down the soul. Care for the Church, the saints of God; the deep anxieties of service for the Lord; for the conversion of those we love; for the recovery of those who have wandered from the way. Circumstances too may try the heart; the love

of those whose love we valued has grown cold; the bitterness of being misunderstood and misjudged — all press upon the soul. How blessed those strong, bright words, “Be careful for nothing”! How blessed to go to God in the strong cryings and secret bitter tears which His eye has marked and noted, and hand over the cares to Him! Mark, it is not to our Father, but to God. It is not here the confidingness of relationship, but to a holy Being whose nature is known — whose throne is never touched by cares. The heart learns there to pour out its earnest cry, deepening in intensity from “prayer” to “supplication,” until the heart has risen, as it were, above the cloud, above the cares which pressed upon the soul, until it bursts out in the pure light of heaven, in “thanksgiving” into the ever opened ear of One who gives His peace to the relieved heart, with the sweet sense that His hand is under the care, has taken it into His own merciful hands, and we have in exchange God’s own peace.

But in Ephesians we are outside the things which distress the heart, in another way. The range of vision takes in the things which occupy the mind of Christ. The great interests of the Lord on earth are before us,, more than our own cares. Not that He does not interest Himself with our little cares and trials — that He does; but here the prayer and supplication in the Spirit, with its watching and perseverance, is for “all saints.” In the true dependence of one who is fully armed with this armor of God, prayer keeps the heart in confidingness in Him. Self is broken, and He is trusted; and the more knowledge the more prayer. Satan cannot seduce the heart which is ever in this attitude before God. “He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.”

The Lord’s people have thus been prepared to meet the foe and to “withstand in the evil day”; that is, the whole period through which we now pass. The soul is formed by the truth; the conscience good, maintained in the light; the heart peaceful, in the confidingness and piety which walks with God and trusts Him amid the storms and waves which beat around us. Thus Satan’s fiery darts are of no avail, and with the helmet of a known salvation covering the head, and the Word of God as the Spirit’s sword, we are ready to meet the wiles of the devil, and the heart is kept in a right condition before God in this evil world. He has His true place of authority which orders all; the saint too is found in his true attitude of dependence and confidence before Him, as expressed in prayer, but prayer which embraces His great interests here on earth — “all saints” in their labors and conflicts, toils and joys.

(Concluded)

A difficulty may be a real one, but it is only for the unbelief of hearts that it is an obstacle, if on the path of God’s will; for faith reckons upon God, and performs that which He wills, and difficulties are as nothing before Him. Unbelief can always find excuses, and excuses too that are apparently well founded; they have only this capital defect, that they leave God out.

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Words of Truth: Volume 4, Father's House, The (4:1-16)

Lord, to be with Thee in Thine own abode,
The place prepared where Thou wilt have us dwell;
Brought home unto Thy Father and Thy God,
Where harpers harping shall Thy triumphs tell.
Sons of His love! heirs of His festal joy!
What bliss! how full, how pure, without alloy!
To gaze around in that effulgent light,
With not a mist from earth to intervene,
Thy majesty, Thy beauty, full in sight,
Thy glory flooding all the boundless scene.
Thy love in its perfection, known at last,
‘Twill solve the long enigma of the past.
To read in full the story of the Cross—
Known dimly—but with growing wonder now;
To measure, by God’s glory, what it cost,
Beneath His curse, Thy holy head to bow.
Thy royal garments (in that hour laid by),
Proving the depths of Thy descent—to DIE!

To hear Thee leading, in our midst, high praise

To Him whom Thou hast glorified on earth,

Whose will, the rule of all Thy pilgrim days,

Made Thee a sorrowing stranger from Thy birth.

Proof—Thou, the slain one—highest heavens above,

Of sovereign mercy and victorious love.

To know how thou hast made an end of sin,

Swept every hostile element away;

To see eternal righteousness brought in,

And watch the universe Thy mind obey.

No longer to perceive and know in part,

But feel with Thee—behold Thee whom Thou art.

To worship Him who sitteth on the throne,

Whose bride are we, the purchased of thy blood;

Thine incorruptibility our own,

The dearest purpose of Thy heart made good.

And through eternity's exhaustless days,

Our Lord, our Saviour! to sound forth Thy praise!

"The Vocation Wherewith Ye Are Called." Eph. 2, And 4:1-16.

Have read these portions of Scripture with a desire to speak specially on the opening verses of chapter 4. What you find there is the calling of a Christian, not as an individual merely, but as a member of the body of Christ, in his corporate place and responsibility. There are two things in Scripture—the, individual calling of the Christian, and his corporate responsibility. In Hebrews you have the one, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling;" and in Ephesians the other, "Walk worthy of the calling wherewith ye are called." What I desire to do first, is to trace a little the line of truth which leads us up to this chapter and its exhortations, that we may see what the calling is, of which we are exhorted to walk worthy. How can we walk worthy of a calling until we know what it is?

The Epistle's to the Ephesians and Romans begin at exactly opposite ends of the truth of God. In the opening of Romans you find man totally ruined, in a state of corruption; and we learn how he is to be brought out of that state and presented to God in Christ. Romans begins at man's end, but Ephesians begins at God's end, and shows what God is to man, dead in sins. In Romans he is alive in sins; in Ephesians dead in sins. In Romans it is how a living sinner is to be taken out of his old place, and brought out into a totally new place. In Ephesians he shows how the cross of Christ had cleared everything away. God's love is like a river with a dam in it. God's love was pent up, so to say. Then Christ came, and on His Cross removed the barrier, and let out the love. That is what the cross was from God's side. Sin was the barrier, and God's Son comes and breaks down the barrier, and God's love can flow out.

The first place you find Christ mentioned doctrinally in this Scripture is where He is dead (chapter 1:19-20), "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." God had been testing man for four thousand years to see if he was a recoverable sinner. But every trial proved he was the more hopelessly irrecoverable. Then Christ enters the place of judgment and sin-bearing-bears it; and God raises Him from the dead. When God made the world, it was not said of creation that it was the "exceeding greatness of his power." It was merely the fiat of God as Creator. "He spake, and it was done." Here it is the energy of the force of God's might put forth to raise Christ from the dead. Christ is looked upon as man here. He is God too, but as man God raised Him. Now why is this? Because Christ went down under judgment, and bore the wrath of God on account of sin. Because Christ was clearing the whole scene from God's side, that the unhindered heart of God may come out in all its living fullness, and take a sinner dead in trespasses and sins, and carry him up to the highest place in Christ in the glory. God's love is thus set free; Christ rises from the dead, having accomplished redemption.

You will find that people often make a mistake about redemption. They find out they are saved, and they attach redemption and salvation to the moment when they believed. But the thing that your eyes have opened upon, perhaps, yesterday, was accomplished more than 1800 years ago. When there was no such person as you existing, God entered into judgment with His Son, who made propitiation for sin, He has dealt first with Christ for sin, before He has dealt with your conscience for it. Redemption is this—it is where God begins with us by putting us on a new landing.

Supposing I am addressing a sinner. What do you require in order to stand before God? You want to be cleansed from the sins you have committed; but, also, you want to be taken out of the very place and nature in which you committed the sins, and put into another. God has dealt with the whole thing. He has taken me out of the place of a child of Adam, and made me a child of God. He came and stripped the bad

tree of its fruit; but He has dealt with the tree also in His Son. Redemption has been accomplished. It is in Christ. Take your true place as a sinner and you'll get it. The moment you take a ruined place God can meet you.

After Christ had borne the judgment of the cross, and risen out of the grave, He preaches peace. (John 20) He first went down into judgment and left it behind. He has come out on the platform of resurrection, and I have come out with Him. The whole thing that stood against you. has been cleared away, and you can look up into God's face without a cloud between. There is an evil nature within me to contend with, but it is "not I." The same power precisely that wrought in Christ is put forth to quicken us. Christ not merely died on the cross for sin, but God has raised Him from the dead, and carried Him right up into the glory. Then the Holy Ghost is sent down, and we are quickened together with Him—raised up together, i.e., Jew and Gentile, and seated in Him in heavenly places. Then you get Christian consciousness. What is that? John 14:20, tells you, "In that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." How do you know you are in Christ and Christ in you? Because Christ said you would when He would send the Holy Ghost!

A Christian may either look upon himself as united to Christ, and seated in the heavenly places, and "possessing all things;" or in the wilderness, "as having nothing" but the Holy Ghost. If you look at yourself, you are not in heavenly places at all.

We think it a great thing to be blessed through Christ, but it is a great deal more to be blessed with Him. (Chapter 2:7.) "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." God is going to show out to the universe that He is very rich. He is going to show out how He is rich to poor outcasts such as we are, and to the thief, the woman of the city who was a sinner. He will place them in the same glory with His Son.

There is no thought of justification in the Ephesians. It is a new creation here; and God has nothing to justify. We are "created in Christ Jesus." In ch. 2:11, 12, He calls to mind what they were. "Wherefore remember that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." In v. 13, we "are made nigh by the blood of Christ," and in v. 14, "He is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition." Why is peace solid? Because Christ made it. Now we get the body of Christ formed on the breaking down of the wall of partition between Jews and Gentiles. The essence of Judaism was to keep up the wall of partition. The essence of Christianity is that it is broken down. God broke it down (v. 16), "And that He might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby;" the one who put it there broke it down. Now we come to both having "access by one Spirit unto the Father." In v. 18 we get the Trinity, "Through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

Now mark the steps by which He has been leading us from "dead in sins," to "access to the Father." Can you go any higher? No. Then he says, "I am going to drop you down into your responsibility." He first establishes our standing. Don't try to enjoy the standing and evade the responsibility. You can't do it. You may try to evade it, and get a bad conscience, but you can't separate the two things.

Christian responsibility is founded on relationship. You are in the relationship, now walk worthy of it. You can't be a naughty child until you are a child; but it is a shame when we are so. The relationship must exist or I can't know it. Then I must know it to walk in it. How can you walk as a child of God until you are one? You may call God your Father in a general way, and not be a child. Thousands are going to ruin with a lie in their right hand thus.

Then again doubting and uncertainty for a child of God are not Christianity. It is in your heart, and when you are hearkening to a doubt you are hearkening to the old man. Very well then, I refuse a doubt because it is of the old man. The more complete my ruin, the more full His mercy. The prodigal can take no place but what the Father gives him. If you want your own place, be shut out! God can't give you a better one than He has given you.

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." These are the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, let me press; ch. 3: 5, proves it. "Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."

This mystery of Christ and the Church (Eph. 3:9,) was "hid in God." Satan thought he had achieved a wonderful victory in driving Christ's body out of the earth. Not a bit of a victory. He sends down the Holy Ghost to constitute and maintain Christ's body here, and Satan has no victory.

The Church stands in complete redemption, as Christ's body. The apostles and prophets were doctrinally the foundation of the Church, but Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, is personally the foundation. The building groweth unto an holy temple. But as to her present condition we read, "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." If that be the Church, where is it now? There is not a sign of it. You may see it, like everything else committed to man, totally spoiled. Wood, hay, and stubble come in, and spoils it all, but Christ will make it all good in Himself by and bye. If the Church is not to His glory, He will come by and bye to be glorified in His saints.

Adam was not God's counseled man at all. The second Adam is. Christ is God's purposed man, and all His purposes come out in Him.

I pass over chapter 3, which is a parenthesis, with one remark, that not only is the Church a habitation of God, but you will find that v. 6 speaks of it as "one body." The Spirit of God comes and dwells in every believer here on earth, constituting them "one body," and united to Christ. The difference between the house or habitation of God and the body is this—I live in the house, but the house is not "me." Now on these two thoughts Paul founds his exhortation in chapter 4. What is the calling of which I am to walk worthy? Is it individual merely? No, that is in Hebrews and other scripture. Here, it is that the Church is Christ's body and the habitation of God, and I am to walk worthy of this. The word "calling" is the same as "vocation." Lowliness and meekness will ever be the characteristic of those who are walking in God's presence. You can't bring self to heaven, and you ought to allow nothing in your walk that you can't take to heaven with you. Many a Christian tries to carry a burden on their backs which they can't take into the Father's house. Better leave it behind you now. "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond (this is the word) of peace." There are hundreds of bodies formed by man. God has constituted one body by the

Holy Ghost here on earth; and my responsibility is to endeavor to keep that unity. But if you look around, you see Christ's members all scattered. What am I to do if I can't set the Church to rights? Begin at home—set myself to rights, and walk with Christ. People have endeavored to attach Christ to unity; it is the popular thing. Man makes unions, and attaches Christ's name to them, and consequently endorses all manner of self-will and wickedness; but if you want the "unity of the Spirit" you must attach it, as Scripture does, to Christ, and then it should have every blessed quality of Christ-holiness, and grace, and truth. You have not to make it. It is made. You have to keep it. It is constituted by the Holy Ghost on earth. Are you endeavoring to keep it, in "one body," with those who are in the path before you?

You know that verse in 2 Cor. 13, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all." Few know what it means, though it is used as a formulary. At Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down and constituted the Church, all three went together. Everybody knew then the grace of Christ; the love of God; and walked in the fellowship of the Spirit of God. Now, every converted person knows the grace of Christ; but all don't know and enjoy the love of God: many like to have Christ between them and God. You will find them fewer who know it than those who know the grace of Christ. Then, again, how very few indeed are walking in the fellowship of the Spirit of God. It is in this fellowship I am bound to walk. It is a plain pathway; one as clear as a sunbeam amidst the hundreds of sects of the professing Church, if I have a single eye! One that contemplates in its breadth the whole Church of God, even if they will not walk with me there.

Now we get (v. 8, &c.) diversity of gifts, which Christ gives as an ascended Lord to the Church. Now, let me ask you (v. 9, 10) what sort of a Christ you have? I have a Christ who was down in the lower parts of the earth. A Christ who has filled from the lowest parts of the earth up to the highest heavens—as a Man. There is not a spot that He has not filled. He is my life. He has not merely put away my sins, but is become my life.

This endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit keeps me in company with the Lord, by one Spirit, in one body. If I have to separate from others who will not walk in this path, I am "endeavoring" to do so even towards those, who will not walk with me. I am observing the unity of the Spirit towards them, though without them.

If we turn to Jeremiah's day, we find him as God's man in the ruin of everything, when Jerusalem was going to be given up to the Gentiles. His pathway there has an analogy to ours. If you want to find the divine clue in the labyrinth around you, it is as plain as a sunbeam to every single eye. Are you down here for God the scene around you? If so, God will be for you. He is always faithful to every faithful soul. Depend upon Him for it. God was for Daniel when Daniel was for God. He never forsakes the true soul.

Jeremiah stands in the close of his nation's history—for forty years his ministry had continued, and that ministry scarcely left a trace behind it in the dark day of Israel's apostasy. He began in the bright day of revival in Josiah's Passover, and he went a downward course—down into Egypt—until at last he pronounces the final words, "My name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah." (44:26). Christ's path was a downward one to the cross. Are you prepared for a downward course? Jeremiah had a heart for the work and a heart for the Lord. He weeps for them when they will not hear the word (13:17). That was a heart that could work for the Lord and not for an object clown here. If you are working for an object here, you'll break your heart. If you are working for Christ and His glory, you will never be disappointed. Oh! I want to press upon you to be for God down here—to be God's men and women in this scene; standing for God, so that He may find you in that posture, that we shall not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

See ch. 15:16-21. Jeremiah sits alone, for the Word of God had separated him. He finds God's word, and eats it—digests it, and he sits alone. Then the answer of God comes to him: You must "separate the precious from the vile." If you do, "you shall be as my mouth." "Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them." That is what people don't like. They would have the union of Christians, but that will not do for God. It must be in the unity of the Spirit, or it will not be gathering with Christ, but scattering. "I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall"—a citadel of strength for the heart that walks with God.

Now, if you turn to 2 Timothy you will find the same principle. You find that the beautiful thing that Paul had labored for was all gone to decay, and yet he could take up the second epistle of Timothy and show them a pathway through it all. "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me." They have given up that beautiful thing which I taught them, and in the very place where I taught it to them—at Ephesus. And it is a patent fact that the doctrine of the Church of God, as he taught it, was all practically lost when Paul left this scene.

Then the midnight cry came, and it found the whole church asleep—wise and foolish. Christ never gives more than one cry—at midnight. It is never repeated. And now we are in that peculiar place, when the midnight cry has gone forth. The wise virgins were very calm and quiet, trimming their lamps. The foolish virgins were all in confusion. Is there anything in your hearts and ways that you would not like Christ to find if He came within half an hour? That is the test. We are in that remarkable place after the cry has gone forth, in the confusion which followed that midnight cry.

Can you conceive anything more blessed than the grace of Christ, in restoring to us what has been buried in the dust of centuries—giving it all back again, when we had given it up. Giving back to us the doctrine of the church of God, when it had lain dormant for 1800 years.

Now Paul comes to what the believer is to do, (2 Tim. 2:19, &c.,) "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." It had not changed, though man had. Then we learn about the seal. One side of the seal marks my privilege, and the other my responsibility. In the professing church He sees every soul that belongs to Him however scattered. Now turn the other side of the seal. "Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." Whatever is false and untrue I must leave. Iniquity means what is not true—what is false—what is not the truth of God. Is it merely negative? No. You are separating yourself to the fellowship of the Spirit of God—to be for God and with God, in the unity of the Spirit. I must walk alone if there is no one else to walk with me. At first the church ought to have purged out all the vile; but instead of separating the vile from the precious, we have now to purge ourselves from the vessels to dishonor; to separate the precious from the vile.

He is likening Christendom to "a great house"—He does not call Christendom. "the great house," it is an analogy. It is always the "House of God," in its responsible place, because the Holy Ghost has not left it, even though wood, hay, and stubble have come in. I am to depart from what is false—anything dishonoring to Christ. I don't deny that the person is a vessel; but it is a question of the glory of Christ, and being

faithful to my brother. Am I to walk in his darkness, or try to lead him into the light? If I do this, I shall be prepared-furnished unto every good work (ch. 2: 21). "Prepared" by being separated from the falseness and confusion around. "Furnished" by the Word of God (ch. 3:17).

Verse 22. "Flee also youthful lusts." Here I get personal holiness. Then, "Follow righteousness, &c., with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart." Here I get my company. You never can get the thing put to rights again. Then you must set yourself to rights, and walk with those who are seeking to walk aright, and I am responsible to God to do so.

Is there anything more simple? You will find this path if you have a single eye; not the most simple Christian who need not be full of light. If you have a single eye you will soon know God's will. If you are doubting what the will of the Lord is, it shows that your eye is not single.

The Lord press His truth on your hearts, and give them to answer with alacrity to those blessed privileges of Christ's body, so that you may walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, and with lowliness and meekness endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Collected Writings, Unity of the Spirit, The: Preface (4:3)

The Unity of the Spirit is a sequel to the tract entitled There is One Body and One Spirit. Many souls have, more or less, apprehended the truth of "one body and one Spirit;" but have not yet grasped the force of the exhortation, which founds their practice on this fundamental truth.

It is hoped that, in the Lord's rich mercy, this may be helpful to souls. "I, therefore the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the uniting bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all (Eph. 4:1-6)."

Here we find that there are unities connected with the Spirit, with the Lord, and with God. I treat here of the unity of the Spirit, as being specially connected with the, object of this paper. The observing of this unity is our responsibility; the others fall into their own places accordingly.

I would remark the use of an expression, which is used often to convey a right thought, but which you do not find in Scripture, that is, "the unity of the body." "There is one body," the unity of which is constituted by the Holy Spirit Himself; and we are exhorted to endeavor to keep this "unity of the Spirit (not 'unity of the body) in the bond of peace." If we were exhorted to endeavor to keep the unity of the body, we would be obliged to walk with every member of Christ, no matter in what association he might be found, or whatever his practice might be — no evil whatever would give us a warrant to separate from him. The endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit necessarily keeps us in the company and association with a divine Person here upon earth. It is not unity of spirit¹, as has been put forward, but of "the Spirit" — the Holy Spirit.

Here I would note that which surely is so plain in the word as to make one almost ashamed of having to insist on it, that is, the personal presence of a divine Person — God, the Holy Spirit, here upon earth; not merely in each believer as an individual, but corporately, in the Church of God. The individual believer is indwelt by the Spirit of God — anointed, sealed (Rom. 8:9, &c.; 1 Corinthians 6; 1 Cor. 12:13; 2 Cor. 1:21,22; Eph. 1:13,14, &c.), baptized by the Holy Spirit into one body, with all other believers. The baptism of the Holy Spirit does not leave him an isolated person. Its action connects him with all other believers, as a body, and with Christ the Head of His body (1 Cor. 12:12,13).² The promise of the Lord as to the Comforter, was that he should not only be with them, but in them. The Lord was with them — the Holy Spirit in His absence, would be both with them, and in them, consequently the Holy Spirit at Pentecost not only "filled all the house," but He "sat upon each of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost," &c. (Acts 2:24). He not only filled each one, in Acts 4:31, at the gathering for prayer, but manifested His presence collectively in their midst, by shaking the place where they were assembled.

The saints are the body of Christ by one Spirit; but they are also the "habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). God dwells amongst them, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them," &c. (2 Cor. 6:16). We have almost come to the state of the men at Ephesus (Acts 19), in being obliged to insist on this truth, when they said, "We did not even hear if (the) Holy Spirit was (come)." (Lit.) Things daily arising make it necessary to do so.

If the Church of God was in a healthy state, there would be no difference practically in the expressions "unity of the body" and "unity of the Spirit." The Holy Spirit Himself dwelling in the Church constitutes its unity, and practically embraces all the members of the body. If the Church was walking in the Spirit, the healthy action of the whole would be unimpaired. Still the unity remains, because the Spirit remains, even when the oneness, and healthy practice of the body as a whole is gone. The unity of a human body remains when a limb is paralyzed — but where is its oneness? The limb has not ceased to be of the body, but it has ceased to be in the healthy articulation of the body. Hence many Christians, while members of the body of Christ, are not endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

How, then, is the unity of the Spirit to be observed? What is "endeavoring" to do so? What is faithfulness to the nature of the Church, Christ's body, in an evil day? It is Separation from Evil. My first duty must be to "depart from iniquity." It may be moral, or doctrinal evil; evil assuming many shapes; I separate myself from it, to Christ. Thus separated, I find myself in the fellowship of the Spirit of God. Associated with the Holy Spirit here upon earth. He glorifies Christ, and dissociates me from everything contrary to Christ; associating me with that which is according to Christ. Thus it ceases to be a question of Christ's members altogether, and becomes entirely a question of Christ, and of the Spirit of God, whom He glorifies. The notion that I may be wittingly associated with an evil principle, or doctrine, or practice, and undefiled, is an unholy notion. I may be perfectly free from it myself as not having imbibed it; but by practical association with it, I have left the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Thus separated into fellowship of the Holy Spirit — the Spirit of holiness and Spirit of truth, we find others who have done the same, and so we can be together happily in the fellowship of the Spirit of God. If there is a spot upon earth where the Lord can be, in unhindered blessing amongst His people, it is amongst those thus together, where there is nothing knowingly allowed inconsistent with His presence in the midst, or to grieve and hinder the Spirit of God. It is not a question merely of how the saints may be together, but of a place where the Lord Himself may be with them, in free and unhindered blessedness, to manifest His presence amongst those who seek to be faithful to Him in an evil day.

The primary step must be, “Let him that nameth the name of the Lord depart from iniquity” (2 Tim. 2:19). Members of Christ are mixed up with much evil on all sides. I must separate myself from such, to walk in the fellowship of, and with, the Spirit of God, who keeps me in company with Christ. To Philadelphia, Christ says, “He that is holy, he that is true” (Rev. 3). The Spirit of God is the Spirit of holiness and the Spirit of truth. Holiness will not do without the truth, or the truth without holiness. The absence of either is not the Spirit of God.

Now, in an evil day, when the faithful endeavor, through His grace, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, the practice of the fellowship and unity of the Spirit is necessarily a narrow platform, entirely apart from evil, and excluding evil from its midst, while, in the breadth of its principles, it contemplates the whole Church of God. Wide enough in principle to receive every member of Christ, all over the world; narrow enough to exclude evil most carefully from its midst. Anything short of this breadth is a sectarian principle, and ceases to be of the Holy Spirit; while the breadth of the principle contemplates every member of Christ. Those gathered thus in the unity and fellowship of the Spirit, necessarily are jealous, with godly jealousy, lest anything should be admitted, either of doctrine or practice, or witting association with such, that would put those who admitted it practically out of the fellowship of the Spirit.

[Before passing on with my subject, I would note that a person may be perfectly sound in doctrine, and holy in life and practice, and yet be a partaker of the evil deeds of another (2 John 9-11) who brings not the doctrine of Christ. The effort is made to graduate the amount of evil by remoteness of contact with it.³ Scripture makes but two degrees: either the person who brings not the doctrine of Christ, that is, personally unsound in the faith, or in other words, a heretic; and he who shows a courtesy to such. He who does so may remain himself sound in the faith, but is treated in Scripture as partaker of the evil deeds of the other. If he has imbibed the doctrine of the other, he ceases to be a partaker, and becomes a heretic himself. These are the two degrees. Evil is evil in Scripture, be the amount great or small; and good is good. It is either of the Spirit of God, or it is not of the Spirit of God.]

Now this “endeavor” does not confine itself to those only who have come together thus in separation from evil, and fellowship of the Holy Spirit. It is not observed merely one towards the other. Its aspect is towards, and has in view, every member of Christ, in whatsoever association he may be — even those not thus gathered in the fellowship of the Spirit. Those who are thus maintaining the truth, are by this showing their truest and most faithful love to those who are not practically with them. Abiding in the light, in uncompromising fidelity to Christ, and fellowship in the Spirit of God, is their truest love to their brethren. They do not compromise the light and truth of their position by leaving it for the darkness; but, if they have grace, they win their brethren into the light, to walk with them in the truth likewise.

A word here to my beloved brethren, who have been called and honored of God, to occupy such a place, in these last evil days. How deeply responsible are they that all their words and actions may so fully bear the test of the light and truth of God, that no occasion of stumbling be found in them, to hinder their brethren in any wise. Let there be such simple, blessed devotedness to Christ and His glory seen in them, that their brethren who are seeking God’s path in the labyrinth around, may be drawn towards the truth, and the place where Christ is with them so specially; and their feet guided in the path where He is, the place where He can freely be with His people. Let them be found in such a place in an evil day — and the character of their walk be simple and fervent devotedness to Christ; thoroughly dependent upon Him, as conscious of their weakness — thoroughly devoted to Him, and to that Church which He loves. I believe, if they were walking in the power and grace of the position they have been called to, that not alone their brethren, who ought to be with them, but the world itself would have to own, “If ought be true on earth, that is!” The counterfeits of the enemy, too, would expose themselves. Let them ever be prepared to make much of Christ and of the path into which He has called them in special association with Himself, in His unspeakable grace, so that He may say to them, “Thou hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name.” There would then be a savor and a power in the simple fact, that Christ was everything amongst them, that nothing could imitate?

Through the Lord’s great mercy, this endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace has been accorded to His saints, and many have had faith, in seeing the pathway, to embrace it. When such exists, the effort many have made to take a place outside, and independently of those who have been thus led of the Lord, is merely the self-will of man, and to be treated as such.

If the simplest saints, as has frequently been the case, have been drawn together in the Lord’s name — even without any intelligence of what the ground of one body, one Spirit, is — of necessity it binds them with all those elsewhere, who have been before them in the way, because subjects of like action of God’s Spirit, and who may have learned the more fully Divine ground of gathering. They may slip away very easily from it, and get linked up with evil, if not watchful; and the enemy works incessantly to this end. But it is utterly untenable to suppose that they can intelligently maintain a divine ground of gathering, and ignore what the same Spirit has wrought amongst others before them.

Scripture admits no such independency, more especially when it is coupled with the profession of the truth of one body and one Spirit, without the practice flowing from such a truth. To maintain an independent position, is to accept one which puts them practically out of the unity of the Spirit. Very probably such had come together at first in the energy of the Holy Spirit, in all simplicity, as gathering in the name of the Lord. By falling into such a course they slip away from the company and fellowship of God’s Spirit. They had begun in the Spirit, and have ended, or are on the way to it, in the flesh.

Walking in the fellowship and unity of the Spirit, involves distinct separation from all who are not in practice doing so likewise. This tries the saints much at times. The enemy uses it to alarm the weaker saints. The cry of want of charity is at once raised. But when it becomes a question of being in the fellowship of the Spirit of God, it ceases to be a question of brethren merely. If those who are otherwise holy in practice will not walk therein; and others have had light and grace to do so, it must involve separation on the part of the latter. To the flesh this is terrible. But human love must not be mistaken for divine love; and fellowship in the flesh, for the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will not bend Himself to our ways, or be in fellowship with us; we must bend our ways into practical fellowship with Him. Therefore Peter bids us to add “to brotherly kindness, love” (2 Peter 1:7). Brotherly kindness will sink into mere love of brethren, because we like their society, &c., if not guarded by the divine tie which preserves it as of God. God is love, and God is light; and, “if we walk in the light, as He is in

the light, we have fellowship one with another.” To exact brotherly love in such a manner as to shut out the requirements of that which God is (as light and as love) (and He dwells in the church by His Spirit), and of His claims upon us, is to shut out God in the most plausible way, in order to gratify our own hearts.

I beseech my brethren, as they value and love the Blessed One, who gave Himself for His Church, to pause ere accepting a position which must practically put them outside the unity of God’s Spirit. The Lord Jesus gave Himself to redeem you; and not only so, but He died, “that he might gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad” (John 11:52). It ought to be on our hearts all day long, that that is scattered which Christ died to gather. He will surely gather them in heaven; but He died to gather them together in one, now. It can be but in keeping the unity of the Spirit of God; and if not thus, it is not what He died to effect. If it is not gathering with Christ, it is scattering, however plausible and well it may look in the eyes of men. God is working graciously in many places; and the enemy is working too, to try and mystify souls just emerging out of darkness, and link them up with the principles of neutrality, indifference, and independency; anything but the truth.

God has, in His mercy to His Church, gathered many saints together in the truth and unity of the Spirit, to the name of the Lord.⁴ They have, through much deep mercy, and failings and shortcomings innumerable, been maintained in it. A merciful Lord has sustained them in the pathway, through evil report and good report. To accept ground independently of that to which God had already by these truths recalled souls to walk in and act upon, is to forfeit the place in the truth and unity of the Spirit which has been accorded of the Lord, and to slip away from the fellowship of the Spirit of God.

The saints may be assured of this, that they will find, on the one hand, that there is no barrier placed by those who occupy this place which God has graciously given, to their walking in the truth; they will find, on the other, there is nothing that can be a bar to their being with them. The platform is as wide as the Spirit of God — wide enough for them all in principle. But it cannot admit of that which would exclude the free action of the Holy Spirit in the truth. They will find it to be a place, however feeble and little they are, that He owns and blesses. Sustaining His feeble ones in it, in richest mercy, and according to them the divine consciousness that it is His pathway in an evil day.

In conclusion, I add a word as to the reception of our brethren amongst us. The simple and blessed title to be with us at the Lord’s Table is, The confession of, and membership of Christ, with holiness of walk. There is no other — no inner circle. The intelligence of those received, while good in its place, has nothing whatever to do with their reception. Those that receive should be intelligent in what they are doing. The moment they look for intelligence in those who seek communion, it is they who cease to be intelligent. But there is a distinction to be observed in dealing with those who have had to do with evil associations, in jealous care for the Lord’s name; those who are wittingly associated with evil, and those unwittingly linked up with it. We read “of some have compassion, making a difference, and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 22,23). Then again, there is surely a wide difference between those who have been mixed up with an ecclesiastical mistake (as the Established systems,⁵ &c.), and those who have been associated with what assumes a divine position, as of God; and have been false to it. Each has to be treated as he deserves.

The basis and principle of the unity of the Spirit, thus contemplated, embrace the whole Church of God. The fact of those who have been mixed up with evil, or worldly systems, seeking fellowship, shows that they are separating themselves to the Lord. This should meet with a ready response. The more deeply we become conscious of the divine character of the place we have been called into by the Lord’s grace, the more ready will be the response of our heart towards all Christ’s members. At the same time, we will grow in the strength and conviction of the holiness that belongs to God’s habitation through the Spirit; and, by His grace, we will watch against the wiles of the enemy in seeking to let in that which would grieve the Spirit of God, and hinder the Lord in identifying Himself with us, and manifesting His presence in our midst.

The Lord in His mercy keeps His faithful ones true and devoted to Him in these evil days. They may be but a remnant; but there were two things which ever marked the faithful remnant at any time,

1st, Devotedness to the Lord;

2nd, Strict attention to fundamental principles. We find, too, that they were ever the objects of His special attention and care. Their very feebleness drew this forth the more strikingly. It was with them He identified Himself most specially. They have but a “little strength” — but through His mercy they have used it; and it has brought them into the spot where He is. The Lord give them to keep His word, and not deny His name — to hold fast that which they have, that no man take their crown. Amen.

Collected Writings, There Is One Body and One Spirit: 1. There Is One Body and One Spirit (4:4)

I trust the following remarks on the momentous subject at the head of this paper, may be found useful at the present time, and that an ever gracious Lord may vouchsafe His blessing on the perusal of them to many of His people, and open up to their minds this most important of all truths, and enable them to seize it in some measure from this outline, and link their souls practically to the divine principles set forth therein.

The Lord has been most graciously working in many places around in these last days. Souls have been new-born to Him, and brought into the liberty of His grace in a moment, so to speak, through the Gospel. Souls thus set free from the bondage of sin and Satan have also found their freedom from the trammels of the sects and parties in the professing church. They have, in many cases, begun to act upon their privileges, and as the disciples of old (Acts 20:7), have assembled themselves to break bread, and thus show forth the groundwork of their redemption and liberty, in that which calls to mind the Lord in His death. Difficulties have arisen, and many have found that they still wanted a divine principle beyond this to guide them, and yet, possibly, feared to go deeper into these things, lest they should be led into something which, perhaps, they have been warned about, and perhaps have learned to fear. The confusion in which things are, and the sad failures of ourselves and of our brethren, have often been the means of driving timid souls away, and they have shrunk from inquiring more deeply into the divine principles, seeing the failures and hearing the recriminations of others.

In such a state of things, the enemy, as ever, seeks to keep the soul from learning the leading truth of God. Satan's successful effort at the first was to seek to blot out in practice, if he could not blot out in fact, the great ever-living truth named at the head of this paper. The vessel, Paul, who communicated it to us through his inspired epistles, had to say at the close of his ministry, "All they which are in Asia be turned away from me" (2 Tim. 1:15). Ephesus was the capital of that proconsular province, and was the place where was an assembly of God, to which those high truths of the "mystery which was hidden from ages and generations, but is now revealed," were written (Epistle to Ephesians); and in the close of the course of one who was walking in the power of his own doctrine, he has to say that all in Asia had turned away from him. God has been pleased of His own sovereign grace to revive out of the rubbish of centuries this wondrous truth, which has lain so long dormant. Many have learned it, and have sought in their weakness to walk therein. They have, in much weakness, and through evil report and good report, and failings innumerable, sought, in reliance upon a gracious God, to glorify Christ in the pathway of obedience to His revealed will, and the counsels, and purposes, and workings of God.

The enemy tries to keep the Lord's people from learning this, His leading truth of the interval or period in which we live. What then I desire is, that the eyes of my brethrens understanding be enlightened by the Spirits teaching to discover what they really are before God, members of the one body of Christ, by one Spirit, and that they may act accordingly.

It is quite impossible that, as a Christian, I can be an individual merely, in the present time. I am a member of the body of Christ as well. And while seeking, as an individual servant, to serve my Lord, I find I have besides, in common with the rest of the body, a corporate responsibility to Christ, the Head of His body, the Church. I seek not then, to evade this responsibility by looking at the failures of others, or to try and use the truth of the Lord'ship of Christ over me as a servant, to evade my corporate responsibility to Christ, the Head of His body.

The Epistle to the Romans is that in which the Spirit of God treats us and looks at us with the most distinct individuality — as sinners, and as justified persons. And yet when He comes to the duties and walk which flow from our individual blessing and position, He at once turns us to our corporate responsibility, so that we cannot dissociate these things. No one could read the 12th chapter of Romans without discovering this. As an individual I am exhorted to present my body a living sacrifice — my reasonable service — to be transformed by the renewing of my mind, &c. Then, as to my corporate place, in the exercise of gift, or otherwise, I am to exercise it with respect to the body. "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts," &c.

I desire that my brethren may simply discover what they are, own the truth, and carry it out practically, walking therein with those whom the Lord has called and privileged to do likewise. Of this I am persuaded, that no one ever learned a truth after a divine manner till the soul was using practically what it had learned. It has then had its true power; so that to talk, as many do, of the body of Christ, &c., and never to have really acted upon this truth, is, depend upon it, but to prove that the truth has not been received into the conscience and soul, while, no doubt, there has been enough seen of it to guide the steps thereinto. With this desire I pass on to my subject.

Words of Truth: Volume N3, Paul's Prayer to the Father (3:14-21)

In speaking of the Apostle's prayer in the end of Ephesians 3, it would be well to explain a little the earlier part of the epistle, as it is important, and will help to explain the prayer. You find in the end of chap. 2 certain great principles that bring out very clearly and distinctly what the Church of God is. The apostle shows that on the ground of Christ's death on the cross, and redemption thus accomplished, the result of the church being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus which Himself the chief corner stone. In chapter 3, the same persons are spoken of as the apostles and prophets of the New Testament. You get them again in chap. 4:11, "He gave some apostles and some prophets." They who formed the foundation of the Church are of the New Testament, and have nothing to do with the Old Testament at all. The apostle is not trying to make a beautiful picture, or to write what will sound well; but we get here in a distinct thing as putting them in contrast with those of the Old Testament. "That which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."

In the end of the preceding chapter the fact is brought out that it was perfectly impossible that the church could be made known previous to the cross even as a historical fact; it could not be until the middle wall of partition had been broken down. "Now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ, for he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace, and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." That is, in order to have this unity between Jew and Gentile in one body—national distinctions being lost; and that they should be "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God." The first principle of Judaism had to be set aside by breaking down the middle wall of enclosure which surrounded the Jew. The essence of Judaism was keeping up the wall. A Jew must not eat with a Gentile; he was not circumcised, so could not eat the Passover (Ex. 12:43-48). If there had been any revelation of the church at all previous to the cross, Judaism was over. It was not merely because of the prejudices of the Jew which we find so strong; that they were specially bound to keep up the middle wall of partition. But the church was formed on breaking it down, and could have no existence till the cross did break it down, and the Jews had lost all title to being the exclusive people of God. Now, all who believe are in Christ Jesus, and could not be out of him. Until then there was no possibility of the existence of the church.

In the first chapter we are taught that we are united to Christ—the head of His body. He, as a man, was set on high far above all principality and power and might. We are united to Him by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven and dwelling in our bodies. That which had been "hid in God," His "eternal purpose," is now revealed, and "by means of the church" is made known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places "the manifold wisdom of God." There had been wisdom in creation, in providence, in the law, and the government of God dealing with Israel; in incarnation, in atonement. But here is a new kind of wisdom, which is unfolded as the "eternal purpose of God" (c. us. 9-11).

There are two names God takes with regard to believers now. "God" and "Father." The special name given to us as Christians is Father. "Holy Father keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me; that they may be one as we are." The Son of God having been

revealed and accomplished His work, has brought us into the place of sons. We are brought to God in two characters—to God as such; as a holy, blessed, and eternal being; but also to Him as Father. We have got the place of relationship as sons. Christ, as man, has taken this place, not of course as affecting His divinity in any wise. There is no truth more at the root of the New Testament than the divinity of the Lord. We find this in John 20:17: The Lord says to Mary, “Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God and your God.” He does not call them servants, or friends; but He puts them into the place of sons, and calls them brethren. I have accomplished redemption, and now, if He is my Father, He is yours; if He is my God, He is yours.

The prayer in the first chapter of this Epistle is founded on the name “God.” “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,” &c. In this chapter it is founded on the name of “Father.” “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” He desires, in chapter 1, that we should, as Christians, know the hope of God’s calling, and the power that puts us in present possession of what it confers. The same power that raised Christ raised us; that we find in the first and second chapters. Here, when we come to “Father” we find “every family,” *πᾶσα πατριὰ*, in contrast with “Jehovah,” in whom there was only one family. “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amos in. 2). When I get the name of Father, every family comes out. Angels, principalities, saints, Jews, Gentiles. Angels, that God can retain in a sinless state before Him, but in all brought to Him in a special manner. We all know He did not become an angel, but a man. It is beautiful to see angels celebrate His blessedness—His good pleasure in man. Creation is not such as He can take a place in: redemption is. It is a brighter and fuller thing. There is nothing like the Son of God dying and making atonement. Glory itself is not such a thing; through that atonement we shall be in the glory with Christ; who could have been there but for this! There is more divine glory in that than there ever could be anywhere else. As the fruit of the travail of His soul, we get this blessed nearness to Christ as His own flesh. “No man ever hated his own flesh, but nourished and cherished it as Christ the Church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” Look at it personally or individually; look at Him as the Head of the body; what way you will; it is wonderful the way in which we are associated with Christ.

The apostle now prays that we may have the realization of this. It is true we are united to Christ by the Holy Ghost:— “If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his” (Rom. 8:9); but I want you to be “strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man.” I want you to be as you ought to be: not only that they should know what they had got, but that they may walk in the power of the place they have been brought into.” “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith.” That they should realize Christ being in them, not merely as their life—that was true as a fact—but that such should be the working of the Spirit of God that they should be strengthened by knowing Christ as dwelling in their hearts by faith. That they should realize His presence. They were Christians, but he looks for this. Their bodies were the temples of the Holy Ghost—that was true; but they should have the present apprehension that Christ was dwelling in their hearts. Instead of letting the heart wander after vanity, to have it filled with Christ. It is this we are called to, and we should thus realize the presence of Jesus in our souls. “Our conversation” should be “in heaven.” We should live in the realization of those things revealed to us by the Spirit of God. “That being rooted and grounded in love,” we may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height”—he does not say of what. He takes in “all saints.” I cannot comprehend the thoughts and purposes of God without my heart taking in, after Christ Himself, “all saints.” He looks out to the breadth and length and depth and height, and is lost in the consideration of all these purposes of God in which He will unfold His glory. No one can comprehend it fully. How He brings the heart back to a center where it feels at home, for we find Christ there. He is the center for our hearts, and His well-known love— “and to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge.” I know it already. The Christ who dwells in my heart—that I have known in lowliness; the meekest and lowliest Man that ever dwelt on earth; the One who was the meekest and the most accessible of men; He who visited my heart, who entered into every sorrow—He is the center of all the glory. The glory is dazzling in its length and breadth, and depth and height; but he adds, “To know the love of Christ.” I know it, and I find that with which I am at home when I get there. It is the very extent and fullness of Divine glory, yet I am at home with it, and it dwells in me. Oh! it is a wonderful thought, “that ye might be filled unto all the fullness of God.” Christ dwells in God, and God in us. The meekest Man, with whom I am more intimate than with any other in the world, is God Himself. It is eternal blessing—it passeth knowledge!

Now, mark how he is looking for the working of grace as a present thing in us—not merely the privileges that are ours:— “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think” —that is the way it is commonly quoted. People say, in His ways and dealings, God is able to do more than we can ask or think; but, if you finish the verse, you see it is “above all we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,” not for us. He is able to do above all we do ask or think. The apostle is looking for the realization of a power that does work in us, though we are poor earthen vessels. There should be this constancy of power. I read in Acts 7 that Stephen, “being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven.” There was constancy. Do you find this? How little we can realize what is heavenly in prayer for ten minutes. How little we know of being filled with the Holy Ghost. It is not that I doubt He dwells in you; but there ought to be “might by his Spirit in the inner man,” enabling us to look up steadfastly. Have you got this steadfastness? You will find even when sincere, and your conversation in heaven, how little your hearts are able to realize what these purposes and counsels of God are. “The love of Christ passeth knowledge;” but he prays that we may know it. “Unto him be glory in the church throughout all ages.” The church never loses its place even in the eternal ages, and he looks for power that we should glorify Him now.

What an encouragement, but at the same time, how humbling. I find my wretched thoughts warring against the mind of the Spirit. The tendency of the flesh is to draw me back; it is perfectly capable of not liking to give up self. St. Augustine hoped God would not answer his prayers at once. But what an encouragement if we ask in truth, He “is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think.” Here I find a worldly temptation. I feel fear and feebleness, but God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that ask or think according to the power that works in us. If He is able, where is the fruit of it? Where is the victory over every temptation in you and around you? Where is the proof to the world that Jesus is all to you? You say that there is a power that works in you; where is the truth of it? How is it not “to me to live is Christ?” It is the greatest of encouragement, but deeply humbling. His grace is above all our wretchedness and feebleness; we are those whom He has called, nourished, and cherished. The Lord give us to pray in earnest with the apostles, that we may know Him who has loved us, and gave Himself up for us. Surely we owe it to Christ, if our hearts dwell on His sufferings, and the cup that He drank, and how blessedly He put Himself forward— “Let these go their way.”

The Lord give us to be diligent of heart, that there may be something of that steadfastness of looking unto Jesus in us. That we may be exercised to know the faithfulness of God, and the place He has given us who are the fruit of Christ’s work. It was mine before the world was; it is mine out of the world; and it will be mine when this world has passed away! The Lord give us to have our hearts filled with Him, by the power of the Spirit of God. Amen.

It is blessed to see how the Apostle felt as to the delight of the Lord in these saints, "What a blessed sense it is that a living God continually Thinks of us to bless us, and that there is no thought of His that does not belong to us. "All things are for your sakes." How Paul's spirit lived with God How he felt the way in which the thoughts of God were set upon these saints, and were to be so dwelt on by them, that God might have a return in thanksgiving. We thus find, that not only redemption has given us a place before God, but that He is always thinking of us. What a place that puts us in! How it makes us feel our own nothingness! It is the only thing that does make us feel it completely; but still, when we apprehend that God has these thoughts about us, it lifts us up into that confidence which is spiritual strength. This consciousness links our hearts with God. Do we really believe that? Surely we must feel how unworthy we are of it; but "All things are yours:" we are "Heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

The Apostle is desiring that they may enter consciously upon blessing (v. 16). "That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory," &c. He does not descend below His own glory in leading us into blessing. Here we are brought into the mind and thoughts of God to enjoy them, not only to His eternal counsels but to His present thoughts. And here the Apostle speaks of Christ as the Son, looking for blessing in the saints. In his prayer in the first chapter he says, "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ," and wishes that they may know the hope of His calling. Here He looks for fellowship, and so it is Father, and prays that we may not only know, but that we may be strengthened with might by His Spirit, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith. He looks for the soul to be brought into the present enjoyment of communion with the Father.

He takes the "riches of the glory" as the measure of what we are to enjoy. This is not like the first chapter. Being brought into the holiest, brought to God, the spring and source of all these thoughts, we ought to have the present enjoyment of it all. He would have us enjoy that into which He has brought us Himself. It is not merely life here, but strength in the inner man. Are our hearts looking for divine strength to be able to endure? It is not merely feeling, but a practical realization by faith of the enjoyment of these thoughts, so that our hearts may be living there. We are not there yet. The Father and Son both dwell in us here. Until we get to our abode, if we are walking in His path, His words, He will dwell in us. Do not be merely contented with saying, "I am inside the door." There is not a thought in the heart of God that is not for you. Well, we can understand how much we need to be strengthened with might by His Spirit to be able to enjoy it. He puts the two words together, "riches" and "glory," and, according to that, you are to be strengthened.

"Rooted and grounded in love." There the soul is settled; and if I look up to God I have this thought. Now I am the object of His love. The heart is brought into the consciousness of it. There is no vacillation here; the winds do not shake it, they only make it grow. That is the atmosphere it lives in, and by the love of the Father. This gives intelligence. You might not think it; but what gives real divine intelligence is being rooted and grounded in love.

The first "family" is the saints. When Christ dwells in my heart, I have His interests and thoughts as the result. What does He think of 'His people. So do I. It gives us a longing desire in our hearts after His people. That is the first circle of divine affections in us. If I have Christ as the center in me, everything is a part of His glory; but first come the brethren.

"The breadth, and lengths, and depth, and height." He does not say what it is, but it is all God's glory. When I get to that it throws me into what dazzles me, so wide, so great, so vast is it; therefore, supposing I could see it all, it would dazzle me, so He brings us back to what is known—the love of Christ. There, in the middle of the glory, I find myself at home. I find I am the nearest friend to the center of it all. Yet it is not a small thing this to which I get back, and which I am at home with—"it passes knowledge." In this very Person the fullness of the Godhead is, and therefore we are filled into all the fullness of God. The wideness of the glory is nothing like the God that is in the midst of it. The first thing is Christ dwelling in my heart by faith, and He being there I can then find all the saints in my heart as the immediate objects of His love. Then I find myself in the midst of all the divine glory, but I am at home in it, because Christ is there.

Mark the wonderful way in which He connects us with His glory. His thoughts first, and then He brings our thoughts into unison with His. We constantly use this verse with regard to prayer. It is all true. But that is not what He looks at here—it is the power in us, not for us. I am looking to God, who is able to do above all we ask or think. I may say I am not up to comprehend all this breadth, and length, and depth, and height. Yes; but this power works in us. The measure of strength is the measure of the glory. Supposing this power worked in us in this wonderful way, His glory would be manifested in us. We cannot bring out God's glory in the church unless we are strengthened in God's thought about us. There is no veil upon them at all, His glory shines into our hearts. Then comes the question, 'How far we realize this?' The Apostle does not ask for knowledge here, but for strength, that the center of all this may dwell in our hearts. It is that love of Christ that makes it all simple to us—it is the positive realization of this blessedness. Do we realize how much God makes us the object of His thoughts? How His heart is set on us? If we thought more of it our hearts would be more set on Him, and looking to Him in everything we do. It would flow out naturally, it would not be an effort. If we were full of Christ, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth would speak.

The Lord give us to count on His love, which is perfect and infinite, and proved in the gift of His Son.

Words of Truth: Volume 7, Communion of the Heart With God (3:13-21)

We have looked at the difference between intercourse with the glory of God, and communion of the soul with God Himself. Communion with God surpasses everything else.

We saw in chap. 1, many things displayed by God, and the recording of them brings before our souls things really glorious. What a glorious thing that Saul the persecutor was made a partaker of the call of the Father of glory! What a glorious thing that such an one as I should know

what the hope of that calling is for my own soul! God might have called us, and yet never have revealed what was in His mind about that call; but He has abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence in making known to us the mystery of His will. I can turn to many scriptures and show you plainly what the hope of His calling is. Again, He has revealed to us the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. As He inherited the promised land, and called it His land, and never gave up His claims, so as to us the heavens are to be filled with His glory. We are to be His inheritance in which He will display the riches of His glory. Again, He makes known the exceeding greatness of His power. He displays it in Christ as man in raising Him from the dead, and in setting Him far above all principality and power; and this power is displayed in us too. This is something come out from God—which human nature cannot lay hold of. It knows nothing of being crucified, dead, buried, quickened, raised up, seated in heavenly places in Christ. This it cannot understand. It is beyond the region of man's thoughts—not contrary to nature or reason, but beyond them. It knows nothing of this. It cannot understand that I am identically one with Christ. But God has said so, and faith receives it. When the soul is quickened, it says, I am the very opposite of Christ in everything. Light has shone in, and revealed the contrast; but the light also discovers that I am reckoned by God, crucified, dead, and buried with Christ. There is a connection directly, there is faith in the soul between the death of Christ eighteen hundred years ago and the believer, so that God can say of a Saul of Tarsus, and of sinners like ourselves—dead, buried, raised up, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ. The call has come down to where I am. The glory of the inheritance cheers me in the wilderness. The Man Christ Jesus is found where a Saul was found, dead, and so we are quickened together with Christ.

Now, the second prayer is not concerning things to come forth from God. The prayer turns upon communion. The eye of Paul is up above, not looking at certain things, however glorious, but at the source and fountain whence those glories flow. It is communion with God Himself. The eye fixed upon Christ in heaven, so that He dwells in the heart. The soul rooted and grounded in love, so that it knows the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. The soul is up above, and it is not certain glories, but an object that meets the mind. The Person of Christ is before the eye, with all the display of the Father's love in Him there; and the saint down here tasting His love, being in communion with this love of Christ.

Now, I cannot compare anything with the love of Christ. It is beyond all other blessings. In fact, I have no blessing at all, without I know His love. I am not speaking of our love to Him, though I would to God there was more of it in our hearts. But what a blessed thing to be able to look up into heaven, and to say to the Lord Jesus, "Lord, I am indeed a poor, cold thing. I am ashamed of my want of love, my leanness, my slowness of heart in learning Thy love; but, nevertheless, Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that Thou lovest me." What would I like to put in comparison with Christ's love? There is nothing like it. There is nothing so sweet as being able to say to one's soul, "I am loved in heaven;" and this love of Christ not known by a certain description of those He loves, but Christ loves me individually. I know it; and unless we know the love of Christ, we cannot say, it passeth knowledge. If you do not know His love—if it has not been made good to your soul by the Holy Ghost—you cannot say it passeth knowledge. If our hearts are in heaven, we shall know the wellings of this fountain of the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. We shall know it perfectly when we are with Him. It will not be any effort then, but now I have to give the lie to sense in learning the love of Christ. We shall see the glory then. Our eye will take in the display of the riches of the inheritance then. But will there be no expression of this love to us then? Oh yes. The love of Christ will be known personally there. The glory will not occupy us like the love.

Now, looking on to the end of verse 19, we shall see the result of knowing this love of Christ, "that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." This is a thought of communion. It is not fullness of glory, but the fullness of God in the soul.

Christians have often very imperfect thoughts of communion. Their intercourse with God consists often in telling Him their troubles, their needs, their desires. It is all one-sided. All is from themselves. They wait not to receive the fullness of God too. But receiving is more our place than giving. As an instance, there was a clergyman, who was in a low, desponding state, telling out to God all his complaints, and more than once his servant remarked, "Master, had you not better say something of Christ now." It is when we are receiving God's thoughts about His fullness, that we can say, in any sense, we are filled with the fullness of God. In the glory there will be no room for self. We shall be filled with God alone. God will be all in all. Filled unto (as it should be rendered) all the fullness of God. A little vessel filled unto the vast ocean, so that there is within and without the fullness of God. We are poor, leaky vessels; but if we are always in the sea, we shall always be filled unto all the fullness.

I often think what a wondrous thing it is, that I can tell God about the glories and beauties of the Son of His love. Who am I to speak to Him of such an One as His Son? I who was a poor, vile sinner—the chief of sinners! Ah! the answer is—But a son now, beloved now. It is the grace of God which places us before Him in communion. He would have us occupied with the love of Christ; having fellowship with Him in the thoughts He has about the Son of His love. How little are Christians occupied with Christ in glory! How little there is of the groaning of the Spirit in us after this glory! There is plenty of the realization of the sorrows of the wilderness, the groanings of the creation, the trials of the way; but how little groaning after the glory, which should fill our souls with unutterable longings after it! Surely we are leaky vessels, letting this love of Christ slip out of our hearts!

This is the eternal fullness of the blessing with which we are inseparably connected. Is that passing through my soul, "Well, God has to do with me"? I do not think God's people enter into this, or think sufficiently of it. God has taken me up; and within and without I am filled into all the fullness of God. It is nothing mystical to be filled unto all the fullness of God. It is simple if I realize who the Christ of God is, whose love I know. Surely it is the fullness of God. It is not a mystical thought if I know His loving heart, and who He is, and the taste of His love in my soul. I can say, Lord, I know Thy love, and I count it to be the fullness of God.

In verse 20, we get into entirely another world. Oh, you say, I must stop here. If ever I get to know this love of Christ, and to be filled into all the fullness of God, I shall have all I want. But Paul could not stop, the Spirit led him to say in this verse, I cannot in any way express the thoughts of God about you. Nothing that could be asked or thought, could measure the love of Christ. Christ Himself, when on earth, did not find human language nearly large enough. On the Cross He said, "Why hast thou forsaken me?" but language left untold all that that forsaking was to Him.

The Queen of Sheba found her heart faint within her at the display of Solomon's glory. And when the Holy Ghost brings any part of the love of Christ to our souls, we find a freshness and power which makes us feel as if we had never known it thus before. Paul could not—when writing by the inspiration of God—at all express the Father's love for you, or the love of the Son, or the Spirit's desires for you. Can you express God's

desires to bless you? Christians think of their desires for blessing, but forget God's desires for them. After all you ask or think, God is able to do exceedingly abundantly beyond it all. But we are not lost in this immensity, for as Paul adds, it is "according to the power that worketh in us." We have tasted that which we know not how to express. The power which is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, worketh in us. I can say to such an one as Paul, though I am less than the least of all saints, the same power works in me as in you. The honorable member and the least honorable have the same power working in them. The result of all these blessings is praise. It ends in worship. "Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages."

It is not praising God, because of the suitability of Christ to me; but praising God because of what Jesus Christ is to Him. The Father's thoughts about His Son revealed to the church are the theme of her worship. Neither is the worship individual. It is family enjoyment. "By the church" the praises are offered.

Thus have we communion with God. Having the divine nature, we have tasted the love of His own beloved Son, and we can say, "To Him be glory in the church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."

Words of Truth: Volume 7, Communion of the Heart With God (3:14-21)

If we turn to the first chapter, we shall find that Paul's prayer there rolls on a different name from this. There it is not the "Father," but the "God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory and it is not the moral character of God Himself that we find there, but certain wondrous things come forth from God. The hope of His calling is the first; the marvelous future of the saint, called by the Father of glory to be in that glory, which He gives as the "God of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Then there is "His inheritance in the saints." As of old, He is not going to give up His land. He commands that it should never be sold, for it is His inheritance; so He, the Father of glory, will not give up His inheritance in the saints.

The third thing in the Apostle's prayer is, that we may know the exceeding greatness of His power, which He put forth, as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, in raising Him from the dead, as the Head of a body, composed of poor sinners, and then setting Him, and us in Him, "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."

But all these glorious things, while they come forth from God—for it is His calling, His inheritance, the exceeding greatness of His power—are not a display of God Himself.

The prayer in our chapter is concerning intimacy with Himself, as the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is communion; not thoughts of glory, but present communion with the love of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Then I am carried along, like a little vessel in a mighty stream, by the mighty power in my soul of the love of Christ.

Is Christ dwelling in your hearts by faith? If you look at verse 17, it does not speak of the Spirit of Christ dwelling in your hearts, or whether, as saints, your bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. These are true of all believers. It would be unbelief to ask for the Spirit of Christ, or that my body might become the temple of the Holy Ghost; but Christ dwelling in the heart is the practical experience of a Christian in a close walk with God. I ask then, does Christ thus dwell in your hearts? You may be in great trouble and trial, just as a poor afflicted saint on a sick bed might be deeply tried by circumstances, and I might go and ask about those circumstances. I might say—Well, what about your daily bread? Is the Lord supplying your need? And if the heart were full of Christ, the answer would be—Oh, do not talk about my troubles; talk about Christ. If Christ were dwelling in the heart, He would be the first thing to come forth from the soul.

Another Christian, who might talk of having the Spirit of Christ, and his body being the temple of the Holy Ghost, when I came to hear a little of the workings of the inner life, I might hear of nothing but worldliness, because Christ was not dwelling in the heart by faith. Is your soul so undimmed, is the new nature so free and bright, so kept turned up to heaven, that Christ in heaven is seen reflected in your heart? Now, if we are honest with ourselves, what answer can we give to this dwelling of Christ by faith in the heart?

I am sure, for myself I can say, I desire earnestly and continually to bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ that He would grant this unto me; and unless you can say, Christ does indeed dwell in my heart, I would say, I desire earnestly to bow my knees for you also, that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ would grant this to you.

In verse 16 we see the way that Christ dwells in the heart. It is by the mighty operation of the Spirit, strengthening the new nature in which He dwells, and the heart is lifted up to the Father to grant this operation of the Spirit in us.

It is very blessed to dwell on those words, "According to the riches of His glory;" it brings before the soul all the Father's delight in our Lord Jesus Christ. What are the riches of the glory of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? In that name I have a volume which contains the whole display of the moral glory of God, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. What a plea then to use, in asking for Christ to dwell in our hearts! Cannot I say to Him—Art Thou not the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ? Art not Thou the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? Is it not Thy will that we should be Christ-bearers through the world—that Christ should dwell in our hearts! He is our Lord Jesus Christ, and is it not pleasing, is it not according to the riches of the glory of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that this Son of His love should dwell in the hearts of all His children Surely, there is something in this plea that just suits us in all our need. Cannot I say, I am sure He would have me full of this love of Christ? I am sure it is according to the riches of His glory that Christ should dwell in my heart? I am sure that He, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, will hear such a prayer, and will give the answer according to the display of that glory.

In the end of verse 17 practical hindrances are removed by our being rooted and grounded in love. Till we are thus appropriating all the love ourselves, we shall be quite unable to comprehend with all saints, the breadth, depth, length, and height, or to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. Take, then, first, the soundings of this love of God for your own soul, and see how far it is appropriated by you.

If we are thus rooted and grounded in love, we can meet every obstacle, and Satan himself, who will take good care not to let us go on without trying to shake our confidence in this love, he will say—Ah! what a poor, pitiful thing you are to talk of being rooted and grounded in this love. Yes, Satan, I am a poor, pitiful thing indeed; but the very pitifulness of my case shows forth the purity of the love of God to one like me.

Then this love will be tested by Christians. We shall find much in them which does not at all respond to it, much to lead us naturally to grow cold towards them; but if rooted and grounded in the love of God, we shall not look at them in their inconsistencies, or in their rewarding one, as they did Paul, who said, the more abundantly he loved, the less he was loved. We shall only look at them as children of the Father, and according to the delight He has towards them as the Father of their Lord Jesus Christ. Then, as regards the world, we must expect from it hatred for our love. We must look for nothing but unthankfulness from that which knows not God, but, if we are rooted and grounded in love we shall not think of what it returns, but of the exceeding sweetness of our being the beams of God's compassion to it.

If you would walk as one rooted and grounded in this love, you must draw it fresh from God every morning. You cannot store it up. It must be fresh. Live, then, in constant communion with the God of love, not fretting yourself either because of your own evil, or because of evil doers; for when a soul frets itself about anything whatever, it is not in communion with God.

Verse 18 has often suggested the question concerning the breadth, length, depth, and height. The question has been asked—Of what? Some have answered, of the love of Christ, but this is not said, and we have the love of Christ as a distinct thing in the next verse. This question—Breadth, length, depth, height—of what? reveals the condition of the soul of the enquirer. Suppose I ask—Of what? You could fairly reply by asking—Are you there? Are you really conning the mystery of which this chapter speaks—of the Son of God filling all things as the Head of a body—God manifest in the flesh—of the mystery of a Christ in glory displaying the manifold wisdom of God—of the Christ of God descending into the lower parts of the earth, and then ascending up, far above all heavens, that He might fill all things; and you are asking—The depth and height of what? Surely, in fairness, it may be replied—If you ask such a question, is your soul really in communion with this wondrous revelation of the mystery which once was hidden from ages and generations, but now is no mystery at all, God having revealed it by His Spirit? Now, if my mind is occupied therewith, I shall see breadth, length, depth, and height in every direction.

Take the simplest question, the putting away of sin. David measured God's mercy and the putting away of sin by the distance of the heavens from the earth, of the east from the west. Is that all? Oh, then it is a very little way! I can look down to that depth when the Christ of God bore my sins and cried,—“My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” and then I can look up to that throne of glory and see the Christ of God set far above all principality; and power, and might, and dominion, and I can say—So great is His mercy, and so far hath He removed our transgressions from us. Again, a Jew would say—“He hath cast all my sins behind His back.” I can say—So far from casting them behind His back, they were all brought to the light when He bore our sins in His own body on the tree, and now, in the light of the glory of God, the Lord of glory bears in His person the marks of their having been forever put away—so complete is the triumph of God over the guilt which was upon me.

But, besides this scanning of the length, breadth, depth, and height, there is the knowledge of the love of Christ. It is precious to know the compassion of Christ to a poor sinner, and when we get on a little further, His loving sympathy for us as our High Priest; but the love of Christ mentioned here is in connection with the Father's name. It is the love of Christ to the Father's children. He loves them because He sees His Father's name upon them—because they are His Father's choice and His Father's gift. Do I know the love of Christ to my soul in this manner? Do you? This is what the Holy Spirit delights in showing us. He has not only taken possession of you as His temple, but He is going to deck that temple to please Himself. He will have no idols there. He says, Christ shall be honored there. All the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be known there. Christ's affection is in the soul who is in communion. This ought to be the history of your experience, past and present. Not like the case of a dying Christian, who, when I asked her if she had joy, said—No, none at all. It is all bright up there. I see Christ is everything for me. I have an answer to all I am in Him; but when I look within, all is in a mist. I have been walking badly, and I cannot have joy down here. Surely this is not a happy state to be in, though it shows the marvelous love of God, in keeping her soul alive in Christ, and in her being able to say—All is bright above, though all is in a mist within. But how different from this to have Christ dwelling in the heart—to have a present life with God just the unconverted man has a present life with the world! So for you and me really now to enjoy a life with the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Ghost, scanning the breadth, length, height, and depth of the mystery, and having the Christ of heaven dwelling in my heart, and revealing to me His love. It is thus the Holy Ghost delights to keep us; not by continually checking and rebuking; not by drying up the sinew of the thigh, as with Jacob, causing us to halt; or saving us as by fire, burning the city over our heads, as with Lot; but by the mighty savor of the love of Christ filling our souls!

Words of Truth: Volume 5, Counsels of God and the Responsibility of Man, The (1:1-14)

We have in these verses what we had in Luke 9:28,36; our calling and our inheritance, or rather God's calling, and God's inheritance in the saints. We cannot too earnestly apply it to the heart and conscience, bringing the soul directly before God; but for this we need the direct action of the Spirit of God. I desire to say a little as to the counsels and purposes of God as here given to us (Eph. 1:1-14); but I must be brief, because it is so very full.

In the first verses we have the calling (vv. 3-6), and then the inheritance (vv. 11, etc). There is a great difference between the counsels of God, and His dealing with our souls as sinners before Him. Here it is entirely the counsels of God. Redemption is given as the way in (v. 7), but there is nothing here about justification. When we are justified, He shows us His plans and thoughts for us. The passage begins at once with this; and it is exceedingly blessed to get this side of the truth—that sovereign grace has had its own thoughts, and has accomplished them. But before He gives these counsels as a whole, He brings the heart into tone-abounding toward us in wisdom and prudence, thus setting us in the consciousness of our own present place before God, according to His counsels for us, the objects of His entire delight (through righteousness doubtless); these are His thoughts of grace towards us. Then He goes on to unfold the whole plan concerning Christ. His thought as regards us is to give us everything in the best possible way. He will make known “The exceeding riches of his grace;” howl “in his kindness towards us.” In ages to come angels will learn it in us; but His mind is that we should learn it now. He sets us thus in perfect

favor in the Son, to let angels know the full extent of it. We should have this kind of thought of God, that He is taking us up to show in us “the exceeding riches of his grace.”

It is not in contrasts only that our souls learn grace. That is not all. I feel uneasy about souls when I find them learning grace, only by contrasting their state now with what it was. Even in worship I dread to find them living entirely in contrasts. It proves that the mind is too near the old thing; if living habitually in God’s presence, the thought of Him would be enough to fill the heart without a thought about ourselves. If near enough to Him we shall drop the other. To enjoy the light of God’s favor and the shining of His love, I do not need a contrast. If I have been exposed to a storm it is true I shall be glad of the shelter of a house, and I may contrast the comfort of it with the storm out of which I have just come; but, is there nothing in the house? The storm is never to be forgotten; but I should desire to be occupied with what I am come into, at rest and contented.

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” All blessings are drawn from Him as such. They are titles of the positions in which Christ is as Man, and as Son. You get the God of our Lord Jesus Christ in chap. 1, and the Father in chap. 3. We have the best kind of blessings of the best place, in the best way—in Christ, “chosen in him.” The thought and counsel of God about us was, that we should be “holy and without blame before him in love;” this is our calling in God. It is not a question of the election of persons, but what we are chosen to. If you take “holy,” “without blame,” and “love,” it is God’s own nature, of which Christ was the expression when here. He was the Holy One, and always before God His Father in love. We are set in Him, and are called to be what He was in the presence of God. It does not say whether on earth or in heaven, because it is our calling and is always true, though not yet fully developed. We are now before Him in love, we dwell in the love; are holy and without blame, having a nature capable of knowing and enjoying God, and are also before Him to enjoy. We need not think of ourselves, for we are this before Him.

First, we have a nature fit for God (v. 4); and secondly, we are the objects of His delight (v. 5). He would have sons, Christ was a Son, and so are we. His nature flows out and finds nothing to hinder His delight in me, and I find nothing to hinder my delight in Him; and then as His own sons in the Father’s house, with the nature and character of Christ before God, we are fully capable of enjoying Him. This is what we are called to; therefore He is not contemplating our weakness and failure, so that you do not find justification for the sinner here, but that we are accepted in the Beloved. Instead of thinking of the ‘sinner, it is to the praise of the glory of His grace.

“In the beloved,” the expression is remarkable, it shows the delight of God in Christ, because He desires to make me know the place Christ has in His heart. Thus I find my place before Him; not according to the necessity of my soul as a sinner, but according to all that is in. God’s heart. This is what they went into in the cloud, in Luke 9, having thus brought us fully into our place, He can now unfold to us the counsels of wisdom and prudence, His thoughts about Christ for Christ’s glory. There He brings us into all His counsels. When He has set us entirely at ease in His presence, we can rest our thoughts on the glory of Christ,—the kingdom as it were, of Luke 9.

Thus we come to the second part, our inheritance. Here we are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. There are three titles of Christ in connection with the inheritance. As Son, necessarily heir; as Son of Man, the appointed heir, and as Creator of all things. We must add redemption, that He may not be alone in it when it comes, for He will have us. with Him as joint-heirs. Thus, there is the calling and the inheritance, the two parts of the glory-scene in Luke 9.

The cloud is the Father’s house into which we are first brought; then there is the earthly part, the kingdom of which we are made heirs,—God’s calling, and God’s inheritance in the saints. We have got the calling, but not an inch of the inheritance yet. Yet the perfect work of Christ having been wrought, we are cleansed, we are justified, and the Holy Ghost is given to us as an earnest of it all. We shall be like Him, and with Him, and meanwhile between His work and the actual accomplishment of all in the glory, the Holy Ghost dwells in us, shedding abroad in our hearts the spring of it all—the Father’s love and giving us the full consciousness of our part in the inheritance before it comes in power.

There are two characters of Christian walk as the result of all this. I am not in possession of the inheritance and am running towards it (Phil. 3:11); living by the faith of the Son of God, looking at Christ in the glory, and counting everything else but dross and dung. He has laid hold of me that they lay hold of Him, may win Christ in glory.

Then, on the other side, I am set in Christ in heavenly places. That is not running to obtain the prize, it is what I have come to already, and this gives a different character to the walk. Sitting in God’s presence to go out into the world, and to manifest what I am sitting in,—to be imitators of God. This comes out in Eph. 5 as light and love. We are called upon to exhibit the character of God Himself as it has been manifested in Christ. We go out to manifest in the world what we are, and where we are, as set in Him. “Ye are”—not, ye ought to be,—the “epistle of Christ”; though, alas, the engraving of Christ is sadly filled up with rubbish, and the characters thus marred and blotted. Yet, like Christ in God’s presence now, we shall be actually like Him in glory, for “He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God.”

I would now go back a little to look into the way in which our responsibility comes in, and how God has met it—His ways for the accomplishment of His counsels. Here (Eph. 1) we are called, but we, are not yet in the glory.

Romans shows us how as poor sinners we can be brought in. in righteousness. God had these counsels before the foundation of the world. It is not the sovereignty of His grace choosing a people out of the world. His counsels have nothing to do with the world at all. God had these plans into which He was going to bring us before there were sinners, and before the world began for them to sin in.

They were thoughts for Christ as Man thoughts into which the world cannot enter, existing before it existed, and they will go on after it to find the perfection of their accomplishment in the new heavens and new earth. (See Prov. 8)

If we look through the crust of the world, what a scene it is! What darkness; if I begin to think about it! Open out the heart of a man of the world before God; oh, what a story it would unfold! Look at the world itself; oh, what confusion twice confounded! All the good that wisdom and power did, is smashed to pieces by the devil; while fragments of the wisdom and power and love seen here and there, are but proofs of the smash that Satan has made of everything. How unaccountable if we do not bring in sin! What perfect moral confusion! What a paradox man is! He cannot put the thought of God out of his head, though he tries hard. It comes back to him in times of dangers and in death: he

cannot get rid of it. He must have a god, so he makes one suited to his own passions, nay, the passions themselves are made gods of and worshipped, to help him to carry out his passions! The heathen have their devil gods; one a good thief; another the upholder of the vilest corruptions. Lovely natural characters found among men, but spent on what passion has put in their heads. It is right and useful that the heart should be exercised about the state of things we now find around us.

But how comforting it is to go back to "Holy and without blame before him in love." It is rest of heart to get away from' even the needed exercises of our hearts, to the thoughts of God before ever evil or responsibility came in. These blessed holy counsels of God in and for His own Son—He whose delights were with the sons of men "hath saved us according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. 1:9.) You need not go into the world to learn God's thoughts about you, they were "before the world began."

When you come to the execution of these counsels, God does not begin at that end. The first man is brought into the world innocent—not holy or righteous—but ignorant of evil, with one thing he ought to do—to obey God. This is the character of that one test. There was no evil in him to be forbidden; no harm in itself in eating the fruit, obedience was everything. It was not like the law which forbade lust. Tell Adam not to steal, he had no one to steal from: tell him not to lust, he would not know what it meant. Then the moment the creature was put in responsibility he fell. Wherever man is tested he has failed the first thing. Noah gets drunk the first thing after having offered his sacrifice. Before the law is brought into the camp, the calf is made. When priesthood is set up, the first day Nadab and Abihu offer strange fire, and Aaron never entered the holy place in his garments of glory and beauty. Whatever God has set up for good and blessing, the creature drags down into ruin. But it is not only what we have done that is in question, but what we are; that goes a good bit deeper.

Patience and grace go on working still, but testing is at an end. Look through man's history: though no promise could be given to the first man, yet in the judgment pronounced on the serpent, the promise is given to the second man, the seed of the woman, which Adam was not. The instant sin came in, God gave something out of man's self as an object for faith, something for him to rest on. Still there is this responsibility of man; but now it is of fallen man. No dispensation had been set up, and man was left to himself till the earth was filled with violence, and God has to make an end of him in the flood. The world had become so bad that God had to judge it, before the great white throne is set. After the flood God begins to deal specifically with man, and we must have grace, as we see it in the call of Abram. Idolatry had come in, and judgment follows, and God for the first time calls out a man in sovereign grace to be father of His family, as Adam was of the sinful family. But He must separate him from the world to live for and with Himself—the world which God had made but which had become corrupted. He calls out one to whom He gave promises in sovereign grace, without the smallest condition; "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." God is going to bring in Christ—the seed, and blessing must come. All rests upon the promise of God. There cannot be an intelligent creature without responsibility, of which the law was the rule.

The law came in "by-the-bye," 430 years after the promises, but could not disannul or add to them. It came in as the perfect measure of man's responsibility. Tested by it, I ought to love God perfectly, ought to have a pure heart—a heart that loves my neighbor as myself. But where is it to be found conscience says it is all perfectly right, I ought not to have bad lusts, but I have them. I do not love God as I ought, nor my neighbor as myself. You do not find one whom the law does not convict of sin. Patience went on, grace worked in individuals; prophets sought to restore; but the history of the thing went on till there was no remedy. Then God said, I have yet one Son; one thing to wake up good in the human heart, if it be there. "It may be they will reverence my Son." The answer was, "Come let us kill him!" Thus responsibility is at an end, and man is lost; it is the Willing point of man's history. All has been gone through in the dealings of God. They had had the law, and broken it; the prophets, and rejected them; the Son, and killed Him; and I may add, the Holy Ghost, and resisted Him. For though the cross had brought all to an issue, grace lingered for a little moment in Israel, and till the testimony of Stephen, in answer to the prayer on the cross. Thus the question of responsibility has been thoroughly settled. "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloke for their sin. If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now have they both seen, and hated both me and my Father." (John 15)

There is man! The individual gets the consciousness of that in his own soul. I find it all true about myself. I am a sinner with whom God has dealt in all these ways. It is my story that is told. "We indeed justly." I am one that despised grace, that rejected the Son, and I am convinced of sin—I do not say the world is, though true; but I say it is I who have done it all!

Up to the cross all was thus thoroughly gone through, and man fully tested. Now God brings out grace, which proves that He no longer deals with man on the ground of responsibility. The law came in after the promise and before Christ, to bring out the offense, to make sin become exceeding sinful. Man did not merely what was wrong, but did it in spite of God forbidding him. Responsibility (not the Christian's) ends in the first man being turned out of Paradise, and the Second Man turned out of the world by him, as unfit to live in it: on no terms will the first man have God. He may heal the sick, open the eyes of the blind, cast out devils, but they will not have Him, they would rather have the devil: and we are in a world that has done this.

Now, when man's responsibility is at an end, and Christ is rejected and on the cross, God begins to work:—works simply, effectually;—does the whole at once and completely. The very point where the enmity of the human heart was proved against God, was the point where God proved His love to man. Man is thus convicted of sin up to enmity against Christ who was the perfect expression of God's love to him; and God is above it all in grace! What hath God wrought! Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. Sin was there fully developed, and the history of it in man brought to an end. Then in that very place, and as to the sin, Christ perfectly glorified God. "In the end of the world." He has done it so perfectly that, as man, God has set Him at His own right hand. So perfect was the work for man, and for glory to God, that the Man who did it has gone up into glory! We have here not a man turned out of Paradise on account of responsibility, but a Man gone into the heavenly Paradise in whom God is glorified! So glorified that He must glorify Him "straightway," and not wait for the kingdom. The work is done for taking away the sins, and taking man to glory. The thing is complete and absolute, and He must have glory. What had we to say to the world our sins and hatred of God, that was all. It was a work done between Christ and God, in drinking the cup which no heart can fathom.

Now from this man entering into the glory of God, I get a new starting point altogether. Now He can bring out the counsels which were before responsibility began, because Christ was there as the center of them. The things that were in God's mind that He could not before reveal, He can now bring out, the blessed and glorious work being all accomplished which gives us our title to have part in them. Christ is our title.

What is a Redeemer without His redeemed? He has brought us to God. Are we then unfit for God? Nay, fit for Him conscience can rest. We are accepted in the Beloved, and sealed with the Holy Ghost. My place before God is not in the flesh, but in Christ; not in the first Adam, but according to the worth of Christ's work. He must see of the travail of His soul, and must have me with Him in glory.

A word as to how we are brought into it The Holy Ghost is given in Scripture consequent upon the faith of a person in the work that results in the remission of sins. It is a person who has received that who is sealed. (See Acts 2:38 and 10: 43, 44.) I am made as white as snow, and now the Holy Ghost says, I can come and dwell there. I am not speaking of being born of God, but of the way the heart is brought into it all.

In Rom. 1-3 we have all the world brought in guilty before God, in respect of sins,—not the state, but works as the ground of judgment. Now God sets forth Christ for a propitiation. This is the blood on the mercy-seat, and we get both sides of Lev. 16—the goat for the Lord's lot, and the scapegoat for the people. All is grace now. It is no question of experience, for "there is none righteous, no, not one." I do not want experience about this, for it is the positive testimony of God, though the deeper I feel about it the better. I find my responsibility perfectly met, and my sins all cleared away, ending in the perfect blessedness of Rom. 5:11,—what God is to the sinner.

After this we come to experience, which is connected, not with what I have done, but with what I am—what I have got into through Adam's sin. I am away from God, and have a sinful nature and lusts. I have to do with what I am, no matter whether I am a Jew or not. This brings in the law. I ought not to lust, but I do. Lust comes from vile flesh. What is flesh? It is that I like sin, and it is there. I shall resist it if I am a Christian, but still it is there. This goes deeper, and the remedy is deeper. You find another truth. It is not Christ bearing sins, but I must reckon myself dead,—crucified with Christ. Can I live on in sin? How did you obtain a part in the obedience of Christ? By death. How can you live on in that which is dead? If I tell a man that his debts are paid, it is not his experience of it, but resting on my word that makes him happy. Unbelief raises a question of experience here, and says, I am not dead; God says you are, and you are now alive to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thus, I have the way to appropriate all that these counsels give me. For I am not in Adam, but "in Christ," and of course have all that is His.

Rom. 8 gives us the second aspect of our blessedness—what the saint is before God "in Christ Jesus." Now I can understand what it is to be accepted in the Beloved. I have an entirely new place; "ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you." The flesh is all past; we are not in the first Adam, but in the last! We are brought into His place; if He is heir of all things, so am I.

Thus it is not merely my responsibility which has been met, but I am transported out of the condition I was in in Adam, into Christ. I do not enter consciously into this new condition till I have learned that in me dwelleth no goad thing, and cry, "oh wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me?"—not take away my sins—not deliver me from what I have done, but from what I am! That brings me into the place where I have the fruit of those counsels; Christ's place in the present grace where He is.

All responsibility is thus settled up to the cross, "guilt cleared away; and besides all that, I am in a new place, in new man before God. Then the responsibility of the Christian begins. I never can know what it is to have to do with being in Christ, until I know what it is to be delivered from the flesh. If we are in Christ, Christ is in us, and our responsibility is to show Christ in everything. Man's responsibility has proved a total failure; the Christian's responsibility is to manifest the life of Jesus in His mortal flesh, and nothing else. You are the epistle of Christ. That is where you are set in the world: "Manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, hut with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart." Men are now to read Christ in you as plainly as they could read the ten commandments on the two tables of stone. It is the engraving of Christ by the Spirit of God upon our hearts that is to be read. Our responsibility as men is over; our responsibility as Christians has begun. We have now to overcome the flesh and to manifest Christ, and He says, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

May the Lord give us earnest purpose of heart, that we may be ever near enough to Him to draw the grace we need to glorify Him!

Collected Writings, Ephesians 1:18 (1:18)

Q. L. H., Jersey. Ephesians 1:8, "Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence?"

A. God has fully unfolded to us, in verses 3-5, His calling, as suited to His own counsels, and His own heart; which is "to the praise of the glory of His grace." In these verses He does not take into account our sinful condition, but lets us know His own thoughts as to the way He desires to have us in His presence, as purposed eternally in His own counsels in Christ. In verse 7, He takes into account that we are sinners, needing redemption and forgiveness, and acts according to the "riches of His grace," which (grace) He has caused to abound toward us, "in all wisdom and intelligence" (as it may be read), in making known the mystery of His will, which He purposed in Himself, for the glory of Christ. He treats us as friends (compare John 15:16, as illustration), in the place of intimacy and nearness. These counsels we learn in ver. 10.

Thank God we are placed in such a position, and called thus to share in His counsels as to Christ; not merely because we shall share the glory with Him (vs. 11), but because His glory is everything to us, and has a real interest in our hearts.

Paul's Doctrine and Other Papers, Church Which is His Body: Preface, The (1:20-21)

Preface

Much need has been felt for a concise, simple statement of the principles which should guide the Lord's people who have had grace and faithfulness given them to "depart from iniquity," in the professing church (which Paul likens to "a great house,") in late years. So many wiles and artifices of the enemy have been set to work to prevent them from walking in the truth, that many have found extreme difficulty in

finding God's pathway in such a labyrinth of evil and corruption as is around. It is to be feared that the difficulties have almost deterred many from seeking it further, if not giving up in despair the endeavors to discover God's way.

This being the case, the few following remarks (which contain but an outline of the immense principles treated of) are put forth with the earnest humble hope, that the Lord may use them for His own glory, and make them helpful to the children of God in seeking to discern their pathway amidst the corruptions of Christendom in these last days. A pathway which is so simple and clear to the believer, where there is a single eye; and the truth of which has more deeply convinced, as they have followed it, the souls of those whom a God of truth has in grace guided therein.

These remarks are committed, in all humility, to Him who alone can make them of any value, by using them in the power of His gracious Spirit-to Him whose right it is, with the weak things of the world, to confound the things that are mighty, so that no flesh may glory in His presence.

With the hope that He may use and bless them, they are sent forth to His Church.

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