

John - Commentaries by Charles Henry Mackintosh

Handfuls of Pasture: Volume 1, Alone With Jesus (8:1-11)

(Road John 8:1-11.)

The more closely and prayerfully we study the four gospels, the more clearly do we see the distinct design of the Holy Ghost in each, and the perfect way in which He has pursued and carried out that design, even in the most minute details. The grand theme of each is Christ; but in no two of the gospels is He presented in the same way. In Matthew, we have Him as the Messiah—Son of Abraham, Son of David—a Jew—Heir of the promises made to the fathers—Heir of the throne of David—Fulfiller of the prophecies—presented to Israel, according to their own scriptures, and deliberately rejected.

Such is the distinct object of the Holy Ghost in Matthew—such His marked design. This He pursues throughout, with unswerving faithfulness. To this end everything is made subservient. With a view to this He culls, groups, and arranges His materials. For this, chronological order is set aside without hesitation and without apology. Scenes and circumstances, separated by many months, are grouped together, by the skilful hand of the Holy Ghost, for the specific purpose of presenting His subject in perfect keeping with the scope and design of the entire gospel, from which He never diverges the breadth of a hair. In a word, Matthew groups for dispensational ends. His is what we may venture to call the great dispensational gospel. Thus much as to Matthew.

In Mark, we have our blessed Lord as the Servant the perfect Workman—the divine Minister—the indefatigable Preacher and Teacher, whose days were given to work, and His nights to prayer—who could hardly find time to eat or sleep—the most laborious Worker that ever wrought in God's great harvest held. Mark tells us, by the Holy Ghost, what the Savior did and how He did it. His gospel is a marvelous record of work, from first to last. We have no record of our Lord's birth—no genealogical chain stretching away back to David, to Abraham, or to Adam. There was no need to trace the pedigree of One who came to serve—to work—to toil night and day. The question in Mark is not so much who He was, as what He did. We are simply told that He was "Jesus Christ, the Son of God," and forthwith the inspired penman plunges into his subject, and gives us a rapid survey of a life of unparalleled labor—a path of service pursued with tin-flinching decision, from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary—resumed in resurrection and carried on from the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens. See Mark 16:19, 20.

Thus much as to Mark, who, we may further add, observes throughout the strict historical order. It is important for the reader to note this, as it will enable him to see the instances in which both Matthew and Luke depart from strict chronological sequence.

Luke gives us "The man Christ Jesus." Such is preeminently his theme. Hence he gives us the pedigree traced up, not merely to David and Abraham, but to Adam and to God. It is not the Messiah, nor the Jew nor the worker, but the man. All that is exquisitely human we have in Luke, just as we have all that is purely Jewish in Matthew, all that is directly ministerial in Mark. Luke groups for moral ends, as Matthew for dispensational purposes. Mark does not group; he simply records, in historic order, the facts of our Lord's marvelous ministry.

Now, before turning to that gospel from which the subject of this paper is selected, we would request the reader's earnest attention to what we have stated in reference to the three synoptical gospels, as they have been called. We would ask him to study the gospels for himself; to compare the passages diligently; to seek to understand why Matthew or Luke departs, in any given case, from the exact order of time; to ask God to teach him, by His Holy Spirit, the true reason for every such departure. In this way, we feel persuaded, he will reap a rich harvest of blessing. He will obtain a deeper insight into the infinite wisdom that dictated those peerless documents. He will rise from his study with a more profound faith in the plenary inspiration of these wonderful narratives.

Furthermore, he will see that those very passages in which the rationalist, the skeptic, or the infidel has sought to find flaws and discrepancies, present the most striking and exquisite proofs of divine wisdom and marked design. He will be convinced that there is no standing-ground between these two conclusions, that the evangelists were either divinely inspired, or they were the most senseless narrators that ever put pen to paper. That they were divinely inspired is proved in every page, in every paragraph, in every line. The internal evidence is perfectly irresistible; and hence it follows that these inspired writers could no more clash one with another than two heavenly bodies, while pursuing their divinely appointed orbits, could come in collision. If, therefore, there seem to be a discrepancy, it is simply because of our ignorance. Let us devoutly own this, and wait for further light.

We shall now proceed with our immediate theme.

The Gospel of John has a character peculiarly its own. In it the Holy Ghost unfolds to our view the Person of the Son of God—the Word—the Eternal Life—the true God. It is not the Messiah, as in Matthew—not the Minister, as in Mark—not the social Man, as in Luke; but the Son, what He was in Himself from all eternity; what He was, though rejected by Israel and the world at large; what He was to any poor way-worn, heavy laden, sin-burdened creature who crossed His blessed path.

Such is the lofty theme of the divinely inspired John. And what is so peculiarly touching is, that while he gives us the very highest possible view of the Blessed One—the most glorious revelation of the Person of the Son—he, nevertheless, continually shows Him to us alone with the sinner. This surely is a fact full of sweetness, comfort, and divine power for us.

Let us look at the opening paragraph of John 8—a paragraph that bears upon its every clause the stamp of divine inspiration. Our blessed Lord, having spent His night on the lonely mountain top, is found, early in the morning, at His post, teaching the people in the temple. Into His

holy and gracious presence, the scribes and Pharisees bring a poor convicted sinner—one respecting whom there could be no possible mistake—one who had openly and flagrantly broken the law of Moses. They quote the law against her. "Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned; but what sayest thou?"

Here then was a case. These men, no doubt, thought to involve our Lord in a dilemma. They wanted to bring Him into collision with Moses—to make it appear that He was throwing the law overboard. This might seem very clever; but ah! what is cleverness in the presence of God? Still their purpose was obvious. If He had said, "Stone her," they might pronounce Him no better than Moses. If, on the other hand, He had said, "You must not stone her," then He was making void the law. But He said neither. "The law was given by Moses," and the Lord allows it to stand in all its majesty, in all its stringency, in all its force. He came not to destroy the law, but to magnify it in the very highest possible manner, both in His life and in His death.

It is a very grave error indeed to suppose that the law is set aside. So far from this, the apostle, in his first epistle to Timothy, declares that, "The law is good if a man use it lawfully." If the law were dead or set aside, it could not be said to be good for anything, for that which is dead is good for nothing. What then is the law good for? Not for justification, but for conviction—not as a rule of life, but as a rule of death.

It is thus our Lord uses it in the scene now before us. He turns the sharp edge of the law right back against the men who had quoted it against a poor fellow sinner. With those men He could have no sympathy whatever. They had conducted this woman into His presence in order to have judgment pronounced and executed upon her. But He had not come to judge, but to save. And yet, as He says, at verse 16, if He judged, His judgment was true—oh! how true in the case of the scribes and Pharisees! They had accused the sinner, and they would fain accuse the Savior; but He makes them accuse themselves. "Jesus stooped down, and with his finger wrote on the ground." There He was the great Lawgiver Himself, the very One whose finger had written the first set of tables. How little they knew this! They were quoting the law against a fellow sinner, in order to find occasion against the Lawgiver. What a position for men to find themselves in! In the presence of the Lawgiver, quoting the law, themselves guilty before Him!

There is something awfully interesting here. Indeed there is not such a scene anywhere else in the sacred canon. It is perfectly unique. Little did these men know what they were doing for the poor convicted one, and for untold millions besides, when they led her into the presence of Jesus. Her very best friends could not have done better for her.

But let us pursue the marvelous narrative. "So, when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." They were determined to have an answer, and truly He let them have one. If they would place Him, before the time, in the judgment seat, He must judge all. He could not give a partial judgment. He could not judge one and let another pass. In point of fact, He judged no man. The object of His blessed mission to a world of sinners was not judgment, but salvation. He came not to cast a stone at a poor, guilty sinner. They could never get Him to engage in such work, blessed forever be His glorious name. How could a divine Savior cast the stone of judgment at a lost convicted sinner? Impossible. If there was a sinless one among them, let him proceed to do the work of judgment. No doubt the sinner was guilty, and moreover, the sentence of Moses was as distinct as possible; but where was the executioner? This was the puzzling question. Who could dare to lift the first stone?

What a complete turning of the tables is here! What becomes of all the cleverness? What an intensely interesting moment! What principle was at stake! There is the sinner—there is the law—there too is the Lawgiver; but who will presume, in His presence, to execute the sentence? This is the point? "And again he stooped down, and wrote on the ground." Does this remind us of the writing of the second set of tables that were enclosed in the ark and covered with the mercy seat? Is there anything significant, anything suggestive, in these two writings on the ground? One thing is clear, namely, that conscience was set to work. "They which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, unto the last: and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst."

Nothing can exceed the moral power of all this. These Scribes and Pharisees are driven out by the intense power of the light that was shining upon them. They could not stand it. Neither human cleverness nor human righteousness can stand the test of the divine presence. These men were wrapped up in the cloak of their own fancied sanctity, and hence they could not endure the light. In order to be able to abide in the presence of God, we must take our true place as utterly lost, guilty, and undone—no cloak—no righteousness—no holiness—no wisdom—not one jot or tittle of anything good in ourselves. But the scribes and Pharisees were not on this ground at all. They were men of character—men of weight—men of reputation, in the world; and the light of what God is—God in Christ—was shining, in full blaze upon them, and they dare not say they were without sin, and all that remained was for them to make their escape as speedily as possible from the action of a light that was reading them through and through.

But why did they begin with the eldest? Why was he the first to retreat? Because he had the greatest reputation to maintain—the character of highest standing to support. No one who has a reputation to maintain—a name or a character to keep up, amongst his fellows, can stand for a moment in the light of the presence of God. Such an one can do well enough in the presence of his fellows; he can get on in the world inasmuch as there such are highly esteemed. A man of character is respected amongst men. But let us remember these solemn and salutary words, "That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God." God values a broken heart, a contrite spirit, a lowly mind. "To this man will I look, even to him who is of a broken and contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word." Now the scribes and Pharisees were the direct opposite of all this, and hence they could find no place in the presence of Jesus.

"They went out," not in a crowd, not promiscuous[^], but "one by one." Conscience is an individual thing. Had they remained, they must strip off their cloaks, and cry out, "Just as I am, without one plea." For this they were not prepared. They were thoroughly confounded, and sent about their business. The Light of the world was shining in the full luster of His heavenly beams, and these muffled men could not endure His brightness, and so they went out and left the poor sinner alone with Jesus.

Blessed moment for her! The whole scene cleared. No answer, no sentence—no executioner—not a single stone of judgment. How was this? Was she not a sinner? Yes, a flagrant one. Was not the law against her? No doubt. How was it then? Jesus was there—the divine embodiment of "grace and truth," and He was not going to stone a poor convicted sinner. It was not for such an object that He had left that bright and blessed world above. Had it been only a question of stoning the sinner, Moses could have managed that. There was no need for Moses' Master to come down into this world.

But oh! there was grace in the heart of Jesus—yes, grace and truth, and truth and grace. Both shine out, with peculiar luster, in this truly inimitable scene. "Truth," in its mighty moral force, had driven the accusers from the scene; and now "grace," in all its sweetness and soothing power, rises with healing in its wings upon the soul of the poor trembling sinner, and sounds in her ears these precious words, "Neither do I condemn thee." Precious accents! sweet, ineffably sweet, to a broken heart and contrite spirit! gladdening beyond expression to one who had, a moment before, been expecting the stones of judgment to fall thick upon her guilty head. Mercy rejoices over judgment; and grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Yes, that blessed One knew what it was to cost Him to speak such words in the ear of a sinner. It was to cost Him His life. That woman deserved to die. There could be no question about that. "The soul that sinneth shall die" was the stern sentence of God's law—the solemn enactment of His government. Was Jesus going to reverse this sentence? Nay; but He was going to bear it in the sinner's stead. He, the sinless One who alone had the right to cast the stone at the sinner, was to expose Himself to the stroke of justice, and have the stone cast at Him.

Such is the solid basis on which the glorious ministry of reconciliation rests—the atoning death of Christ—His giving Himself the just for the unjust. It will perhaps be said that there is nothing about atonement in John 8 True; the great subject of the entire Gospel of John is the Person, not the atoning work of the Son. But it is needful, nay essential, for us to know the ground on which our blessed Lord could speak those words of balm and consolation in a sinner's ear, "Neither do I condemn thee." That ground is, unquestionably, His sacrificial atoning death. In no other way—on no other ground, could sin be passed, remitted, or blotted out. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." Solemn yet glorious words! Solemn, as letting us know what sin is. Glorious, as letting us know what remission is.

But let us carefully mark the authority on which the woman knew she was not condemned. What was it? Simply the word of Jesus. She knew it because He said it. Blessed authority—nothing like it—none other but it. Christ's work the basis—His word the authority. How simple! How solid! How satisfactory! Nothing can touch it. All the powers of earth and hell—men and devils, cannot shake this foundation—the foundation of a divine work, a divine word—a foundation on which the reader who needs and desires it, may rest this moment, and rest forever.

The scribes and Pharisees knew nothing of this ground or this authority. If they had met the woman on her way out from the Lord's presence, and questioned her as to the issue of her interview, how they would have scorned the idea of "no condemnation!" They would have sent her to a reformatory or a penitentiary, and after some years of moral reform they might begin to admit that there was some faint hope for such a wretched creature. But ah! what a sorry basis is moral reform!—what a poor authority is a human certificate! No, reader; it will never do—never stand—never suit either for God or for thy precious soul. It must be all divine. And so it is, blessed be God! Christ did the work—God speaks the word—faith behaves and fills the heart with peace and joy. Nor this only. The same grace that fills the heart with peace, gives power over sin in all its workings. For let it never be forgotten that an indissoluble link binds together these two utterances, "No condemnation"—"Sin no more." Grace shines in the one; holiness breathes in the other.

The Christian Shepherd: 2002, Drinking (7:37-38)

"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink. He that believeth on Me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37-38).

The Lord did not say "draw"—He said "drink." The true spring and power of all ministry in the church will ever be found in drinking for our own souls, not in drawing for others. We must abide close to the eternal fountain, the heart of Christ. Drink deeply; drink continually. Thus our own souls shall be refreshed and enriched; rivers shall flow for the refreshment of others, and streams of praise shall ascend to the throne and to the heart of God by Jesus Christ.

C. H. Mackintosh (adapted)

Short Papers, Rivers of Living Water (7:37-38)

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." John 7:37, 38.

The feast referred to in this lovely scripture was "The feast of tabernacles," called, at the opening of the chapter, "The Jews' feast." This stamped its character. It could no longer be called, as in Lev. 23 "A feast of Jehovah." The Lord could not own it. It had become an empty formality—a powerless ordinance—a piece of barren routine—something in which man could boast himself while God was entirely shut out.

This is nothing uncommon. There has ever been a strong tendency in the human mind to perpetuate forms when the power is gone. No doubt power may clothe itself in a certain form; and, so long as the form is the expression of the power, it is all right and good. But the danger lies in going on with the mere outward form without a single particle of inward power. Thus it was with Israel of old; and thus it is with the professing church now. We have all to watch against this snare of the devil. He will use a positive ordinance of God as a means of deceiving the soul, and shutting out God altogether. But where faith is in lively exercise, the soul has to do with God in the ordinance, whatever it is, and thus the power and freshness are duly maintained.

The reader has, no doubt, noticed that in the opening chapters of John's Gospel, the inspired writer invariably designates the feasts as feasts of the Jews; and not only so, but we find the Lord Jesus displacing one after another of these feasts and offering Himself as an object for the heart. Thus at the opening of chapter vii. we read, "After these things Jesus walked in Galilee; for he would not walk in Jewry, because the

Jews sought to kill him. Now the Jews' feast of tabernacles was at hand." Terrible anomaly! deadly delusion! Seeking to murder the Son of God, and yet keeping the feast of tabernacles! Such is religious man without God. " His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see thy ivories that thou doest. For there is no man that doeth anything in secret, and he himself seeketh to be known openly. If thou do these things, show thyself to the world. For neither did his brethren believe on him."

Near as His brethren were to Him, according to the flesh, they knew Him not, they believed not on Him. They had not one thought in common with Him. They would fain have Him make a display of Himself before the world. They knew not His object. He had not come from heaven in order to be gazed at and wondered after. "All the world will wonder after the beast" by-an-by; but the blessed Son of God came to serve and to give. He came to hide Himself, to glorify God, and to serve man.

He refused, therefore, to exhibit Himself at the feast. " Then Jesus said unto them, my time is not yet come; but your time is always ready. The world cannot hate you; but me it hateth, because I testify of it that the works thereof are evil. Go ye up unto this feast: I go not up yet to this feast: for my time is not yet full come. When he had said these words unto them, he abode still in Galilee. But when his brethren were gone up, then went he also up unto the feast, not openly, but as it were in secret."

And for what did He go up? He went up to serve. He went up to glorify His Father, and to be the willing Servant of man's necessity. " Now about the midst of the feast, Jesus went up into the temple and taught. And the Jews marveled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned? Jesus answered them, saying, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me" Here His moral glory, as the self-hiding Servant, shines out. " My doctrine is not mine." Such was His answer to those who wondered where He got His learning. Alas! they knew Him not. His motives and His objects lay far beyond the reach of carnal and worldly-minded men. They measured Him by their own standard, and hence, all their conclusions were utterly false. " If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself [απ εμαυτον]. He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory; but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true and no unrighteousness is in him."

The blessed One did not speak from Himself, as if He were independent of the Father, but as One who lived in absolute and complete dependence, and in unbroken communion, drawing all His springs from the living God, doing nothing, saying nothing, thinking nothing apart from the Father.

We have the same truth with reference to the Holy Ghost, in John 16 " Howbeit, when he the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will show you things to come." The Holy Ghost did not speak from Himself, as independent of the Father and the Son, but as One in full communion with them.

But we must turn, for a moment, to the words which form the special subject of this paper. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.'" Here we have set before us a truth of infinite preciousness and immense practical power. The Person of Christ is the divine spring of all freshness and spiritual energy. It is in Him alone the soul can find all it really needs. It is to Him we must betake ourselves for all our personal refreshment and blessing. If, at any time, we find ourselves dull, heavy and barren, what are we to do? Make efforts to raise the tone? Nay, this will never do. What then? Let him " Come unto me and drink"

Mark the words. It is not, " Come unto me and draw." We may draw for others and be dry ourselves; but if we drink, our own souls are refreshed, and then—" Rivers of living water."

Nothing is more miserable than the restless efforts of a soul out of communion. We may be very busy; our hands may be full of work; our feet may run hither and thither; the head may be full of knowledge; but if the heart be not livingly occupied with the Person of Christ, it will, it must be, all barrenness and desolation so far as we are personally concerned; and there will, there can be, no "rivers of living water" flowing out for others. Impossible. If we are to be made a blessing to others, we must feed upon Christ for ourselves. We do not " drink" for other people, we drink to satisfy our thirst; and as we drink, the rivers flow. Show us a man whose heart is filled with Christ, and we will show you a man whose hands are ready for work, and his feet ready to run; but unless we begin with heart communion, our running and our doing will be a miserable failure—there will be no glory to God—no rivers of living water.

Yes, reader, we must begin in the very innermost circle of our own moral being, and there be occupied, by faith, with a living Christ, else all our service will prove utterly worthless. If we want to act on others; if we would be made a blessing in our day and generation; if we desire to bring forth any fruit to God; if we would shine as lights amid the moral gloom around; if we would be a channel of blessing' in the midst of a sterile desert, then, verily, we must hearken to our Lord's words in John 7:37. We must drink at the fountain head. And what then? Drink still—drink ever—drink largely, and then the rivers must flow. If I say, "I must try and be a channel of blessing to others" I shall only prove my own folly and weakness. But if I bring my empty vessel to the fountain head and get it filled, then, without the smallest effort, the rivers will flow.

Answers to Correspondents: From Things New and Old 1858-1863, 17. Regeneration (5:2)

"G. C. R." asks, "Is it correct to speak of regeneration as being the work of the Holy Spirit?" John 3:8, contains an explicit answer to our correspondent's inquiry. "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." In John 5:25, we find the work of quickening attributed to "the Son of God." In 1 Peter 1:23, the word is presented as the instrument of quickening, or giving new life. In James 1 "The Father of lights" is presented as the One who begets us by the word of truth. Putting all these passages together, we learn that the Father begets, by the Word, through the power of the Holy Spirit. This makes the matter divinely simple.

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 6, Two Musts, The (3:7)

In our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, He twice makes use of the word "must"—a word of immense depth and moral power in both cases. Let us ponder it for a few moments; for, though but a word of one syllable, it contains a volume of most precious evangelical truth in whichever light we view it.

I. And, first, then, we read, u Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." Here we have the total setting aside of man, in his very best estate. The " must" of the third of John, like the flaming sword of the third of Genesis, " turns every way to keep the way of the tree of life." It completely shuts out the first man and all who are linked with him, from the tree of life. If I must be born again—if I must have a new life—a new nature, then it matters not, in the smallest degree, what I am or what I have, I am shut out. Man, as born of a woman, enters this world with the image of his fallen parent stamped upon him. Man, as he came from the hand of his Creator, was made in the "image of God." Man, as he issues from the womb of his mother, wears the image and likeness of a fallen creature. Hence the force of our Lord's expression, " Ye must be born again." It is not said, " Ye must mend, ye must try and be better, ye must alter your mode of living, ye must turn over a new leaf." Had it been thus, Nicodemus would never have asked, "How can these things be?" A man of the Pharisees would have understood any or all of these things. A change of conduct, a change of character, any moral reform, any self-improvement, is perfectly intelligible to a Pharisee of every age; but to be told, " Ye must be born again," can only be understood by one who has reached the end of himself and his doings, who has been brought to see that in him, that is in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing, who sees himself as a thorough bankrupt—a bankrupt without a certificate, who can never again set up on his own account. He must get a new life to which the deed of bankruptcy cannot apply; and he must trade in the wealth of another, on which the creditors have no possible claim.

There is immense power in this little word " must:" It bears upon all alike. It speaks to the drunkard, and says, " You must be born again." It addresses the most rigid teetotaler, and says, " You must be born again." It speaks to every class, to every condition, to every grade and shade of character, to man in every rank and every clime, to every creed and every denomination, in its own clear, emphatic, sweeping style, and says, " You must be born again." It bears down with far more weight upon the conscience than any appeal that could be made on the ground of moral conduct. It does not interfere, in the least, with the question of moral reform in any one of its many phases. It allows as broad a margin as any philanthropist or moral reformer may desire. It does not disturb the various distinctions which society, public opinion, law, or equity has established. It leaves all these things perfectly untouched; but it raises its clear and commanding voice above them all, and says to the sinner—to man as born of a woman—to the worst and to the best of men, " You must be born again." It demands not reformation, but regeneration—not amendment, but atonement.

II. What, then, it may be asked, are we to do? Whither are we to turn? How are we to get this new life? Our Lord's second "must" furnishes the reply. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." This makes all plain. A second Man has entered the scene. There are two men and two musts. As to the first man, he must be born again; and, as to the second Man, He must be lifted up. In a word, the cross is the grand solution of the difficulty, the divine answer to the " How? é Am I completely struck down by the first " must?,é Am I overwhelmed by the insuperable difficulty which it proposes to me? Am I on the very verge of despair as I contemplate the apparent impossibility of what, nevertheless, must be P Oh! then with what power does the second " must" fall on my heart. " The Son of man must be lifted up." Why must He? Because I must have new life, and this life is in the Son, but it could only be mine through His death. The death of the Second Man is the only ground of life to the first—life to me. One look at Christ, as lifted up for me, is life eternal. The moment this look is given the new birth takes place. The soul that simply believes on the Son of God, as dead and risen, is " born of water and of the Spirit;" he hath everlasting life—he is passed from death unto life, from the old creation into the new, from the first man to the Second—from guilt to righteousness, from condemnation to favor, from darkness to light, from Satan to God. May God the Spirit unfold to the reader's heart the beauty and power, the depth, comprehensiveness, and moral glory of " the two musts! "

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 5, Eternal Punishment, A Letter to a Friend on (3:36)

Beloved Friend,

I have been thinking a good deal of late, on the last verse of the third chapter of John. It seems to me to furnish a most powerful answer to two of the leading heresies of this our day, namely Universalism on the one hand; and Annihilationism, on the other: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

The deniers of eternal punishment, as you are fully aware, are divided into two classes, each differing from the other very materially. Some profess to believe that all will, ultimately, be restored and brought into everlasting felicity: these are the Universalists. Others, again, are of opinion that all who die out of Christ are annihilated, soul and body—made an end of thoroughly—will perish like the beast.

Now, I think you will agree with me in the thought that John 3:36, completely demolishes both these fatal errors. It meets the Universalist by the sweeping and conclusive statement that the unbeliever " Shall not see life." It entirely sets aside the notion of all being restored and eternally saved. Those who refuse to believe the Son, shall die in their sins, and never see life.

But, were this all, the Annihilationist might say, " Exactly so; that is just what I believe. None but those who believe in the Son shall live eternally. Eternal life is only in the Son, and hence, all who die out of Christ shall perish, soul and body, they shall be made an end of."

Not so, says the Holy Ghost. It is quite true they shall not see life; but—tremendous fact! " The wrath of God abideth on him." This, beyond all question, gives a flat contradiction to annihilationism. If the wrath of God is to abide upon the unbeliever, it is utterly impossible he can be made an end of. Annihilation and abiding wrath are wholly incompatible. We must either erase the word " abiding" from the inspired page, or abandon completely the notion of annihilation, to hold the two is out of the question.

Of course, I am merely now referring to this one passage of holy scripture; and truly it is enough, of itself, to settle any mind that simply bows to the voice of God, as to the solemn question of eternal punishment. But here, my beloved friend, is just the point. Men will not submit to the teaching and authority of holy scripture. They presume to sit in judgment upon what is and what is not worthy of God to do. They imagine that people may live in sin, in folly, in rebellion against God, and in the neglect of His Christ, and after all, go unpunished. They take upon them to decide that it is inconsistent with their idea of God to allow such a thing as eternal punishment. They attribute to the government of God what we should consider a weakness in any human government, namely, an inability to punish evil doers.

But ah! the word of God is against them. It speaks of "unquenchable fire"—of an "undying worm"—of a "fixed gulf"—of "abiding wrath." What, I would ask, is the meaning of such words, in the judgment of any honest unprejudiced mind? It may be said that these are figures. Granted that the "fire," the "worm" and the "gulf" are figures but figures of what? Of something ephemeral—something which must, sooner or later, have an end? Nay; but something which is eternal, if anything is eternal. If we deny eternal punishment, we must deny an eternal anything, inasmuch as it is the same word which is used in every instance to express the idea of endless continuance. There are about seventy passages in the Greek New Testament where the word "everlasting" occurs. It is applied amongst many other things to the life which believers possess, and to the punishment of the wicked, as in Matt. 25:46. Now, upon what principle can anyone attempt to take out the six or seven passages in which it applies to the punishment of the wicked, and say that in all these instances it does not mean forever; but that in all the rest it does? I confess this seems to me perfectly unanswerable. If the Holy Ghost, if the Lord Jesus Christ Himself had thought proper to make use of a different word, when speaking of the punishment of the wicked from what He uses when speaking of the life of believers, I grant you there might be some basis for an objection.

But no; we find the same word invariably used to express what everybody knows to be endless; and therefore if the punishment of the wicked be not endless, nothing is endless. They cannot, consistently, stop short with the question of punishment, but must go on to the denial of the very existence of God Himself.

And indeed I cannot but believe that here lies the real root of the matter. The enemy desires to get rid of the word of God, of the Spirit of God, the Christ of God, and God Himself; and he craftily begins by introducing the thin end of his fatal wedge, in the denial of eternal punishment; and when this is admitted the soul has taken the first step on the inclined plane which leads down to the dark abyss of atheism.

This may seem strong, harsh and ultra; but it is my deep and thorough conviction; and I feel most solemnly impressed with the necessity of warning all our young friends against the danger of admitting into their minds the very shadow of a question or doubt as to the divinely established truth of the endless punishment of the wicked in hell. The unbeliever cannot be restored, for scripture declares "he shall not see life." Moreover, he cannot be annihilated, for scripture declares that "the wrath of God abideth upon him."

Oh! my beloved friend, how much better and wiser and safer it would be for our fellow men to flee from the wrath to come than to deny that it is coming, or that when it does come it will be eternal.

Ever, believe me,

Most affectionately yours,

C. H. M.

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 4, Glad Tidings: Part 5 (3:16)

It only remains for us, now, to ponder the last clause of the fruitful passage of scripture which has been under consideration. (John 3:16.) It sets forth the positive result, in every case, of simple faith in the Son of God. It declares, in the simplest and clearest way, the fact that every one who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ is a possessor of everlasting life. It is not merely that his sins are blotted out, that is blessedly true. Nor is it merely that he is saved from the consequences of his guilt, which is equally true. But there is more. The believer in Jesus has a new life, and that life is in the Son of God. He is placed upon a new footing altogether. He is no longer looked at in the old Adam condition, but in a risen Christ.

This is an immense truth, and one of the deepest possible moment. We earnestly crave the reader's calm and prayerful attention while we seek, in some feeble way, to present to him what we believe to be wrapped up in the last clause of John 3:16.

There is, in the minds of many, a very imperfect sense of what we get by faith in Christ. Some seem to view the atoning work of Christ merely as a remedial measure for the sins of our old nature—the payment of debts contracted in our old condition. That it is all this, we need not say; blessed be God for the precious truth. But it is much more. It is not merely that the sins are atoned for, but the nature which committed them is put to death and set aside by the cross of Christ, and to be "reckoned" dead by the believer. It is not merely that the debts contracted in the old condition are canceled, but the old condition itself is completely ignored by God, and to be so accounted by the believer.

This great truth is doctrinally unfolded in the fifth chapter of 2 Corinthians, where we read, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (Ver. 17.) The apostle does not say, "If any man be in Christ, he is pardoned—his sins are forgiven—his debts paid." All this is divinely true; but the statement just quoted goes very much further. It declares that a man in Christ is a new creation altogether. It is not the old nature pardoned, but completely set aside, with all its belongings, and a new creation introduced in which there is not a single shred of the old. "All things are become new; and all things are of God."

Now this gives immense relief to the heart. Indeed, we question if any soul can enter into the full liberty of the gospel of Christ, until he lays hold, in some measure, of the truth of the "new creation." There may be a looking to Christ for pardon—a vague hope of getting to heaven at the last—a measure of reliance on the goodness and mercy of God—there may be all this, and yet no just sense of the meaning of

"everlasting life"—no happy consciousness of being " a new creation"—no understanding of the grand fact that the old Adam nature is entirely set aside, the old system in which we stood completely abolished.

But it is more than probable that some of our readers may be at a loss to know what is meant by such terms as, " the old Adam nature"—" the old system"—" the flesh"—" the old man," and such like. These expressions may fall strangely on the ears of those for whom we specially write; and we certainly wish to avoid shooting over the heads of our readers. As God is our witness, there is one thing we earnestly desire, one object which we would ever keep before our minds, and that is the instruction and edification of our readers; and therefore we would rather run the risk of being tedious, than make use of phrases which convey no dear or intelligible idea to the mind. And, further, we would add, that we have no desire to press any peculiar theory or notion of our own. To do so could be of no possible value to any one. But no one can look upon the subject of " everlasting life" as a mere notion. And as to such terms as, "the old man"—"the flesh," and the like, scripture uses them in manifold places; for example, in the sixth chapter of Romans, we read, " Knowing tins, that our old man is crucified with him [Christ] that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Ver. 6.

Now, what does the apostle mean by "the old man?" We believe he means our old Adam nature—that nature which we inherited from our first parents. And what does he mean by " the body of sin?" We believe he means the whole system or condition in which we stood in our tin-regenerate, unrenewed, unconverted state. The old Adam nature, then, is declared to be crucified—the whole system of sin is said to be destroyed by the death of Christ. Hence, the soul that believes on the Lord Jesus Christ is privileged to know that his old nature, his sinful, guilty self, is looked upon by God as dead and set aside completely. It has no existence whatever before God. He sees it dead and buried.

Observe, it is not merely that our sins are forgiven, our debts paid, our guilt atoned for; but the nature that committed the sins, contracted the debts, and incurred the guilt is put forever out of God's sight. It is not God's way to forgive us our sins, and yet leave us in the sinful nature that committed them. No; He has, in His marvelous grace and vast plan, condemned and abolished forever, for the believer, the old Adam nature, with all its belongings, so that it is no longer recognized in any way. " He that is dead is freed [justified] from sin." It is not that we are pardoned and our sinful nature left alive. No; we are declared, by the voice of holy scripture, to be crucified—dead—buried, and risen with Christ. God tells us we are so, and we are to " reckon" ourselves to be so. It is a matter of faith, and not merely a matter of feeling. If I look at myself from my standpoint, or judge by my feelings, I shall never—can never understand this truth. And why? Because I feel myself to be just the same sinful creature as ever. I feel that there is sin in me; that in my flesh there dwelleth no good thing; that my old nature is in nowise changed or improved; that it has the same evil tendencies as ever, and if not mortified and kept down by the gracious energy of the Holy Spirit, it will break out in its true character.

And it is just here, we doubt not, that so many sincere souls are perplexed and troubled. They are looking at themselves, and reasoning upon what they see and feel, instead of resting in the truth of God, and reckoning themselves to be what God tells them they are. They find it difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile what they feel in themselves with what they read in the word of God—to make their inward self-consciousness harmonize with God's revelation. But we must remember that faith takes God at His word. It ever thinks with Him on all points. It believes what He says, because He says it. Hence, if God tells me that my old man is crucified—my old nature dead and out of sight, that He no longer sees me as in the old Adam state, but in a risen Christ, I am to believe, like a little child, what he tells me, and walk in the faith of it, from day to clay. If I look in at myself for evidences of the truth of what God says, it is not faith at all. " Abraham considered not his own body now dead when he was about an hundred years old; neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb; he staggered not at the promise of God, through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God." Rom. 4:19, 20.

This is the great principle which underlies the whole christian system. "Abraham believed God"—not something about God, but God Himself. Tins is faith. It is taking God's thoughts in place of our own. It is, in short, allowing God to think for us.

Now, when we apply this to the subject before us, it makes it most simple. He that believeth in the Son of God hath everlasting life. Mark, it is not he that believeth something about the Son of God. No; it is he that believeth in Himself. It is a question of simple faith in the Person of Christ; and every one that has this faith is the actual possessor of everlasting life. This is the direct and positive statement of our Lord in the Gospel. It is repeated over and over again. Nor is this all. Not only docs the believer thus possess eternal life, but by the further light which the epistles throw upon the grand question, he may see that his old life—that in which he lived in nature—that which the apostle designates "the old man," or " the flesh," is accounted by God as dead and buried. This may be difficult to understand; but let the reader remember that he must believe, not because he understands, but because it is written in God's word. It is not said, " Abraham understood God." No; but he " believed God." It is when the heart believes, that light is poured in upon the understanding. If I wait till I understand in order to believe, I am leaning to my own understanding, instead of committing myself, in childlike faith, to God's word.

Reader, ponder this! You may say you cannot understand how your sinful nature can be looked upon as dead and gone, while you feel its workings, its heavings, its tossings, its tendencies, continually within you. We reply, or rather God's eternal word declares, that if your heart believes in Jesus, then is all this true of you, namely, you have eternal life; you are justified from all things; you are a new creation; old things are passed away; all things are become new: and all things are of God. In a word, you are " in Christ" and, " as he is so are you in this world." (1 John 4:17.)

And is not this a great deal more than the mere pardon of your sins, the canceling of your debts, or the salvation of your soul from hell? Assuredly it is. And suppose we were to ask you, on what authority you believe in the forgiveness of your sins. Is it because you feel, realize, or understand? Nay; but because it is written, " To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:43.) " The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:7.) Well, then, upon precisely the same authority you are to believe that your old man is crucified, that you are not in the flesh, not in the old creation, not in the old Adam condition; but that, on the contrary, you are viewed by God as actually in a risen and glorified Christ—that He looks upon you as He looks upon Christ.

True, it is, alas, how true! the flesh is in you, and you are still here, as to the fact of your condition, in this old world, which is under judgment. But, then, hear what your Lord saith, when speaking about you to His Father, " They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." And again, " As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world." John 17:16, 18.

Hence, therefore, if you will just bow to God's word; if you will not reason about what you see in yourself, and feel in yourself, and think of yourself, but simply believe what God says, you will enter into the blessed peace and holy liberty flowing from the fact that you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; nor in the old creation, but in the new; not under law, but under grace; not of the world, but of God. You have passed clean off the old platform which you occupied as a child of nature, and a member of the first Adam; and you have taken your place on a new platform altogether, as a child of God, and a member of the body of Christ.

All this is vividly prefigured by the deluge and the ark, in the days of Noah. (See Gen. 6-8.) "And God looked upon the earth, and behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth." Here, then, was, in type, the end of the old creation. All was to pass under the waters of judgment. What then? "Make thee an ark of gopher wood." Here we have set forth a figure of the new thing. That ark, floating peacefully over the dark abyss of waters, was a type of Christ, and the believer in Him. The old world, together with man, was buried beneath the waves of judgment, and the only object that remained was the ark—the vessel of mercy and salvation, riding in safety and triumph over the billows. Thus it is now, in truth and reality. There is nothing before the eye of God but a risen, victorious, and glorified Christ, and His people linked with Him. The end of all flesh has come before God. It is not a question of some very gross forms of "flesh," or of nature, of that merely which is "vile and refuse." No; it is "the end of all." Such is the solemn, sweeping verdict; and then—what? A risen Christ. Nothing else. All in Him are seen by God as He is seen. All out of Him are under judgment. It all hinges upon this one question, "Am I in or out of Christ?" What a question!

Reader, are you in Christ? Do you believe in His Name? Have you given Him the confidence of your heart? If so, you have "eternal life"—you are "a new creation"—old things are passed away." God does not see a single shred of the old thing remaining for you. "All things are become new, and all things are of God." You may say, you do not feel that old things are all passed away. We reply, God says they are, and it is your happy privilege to believe what He says, and "reckon" yourself to be what He declares you are. God speaks according to that which is true of you in Christ. He does not see you in the flesh, but in Christ. There is absolutely nothing before the eye of God but Christ; and the very weakest believer is viewed as part of Christ, just as your hand is a part of your body. You have no existence apart from Christ—no life—no righteousness—no holiness—no wisdom—no power. Apart from Him, you are nothing, and can do nothing. In Him you have all and can do all; you are thoroughly identified with Christ. Marvelous fact! Profound mystery! Most glorious truth! It is not a question of attainment or of progress. It is the settled and absolute standing of the feeblest member of the Church of God. True, there are various measures of intelligence, experience, and devotedness; but there is only one life, one standing, one position before God, and that is Christ. There is no such thing as a higher or a lower christian life. Christ is the believer's life, and you cannot speak of a higher or a lower Christ. We can understand the higher stages of christian life; but there is no spiritual intelligence in speaking of a higher christian life. "He that believeth on the Son of God hath everlasting life."

This is a grand truth, and we earnestly pray that God the Spirit may open it fully to the mind of the reader. We feel assured that a clearer understanding thereof would chase away a thousand mists, answer a thousand questions, and solve a thousand difficulties. It would not only have the effect of giving settled peace to the soul, but also of determining the believer's position in the most distinct way. If Christ is my life—if I am in Him and identified with Him, then not only do I share in His acceptance with God, but also in His rejection by this present world. The two things go together. They form the two sides of the one grand question. If I am in Christ and as Christ, before God, then I am in Christ and as Christ before the world; and it will never do to accept the result of this union before God, and refuse the results of it as regards the world. If we have the one, we must have the other likewise.

All this is fully unfolded in John 17. There we read, on the one hand, "The glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me." (Ver. 22, 23.) And, on the other hand, we read, "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." (Ver. 14.) This is as plain and positive as anything can be. And be it remembered that, in this wondrous scripture, our Lord is not speaking merely of the apostles, but, as He says, of "them also who shall believe on me through their word," that is, of all believers. Hence it follows that all who believe in Jesus are one with Him, as accepted above; and one with Him, as rejected below. The two things are inseparable. The Head and the members share in one common acceptance in heaven, and in one common rejection upon earth. Oh! that all the Lord's people entered more into the truth and reality of this! Would that we all knew a little more of the meaning of fellowship with a heaven-accepted, earth-rejected Christ!

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 4, Glad Tidings: Part 2 (3:16)

In the passage of scripture which has been engaging our attention, namely, John 16, we have a very remarkable illustration of the character of the entire Gospel of John, and especially the opening chapters. It is impossible to meditate upon it without seizing this interesting fact. In it, we are introduced to God Himself, in that wondrous aspect of His character and nature, as loving the world, and giving His Son. In it, too, we find, not only the "world" as a whole, but the individual sinner, under that most satisfactory title of "whosoever." Thus God and the sinner are together—God, loving and giving; and the sinner, believing and having. It is not God judging and exacting; but God loving and giving. The former was law; the latter, grace: that was Judaism; this, Christianity. In the one, we see God demanding obedience in order to life; in the other, we see God giving life as the only basis of obedience. In the one, we see man struggling for life, but never obtaining it; in the other, we see man receiving life as a free gift, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Such is the contrast between the two systems—a contrast which cannot be too deeply pondered. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." John 1:17.

But let us mark the way in which this is unfolded in our text. "God so loved the world." Here we have the wide aspect of the love of God. It is not confined to any particular nation, tribe, caste, or family. It embraces the whole world. God is love; and, being so, it is not a question of the fitness or worthiness of the object of His love. It is what He is. He is love, and He cannot be anything else. It is the very energy and activity of His nature. The heart may have many a question, many an exercise as to its state and condition before God, and very right it should have them. The Spirit Himself may produce such exercises and raise such questions; but, after all, the grand truth shines forth in all its luster, "God

is love." Whatever we are, whatever the world is, that is what God is; and we know that the truth as to God forms the deep and rich substratum which underlies the whole system of Christianity. The soul may pass through deep and sore conflict, under the sense of its own wretchedness; there may be many doubts and fears; many dark and heavy clouds; weeks, months, or years, may be spent under the law, in one's inward self-consciousness, and that, moreover, long after the mere intellect has yielded its assent to the principles and doctrines of evangelical religion. But, after all, we must be brought into direct personal contact with God Himself—with what He is—with His nature and character, as He has revealed Himself in the gospel. We have to acquaint ourselves with Him, and He is love.

Observe, it does not say, merely, that God is loving, but that He is love. It is not only that love is an attribute of His character, but it is the very activity of His nature. We do not read that God is justice, or holiness; He is just and He is holy; but it would not express the full and blessed truth to say that God is loving; He is much more, He is love itself. Hence, when the sinner—"whosoever" he be, it matters not—is brought to see his own total and absolute ruin, his hopeless wretchedness, his guilt and misery, the utter vanity and worthlessness of all within and around Him, that there is nothing in the whole world that can satisfy his heart, and nothing in his heart that can satisfy God, or satisfy even his own conscience, when these things are opened, in any measure, to his view, then is he met by this grand substantial truth that "God is love," and that He so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son.

Here is life and rest for the soul. Here is salvation, full, free, and everlasting, for the poor, needy, guilty, lost one—salvation, resting not upon anything in man, or of man—upon aught that he is or can be, aught that he has done, or can do, but simply upon what God is, and has done. God loves and gives, and the sinner believes and has. This is far beyond Creation, Government, or Law. In Creation, God spake and it was done. He called worlds into existence by the word of His mouth. But we hear nothing, throughout the entire record of creation, of God loving and giving.

Finally, as to the Law, it is, from beginning to end, a perfect system of command and prohibition—a system perfect in its action as testing man, and making manifest his entire alienation from God. "The law worketh wrath." And again, "By the law is the knowledge of sin." But what could such a system do in a world of sinners? Could it give life? Impossible. Why? Because man could not fulfill its holy requirements. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, then verily righteousness should have been by the law." But no; the law was a ministration of death and condemnation. (See 2 Cor. 3) The only effect of the law, to any one who is under it, is the pressure of death upon the soul, and of guilt and condemnation upon the conscience. It cannot possibly be otherwise with an honest soul under the law.

What, then, is needed? Simply this, the knowledge of the love of God, and of the precious gift which that love has bestowed. This is the eternal groundwork of all. Love and the gift of Love. For, be it observed, and ever remembered, that God's love could never have reached us, save through the medium of that gift. God is holy, and we are sinful. How could we come near Him? How could we dwell in His holy presence? How could sin and holiness ever abide in company? Impossible. Justice demands the condemnation of sin; and if Love will save the sinner, it must do so at no less a cost than the gift of the only begotten Son. Darius loved Daniel, and labored hard to save him from the lions' den; but his love was powerless because of the unbending law of the Medes and Persians. He spent the night in sorrow and fasting. He could weep at the mouth of the den; but he could not save his friend. His love was not mighty to save. If he had offered himself to the lions instead of his friend, it would have been morally glorious; but he did not. His love told itself forth in unavailing tears and lamentations. The law of the Persian kingdom was more powerful than the love of the Persian king. The law, in its stem majesty, triumphed over an impotent love which had nothing but fruitless tears to bestow upon its object.

But the love of God is not like this—Eternal and universal praise to His Name! His love is mighty to save. It reigns through righteousness. How is this? Because "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." The law had declared, in words of awful solemnity, "The soul that sinneth it shall die." Was this law less stern, less majestic, less stringent than the law of the Medes and Persians? Surely not. How, then, was it to be disposed of? It was to be magnified and made honorable, vindicated and established. Not one jot or tittle of the law could ever be set aside. How, then, was the difficulty to be solved? Three things had to be done: the law had to be magnified; sin condemned; the sinner saved. How could these grand results be reached? We have the answer in two bold and vivid lines from one of our own poets,

Precious record! May many an anxious sinner read and believe it! Such was the amazing love of God that He spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. His love cost Him nothing less than the Son of His bosom. When it was a question of creating worlds, it cost Him but the word of His mouth; but when it was a question of loving a world of sinners, it cost His only begotten Son. The love of God is a holy love, a righteous love, a love acting in harmony with all the attributes of His Nature, and the claims of His Throne. "Grace reigns, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." The soul can never be set at liberty till this truth is fully laid hold of. There may be certain vague hopes in the mercy of God, and a measure of confidence in the atoning work of Jesus, all true and real so far as it goes; but true liberty of heart cannot possibly be enjoyed until it is seen and understood that God has glorified Himself in the manner of His love toward us. Conscience could never be tranquillized, nor Satan silenced, if sin had not been perfectly judged and put away. But "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." What depth and power in the little word "so!"

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 4, Glad Tidings: Part 1 (3:16)

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

There are some passages of holy scripture which seem to contain, in a line or two, an entire volume of most precious truth. The verse which we have just penned is one of such. It is part of our Lord's memorable discourse with Nicodemus, and it embodies, in a condensed form, a very full statement of gospel truth—a statement which may well be termed "Glad Tidings."

It should ever be borne in mind, both by preachers and those to whom they preach, that one grand object of the gospel is to bring God and the sinner together in such a way as to secure the sinner's eternal salvation. It reveals a Savior-God to a lost man. In other words, it presents God to the sinner in the very character that meets the sinner's need. A Savior is precisely what suits the lost, just as a life-boat suits a drowning man, or a physician a sick man, or bread a hungry man. They are fitted the one for the other; and when God, as a Savior, and man, as a lost sinner, meet together, the whole question is settled forever. The sinner is saved, because God is a Savior. He is saved according to the perfection which belongs to God, in every character He wears, in every office He fills, in every relationship He sustains. To raise a question as to the full and everlasting salvation of a believing soul, is to deny that God is a Savior. So it is in reference to justification. God has revealed Himself as a Justifier; and, hence, the believer is justified according to the perfection which attaches to God in that character. If a single flaw could be detected in the title of the very weakest believer, it would be a dishonor to God as a Justifier. Grant me but this, that God is my Justifier, and I argue, in the face of every opposer and every accuser, that I am, and must be, perfectly justified.

And, on the same principle, grant me but this, that God has revealed Himself as a Savior, and I argue, with unclouded confidence and holy boldness, that I am, and must be, perfectly saved. It does not rest upon aught in me, but simply and entirely upon God's revelation of Himself. I know He is perfect, in everything; and, therefore, perfect as my Savior. Hence, I am perfectly saved, inasmuch as the glory of God is involved in my salvation. "There is no God else beside me; a just God and a Savior; there is none beside me." What then? "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." (Isa. 45:21, 22.) One believing look from a lost sinner to a just God and a Savior, secures eternal salvation. "Look" How simple! It is not "Work"—"Do"—"Pray"—"Feel"—no; it is simply "Look." And what then? Salvation—everlasting life. It must be so, because God is a Savior; and the precious little monosyllable "Look" fully implies all this, inasmuch as it expresses the fact that the salvation which I want is found in the One to whom I look. It is all there, ready for me, and one look secures it—secures it forever—secures it for me. It is not a thing of today or to-morrow; it is an eternal reality. The bulwarks of salvation behind which the believer retreats have been erected by God Himself—the Savior-God, on the sure foundation of Christ's atoning work; and no power of earth or hell can ever shake them. "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him, shall not be confounded." Isa. 28:16 Pet. 2:6.

But let us now turn directly to the profound and comprehensive passage which forms the special subject of this paper. In it, most assuredly, we listen to the voice of a Savior-God—the voice of Him who came down from heaven to reveal God in such a way as He had never been revealed before. It is a marvelously blessed fact that God has been fully revealed in this world—revealed, so that we—the writer and the reader of these lines—may know Him, in all the reality of what He is—know Him, each for himself, with the utmost possible certainty, and have to do with Him, in all the blessed intimacy of personal communion.

Reader, think of this! Think, we beseech you, of this amazing privilege. You may know God for yourself, as your Savior, your Father, your own very God. You may have to do with Him; you may lean upon Him, cling to Him, walk with Him, live, and move, and have your being in His own most blessed presence, in the bright sunshine of His loving countenance, under His own immediate eye.

This is life and peace. It is far more than mere theology or systematic divinity. These things have their value; but, be it remembered, a man may be a profound theologian, an able divine, and yet live and die without God, and perish eternally. Solemn, awful, overwhelming thought! A man may go down to hell, into the blackness and darkness of an eternal night, with all the dogmas of theology at his fingers' ends. A man may sit in the professor's chair, stand in the pulpit, and at the desk; he may be looked up to as a great teacher and an eloquent preacher; hundreds may sit at his feet and learn, thousands may hang on his lips, and be enraptured, and, after all, he himself may descend into the pit, and spend a dismal, miserable eternity in company with the most profane and immoral.

Not so, however, with the one who knows God as He is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. Such a one has gotten life eternal. "This," says Christ, "is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." (John xvii. 3.) It is not life eternal to know theology or divinity. A man may sit down to the study of these, as he would to study law or medicine, astronomy or geology, and, all the while, know nothing of God, and therefore be without divine life, and perish in the end.

So also as to mere religiousness. A man may be the greatest devotee in the world. He may, most diligently, discharge all the offices, and sedulously attend upon all the ordinances of systematic religion; he may fast and pray; hear sermons and say prayers; be most devout and exemplary; and, all the while, know nothing of God in Christ; yea, he may live and die without God, and sink into hell forever. Look at Nicodemus. Where could you find a better sample of religious human nature than in him? A man of the Pharisees, a ruler of the Jews, a master in Israel; one, moreover, who seemed to discern in the miracles of our Lord the clear proofs of His divine mission; and yet the word to him was, "Ye must be born again." We have no need, surely, to go farther than this to prove that a man may be, not only religious, but actually a guide and a teacher of others, and yet not have a single spark of divine life in his soul.

But it is not so with one who knows God in Christ. Such a one has life, and an object. He has God Himself for his priceless portion. This is divine. It lies at the very foundation of personal Christianity and true religion.

It is above and beyond everything. It is not, we repeat, mere theology, divinity, or religiousness; it is God Himself, known, trusted, and enjoyed. It is a grand, unmistakable reality. It is the soul of theology, the groundwork of divinity, the life of true religion. There is nothing in all this world like it. It is something which must be felt in order to be known. It is acquaintance with God, confidence in Him, and enjoyment of Him.

Now, it may be that the reader is disposed to ask, "How can I possess this priceless treasure? How can I know God for myself, in this living, saving, powerful manner? If it be true that without this personal knowledge of God, I must perish eternally, then how am I to obtain it? What am I to do, what am I to be, in order to know God?" The answer is, God has revealed Himself. If he had not, we may say, with decision, that nothing that we could do, nothing that we could be, nothing in us or of us could possibly make us acquainted with God. If God had not manifested Himself, we should have remained forever in ignorance of Him, and perished in our ignorance. But, seeing that He has come forth from the thick darkness, and showed Himself, we may know Him according to the truth of His own revelation, and find, in that knowledge, everlasting life, and a spring of blessedness at which our ransomed souls shall drink throughout the golden ages of eternity.

We know of nothing which so clearly and forcibly proves man's utter incompetency to do aught towards procuring life, as the fact that the possession of this life is based upon the knowledge of God; and this knowledge of God must rest upon the revelation of God. In a word, to know God is life; to be ignorant of Him is death.

But where is He to be known? This is, in very deed, a grave question. Many a one has had to cry out, with Job, " Oh! that I knew where I might find him." Where is God to be found? Am I to look for Him in creation?

Doubtless, His hand is visible there; but ah! that will not do for me. A Creator-God will not suit a lost sinner. The hand of power will not avail for a poor guilty wretch like me. I want a heart of love. Yes, I want a heart that can love me in all my guilt and misery. Where can I find this? Shall I look into the wide domain of Providence—the widely extended sphere of God's government? Has God revealed Himself there in such a way as to meet me a poor lost one? Will Providence and government avail for one who knows himself to be a hell-deserving sinner? Clearly not. If I look at these things, I may see what will perplex and confound me. I am short-sighted and ignorant, and wholly unable to explain the ins and outs, the bearings and issues, the why and the wherefore of a single event in my own life, or in the history of this world. Am I able to explain all about the loss of The London? Can I account for the fact that a most valuable life is suddenly cut short, and an apparently useless one prolonged? There is a husband and the father of a large family: he seems perfectly indispensable to his domestic circle; and yet, all in a moment, he is cut down, and they are left in sorrow and destitution. While, on the other hand, yonder lies a poor bed-ridden creature, who has outlived all her relations, and is dependent on the parish, or on individual benevolence. She has lain there for years, a burden to some, no use to any. Can I account for this? Am I competent to interpret the voice of Providence in this deeply mysterious dispensation? Certainly not. I have nothing in or of myself wherewith to thread my way through the mazes of the labyrinth of what is called Providence. I cannot find a Savior-God there.

Well, then, shall I turn to the law—to the Mosaic economy—the Levitical ceremonial? Shall I find what I want there? Will a lawgiver, on the top of a fiery mount, wrapped in clouds and thick darkness, sending forth thunders and lightnings, or hidden behind a veil—will such a One avail for me? Alas! alas! I cannot meet Him—I cannot answer His demands nor fulfill the conditions. I am told to love Him with all my heart, with all my mind, and with all my strength; but I do not know Him. I am blind and cannot see. I am alienated from the life of God, an enemy by wicked works. Sin has blinded my mind, blunted my conscience, and hardened my heart. The devil has completely perverted my moral being, and led me into a state of positive rebellion against God. I want to be renewed in the very source of my being, ere I can do what the law demands. How can I be thus renewed? Only by the knowledge of God. But God is not revealed in the law. Nay, He is hidden—hidden behind an impenetrable cloud, an unrent veil. Hence I cannot know Him there.

I am compelled to retire from that fiery mount, and from that unrent veil, and from the whole economy of which these were the characteristic features, the prominent objects, still crying out, " Oh! that I knew where I might find him." In a word, then, neither in creation, nor in providence, nor in the law, is God revealed as " a just God and a Savior." I see a God of power, in creation; a God of wisdom, in providence; a God of justice, in the law; a God of love, only in the face of Jesus Christ. " God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself."

2 Cor. 5:19.

To this stupendous fact we call the reader's earnest attention; that is, if he be one who does not yet know the Lord. It is of the very last possible importance that he be clear as to this. Without it there can be nothing right. To know God is the first step. It is not merely knowing some things about God. It is not unrenewed nature turning religious, trying to do better, endeavoring to keep the law. No, reader; it is none of these things. It is God, known in the face of Jesus Christ. " For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath sinned in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." This is the deep and blessed secret of the whole matter. The reader, so far as his natural condition is concerned, is in a state of darkness. There is not so much as a single ray of spiritual light. He is, spiritually and morally, just what creation was, physically, before that sublime and commanding utterance fell from the lips of the Almighty Creator, " Let there be light." All is dark and chaotic, for " the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." 2 Cor. 4:4, 6.

Here are the two things, namely, the god of this world blinding the mind, and seeking to hinder the shining of the precious life-giving beams of the light of God's glory; and, on the other hand, God, in His marvelous grace, shining in the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of His glory in the face of Jesus Christ. Thus all hinges upon the grand reality of the knowledge of God. Is there light? It is because God is known. Is there darkness? It is because God is not known. No doubt there are various measures in the experience and exhibition of this light; but there is light, because there is the knowledge of God. So also there may be various forms of darkness; some more hideous than others; but there is darkness, because God is not known. The knowledge of God is light and life. Ignorance of God is darkness and death. A man may enrich himself with all the treasures of science and literature; but if he does not know God, he is in a dark, a primeval night. But, on the other hand, a man may be profoundly ignorant of all human learning; but if he knows God, he can walk in broad daylight.

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 4, Glad Tidings: Part 3 (3:16)

It may, here, be needful to meet a difficulty which often occurs to anxious souls, in reference to the question of appropriation. Thousands have been harassed and perplexed by this question, at some stage or other of their spiritual history; and it is not improbable that many who shall read these pages, may be glad of a few words on the subject. Many may feel disposed to ask, " How am I to know that I love, and the gift of love, are intended for me? What warrant have I for believing that ' everlasting life' is for me? I know the plan of salvation; I believe in the all-sufficiency of the atonement of Christ for the forgiveness and justification of all who truly believe. I am convinced of the truth of all that the Bible declares. I believe we are all sinners, and, moreover, that we can do nothing to save ourselves—that we need to be washed in the blood of Jesus, and to be taught and led by the Holy Ghost, ere we can please God here, and dwell with Him hereafter. All this I fully believe, and yet I have no assurance that I am saved, and I want to know on what authority I am to believe that my sins are forgiven and that

I have everlasting life."

If the foregoing be, in any measure, the language of the reader—if it be, at all, the expression of his difficulty, we would, in the first place, call his attention to two words which occur in our precious text (John 3:16), namely, " world" and " whosoever." It seems utterly impossible for anyone to refuse the application of these two words. For what, let us ask, is the meaning of the term " world?" What does it embrace? or, rather, What does it not embrace? When our Lord declares that " God so loved the world," on what ground can the reader exclude himself from the range, scope, and application of this divine love? On no ground whatever, unless he can show that he alone belongs not to the world, but to some other sphere of being. If it were declared that " the world" is hopelessly condemned, could any one making a part of that world avoid the application of the sentence? Could he exclude himself from it? Impossible. How then can he, why should he, exclude himself, when it is a question of God's free love, and of salvation by Christ Jesus?

But, further, we would ask, what is the meaning—what the force—of the familiar word, " whosoever?" Assuredly, it means " anybody;" and if anybody, why not the reader? It is infinitely better, infinitely surer, and more satisfactory to find the word " whosoever" in the gospel than to find my own name there, inasmuch as there may be a thousand persons in the world of the same name; but " whosoever" applies to me as distinctly as though I were the only sinner on the face of the earth.

Thus, then, the very words of the gospel message—the very terms used to set forth the glad tidings, are such as leave no possible ground for a difficulty as to their application. If we listen to our Lord, in the clays of His flesh, we hear such words as these, " God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life." Again, if we listen to Him after His resurrection, we hear these words, " Go ye unto all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16) And, lastly, if we listen to the voice of the Holy Ghost sent from a risen, ascended, and glorified Lord, we hear such words as these, " The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Rom. 10:12, 13.

In all the above cited passages, we have two terms used, one general, the other particular, and both together so presenting the message of salvation, as to leave no room whatever for any one to refuse its application. If " all the world" is the scope, and " every creature" is the object of the precious gospel of Christ, then on what ground can any one exclude himself? Where is there authority for any sinner out of hell to say that the glad tidings of salvation are not for him? There is none. Salvation is as free as the air we breathe—free as the dewdrops that refresh the earth—free as the sunbeams that shine upon our pathway; and if any attempt to limit its application, they are neither in harmony with the mind of Christ, nor in sympathy with the heart of God.

But it may be that some of our readers would, at this stage of the subject, feel disposed to ask us, " How do you dispose of the question of election?" We reply, " Very simply, by leaving it where God has placed it, namely, as a landmark in the inheritance of the spiritual Israel, and not as a stumbling block in the pathway of the anxious enquirer." This we believe to be the true way of dealing with the deeply important doctrine of election. The more we ponder the subject, the more thoroughly are we convinced that it is a mistake on the part of the evangelist or preacher of the gospel to qualify his message, hamper his subject, or perplex his hearers, by the doctrine of election or predestination. He has to do with lost sinners in the discharge of his blessed ministry. He meets men where they are, on the broad ground of our common ruin, our common guilt, our common condemnation. He meets them with a message of full, free, present, personal, and eternal salvation—a message which comes fresh, fervent, and glowing from the very bosom of God. His ministry is, as the Holy Ghost declares in 2 Cor. 5, " a ministry of reconciliation," the glorious characteristics of which are these, " God in Christ"—" reconciling the world unto himself"—" not imputing their trespasses;" and the marvelous foundation of which is, that God has made Jesus who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Does this trench, in the smallest degree, upon the blessed and clearly established truth of election? By no means. It leaves it in all its integrity and in its full value, as a grand fundamental truth of holy scripture, exactly where God has placed it, not as a preliminary question to be settled ere the sinner comes to Jesus; but as a most precious consolation and encouragement to Him when he has come. This makes all the difference. If the sinner be called upon to settle, beforehand, the question of his election, how is he to set about it? Whither is he to turn for a solution? Where shall he find a divine warrant for believing that he is one of the elect? Can he find a single line of scripture on which to base his faith as to his election? He cannot. He can find scores of passages declaring him to be lost, guilty, and undone—scores of passages to assure him of his total inability to do aught in the matter of his own salvation—hundreds of passages unfolding the free love of God, the value and efficacy of the atonement of Christ, and assuring him of a hearty welcome to come, just as he is, and make his own of the precious fruits of God's salvation. But if it be needful for him to settle the prior question of his predestination and election, then is his case hopeless, and he must, in so far as he is in earnest, be plunged in black despair.

And is it not thus with thousands, at this moment, through the misapplication of the doctrine of election? We fully believe it is; and hence our anxiety to help our readers by setting the matter in what we judge to be the true light before their minds. We believe it to be of the utmost importance for the anxious enquirer to know that the standpoint from which he is called to view the cross of Christ, is not the standpoint of election, but of conscious ruin. The grace of God meets him as a lost, dead, guilty sinner, not as an elect one. This is an unspeakable mercy, inasmuch as he knows he is the former, but cannot know that he is the latter until the gospel has come to him in power.

"Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God." How did he know it? "Because our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." (1 Thess. 1:4, 5.) Paul preached to the Thessalonians as lost sinners, and when the gospel had laid hold of them as lost, he could write to them as elect.

This puts election in its right place. If the reader will turn for a moment to Acts 17 he will there see how Paul discharged his business, as an evangelist, amongst the Thessalonians. "Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ." So also in that splendid passage at the opening of 1 Cor. 15, " Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." Ver. 1-4.

From this passage, and many others which might be quoted, we learn that the apostle preached not merely a doctrine, but a person. He did not preach election. He taught it to saints, but never preached it to sinners. This should be the evangelist's model, at all times. We never once find the apostles preaching election. They preached Christ—they unfolded the goodness of God—His loving-kindness—His tender mercy—His pardoning love—His gracious readiness to receive all who came in then true character and condition as lost sinners. Such was their mode of preaching, or rather, such was the mode of the Holy Ghost in them, and such too was the mode of the blessed Master Himself. "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out." Matt. 11, John 6; 7

Here are no stumbling-blocks in the way of anxious enquirers—no preliminary questions to be settled—no conditions to be fulfilled—no theological difficulties to be solved. No; the sinner is met on his own ground—met as he is—met just now. There is rest for the weary, drink for the thirsty, life for the dead, pardon for the guilty, salvation for the lost. Do these free invitations touch the doctrine of election? Assuredly not. And what is more, the doctrine of election does not touch them. In other words, a full and free gospel leaves perfectly untouched the grand and all-important truth of election: and the truth of election, in its proper place, leaves the gospel of the grace of God on its own broad and blessed base, and in all its divine length, breadth, and fullness. The gospel meets us as lost, and saves us; and then, when we know ourselves as saved, the precious doctrine of election comes in to establish us in the fact that we can never be lost. It never was the purpose of God that poor anxious souls should be harassed with theological questions or points of doctrine. No; blessed forever be His name, it is His gracious desire that the healing balm of His pardoning love, and the cleansing efficacy of the atoning blood of Jesus, should be applied to the spiritual wounds of every sin-sick soul. And as to the doctrines of predestination and election, He has unfolded them in His word to comfort His saints, not to perplex poor sinners. They shine like precious gems on the page of inspiration, but they were never intended to lie as stumbling-blocks in the way of earnest seekers after life and peace. They are deposited in the hands of the teacher to be unfolded in the bosom of the family of God; but they are not intended for the evangelist, whose blessed mission is to the highways and hedges of a lost world. They are designed to feed and comfort the children, not to scare and stumble the sinner. We would say, and that with real earnestness, to all evangelists, "Do not hamper your preaching with theological questions of any sort or description. Preach Christ. Unfold the deep and everlasting love of a Savior God. Seek to bring the guilty conscience-smitten sinner into the very presence of a pardoning God. Thunder, if you please, if so led, at the conscience—thunder loud at sin—thunder forth the dread realities of the great white throne, the lake of fire, and everlasting torment; but see that you aim at bringing the guilty stricken conscience to rest in the atoning virtues of the blood of Christ. Then you can hand over the fruits of your ministry to the divinely qualified teacher to be instructed in the deeper mysteries of the faith of Christ. You may rest assured that the faithful discharge of your duty as an evangelist will never lead you to trespass on the domain of sound theology."

And, to the anxious enquirer, we would say, with equal earnestness, "Let nothing stand in your way in coming, this moment, to Jesus. Let theology speak as it may, you are to listen to the voice of Jesus, who says, 'Come unto me.' Be assured there is no hindrance, no difficulty, no hitch, no question, no condition. You are a lost sinner, and Jesus is a full Savior. Put your trust in Him, and you are saved forever. Believe in Him, and you will know your place amongst the 'elect of God' who are 'predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son.' Bring your sins to Jesus and He will pardon them, cancel them by His blood, and clothe you in a spotless robe of divine righteousness. May God's Spirit lead you, now, to cast yourself simply and entirely upon that precious all-sufficient Savior!"

We shall close this paper with a very brief notice of three distinct evils resulting from a wrong application of the doctrine of election, namely, I. The discouragement of really earnest souls who ought to be helped on, in every possible way. If such persons are repulsed by the question of election, the result must be disastrous in the extreme. If they are told that the glad tidings of salvation are only for the elect—that Christ died only for such, and hence, only such can be saved—that unless they are elect they have no right to apply to themselves the benefits of the death of Christ. If, in short, they are turned from Jesus to theology—from the heart of a loving pardoning God to the cold and withering dogmas of systematic divinity, it is impossible to say where they may end; they may take refuge either in superstition, on the one hand, or in infidelity, on the other. They may end in high Church, broad Church, or no Church at all. What they really want is Christ, the living, loving, precious, all-sufficient Christ of God. He is the true food for anxious souls.

II. But, in the second place, careless souls are rendered more careless still by a false application of the doctrine of election. Such persons when pressed as to their state and prospects, will fold their arms and say, "You know I cannot believe unless God gives me the power. If I am one of the elect I must be saved; if not I cannot. I can do nothing, but must wait God's time." All this false and flimsy reasoning should be exposed and demolished. It will not stand, for a moment, in the light of the judgment-seat of Christ. Each one will learn there that election furnished no excuse whatever, inasmuch as it never was set up, by God, as a barrier to the sinner's salvation. The word is, "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The very same form of speech and style of language which removes the stumbling-block from the feet of the anxious enquirer, snatches the plea from the lips of the careless rejecter. No one is shut out. All are invited. There is neither a barrier on the one hand, nor a plea on the other. All are made welcome; but all are responsible. Hence, if any one presumes to excuse himself for refusing God's salvation, which is as clear as a sunbeam, by urging God's decrees, which are entirely hidden, he will find himself fatally mistaken.

III. And, now, in the third and last place, we have frequently seen, with real sorrow of heart, the earnest, loving, large-hearted evangelist damped and crippled by a false application of the truth of election. This should be most carefully avoided. We hold that it is not the business of the evangelist to preach election. If he is rightly instructed, he will hold it; but, if he is rightly directed, he will not preach it.

In a word, then, the precious doctrine of election is not to be a stumbling-block to the anxious—a plea for the careless—a damper to the fervent evangelist. May God's Spirit give us to feel the adjusting power of truth!

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 4, Glad Tidings: Part 4 (3:16)

Having, in our last paper, endeavored to clear away any difficulty arising from the misuse of the precious doctrine of election, and to shew the reader, "whosoever" he be, that there is no hindrance whatever to his full and hearty acceptance of God's free gift, even the gift of His only begotten Son; it now only remains for us to consider the result, in every case, of this acceptance, as set forth in the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Here, then, we have the result, in the case of every one who simply believes in Jesus. He shall never perish, but shall possess everlasting life. But who can attempt to unfold all that is included in this word, "perish?" "What mortal tongue can set forth the horrors of the lake that burneth with lire and brimstone, " where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched?" We believe, assuredly, that none but the One who used the word, in speaking to Nicodemus, can fully expound it to any one, but still we feel called upon, as the conductors of " Things New and Old," to bear our decided and unequivocal testimony to the solemn truth of Eternal Punishment. We have, occasionally, referred to this subject in our "Correspondence;" but we believe it demands from us a formal notice; and, inasmuch as the word "perish" occurs in the passage which has, for some months, been occupying our thoughts, we cannot do better than call the reader's attention to it.

It is a serious and melancholy fact that the enemy of souls and of the truth of God is leading thousands, both in Europe and America, to call in question the momentous fact of the everlasting punishment of the wicked. This he does on various grounds, and by various arguments, adapted to the habits of thought, and moral condition, and intellectual stand-point of individuals. Some he seeks to persuade that God is too kind to send any one to a place of torment. It is contrary to His benevolent mind and His beneficent nature to inflict pain on any of His creatures.

Now, to all who stand, or affect to stand, upon this ground of argument, we would suggest the important inquiry, " What is to be done with the sins of those who die impenitent and unbelieving?" Whatever force there may be in the idea that God is too kind to send sinners to hell, there is equal force in the idea that He is too holy to let sin into heaven. He is " of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity." (Hab. 1:13.) God and evil cannot dwell together. This is plain. How, then, is the case to be met? If God cannot let sin into heaven, what is to be done with the sinner who dies in his sins? He must perish. But what does this mean? Does it mean annihilation, that is, the utter extinction or blotting out of the very existence of body and soul? Nay, reader, this cannot be. Many would like this, no doubt. " Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," would alas! suit many thousands of the sons and daughters of pleasure who think only of the present moment, and who roll sin as a sweet morsel under their tongue. There are millions, on the surface of the globe, who are bartering their eternal happiness for a few hours of guilty pleasure, and the crafty foe of mankind seeks to persuade such that there is no such place as hell, no such thing as the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; and, in order to obtain a footing for this fatal suggestion, he bases it upon the plausible and imposing notion of the kindness of God.

Reader, do not believe the arch-deceiver. Remember, God is holy. He cannot let sin into His presence. If you die in your sins, you must perish, and this word " perish" involves, according to the clear testimony of holy scripture, eternal misery and torment in hell. Hear what our Lord Jesus Christ saith, in His solemn description of the judgment of the nations: " Then shall the king say also to them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. 25:41.) And, while you hearken to these awfully solemn accents, remember that the word translated " everlasting " occurs seventy times in the New Testament, and is applied as follows: "everlasting fire"—"eternal life"—"everlasting punishment"—" eternal damnation"—" everlasting habitations"—"the everlasting God"—"eternal weight of glory"—" everlasting destruction "—" everlasting consolation "—"eternal glory"—" eternal salvation"—" eternal judgment" "eternal redemption"—"the eternal Spirit"—"eternal inheritance"—" everlasting kingdom"—" eternal fire."

Now, we ask any candid, thoughtful person, upon what principle can a word be said to mean eternal, when applied to the Holy Ghost or to God, and only temporary, when applied to hell fire or the punishment of the wicked? If it means eternal, in the one case, why not also in the other? We have just glanced at a Greek Concordance, and we should like to ask, would it be right to mark off some half-dozen passages in which the word " everlasting" occurs, and write opposite to each, these words, " everlasting here only means for a time?" The very thought is monstrous. It would be a daring and blasphemous insult offered to the Volume of Inspiration. No, reader, be assured of it, you cannot touch the word " everlasting" in one case, without touching it also in all the seventy cases in which it occurs. It is a dangerous thing to tamper with the word of the Living God. It is infinitely better to bow down under its holy authority. It is worse than useless to seek to avoid the plain meaning and solemn force of that word " perish" as applied to the immortal soul of man. It involves, beyond all question, the awful—the ineffably awful reality of burning forever in the flames of hell. This is what scripture means by " perishing." The votary of pleasure, or the lover of money, may seek to forget this. They may seek to drown all thought of it in the glass or in the busy mart. The sentimentalist may rave about the divine benevolence; the skeptic may reason about the possibility of eternal fire; but we are intensely anxious that the reader should rise from the study of this paper with the firm and deeply wrought conclusion and hearty belief that the punishment of all who die in their sins will be eternal in hell, as surely as the blessedness of all who die in the faith of Christ will be eternal in the heavens. Were it not so, the Holy Ghost would, most assuredly, have used a different word when speaking of the former, from that which He applies to the latter. This, we conceive, is beyond all question.

But there is another objection urged against the doctrine of eternal punishment. It is frequently said, " How can we suppose that God would inflict eternal punishment as a penalty for a few short years of sin?" We reply, it is beginning at the wrong end to argue in this way. It is not a question of time, as viewed from man's stand-point, but of the gravity of sin in itself, as looked at from God's stand-point. And how is this question to be solved? Only by looking at the cross. If you want to know what sin is in God's sight, you must look at what it cost Him to put it away. It is by the standard of Christ's infinite sacrifice, and by that alone, that you can rightly measure sin. Men may compare their few years with God's eternity; the may compare their short span of life with that boundless eternity that stretches beyond; they may seek to put a few years of sin into one scale, and an eternity of woe and torment into the other, and thus attempt to reach a just conclusion: but it will never do to argue thus. The question is, did it require an infinite atonement to put away sin? If so, the punishment of sin must be eternal. If nothing short of an infinite sacrifice could deliver from the consequences of sin, those consequences must be eternal.

In a word, then, we must look at sin from God's point of view, and measure it by His standard, else we shall never have a just sense of what it is or what it deserves. It is the height of folly for men to attempt to lay down a rule as to the amount or duration of the punishment due to sin. God alone can settle this. And, after all, what was it that produced all the misery and wretchedness, the sickness and sorrow, the death and

desolation of well nigh six thousand years? Just one act of disobedience—the eating of a little fruit. Can man explain this? Can human reason explain how one act produced such an overwhelming amount of misery? It cannot. Well, then, if it cannot do this, how can it be trusted when it attempts to decide the question as to what is due to sin? Woe be to all those who commit themselves to its guidance in this most momentous point!

All! reader, you must see that God alone can estimate sin and its just deserts, and He alone can tell us all about it. And has He not done so? Yes, verily, He has measured sin in the cross of His Son, and there, too, He has set forth, in the most impressive manner, what it deserves. What, think you, must that be that caused the bitter cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" If God forsook His only begotten Son, when He was made sin, must not sin deserve infinite and everlasting punishment? We believe the conclusion is unavoidable. We consider that the infinite nature of the atonement proves, unanswerably, the doctrine of eternal punishment. That peerless and precious sacrifice is at once the foundation of our eternal life, and of our deliverance from eternal death. It delivers from eternal wrath and introduces to eternal glory. It saves from the endless misery of hell, and procures for us the endless bliss, of heaven. Thus whatever side of the cross we look at, or from whatever side we view it, we see eternity stamped upon it. If we view it from the gloomy depths of hell, or from the sunny heights of heaven, we see it to be the same infinite, eternal, divine reality. It is by the cross we must measure both the blessedness of heaven and the misery of hell. Those who put their trust in that blessed One who died on the cross, obtain everlasting life and felicity. Those who reject Him, must sink into endless perdition.

"We do not, by any means, pretend to handle this great question theologically, or to adduce all the arguments that might be advanced in defense of the doctrine of eternal punishment; but there is one further consideration which we must suggest to the reader, as tending to lead him to a sound conclusion, and that is the immortality of the soul. " God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." The fall of man in nowise touched the question of the soul's immortality. If, therefore, the soul is immortal, annihilation is impossible. The soul must live forever. Overwhelming thought! Forever! Forever! Forever! The whole moral being sinks under the awful magnitude of the thought. It surpasses all conception and baffles all mental calculation. Human arithmetic can only deal with the finite. It has no figures by which to represent a never ending eternity. But the writer and the reader must live throughout eternity, either in that bright and blessed world above, or in that terrible place where hope can never come.

May God's Spirit impress our hearts more and more with the solemnity of eternity and of immortal souls going down into hell. We are deplorably deficient in feeling as to these weighty realities. We are daily thrown in contact with people, we buy and sell and carry on intercourse in various ways with those who must live forever, and yet how rarely do we seek occasion to press upon them the awfulness of eternity and the appalling condition of all who die without a personal interest in the blood of Christ.

Reader, let us ask God to make us more earnest, more solemn, more faithful, more zealous in pleading with souls, in warning others to flee from the wrath to come. We want to live more in the light of eternity, and then we shall be better able to deal with others.

We shall, if tire Lord permit, devote our next paper to the consideration of " everlasting life."

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 3, God for Us: Part 1 (3:16)

How much is wrapped up in these few words,—"God for us!" They form one of those marvelous chains of three links so frequently found in scripture. We have "God" linked on to "us" by that precious little word "for." This secures everything, for time and eternity. There is not a single thing within the entire range of a creature's necessities that is not included in the brief but comprehensive sentence which forms the heading of this paper. If God be for us, then it follows, of necessity—blessed necessity—that neither our sins, nor our iniquities, nor our guilt, nor our ruined nature, nor Satan, nor the world, nor any other creature can possibly stand in the way of our present peace and our everlasting felicity and glory. God can dispose of all—has disposed of them, in such a way as to illustrate His own glory, and magnify His holy Name, throughout the wide universe, forever and ever. All praise and adoration be to the Eternal Trinity!

It may, however, be that the reader feels disposed, at the very outset, to inquire how he is to know his place amongst the "us" of our precious thesis. This, truly, is a most momentous question. Our eternal weal or woe hangs upon the answer. How, then, are we to know that God is for us? In reply to this most weighty question, we shall seek, by God's grace, to furnish the reader with five substantial proofs that God is for us, in all our need, our guilt, our misery, and our danger—for us, spite of all that we are, and that we have done—for us, although there is no reason whatever, so far as we are concerned, why He should be for us, but every reason why He should be against us.

The first grand truth which we shall adduce is

The Gift Of His Son

" For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." John 3:16.

Now, we are glad, for various reasons, to commence our series of proofs with these memorable words. In the first place, they meet a difficulty which may suggest itself to the mind of an anxious reader—a difficulty based upon the fact that the sentence culled from Rom. 8:31 evidently applies, primarily, to believers and only to such, as does the entire epistle and every one of the epistles.

But, blessed be God, no such difficulty can be started in reference to the all-embracing and encouraging words of Him who spake as never man spake. When we have from the lips of our blessed Lord, Himself the Eternal Son of God, such words as these, God so loved the world," we have no ground whatever for questioning their application to each and all who come under the comprehensive word " world." Before any

one can prove that the free love of God. does not apply to him, he must first prove that he does not form a part of the world, but that he belongs to some other sphere of being. If indeed, our Lord had said, " God so loved a certain portion of the world," call it what you please, then verily it would be absolutely necessary to prove that we belong to that particular portion or class, ere we could attempt to apply His words to ourselves. If He had said that God so loved the predestinated, the elect, or the called, then we must seek to know our place amongst the number of such, before we can take home to ourselves the precious assurance of the love of God, as proved by the gift of His Son.

But our Lord uses no such qualifying clause. He is addressing one who, from his earliest days, had been trained and accustomed to take a very limited view indeed of the favor and goodness of God. Nicodemus had been taught to consider that the rich tide of Jehovah's goodness, loving-kindness and tender mercy could only flow within the narrow enclosure of the Jewish system and the Jewish nation. The thought of its rolling forth to the wide wide world had never, we may safely assert, penetrated the mind of one trained amid the contracting influences of the legal system. Hence, therefore, it must have sounded passing strange in his ear, to hear "a teacher come from God" giving utterance to the great fact that God loved not merely the Jewish nation, nor yet some special portion of the human race, but " the world." No doubt, such a statement would add not a little to the amazement felt by this master in Israel at being told that he himself, with all his religious advantages, needed to be born again in order to see or enter the kingdom of God.

Do we then deny or call in question the grand truth of predestination, election, or effectual calling? God forbid. We hold these things as amongst the fundamental principles of true Christianity. We believe in the eternal counsels and purposes of our God—His unsearchable decrees—His electing love—His sovereign mercy.

But do any or all of these things interfere, in the smallest degree, with the gracious activities of the divine nature, or the outgoings of God's love towards a lost world? In no wise. God is love. That is His blessed nature, and this nature must express itself toward all. The mistake lies in supposing that, because God has His purposes, His counsels, His decrees—because He is sovereign in His grace and mercy—because He has chosen from all eternity a people for His own praise and glory—because the names of the redeemed, all the redeemed, were written down in the book of the slain Lamb, before the foundation of the world—that therefore God. cannot be said to love all mankind—to love the world—and, moreover that the glad tidings of God's full and free salvation ought not to be proclaimed in the ears of every creature under heaven.

The simple fact is that the two lines, though so perfectly distinct, are laid down with equal clearness, in the word of God; neither interferes, in the smallest degree, with the other, but both together go to make up the beautiful harmony of divine truth and to set forth the glorious unity of the divine nature.

Now, it is with the activities of the divine nature and the outgoings of divine love that the preacher of the gospel has specially to do. He is not to be cramped, crippled or confined in his blessed work, by any reference to God's secret decrees or purposes, though fully aware of the existence of such. His mission is to the world—the wide wide world. His theme is salvation—a salvation as full as the heart of God, as permanent as the throne of God—as free as the air—free to all without any exception, limitation, or condition whatsoever. The basis of his work is the atoning death of Christ which has removed all barriers out of the way, and opened up the floodgates in order that the mighty tide of divine love may roll forth, in all its fullness, richness and blessedness, to a lost and guilty world.

And here, we may add, lies the ground of man's responsibility in reference to the gospel of God. If, indeed, it be true that God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son—if " the righteousness of God is unto all"—if it be God's gracious will that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth—if He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance—then verily is, every man who hears this glorious gospel laid under the most solemn responsibility to believe it and be saved. No one can honestly and truthfully turn round and say, " I longed to be saved, but could not, because I was not one of the elect. I longed to flee from the wrath to come but was prevented by the insuperable barrier of the divine decree which irresistibly consigned me to an everlasting hell."

There is not, within the covers of the volume of 'God, in the entire range of His dealings with His creatures, in the aspect of His character, or in the enactments of His moral government, the very faintest shadow of a foundation for such an objection. Every man is left without excuse. God can say to all who have rejected His gospel, " I would, but ye would not." There is absolutely no such thing as reprobation in the word of God, meaning thereby the consignment, on God's part, of any number of His creatures to. everlasting damnation. Everlasting fire is prepared for the devil and his angels. (Matt. 25) Men will rush into it. " Vessels of wrath" are fitted, not by God, but by themselves, " to destruction." (Born. ix.) Everyone who gets to heaven will have to thank God for it. Everyone who finds himself in hell, will have to thank himself for it.

Furthermore, we have ever to remember that the sinner has nothing to do with God's unpublished. decrees. What does he—what can he know about such? Nothing whatever. But he has to do with God's, published love—His proffered mercy—His free salvation—His glorious gospel. "We may fearlessly assert that so long as these glowing and glorious words shine in the record of God, "Whosoever will let him take of the water of life freely," it is impossible for any son or daughter of Adam to say, " I longed to be saved, but could not. I thirsted for the living water, but could not reach it. The well was deep and I had nothing to draw with." All, no! such language will never be used, such an objection will never be urged by anyone in all the ranks of the lost. When men pass into eternity they will see with awful clearness what they now affect to think is so obscure and perplexing, namely, the perfect compatibility of God's electing sovereign grace and the free offer of salvation to all—the fullest harmony between divine sovereignty and human responsibility.

'We fondly trust the reader sees these things, even now. It is of the very last possible importance to maintain the balance of truth in the soul—to allow the beams of divine revelation to act, with full power, on the heart and conscience, unimpeded by the murky atmosphere of mere human theology. There is imminent danger in taking up a certain number of abstract truths and forming them into a system. We want the adjusting power of all truth. The growth and practical sanctification of the soul are promoted, not by some truth, but by the truth, in all its fullness, as embodied in the person of Christ, and set forth by the eternal Spirit in the holy scriptures. We must get rid completely of all our own preconceived notions—all merely theological views and opinions—and come like a little child, to the feet of Jesus to be taught by His Spirit, from out His holy word. Thus only shall we find rest from conflicting dogmas. Thus shall all the heavy clouds and mists of human opinion be rolled away and our enfranchised souls shall bask in the clear sunlight of a full divine revelation.

We shall now proceed with our proofs.

The second fact which we shall adduce to prove that God is for us will be found in THE DEATH OF HIS SON.

And, for our present purpose, it is only necessary for us to take up one feature in the atoning death of Christ, but that one feature is a cardinal one. We refer to the marvelous fact set forth by the Holy Ghost in the prophet Isaiah, "It pleased Jehovah to bruise him. He hath put him to grief." Chap. 53.

Our blessed Lord might have come into this world of sin and sorrow. He might have become a man. He might have been baptized in the Jordan—anoined by the Holy Ghost—tempted of Satan in the wilderness. He might have gone about doing good. He might have lived and labored, wept and prayed, and, at the close, gone back to heaven again, thus leaving us involved in deeper gloom than ever. He might, like the priest or the Levite, in the parable, have come and looked upon us in our wounds and misery, passed by on the other side and returned alone to the place from whence He came.

And what if He had? what, reader, but the flames of an everlasting hell, for thee and me? For, be it well remembered, that all the living labors of the Son of God—His amazing ministry—His days of toil and His nights of prayer—His tears, His sighs, His groans—the whole of His life-work, from the manger up to, but short of, the cross, could not have blotted out one: speck of guilt from a human conscience. "Without shedding of blood is no remission." No doubt, the eternal Son had to become a man that He might die; but incarnation could not cancel guilt. Indeed, the life of Christ, as a man on this earth, only proved the human race more guilty still. "If I had not come and spoken to them, they had not had sin." The light that shone in His blessed ways, only revealed the moral darkness of man—of Israel—of the world.. Hence, therefore, had He merely come and lived and labored here for three-and-thirty years, and gone back to heaven, our guilt and moral darkness would have been fully proved but no atonement made. "It is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul."

This is a grand foundation-truth of Christianity, and, must be constantly affirmed, and tenaciously held. There is immense moral power in it. If it be true that all the life-labors of the Son of God—His tears, His prayers, His groans—His sighs—if all these things put together could not cancel one single speck of guilt; then, indeed, may we not lawfully inquire what possible value can there be in our works—our tears—our prayers—our religious services—our ordinances, sacraments and ceremonies—the whole range of religious activity and moral reform? Can such things avail to cancel our sins and give us a righteousness before God? The thought is perfectly monstrous. If any or all of these things could avail, then why the sacrificial, atoning death of Christ? Why that ineffable and inestimable sacrifice, if aught else would have done?

But, it will perhaps be said that, although none of these things could avail without the death of Christ,, yet they must be added to it. For what? To make that peerless death—that precious blood—that priceless sacrifice of full avail? Is that it? Shall the rubbish of human doings, human righteousness, be flung into the scale to make the sacrifice of Christ of full avail in the judgment of God? The bare thought is positive and absolute blasphemy.

But are there not to be good works? Yes, verily; but what are they? Are they the pious doings, the religious efforts, the moral activities of unregenerate, unconverted, unbelieving nature? Nay. What then? What are the Christian's good works? They are lifeworks, not dead works. They are the precious fruits of life possessed—the life of Christ in the true believer. There is not anything beneath, the canopy of heaven which God can accept as a good work save the fruit of the grace of Christ in the believer. The very feeblest expression of the life of Christ, in the daily history of a Christian, is fragrant and precious to God. But the most splendid and gigantic labors of an unbeliever are, in God's account, but "dead works."

All this, however, is a digression from our main line, to which we must now return.

We have said that, for our present purpose, we shall merely refer to one special point in the death of Christ, and that is the fact that it pleased Jehovah to bruise Him. Herein lies the striking and soul-subduing proof that God is for us. "He spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." He not merely gave Him but bruised Him, and that for us. That spotless, holy, perfect One—the only perfect man that ever trod this earth—the One who ever did the things which pleased His Father—whose whole life from the manger to the tree was one continued sweet odor ascending to the throne and to the heart of God—whose every movement, every word, every look, every thought was well pleasing to God—whose one grand object, from first to last, was to glorify God and finish His work—this blessed One was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God—was nailed to the cursed tree, and there endured the righteous wrath of a sin hating God; and all this because God was for us—even its.

What marvelous and matchless grace is here! The Just One bruised for the unjust—the sinless, spotless, holy Jesus, bruised by the hand of Infinite Justice in order that guilty rebels might be saved; and not only saved but brought into the position and relationship of sons—sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty—heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

This surely is grace—rich, free, sovereign grace—grace abounding to the very chief of sinners—grace reigning, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ. Who would not trust this grace? Who can look at the cross, and doubt that God is for the sinner—for any sinner—for him—for the reader of these lines? Who would not confide in that love that shines in the cross? Who can look at the cross and not see that God willeth not the death of any sinner? Why did He not allow us to perish in our guilt—to descend into that everlasting hell which we so richly deserved because of our sins? Why give His only begotten Son? Why bruise Him on that shameful cross? Why hide His face from the only perfect Man that ever lived—that Man His own Eternal Son? Why all this, reader? Surely it was because God is for us, spite of all our guilt and sinful rebellion. Yes, blessed be His Name, He is for the poor self-destroyed, hell-deserving sinner, be he who or what he may; and each one whose eye scans these lines is now entreated to come and confide in the love that gave Jesus from the bosom and bruised Him on the cross.

Oh I beloved reader, do come, just now. Delay not! Waver not! Reason not! Listen not to Satan! Listen not to the suggestions and imaginings of your own heart; but listen to that word which assures you that God is for you, and to that love which shines forth in the gift and the death of His Son.

(To be continued, if the Lord will.)

(John 21:1-19.)

A careful study of these verses will enable us to trace, in them, three distinct kinds of restoration, namely, restoration of conscience, restoration of heart, and restoration of position.

I. The first of these, restoration of conscience, is of all-importance. It would be utterly impossible to over estimate the value of a sound, clear, uncondemning conscience. A Christian cannot get on if there is a single soil on his conscience. He must walk before God with a pure conscience—a conscience without stain or sting. Precious treasure! May my reader ever possess it.

It is very obvious that Peter possessed it in the touching scene, “ at the sea of Tiberias.” And yet he had fallen—shamefully, grievously fallen. He had denied his Lord with an oath; but he was restored. One look from Jesus had broken up the deep fountains of his heart, and drawn forth floods of bitter tears. And yet it was not his tears, but the love that drew them forth, which formed the ground of his thorough restoration of conscience. It was the changeless and everlasting love of the heart of Jesus—the divine efficacy of the blood of Jesus—and the all-prevailing power of the advocacy of Jesus that imparted to Peter’s conscience the boldness and liberty so strikingly and beautifully exhibited on the memorable occasion before us.

The risen Savior is seen, in these closing chapters of John’s Gospel, watching over His poor, foolish, feeble, erring disciples—hovering about their path—presenting Himself, in various ways, before them—taking occasion, from their very necessities, to make Himself known, in perfect grace, to their hearts. Was there a tear to be dried, a difficulty to be solved, a fear to be hushed, a bereaved heart to be soothed, an unbelieving mind to be corrected? Jesus was present, in all the fullness and variety of His grace, to meet all these things. So also when, under the guidance of the ever forward Peter, they had gone forth to spend a night in fruitless toil, Jesus had His eye upon them. He knew all about the darkness, and the toil, and the empty net, and there He was on the shore, to kindle a fire and prepare a dinner for them. Yes, the selfsame Jesus who had died on the cross to put away their sins, now stood on the shore to restore them from their wanderings, gather them round Himself, and minister to all their need. “Have ye any meat?” developed the fruitlessness of their night’s toil. “ Come and dine,” was the touching expression of the tender, thoughtful, all-providing love of the risen Savior.

But let us note, particularly, the evidences of a thoroughly restored conscience, as exhibited by Simon Peter. “Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved, saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher’s coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea.” He could not wait for the ships, or for his fellow-disciples, so eager was he to get to the feet of his risen Lord. In place of saying to John or to the others, “ You know how shamefully I have fallen, and although I have, since then, seen the Lord, and heard Him speak peace to my soul, yet I think it more becoming in one that has so fallen to keep back, do you therefore go first and meet the blessed One, and I shall follow after,” in place of aught in this style, he flings himself boldly into the sea, as much as to say, “ I must be the very first to get to my risen Savior; none has such a claim on Him as poor, stumbling, failing Peter.”

Now, here was a perfectly restored conscience—a conscience without a single spot—a conscience basking in the sunlight of unchanging love. Peter’s confidence in Christ was unclouded, and this, we may boldly affirm, was grateful to the heart of Jesus. Love likes to be trusted. Let us ever remember this. No one need imagine that he is honoring Jesus by standing afar off on the plea of un-worthiness; and yet it is very hard for one who has fallen or backslidden, to recover his confidence in the love of Christ. Such an one can see clearly that a sinner is welcome to Jesus, no matter how great or manifold his sins may have been; but then he thinks the ease of a backsliding or stumbling Christian is entirely different. Should these lines be scanned by one who has backslidden or fallen, we would press upon him, most earnestly, the importance of immediate return to Jesus. “ Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.” What is the response to this pathetic appeal? “ Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God.” “ If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, return unto me.” (Jer. 3:22; 4:1.) The love of the heart of Jesus knows no change. We change; but He is “ the same yesterday, to-day, and forever;” and He delights to be trusted. The confidence of Peter’s heart was a rich feast to the heart of Christ. No doubt, it is sad to fall, to err, to backslide; but it is sadder still, when we have done so, to distrust the love of Jesus, or His gracious readiness to take us to His bosom again.

Beloved reader, have you fallen? Have you erred? Have you backslidden? Have you lost the sweet sense of divine favor, the happy consciousness of acceptance with God? If so, what are you to do? Simply this, “ Return.” This is God’s own special word to the backslider. Return, in self-judgment, and in the fullest confidence in the boundless, changeless love of the heart of Christ. 1)0 not, we beseech you, keep away in the distance of your own unbelief. Do not measure the heart of Jesus by your own thoughts. Let Him tell you what is in His heart toward you. You have sinned, you have failed, you have turned aside, and now, it may be, you are afraid or ashamed to turn your eyes toward the One whom you have grieved and dishonored. Satan, too, is suggesting the darkest thoughts, for he would fain keep you at a chilling distance from that precious Savior who loves you with an everlasting love. But you have only to fix your gaze upon the blood, the advocacy, the heart of Jesus, to get a triumphant answer to all the enemy’s terrible suggestions, and to all the infidel reasonings of your own heart. 00 not, therefore, go on another hour without seeking to get a thorough settlement of the question between your soul and Christ. Remember, “ His is an unchanging love, free and faithful, strong as death.” Remember also His own words, “ Return, ye backsliding children”—“Return to me.” And, finally, remember that Jesus loves to be trusted.

II. But the heart has to be restored as well as the conscience. Let this not be forgotten. It often happens in the history of souls, that though the conscience may be perfectly clear as to certain acts which we have done, yet the roots from whence those acts have sprung have not been reached. The acts appear on the surface of daily life, but the roots are hidden down deep in the heart, unknown, it may be, to ourselves and others, but thoroughly exposed to the eye of Him with whom we have to do.

Now, these roots must be reached, exposed, and judged, ere the heart is in a right condition in the sight of God. Look at Abraham. He started on his course with a certain root in his heart, a root of unbelieving reserve, in reference to Sarah. This thing led him astray when he went down into Egypt, and although his conscience was restored, and he got back to his altar at Bethel, yet the heart was not reached for years

afterward, in the affair of Abimelech, king of Gerar.

All this is deeply practical and most solemn. It finds its illustration in Peter as well as in Abraham. But only mark the exquisitely delicate way in which our blessed Lord proceeds to reach the roots in the heart of His dear and honored servant. "So when they had dined." Not till then. There was no allusion to the past, nothing that might cause a chill to the heart, or bring a cloud over the spirit while a restored conscience was feasting in company with a love that knows no change. This is a fine moral trait. It characterizes the dealings of God with all His saints. The conscience is set at rest in the presence of infinite and everlasting love, ere there is the most distant allusion to the roots of things in the heart. When Simon Peter, in the full confidence of a restored conscience, flung himself at the feet of his risen Lord, he was called to listen to that gracious invitation, "Come and dine." But, "when they had dined," Jesus, as it were, takes Peter apart in order to let in upon his soul the light of truth, so that by it he might discern the root from whence all his failure had sprung. That root was self-confidence, which had led him to place himself in advance of his fellow-disciples, and say, "Though all should deny thee, yet will not I."

This root had to be exposed, and, therefore, "When they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" This was a pointed and pungent question, and it went right to the very bottom of Peter's heart. Three times Peter had denied his Lord, and three times his Lord now challenges the heart of Peter—for the roots must be reached if any permanent good is to be done. It will not do merely to have the conscience purged from the effects which have been produced in practical life, there must also be the moral judgment of that which produced them. This is not sufficiently understood and attended to, and hence it is that again and again the roots spring up and bring forth fruit, and scatter their seed a thousand-fold around us, thus cutting out for us the most bitter and sorrowful work, which might all be avoided if the roots of things were thoroughly judged and kept under.

Christian reader, our object in this paper is entirely practical. Let us, therefore, exhort one another to judge our roots, whatever they may be. Do we know our roots? Doubtless, it is hard, very hard, to know them. They are deep and manifold; pride, personal vanity, covetousness, irritability, ambition—these are some of the roots of character, the motive springs of action, over which a rigid censorship must ever be exercised. We must let nature know that the eye of self-judgment is continually upon it. We have to carry on the struggle without cessation. We may have to lament over occasional failure; but we must maintain the struggle, for struggle bespeaks life. May God the Holy Ghost strengthen us for the ceaseless conflict.

III. We shall close this paper with a brief reference to restoration as bearing upon the soul's position or path. The conscience being thoroughly purged, and the heart, with its varied roots, judged, there is moral preparedness for our proper path. The perfect love of Jesus had expelled all fear from Peter's conscience; and His threefold question had opened up the roots in Peter's heart, and now He says to him, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, when thou wast, young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hand, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, follow me."

Here, then, we have, in two words, the path of the servant of Christ. "Follow me" The Lord had just given Peter the sweetest pledges of His love and confidence. He had, notwithstanding all past failure, entrusted him with the care of all that was dear to His loving heart in this world, even the lambs and sheep of His flock. He had said to him, "If you have affection for me, feed my lambs, shepherd my sheep," and now, in one brief but comprehensive utterance, He opens before him his proper path. "Follow me." This is enough. It includes all beside. If we want to follow Jesus, we must keep the eye continually upon Him; we must mark His footprints and tread therein. Yes, mark them and walk in them; and when tempted, like Peter, to "turn about" in order to see what this one or that one has to do, or how he does it, we may hear the correcting words, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me." This is to be our one grand and all-absorbing business, come what may. A thousand things may arise to distract and hinder. The devil will tempt us to look hither and thither, to look at this one and that one; to imagine we could do better here than there, or there than here; to be occupied with, and imitating the work of some fellow-servant. All this is met by those pointed words, "Follow me."

There is immense danger, in the present day, of following in the wake of others, of doing certain things because others do them, or doing things as others do them. All this has to be carefully guarded. It will be sure to come to nothing. What we really want is a broken will—the true spirit of a servant that waits on the Master to know His mind. Service does not consist in doing this or that, or running hither and thither; it is simply doing the Master's will, whatever that maybe. "They serve who stand and wait." It is easier to be busy than to be quiet. When Peter was "young" he went whither he would; but when he got "old" he went whither he would not. What a contrast between the young, restless, ardent, energetic Peter, going whither he would, and the old, matured, subdued, experienced Peter going whither he would not! What a mercy to have the will broken! To be able to say from the heart, "What thou wilt—as thou wilt—where thou wilt—when thou wilt." "Not my will, but thine, O Lord, be done."

"Follow me." Precious words! May they be engraved on our hearts, beloved reader! Then shall we be steady on our course, and effective in our service. We shall not be distracted or unhinged by the thoughts and opinions of men. It may happen that we shall get very few to understand us or sympathize with us—few to approve or appreciate our work. It matters not. The Master knows all about it. Let us only be sure of what He has told us to do, and do it. If a master tells one of his servants, distinctly, to go and do a certain thing, or occupy a certain post, it is his business to go and do that thing, or occupy that post, no matter what his fellow-servants may think. They may tell him that he ought to be somewhere else, or to do something else; a proper servant will heed them not; he knows his master's mind, and has to do his master's work.

Would it were more thus with all the Lord's servants! Would that we all knew more distinctly and carried out more decidedly, the Master's will respecting us. Peter had his path and John had his. James had his work, and Paul had his. So it was of old, the Gershonite had his work, and the Merarite had his; and if one had interfered with the other, the work could not have been done. The Tabernacle was carried forward or set up by each man doing his own proper work. Thus it is in this our day. God has varied workmen in His house and in His vineyard; He has quarrymen, stone-squarers, masons, and decorators. Are all quarrymen? Surely not; but each has his work to do, and the building is carried forward by each one doing his own appointed work. Should a quarry-man despise a decorator, or a decorator look down with contempt upon a quarryman? Assuredly not. The Master wants them both, and whenever the one would interfere with the other, as, alas! we so often do, the faithful correcting word falls on the ear, "What is that to thee? Follow thou me."

It is not our object, in the following pages, to dwell upon the ministry of the Baptist; nor yet upon the place which he filled in the history of God's dealings with Israel, deeply interesting as all this might be, and profitable too, inasmuch as his ministry was at once solemn and powerful, and his dispensational position full of the very deepest interest. But we must, for the present, confine ourselves to two or three of his utterances as recorded by the Holy Ghost in the Gospel of John, in which we shall find two things very strikingly presented to our view, namely, his estimate of himself, and his estimate of his Lord.

Now these arc, assuredly, points worthy of our attention. John the Baptist was, according to the testimony of his blessed Master, the greatest "among them that are born of women." This is the very highest testimony that could be borne to any one, whether we consider the source from which it emanated, or the terms in which it is couched. He was not only a prophet, but the greatest of prophets—the forerunner of the Messiah—the harbinger of the King— the great preacher of righteousness.

Such was John, officially; and hence it must be of the deepest interest to know what such an one thought of himself, and what he thought of Christ—to hearken to his fervent utterances on both these points, as given on the page of inspiration. Indeed we shall find herein a mine of most precious practical instruction.

Let us turn to the first chapter of John's Gospel, and read at the nineteenth verse.

"And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No. Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness."

They were determined to have an answer; and he gives them one. They would compel him to speak of himself; and he does so. But mark his answer—mark his words! Who or what was he? Nobody. He was only "a voice." This is morally lovely. The self-emptiness of this most honored servant is perfectly beautiful. It does the heart good to be brought in contact with such practical grace as this. Here was a man of real power and dignity, one of Christ's most illustrious servants, occupying the very highest position, whose preaching had stirred the hearts of thousands, whose birth had been announced by angels, whose ministry had been foretold by prophets, the herald of the kingdom, the friend of the King—and yet this remarkable man, when forced to speak of himself, can merely be induced to say, "I am a voice." Not even a man; but only a voice.

What a lesson is here for us! What a wholesome corrective for our lamentable self-occupation, self-complacency, and self-exaltation. It is truly wonderful to think of the Baptist's brilliant career, of his powerful ministry, of his widespread influence, extending even to the heart of Herod the king, of the place he occupied, and the work he did, and yet, notwithstanding all this, when forced to give out what he had to say of himself, he sums it all up in that one self-emptied word, "A voice."

This, we must confess, contains, in its brief compass, a volume of deep practical instruction for the heart. It is precisely what is needed, in this day of busy self-importance—needed by each—needed by all; for have we not, each and all, to judge ourselves on the ground of our inordinate tendency to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think? Are we not all prone to attach importance to any little work with which we ourselves happen to stand connected? Alas! it is even so, and hence it is that we so deeply need the wholesome teaching furnished by the lovely self-emptiness of John the Baptist, who, when challenged to speak of himself, could retire into the shade and say, "I am only a voice."

Now this was a very remarkable answer to fall on the ears of Pharisees, of whom were the messengers that were sent to question the Baptist, as we read, "They which were sent were of the Pharisees." Surely it is not without meaning that this fact is stated. Pharisees know but little of self-hiding or self-emptiness. Such rare and exquisite fruits do not thrive beneath the withering atmosphere of Pharisaism. They only grow in the new creation, and there is no Pharisaism there. Pharisaism, in all its phases and in all its grades, is the moral antipodes, the direct opposite of self-abnegation, and therefore John's reply must have sounded strange in the ears of the questioners.

"And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; he it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose."

Thus, the more this dear servant of Christ is forced to speak of himself, or of his work, the more he retires into the shade. When asked about himself, he says "I am a voice." When asked about his work, he says, "I am not worthy to unloose my Master's shoe-latchet." There is no puffing off or exalting of self; no making much ado of his service, no parading of his work. The greatest of prophets was, in his own eyes, merely a voice—the most honored of servants deemed himself unworthy to touch his Master's shoe.

All this is truly refreshing and edifying. It is most healthful for the soul to breathe such an atmosphere as this in a day like the present of so much contemptible egotism and empty pretension, John was a man of real power, real worth, real gift and grace; and therefore he was a lowly unpretending man. It is generally thus. The really great men are fond of the shade, and, if they must speak of themselves, they make short work of it. David never spoke of his wonderful feat with the lion and the bear until compelled to do so by Saul's unbelief. Paul never spoke of his rapture to paradise till it was drawn forth by the folly of the Corinthians; and when forced to speak of himself or his work, lie apologizes, and says, again and again, "I speak as a fool."

Thus it is ever. True worth is modest and retiring. The Davids, the Johns, and the Pauls have delighted to retire behind their Master, and lose sight of themselves in the blaze of His moral glory. This was their joy. Here they found and ever shall find their deepest, fullest, richest

bleasing. The very highest and purest enjoyment which the creature can taste is to lose sight of self in the immediate presence of God. Oh! to know more of it! It is what we want. It would effectually deliver us from the tendency to be occupied with, and influenced by, the thoughts and opinions of men; and it would impart a moral elevation to the character, and a holy stability to the course which, assuredly, are for the glory of God and our souls' true peace and blessing.

But we must gather up further instruction from the history of John the Baptist. Let the reader turn to John 3:25: "Then there arose a question between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purifying." There were questions then, as there are, alas! questions now, for our hearts are full of questions. "And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him."

Here was something calculated to test the heart of the Baptist. Could he bear to lose all his disciples? Was he prepared for desertion? Was he really up to the height of his own words? Was he merely a voice, a nothing, and a nobody? These were pertinent questions; for we all know it is one thing to talk humbly, and another thing to be humble. It is one thing to speak about self-emptiness, and quite another to be self-emptied.

Was the Baptist, then, up to the mark? Was he prepared to be superseded and set aside? Was it of any moment to him who did the work provided the work was done? Harken to his reply: "John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven." This is a great practical truth. Let us seize it and hold it fast. It is an effectual remedy for self-confidence and self-exaltation. If a man can "take unto himself" nothing—if he can do nothing—if he is nothing, it ill becomes him to be boastful, pretentious, or self-occupied. The abiding sense of our own nothingness would ever keep us humble. The abiding sense of God's goodness would ever keep us happy. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." The remembrance of this would ever keep us looking up. Whatever good there is in us, or around us, comes from heaven—comes from God—the living and ever flowing source of all goodness and blessedness. To be near Him, to have Him before the heart, to serve in His holy presence, is the true secret of peace, the unfailing safeguard against envy and jealousy.

The Baptist knew something of this, and hence he had an answer ready for his disciples. "A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease."

Here lay the deep and precious secret of John's happiness and peace. His joy was not in his own work, not in gathering a number of disciples round himself, not in the success or acceptableness of his ministry, not in his personal influence or popularity) not in any or all of these things put together. His pure and holy joy was to stand and hear the voice of the Bridegroom, and to see others, to see his own disciples, to see all, flocking to that blessed One, and finding all their springs in Him.

"This is my joy, which ne'er can fail, To see my Savior's arm prevail, And mark His steps of grace; Now new-born souls convinced of sin, His blood revealed to them within, Extol the Lamb in every place."

Such, then, was the Baptist's estimate of himself and of his Lord. As to himself, he was but a voice, and must decrease. As to his Lord, He was the Bridegroom; He was from heaven; he was above all; the center of all; whose glory must increase and fill with its blessed beams the whole universe of God, when all other glory shall have faded away forever.

But we have further testimony from the lips of this beloved and honored servant of God—testimony, moreover, drawn forth, not by any "question" about purifying—or any appeal to his personal feelings on the subject of his minister; but simply by his intense admiration of Christ as an object for his own heart. "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me. And I knew him not; but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God. Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God." John 1:29-36.

Here was what occupied John's heart. The Lamb of God. Peerless, precious object é Satisfying portion! Christ Himself—His work—His Person. In verse 29 we have one great branch of His work; "He taketh away the sin of the world." His atoning death is the foundation of everything. It is the propitiation for His people's sins; and for the whole world. In virtue of this precious sacrifice, every stain is removed from the believer's conscience; and in virtue thereof every stain shall yet be obliterated from the whole creation. The cross is the divine pedestal on which the glory of God and the blessedness of man shall rest forever.

Then in verse 33 we have another branch of Christ's work. "He baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." This was made good on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down from the risen and glorified Head to baptize believers into one body. We do not attempt to enter upon these weighty subjects here, inasmuch as our object is to present to the heart of the reader the great practical effect of occupation with Christ Himself—the only true object of all believers. This effect comes very strikingly out in the following verses. "Again the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; and looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God." Verses 35, 36.

Here the Baptist is wholly engrossed with the Person of his Lord, and hence we have no reference to His work. This is a point of the deepest possible interest and moment.

"John stood"—fixed—riveted—gazing upon the most glorious object that had ever fixed the gaze of men or angels—the object of the Father's delight and of heaven's adoration—"the Lamb of God." And mark the effect. "The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." They felt, no doubt, that there must be something peculiarly attractive in One who could so command their master's heart, and therefore, leaving him, they attached themselves to that glorious Person of whom he spoke.

This is full of instruction for us. There is immense moral power in true occupation of heart with Christ, and in the testimony which flows from thence. The positive enjoyment of Christ; feeding upon, and delighting in Him; the heart going out, in holy adoration, after Him; the affections centered in Him; these are the things that tell powerfully upon the hearts of others, because they tell upon our own hearts and ways. A man who is finding His delight in Christ is lifted out of himself, and lifted above the circumstances and influences which surround him. Such an one is morally elevated above the thoughts and opinions of men; he enjoys a holy calmness and independence; he is not thinking about himself, or seeking a name or a place for himself. He has found a satisfying portion, and is therefore able to tell the world that he is wholly independent of it. Was John troubled by the loss of his disciples? Nay, it was the joy of his heart to see them finding their center and their object where he had found his own. He had not sought to make a party, or to gather disciples around himself. He had borne witness to another, and that other was "the Lamb of God," in whom he himself delighted, not only because of His work, but because of His worth—His moral glory—His intrinsic, peerless, divine excellence. He heard the Bridegroom's voice and saw His face, and his joy was full.

Now we may well inquire, What can the world offer to a man whose joy is full? What can circumstances, what can the creature do for him? If men slight and desert him; if they wound and insult him—what then? Why, he can say, "My joy is full. I have found all I want in that blessed One who not only has taken away my sins and filled me with the Holy Ghost, but who has drawn me to Himself and filled me with His own divine preciousness and eternal excellency."

Reader, let us earnestly seek to know more of this deep blessedness. Rest assured we shall find therein an effectual cure for the thousand and one ills that afflict us in the scene through which we are passing. How is it that professors so often exhibit a morose and unlovely temper? Why are they peevish, fretful, and irritable in the domestic life? Why so ruffled and put about by the petty annoyances of their daily history? Why so easily upset by the most contemptible trifles? Why put out of temper if the dinner be not properly and punctually served up? Why so touchy and tenacious? Why so ready to take offense if self be touched or its interests intruded upon? Ah! the answer is easily given. The poor heart is not finding its center, its satisfying portion, in "the Lamb of God." Here lies the secret of our failure. The moment we take our eye off Christ—the moment we cease to abide in Him by a living faith, that moment we get under the power of every passing current of circumstances and influences; we become feeble and lose our balance; self and its surroundings rise into prominence and fill the heart's vision; and thus, instead of exhibiting the beautiful features of the image of Christ, we exhibit the very reverse, even the odious and humiliating tempers and dispositions of unsubdued nature.

May God enable us to lay these things seriously to heart, for we may depend upon it that serious damage is clone to the cause of Christ, and grievous dishonor brought upon His holy name by the uncomely manners, tempers, and ways of those who profess to belong to Him.

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 1, All-Sufficiency of Christ: Part 4 (17:14-18)

Having, in the three preceding papers of this series, sought to unfold the grand foundation truths connected with the work of Christ for us—His work in the past, and His work in the present—His atonement, and His advocacy; we shall now seek, by the gracious aid of the Spirit of God, to present to the reader something of what the scriptures teach us as to the second branch of our subject, namely, Christ as an object for the heart.

It is a wonderfully blessed thing to be able to say, "I have found an object which perfectly satisfies my heart—I have found Christ." It is this which gives true elevation above the world. It renders us thoroughly independent of the resources to which the unconverted heart ever betakes itself. It gives settled rest. It imparts a calmness and quietness to the spirit which the world cannot comprehend. The poor votary of the world may think the life of the true Christian a very slow, dull, stupid affair indeed. He may marvel how such an one can manage to get on without what he calls amusement, recreation, and pleasure; no theaters—no balls or parties—no concerts—no cards or billiards—no hunts or races—no club or news-room—no cricket or croquet parties.

To deprive the unconverted man of such things would almost drive him to despair or lunacy. But the Christian does not want such things, would not have them. They would be a perfect weariness to him. We speak, of course, of the true Christian, of one who is not merely a Christian in name but in reality. Alas! alas! many profess to be Christians, and take very high ground in their profession, who are, nevertheless, to be found mixed up in all the vain and frivolous pursuits of the men of this world. They may be seen at the communion table on the Lord's Day and at a theater or a concert on Monday. They may be found assaying to take part in some one or other of the many branches of christian work on Sunday, and, during the week, you may see them in the ball-room, at the race-course, or some such scene of folly and vanity.

It is very evident that such persons know nothing of Christ as an object for the heart. Indeed, it is very questionable how anyone with a single spark of divine life in the soul can find pleasure in the wretched pursuits of a godless world. The true and earnest Christian turns away from such things—turns away instinctively. And this, not merely because of the positive wrong and evil of them—though most surely he feels them to be wrong and evil—but because he has no taste for them, and because he has found something infinitely superior, something which perfectly satisfies all the desires of the new nature. Could we imagine an angel from heaven taking pleasure at a ball, a theater, or a racecourse? The bare thought is supremely ridiculous. All such scenes are perfectly foreign to a heavenly being.

And what is a Christian? He is a heavenly man; he is a partaker of the divine nature. He is dead to the world—dead to sin—alive to God. He has not a single link with the world. He belongs to heaven. He is no more of the world than Christ his Lord. Could Christ take part in the amusements, gaieties, and follies of the world? The very idea were blasphemy. Well, then, what of the Christian? Is he to be found where his Lord could not be? Can he consistently take part in things which he knows in his heart are contrary to Christ? Can he go into places, and scenes, and circumstances in which he must admit his Savior and Lord can take no part? Can he go and have fellowship with a world which hates the One to whom he professes to owe everything?

It may, perhaps, seem to some of our readers that we are taking too high ground. We would ask such, what ground are we to take? Surely christian ground, if we are Christians. Well, then, if we are to take christian ground, how are we to know what that ground really is? Assuredly

from the New Testament. And what does it teach? Does it afford any warrant for the Christian to mix himself, in any shape or form, with the amusements and vain pursuits of this present evil world? Let us hearken to the weighty words of our blessed Lord, in John 17 Let us hear from His lips the truth as to our portion, our position, and our path in this world. He says, addressing the Father, "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." Verses 14-18.

Is it possible to conceive a closer measure of identification than that set before us in these words? Twice over, in this brief passage, our Lord declares that we are not of the world, even as He is not. What has our blessed Lord to do with the world? Nothing. The world has utterly rejected Him, and cast Him out. It nailed Him to a shameful cross, between two malefactors. The world lies as fully and as freshly under the charge of all this, as though the act of the crucifixion took place yesterday, at the very center of its civilization, and with the unanimous consent of all. There is not so much as a single moral link between Christ and the world. Yea, the world is stained with His murder, and will have to answer to God for the crime.

How solemn is this! What a serious consideration for Christians! We are passing through a world that crucified our Lord and Master, and He declares that we are not of that world, even as He is not of it. Hence it follows that in so far as we have any fellowship with the world, we are false to Christ. What should we think of a wife who could sit, and laugh and joke, with a set of men who had murdered her husband? And yet this is precisely what professing Christians do when they mix themselves up with this present evil world, and make themselves part and parcel of it.

It will perhaps be said, "What are we to do? Are we to go out of the world?" By no means. Our Lord expressly says, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil." In it, but not of it, is the true principle for the Christian. To use a figure, the Christian in the world is like a diver. He is in the midst of an element which would destroy him, were he not protected from its action, and sustained by unbroken communication with the scene above.

And what is the Christian to do in the world? What is his mission? Here it is: "As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I sent them into the world." And again, in John 20:21, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."

Such is the Christian's mission. He is not to shut himself within the walls of a monastery or a convent. Christianity does not consist in joining a brotherhood or a sisterhood. Nothing of the kind. We are called to move up and down in the varied relations of life, and to act in our divinely-appointed spheres to the glory of God. It is not a question of what we are doing, but of how we do it. All depends upon the object which governs our hearts. If Christ be the commanding and absorbing object of the heart, all will be right. If He be not, nothing is right. Two persons may sit down at the same table to eat; the one eats to gratify his appetite, the other eats to the glory of God—eats simply to keep his body in proper working order as God's vessel, the temple of the Holy Ghost, the instrument for Christ's service.

So in everything. It is our sweet privilege to set the Lord always before us. He is our model. As He was sent into the world, so are we. What did He come to do? To glorify God. How did He live? By the Father. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." John 6:57.

This makes it all so simple. Christ is the standard and touchstone for everything. It is no longer a question of mere right and wrong according to human rules. It is simply a question of what is worthy of Christ. Would He do this or that? Would He go here or there? "He left us an example that we should follow his steps; and, most assuredly, we should not go where we cannot trace His blessed footsteps. If we go hither and thither to please ourselves, we are not treading in His steps, and we cannot expect to enjoy His blessed presence.

Christian reader, here lies the real secret of the whole matter. The grand question is just this—Is Christ my one object? What am I living for? Can I say, "The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me?" Nothing less than this is worthy of a Christian. It is a poor miserable thing to be content with being saved, and then to go on with the world, and live for self-pleasing and self-interest—to accept salvation as the fruit of Christ's toil and passion, and then live at a distance from Himself. What should we think of a child who only cared about the good things provided by his father's hand, and never sought his father's company—yea, preferred the company of strangers? We should justly despise him. But how much more despicable is the Christian, who owes his present and his eternal all to the work of Christ, and yet is content to live at a cold distance from His blessed Person, caring not for the furtherance of His cause—the promotion of His glory!

(To be continued, if the Lord will)

Answers to Correspondents: From Things New and Old 1858-1863, 88. John 15:1-6 (15:1-6)

Three correspondents have applied to us, this month, for an exposition of John 15:1-6. We have long felt that the difficulty arising from this most important scripture, is the result of seeking to introduce into it a train of thought altogether foreign to it. There is nothing whatever in the passage about the believer's security—no such idea as the possibility of a believer's being lost. It is utterly impossible that our blessed Lord can look at His people, in John 10, under the figure of sheep, and declare that they can never perish, and then look at them, in John 15, under the figure of branches, and declare that they can. This, we conceive, is clear. The believer possesses eternal life. He is a member of the body of Christ, and the members are as safe as the Head. The Lord be praised for this most precious and tranquilizing truth! It is as clearly taught in Scripture as the doctrine of the Trinity, or of justification by faith. Hence, therefore, whatever John 15:1-6 teaches, it most assuredly does not teach, that a child of God, a member of Christ, can ever be burning in hell fire. It is of all-importance to approach the passage with the mind quite clear as to this foundation truth. It is not a question of a sinner's salvation, but of a Christian's fruit-bearing.

Christ was the true vine, in contrast with Israel, who had proved to be "the degenerate plant of a strange vine," and had "brought forth fruit to Himself" Many might attach themselves to Christ, and yet not abide in Him. Now it is only by abiding in Him, that we can bring forth fruit. The Father, as husbandman, looks after the vine, cultivates and prunes according to His wisdom and faithfulness. If any attach themselves, in profession, to the vine, but do not abide therein, He takes them away. He disallows everything, as fruit, that is not the direct result of abiding in the true vine. "If any man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." How many withered branches have strewed the Church's pathway from the beginning until now! How many such lie scattered around us at this moment! And yet not one of Christ's members can perish. The Lord grant that we may not only rejoice in our eternal security, but also abide in Him!

Answers to Correspondents: From Things New and Old 1858-1863, 95. John 14:1 (14:1)

"J. L. H." In John 14:1, our Lord is teaching His disciples, that inasmuch as He was going away from them, they should henceforth regard Him as they had hitherto regarded God, as an object of faith. While He was with them, He was an object of sight as well as an object of faith. No man hath seen God at any time; He is only known to faith. So it is to be also as to Jesus, "Ye believe in God, believe also in Me."

Answers to Correspondents: From Things New and Old 1858-1863, 2. On Addressing Prayer to Jesus (14:13-14)

We have been applied to by two correspondents, "A young Christian," and "Faint yet pursuing," for counsel in reference to the same point, namely, as to the rightness of addressing prayer to the Lord Jesus Christ. We believe there is a simplicity and an ease in the way of the Spirit of God, in reference to such matters, that would tend to relieve the heart of all difficulty. We know that "The Father is God; the Son is God; and the Holy Spirit is God;" and hence, when we address any One of the Divine Trinity in unity, we are addressing God.

This is simple enough. Properly speaking, we have access to the Father, in the name of the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit. "And whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do; that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:13-14). Again, "In that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full." "At that day ye shall ask in My name" (John 16:23-24, 26). In Acts 7 we find Stephen addressing the Lord Jesus, saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). We feel quite assured, that when one is praying in the Spirit, he will be in full harmony with the divine mind in reference to this and every other point; and a cold accuracy, without the Spirit, is little worth.

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 2, Lord's Coming, Papers on the: The Fact Itself (14:1-3)

In approaching this most glorious subject, we feel that we cannot do better than to lay before the reader the distinct testimony of holy scripture to the broad fact itself, that our Lord Jesus Christ will come again—that He will leave the place which He now occupies on His Father's throne, and come in the clouds of heaven, to receive His people to Himself; to execute judgment upon the wicked; and set up His own everlasting and universal kingdom.

This fact is as clearly and fully set forth in the New Testament as either of the other two facts to which we have already referred. It is as true that the Son of God is coming from heaven, as that He is gone to heaven, or that the Holy Ghost is still on this earth. If we admit one fact, we must admit all; and if we deny one, we must deny all; inasmuch as all rest upon precisely the same authority. They stand or fall together. Is it true that the Son of God was refused, cast out, crucified? Is it true that He has gone away into heaven? Is it true that He is now seated at the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honor? Is it true that God the Holy Ghost came down to this earth, fifty days after the resurrection of our Lord; and that He is still here?

Are these things true? As true as scripture can make them. Then just as true is it that our blessed Lord will come again, and set up His kingdom upon this earth—that He will literally, and actually, and personally come from heaven, take to Himself His great power and reign from pole to pole, and from the river to the ends of the earth.

It may perhaps seem strange to some of our readers that we should deem it needful to undertake the proof of such a plain truth as this; but be it remembered that we are writing on this subject as though it were perfectly new to the reader; as if he had never heard of such a thing as the Lord's second coming; or as if, having heard of it, he still calls it in question. This must be our apology for handling this precious theme in so elementary a manner. Now for our proofs.

When our adorable Lord was about to take leave of His disciples, He sought, in His infinite grace, to comfort their sorrowing hearts by words of sweetest tenderness. "Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:1-3.

Here we have something most definite. Indeed it is as definite as it is cheering and consolatory. "I will come again." He does not say, I will send for you. Still less does He say, "You will come to me when you die." He says nothing of the kind. To send an angel, or a legion of angels, would not be the same thing as coming Himself. No doubt it would be very gracious of Him, and very glorious for us, if a multitude of the heavenly host were sent, with horses of fire and chariots of fire, to convey us triumphantly to heaven. But it would not be the fulfillment of His

own sweet promise. And most surely He will do what He promised to do. He will not say one thing and do another. He cannot lie or alter His word. And not only this, but it would not satisfy the love of His heart to send an angel or a host of angels to fetch us. He will come Himself.

What touching grace shines in all this! If I am expecting a very dear and valued friend by train, I shall not be satisfied with sending a servant or an empty cab to meet him; I shall go myself. This is precisely what our loving Lord means to do. He is gone to heaven; and His entrance there prepares and defines His people's place. Amid the many mansions of the Father's house, there would be no place for us if our Jesus had not gone before; and then, lest there should be in the heart any feeling of strangeness at the thought of our entrance into that place, He says, with such sweetness, "I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Nothing short of this can fulfill the gracious promise of our Lord, or satisfy the love of His heart.

And be it carefully noted that this promise has no reference whatever to the death of the individual believer. Who can imagine that, when our Lord said, "I will come again," He really meant that we should go to Him through death? How can we presume to take such liberties with the plain and precious words of our Lord? Surely if He meant to speak of our going to Him, through death, He could and would have said so. But He has not said so, because He did not mean so; nor is it possible that He could say one thing and mean another. His coming for us, and our going to Him, are totally different things; and being different ideas, they would have been clothed in different language.

Thus, for example, in the case of the penitent thief on the cross, our Lord does not speak of coming to fetch him; but He says, "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." We really must remember that scripture is as divinely definite as it is divinely inspired, and hence it never could and it never does confound two things so totally different as the Lord's coming and the Christian's falling asleep.

It may be well, at this point, to remark that there are but four passages in the entire New Testament in which allusion is made to the subject of the Christian passing through the article of death. The first is that passage in Luke 23 already referred to: "To-day! shalt thou be with me in paradise." The second occurs in Acts 7, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." The third is that most familiar and lovely utterance in 2 Cor. 5, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." The fourth occurs in that charming first of Philipians, "Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better."

These most precious passages make up the sum of scripture testimony on the interesting question of the disembodied state. There is a passage in Rev. 14 often misapplied to this subject; "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." But this has no application to Christians now, though no doubt all such who die in the Lord are blessed, and their works do follow them. The reference, however, is to a time yet future, when the Church shall have left this scene altogether, and other witnesses make their appearance. In a word, Rev. 14:13 bears upon apocalyptic times, and must be so viewed if we would avoid confusion.

We must now resume our subject, and proceed with our proofs, and in so doing, we shall ask the reader to turn to the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The blessed Lord had just gone up from this earth, in the presence of His holy apostles. "And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven?" Ver. 10, 11.

This is intensely interesting, and furnishes a most striking proof of our present thesis. Indeed it is impossible to avoid its force. Alas! that any should seek or desire to avoid it! From the manner in which the angelic witnesses speak to the men of Galilee, it would seem like tautology; but, as we well know, there is—there can be—no such thing in the volume of God. It is therefore lovely fullness, divine completeness, that we see in this testimony. From it we learn that the selfsame Jesus who left tills earth, and ascended into heaven, in the presence of a number of witnesses, shall so come, in like manner as they had seen Him go into heaven. How did He go? He went up personally, literally, actually, the very same person who had just been conversing familiarly with them—whom they had seen with their eyes, heard with their ears, handled with their hands—who had eaten in their presence, and "showed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs." Well, then, "He shall so come, in like manner."

"He who with hands uplifted. Went from this earth below, Shall come again all gifted, His blessing to bestow."

And here we may ask—though it be rather anticipating what may come before us in a future paper—Who saw the blessed Lord as He went up? Did the world? Nay; not one unconverted, unbelieving person ever laid his eyes upon our precious Lord, from the moment that He was laid in the tomb. The last sight the world got of Jesus was as He hung on the cross, a spectacle to angels, men, and devils. The next sight they will get of Him will be when, like the lightning flash, He shall come forth to execute judgment, and tread, in terrible vengeance, the winepress of the wrath of Almighty God. Tremendous thought!

None, therefore, but His own saw the ascending Savior, as none but they had seen Him from the moment of His resurrection. He showed Himself, blessed be His holy Name! to those who were dear to His heart. He assured and Confirmed, strengthened and encouraged their souls by these "many infallible proofs" of which the inspired narrator speaks to us. He led them to the very confines of the unseen world, just so far as men could go while still in the body; and there He allowed them to see Him ascending into heaven; and while they gazed upon this glorious sight, He sent the precious testimony home to their very hearts. "This same Jesus"—no other, no stranger, but the same loving, sympathizing, gracious, unchanging friend—"whom ye have seen go into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

Is it possible for testimony to be more distinct or satisfactory? Could proof be more clear or conclusive? How can any counter argument stand for a moment, or any objection be raised? Either those two men in white apparel were false witnesses, or our Jesus shall come again in the exact manner in which He went away. There is no middle ground between those two conclusions. We read in scripture that, "in the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established;" and therefore in the mouth of two heavenly messengers—two heralds from the region of light and truth, we have the word established that our Lord Jesus Christ shall come again in actual bodily form, to be seen by His own first of 1 all, apart from all others, in the holy intimacy and profound retirement which characterized His departure from this world. All this, blessed be God, is wrapped up in the two little words "as" and "so."

We cannot attempt^ in a brief paper like the present, to adduce all the proofs which are to be found in the pages of the New Testament. We have given one from the Gospels and one from the Acts, and we shall now ask the reader to turn with us to the Epistles. Let us take, for example, the First Epistle to the Thessalonians. We select this epistle because it is acknowledged to have been the earliest of Paul's writings; and further, because it was written to a company of very young converts. This latter point is valuable, inasmuch as we sometimes hear it stated that the truth of the Lord's coming is not suitable to bring before the minds of young believers. That the Apostle Paul did not think it unsuitable is evident from the fact that of all the epistles which he wrote not one contains so much about the Lord's coming as that which he penned for the newly converted Thessalonians. The fact is, when a soul is converted and brought into the full light and liberty of the gospel of Christ, it becomes divinely natural for such an one to look for the Lord's coming. That most precious truth is an integral part of the gospel. The first coming and the second coming are most blessedly bound up together by the divine link of the personal presence of the Holy Ghost in the Church.

On the other hand, where the soul is not established in grace; where peace and liberty are not enjoyed; where a defective gospel has been received, there it will be found that the hope of the Lord's coming will not be cherished, for the simple reason that the soul is, of necessity, occupied with the question of its own state and prospects. If I am not certain of my salvation—if I do not know that I have eternal life—that I am a child of God, I cannot be looking out for the Lord's return. It is only when we know what Jesus has done for us at His first coming, that we can, with bright and holy intelligence, look out for His second coming.

But let us turn to our epistle. Take the following sentences from the first chapter: " For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance.....So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." Verses 5-10.

Here we have a fine illustration of the effect of a full clear gospel, received in simple earnest faith. They turned from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son. They were actually converted to the blessed hope of the Lord's coming. It was an integral part of the gospel which Paul preached; and an integral part of their faith. Was it a reality to turn from idols? Doubtless. Was it a reality to serve the living God? Unquestionably. Well then it was just as real, just as positive, just as simple, their waiting for God's Son from heaven. If we question the reality of one, we must question the reality of all, inasmuch as all are bound up together and form a beautiful cluster of practical christian truth. If you had asked a Thessalonian Christian what he was waiting for, what would have been his reply? Would he have said, " I am waiting for the world to improve by means of the gospel which I myself have received? or, I am waiting for the moment of my death when I shall go to be with Jesus?" No. His reply would have been simply this, " I am waiting for the Son of God from heaven." This, and nothing else, is the proper hope of the Christian, the proper hope of the Church. To wait for the improvement of the world is not christian hope at all. You might as well wait for the improvement of the flesh, for there is just as much hope of the one as the other. And as to the article of death—though, no doubt, it may intervene—it is never once presented as the true and proper hope of the Christian. It may, with the fullest confidence, be asserted that there is not so much as a single passage in the entire New Testament in which death is spoken of as the hope of the believer; whereas, on the other hand, the hope of the Lord's coming is bound up, in the most intimate manner, with all the concerns and associations and relationships of life, as we may see in the epistle before us. Thus, if the apostle would refer to the interesting question of his own personal connection with the beloved saints at Thessalonica, he says, " For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy." Chap. ii. 19, 20.

Again, if he thinks of their progress in holiness and love, he adds, " And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you; to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." Chap. iii. 12, 13.

Finally, if the apostle would seek to comfort the hearts of his brethren in reference to those who had fallen asleep, how does he do it? Does he tell them that they should soon follow them? Nay; this would have been in full keeping with Old Testament times, as David says of his departed child, " I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me." (2 Sam. 12:23.) But it is not thus that the Holy Ghost instructs us in 1 Thessalonians—quite the reverse. " I would not," He says, " have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye borrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that [not they which shall be, but] we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent [come before or take precedence of them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words." Chap. iv. 13-18.

It is impossible for any proof to be more simple, direct, and conclusive than this. The Thessalonian Christians, as we have already remarked, were converted to the hope of the Lord's return. They were taught to look out for it daily. It was as much a part of their Christianity to believe that He would come, as to believe that He had come and gone. Hence it came to pass that when some of their number were called to pass through death, they were taken aback; they had not anticipated this; and they feared lest the departed should miss the joy of that blissful and longed-for moment of the Lord's return. The apostle therefore writes to correct their mistake; and, in so doing, he pours a fresh flood of light upon the whole subject, and assures them that the dead in Christ—which includes all who had or shall have fallen asleep; in short, those of Old Testament times as well as those of the New—should rise first, that is, before the living are changed, and all shall ascend together to meet their descending Lord.

We shall have occasion to refer to this remarkable passage again, when handling other branches of this glorious subject. We merely quote it here as one of the almost innumerable proofs of the fact that our Lord will come again, personally, really, and actually; and that this His personal coming is the true and proper hope of the Church of God collectively, and of the believer individually, We shall close this paper by reminding the christian reader that he can never sit down to the table of his Lord without being reminded of this glorious hope, so long as those words shine on the page of inspiration, "For as often ye eat this bread, and drink tins cup, ye do show the Lord's death till"—when? Till

ye die? Nay; but—" till he come." (1 Cor. 11:26.) How precious is this! The table of the Lord stands between those two marvelous epochs, the cross and the advent—the death and the glory. The believer can look up from the table and see the beams of the glory gilding the horizon. It is our privilege, as we gather, on each Lord's day, round the Lord's table, to show forth the Lord's death, to be able to say, " This may be the last occasion of celebrating this precious feast. Ere another Lord's day dawn upon us, He Himself may come." Again we say—How precious is this!

The Christian Shepherd: 2000, Christian Love (13:34)

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34).

What a lofty standard to follow—to love one another as Christ has loved us. How did He love? He loved in spite of all our weakness, failures and sins. His love rose above every barrier, proving itself superior to every hindrance. Many waters could not quench His love—not even the dark waters of death, for He loved us and gave Himself for us.

Such love is to be our model. We are to love one another as Christ loved us. It is the outflow of the divine nature in the believer. It may express itself in various ways—at times, rebuking, reproofing, or even smiting. Our Lord had occasionally to do so in reference to those whom, notwithstanding, He loved with an everlasting, unchangeable love.

True love is not blind, for it occupies itself with my faults in order to deliver me. "[Love] suffereth long, and is kind. . . . [Love] never faileth" (1 Cor. 13:48). "Little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:18).

There are two kinds of spurious love—sectarian and clique. There is a great danger in loving a person merely because they hold the same opinions as we (sectarian) or because their habits and tastes are agreeable to us (clique). It is not Christian love to love our own opinions or our own image. True Christian love is to love the image of Christ wherever we may see it.

C. H. Mackintosh (from Things New and Old)

The Mackintosh Treasury: Vol. 5, Philadelphia and Laodicea (13:21-25)

I would observe that 1 Sam. 4 and 7 remind us of the churches of Laodicea and Philadelphia in Rev. 3 The former presents to us a condition which we should carefully avoid; the latter, a condition which we should diligently and earnestly cultivate. In Laodicea we see miserable self-complacency, and Christ left outside. In Philadelphia we see conscious weakness and nothingness, but Christ exalted, loved, and honored; His Word kept and His name prized.

And let it be remembered that these things run on to the end. It is very instructive to see that the last four of the seven churches give us four phases of the Church's history right on to the end. In Thyatira we find Romanism; in Sardis, Protestantism. In Philadelphia, as we have said, we have that condition of soul, that attitude of heart which every true believer and every assembly of believers should diligently cultivate and faithfully exhibit. Laodicea, on the contrary, presents a condition of soul and an attitude of heart from which we should shrink with ever-growing intensity. Philadelphia is as grateful as Laodicea is loathsome to the heart of Christ. The former He will make a pillar in the temple of His God; the latter He will spew out of His mouth, and Satan will take it up and make it a cage of every unclean and hateful bird-Babylon! An awful consideration for all whom it may concern. And let us never forget that for any to pretend to be Philadelphia is really the spirit of Laodicea. Wherever you find pretension, assumption, self-assertion, or self-complacency, there you have in spirit and principle, Laodicea, from which may the good Lord deliver all His people!

Beloved, let us be content to be nothing and nobody in this scene of self-exaltation. Let it be our aim to walk in the shade as far as human thoughts are concerned, yet never be out of the sunshine of our Father's countenance. In a word, let us ever bear in mind that the fullness of God ever waits on an empty vessel.

Handfuls of Pasture: Volume 1, Jesus Girded (13:1-10)

(John 13:1-10.)

The attitude in which our blessed Lord Jesus appears in this scripture is one of infinite grace. We behold Him furnished with a basin, girded with a towel, and stooping down to wash and wipe his disciples' feet. Yes; Jesus, the Son of God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, is here seen laying His holy hands upon the defiled feet of His followers, in order to wash away every soil which, even unknown to themselves, they might have contracted. The dignity and glory of the Person magnify the grace of the act. There could be nothing higher than the place from which Christ had come; and there could be nothing on earth lower than the defiled feet of a sinner; but such is the glory of Christ's Person that He fills up all the space between. He can lay one hand on the throne of God, and the other on the feet of His saints, and form, in Himself, the mysterious precious link between the two. "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God and went to God; he riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded."

Observe this. Jesus, knowing that all things were in His hands—knowing whence He had come and whither He was going, enters upon the deeply significant work of washing His disciples' feet. What marvelous grace! What full provision is here! How true it is that Jesus meets us, at every stage of our spiritual history, with the very thing we need. He meets us at the first, when bowed down beneath the crushing load of guilt, and, by His precious blood, removes the load and casts it into the mighty waters of divine forgetfulness. He meets us day by day, as we pass along through a defiling scene, and with the basin and towel removes the defilement which we unavoidably contract, so that we may ever appear before God "clean every whit," and tread the courts of the sanctuary with feet as clean as Jesus can make them. He cleanses our conscience by His blood, and He cleanses our ways by His word.

This gives immense relief to the heart. Jesus has made us clean; and Jesus keeps us clean. There is not a soil on the conscience, not a soil on the feet of the very weakest member of the household of faith. Both the one and the other are cleansed according to the lofty demands of the sanctuary. All that God saw on my conscience has been washed away by the blood; and all that He sees in my ways is washed away by the word, so that I am "clean every whit." This is what Christ declares; it is founded upon His perfect work; and it maintains the heart in unruffled repose. The action of the basin and the towel never ceases for one moment. As we pass from the bath to the robing-room— from the fountain where our sins were washed away to the place where we shall put on our robes of immortality, our feet necessarily contract defilement; and if we did not know upon divine authority, that all that defilement was removed by a divine action continually going on, what should we do? We should either be in a most wretched state of soul, fearing all was not right, or else we should have a very low apprehension of the holiness of our position and path. But when, by the eye of faith, we see Jesus girded—when we gaze upon that mysterious basin—when, in the light of divine revelation, we interpret the whole mystic scene in John 13:1-10, then, while we have the most elevated view of the purity of that position in which the blood of Jesus has set us, our hearts enjoy profound peace, because we know that the One who was nailed to the cross to bring us thereinto, is girded for the gracious purpose of keeping us therein.

Nor need we, for one moment question the full application of all this to our own souls, for as surely as Christ washed the feet of those who sat around Him at the last supper, so surely is He washing our feet, yea, and will continue to wash the feet of His saints until we all stand upon the golden pavement of the upper sanctuary. "Having loved His own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end." Yes, right through and through to the very end of time, through all the changes of this ever changing scene, His love endures. The love of Jesus is not a love for a day, a month, or a year; it is a love for eternity. What He did over eighteen hundred years ago, He is doing now, and He will continue to do until we shall no longer need to have it done, and then "He will gird Himself, and come forth and serve us" in the glory of the kingdom. We are bound to Him forever, not only by our deep necessities, but by the powerful attractions of His Person.

Yes, my beloved Christian reader, you are as surely included in the mystic action of John 13 as you are in the powerful intercession of John 17. Of the latter, you are assured by His own words of thoughtful, tender love, when He said, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;" and of the former you are assured by the comprehensive expression, "His own....unto the end." Wherefore remember, for the abiding peace and consolation of your heart, Jesus is ever washing your feet. He has washed you already, so that you need not be washed over again; but your feet, your ways, need to be cleansed, and that He is doing for you, without any interruption, morning, noon, eventide, and midnight. He is always doing it, because you always need it to be done. It is not merely when you have committed some sin of which your conscience takes cognizance, but at all times your feet need to be washed, and this Jesus is doing for you, else you would have no part in Him.

Peter, like many in our day, did not quite understand the meaning or object of Christ's gracious act. He evidently thought it demeaning for His blessed Master to perform such an office, whereas it was but a beautiful outshining of His moral glory. In one sense, the mount of transfiguration itself had not yielded a brighter testimony to the glory of Christ, than that afforded by the basin and towel in John 13. But the ardent Peter did not apprehend this, and hence he refused to allow Jesus to wash his feet; and when told of the terrible consequences of such a refusal, he said, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." This, as we know, was another mistake, for poor Peter was often mistaken, though his heart was right after all. The grand truth is this—the moment a person believes in Jesus, he is as clean as the blood of Jesus can make him— "clean every whit;" and, as a consequence, he does not need to come again and again and be washed. "The worshippers once purged, should have no more conscience of sin." (Heb. 10) The idea of repeated washing would lower the blood of Christ to the level of "the blood of bulls and goats." To be washed in the blood of Jesus is to be rendered perfectly and eternally clean—clean enough for God. What more is needed? Jesus replies, nothing more, "save to wash his feet." And what makes this needful? Because the believer is, in himself, a poor, feeble, failing creature; and, moreover, he is passing through a defiled and defiling place; and hence the unspeakable blessedness of knowing that the Lord Jesus is ever girded on his behalf, in order to wash away every soil which he contracts in his daily walk, so that he may ever be maintained practically in the integrity of the position into which the blood has introduced him. The Lord be praised for such ample provision! Well may we say, "Thou, O, Christ, art all I want."

May we enter into the truth and value of all this, and thus be able to follow the blessed example set before us in this chapter. "I have given you," says our Lord, "an example that ye should do as I have done to you." How are we to do this? By walking in communion with Christ, we shall be able to cleanse each others ways through the action of the word of God. If I see a brother pursuing a wrong course, adopting a wrong habit, or standing in an unclean association, I should bring the word to bear upon him so that he may be fully delivered from the evil thing.

Christian Truth: Volume 8, Sympathy of Jesus, The (11:1-4)

This account presents a magnificent picture of the way of the Lord Jesus when down here, and gives us an insight into the path of the Man Christ Jesus. And let me say here that the study of the path of the Son of God is not only that which the mind may dwell upon with pleasure and admiration, but it is something on which the heart may feed for strength and blessing. There are three precious facts which I want to consider.

1. The blessed Lord Jesus was at all times actuated by a true and real desire to glorify His Father in heaven. It was this that moved Him moment by moment. Ah! He is the only One who has ever lived in this scene, having this one thing governing the whole course of His life—the glory of God. Personal affection never for a moment swayed Him, nor did personal fear hold Him back, but, along His entire pathway,

the glory of God shone out most brightly through Him.

And in this case, had Jesus no love for those sorrowing sisters? Did He know their case, and yet stay two days "in the same place where He was"? Yes; He knew all about their need—He had love for them. Then why not at once hasten to their side? This is how you and I act, beloved friends; we hear of the illness of some loved one, and take the next train in order to be with that one as soon as possible. But to bring glory to the Father was that which was ever dearest to the heart of the Son. Was it that Jesus had forgotten their distress? or that His love for them had changed? No; there was no coldness in His affection for these tried ones (as they prove by-and-by), but the right moment for Him to act had not come then.

Yes, Jesus pitied them, loved them, felt for them, as He alone was able, and yet things got to the very worst in that little home, and the Master came not. What would those loving hearts feel? Would they question, like the disciples in the boat, "Master, carest Thou not that we perish?" Did they dare to say that to the Master?—"Carest Thou not?" Oh, how little they understood Him, to speak thus! And perish, with Jesus on board? Impossible!

Beloved, do we know anything of this, "Carest Thou not?" When circumstances look dark, our hearts begin to question the love of the One who permits such to befall us. Oh, let me press upon you this important truth—the dealings of the Father's hand must ever be looked at in the light of the love of that Father's heart. Grasp this. Never try to interpret love by its manifestations. How often our Father sends chastisement, sorrow, bereavement, pressure! How well He could take me out of it all -in a moment-He has the power, but He leaves me there. Oh, may He help us to rest patiently in Himself at such times, not trying to read His love by the circumstances, but them, whatever they may be, through the love of that heart. This gives wondrous strength-knowing that loving heart, and not questioning the dealings of His hand.

In their bitter sorrow the sisters flee at once to the Master. No one like Him for them now. Do we know anything of this? -telling Him the trouble of the heart, the sorrow of the way? They send word, but He sets not out to their help. But all is right; they are not forgotten, nor left without His caring for them, or concerning Himself about them.

Oh, no; and if we tell Jesus, we may rest satisfied that He will undertake for us. Have you taken your needy case to Him? Then leave it with Him—that is all -how simple. Have we not sometimes seen the little child take some treasures to the mother for her to keep, and then, in the restlessness of its mind, turn back to take them into its own hands again? And do we not too often, in the restlessness of our unbelief, carry away the need and care we have been telling out to Him? Sickness, sorrow, want, bereavement come upon us; perhaps some domestic trouble burdens us; the thing has gone on so long, it seems as though the Master heeded not. Have you "told Jesus"? Then leave it with Him, in happy confidence. This Martha and Mary found, and truly our God is worthy of the unwavering trust of the heart. He does all things well.

In the Father's dealings, He may see fit to suffer trial and pressure to remain for years, because He, in His wisdom, knows that it is exactly what His child needs. Do you ask for an illustration? I give you one that occurs to the mind at this moment. The "thorn in the flesh" to Paul. "What!" you say, "the Apostle Paul need something to keep him balanced!" Yes; he who had been up in the third heaven, and had heard things which it was impossible for human speech to utter, needed a counterpoise—something to keep the flesh in check. Perhaps you think that one who had been up there and had listened to such glorious words, might have kept straight down here ever afterward. No, Satan would make use of those wondrous revelations to puff up the flesh; so God allowed the messenger of Satan to buffet him, lest he "should be exalted." And the beloved Apostle "besought the Lord thrice" that it might depart from him.

"What!" you say, "could he have been in communion with the Lord when he asked a thing which it was not the will of the Lord to grant?" That is not the point for us; let us make our request known to Him, and, if it be right, we shall get deliverance; if not, like the Apostle, we shall get what will be infinitely better, the Lord's grace in the pressure, enabling us to bear it all for His glory. This will give moral elevation—bearing the trial, supported by the condescending grace of God, knowing that what His hand dispenses is good, and so giving glory and honor to His name.

"But," you say, "that is too lofty a height for me ever to attain to; how can I glorify Him in my commonplace duties which seem like domestic drudgery from Monday morning to Saturday night?" Better than that, beloved, you are where He has placed you, and that is not too common a place for glorifying His name. What says the Holy Ghost? "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Cor. 10:31. Can anything be more commonplace than eating and drinking? Surely not. And can I do this to His glory? Yes. Two persons may be sitting at the same table, one eating merely to gratify the appetite and passion, the other to keep his body in working order for the Master to use down here. So in the home circle, behind the counter, or elsewhere, His name may be honored and glorified. How would nineteen out of every twenty of us live for Him if the only way of so doing were public service? No; service is what the Master gives each one to do, whether it be to evangelize a continent, to stand behind a counter, or to sweep a crossing; only let each one of us be where He wills, and be there shining for Him.

Then saith He, "Let us go into Judea again. His disciples say unto Him, Master, the Jews of late sought to stone Thee; and guest Thou thither again?" Yes; He will not allow fear of personal safety to keep Him back now, any more than He suffered personal affection to take Him to Bethany, when it is a question as to what is for the glory of God. No thought of personal danger kept Him from being about His "Father's business." And now the moment is come, God's glory will shine through the One who "pleased not Himself."

2. The profound sympathy of the heart of Jesus with us in all the sorrows and trials through which we pass. Had those sisters for a moment questioned the love of Jesus for them, and His sympathy with them in their sorrow, how they would be rebuked by those groans and tears! "Jesus wept." I suppose this is the shortest verse in the Bible, when one talks of verses, but oh! what it opens out to us! He is going to the grave of His friend as "the resurrection and the life," and as He goes, He weeps. What tender sympathy and grace! And He is the same today. It is true the surroundings are different, but the heart is the same "yesterday, and to-day, and forever."

He "wept." How we see the reality of His human nature! Yes; it was a perfectly human heart. He wept for the sorrow and desolation which sin had brought into the world; and He entered into it as no other could. Oh! those groans and tears! How they tell out the love and tenderness of the heart of our precious Lord Jesus! Yes; He truly loved those tried ones, and they proved it. So shall we, if we rest in the same tender, gracious, sympathizing Lord. How sad for Him to have to say to Martha, "Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest

see the glory of God?" Unbelieving heart, listen, doubt not, and thou shalt see that glory too. Hinder not the Master by unbelief.

3. His gracious condescension in linking us with Himself in the work which He is now carrying on in this world. He only does that which they are unable to perform. He allows them to roll away the stone; it is His work to raise the dead, so He speaks, "Lazarus, come forth." He stands at that open grave, the expression of God, and surely God's glory shines forth most brightly through His beloved Son.

Then "Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go." Here again they can help in the work, and can free Lazarus from the graveclothes that bind him hand and foot. So now, Jesus graciously permits us to help Him in His work with dead souls. It is true He alone can speak the word that quickens the dead, unsaved one; but He, blessed be His holy name, allows us poor, feeble things, saved by His grace, to speak a word here and there to the unsaved, and to endeavor to bring them under the power of His Word so that they may be blessed, and in our measure to assist Him in the wondrous work which He is at present carrying on.

May He enable us to enter into those marvelously blessed facts, and teach us to make them truly practical, so that we may, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, do all, even the most commonplace things of our daily life, to the glory of God. And may He also help us to understand and to realize the sympathy of Jesus for us in all we go through, and too that we may be "workers together with Him," while He leaves us here.

Christian Truth: Volume 28, Life and Liberty: Loose Him and Let Him Go (11:44)

"Loose Him, and Let Him Go"

There are many divinely quickened souls who need to know the power of those commanding words, "Loose him, and let him go." John 11:44. They have been quickened out of a state of death by the life-giving voice of the Son of God, but they "come forth," "bound hand and foot with graveclothes," and their faces "bound about with a napkin." That is to say, they have not as yet been able to shake off the trammels of their former condition, or to go on their way in the liberty wherewith Christ makes His people free. That they have received divine life is manifest from the very struggles, fluctuations, and conflicts of which they complain.

Those who are "dead" know nothing of such things. As long as Lazarus lay in the silent tomb in the cold grasp of death, he never felt his graveclothes to be any hindrance to movement, or his napkin to be any hindrance to vision. All was dark, cold, and lifeless; and the graveclothes were the suited trappings of such a condition. A man whose hands and feet were fast bound in the fetters of death, could not possibly feel any inconvenience from graveclothes; and one whose eyes were fast sealed by the stern hand of death, could not feel any inconvenience from a napkin.

Thus it is with the unconverted, the unregenerate, the unawakened. They are "dead"—morally, spiritually "dead." Their feet are fast bound in the fetters of death, but they know it not. Their hands are confined by the handcuffs of death, but they feel it not. Their eyes are covered by the dark napkin of death, but they perceive it not. They are dead. The robes of death are around them; the graveclothes are upon them and suit their condition.

But then in some way or another, the persons for whom I write this paper have been acted upon by the mighty, quickening voice of the Son of God—"the resurrection, and the life." A verse of Scripture, a sermon, a lecture, a tract, a hymn, a prayer, some passing event, has proved to them a life-giving voice. It has sounded upon their ears, it has fallen upon their hearts, it has penetrated to the very depths of their being. They are aroused, they know not how. They wake up, they know not why. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." John 3:8. The life is there in all its reality. The new birth has taken place. The new nature has been communicated. Those who are standing by, who know what life is, see the movements, the struggles, the heavings and workings of life, but as yet the grave clothes and napkin are there. I believe there are many in this condition—many quickened—many born—who know not the privileges which attach to their birth, or the source and object of the life which has been communicated to them. In a word, they need that the voice which has already said, "Lazarus, come forth," should also say, "Loose him, and let him go." They have been quickened; they need to be emancipated.

Let us take an example or two from the Word of God. The prodigal was quickened before he was emancipated. "I will arise and go to my father," was the utterance of the new life—the aspiration of the new nature. When he spoke thus, he was full of doubt and uncertainty as to the mode in which the father would receive him. He was full of legality—full of the thought of servitude instead of the thought of sonship. The new life was there, but as yet it was connected with numerous doubts and fears within, and the rags of his former condition were upon him. He had been acted upon by a life-giving voice, and he only needed to be emancipated. The new nature having been imparted, moved toward the source from which it had sprung; but as yet its movement was cramped, as it were, by the graveclothes, and its vision impeded by the napkin.

Now who would think of maintaining the monstrous idea that the prodigal ought to have continued in his rags? to have persisted in his doubts, fears, and uncertainty? Who would assert that for the rest of his days Lazarus ought to have worn his graveclothes and napkin in order to prove that he was a living man? It will be said that the father's embrace dispelled the prodigal's fears, for how could he fear in the arms of paternal love? But was it not the father also who commanded the rags to be displaced by "the best robe"?

And then as to Lazarus, it may be urged that the voice that had quickened and raised him, commanded him to be loosed and let go. Exactly so; and is it not just the same in reference to anyone who has obtained new life by believing in the name of the Son of God? Truly so. He should no longer wear the rags of the "far country" or the trappings of the grave. His hands and feet should be unbound so that he may serve the Lord Christ, and run in the way of His commandments. His face too should be uncovered—the napkin should be removed—so that he may gaze upon the One whose voice has quickened him.

But let us take another example. In the 7th chapter of Romans we have a striking case of a quickened soul not yet emancipated. Here we see the earnest struggles of the new life—the fervent breathings of the new nature. Here we find one who can say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man"; and yet he has to say, "I am carnal, sold under sin." Now the believer is not "sold" but "bought"—"redeemed with the precious blood of Christ"—ransomed from the power of the grave—delivered "from going down to the pit." Again, we find this quickened soul confessing, "What I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." This is a condition of perpetual defeat, whereas the believer can say, "We are more than conquerors," and "Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ." (See Rom. 8:37; -2 Cor. 2:14.) Last, we hear this quickened soul exclaiming, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But the believer, instead of being a "wretched man," seeking for deliverance, is really a happy man, rejoicing in being fully and eternally delivered.

In short, the 7th chapter of Romans which has been so sadly misunderstood, is a simple picture of a soul divinely quickened but not yet divinely emancipated—a soul not yet able to say, "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Rom. 8:2. It is one who has been acted upon by the authoritative word, "Lazarus, come forth," but of whom it has yet to be said, "Loose him, and let him go." In other words, there is life but not liberty. There is sufficient light to see the wretched condition of "the old man," but not sufficient to see the position of the new—there is the just perception of the spirituality of the law without the knowledge of deliverance from its condemning power. Should any rest satisfied with such a condition? Is this the believer's proper standing? Assuredly not. As well might we maintain that Lazarus ought to have been quite satisfied to go on all his days "bound hand and foot with graveclothes; and his face... bound about with a napkin." This would never do. The Lord does not do His work by halves, either as to soul or body. The life and the liberty are connected as coming from the same source. The life which the believer has is not old Adam-life improved, but new Adam-life imparted; and the liberty in which the believer walks is not liberty for the old Adam to fulfill his horrible lusts, but liberty for the new man to walk with God.

Oh! how ardently I long that those precious souls for whom I write may fully enter into what I have written. I write for quickened souls who are not yet emancipated—who have life but not liberty—who have "come forth," but are not yet loosed and let go. There are many such. There are many in the condition of the prodigal when he arose from the far country, but had not yet reached the father's arms—many in the 7th of Romans. I earnestly long for their full emancipation. I would affectionately remind them that the whole work is done—the sacrifice completed—the ransom paid. They have not to read another syllable in order to get settled peace. Christ has made peace. God is well pleased. The Holy Spirit bears witness. The Word of God is plain. Where then is there the foundation for a doubt? The reader may exclaim, "Alas! it is in myself." Yes; but my dear friend, you have nothing to do in a matter which has already been done for you. The righteousness of God is "to him that worketh not." If you had aught to do in order to get righteousness, then Rom. 4:5 would not be true. Christ has done all for your present, personal, and perfect salvation. May many hear and understand those thrilling accents. "Loose him, and let him go."

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