

# “Ye are Christ’s”

## Twelve Addresses given at Conferences for Younger Christians

### 1. “My Disciples”

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.” (Ps. 23)*

My subject is discipleship, and I do not know a more heartening Scripture for disciples than Psalm 23. It is so well known that probably you could all repeat it without a mistake, but often those parts of the Bible that we know best yield to us the greatest good. May it be so now.

Disciples could not be without a leader, and our Leader is the Lord, the good Shepherd of the sheep. But no man is the Lord’s disciple unless he is a saved sheep, and the first sentence of our Psalm involves that.

#### **THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD**

On this sentence hangs every blessing in the Psalm, and they are many. But notice, it is not, The Lord is *the* Shepherd, but The Lord is *my* Shepherd; it is a personal matter, deeply and exclusively personal. A young man said to me one day, “I don’t like the personal way you put things.” “And that is the reason you are not saved,” was my answer. If you cannot say “The Lord is my Shepherd,” you are not saved. You do not know Him, and you are not a disciple of His. How can you come into this? A girl was very ill, and greatly troubled about her soul’s salvation. Somebody sent her a Scripture text card by post. It ran, ‘Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give unto them eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.”’ She read those wonderful words, and said to herself “If only I could say that I was one of His sheep, I should be happy.” But she could not say it, and threw the card down with a sigh. As the card dropped on the coverlet it turned over, and she saw through her tears that there were words on the other side that she had not noticed. She read them, and these were they. “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.” Then the light broke in to her soul, and she exclaimed, “If I’m not a sheep, I’m a sinner, and Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, and so He came to save me.” Then she understood that the sinners whom Jesus our Lord saves are the sheep that shall never perish. How wonderfully safe are all you lambs of Christ’s flock. He died to save you; He lives to keep you. The hand that smashed the power of death holds you in everlasting security. Eternal love and Omnipotence combine in the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for you. You are for ever safe.

He said, "I am the GOOD Shepherd." You may crowd into that adjective every quality that it will bear, all are true of Him. If you were to show me a man who claimed to be a shepherd and yet was always losing his sheep, I should say that he was a bad shepherd and not worthy of the name at all, for a shepherd is not a loser of sheep but a keeper of sheep. The Lord is the good keeper of sheep.

I had been speaking about the eternal security of the sheep of Christ, and at the close of the meeting a man said to me—a good man too—"I don't agree with you at all. You've been telling us that when once a person is saved he is saved for ever. Now I believe, that like the sow, I may return to my wallowing in the mire." "Oh," I said, "you are a pig then." He flushed and I thought he was going to be very angry, but his face broke into a smile that was good to see, as he said, "No, of course I'm not. I see it now, I'm not a pig, I'm a sheep."

There is all the difference in the world between a sheep and a sow. The sow that is washed is the man that has not been born again, but who is outwardly reformed. He has given up his bad habits—it may be he has become a teetotaller, and perhaps a little religious, but there has been no inward work of the grace of God in his soul. His nature is the same and we find him sooner or later back in the mire again. The pig loves the dirt. I remember reading of a certain Chinese Emperor who had an extraordinary predilection for pigs. He had one which was a special favourite. It had an attendant, and was dressed in a silken coat. One day it eluded the vigilance of its keeper, and grunted with delight in the mud—silk coat and all. Why? It was the nature of the beast to do so. But when a man or woman comes to Christ, there is an inward work. They are born again, and receive a new nature that hates sin; they are His sheep.

The second sentence hangs upon the first.

### **I SHALL NOT WANT**

If we find the words, "Never perish" in John 10 we find "never thirst" in John 4. "Never perish," "never thirst." Those whom the Good Shepherd saves, He seals. He gives to them the Holy Spirit. And the indwelling Spirit is the well of water that springs up into everlasting life. Christ is the giver of living water, so He told that tired and wretched sinner by Sychar's well, and His words abide for us. We are slow to learn our poverty of soul and utter dependence on the Lord for satisfaction of heart. Often we slip backward because we do not give up self wholly for Christ. We think that after all we can find some good in self and some satisfaction in what we are.

We are slow also to learn how liberally and bountifully He gives. "I shall not want." "Never thirst." There are great words for us to take hold of by faith, and then prove how real they are by the Holy Spirit's power.

### **HE MAKETH ME TO LIE DOWN IN GREEN PASTURES**

When the heart is satisfied there is rest and not before. The restlessness of the world is the result of the vain search for satisfaction. With what poignancy the Preacher tells in Ecclesiastes the story of man's vain search, and what a contrast we see in the Song of Songs, where the heart can say of the heavenly Bridegroom, for we may see Him in this passage, "I sat down under His shadow with great delight and His fruit was sweet to my taste."

Jenny Lind, the Swedish nightingale, when at the zenith of her fame and popularity wrote,

“In vain I seek for rest  
In all created good;  
It leaves me still unblest  
And makes me cry to God.  
And sure of rest I cannot be  
Until my heart finds rest in Thee.”

She had learnt the weariness of the world, and the way of rest.

### **HE LEADETH ME BESIDE THE STILL WATERS**

The still waters speak of quietness of heart, not necessarily because circumstances are quiet, but peace and quietness of heart no matter what the circumstances may be. Do you remember that wonderful passage, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee,” not “Thou wilt place him in the midst of a peaceful environment.” It means that we may be in perfect peace in the midst of circumstances that seem all against us. We have an example of it in the Lord Jesus Himself. Recall that incident on the lake of Galilee, when a great storm arose. The winds blew and the waves dashed in their fury against the tiny boat in which He sailed, and it seemed as though it would be broken and wrecked by the angry tempest. All in that boat, seasoned mariners though they were, were in a panic of fear, save one: and

“His head was on a pillow laid,  
And He was fast asleep.”

Why did not the disciples stretch themselves by His side, and share the peace that filled His blessed heart? They awoke Him from His sleep, and with one word He brought those tempestuous billows in quietness to His feet as a man might bring his dog to his heel. But those disciples were just as safe in the storm as they were when a great calm laid itself upon the sea, and there was no reason why they should not have shared His peace. The Lord can give His peace to our hearts, but we shall need a pillow to put our heads upon or we shall not enjoy it. What pillow was it that Jesus put His head upon? The pillow of His Father’s changeless love. He knew that His hand held the reins. Those wild tempestuous steeds were under His control, and in the knowledge of His Father’s changeless love, He could rest, and He gives us that same love to rest upon. “We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.” But we only enjoy the fact as He leads us; if we wander from His side, we are distraught and restless; as we keep near to Him we know the music and the rest of the gently flowing waters of quietness.

Safety, satisfaction, rest, and peace, these are the blessings that He bestows, and when our souls enjoy them we are free to go after Him who gives them; we shall go after Him if He who gives these blessings is greater to us than all that He gives. Then it will be true that

### **HE LEADETH ME IN THE PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS FOR HIS NAME’S SAKE**

The path of discipleship is the path of righteousness. Once “ye were as sheep going astray; but now are returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” Now yielded to Him, no longer turning to your own way, He will lead you, invigorating your souls by His grace every step of the way. Mark the words, “He leadeth me,” He does not drive or drag, He leads. I was visiting a young

mother. She was teaching her baby boy to walk, and as she led him across the floor, I noticed that she did not make him take the long strides that she could have taken, or go the pace she could have gone; she shortened her steps to his, and as he could go, she went, and spoke words of encouragement to him all the way; and as I watched the charming sight, I said to myself, "That is it, He leadeth me." Yes, young Christian, you may be weak, but He who leads you is strong, and His strength may be perfect in your weakness. His grace is sufficient for you. He is not a hard Master; His yoke is easy and His burden is light. He cares for His lambs with an infinite tenderness, so precious are they to Him. He will lead and not drive you in the paths of righteousness, He will not make you go beyond your strength, or lay upon you one thing that you are not able to bear.

But do not be surprised if the way winds at times through darkness and gloom. You may be called to walk **THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH**. That does not mean when you come to your death-bed, it may of course include that, though countless Christians have proved that when they came to that crisis in their soul's history there was not even a shadow. This world is the valley of the shadow of death for the one who loves the Lord. "Where thou lodgest I will lodge, and where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried," said the Moabitish Ruth to her mother-in-law, and she is the example for all time of unselfish, devoted love. You said that to the Lord in your baptism, and in taking up your cross you carry that decision out in practical living. If you had seen a man carrying his cross in the day when the Lord was here you would have said, That man is as good as dead to this world, he is on his way to execution. That is it, he would be treading the valley of the shadow of death. But the Psalmist did not stop at "the valley of the shadow of death," he completed the sentence and he made the valley ring with triumph. Said he,

**I WILL FEAR NO EVIL, FOR THOU ART WITH ME. THY ROD AND THY STAFF THEY COMFORT ME**

He had perfect confidence because he had blessed company, and the company yielded continual comfort. Here is little Tom. On his way home from school, some bigger and rougher boys have treated him badly and sent him home a terrified and tearful lad. He does not want to go that way again. But his father says, "Come, Tom, take my hand, I will go with you." He puts his hand into his father's hand and as he walks by his side, he seems inches taller. "There are the boys, Tom, are you afraid?" "Not a bit, father," is his ready answer, "for you are with me." His father is greater than his enemies and he fears no evil from them. So it is, young Christian. Whatever tests and trials your witness for Christ may bring you into, you may have this confidence. You may say, "Thou art with me," even in the presence of death. And notice well, no longer does the Psalmist talk about the Lord, he talks to Him; he has changed the third pronoun personal for the second, it is no longer "He" but "Thou."

**"THY ROD AND THY STAFF THEY COMFORT ME"**

As Aaron's rod that budded was the insignia of his priesthood, so the rod of the Lord points Him out as our great High Priest, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and is merciful and faithful, able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by Him. The Epistle to the Hebrews shows us the Lord bearing the priestly rod, and in that same Epistle He is the "Great Shepherd of the sheep." His sheep are the sons of God and He is bringing them to glory. His priestly grace

sustains them on the road. The staff, His strength, carries them on triumphantly. The table prepared, the head anointed, and the cup overflowing, all speak of blessings that none but our Great Shepherd could supply. They are a feasting heart, a witnessing for Christ in the joy of the Holy Ghost, and a cup overflowing with blessing for others.

Goodness and mercy have followed you so far on your homeward way. You have not travelled far as yet, but suppose you are to live until the weight of a hundred years bows your head and bends your back, what then? You may face the future with confidence and say, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Not one day a week only, but seven; not on the bright days only, but all the days of my life; through the enthusiasms of youth, the sterner years of middle age and into the infirmities of old age, it will still be the same. But you are not looking so far ahead, you are looking for the Lord, His coming draws nigh. We read, "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and 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 the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4). We "shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

Presumptuous man, this David! some would say; it would have been far more becoming if he had said, I hope I shall dwell in the house of the Lord. But if it had depended upon David, it would have been presumption even to hope. But it did not depend upon David, nor does such a glorious destiny depend on any one of us who can say "The Lord is my Shepherd." If the Lord is my Shepherd, I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. This Psalm, beginning as it does, could not end in any other way, it would not be perfect if it did. If the Lord is your Shepherd will He lose you on the way to His house? Impossible! You are too precious to Him for that. You are His Father's love-gift to Him. You are His for ever. The Shepherd is responsible for the sheep; He will lead them safely home. His honour is at stake, His pledged word and the glory of His Name; but best of all, He loves you too well to lose you. Who would not follow Him?

"O, who will follow the Nazarene?  
O Lord, our hearts awaken!  
May no false pomp Thy glory screen,  
Thy life from the earth was taken.

And O, Thy Name is above the skies,  
All past Thy toil and sorrow.  
Though earth may woo, my heart replies,  
That I wait the grand tomorrow."

Now let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; if any one will go after the Lord, he will find Him able to sustain him from the first step in the path of discipleship to the last; the difficulties in the path will only reveal more and more His inexhaustible resources of grace and power. "If so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together." "If any man serve Me, let him follow Me; and where I am there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour."

## 2. Adorning the Doctrine

*“Exhort servants to be obedient unto their masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” (Tit. 2)*

The doctrine of God our Saviour is THE GOSPEL. It tells us that God is good and doeth good. How glad we are that we ever heard it; without it we had lived without God, without Christ and without hope in the world; and what would such a life have been to us? And what should we have been?

“A walking shadow; a poor player,  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,  
And then is heard no more . . . a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,  
Signifying nothing.”

So much for a life lived without the knowledge of God, but when such a life is done, what then? “After this the judgment,” when account must be given to God for it all. But the gospel has brought light and substance into our lives; we have something to live for now, as we shall see, and we have a glorious hope for the future. Let us thank God and rejoice that we ever heard the gospel. Now we are called upon to adorn the gospel. Adorn the gospel! how can we do that? Is not the gospel perfect in its beauty? Yes, so we thought it to be when first the light of it dispelled the darkness in which we groped, and we were right, and if it is already perfect, what can we do to adorn it? Truly we cannot add anything to it, we might as well try

“To gild refined gold, to paint the lily,  
To throw a perfume on the violet,  
To smooth the ice, or add another hue  
Unto the rainbow, or with taper light  
To seek the beauteous eye of heaven to garnish.”

But we can bring out in lives that have been renewed by it, the beauty that is in it. The world does not see any beauty in it, and we cannot wonder at that, for when He who is the theme of it was here He was despised and rejected of men, He was without form or comeliness to them, and when they saw Him there was no beauty in Him that they should desire Him, but “to you who believe He is precious,” “the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely One.” What Jesus was the gospel is.

Take a hyacinth bulb. A parcel of them was once left in a kitchen, and the cook, who mistook them for onions, said, “They had neither taste nor smell, so I threw them out.” But plant that dry looking root, with neither taste nor smell, in a bowl; give it proper culture, and then behold it sending up its glorious spike of flowers and filling the whole house with fragrance. But all the beauty that

cultivation brings into evidence was there in the bulb before it was disclosed. So it is with the gospel. We who have believed it must live out its blessedness before the eyes of our fellow men, to whom it has neither taste nor smell, and so adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. What a responsibility, yet what a privilege lies within the reach of us all! In this world that reeks with unholy savours and the stench of sin we may produce and shed abroad the beauty and sweetness of the grace of God, we may be imitators of God, going about doing good.

The exhortation was first addressed to servants, slaves who had been sold and bought in the public markets. And four ways in which they might do good was set before them. They were to be obedient to their own masters; and meek in their behaviour towards them, not answering again; and honest, not purloining their master's goods; and faithful, showing all good fidelity. OBEEDIENCE, MEEKNESS, HONESTY, FAITHFULNESS! Practical qualities these, and how good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, and what a contrast to the spirit and the ways of the world as we know it.

Young men and women who have professed the Name of the Lord, see that you do not come behind in these things; it is up to you all to show what the grace of God can do in lives like yours. You do not need to go to the mission field for this; do it in the house where you live and in the place where you work.

Have you got your Bibles open at Titus 2? If so, notice that verse 11 begins with "For," and proceeds to give the cause which only can produce this desired effect, and it is this which we must now consider, "FOR THE GRACE OF GOD THAT BRINGETH SALVATION HATH APPEARED TO ALL MEN." The grace of God is the activity of His love towards those who deserved His wrath, and it subsists for us in our Lord Jesus Christ. We shall understand it better if we see it in Him, and we have not got it at all if we dissociate it from Him, for grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, and He dwelt among us full of grace. The grace of God which is salvation was not sent to us, but brought to us. It was not sent by an angelic messenger, it was brought by God's beloved Son. Many people look upon this blessing as they do upon a present sent to them by parcel post. There it is, they have got it, and are glad to have it, for is it not a token of the love of the distant friend? But he is not there; how different it would have been if he had brought it. And along with this mistake, these same people spell salvation IT; that is the wrong way to spell it, surely; it should be spelt HIM, for if you have Him, the Saviour, you have salvation. Moses understood it when he sang, "The Lord is my strength and my song, and He is become my salvation."

Is not this what the Lord meant when He said to the publican in the tree, "Zaccheus, make haste and come down, for today I MUST ABIDE at thy house." And as He crossed the threshold of that happy man's home, He said, "This day is SALVATION come to this house." Why? Because He had come to it, Jesus Himself was salvation. When He brings salvation to us, He comes to stay with us. It is as though He said, I love you so well, and I have sought you so long, I will never be parted from you. "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee." We have the blessing but we have the Blesser too. And now the grace of God has given to us the desire to adorn the doctrine; and in His salvation lies the power that can do it, for salvation is a great and comprehensive work. What we need now is instruction as to how to do it.

As the sun rises in the morning for all, so the Lord Jesus appeared for all men. Alas that so few appreciate the grace that He brought. But we are glad that our hearts have been opened to give Him a welcome. May we treat Him well who has come to us and show all good fidelity to Him. He has blessed us, He has saved us, we are His. But that is the beginning of the ways of grace with us.

Grace saves us and also teaches and instructs us in the way of righteousness, as we read, **“TEACHING US THAT DENYING UNGODLINESS AND WORLDLY LUSTS, WE SHOULD LIVE SOBERLY, RIGHTEOUSLY, AND GODLY, IN THIS PRESENT WORLD.”** We are now in the school of grace. Does the thought of school bring back memories of hard tasks and stern teachers? Those things belong to the old school and schoolmaster whose name is LAW; the school of grace is different, for the Saviour is the Teacher there. It is He who said, **“Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls, for My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”** If He is our Teacher, how attractive the lessons must be, and He teaches not only by His words but by His ways. He is our pattern and guide, and we are to be imitators of Him. We entered His school on the day that He saved us; we shall be in it until the end of our days on earth; then, and not until then, shall we graduate; may we all do it with honours for His joy.

The teaching is not theoretical but practical. We must know the doctrine, of course, if we are to adorn it, but in this school of grace we are taught to walk rather than to talk. We must learn how to behave ourselves in three spheres of life: in the inner, personal sphere we are to live soberly, in our relations with others we are to live righteously, and in our relations with God we are to live godly. Christ has set us an example that we should walk in His steps, and all this was lived out perfectly by Him when He was here.

Do you know the beautiful hymn, some verses of which are:

“O Lord! when we the path retrace  
Which Thou on earth hast trod,  
To man Thy wondrous love and grace,  
Thy faithfulness to God.

Faithful amidst unfaithfulness  
'Mid darkness only light,  
Thou didst Thy Father's name confess,  
And in His will delight”?

As we sit at His feet and consider Him, we admire and adore and sing:

“We wonder at Thy lowly mind,  
And fain would like Thee be,  
And all our rest and pleasure find  
In learning, Lord, of Thee.”

It all becomes so real and so wonderful, that we are glad to turn our backs upon our former life; we deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. These two things make up the life of the world; they mean, **“We won't have God, and we will please ourselves.”** But for us, God has become so attractive through the gospel that we cannot live without Him, and His light has revealed to us how pernicious our own way was, so that we now choose His way instead of ours.

And grace has made us expectant, the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost has given us a hope of which we are not ashamed. We are **“LOOKING FOR THAT BLESSED HOPE, AND THE GLORIOUS APPEARING OF THE GREAT GOD AND OUR SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST.”** The blessed hope is the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ, to fulfil His own word,



“I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am there ye may be also.” There are those who teach that only those who are faithful and watching will be taken when the Lord fulfils this word; they insist on what is called a “partial rapture” which will be a reward for faithfulness and labour. If that were so—which, thank God, it is not—this hope would no longer be a BLESSED HOPE; for who of us would care to lay his hand upon his heart and say, “I am one of the faithful”? If we have a true sense of our own frailty we confess that we are unprofitable servants, but this hope does not depend upon what we are but upon what God is; it has been given to us by the grace of God, IT IS ALL OF GRACE; but “to him that worketh the reward is not reckoned of grace but of debt.” It is a blessed hope, not because it is acquired by fulfilled responsibility but because it has been set before us by sovereign grace.

The glorious appearing will follow that blessed hope; indeed, it is part of it. The glory of our Saviour shall fill the world in that day. It does not fill the world yet; this is the night in which our Lord is absent from the world and in which we have to shine as lights and be witnesses to the blessedness of the gospel, but the morning is coming when the Sun of righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings. The world will not rejoice when He appears; all nations of the earth shall wail because of Him, but we shall rejoice in that day. And what is it that has made the difference? The next verse tells us, “WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR US.” Such was His love, and because He loved us and gave Himself for us, we shall not be afraid when He comes in His glory, and because we love Him we shall rejoice to see Him exalted where once He was dishonoured.

He gave Himself TO REDEEM US FROM ALL INIQUITY. We were slaves, but He has set us free, and the price of our redemption was His blood. He gave Himself to deliver us from the bondage of sin and to lead us in the paths of righteousness, and “THAT HE MIGHT PURIFY UNTO HIMSELF A PECULIAR PEOPLE.” He wanted us entirely for Himself, His own peculiar treasure, and for this He would separate us from every evil thing and from every rival and from every yoke.

It is blessed to be able to sing,

“Lord Jesus, Thine,  
For ever to recline  
On love eternal fixed and sure.  
Yes, I am Thine for evermore,  
Lord Jesus, Thine.”

But there is more than that, we are to be ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS. We learn in secret, but we show our progress before the eyes of others. The Christian is not called to be a monk, wasting his days behind monastery walls, but as Jesus of Nazareth went about doing good for God was with Him, so are we called to follow in His steps, and to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour by good works. In this matter we must not be slothful. Our spiritual force and progress are not gauged by our intellectual knowledge of the doctrines of the Epistles, but by the way we carry out the exhortations in them.

I would press upon you that the schooling is in secret. Cultivate secret intercourse with the Lord; sit at His feet when no eye but His can see you, and He that seeth in secret shall reward you openly. You will gain wisdom and strength in secret, you will learn there what resources you have to draw upon when the test comes. I will illustrate this.

Acres upon acres of peach trees stretched themselves upon the hillsides of a fertile valley through which we were speeding in the Sydney-Melbourne express. A beautiful sight were those trees, clothed in pink and white blossom from the topmost branches to the lowest, and standing as a fair bride to receive the smiles and kisses of the sun which looked upon them from a cloudless sky like a radiant bridegroom. They adorned the whole valley and they were full of promise of delicious fruit for the multitudes in the crowded cities in the months yet to be. It was kindly nature, under God's supervision, preparing her stores of solace and refreshment against the day when the summer time would test the strength and mettle of the people with heat and drought and dust.

As my eyes feasted upon that lovely valley I held a silent communion with it. "Tell me," said my heart, "tell me peach trees, the secret of your beauty and your usefulness—why are you able to stretch out your charms before the sun today, and to promise hands and arms laden with fruit for the hot months that lie ahead of us?" And I got my answer definite and clear. "We should have neither beauty today nor usefulness tomorrow were it not for a process and power that the eye of man does not see. Our roots strike downwards, and hidden away from all interference we draw from the soil continually the stimulants and nourishment that give vigour to our inward life; thus it is that we are benefactors in the world. Our life within, sustained in secret, shows itself in its season as you see it. If this secret life of ours failed, or if it were interrupted by any intrusion from without, we should wither and die."

And as our train sped onwards I considered the peach trees, how they grew, and took out my Bible, and read, "Thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Matt. 6:6). Are any of us mourning our lack of fruitfulness? Do we feel that we are not adorning the doctrine, that we are not zealous of good works as we should be? We may be sure that the whole cause of it is the neglect, more or less, of the secret life with our Lord—we are not learners of Him in secret; and every one of us knows that it is so.

This parable of the peach trees enforced its lesson upon me from another side. I thought again of the testing time of the year for the southern land, when the sun blazes from the heavens in his summer strength, scorching and withering almost everything of lesser growth. Yet that same sun does but serve to bring the fruit of those trees to perfection, imparting to them a sweetness and bloom that they could not possess without it. So, too, it is with every test and trial of life; they all have their sure effect upon us. We are either scorched and withered by them, like the corn on the rocky ground that perishes when the sun is up, or they bring our Christian life and fruit to maturity; and which of these two effects is to be realised in our case is determined by our secret life with our Lord. If we are much with Him, striking our roots downward in the knowledge of Himself, and drawing our refreshment and strength from the hidden springs that are in Him we need not dread the trial; we may glory in tribulation, for it will but serve the will of God and work for our good, and enable us to stretch forth hands laden with sweeter fruit to the weary and distressed.

Then go forth to "love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven (characteristically so): for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." So blessed and good is He!

### 3. Great Sights

*“Mine eyes have SEEN Thy salvation.”* (Luke 2:25-32)

*“He that SAW it bare record, and his record is true.”* (John 19:30-35)

*“We SEE Jesus . . . crowned with glory and honour.”* (Heb. 2:6-11)

*“We shall SEE Him as He is.”* (1 John 3:1-3)

I offer you a chain of four golden links. Four passages from the Scriptures for your consideration that show our Lord to us in four different positions. First, coming into the world; second, going out of the world; third, exalted to the highest place in heaven; fourth, coming again. In a manger, on a cross, upon a throne, coming again in clouds of glory. How different the circumstances, yet the same Person, admirable and perfect wherever He is seen.

#### HIS ADVENT

Consider the first. The great hour had arrived, and He who had been promised had come. It was by God's own lips that His coming had been foretold forty centuries before, and faithful men had waited; their eager eyes had longed for the sight of Him, but He had not appeared in their day; they had died in faith but had passed on the great hope to their successors, who had treasured it and passed it on to others in an unbroken line of faith. But now the due time had come, and the Virgin daughter of David's royal house had brought forth her Firstborn, according to the Scriptures, and laid Him in a manger. The great Deliverer had appeared, but not as some had supposed He would come, with mighty hosts attending and with great power and glory to insist upon His rights and to exercise an undisputed sway over all nations on earth, but in weakness, lowliness, and unparalleled poverty.

Only the anointed eye could discern who He was, the eye of faith, for though the angels voiced the gladness of heaven and proclaimed the greatness of that Babe, His lowly birth and great humility made no appeal to men, except to such as Simeon who had the eye of faith. He was an old man, unknown and perhaps poor in the world, but rich in heaven's reckoning, and highly favoured of God. He entered the Temple and took the Babe, now eight days old, in his arms, and blessed God and said, “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation.” What an affecting scene was that! The aged saint who had waited until his natural eyes had grown dim for a sight of God's Salvation, looks upon Him at last and knows Him; his arms embrace Him, and he loves Him and presses Him to his heart, and is satisfied and at peace.

Yet things were not as a godly Israelite would have had them in the land. The nation was under the heel of a Gentile power; the proud leaders of it were as dead as corpses towards God, and darkness, demon-possession and disease held the people in bitter bondage; there was a great parade of external religion, but underneath the surface, moral putrefaction and death and everything that was hateful to God. Yet Simeon was at rest about it all, for though he saw not yet everything put right, he saw Jesus, and that was enough; the One who would put things right had come.

It is clear that only faith could have given him such rest; unbelief might have argued that some adverse force would appear that would shatter his hopes, or that the One upon whom his eyes rested with adoration and joy was but a helpless babe, dependent upon His mother, and she one of the

poorest in the land, the wife of a village carpenter; but faith saw Him to be Emmanuel, God with us, and was satisfied.

Yet here, indeed, is a marvellous thing; the Babe that lay in the arms of Simeon was He who had created the hosts of heaven, and without Him nothing was made that was made. He had come forth from the Father, the Only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, and had come into the world, a human Babe. This is the mystery of the Incarnation. Who would dare to explain it? No creature mind can grasp the immensity of it, yet we can believe and rejoice and give thanks that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world, a Light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of His people Israel. Yes, He sent Him from heaven, and He came bringing light and life and love from thence to men in their misery and sin.

That old man with his keen eye and his steadfast trust is a pattern for us, and we might well covet the rest of heart that he knew. Things are not as we would have them in the world; confusion and chaos abound; and things are even worse in the church; but has our faith laid hold of the great fact that the Son of God has come, and that upon Him help has been laid, and that He can and will undo the works of the devil and bring heaven and earth into reconciliation to God? In the knowledge of this there is peace and rest of heart.

## **HIS EXIT**

Simeon seemed to have realized that the road upon which Christ's holy feet would tread for the accomplishment of God's will would be a rough one, and that men would be tested and exposed by His coming; and it was even so, as we well know who have read and believed the Divine record. We part company with Simeon beholding with adoration the lowly Babe, and we take our stand with John as, astonished and bewildered, he gazes upon a cross. Thirty-three eventful years had passed between the two, in the last three of which "Jesus of Nazareth went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed by the devil: for God was with Him," yet in spite of His life and ministry of love He was hated and despised by men; His way was no royal progress to a throne; instead

"His path, uncheered by earthly smiles,  
Led only to the cross."

And John saw it and bare record that ye might believe. And herein is a strange thing, for what was it that John saw? He saw his Lord and Master, the One whom he trusted would have redeemed Israel, hanging upon a felon's cross, with thorn-crowned head bowed in death, and blood and water flowing from His spear-ripped side. That was a sight that shattered the faith of many and destroyed their hopes, yet John tells us that he bears record of it, that we might believe. What was there in that sight to command our faith? It looked as though the cause of the Lord was lost. His foes exulted in what they considered was His extinction. His disciples with the women who had followed Him thought that He had been utterly defeated, and they mourned and wept in hopeless sorrow. But the conclusions of foes and friends were hasty and wrong; it was not defeat but victory, as John had surely learnt when he bore record of it that we might believe. But what are we to believe? We are to believe that God's love is greater than man's hatred, and that there and then, when man's hatred of God broke all bounds and rose up to murder His Son and drive Him from the world that they claimed as their own, His love triumphed, and,

“The very spear that pierced His side  
Drew forth the blood to save.”

“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4). Seeing with the eye of faith what John saw we exclaim with rapture, “We have known and believed the love that God has for us, God is love.” We see not only God’s salvation, in His beloved Son whom He sent into the world, but we see in that cross the great atoning sacrifice, apart from which He could not have been the Saviour, we see Satan defeated, sin expiated and God glorified, and seeing it we believe, and admire and adore.

## **HIS RETURN TO GLORY**

And now we turn our eyes to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and there we see Jesus, crowned with glory and honour. Yes, the One whom Simeon looked upon, a lowly Babe at His mother’s breast, the One whom John saw crucified and dead upon a cross, we see now in the highest place in the glory. God has raised Him from the dead and set Him there. Every Christian heart thrills at the thought of His exaltation, and yet that glory that has received Him has not made Him more glorious. It was the only place in the universe that was worthy of Him. His disciples anticipated the throne of David for Him, and He shall have it in due time, with every other throne; but there was only one place that was worthy of Him when He came forth from among the dead, and that was the Father’s throne on high. The diamond is put in a golden setting, but its setting does not increase the value of the gem, it is the only fit setting for it; so it is with Jesus, whose Name is now above every name, and who is crowned in heaven with glory and honour; He is in His right setting there. God has said to Him, “Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool.” But He is not inactive there, but having passed through all suffering He is the fully-qualified Captain, or Leader, of God’s many sons. I should like to deepen the desire within us to follow Him, and to awaken and stir up a holy enthusiasm for Him in the hearts of those He has saved.

Psalm 110 is a remarkable Psalm; it is quoted in the New Testament more often than any other. It begins, “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool,” plainly presenting the Lord as faith sees Him now crowned with glory and honour. The third verse of it is very beautiful; it describes what is yet to be seen in Israel when the Lord shall rule in Zion, but I want to give it a present application which I feel is wholly just, and for this purpose I will quote it as it is translated in Darby’s New Translation. “The people shall be willing (or offer themselves willingly) in the day of Thy power, in holy splendour from the womb of the morning shall come to Thee the dew of Thy youth.” All His foes are to be subdued beneath His feet, and Israel shall surround Him, their Messiah and King, with loud hosannas, a new-born nation, never more to grieve Him. That will be a thing splendid to behold, but there is a greater splendour, and it may be realized and seen now. This is the day of His rejection by men; He is not wanted by the world, but those who love Him may come to Him with whole-hearted devotion; they may be filled with enthusiasm for Him, and, as a newborn race—the children of the morning—they may follow Him with steady steps and loins well girt; they may make their boast in the Lord. This in the eyes of heaven is “holy splendour,” and nothing else than this can please our God.

We see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, and it is as the victorious and crowned Saviour that He is leading many sons to glory. Glory is our destiny, for we are following the One who is there.

This is all real to men of faith but not to those who walk by sight, and we must be on our guard against the glamour of “the things that are seen” which dims faith’s keen vision, and often betray the Christian into fearing men, or into admiring and following them. But the greatest of men can offer us no destiny. Death is their master, it mocks at their promises, and shatters all their hopes and ambitions. Every day is a witness to this.

“The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e’er gave,  
Await alike th’inevitable hour—  
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.”

There is no hope beyond the grave but in Christ. He has overthrown death, and destroyed him who had the power of it, which is the devil, that He might deliver those who through fear of it were all their life-time subject to bondage. And in Him we have a hope that maketh not ashamed. He will not fail us, nor be untrue to God who has entrusted His sons to His care. He is not only a great Leader, but He is “a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God,” and He ever liveth to make intercession for us. And that brings us to another side of His activities for us in the glory. If the road is rough and the trials great, and if the fight waxes fierce and we grow faint, “He has said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,” and He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, and knows how to sympathize with us and to succour us in our hours of need. He considers us and cares for us and provides the grace that we need, so that when we look to Him and come to His throne of grace, we find the help already prepared and waiting for us. Jesus is not only a glorious Leader but He is a sympathetic Friend. His Name is glorious, and His arm is omnipotent, but His heart is tender. He has won our admiration by His exploits, but He has won our hearts by His love.

## **HIS COMING AGAIN**

“We shall see Him as He is.” That will be the climax of our joy and the consummation of all our hopes, when the stress and strain of our pilgrimage is over and the testing is complete. We shall meet Him and look upon His face; we shall see Him as He is. To the world He will come as the King of kings, and the Lord of lords, to judge and make war, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. But we shall not wail because of Him, for though we too shall see the splendour of His Majesty, we shall see Him and know Him as we have learnt Him here. What He is to us now He will be when we see Him. We shall not meet a stranger whom we fear, but a Saviour and a Friend whom we love; One who has been near to us in our sorrows and carried us through them, who is our daily resource and joy; as He is to us now, so shall we see Him then. What precious experiences have bound us to Him in this valley of weeping, what intimate links we have with Him, and these we shall never lose.

We shall see Him also as the One in whom the Father delights, the Object of the Father’s love; and in this we shall have full communion with the Father, and this will be the supreme joy of the Father’s house, where the Father’s beloved Son is honoured and adored by all.

And we are to appear with Him when He comes forth to reconcile all things to God, and when His glory shall shine to the uttermost bounds of the universe that He has created. We shall see Him then, just as blessedly perfect as He was in the manger, and on the cross, and on His Father’s

throne, and every remembrance of Him and every fresh view of His glory will call forth fresh praise from our willing hearts and lips.

He is a great and glorious Saviour, and I wish that I could set Him forth in a worthier way, but this is at once my joy and my grief; my joy that I am able to speak of Him at all; my grief because my words about Him are so cold and dull when they ought to be words that would move you and thrill you and bring you in holy enthusiasm and full surrender to His feet. But a thousand times better than hearing of Him is to draw near and learn what He is for yourself, and that knowledge that you will gain of Him now you will never lose; it will be your prized possession for ever and ever.

## 4. At His Feet

*“And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner . . . stood at His feet behind Him weeping.”* (Luke 7:36-50)

*“Mary, which also sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard His word.”* (Luke 10:39)

*“When Mary was come where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying unto Him, Lord if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.”* (John 2:32)

*“Then took Mary a pound of ointment, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.”* (John 12:3)

I want to tell you of a place where life’s perplexities are solved and where the burdens of the soul roll away; it is at the feet of the Lord Jesus. To be at His feet is to be in the most blessed place in God’s universe. I would speak of our sin, our service, our sorrow and self, and show how we may be at rest as to these great questions; they are all answered at our Saviour’s feet. It is there that we learn His greatness, and He is greater than them all. There is no place like it for the guilt-laden sinner, no place like it for the perplexed or happy saint.

### **THE LORD JESUS IS GREATER THAN OUR SINS**

The first great truth that dawns upon the soul as we come into this place of blessing is that He is greater than our sins. It was this that the sinner of the city discovered in Luke 7. He had said: “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” It is more than likely that this tired woman had heard these words and, attracted by them, had followed Him to Simon’s house. Should she enter it? What right had she to do that? The frowns of the Pharisee and his guests would have driven her far from the door if the One whom her soul sought had not reclined just within it, in the lowest seat of the feast. Her need of Him was greater than her fear of them, and two forces were at work which were greater than their hostility; these combined to bring her to His feet. His love drew her, her need drove her, and pressed by the drawing of His love and the driving of her need, she took the one step across the threshold that brought her to the only spot where her weary, burdened heart could find relief and rest.

At His feet she wept out her repentance for a sinful life, and she mingled tears of gratitude to Him with those penitential tears for the welcome He gave her. Simon would not have permitted her to touch him, his guests would have spurned her, but the lowly Jesus, the mighty Prince of Life, was not like them, He was the Friend of sinners. She discovered that He had a heart of infinite tenderness, that He could feel even for her, and that when He opened His mouth He spoke as no other man ever did or could speak: He spoke of forgiveness, of salvation, of peace, and surely, of all things on earth or in heaven none could meet the longings of a weary soul like these.

Her sins were many, the Lord who knew them all said so, but they were not too many for His forgiveness; where her sin had abounded His grace did much more abound. His words lifted the burden from her conscience and heart; in Him she found her salvation and her peace. She heard Him say, even to her, “Thy sins are forgiven thee; thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.” And who can describe the blessedness of one who has heard and believed such words as these? David could describe it; and so can I; and so can all who have come conscience-stricken, sin-laden, honest to



God at last to the feet of this great Saviour. They know the relief from the burden, the peace after the storm, the deep, holy calm that fills the heart as the sense of forgiveness steals over the soul. Only at His feet can this be known. It all comes in and through Him, “in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Eph. 1).

### **THE LORD JESUS IS GREATER THAN OUR SERVICE**

I do not say that the beloved Mary of Bethany was the woman of the city—some have done so—but as the Scripture does not say so we had better not—I merely point out that she dearly loved the spot where that woman’s burden rolled away, and that every time we read of her she is at the feet of Jesus. The first of these instances is in Luke 10:38-42.

We often admire Mary for taking the place of the disciple instead of the servant on this occasion, but may we not waste admiration upon her that ought to be bestowed upon the Lord? He it was who drew her into that place of subjection and blessing; she did but respond to His drawing as the needle responds to the magnet. Happy woman! He at whose feet Mary sat at rest and without fear was none other than Him before whom angels veiled their faces and cried, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts”, but she knew Him in the revelation of His grace, as the One who had come into the world not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many. She had discovered that His heart found a peculiar and unspeakable joy in filling up the vacancies in human hearts with the knowledge of His Father and Himself; it was His meat and His drink to do this. She realized that it pleased Him more to have her there listening to His word than any service she could have rendered to Him could have done. And she knew that she could only serve Him intelligently and well as she sat as a learner at His feet.

He values our service and will most surely reward it, but He loves our company more, and we may neglect Him while we serve. He has more to say to us and do in us, than to say through us and do by us. He should be more to us than all we can do for Him, and we show that we know this as we sit at His feet and hear His word. There and then He can sanctify and cleanse us by the washing of water by His word, and can nourish and cherish us and fashion us according to His own good pleasure. “Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” He said, not the better part as is so often said, as though there was a good part and a better one, but that good part. It stood alone in its blessedness and in His appreciation of it. May it ever be yours and mine,

### **THE LORD JESUS IS GREATER THAN OUR SORROWS**

The sisters at Bethany were bewildered and broken by a sore bereavement. They had hoped that their Friend, who loved them so dearly, would have hastened to their help, and healed their brother of his sickness when they appealed to Him, but He had not done so. It seemed as though He had failed them in this great crisis in their lives, for He had spoken no word and their brother had died and now lay within a sealed sepulchre, a corrupting corpse, and they sat at home without hope.

It was then that He came to them. Martha went out to meet Him and stood upon her feet and talked, and it must be confessed that she talked well, but when He called for Mary and she came to the place where He waited for her, she fell at His feet and wept. Behold her prostrate there. Listen as she pours out her grief before Him. See her as she looks up through her tears into His face. And, lo, He weeps. Amazing words, JESUS WEPT. What wonder must have filled her soul as she beheld tears upon His cheeks! How beautiful He must have seemed to her that day! What a revelation of

His heart were those tears! How His sympathy must have swallowed up her sorrow! What intimacy with Him did her sorrow yield her! Would she ever forget it? Then He walked by her side to the resurrection of her brother, and in His company, with Himself so near, her heart must have said, All is well. Sorrowing saints of God, Jesus Christ is the Same yesterday, today and for ever! The same for you as He was for Mary.

Presently His voice of power broke through the power of death and set the captive free from its grip, and the multitude beheld and wondered; but Mary had learnt something more wonderful than the power that amazed them. His sympathy had poured its comfort into her soul; she had learnt that He was greater than her sorrow and nearer to her than it. Never would she have known how much He loved her, or how tender His heart was, or how all-sustaining His presence, had it not been for her great sorrow.

### **THE LORD JESUS IS GREATER THAN SELF**

The last we read of Mary is in John 12, and it is fitting that her life's record should close there. The pound of "spikenard very costly" would have distinguished her among her acquaintances. It was the sort of thing those eastern women reserved for the greatest day in their lives. She had not even poured it on her brother at his death, much as she loved him, but she poured it out upon the feet of Jesus, well knowing that He was going to death and burial. The world had nothing to give Him but a cross of shame and a grave with malefactors, and she only among all His disciples realised this, and she said by her action, He is worthy of the best I can give Him, all I have that would distinguish me shall go into His grave. The Lord interpreted that action as no man could have done, and said, "Let her alone: against the day of My burying hath she kept this," and, "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her." What she had done showed what the knowledge of His love could do. It had made the woman forget the beautifying of herself, and all that would distinguish her, it had made her risk the criticism and scorn of her friends who did not understand. To her henceforward Mary was nothing and Christ was everything. Mary wanted no place for Mary in a world that did not want her Lord.

It was to this point that Paul was brought when he said, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). And to this point the Holy Ghost would lead us all. Soon every ransomed saint of God will bow before Him in His glory above, and cast their crowns at those feet that once were pierced in death for us, and worship and adore Him there for He is worthy. We shall cast our best at His feet in the day of His glory, Mary cast her best and herself also, at His feet in the days of His rejection and sorrow. If He will be worthy then to fill our hearts and vision without a rival, He is worthy now, for "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and for ever."

## 5. “Ye are Christ’s”

*“All things are your’s; whether Paul or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours and YE ARE CHRIST’S; and Christ is God’s.” (1 Cor. 3:21-23)*

*“O Father. . . . I pray for them . . . which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine. And all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine; and I am glorified in them.” (John 17:9-10)*

“Ye are Christ’s” (1 Cor. 3:23). I invite you to dismiss from your minds all popular notions as to what our relations with Christ are, for the more popular a notion is the more likely it is to be false, and come back to the clear unmistakable words of Scripture. They are not, Christ is yours, but “Ye are Christ’s.” I am not aware of any passage in the New Testament that says, Christ is yours.

We are His possession; His claims are absolute; He is our Lord. This is the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Many things are yours. Before we reach this arresting statement, we are told, “All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours,” and popular Christianity would crown this glorious wealth by saying, “And best of all Christ is yours.” But the Scripture does not say that at all. What it says is, “YE ARE CHRIST’S, and Christ is God’s.” Just as Christ was and is and ever will be altogether at God’s disposal, the willing Servant of His good pleasure, so are we to be at Christ’s disposal, to be pleasurable to Him both now and for ever.

We did not choose Him, but He chose us; we did not buy Him, but He bought us, and great was the price He paid; and since He chose us and bought us we must belong to Him—spirit, soul and body. Yes, body as well as spirit and soul.

I know that it is preached and taught that Christ is the pearl of great price, and that we as merchantmen seeking goodly pearls must surrender all we have and purchase Him so that we may call Him ours (Matt. 13). But it is a fake interpretation of a great passage and sadly mars its beauty and power. Christ is the merchantman and His church is the pearl of great price. For it He sold all and gave Himself for it, that it might be His by unchallengeable and everlasting right. His church is His, and you are part of it if you have believed (Eph. 5).

That we are not our own but Christ’s is emphasized later in this epistle when the apostle, full of surprise that his Corinthian converts were forgetting it, and of indignation at the conduct that resulted from their forgetfulness, urges “What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your bodies, which are God’s” (chap. 6:19-20, N.T.). Our bodies belong to God because they are Christ’s and Christ is God’s. Not only purchased are we but taken possession of—purchased by the blood of Christ and possessed by the Holy Ghost. What else could be true but this, “Ye are Christ’s”?

When first the apostles proclaimed that God had made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ, so real was it to those who yielded themselves to Him that they put all they possessed at His feet; they kept nothing back: lands, houses; everything belonged to Him for He was Lord, and they were His and without delay or regret they surrendered all to His disposal. Was that because they were a generous and large-hearted people? No. It was because they wholly recognised the claims of Christ. Nor was the truth less effectual amongst the Gentiles who believed, for the churches of Macedonia, though

in great poverty, first gave their own selves to the Lord and then placed what else they had at His command. So it is recorded for us in 2 Corinthians 8.

The Christians at Corinth had not fully owned the Sovereign Lordship of their Saviour. It is probable that they boasted that Christ was theirs. It seems certain that they did, for they were taking the benefits and gifts that they had received because they were Christ's and using them for self-exaltation.

They were laying hold of these benefits and saying they are ours, they were puffed up thereby, and producing all kinds of strife, and envy, and ill-blood where peace and love should have held sway. They were reigning as kings, these people who could boast that Christ was their's, while Paul and his fellow-apostles, men who fully owned that they were Christ's, were the offscouring of all things, for so we learn from chapter 4 of this epistle. Paul could not reign where Christ was crucified, he must be as his Lord.

The sort of Christianity that the Corinthians showed is the sort that is popular today, and just as they needed to have the truth pressed upon them that they were Christ's, so do we. There can be no advance in grace and truth, no walking and growth in the Spirit apart from this. "Ye are Christ's" must gain its proper ascendancy in our lives if we are to be what the Scripture shows us that Christians really are.

Before proceeding to speak of the blessedness of this fact, let me say that it is not my intention to take from anyone any definite blessing or joy that they may have derived from thinking of Jesus as theirs. There is a certain measure of truth in that side of things; the trouble is that it is forced wholly out of its place to the detriment of souls.

It is true that the Lord Jesus has placed Himself at our disposal. He is our Saviour, our Advocate, our Priest, all the grace and love that fill His heart flow out without limit for us, in that sense He may be said to be ours; but was there ever a Christian who really got the joy and benefit of these things apart from owning the claims of the Lord over him? It is only as we own that we are Christ's that we can rejoice in what He is to us.

It is good to speak of Him as our Saviour. Yes, but what did He save us for? That we might belong to Him, "He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works"—that we might be His peculiar treasure. We rejoice to speak of Him as our Lord; but that means not that He belongs to us, but that we belong to Him, it is not our claiming Him, but our owning His claims over us.

We delight in the fact that "The Lord is my Shepherd." True, but does the Shepherd belong to the sheep or the sheep to the Shepherd? His own account of this blessed relationship is very definite. "I am the Good Shepherd; the Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep . . . I am the Good Shepherd and know My sheep, and am known of Mine . . . My sheep hear My voice . . . neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand . . . My Father gave them Me." There is no part of Scripture that emphasizes the great fact that we are Christ's more than John 10, and oh, the preciousness of it; We are His because of the great love that fills His heart for us, love that has flowed forth and proved itself by His death for us. He gave Himself that He might possess us for Himself for ever without a rival. We are His because His Father gave us to Him, and we are more precious to Him because of this than thrones and kingdoms; we are the Father's love-gift to His well-beloved Son. We are His because He can keep us. He can hold us against the threatenings of

every hostile power. In His right hand dwells omnipotence. The sheep belong to the Shepherd. "Ye are Christ's."

We may begin, and often do, like the bride in Canticles who sang in her new-found joy, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His," but if we advance in the knowledge of the Lord we shall speedily change our song as she did, and rejoice with a greater joy to sing, "I am my Beloved's and His desire is towards me." The first is a sort of half truth in which self has a place of prominence, the last is the whole truth, in which Christ is all. There the heart loses sight of all but the greatness and tenderness of Him who has been spoken of in poetical language as "this tremendous Lover." Then it is realized that the only response to love such as His is to yield ourselves to Him, and it becomes the joy of life to own that we are His.

This means much to Him; if we would know how much, we must measure the travail of His soul when He gave Himself to save us, and as we endeavour to do that which is impossible, we must remember that His joy in possessing us will compensate Him fully for ever for all that He has suffered to make us His. He will say in the day of His glory, The prize is worth the price.

But consider the Lord's intercession on behalf of His own in John 17. He is speaking to His Father, in that full and blessed communion that ever existed between the Father in heaven and the Beloved Son upon earth. He makes requests for His own. Hear Him say, "the men Thou gavest Me out of the world; Thine they were and Thou gavest them Me." . . . "I pray for them which Thou gavest Me for they are Thine, and all Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine. Keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me."

When He spoke to His disciples, He could not tell them all that was in His heart, He was straitened and restricted, but when He spoke to His Father, what was in His heart could flow out without any reserve, and could anything affect us more deeply? Could we possibly listen to that wonderful prayer and not gladly and fully own that we are Christ's indeed? His because the Father gave us to Him, His because He bought us with a great price, His because possessed on His behalf by the Holy Ghost. Yes, the truth, the whole truth is this, "Ye are Christ's." Let it fix itself in our hearts and minds, and produce in our lives its own true and blessed fruit.

"Christ! I am Christ's and let that Name suffice you,  
Ay, for me too He greatly hath sufficed;

Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,  
Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ."

## 6. “Well-pleasing to Him”

*“Wherefore we labour (or are ambitious) that whether present or absent, we may be well-pleasing to Him.” (2 Cor. 5:9, N.T.)*

*“For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Cor. 5:21)*

*“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (2 Cor. 5:1)*

*“For the love of Christ constraineth us.” (2 Cor. 5:14)*

*“For we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of the Christ; that each may receive the things done in the body, according to those he has done, whether it be good or evil.” (2 Cor. 5:10, N.T.)*

That may not appear to be a very suitable Scripture to read and speak from at a gathering of young Christians. What with the dissolution of this tabernacle, our body, in which we are said to groan, and the desire to be absent from it, and the word in the previous chapter about the outward man perishing, it does indeed seem to be old man’s chapter, and so it is, but what is good for the old is good for the young, and Scripture adapts itself to every state and phase of spiritual life and growth.

Young as some of you are there is one sentence in it that I know will appeal to your heart if you love the Saviour; it is verse 9, and I will read it as it is given in the New Translation. “Wherefore we labour (or, are ambitious) that whether present or absent we may be well pleasing to Him.” That is my text, The “Him” of it is the One who died for you, your Saviour and your Lord. You will all agree with me when I say that we could have no higher and more blessed aim or ambition in life than that, and also that we ought not to have a lesser one. No life can be right and successful that has not the right aim, and this is the Christian’s right aim, to be well pleasing to his Lord. The life that has this aim will be a happy life; it will be a life moreover that will be useful and full of blessing for others, and most and best of all, it will glorify the Lord. Truly this aim must be yours; you will be hopeless and miserable failures if it is not, and we do not want you to be that. You must labour to be well-pleasing to Him, let it be your absorbing ambition, there are a thousand reasons why you must.

Now Paul, the writer of the epistle, speaking for himself and his fellows, says, We are ambitious to be well-pleasing to Him. We realize as we read the words that this is not a mere pastime, something about which we may be more or less indifferent, and take it up and put it down as the mood takes us. Paul was zealous about it; it was his great purpose in life and to it he bent all the vigour of his saved and devoted soul. It must be so with you if you are to make anything of this Christian living, for of a truth if you are not well pleasing to Him, you will please nobody worth considering, and if you are to please Him you will have to labour for it.

And that rules out other objects and pursuits; it means a bending of all your energies to this purpose.

If you are to do this you must, of course, be free from all anxious thought about yourself. Some of you may not yet have the assurance of salvation. You are happy sometimes, in the gospel meetings for instance, when the Name of Jesus is sweetly proclaimed, but at other times you are just as

miserable and uncertain. If that is the case with any of you, you cannot labour to be well-pleasing to Him, for you are self-centred and thinking of your own blessing, and quite right too, until that question is a settled one with you. Look at the end of our chapter, "God hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." That wonderful statement ought to satisfy your anxious longings and still your fears. In amazing love to us God made Christ, our great Substitute, all that we were in our sinfulness, when He suffered for us on the cross, that we might become all that He is in righteousness now before God. He was charged with our guilt, for the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all, but more than that, He was made sin for us. He suffered for what we were as well as for what we had done, that there might not remain one stroke of judgment for us either because of what we were or had done, but that we might be received into everlasting favour.

And now for all who believe it is true, that though they were lost and vile indeed, to every sin a prey, and could do nothing else but sin because of the very nature that was in them, yet now as a result of and on the basis of that great Sin-offering they are made the very righteousness of God in Christ. God will be able to say to the intelligent universe, If you want to see My righteousness, the way I can act in blessing in complete consistency with My eternal justice, look at those who were once guilty sinners and Satan's slaves, but are now in Christ before Me.

Consider that great statement well, pray that you may understand it, and cast away your doubts and fears for ever.

Questions as to the future may trouble you and prevent you from labouring to be well pleasing to your Lord, you may be afraid of the changes that such an aim and purpose might involve you in. You don't know what His will might mean for you, and you shrink from wholly yielding to it. Well, the beginning of the chapter describes the greatest of all changes that will ever be in our life's story. "If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." The greatest of all changes means the greatest of all blessings, and every other change in our lives which shall be according to God's will, will bring to us fresh blessing. We speak with absolute and unshakable confidence as to the final change; we cry with exultation, "We know," and we may have the same assurance as to every other change, for it is written, "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose." You then, young Christian, may look back on the past and view it in true Christian peace. You may face the future and press on to it in this blessed Christian confidence, and, free from all anxiety and fear, labour to be well pleasing to your Lord.

But others say, "These are not questions that trouble me, what hinders me, and what I deeply deplore is my coldness of heart. I never loved the Lord very well, but I seem to have lost what little love I had, and how can I labour to be well pleasing to Him when my heart is cold and fickle?" Look again at our chapter, verse 14 says, "For the love of Christ constraineth us." This love of Christ only will avail to rekindle the dying embers of love to Him in any heart, but it is enough. This love constrained Paul to labour and endure the most extraordinary suffering,

"He had no honour and no friend but Christ,"

and it will act in like manner in you if you will let it.

I hope you all read Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, especially the second part of that immortal story; in it you will find much profitable talk, and especially from the mouth of Greatheart, the warrior pilgrim. Well, when in that story old Honest desired to join the pilgrim band, he had to give an

account of himself to them, and he said, "I come from the town of Stupidity, it lieth about four degrees beyond the city of Destruction."

"I have often wondered," remarked Greatheart, "that any should come from your place; for your town is worse than is the city of Destruction."

"Yes," said old Honest, "we lie more off the sun, and so are more cold and senseless. But were a man in a mountain of ice, yet if the Sun of Righteousness will rise upon him, his frozen heart shall feel a thaw, and **THUS IT HATH BEEN WITH ME.**"

"I believe it, father Honest, I believe it," cried Greatheart, "for I know the thing is true."

That is it: let but one ray of the love of Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, into your heart and it will thaw its iciness, and warm its coldness, and it will operate in constraining power, and you will not desire to live unto yourself but unto Him who died for you and rose again. The love of Christ! What a theme it is! How tender yet how strong it is! It passeth knowledge, and you can say, He "loved me and gave Himself for me"!

Yet still you plead your weakness; you have the desire, but how to realize it you know not. Turn again to our chapter. Verse 5 tells us, "Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." The magnificent destiny of verse 1 is certain, and that you might have no doubt about it, He has given to you the earnest of His Spirit. The Spirit of God dwells in you, to make the love of Christ a present and living reality to you, and to foster your desires to be well-pleasing to your Lord and to enable you to labour with that object in view. You are not cast upon your natural powers, for that would be vain indeed; the Spirit is in you as the power by which Christ strengthens you to do His will, and the Spirit does not work in vain.

Now to be well pleasing to any person you must know him, and it is even so with your Lord, and you cannot know Him intimately and well if you do not spend much time with Him. You must live unto Him and not unto yourself. I am sure you will gladly admit the righteousness of that, for if He died for you that you might live, the life you live should be unto and for Him. I am not talking now so much of your service, though He does appreciate your service. It pleases the Lord when a young brother stands up and out of a full heart tells what a dear Saviour he has found, and when a young sister gathers a few children about her to tell them of Him, but this must flow from acquaintance with Him if it is to have its full value in His eyes. Do you remember that when He chose His apostles, it was not that He might send them forth to preach, first of all but that they might be with Him, the preaching followed that. We are well pleasing to Him when we desire His company above all things else and when His love is better to us than wine. John was well pleasing to the Lord when he put his head down upon His bosom, and he was not an old grey haired brother when he did that; he was the youngest of the disciples, and as far as we can make out, not more than twenty at the time. He found his solace in a time of trouble on that breast, in which the tenderest heart in the universe beats, and when the great test came and all the older brethren fled, this youth of twenty with a few women stood by the cross of Jesus. And his Lord was able to trust him, to entrust his mother, a most precious legacy, for to him, and not to Peter, He said, "Behold thy mother." Put your head on His bosom, there is room for it there and as you do you will live unto Him; you will be His friend and He will be able to trust you and when the test comes you will witness and your service will be well pleasing to Him. Yes, in these smoky towns where you live and work, with their sin and sorrow and misery, you will be well pleasing to Him.



Finally, the time is coming when He will show us everything as He sees it. "For we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (v. 10). The review will take place and we shall all stand face to face with our Lord at last, and give an account to Him as to how we have lived. And some of you say, "I don't like the thought of the judgment seat of Christ; it makes me tremble." Well, it may not do you any harm to tremble a little; it may indeed be good for you, and make you seek the Lord more truly now and learn the infinite efficacy of His one sacrifice that gives a purged conscience and peace with God even in view of the judgment seat of Christ. And if His love with you is made perfect, you will have boldness in the day of judgment because as He is so are you in this world.

You will see everything in that day as He sees it, and you shall know as you are known; and it will give Him great joy to show His approval of all that has pleased Him in your life and to put the crown on your brow, which you will cast with gratitude and adoration at His feet.

How glad you'll be to have a crown to cast before Him then, then see to it that you labour for it now. There will be much that will not bear His scrutiny. The wood, hay and stubble will all be burnt up, and everything will be lost that has not been well pleasing to Him. Yes, with some there may be days, weeks, months, perhaps years of life—all lost. I was asked to visit a young man. He had professed the Saviour's Name as a boy, but when in his teens the world put in a claim for him and he yielded to it, and lived for sport and pleasure and forgot the Lord, and at twenty-nine he was dying of consumption. He was unresponsive to anything that I could say; the world had cast its chilly blight upon his soul and he seemed insensible to the Word. But that night or the next, he awoke out of his sleep in a state of great excitement.

And after a while he told his wife the cause of it. He had dreamt that he was in an exhibition of wood carving work. He was himself an expert in that branch of art, and many fine pieces of his own were there. Suddenly the building burst into flames and he managed to escape almost miraculously through a window, and only just in time, for the whole structure collapsed and buried in its ruins every bit of work in it. No wonder he was excited for he saw the meaning of his dream. His life was like that. He was going into heaven truly, his soul was saved, but all his life was lost. The thought filled him with regret. He might have lived those dozen years well pleasing to the Lord, but he had wasted them, they were lost years. It is true that his soul was restored, for the grace of the Lord is unbounded, but the joy was mingled with sorrow. A friend called to see him and he said "It is kind of you to come and see me, but don't stay. I am going to spend my eternity with Jesus and I know so little about Him; I want to spend all the time I can with Him now." In a few days he went home, through the merits of the Saviour's blood, but he left his wasted years behind, all lost . . . O gracious and living Lord, grant in Thine infinite grace that not one here shall have that bitter experience, but may we whatever our past has been live henceforth not unto ourselves but unto Thee, and so be well pleasing to Thee. For Thy dear Name's sake. Amen.

## 7. Trading for our Lord

*“And as they heard these things, He added and spake a parable, because He was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, that unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.” (Luke 19:11-26)*

My words are for you, Christ’s young men and women. You have come into great wealth, and the question for you is, To what use are you putting it? To assure you of the wealth I will quote well known and greatly loved words. “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.” What will you do with your riches? Selfishly enjoy them? If you try that you will not enjoy them at all. I would remind you of that ancient word, “There is that which scattereth and yet increaseth; there is that which withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty.” And you have surely read in wise old John Bunyan’s book of that man,

“Whom some did count as mad,  
The more he gave the more he had.”

But in this matter you need to be instructed, and our Saviour is not only our Lord to command us, but He is our Teacher to instruct us, and happy are we if we know Him in this threefold way. The riches that He has given us are ours eternally, and yet in another way we are stewards of them, and with them we are to trade for Him. Most of you who hear me are in business life, but every one of us has been called to do business for our absent Lord, and this is taught us in a striking way in the parable of the pounds. It is of that that I would speak to you.

“A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom.” I want you first to notice how the Lord describes Himself. “A certain nobleman.” The One who has saved us and whom we are to represent and serve is THE NOBLEMAN. All true nobility is in Him. Where else can you look for it? God found it in Him. How absolute was His fidelity to God—ever obedient, ever dependent. He did always the things that pleased Him, so that God could say of Him, “Behold

My Servant, the One in whom My soul delighteth.” And how noble He was in His ways with men. No selfish motive ever moved Him, no hatred or ingratitude from men changed Him. He would not put forth His power for His own relief, but for others that power knew no limit or rest. He was the servant of all from early morn to the close of day. It is recorded that “all the people came early in the morning to Him.” He was there waiting for them when they came; to teach them, to serve them, to heal them; and not until every man had gone to his own home did He retire, a homeless Man, to the Mount of Olives.

Everything that He did in His life of service was nobly done, beautifully done. See Him as He stands beside the widowed mother, weeping for her dead. His heart is moved with compassion for her sorrow, and His word rebukes the cause of it and makes her son alive again. Then He moves on without waiting for reward or recognition. He might have claimed that young man’s life and service and have said to him, Follow Me, but He didn’t, He restored him to his mother. See Him stoop to gather the children to His heart when the disciples would have driven them away—they were of no account to others, but how dear they were to Him! No need escaped His notice, no sigh reached His ear in vain. Self-sacrificing love placed Him at the service of all, and He served because love must serve in a world of sin and need. Wonderful Saviour! The true Nobleman! Our Lord and Master, who has saved us that we might serve Him!

“But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.” The next thing that we must note is that we are to occupy for Him in a world that has refused His claims. He is the rightful King of all, but He is the rejected King. The world of men did not appreciate His nobility, so ignoble were they. His meekness, gentleness, and long-suffering moved them to nothing save contempt and hatred. The world has not changed to acknowledge His goodness, and Christ has not changed to meet its ignoble standards. He is not wanted in it now any more than He was, and we are to represent Him and trade for Him where He is not wanted. It should be plain to us that the world will not cannot help us in this our Lord’s business. We cannot call upon its resources and we ought not to follow its ways. We are to serve in the midst of it as our Master did—doing good unto all men—but we must look outside of it for our supplies and direction.

“And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till come.” It is not in this parable as in that of the Talents in Matthew’s Gospel, where the number of talents were distributed according to the ability of the servants, but to each servant is given a pound. The pound is that great treasure which the Lord brought into the world. It is the knowledge of God in His grace. This is specially unfolded for us in this Gospel of Luke. It is both interesting and instructive to see that the special character of the truth which the Lord presents to men in each of the Gospels is that which is most opposed by them. In this Gospel of Luke the leaders of the people were continually finding fault with Him because of the grace which carried Him into the company of sinners. In chapter 5 they said, “He eateth with publicans and sinners.” In chapter 7 they complained “He is the friend of publicans and sinners”; in chapter 15 they said, “This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them,” and here in chapter 19 they find fault with Him because He had gone to be guest with a man that was a sinner. But it was this grace of God that could reach down to the vilest and most needy that He had come to show. He was here to reveal the grace of God, and in this He was doing His Father’s business. How fully this grace was revealed in the Pharisee’s house in chapter 7 when He said to the sinner of the city, “Thy sins are forgiven thee;” how blessedly it was declared in the threefold parable in chapter 15 in which we see Father, Son and Holy Ghost rejoicing over the recovery of once lost but repentant sinners; and what could

exceed the glory of it, when the crucified Saviour said to the dying malefactor, "Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

The Lord brought the knowledge of God in His infinite grace to guilty men in the world, but when He went back to heaven He did not take it back with Him, He left it here with His servants that they might trade with it for Him. We find it in the commission which He gave to them after He rose from the dead. He said unto them, "Thus it is written and thus it behoved Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (ch. 24).

The knowledge of God in the infinite grace of His heart is the silver pound, and our Lord has committed it to us. It is a great treasure and is so described in 2 Corinthians 4. "For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us." This is the silver pound, and we are responsible to put it in circulation on our Lord's behalf, and to trade with it for Him until He comes.

I ask you, happy young Christian, what can compare in value with the knowledge of the God of all grace? It has meant much to you. Without it you were without hope, without light, without peace; a wanderer, an orphan, an unforgiven sinner. But the gospel of His grace has changed all that, and you can say, "God is for us." You can wake in the morning with the thought that you know God, and that He loves you and cares for you. Your needs are many, but His supplies are infinite, and His mercies are renewed every morning to you. Just as the manna was always waiting, morning by morning, for Israel in the wilderness, and God was never late with His supplies of it, so now a full provision awaits you when the day's needs commence. What peace of mind, what quietness this knowledge should give you! The quietness of mind and contentment that the knowledge of God gives is necessary if we are to trade successfully, for if we are marked by worry and irritability and discontent, men of the world might well say to us, "What have you got that we have not?" But if they see that we have something that sustains us in trial and keeps us quiet amid the stress and tear of life, they may be ready to listen to our words. So shall we have joy of trading with our pound, of speaking to men and women of the God we know, and the words we speak will be words in season to them that are weary.

We may tell them that we know a God whose compassions are without limit, that never a cry to Him has been refused or will be as long as the day of grace lasts. We may tell them that God is moved because of their distresses, and that His mercy is poured forth to meet them in their misery. We may tell them that He has searched them, and that He knows them and their sins, and yet He will receive and save them; that He commends His love to them in that while they were yet sinners Christ died for them. What news is this for weary, sinful men! Strange it is that they care about it so little. Strange that we who possess the treasure should show such faint zeal in trading with it.

If a man is to trade successfully he must consider carefully where and how to trade, and this is surely not less important in that which is the chief business of the servant of the Lord, and every Christian is a servant. Doctors, mechanics, teachers, nurses, typists, clerks, and many other callings we may follow, but all these are secondary. We desire to be efficient in these secular duties, and that is right, but our chief concern is our business for the Lord, and we ought to know how and where He would have us serve. We ought to know where we can put the pound out at the best rate of interest. With most of us the Lord intends that we should continue in the calling wherein we are

called and hold forth the word of life and shine as lights just where we are. It may be that He would have some of us to carry the pound in diligent labour into the streets and lanes of the city, or far out into heathen lands. In these things He, the Master, must direct; it is ours to obey, to serve, to trade.

“And it came to pass that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded those servants to be called to him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much each man had gained by trading.”

The absence of our Lord is not to be for ever. “Occupy till I come” links up the present with the future, and produces solemn thoughts as to what He will say to us when He returns. But there is encouragement for us in the parable, for we are sure that the Lord will not forget any bit of true service. Heaven’s book-keeping is accurate. All that we have gained for our Lord is entered there, and it will give the Lord joy to acknowledge the faithfulness of His servants.

But there was one servant who knew not his Lord and cared naught for His honour and wealth, though he stood with the rest of the servants and appeared to be what they were. He never valued the pound, it was naught to him, so he hid it in a napkin and buried it out of sight; and if he did business at all, he did it with his own base coin, upon which the image and superscription of the King did not appear. There are many such: they have pledged themselves by solemn vows to serve the Lord, and to uphold and trade with the gospel of God as it is revealed in the Bible, but they have no intention of fulfilling their vows; they are ashamed of the gospel and desire to be popular in the world; they are unfaithful men, and are traitors to their trust, even though they still profess to be Christ’s servants; but they are not vitally His.

This servant did not know the Lord at all; out of his own mouth will we judge him. “I knew,” he said, “that thou wert an austere man.” Did he know? Did he not declare his ignorance when he opened his mouth? Who among you who know the Lord will go down on your knees and say to Him, “I know that Thou art an austere man”? Nay, you have other things to say of Him. You have seen no frowns upon His brow; you have heard no hard words from His lips; the tenderest heart in the universe beats in His breast, and you have proved it so. Your service has been full of failure; often you have blundered, but those very blunders have become opportunities for the display of His grace to you. This man did not know the Lord, so we who do know Him must conclude. He was a wicked servant, who loved himself and despised his Lord and His pound.

“How much?” and “Of what sort?” (1 Cor. 3); thus will all our work be tested. But let us have neither doubt nor question as to this matter, by the pound alone can we gain by trading. The knowledge of God as revealed by Christ Jesus, now told out in the gospel, and this alone can bring men to God and subdue them to Christ. All else will fail, no matter how plausible and popular; the gospel alone is God’s power unto salvation to everyone that believeth. Knowing this, may we earnestly desire to be kept diligently putting it into circulation “till He comes.”

## 8. The Lord's Yoke

*“At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight. All things are delivered unto Me of My Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him. Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” (Matt. 11:25-30)*

Of the Lord's grace and yoke I would speak to you. But as you well know we miss the full meaning and beauty of the great sayings of Scripture if we separate them from their setting, so I must first show you the circumstances in which He spoke these most wonderful of all His words recorded in this Gospel of Matthew. “At that time,” we read. What time was that? It was a solemn time, a time of crisis. As we reach this part of the Record a sadness creeps over our spirits, we feel that we are entering upon the fulfilment of Isaiah 53. There is a quotation from that heart-moving chapter in the 8th of this Gospel. “Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses.”

The King had come to His kingdom, He had come to dwell among His people, full of grace and truth. He was with them to pour out His mercy upon them in a healing flood, but they did not know Him; to them He was only a passing sensation. He had no form nor comeliness, and when they saw Him, there was no beauty that they should desire Him. WHY?

You have all read Bunyan's immortal allegory, and may remember that when the pilgrims on their journey to the Celestial City reached the house of the good Gaius, there they were entertained after a godly sort, and they had much profitable talk. The 53rd chapter of Isaiah was read, and old, white-haired Mr. Honest who was one of the pilgrim band enquired, Why was it that they saw no beauty in Him? And that is the question, surely, that must spring up in every honest, enquiring heart. Why? Now Greatheart who was the warrior and the instructor of the party—and no one can be a successful Christian warrior who is not instructed—answered, “Those of whom that is said lacked the eyes that can look into the heart of our Prince.” That was a shrewd and inspired answer.

The wise and prudent of the day who formed public opinion, looked only upon what was outward, and for all their prudence they were deceived by the vain show in which they and their fellows paraded themselves, and Jesus was to them only “the carpenter,” or “a Galilean,” who “had never learnt.” Away with Him! They were blind. Blind! Blind to the infinite, divine loveliness of Him, blind to what was in His heart. They were blinded by the god of this world whose willing prey they were, and as it was then, so it is now, even in this very day. Those who do not rally to our Prince are those that have no eyes to see into His heart. Did that heart, the tenderness of which they could not appreciate, feel it when they turned with contempt from Him? Yes, it felt it deeply, but for their sakes and not for His own. Behold Him stretching out His hands towards blind, rebellious Jerusalem, and saying, while tears of pity ran down His face, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not.” His heart was broken because they had no eyes to look into it, and because they spurned the love that was there.

It was in that crisis, “at that time,” when it could be clearly seen that they wanted neither Him nor His blessing, when they despised and rejected Him, that He lifted up His eyes to His Father. Did

the Father care? He had sent His beloved Son into the world. "Having therefore one Son, His well-beloved, He sent Him also unto them, saying, They will reverence My Son" (Mark 12:6). Was He indifferent then to the fact that His Son was despised and rejected? No, He was not indifferent, He looked down upon it all and passed His judgment upon these wise and prudent men who imagined that they could discriminate and discern, and He left them to their blindness and gave to the babes eyes that could look into the heart of His Son: He revealed His grace to them.

It is a most affecting thing to keep in mind that if we have been attracted to Jesus and can say to Him,

"Fairer than all the earth-born race  
Perfect in comeliness Thou art,  
Replenished are Thy lips with grace  
And full of love Thy tender heart."

we have been the subjects of the Father's work. He has revealed these things to us. He has given us eyes that can look into the heart of our Prince. Our Lord was satisfied to have it so, since this was His Father's doing. There was no resentment in His heart, He accepted the situation, and spoke those memorable words of perfect submission, "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

But though He was rejected by the people who ought to have welcomed and worshipped Him, yet His glory could not be hid. He is more than King of the Jews, He is Heir to and has been called and appointed to a universal throne, for He said, "All things are delivered unto Me of My Father." The Father has trusted Him, fully and for ever. Into His hands the Father has committed the maintenance of His limitless glory and the carrying out of all His will. His absolute and universal supremacy is assured; He has the disposal of every created being in His power, from the highest angel in heaven to the meanest demon in hell. At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven, in earth and under the earth. But His personal greatness is greater than all that He will do. He is the Son, and none can know the mystery of His eternal being, and of that eternal relationship with the Father, but the Father. And He knows the Father for He dwelt in an eternal intimacy of love in the Father's bosom, and He has come forth from the Father and become Man, that He might reveal to us men the Father's Name and love, that the fulness of joy and everlasting satisfaction that this Name and love afford might be ours, that we might share it with Him, who is to be the Firstborn among many brethren in the Father's house.

We are glad to have that glimpse of His greatness, but now we come to the other side, we make haste to reverently acknowledge the glory of His Name, but now we must open our eyes to look into His heart. His face is toward the multitudes now. He has accepted His rejection by Israel and now offers Himself as the Saviour of a needy world.

Oh! listen to His words. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest." It is an overwhelming word. Behold Him in the presence of the world's need. He knew everything; He measured everything; He had heard every sigh, seen every tear, weighed every burden; no heart was hidden from Him; the sin, the sorrow, the sordidness of men's lives was all uncovered before His eye, and He stretched out His hands to the world and cried to the world with its countless woes and claimant needs, "Come unto Me!" . . . Of course, we say at once that only God could speak like that. For who but God could soothe every fevered spirit, relieve every accusing conscience, bind up every broken heart and bless every troubled sinner! Only God could

speak thus, and yet these words came from the lips of Jesus, the lowly, rejected yet unresentful Nazarene. God was manifested in the flesh!

Have you been arrested by these words? Then now you need eyes to look into the heart of the One who spoke them. If you can do this, wonderful things will be revealed to you. That heart cares for you, it pities you. He looks into your heart and knows its sins and hopes and fears, its shattered ambitions and hidden secrets and desires, He knows your burdens and every deep and unspoken longing of your soul. He knows

“The regret, the struggle and the failing!  
The long days desolate and useless years!  
Vows in the night, so fierce and unavailing!  
Stings of your shame and passions of your tears.”

As you look into His heart and see this you draw near, you are encouraged to commit yourself to Him, to trust in Him. Surely you may fully trust the One whom the Father has fully trusted, you may safely commit your soul and its everlasting welfare to Him to whom the Father hath committed all His glory. Yes, surely, but it is only as you look into His heart that you will really come. It is the grace rather than the greatness of His Name that attracts us, the tenderness of His heart rather than the glory. Here is rest for you, perfect rest. The only One in heaven or on earth who could undertake your case is willing to do it.

He appeals to you to come to Him, to come just as you are, and to bring all you are, with everything that is a burden to you; He invites you, and there is the yearning of divine love in His words, to cease your labours, and to rest in Him.

“Lay down, thou weary one  
Lay down thy head upon My breast.”

How can He do it, and be consistent with God’s holy Name and righteous rule? That question we must ask as we draw near to Him and He answers it. Look upon the multitude to whom He calls. “There is not a man that sinneth not,” said Solomon, as on bended knees he stretched out his hands in supplication to Almighty God. How can this question be met? Above that multitude of sinners a cross raises its rugged head, and to that cross Jesus went; on it He bore in His own body our sins; there He was wounded for our transgressions. And His great sacrifice and precious blood answer the question.

The Lord hath made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all, and our sins and iniquities are remembered no more. “I lay down My life for the sheep,” He said, “I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father.”

Now it is this One who suffered for our sins, and whose grace has no limit, and who is now the risen Lord who invites us, in winning tones, to subject ourselves to His will. “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls,” He says.

Other lords have had dominion over us and the bondage was bitter. What a heavy yoke Satan lays upon the necks of his dupes and how he befools them. Artists have often portrayed Satan with a sardonic smirk upon his face, and they have not defamed him. He seems to take a pleasure in double-crossing his victims. We have examples in Scripture. He enticed Achan, and Achan saw and



coveted the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment, surely they were lawful plunder, but having got them what should he do with them? Bury them, that was all he could do, and he was soon buried with them beneath the avenging stones of an outraged people. And there was that servant of Elisha, who pursued Naaman because Satan had put it into his heart to covet his Syrian wealth and gay apparel, but do you think he would wear his ill-gotten finery with pride and satisfaction when with it went the rotting carcass of a leper? There are many examples both ancient and modern of this same thing: they warn us, if we need the warning, that the yoke of Satan is not easy and the burden of sin is not light, and that Satan lays his yoke upon the necks of his dupes with a sinister motive and a terrible purpose. How greatly we should rejoice if the hand of our Saviour has lifted that yoke from us and set us free. If the Son shall make you free ye shall be free indeed. But we must come under some yoke, and Jesus offers His. Shall we not gladly accept it as a great gift? If we have looked into His heart we can do no other, for we shall be persuaded that His will can only mean our blessing. His will is not against us, it is for us, and against everything that could do us harm. His will is our greatest blessing.

In this Gospel of Matthew He is the King, but the King rejected, but we will not reject His Kingship. We rally afresh to His banner with uplifted hands and with loyal hearts we cry

“Christ of God, our souls confess Thee,  
King and Sovereign here and now.”

How shall I speak for Him who invites us to yield to Him? He must speak for Himself. He says, “I am meek and lowly in heart.” What is it to be meek? It is remarkable that Moses, the God-chosen leader for His people in the Old Testament, was the meekest man in all the earth; he was a figure of Jesus our Lord. God’s leaders are meek, and that certainly does not mean weak. Meekness is not weakness. The meek man is the one who is subject to the will of God, and Jesus was so absolutely. “My Father’s business,” “Even so Father,” “Not My will.” This was the whole tenor of His life, and He has qualified by His great obedience to command us. In the meek man there is an absence of pride; meekness and lowliness go together.

There have been leaders of men who were haughty tyrants, men of unbounded pride, who brooked no challenge to their wills. Such were Nebuchadnezzar, Nero, Napoleon. But think of Jesus. He took the lowest place, even with those disciples who rightly called Him “Master and Lord.” His love made Him their servant. He is not a hard Master, His commandments are not grievous, His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

“Learn of Me,” He says. Some of us have rather unpleasant memories of teachers, and tasks, and schools. But who of us would desire to be excused from this school and from the lessons that our Lord would teach us? We learn of Him as we consider Him. His words are words of life to us; He teaches us by His ways also. Our wonder increases as we sit at His feet and learn of Him, and as we wonder we grow and worship. If we cease to wonder we shall cease to grow; we shall slip back and lose the joy of what we know. But as we learn of Him we wonder and grow and find rest to our souls. We rest in His perfect love, His perfect wisdom, His perfect way. We can take up His own words in all circumstances, “Even so, Lord, for so it seemeth good in Thy sight.” And that submission to perfect love and wisdom means rest of soul.

But I have heard it said, “It is hard to be a Christian,” and some of you have said it in your hearts if you have not confessed it with your mouths. A young Christian man said that to me once and he seemed very depressed about it. I met him about a year afterwards, and his face was radiant. “It was

hard when I was half and half,” he said, “but it’s different now.” He had yielded to the Lord’s yoke and he was proving how true were the Lord’s words, “My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

If your experience contradicts His word, it has not been true Christian experience, and can we discover where it is wrong. I once saw a man labouring with a mule. His desire was that it should go one way, its determination was to stand still just where it was. It was hard for the mule and hard for the master, for their wills were in opposition. If your will is opposed to the Lord’s will, it is hard for you and it is not easy for Him, but that clash of wills will cease if you yield yourself wholly to Him. Do you find that difficult? Pray then for the single eye. Take your eye off the world’s tinsel and its unsatisfying prizes, cease to consider for yourself and look into the heart of your Prince. Here lies the secret. It is easy to yield to perfect love and if you will look into the Lord’s heart you will gladly yield yourself to Him, for His love for you is perfect, and you will find that His yoke is padded with love, it will not chafe or irk you. He will not lay upon you any burden you cannot bear. He lifts the heavy burdens, and puts a joyous burden on the necks of those who look into His heart. The burden He lays upon them is witness for Him; He wants you to bear Himself in witness to the world, to show to men what He is and how blessed a thing it is to belong to Him. It has been said “His burden bears those that bear it.”

Take these words of shrewd old Bunyan with you and consider them well, “Eyes that look into the heart of our Prince,” and take these words of our Lord and let them be a comfort to your heart and a soft pillow for your head. “MY YOKE IS EASY AND MY BURDEN IS LIGHT.”

## 9. The Bright Shining of a Candle

*“The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. Take heed, therefore, that the light which is in thee be not darkness. If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.”*  
(Luke 11:34-36)

What sort of eye is yours? It is certain from these solemn words of the Lord that everything depends upon the answer to the question. I ask you to face it fairly. It is plain also that there are two sorts of eyes, and not three; the single eye, which means a good eye that can bear the light, or an evil eye, an eye that shrinks from the light, that cannot bear it. When David said, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23-24), he spoke as a man who had a single eye, that did not shrink from the light; when those scribes and Pharisees went one by one from the presence of the Lord, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last (John 8), they showed how men act who have the evil eye, the eye that cannot endure the light.

Now let us consider this matter, being assured that the whole secret of free and vigorous Christian living lies in it. The light is not something that we possess in ourselves, it does not exist in the eye. The eye is the organ that admits the light from without, and it must be a good and sound eye that does not shrink from the light if the light is to be of any use to us. The thing of first importance is the light, the candle, of which the previous verse speaks; the light and the eye go together, we must not divorce the one from the other, for the Lord has joined them together, and what the Lord Jesus has joined together let no man put asunder.

First the light and then the eye. He said, “No man when he lighteth a candle, putteth it in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.” The candle is first lighted, then everything depends upon the eye, whether it can bear the light or not. What is the light? No, we will not put it that way, for we want to make an appeal to the heart as well as the conscience. We ask, WHO IS THE LIGHT? for it is a Person. The Light, the Candle that has been lighted for us by God’s own hand is the Lord Himself, our Saviour. It is Himself of whom He spoke in the parable. “I am the light of the world,” said He, on another occasion. He is “the bright shining of a candle that doth give thee light,” and since He has come every man is tested by Him. It is made manifest by His coming into the world whether our eye is good or evil.

This is a great theme and we must pursue it, for light is good. How those great men of Old Testament times longed for it! When Moses cried, “Show me Thy glory,” he was yearning for the light, and when David prayed “O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles. Then will I go to the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy”—he was praying for the light, but I do not suppose that he knew how his prayer would be answered, or that God’s light and truth would come forth in the person of God’s beloved Son, but so it was, for He was the true Light that, coming into the world, shineth for every man (John 1:9, N.T.), and He is the truth for all those whose eye admits the light.

But let us work back a little further in our Scripture, that we may understand it better, and miss nothing of its solemn meaning to us. It was an evil generation to which the Lord came and in which the light shone (v. 29), its eye could not endure the light; it did not perceive that He was the light,

so it asked for a sign. The light was shining, yet it asked for light, for that is what a sign meant, something that would make plain to them who the Lord was, and leave them in no doubt about it. It was as though a man came into a room at midnight in which a candle shone brightly and declared that he must have a sign, some definite proof that it was a candle. But why were they like that? The light that shone made their evil eye to smart and they did not like it, they wanted something that would make them comfortable in their sins, something that would suit themselves and not God; their will, not His. So they rejected the Light that shone so brightly and showed them how evil they were, and just so far as that disposition lurks in the heart of any of us and we yield to it, so far have we the evil eye, an eye that does not want the light.

The Lord quotes the cases of the men of Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba as condemning that generation. Jonas carried light—a partial glimmer it was to the great pagan city of Nineveh. That light shone in the dense darkness of their idolatry and sin, and lo, they admitted it to their hearts. They had the single or good eye, and repented at the preaching of Jonas. They were honest with God and He was gracious with them. He never turned His face away from a man who bowed before Him in true self-judgment, in repentance. But no man ever did that who had not a sense in his soul that there is forgiveness with God that He may be feared. The light that exposes the sin, reveals the God who can pardon it. But in the men of Nineveh we have the negative side of things, we see in them what the light delivered them from; in the Queen of the South we have the positive side. She came out of the darkness of her native land to the great light that shone in Israel, and no selfishness, no national pride kept her from owning the light that was there in Solomon's wisdom, her eye admitted it and the light illuminated her; every hard question that troubled her vanished as she listened to Solomon, and she was filled with wonder and worship to God, as the story in 1 Kings 10 shows. And I may remark, by the way, that those who have the single eye and admit the light are ever wondering, the light is so marvellous, and the things that they see in it are so great that they must wonder, and while they wonder they grow and worship.

But a greater light than ever shone in Nineveh or Jerusalem is shining now, for a greater than Jonah and Solomon has come, even the Lord Himself. He is the light. Have we seen Him? Do we love Him? He is the great test. Have our eyes admitted the light, and has it searched us and illuminated us, until our whole bodies are full of light, having no part dark?

There are two sides to this wonderful illumination, at least so it seems to me. There is the measure of our blessing in it, and there is the character of our practical living. God's purpose is that the last should be consistent with the first, nothing but this could suit Him. Alas, that we should so often be satisfied with less than this! As to the first, the true light is now shining; happy indeed are all those who have the eye that does not shrink from it. Of old a great light shone at Sinai, but Israel could not bear it, it exposed what they were and condemned them. It showed what God's demands were, but they neither could meet those demands nor did they desire to do so. Hence we read that Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of it. The light made their eye smart, they could not endure it; the end of it was condemnation, and Moses, who represented it to them, and in whose face the light of it shone, had to put a veil over his face. All this we learn from 2 Corinthians 3. But a greater light is shining in the face of Jesus. God in the fulness of His nature and character is revealed there. The light that will fill the universe of bliss so that there will be no part dark within the limitless bounds of it, shines now in Jesus' face. Can we look into His face with unveiled face? Yes, for, wonderful fact, that light shines not for our condemnation but for our salvation. The rays of light that shine from Him are life-giving, not death-dealing, and if we look we live, and into our hearts

the light shines to give the knowledge of God, and “We have this treasure in earthen vessels.” We have the light of life and walk no more in darkness; and what a treasure is this!

The light condemns what we are as men in the flesh and brings us to true self-judgment, that Christ may be everything to us—wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. We see this illustrated for us in men of olden times. It was when Job had seen the Lord, when he said, “Now mine eye seeth Thee,” that he cast his own righteousness in the dust and said, “I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42). And Daniel also beheld the glory of the Lord in a vision, and said, “I saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me; for my comeliness was turned into corruption” (Dan. 10). But these men had the single eye, they did not refuse the light, they let it search them and show them what they were and the end was blessing for them both; like the men of Nineveh they owned the truth as to themselves, and the light that showed them themselves also showed them that God was greater than their sin and corruption and was a God of blessing who had a great care for them.

This self-judgment there must be; “I know that in me, that is in my flesh good does not dwell” (Rom. 7 N.T.) is the soul’s confession when the eye admits the light, but we may also behold the glory of the Lord and discover that the righteousness that we do not possess in ourselves is in Christ for us, and is ministered to us from the glory into which He has gone, and that we become the righteousness of God in Him, for He was made sin for us with this end in view. Those who have admitted the light, and been searched by it, have ceased from the weary and useless struggle to be what they feel they ought to be, they have given up the disappointing search for goodness in the rubbish of their own lives and they have turned the eye to Christ. They have changed ashes for beauty and mourning for the oil of gladness. They have had the ashes and the mourning of repentance and self-judgment, for the light has shown them what they are, and they have been honest with God about it, but they have also seen the glory of the Lord who is greater than Solomon, and in Him their need is met, by Him their hearts are filled.

So the light reveals the blessing and the measure of it, but what then? Why, it must become also the measure of our practical living. We are glad to have seen with the eye of faith the great salvation that is in Christ for us, and the perfect righteousness that is ours in Him, but God would have us consistent with that in our lives and work, and for this we must admit the light. How often we would cling to our own way, how often we would like to hide something of self in our bosoms, some secret ambition, some hope that in some future and favourable time we might attain to something that our hearts have desired and which we feel the light condemns now. We cannot be comfortable in the light when such is the case, and we need the warning, “Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.” God must have reality, He would have us to be honest with Him at all times and about everything and we are that as Christ is our standard. If I have an eye for my own gratification and pleasure it will not bear the light and is so far evil, for that is self, and no man can serve two masters. The light exposes self and selfishness and shows us Christ instead, and when we are right and the eye is single, the test is, not, is this right or that? but, is it Christ? What a wonderful thing it must be to have the whole body full of light, having no part dark, all clear and open and honest before God, and so a conscience void of offence before men. It was so with Paul when he said, “For me to live is Christ.” Then the bright shining of the Candle gave him light, and so it may be with us, and if so ours will be the path of the just that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. God grant that we may so love the light and rejoice in it that we may ever say, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”



## 10. Three Men

*“And SAUL eyed David from that day and forward. And there was a javelin in Saul’s hand. And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall with it. . . . And the soul of JONATHAN was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.”* (1 Sam. 18).

*“And Jonathan, Saul’s son arose and went to David in the wood . . . and said to him . . . Thou shalt be King of Israel, and I shall be next unto thee.”* (1 Sam. 23:16-17).

*“And MEPHIBOSHETH the son of Saul, went to meet the King, and he answered, My lord and king . . . All my father’s house were but dead men before my lord the king: yet didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table.”* (2 Sam. 19).

David, the son of Jesse, was chosen of God to be the saviour, shepherd and king of His ancient people Israel, and in these respects he foreshadowed our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Saviour of men, and the coming King. Being God’s chosen man, it followed that all in Israel who were subject to God would think well of him and yield him obedience; indeed, he became the test in his day as to how far every man understood the thoughts and ways of God. There were three men—Saul, Jonathan, and Mephibosheth—who were brought into direct contact with him, and the way they treated David is illustrative of the way men are treating our Lord Jesus Christ in our day; and this is my subject.

David was not the man whom Israel would have chosen, for he was but a shepherd-lad, without any pretension to greatness. They chose Saul because of his outward appearance, and even Samuel, the prophet of God, would have repeated their mistake when sent to the house of Jesse, by pouring the anointing oil upon the head of Eliab, because of the beauty of his countenance and the height of his stature. But “the Lord seeth not as man seeth: for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7).

To the natural eye there was “no beauty” in Jesus, and so “He was despised and rejected of men,” but He was infinitely lovely and lovable in the eyes of God, for He loved the Lord His God with all His heart, and the heart is the mainspring of every action.

Yes, Jesus was the Man after God’s own heart, His Anointed, who fulfilled all His will.

Israel discovered in the day of their distress that God’s chosen man was the only one who could deliver them. When the great Goliath threatened them, and Saul and Eliab trembled before him in their helplessness, they had need to look elsewhere for salvation. It was then that David appeared, and girded with the strength of the God of Israel he overthrew the giant and set the people free. Then they proved what was stated of the shepherd-lad at his anointing, that he was “goodly to look to.”

The enthralling story of David’s victory is recorded in 1 Samuel 17, and shows us, in figure, the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ over our mighty foe, the devil—a victory told in the words of Hebrews 2:14-15, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

How complete was David's victory, and how glorious; yet how surprising to both Philistine and Israelite, for Goliath was a man of war, invincible as he thought, and armed to the teeth, while David was a stripling, with no other weapons than five smooth stones and a simple sling. But by these was that huge mass of boasting flesh brought to the dust, and there, "by his own sword," was the giant spoiled of his head, so that even the most fearful and timid in Israel might join in the glad shouts that rang out triumphantly from the heights of Pas-dammim. The Lord was crucified in weakness; He went out against the powers of darkness and the devil on our behalf, and as He hung rejected and gibbeted upon a malefactor's cross it seemed as though He had met with utter and irretrievable defeat. But it was—

"By weakness and defeat  
He won the meed and crown;  
Trode all our foes beneath His feet  
By being trodden down."

And by His death, death's dominion has been overthrown, and the devil's power annulled, and this so completely that our risen Lord can say, "Fear not I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth and was dead: and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death" (Rev. 1:17-18).

"Triumphant saints no honour claim,  
The conquest was His own."

## **SAUL**

After the overthrow of the giant, David got a measure of recognition in Israel, for we are told in 1 Samuel 18 that "he was accepted in the sight of all the people" (v. 5); the women sang his praises (v. 7); all Israel loved him (v. 16); and "his name was much set by" (v. 30). But Saul stood out in base and brutal contrast to the rest of Israel; there sprung up in his heart a bitter and undying hatred towards the people's deliverer; he eyed David with a jealous eye, and sought to destroy him (vv. 9-10). Saul represents the unconverted man, the man in the flesh. We read a great deal about the flesh in the New Testament. It is that evil principle within the heart of man that shuts out God and Christ, and will always make SELF the supreme object of the life in opposition to Christ. The flesh will have religion, and meetings, and sometimes tolerate Christians, but it will not have Christ. When He came into the world it betrayed Him for the price of a slave; spat upon His sacred cheek; and nailed Him to a cross. It has not changed in the course of the centuries, and the Christ of God is still rejected and hated by it. The unconverted man is in the flesh; he has no love for our Lord Jesus Christ, and his position is terrible, for the Scripture saith, "If any man love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema; maranatha" (1 Cor. 16:22).

Indifference to Christ and His rights may seem a small matter to some, and they may be surprised that it should call down the anathemas of Almighty God upon them, nevertheless it does; and the justice of it will be evident to you, I believe, if you see its baseness illustrated in Saul's attitude towards David. Israel owed everything to David, for the Philistines threatened not only to seize their lands and wealth, but to make every one of them—men, women, and children—their absolute slaves. And Saul could not deliver them, nor Jonathan, nor Abner, and the people were at their wits' end. It was then that David appeared, and, taking his life in his hand, he overthrew the great



foe and delivered the people from his power. David was undoubtedly the one man in the realm whose right it was to reign, and Saul's conscience told him so, but in his selfish pride he refused to surrender to David. Saul was first in his own thoughts, and he hated David because he knew that David ought to be. Yet David did not suffer in the fight that he waged for Israel; protected by the mighty hand of Jehovah he came through it without a scar. How different it was with our Lord Jesus Christ when He came to deliver men; His visage was so marred more than any man's, and His form more than the sons of men. His hands and feet were pierced and nailed to the tree; every sorrow found its centre in Him, and He drank to the dregs the bitterness of death. He has won an everlasting deliverance for sinful men at great cost to Himself—a deliverance from Satan's power, from the fear of death, and from eternal hell; and the preaching of the wonderful love that made Him do it should have prostrated the whole race at His feet. How base is that ingratitude that refuses to love Him! How sinful that selfishness that will not yield homage to Him! How terrible the pride that will not have the blessing through Christ crucified!

Alas! "All of self, and none of Thee," is the answer that thousands are giving to the claims of Christ.

## **JONATHAN**

Saul hated David, but Jonathan loved him as his own soul; and no wonder, for he had watched the fight in the field of Elah, and as he saw David go forth against the enemy he could say, he has undertaken that conflict for me; and when the victory was completed, he could say, he has destroyed the foe for me. He had also beheld him in the tent of the king with the head of Goliath in his hand, and there David won his heart, so that he stripped himself of everything that distinguished him, and made a full surrender to him. David was victor in the battlefield; he was also victor in the tent of the king; the trophy of his first victory was the head of Goliath; the trophy of the second was the heart of Jonathan. Have we known an epoch like that in our lives? Has the Lord Jesus captivated us? Do we love Him and have we made a full surrender to Him? Four lines from Charlotte Elliot's sweet hymn express this surrender perfectly:

"Just as I am, Thy love I own  
Has broken every barrier down;  
Now to be Thine, yea, THINE ALONE,  
O Lamb of God, I come."

How beautiful was the devotion of Jonathan to David! And we learn how greatly David prized it by his touching lament at Jonathan's death: "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women" (2 Sam. 1:26). Yet Jonathan was slain in Saul's company by the hands of the Philistines, and he did not see the glorious kingdom of his well-loved friend. I have often wondered why this was; why the one who shone like the rising of a brilliant star in his love to David at Elah should have set in darkness at Gilboa. I believe I have found the reason in 1 Samuel 23:16-18.

We have a heart-moving scene there. David and Jonathan met in the wood, as they had met before in chapter 20:41-42, and there they bade each other a last farewell; and Jonathan, moved by love to his friend, and the knowledge that God was with him, renounced all claim to the throne in the words, "THOU SHALT BE KING . . . AND I SHALL BE NEXT."

It was there that the strength of Jonathan's devotion declared itself; it was there also that he betrayed its weakness. David first, but "I NEXT." Oh, why did he not put a full point after he had declared that the kingdom was David's, and then been silent as to himself! Why did he not leave the appointment of his place to his king? for surely the king alone had the right to say who should be next unto him. It was the introduction of the capital "I"—his thought for himself—that was the undoing of Jonathan. This carried him back to his father's court, where his friend was hated, and where in former days he had been persecuted for his friend's sake. How different his history might have been if he had said: "David, thou shalt be king, and I will share thy rejection until thy rights are publicly owned; whither thou goest I will go. I am wholly thine, command me as thou wilt." It would have meant for the time being the cave, and the mountain-side, and the scorn of all time-servers instead of popularity and the palace of the king. But it would also have meant a place of honour in the kingdom of David instead of ignominy and death at the hands of the uncircumcised Philistines.

How solemn is the lesson that this story teaches. It is possible to begin well and yet to fail in that full-hearted response to the Lord's love which alone is right and well-pleasing to God; it is possible for thought of self to come in and make us careful for our own ease and safety, and, as we often falsely judge, our own present advantage.

The believer is not in the flesh but in the Spirit (Rom. 8:9), but the flesh is still in the believer, and whenever it is consulted or allowed to control us, it will find room for self, and in so far as it does this our lives are not wholly for Christ.

David in his rejection prefigured Christ in His rejection; and be it clearly understood that Christ is just as much rejected now as when men cried, "Away with Him." His rights are not acknowledged; the world does not put its crowns upon His brow; men do not want His interference in their affairs, and those who truly follow Him must heed the words of the One whom they follow: "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept My sayings they will keep yours also" (John 15:19-20).

This is our life, and the treasure we have found in His love should make us welcome it.

"Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands our soul, our life, our all."

And "if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him."

But I must add here, that all who love the Lord will see His glory, and in the day when He reigns they shall be with Him, and He will remember every pulsation of love to Himself, and every act of faithfulness to Him, and this should constrain us as well as His love to us, to live wholly for Him, and to refuse all the clamouring of self and the flesh for a place.

## **MEPHIBOSHETH**

The good start in devotion to David that Jonathan made was carried on in perfection in his son Mephibosheth. He was a very different sort of man to the Gadites with "the faces of lions," who were "swift as the roes upon the mountains," and "could handle shield and buckler," and were "fit

for battle” (1 Chr. 12:8). David needed such men as they were, for he was a man of war, but he was also a man with a heart, great and tender, and he valued above all things devotion to his person; and who shall say that the crippled son of Jonathan did not give him more pleasure in the long run than the fearless veterans of his old guard.

One thing is certain. David found great pleasure in showing him kindness “for Jonathan’s sake.” He called what he did “the kindness of God,” and seemed happier in doing it than in slaughtering his foes. In this one incident he stood out prominently as the man after God’s heart, for we know that God finds His delight in bestowing blessing upon needy, helpless men. That part of Mephibosheth’s contact with David is beautifully told in 2 Samuel 9.

The question is, How did Mephibosheth react to David’s great kindness? He could not do great and brilliant things, he would have been useless and a burden on the field of battle, yet there was something he could do—he could appreciate David’s kindness and he could keep a heart loyal to him. He certainly seems to have been grateful to David for all the benefits he bestowed upon him, but sometimes a man may appreciate favours and have very little true love for the benefactor. It may even be so with us; we may value the blessings that come to us through Christ and yet not have much loyalty of heart for Him. It is a sad thing to contemplate, but it may be so, and assuredly the test will come.

The test came to Mephibosheth. Absalom, the favourite and spoiled son of his father, rebelled against him, and David had to flee the city of Jerusalem. There never had been such a day of sorrow for David in all his chequered career, he reached then and there the very nadir of his fortunes, and the strange thing was that Jerusalem seemed glad to see the back of him, and to welcome the traitor son. What would Mephibosheth do? When the full story is told we learn that he would have shared the sorrow and evil of the king if he could have done so, but it was not to be. Robbed and slandered by his servant, he was forced to remain behind in the city that had cast off David. The city rejoiced, it held high revelry, but Mephibosheth did not join in the festivities; he held himself in strict separation from it all and mourned for the absent king. He “neither dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes, from the day the king departed until the day he came again in peace” (2 Sam. 19:24).

Do we realise, O Christians, that the true King is rejected by the world, and that the devil has usurped His throne, and is both god and prince of the world? This the Scriptures teach most plainly, and since this is true, what should we do, who are left in it? If we are devoted to the Person of our Lord as Mephibosheth was to David we shall feel that a great moral gulf lies between us and it, that we have nothing in common with it, and that practical separation becomes us.

“Its grand fete days, and fashions and ways  
Are all but perishing things.”

Yet not because of this only, but because it is enmity against God and Christ, and lieth in the wicked one, we must go through it as Christian and Faithful went through Vanity Fair in John Bunyan’s book.

It is exceedingly interesting to see what Mephibosheth said to David when he returned in triumph to his throne and city. He rejoiced that the king had come back to his own, and he wanted nothing for himself. The king’s rights and not his own were everything to him. He claimed nothing for himself, but he made his boast in David’s grace and in David’s word. Hear what he says, “All of my father’s house were but dead men before my Lord the King.” Dead men have no place or rights;

they cannot claim anything, especially when they are dead under the sentence of a righteous law. And it was this that this grandson of Saul, David's great enemy, meant, so it seems to me. But if he could claim no place in the king's palace and favour because of what he was, he could rely on David's word and boast of his kindness. "Yet," he said, "didst thou set thy servant among them that did eat at thine own table." David had said that he should eat bread continually and always at his table as one of the king's sons, and he knew that the king's word would stand and he wanted nothing more.

Moreover, Mephibosheth declined to put in a claim for any possession in the land, for when the question arose as to Ziba his servant sharing the land that formerly belonged to him, he said, "Yea, let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house."

He struck the right note, and it is happy for us if we can tune our boasting to the same key. We had no claim upon God, for we were all dead men before Him, but He is rich in mercy, and for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, He quickened us, and saved us, and set us among them that eat at His table. In the exceeding riches of His grace and His kindness toward us He has made us His children in an unchanging, everlasting relationship. Shall we not boast in this? Mephibosheth could not forget David's kindness. In this last incident in his life's story it stands out as the one thing that dominated him and expressed his relationship to his king. And can we forget? It would be a strange and unnatural thing if we did.

As we consider Mephibosheth, his moral greatness grows upon us. He was no whining, time-serving sycophant, thinking only of his own advantage. His loyalty to David in rebellious Jerusalem was great; the entire absence of self-conceit and self-seeking on David's return increases our admiration for him, and his reliance on David's word and his boast in what David had done for him were evidence of true gratitude. His joy at the king's return in peace was so great that he does not even ask that his slanderous, thieving servant should be punished. He desired no property, he sought nothing for himself. The person of the king was everything to him, and that the king should have his rights was all his desire. Everybody may not agree with me, but I set Mephibosheth, lame and apparently useless to the king as the greatest of all the king's men, and I am inclined to think that in those closing years of the king's life he found more pleasure in Mephibosheth than in any other.

We are looking for the time when our Lord will come into His rights, when the long years of His rejection shall close, and the nations shall own Him as King of kings and Lord of lords. It will be the day of His glory, and a happy day for us if some of the traits of Mephibosheth are showing themselves in us now. Glorious and happy day will this be for all those who love Him.

But how do we stand in this matter? Let us put the treatment that David received from these three men together and test ourselves as to our attitude to the Lord Himself.

SAUL—Saul everything, David nothing.

JONATHAN—David first, Jonathan second.

MEPHIBOSHETH—David everything, Mephibosheth nothing.

In one of these classes we stand.

Lord—

“Take Thou our hearts, and let them be  
For ever closed to all but Thee;  
Thy willing servants, let us wear  
The seal of love for ever there.”

## 11. Blowing the Silver Trumpets

*“And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps. And when they shall blow with them, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And if they blow but with one trumpet, then the princes, which are heads of the thousands of Israel, shall gather themselves unto thee. When ye blow an alarm, then the camps that lie on the east parts shall go forward. When ye blow an alarm the second time, then the camps that lie on the south side shall take their journey: they shall blow an alarm for their journeys. But when the congregation is to be gathered together, ye shall blow but ye shall not sound an alarm. And the sons of Aaron, the priests, shall blow with the trumpets; and they shall be to you for an ordinance for ever throughout your generations. And if ye go to war in your land against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies. Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the Lord your God.”*  
(Num. 10:1-10)

What is it that we need first and most in the life that lies ahead of us, if the Lord will, to be fruitful in the things that are pleasing to God? How are we to fulfil the relationships of life, and in them adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things? What is it that lies at the basis of all spiritual life and service, and without which we can only fail in every sphere of life? With the exercises that come to most of us, as we face the future, we may well ask such questions as these, and if we do we shall find that there is but one answer to them, and it is this: What is needed first and most and continuously, and without which we know nothing of the art of Christian living, is THE FULL AND UNRESERVED ACKNOWLEDGMENT THAT WE BELONG TO GOD. Without this we build without a foundation, we waste our energies, and live unreal and useless lives. Now if we belong to God His claims are paramount; since He is God, that must be so, but the fact that He has redeemed us gives Him a double title; and for our blessing as well as for His glory we must own His claims, and obey the word, “YIELD YOURSELVES UNTO GOD.”

This great and indispensable truth is remarkably illustrated for us in the use of the silver trumpets. They figured largely in the every-day life of Israel, for never a day passed when they did not make their appeal to that people. They were blown on God’s behalf for the people to hear, and they were blown on the people’s behalf for God to hear. It must be noted that they were made of silver. Every Israelite that was numbered from twenty years old and upwards had to bring half a silver shekel as an offering to Jehovah; no more and no less. It was called atonement money. It was the acknowledgment on their part that they belonged to God who had redeemed them by blood and power out of the bondage of Egypt for His own pleasure, and the silver thus offered was devoted to the service of the sanctuary, and of part of it these trumpets were made (Ex. 30).

When the priests blew long and loud upon these trumpets they proclaimed to the uttermost limits of Israel that the people belonged to God, that He had redeemed them and had rights over them that could not be challenged. They were to hold themselves at His disposal. It mattered not with what they were engaged—God’s call was imperative, and their own pursuits must take second place;

must be abandoned in fact, and that immediately at whatever time the silver trumpets sounded out their assembling call.

Let us give attentive ears to the truth that the silver mouths of these trumpets proclaim, for their story has been written for our learning. Do we not hear the sound of them in the New Testament in such words as these in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20? “What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, AND YE ARE NOT YOUR OWN? FOR YE ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE,” and again in 1 Peter 1:18-19, “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” In clarion tones these words call to our souls. Yet there is nothing discordant in their sound to him that hath ears to hear and a heart to understand; for they do not only tell of an insistent claim but of a great love, a love that paid the price and shed the blood, that it might possess us righteously and without a rival.

The words themselves are pure like silver, for “the words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times” (Ps. 12:6), and obedience to the words of the Lord purifies the soul; for we read, “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit” (1 Pet. 1:22). For practical and continuous purity of heart and life we must keep the great fact that we belong to God before our souls. It is the word of God to us morning by morning. The silver trumpet of His Word proclaims His redemptive rights over us, and the way of blessing for us is to respond in a glad subjection to His will.

## **CALLING THE ASSEMBLY**

The first use to which these trumpets were put was “for the calling of the assembly.” The Tabernacle was the God-appointed centre for His redeemed people in those ancient days, and from that centre His words went forth, and to it He summoned them when He would. That was the shadow, the picture; Christ is the substance, the reality; and if we are obedient to the word of God, Christ will be our one and only centre. Hear, then, the call of the silver trumpet of the Word in this respect. “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them (Matt. 18:20). “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:25). “This do in remembrance of Me” (1 Cor. 11:24). If lethargy of spirit has come over us, or if indifference of any sort has crept into our hearts in regard to these matters, may the words of God awaken us from it! And let each of us take heed to himself and not be influenced by another, for “the manner of some” must not affect us, but the Word, and the appeal that the Word makes is a personal one.

Suppose that when the priests at the Tabernacle blew upon the silver trumpets calling the people together to hear the Word of the Lord, they were so engrossed with other matters that they did not heed the call. Suppose that Judah had a quarrel with Benjamin, and they considered their quarrel to be of more importance than the call of God, and so did not respond together to it. Suppose each tribe had made a centre for itself, with its own laws, creed, and regulations. Suppose some were too busy with domestic, commercial or personal matters to hear the summons. What then? Would God be indifferent? No! The call would continue until some were aroused by it, and from first one tribe and then another there would come forth those who felt and owned God’s claim. And there they would stand at last in the God-appointed meeting place, where He could speak to them and commune with them. Not many, we will suppose, only two or three when compared with the multitude of the people, but obedient to the call of God and united in that obedience! Would the

Lord despise them? Would He refuse to say to them what He would have said to the whole of Israel if they had been there? We may be sure that the Word would not be less rich, or the meeting less blessed because not all were there! And so it is and will be as long as God's Word abides, and those who obey it, though but two or three, will prove how faithful He is to it. He cannot deny Himself.

## **THE JOURNEYING OF THE CAMPS**

The people were pilgrims in that great wilderness and they had not to settle down and make their home in it. They were travelling to Canaan, and need was that they should be reminded of the fact. So when the time came for them to pass on, an alarm was blown; the trumpets kept them on the move, and this we need also. How soon we can stagnate and sleep, and forget our heavenly home and calling! Yet God is gracious, and His Word awakes us to renewed spiritual energy. It blows an alarm and says to us, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light" (Eph. 5:14). "Set your affection on things above, not on things on earth" (Col. 3:2). "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:13). In such words as these do we hear the silver trumpets sounding an alarm, lest we should mind earthly things and forget our high destiny and our Father's house. For these two purposes the trumpets were blown on God's behalf in those times of old, and for us in these last days the word comes to us saying, "He that hath ears to hear let him hear." and "be not hearers of the Word only but doers of it."

## **WHEN IN CONFLICT WITH THE OPPRESSOR**

Then the priests had to sound the silver trumpets on behalf of the people that they might be remembered before God. They had to do this when they were in conflict with their foes, for foes they had to meet, and they were never by their own prowess equal to them, and God made them like that, that they might in time of stress depend upon Him. They could not do without God. He was their refuge and resource and strength. When they blew the trumpets in the day of battle it was as though they said: "O God, we are Thine, for Thou hast redeemed us, undertake for us against the oppressor." And God ever responded to their appeal. And will He disappoint us if we take up this stand in faith? Let us test Him and see. How fierce are the struggles in which some Christians engage! They desire to do right and be overcomers when sore temptations beset them; they yearn after the victorious life, but they seem to yearn in vain; hope and disappointment have alternated in their experience, and the outcome of it is that, finding the foe too strong for them, they are discouraged and ready to give up the fight. Let all such learn to use the silver trumpets. Let the great fact that they are redeemed of the Lord get a firm hold upon their souls, and let them tell it out to God. Let their cry be: "O God, I am Thine, full of failure I am, often defeated I have been, yet I am loved by Thee, and redeemed by Thee, and at so great a cost; I cannot fight this battle, fight it for me, my foes are Thy foes and Thine are mine; I hide in Thee and own that only through Thee can I be more than a conqueror."

The Christian life is not a life of ease. It is not described in the Word in the language of the bedchamber, but of the battlefield. The world, the flesh and the devil are opposed to us if we belong to God. If we lose the sense that we belong to Him we cannot prevail in the fight; but when we blow the trumpets before Him, then will the Word be fulfilled: "Ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and ye shall be saved from your enemies."



## **ON THE DAYS OF THEIR GLADNESS AND ON THEIR SOLEMN DAYS**

These sons of Jacob were to acknowledge God in all their circumstances. Whether they were exalted or brought low, whether they prospered or suffered adversity, whether they rejoiced or wept, the redemption note had to be dominant. And how else shall we be kept from independence of God when things go well with us? We are safe in the days of gladness if we rejoice before the Lord, and own Him as the Giver of every mercy, and if we hold ourselves and His gifts for Him, the Giver to whom we belong. And we are comforted and sustained if we call upon Him in the day of sorrow. If we blow the silver trumpet and say—

“Lord I am Thine, though sorrows gather round me,  
And death’s dark shadow thwart my path is thrown;  
Saviour Divine, Thy outstretched hand upholds me,  
And, being Thine, I shall not walk alone.

## **AT THE BEGINNINGS OF THEIR MONTHS**

The beginnings of their months spoke of the constant changes in this life. At every change it is our privilege and our safety to depend upon God and to do His will whose we are. “Ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live and do this, or that” (Jas. 4:15). No change in our circumstances ought to be contemplated, much less completed, without the use of the silver trumpets. “O God, we belong to Thee. Guide us in all our ways,” should be our cry. The young man entering business, young Christians forming friendships, associations, new relationships, should let the great fact that they are bought with a price control them, and pour out the joyous notes of this blessed truth in the Lord’s ear. Thus will they be spared many sorrows and preserved from great disaster. “Acknowledge Him in all thy ways and He shall direct thy paths.”

## **OVER THEIR BURNT OFFERINGS AND PEACE OFFERINGS**

With these sacrifices the people approached unto God. The burnt offering was a type of our worship, and the peace offering of our fellowship; our worship which has Christ, the beloved Son of God who went into death, as its subject, and our fellowship which finds its life and its food in Him also. But we cannot approach to God for worship except as redeemed by the blood of Christ. Vain and presumptuous is the notion of the “modernist” that he does not need this; “without the shedding of blood is no remission.” And the blood that has redeemed us gives us boldness before God, so that we can in holy fellowship unite in worship before Him, His redeemed ones. Hence we sing the new song unto our great and blessed Saviour, “Thou hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood.”

“I AM THE LORD THY GOD,” is God’s final word in the instructions given for the use of these trumpets. He can brook no rival. He must be supreme. For His pleasure He has redeemed us, and His will for us is good, perfect and acceptable. It is not against us, but for us. It is against all that could do us harm, and has nothing but blessing for us, and as we own Him and live as those who belong to Him, as we daily, hourly, blow the silver trumpets, we shall prove that His yoke is easy and His burden is light.



## 12. The Testimony of the Lord

*“God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power and of love, and of a sound mind. Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.” (2 Tim. 1:7-8)*

My appeal is specially and definitely to the young disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ. I am not in this minimising the importance of those who are older in the faith; a great responsibility rests upon them, and theirs is a great privilege. As they increase in the knowledge of God, they give stability to practical Christian fellowship and testimony, but they must be watchful lest they lose their spiritual vigour and enthusiasm for Christ. If they fail in this they will not help but hinder those who are coming after them, and nothing could be more serious than that in these perilous times in which the whole truth of God is being challenged. But my appeal is to the young Christians; to them I say, Rally to the banner of our Lord and be not ashamed of His testimony.

Consider the position:—the time has come when “they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they shall turn away their ears from the truth AND SHALL BE TURNED UNTO FABLES” (2 Tim. 4:3-4). God only could have given to Paul the prophetic vision that enabled him to describe so graphically and without mistake what these last days would be like. In this farewell letter to young Timothy, his son in the faith, he tells us all about it. It is a God-inspired letter, as all Scripture is God-inspired; read it and it will keep you from being discouraged and dismayed, for if God foresaw the condition into which Christendom would fall, He has not been taken by surprise by it, nor need you be surprised. To be forewarned is to be fore-armed, and God, who foresaw it all, has instructed you how to act in the midst of it. He has given to you the Spirit, not of cowardice, but of love, and power, and of a sound mind; and all the grace that you require is in Christ Jesus for you, so that you need not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. Christian, be enthusiastic for Christ, and the faith that is His.

Your choice lies between the testimony of our Lord and fables. The testimony of our Lord is not popular and the fables are. They are labelled “scientific discoveries,” they are propounded by university professors and preached by bishops, and they please the people who love pleasure more than they love God; but they are fables, nevertheless—God-dishonouring, soul-damning fables. While they puff up the fleshly mind they save no soul, but your souls have been saved and blessed and made free and glad by the testimony of the Lord; by that testimony you must stand, and in standing by it suffer ridicule if needs be, and be looked down upon as being ignorant and behind the times. You will be told that on the other side are the wise and the mighty and noble, and that on the side of the testimony are the nobodies. Be it so, that is just what we should expect as we read such a passage as 1 Corinthians 1:26-31. But one thing is certain, one man with God is better than ten thousand without Him, and God will ever be with the testimony of the Lord. Be the one man if necessary.

The perilous times have arrived, and the faith once delivered to the saints is being assaulted and opposed by many evils. There is the form of godliness in which the power that convicts men of sin and brings them with repentance to the feet of the great Redeemer, and changes their lives, is denied. Leaders of religious thought are turning away from the testimony of the Lord and offering the sacraments instead of the living Lord and Christ as the means of life and blessing, and are drifting back into popish superstitions; and others, drunk with the wine of modernism, have made an unholy alliance with “science, falsely so called,” and are casting aside the Word of God as an

obsolete thing and overthrowing the faith of some. Formalism, Ritualism—these be the gods of an apostatizing Christendom, but they are as false as Baal and Ashtaroth and Chemosh, the gods of the Canaanites! “O Timothy,” wrote Paul, the aged, in view of these days, “Keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called: which some professing have erred concerning the faith” (1 Tim. 6:20).

But God, who, “in the beginning created the heavens and the earth” as Genesis tells us, still reserves to Himself thousands who have not bowed the knee to these modern gods and whose lips have not kissed them,—you through the grace of God are among these, and the obligation that is laid upon you is not to be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord. The time has come when you must be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and turn away from those who have turned away from the truth, for the command is clear, “Let every one that names the name of the Lord withdraw from iniquity” (N.T.). It is at once your responsibility and privilege to stand for and to preach the word, to be instant in season and out of season.

What is the testimony of our Lord? It is the word of the Lord as given to men at any given time. The first of which we have any record was given through Enoch, the seventh from Adam, who prophesied saying, “Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment”, and in that first testimony we have proof enough that evolution is a fable. If man had struggled up through the ages, overcoming the most extraordinary difficulties and rising superior to a baffling environment, until at last he emerged from an ape ancestry into a noble manhood, why should he be judged? Surely instead of judgment the Almighty might well and righteously congratulate him upon his achievement, and encourage him to still greater efforts. But if, on the other hand, he was created in the image and after the likeness of God, and if he has fallen from his high estate: if he is a degenerate Adam instead of a glorified ape: if he was made a moral being with responsibilities towards his Creator, and if he has broken down in those responsibilities and set at naught the will of God and pleased himself, how just it is that he should be called to account and that judgment should await him. “As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:11). But how great is the mercy of God that warns men of the certainty of judgment before it comes, and calls upon them to repent in view of it. I repeat that the fact of coming judgment exposes the modern doctrine of evolution to be not truth but a profane and vain imagination of man’s mind. It is a fable and not the testimony of the Lord.

It may be objected, You are quoting from Genesis, and Genesis is now held by “all scholars” to be unauthentic, and these stories of Enoch and others are legendary, or at the best allegorical. I am not quoting from Genesis at all, but from Jude, a short epistle written at least 3,000 years after the translation of Enoch to heaven; but Jude corroborates Genesis. If Enoch did not live and walk with God, as Genesis tells us, then he did not prophesy as Jude tells us; nor did he please God before he was translated, as the author of Hebrews tells us; nor did he beget Methuselah, as Luke tells us. If these three New Testament writers are untrustworthy on one point, we cannot accept them as reliable on any point; their writings and Genesis stand or fall together, and those who try to hold on to the New Testament and yet discard Genesis in their haste to compromise with these so-called scientific discoveries, and to appear progressive in the eyes of their fellows and congregations, are, to say the least, very inconsistent men.

The testimony that Enoch gave from the Lord has not been cancelled, the judgment of which he spoke will surely come, but it has been postponed for God is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance; and in the meanwhile the testimony

of the Lord is going out to men. It comes from the God who cannot lie, and it tells us what He is; it is a testimony of grace, yet it does not hide the fact of judgment to come. When we come to this testimony, we are not dealing with theories, speculations, and hypotheses, but with facts, and these facts are three:—

Christ has been here.

He is no longer here.

He is coming back again.

CHRIST HAS BEEN HERE. John says, “We know that the Son of God is come. . . . This is the true God and eternal life” (1 John 5:20); and again, “Every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ come in flesh is of God” (chap. 4:2, N.T.); and again, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (4:10). The Son of God has come and His coming was the manifestation of God’s love to men. He did not come as a Judge, but “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2 Cor. 5:19). He was announced at His birth as a Saviour by heavenly heralds. How did men treat Him when He came? They ought to have hastened to the manger where He was cradled, as the shepherds did, they ought to have brought their worship and their gifts to Him as did the wise men from the East, but they did not. All Jerusalem was troubled at the news of His birth, yet He did not turn back. He had come as the pledge of God’s love to men. He was the Father’s sent One and the light of the world. He came to show and to tell that “God is love.”

But when Christ came, He was not wanted. There was no room for Him in man’s scheme of things. There was room for Caesar in his Imperial purple, tyrant though he was; there was room for Herod and Pilate, for priests and publicans, for scribes and sinners; there was room for Barabbas, but no room for Jesus. He was despised and rejected of men. Not only rejected—a man may be rejected because of his proposals and yet respected because of his personal qualities—but Jesus was despised, and rejected because He was despised. Men despise that which they think beneath them, something contemptible, despicable—such was Jesus in their eyes. They could not endure perfect goodness, they would not have the Son of God, and with wicked hands they crucified and slew Him.

If the cross of Christ revealed that “God is love”—and it did, for “God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”—it also exposed the heart of man. The cross of Christ was the proof that there was not a chord in man’s heart that would respond even to God’s tenderest touch. The cross was man’s defiant answer to the most blessed advance that God could make to him. The best that God could do only laid bare the incorrigibility of man’s nature, and put beyond all controversy for ever the fact that he **MUST BE BORN AGAIN**. The princes of this world crucified the Lord of glory and they acted for the race, they showed that men loved darkness rather than light and preferred Satan to God, even though God is love.

How wonderful it is that that same cross shows us how God can be a just God and a Saviour, who will have all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. If you hold fast this, you may be charged with holding “dry-as-dust” and “out-of-date” theology. But is it dry-as-dust theology? It is the most glorious testimony that ever sounded on mortal ears—“There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” Is this testimony out of date? Nay, this is the due time in which it must be made known. A multitude of dying saints have been filled with triumph in the very face of death

because they believed it, and were persuaded that nothing could separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. But they could have known nothing about it if the Son of God had not come,

**CHRIST IS NO LONGER HERE.** He is the Stone that the builders rejected, nevertheless He has become the Head of the corner; this is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes. God has intervened for His own glory and raised Him from the dead. This is the dominant note of Peter's gospel in Pentecostal times; it rings triumphantly in Paul's gospel. God has given His answer to man's foul act. He has justified His Son whom men condemned, and Christ risen and exalted is God's new beginning of the creation of God. We must stand either with the world that crucified Him or with God who has glorified Him. God has bound us up with Christ in glory by the Holy Spirit whom He has given to us, and by so doing has separated us from the world. God's purpose of blessing for men far exceeds anything that they can imagine for themselves, but this purpose is in Christ Jesus our Lord; not in the first man, Adam, but in the Second Man, Christ, for the first man was made of dust and to dust he goes, but the second Man is out of heaven (1 Cor. 15:47, N.T.) and in Him, God gives to all who believe life and incorruptibility and an inheritance, "incorruptible, and undefiled, and unfailing, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:4, N.T.). "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

**HE IS COMING BACK AGAIN.** "The Lord saith unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, until I make Thy foes Thy footstool" (Ps. 110:1; Acts 2:34-35; Heb. 1:13). The rights that were refused Him when He came in grace, will be secured by the power of God when He comes in glory, and "at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:10-11). The testimony of our Lord is incomplete if we leave out this. The hopes of the saints of God were always centred in Christ and His coming to establish righteousness in the earth. Of this Enoch spoke; the vision of this rejoiced the heart of Abraham; it was part of the testimony that God established in Jacob; that they might set their hope in God and not forget His works (Ps. 78); it has been revealed to us in the testimony of the Lord in its greatness and detail. Man after the flesh who is not subject to the law of God must give way before Christ, who was ever obedient, and He shall be glorified as Redeemer, Judge, and King. **HE IS THE FAITHFUL WITNESS** (He has been here); **THE FIRST BEGOTTEN FROM THE DEAD** (He is not here), **AND THE PRINCE OF THE KINGS OF THE EARTH** (He is coming back again) (Rev. 1).

"We have not followed cunningly devised fables, (that exalt man in his pride, and dishonour Christ, and deny the revelation of God) when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard when we were with Him in the holy mount" (2 Pet. 1:16-18).

The fables to which so many have turned make men comfortable without God, they give to them a false hope, a fool's paradise, and encourage them to trust in themselves and their own efforts. The testimony of the Lord exalts Christ who is the theme of it. In it **GOD COMMANDS ALL MEN EVERYWHERE TO REPENT**: "because He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that **HE HATH RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD**" (Acts 17:30-31). This testimony cannot fail, and the foundation of God standeth sure, but on our part we must keep it pure and not

mix it with fables of men. We must “hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1:13). Only thus can we be “faithful men.” “Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things. Remember that Jesus Christ of the seed of David was raised from the dead according to my gospel: wherein I suffer trouble, as an evil doer, even unto bonds, but the word of God is not bound” (2 Tim. 2:7-9). “Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of the Lord nor of me, His prisoner, but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel ACCORDING TO THE POWER OF GOD.”

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